The Computer Game as an Alternative Artistic Discourse

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Abstract—The article aimed to determine the specificity of computer game discourse, its features, key linguistic characteristics, and communicative features. The methodology included the analysis of computer game discourse materials, in particular, dictionary articles, texts of electronic messages, and computer conferences, as well as recordings of fragments of the spoken language of users and users of computer games. The specific feature of computer discourse is the selective combination of features, typical for other types and forms of communication. Computer discourse has some communicative features: electronic communication channel; mediated communication; distance communication; emotionality transmission through emoji symbols; genre heterogeneity; discourse participants' creativity. Computer discourse is characterized by the dominance of English-language lexical bases (barbarisms and semantic translations) and a tendency to unify the norms and rules of communication. Despite such specificity, computer jargon in its functioning and especially word formation is subject to the laws of the Ukrainian language. In particular, affixal, non-affixal, and lexico-semantic are the most widespread modes of word formation in the computer lexicon. At the same time, lexico-semantic can be combined with other known ways. Computer vocabulary is characterized by the use of speech games and means of speech expression. The key tendency in the formation of computer discourse is to reduce the ways of information transmission as much as possible.

Index Terms—computer discourse, computer game discourse, computer game artistic discourse, communicative features of computer discourse

I. Introduction

In modern society, where international contacts are expanding at different levels and in different economic spheres, the role of the use of computers and the global Internet system is growing. Our research is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of computer discourse. Computer and computer games discourse emerged simultaneously with the appearance of electronic computers in the United States in 1946. With the development of computer technology in Ukraine a specific language was also formed in which the ICT professionals communicated. The spread of personal computers and the creation of the Internet attracted the general public to this sphere, which adopted and enriched computer vocabulary. The relatively young age of professionals engaged in this area of professional activity, as well as the popularity of computers among young people prone to the use of slang expressions, determine the fashion for them among users.

The article aims to define the specificity of computer game discourse, its features, major linguistic characteristics, and communicative features.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

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The conceptual range of the term 'discourse' is now quite comprehensive (Merchant, 2001; Baron, 2003; Herring, 2008; Eisenstein, 2013). Discourse is seen as a functional style, a type of speech (spoken, written, scientific, artistic, business) (Flammia & Saunders, 2007). Discourse is also seen as a complex communicative phenomenon that not only involves the act of creating a certain message but also reflects its dependence on many factors: knowledge of the world, attitudes, opinions, goals, status characteristics of participants in communicative interaction, etc (Crystal, 2011). Discourse is described as a multidimensional cognitive, communicative gestalt system defined by a set of three aspects: the formation of ideas and beliefs (cognitive aspect), the interaction of communicants in specific socio-cultural contexts/situations (socio-pragmatic aspect), and the use of means, verbal and non-verbal (linguistic aspect) (Dudeney, 2000; Hao, 2021). It is thus essential to argue that discourse is interactive, that it is seen as an interaction, a joint construction of meanings (Beggs, 2012). This construction of meanings has a purposeful, regulatory, i.e. strategic nature. In any act of verbal communication, communicants have certain extra-verbal goals that govern their activities, and the instrument of achieving such goals or the instrument of regulation is a discursive strategy (Friedman, 1995). Discourse is classified according to various criteria and principles (Wang et al., 2016). According to genre specificity, a distinction is made between scientific discourse, artistic discourse, journalistic discourse, and business documentation discourse (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2016). The notion of discourse is based on the fact that speech encompasses structures that reflect expressions of people in different spheres of life (Maggiore et al., 2012). Technical discourse is an integral part of scientific discourse. Computer discourse is part of technical discourse respectively, as discourse is a particular way of communicating and understanding the environment (or its certain aspect) (Derakhshan & Khatir, 2015; Vasileiadou & Makrina, 2017). Communication and understanding of specialists in the field under study will be an aspect of technical discourse (Mayer, 2019; Marchiori et al., 2011).

A computer game is the interaction of a person (group of people) with a computer or several people with each other using a computer for entertainment, education, or training (Deterding, 2014). Thus, a computer game as an alternative discourse reflects a multidimensional cognitive, communicative system where people interact with a specific purpose. Artistic discourse in the context of computer games is a discourse in the interaction of a group of people with the computer for a specific purpose, fictitiously depicting actual reality. It is an image created by the authors of the computer game, actually, those who interact in the game (game participants), which by fictional representation reflects the author's worldview, world understanding, and experience.

Computer games have attracted the attention of many researchers. It is impossible to analyze, even at a glance, the numerous publications devoted to the mentioned topic. However, there are several trends in the scientific literature, which allow making some generalizations. The first category of works deals with the coverage of the history, evolution, and perspectives of video games. (Vasileiadou & Makrina, 2017). The second urge to emphasize the role of computer games in different areas of our lives: politics (here often combined with the discourse of consciousness manipulation and social stereotyping) (Deterding, 2014), education (games as a powerful motivator for learning, criteria for choosing learning, subjects for which they seem to be most effective), immersive journalism (Wang et al., 2016), etc. Numerous publications are devoted to the negative psychological effects associated with immersion in virtual gaming space, leading to addiction, manifestations of unmotivated aggression, and depression. Far less common are studies that demonstrate the positive effects of computer games, although some researchers report certain cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social benefits of gamers. Summarizing the current state of research on video games, it can be concluded that they are usually considered in three aspects: who plays, how they play, and what they play. However, an interdisciplinary approach including anthropology, philosophy, economics, etc. would seem productive (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2016). Such an interdisciplinary approach could be the cultural approach, but unfortunately, despite the great attention to this subject, there is a lack of integrative research here and now. At the same time, it cannot be said that there are none at all: there are already attempts to combine the analysis of technical and cultural components when looking at video games. For example, Mayer (2019) uses the example of a game to demonstrate a possible method of video game analysis, including hardware, software code, functionality (purpose), gameplay, meaning, referentiality, and the socio-cultural aspect, with semiotics being the key methodology. This is one of the rare attempts to combine the technical and the aesthetic-sociocultural components. However, from our perspective, it seems more important to speak not so much of the technical requirements of gameplay, but rather of games as a text that requires reading through a system of numerous archetypes, symbols, imagery, allusions, and reminiscences encoded in them.

