

ENVIRONMENTAL INTERNET DISCOURSE: GENRE OVERVIEW

The invention of the Internet started a new epoch in human communication. Its impact on society development can hardly be overestimated. Originally designed in the United States in the late 1960's to facilitate the transfer of computer programs and data between remote computers in the interests of national defense, computer network caught on almost immediately as a means of interpersonal communication. First used in elite universities and organizations, the Internet became available for popular use with the rise of commercial Internet service providers [3]. Since then computer-mediated communication has become global. Over the past three decades the Internet has radically changed the way people interact with each other.

At the beginning of the XXI century there has been a dramatic increase in scientific research of the Internet phenomenon. The Internet discourse has become an object of numerous linguistic studies.

Despite well-developed computer technologies and revolutionary communication means, modern society faces a lot of problems. One of the most urgent and painful issues is global ecological crisis. Thoughtless exploitation of the planet and its resources, consumerism and the myth that a man can suppress and rule the nature have caused nightmarish consequences. Nature fights back through different catastrophes: volcano eruptions, tsunamis, earthquakes, tornados, floods etc. Though various attempts have been made to amend the situation, there is no evident improvement in the human-nature

relationship. Scientists all over the world are preoccupied with the challenge of working out the strategy for the environmental problems solution.

Linguistics, being concerned with the given objective, investigates how language facilitates the change in people's attitude to the environment. All studies are conducted in the light of discourse approach. *Environmental discourse* as a separate type of institutional discourse is understood in this article as a specific discourse type aimed at reflecting human-nature relationship, informing the population of environmental issues, influencing and forming public environmental awareness. Dealing with the problems that can be solved only on the global scale, environmental discourse is realized not only in traditional media, it makes extensive use of the possibilities that the Internet offers and enjoys genre variability typical to the Internet discourse.

Therefore, the *purpose* of this article is to give a genre overview of the environmental Internet discourse.

Traditionally, environmental discourse is subdivided into four genres: scientific, media, belles-lettres and religious [1]. Each of which is further sectioned into smaller parts. This can be schematically shown in the table.

Table 1

Environmental Discourse Genres

<i>Scientific</i>			<i>Media</i>			<i>Belles-lettres</i>	<i>Religious</i>
<i>Scientific</i>	<i>Educational</i>	<i>Popular Science</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Analytical</i>	<i>Publicistic</i>	Drama Poetry Prose	Oral and written text on religious issues (Sermons Articles)
Monograph Thesis Presentation	Lectures Seminars Papers Course Papers	Books Lectures Essays Articles	Note Commentary Interview	Discussion Article Overview	Essay Pamphlet Squib		

The boundaries between the mentioned above genres are rather vague, as for instance the features of the scientific genre can be found in media or even belles-letters.

Environmental Internet discourse differs a lot from its traditional non-virtual counterpart. This is mainly due to the structural and genre peculiarities of the Internet discourse itself. Susan Herring states that not all the properties of the Internet discourse follow necessarily and directly from the properties of the computer technology. Rather, social and cultural factors – carried over from communication in other media as well as internally generated in computer-mediated environments – contribute importantly to the constellation of properties that characterize the Internet discourse [3].

The Internet discourse is distinguished from other discourse types by several remarkable features. Firstly, the Internet discourse structure is conditioned by hypertext. Hypertext is a specific text type that contains links allowing the user to move from one piece of text or document to another. Secondly, cohesion is the Internet discourse distinctive feature. Thirdly, the Internet discourse is known for its heterogeneity. Still there is no universally recognized genre typology of the Internet discourse. As David Crystal states, given the speed of technological change, doubtless new genres will emerge which will make any attempt at classification quickly outdated [2; 10]. The scholar identifies five broad Internet-using situations (genres): e-mail, chatgroups (including Bulletin Boards), virtual world and World Wide Web [2; 10-17]. These five situations are not entirely mutually exclusive, as it is possible to find sites in which all of them are combined, or where one situation is used within another [2; 14].

Based on genre peculiarities of the Internet discourse we distinguish the following environmental Internet discourse genres: *websites*, *bulletin boards*, *blogs*, *chat rooms* and *forums*. All of them have specific linguistic and structural features, but pursue the same goal, namely to change human-nature relationship from war into partnership. Predominantly the given genres are not homogeneous, as one genre can include features of other genres. For instance, many environmental websites contain “Blog” sections.

Taking into consideration the worldwide popularity of the Internet and its ever-growing possibilities for highlighting urgent environmental issues, we consider the

profound study of its genre variability and pragmatic potential to be the prospects for our further linguistic research.

Abstract

The advent of the Internet in the second half of the XXth century marked a turning point in human communication. Global ecological crisis has raised numerous challenges to be met. Linguistics takes them up, trying to solve environmental issues incorporating traditional language means with the latest achievements in computer technologies. Consequently, environmental Internet discourse emerges and becomes a powerful means of influencing and shaping public environmental awareness.

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