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DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF POPULAR SCIENCE DISCOURSE

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Abstract. Lately the linguistic world has been using the term discourse very often. However, there is a room for discussion when it comes defining the term. The given article examines the opinions of eastern and western scholars on discourse studies in general and popular science discourse in particular. The distinctive features of the popular science discourse and difference between the pure scientific and popular science discourse are revealed.

Keywords: discourse, scientific discourse, popular science discourse, scientific style, popular science discourse in media

In recent years, with the improvement of the cognitive and discursive paradigm of research, the popularity of the use of the term “discourse” has grown significantly, but the problem of conceptualization of this notion in modern linguistics still exists. Due to its multidimensionality, polydisciplinarity and its use in various fields of research, discourse is not considered to be precisely defined, that is why there are different interpretations of this phenomenon.

V. Z. Demyan’kov writes that *dicursus as a conversation, talk* was used as far back as the 5th century A. D. [1]. Of course, now the discourse is much larger and wider than the usual conversation, but at its core, one way or another, there is precisely a conversation, a dialogue.

The main focus of linguists in the definition of the term is concentrated on distinguishing it from the term “text.” Traditionally, discourse is compared to such concepts as speech, utterance and speech activity in general. The differentiation of the two terms began approximately in the late 1970s of the 20th century. In order to determine the significance of this phenomenon, let us consider the opinions of several scholars.

In the Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary, N. D. Arutyunova defines discourse as “text taken in event aspect.” [2]. It means an inalienable living aspect, which consists in the fact that discourse is present in the context of events, life scenarios and situations. Examples of the concept in this dictionary are reportage, interviews, briefing, sophisticated small talk.

The author of numerous works on discourse issues Van Dijk in his book “Ideology: An Interdisciplinary Approach” [3] shares two basic concepts of discourse. First, *in a broad sense*, it is a “communicative event” that occurs between the speaker and the listener in a specific time and place. The scholar notes as examples of such a general concept of talking with a friend, with a doctor, reading a newspaper. *In a restricted sense*, discourse is the written or oral result of communicative action. In both cases, the use of the word “discourse” always carries in the context of a particular event or situation.

British scholars B. Hatim and I. Mason [4] studying the analysis of the text, also came to the concept of discourse. They defined language and text as the realization of sociocultural messages and relations, and discourse - as institutionalized modes of speaking and writing which give expression to particular attitudes towards areas of socio-cultural activity.

Studying the Russian linguistic persona, Yu. N. Karaulov called discourse “a certain set of speech products of a fragmentary nature (replicas in dialogues and various situations, utterances of several sentences, etc.), but collected over a sufficiently long period of time.” [5]. For example, a linguist cites a collection of statements by an artistic character as a linguistic personality.

As for Kazakhstani scholars, M. Bissimalieva defined the discourse as “a language segment, taking into account the participants in the event, their knowledge, and the current situation of communication.” [6]. At the same time, the basis for studying is the identification of the concepts of “text linguistics” and “discourse analysis”: in the first case, the language is analyzed, in the second case additional knowledge is required about participants in communication and the communicative situation.

G. G. Burkitbaeva in her work “Text and Discourse…,” after studying the opposition of these concepts, came to the logical conclusion that “discourse is a broader concept than text, and the relationships between them can be defined in terms of set theory as inclusion relations,” that is, the discourse includes the text in itself. Various oral or written text implementations in the interaction of communicants, carried out in a specific situation, is discourse [7].
Thus, discourse in linguistics is a collection of spontaneous oral speeches of one or several people, or a dynamic written conversation between the author and the reader. Discourse is characterized by the presence of temporary, spatial, behavioral and emotional symptoms.

There is a great variety of types of discourses, since this concept is applicable to any sphere of human life. The most complete and convenient classification of discourse was introduced by the Russian linguist V. I. Karasik, who identifies two following types: personal/self-centered (every day, colloquial, narrative) and status-centered/institutional (depending on the status or profession of the discourse participants) [8]. Depending on the role, there are agents (the active side of the discourse) and clients (listeners and readers). V. I. Karasik singled out the following main types of status-centered/ institutional discourse: political, diplomatic, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, science, theatrical and mass information. The scholar pays special attention to scientific discourse, since this type “traditionally attracts the attention of linguists.” Clients of the scientific discourse are students and scientists/scholars. In turn, the scientific style of the text/discourse is divided into sub-types: academic, educational, technical, journalistic, informational and scientific-colloquial [8].

With the development of the cognitive-discursive paradigm of research, the study of the strategic organization of texts functioning in those types of discourse, in which the orientation toward a potential addresses is clearly expressed, is of particular importance. We can identify the popular science discourse as “reader-oriented” [9]. It is generally believed that the difference between popular science discourse and the scientific discourse lies in the fact that the recipient of information in popular science one is a non-professional on a specific scientific topic. The target audience, as a rule, is considered mass non-specialists: viewers of television programs, listeners of radio broadcasting and readers of popular science literature. At the same time, they can be specialists of different ages and absolutely different fields of knowledge.

E. A. Lazarevich argues that the popular science style is quite an independent functional style, the typological features of which do not coincide with the signs of the scientific. “The proximity of certain features of popular science literature and literature of other types does not give grounds for talking about the typological uncertainty of the former. Its similarity to others is always clearly expressed and limited. So, partially coinciding on topics with science literature, popular science literature differs from it by the target setting and the readership. Having some reader community with fiction, popular science literature does not coincide with it on the subject and target setting” [10].

N. V. Kirichenko gives the following interpretation of the notion “popular science sub-style”: “one of the stylistic-speech varieties of scientific functional style, which has (compared to pure scientific) additional communication tasks - the need to “translate” special scientific information into the language of non-specialized knowledge, namely, the tasks of popularizing scientific knowledge for a wide audience” [11].

V. E. Chernyavskaya also classifies the popular science style in the sphere of scientific functional style, contrasting “popularization” texts with academic scientific works, but only within the framework of a scientific style. The purpose of the popular science discourse is “mass dissemination and popularization of certain scientific information. The popular scientific type of the text differs from the others in its goals, content, nature of the addressee, to which they are addressed” [12].

Scientific communication can be carried out both between people who have knowledge and ideas in a special field, and between people who do not have such knowledge and ideas. For this, there is a popular science sub-style, main task of which is to familiarize the reader with an accessible and understandable non-specialist form with scientific knowledge. In popular science texts, definitions of scientific concepts are either replaced by simplified definitions, descriptive turns, or concepts are explained in the text and illustrated by examples and comparisons.

Television channels covering scientific topics, a lot of magazines and newspapers, WEB sites and publications use popular science discourse, since such a message solves two problems at once: transferring scientific knowledge and capturing the attention of recipients of information. For example, the telecast “How does it work?” on Discovery channel, Youtube channels “Ted-Ed,” “Science,” “QWERTY,” websites http://www.popsci.com/ - Popular Science, “http://www.popmech.ru/ - Popular Mechanics,” as well as thousands of others. Channel Discovery at one time launched a popular science broadcast “How does it work?” which showed how different devices are manufactured and operated. The program touched upon all areas of life, from complex phone devices, to conventional shovels, from the processing of metal to the production of cheese.

Popular science discourse, as a type of scientific discourse, contains relevant information. That is, the content of the popular science discourse is almost the same as the scientific one. Therefore,
there is general scientific vocabulary and terms. For example, nanosystems synthesized by chemists can be used to solve problems of ecology, health, and environmental management, since their analytically significant properties (optical, magnetic, etc.) allow determining the content of biologically active substances, in particular sulfonamides, tetracycline antibiotics, catecholamines and others [13].

However, the compiler of popular science discourse, talking about research, search, usually specially omits much of the complex evidence and arguments, because it seeks to make the text more accessible and exciting - popularizes it. Therefore, non-fiction magazines not only simplify information, but also look for an approach that would be of interest to readers: All the results are reduced to one conclusion: you can store water and food products in plastic. But not too long (for different plastics - different terms). And do not heat at all, especially over 60 ° C [14].

To capture the attention and interest of the client, popular science discourse uses techniques such as surprise, unpredictability, originality. When it comes, it would seem, about all known, everyday scientific topics, but there is always something new and unusual. This reflects the important function of popular science TV shows and publications - cognitive. At the same time, it is entertainment websites and portals, such as Youtube, that provide different resources for a cognitive and interesting study of science, since the users initially aspires to occupy themselves with something, “to kill time.” For example, Youtube channel “TOPLES’ (TOIJIIEC)” tells about space, laws and riddles of physics, psychology, etc. using simple words and expressions. The program “What was before the Big Bang?” gives full knowledge about such a famous phenomenon, about the scientist Sir Fred Hoyle, who introduced this concept.

Therefore, we can establish that popular science discourse uses all available means to give scientific knowledge the principles of accessibility and visibility. In popular science discourse the scientific data is explained by examples or visuals, the scientific terms are clarified and the whole discourse have a course of logical thought by special speech means. This is the main difference of this discourse from purely scientific.

If the discourse actively uses special terms that are not explained, sentences that are difficult for the perception, then there is an automatic transition to a scientific style, focused on the professional, and becomes boring and not understandable for all other participants in the discourse. For example, mathematical theorem 1 in the Dirichlet Principle:

Scientific discourse:
“With any choice of five points inside the unit square, there are a couple of points removed one from the other by less than $\sqrt{2}/2$.”

Popular science discourse:
“Divide the square into 4 quarters. At least two of the five selected points will fall into one quarter, and then the distance between them will be less than the diagonal of the quarter.”

At the same time, often multi-disciplinary journals can contain different articles, some of which are of interest to one circle of readers, while the second part is aimed at professionals or amateurs in a completely different sphere. It is obvious that the audience independently chooses the discourse, which becomes a participant. The simplification of the language, the absence of complex terms and the presentation of scientific knowledge in a dialogue format make the popular science discourse oriented to a wider range of listeners, viewers and readers.

In addition, the media can use the results of scientific research to weight their reflections and theories by adding phrases such as “according to British scientists” or “Australian biologists have identified.” In this case, it is difficult to determine not only the type of such discourse, but also whether its contents are true: “British scientists have proved that dogs yawn after their owners. This is due to the cognitive-behavioral instincts of the dog.”

Since one of the main tasks of popular science discourse is to increase the interest of the addressee, several genres can be used in one TV program or magazine article: a scientific presentation, reportage and interviews, as well as various combinations of these genres in one rubric. One news, for example, can be described as a report, while scientific hypotheses and proven theories can be proposed between the chronological courses of events. Complex information is visually illustrated by examples and becomes very easy to understand and remember.

Thus, the distinctive features of popular science discourse are educational, cognitive, entertaining, exploratory, illustrative, expressive and informative at the same time.

Popular science discourse has a huge range for creating speech units - texts and articles, because it can use a variety of purely scientific and simply interesting methods. Reports, TV programs and magazines become so interesting and attractive that the addressee necessarily wants to come in
contact with knowledge in more detail, get to know more closely about this or that field of science. The functional task of the popular science discourse on bringing more viewers, listeners and readers to science, is successfully carried out due to variety of methods.

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