Computer discourse produces its genres. In electronic communication, the boundaries between genres are softer and more varied than in the real world. This is due to the incomplete formation of such genres; a similar situation indicates that the Internet has its laws of communication. Therefore, the language of the Internet is not subject to codification. The phenomenon of the transformation of common speech genres in virtual communication presents a huge linguistic material. Crystal (2002) "Language and the Internet", and Crystal (2011) "Internet linguistics" consider this issue.

For the linguistic analysis of electronic communication, D. Crystal's classification, which is based on situational and style-forming attributes, is suitable. In "Language and the Internet", Crystal identifies some genres, calling them broad Internet-using situations (Crystal, 2002):

- email;
- synchronous and asynchronous chats, including BBS;
- virtual worlds (MOOs, MUDs, MUCKs, MUSEs, etc);

- Web texts, which include electronic texts with a hyper- and linear structure (e.g. PDF texts).

III. METHODOLOGY

Language as a means of communication has a distinctive social character, where social functions actively influence its structure and largely determine its development. In this respect, the communicative status and the essence of the language of computer game users are of theoretical and practical interest. This study is devoted to the consideration of this exact matter. The material for the research was dictionaries, texts of electronic messages and conferences, as well as recordings of fragments of the spoken language of users and computer game users.

IV. RESULTS

The ancient emergence and continuous presence of the game in culture, and its problems in philosophical, cultural, pedagogical, and psychological scientific research are undeniable processes. In different historical epochs, the phenomenon of the game has been interpreted from different positions, and its role and place in culture have been defined differently. Any transformation of the socio-cultural place was marked by the configuration of game problematics in humanitarian knowledge.

To consider computer communication from the linguistic point of view, it is necessary to establish the place of computer discourse in the communicative environment, to identify the leading features of computer communication and its main types. Discourse is viewed as a cultural-behavioral unit of speech activity. Specifically, D. Crystal defines it as a set of sentences constituting a recognizable speech event. In subject-linguistic terms, he understands discourse as any logically coherent piece of speech (mostly verbal) that exceeds one sentence in size.

Computer-based communication opens up a new dimension in human communication, allowing large volumes of information to be stored and quickly transferred, using audio and video communication channels, and communicating online, i.e. in direct linear contact with the respondent. Computer-based communication implies, in addition to face-to-face, communication in a virtual environment, and this is its most important distinguishing feature.

Computer discourse is defined by the authors of the study as the communication of computer game users directly or in computer networks. At the same time, computer communication can be both individual-oriented (correspondence by email) and status-oriented (communication in various conferences). Computer discourse has many points of contact with mass communication but does not coincide with it completely, since computer communication, unlike mass communication, is mutually directed and many texts have a personal character.

Computer communication is multifaceted. It has features inherent to other types of communication. In terms of scope, computer communication includes features of mass communication (communication with the whole world), interpersonal communication (communication between the user and the computer), and group communication. Considering the time factor - the duration of the communication process - computer communication can be both brief (receiving email) and long in time (participation in conferences). According to its form, computerized communication is divided into verbal communication (direct communication or with a voice modem) and written communication (text and graphics, i.e. pictures, schemes, etc. but not letters). According to the channel of transmission and perception of information, computer communication is divided into actual and virtual.

Computer discourse, being a multi-genre functional variety of monologic and dialogic speech, is characterized by some specific communicative means. The peculiarity of speech communication of the participants of computer communication lies not only in the use of professionalism but also in the combination of lexical units belonging to different styles and registers, formed following the pragmatic instructions and goals of communication.

The lexical design of computer discourse texts is primarily characterized by the saturation of speech with terms of all types. This study identifies three groups of computer terminology usage:

- 1) specific computer terms used only by people relating to computers (server, modem, bit, byte);
- 2) words borrowed by computer terminology from other disciplines that have acquired a different meaning in computer discourse (domain in mathematics is a realm or interval, in physics a domain, in computer discourse it is the final part of an Internet address);
- 3) common literary words that have taken on a terminological meaning in computer communication (flame fire, bright light, passion, in computer discourse "an argument gradually shifting from the subject of discussion to personalities").

The following abbreviations are common among the terms used in computer discourse: PC - personal computer; IRC (Internet Relay Chat) - real-time communication; WAN (Wide Area Network) - any network covering more than one house; WWW (World Wide Web) - worldwide information environment, etc. Most commonly abbreviated names of institutions, organizations, countries, etc.

A distinctive feature of abbreviations in computer texts is the abbreviation not only of terms but also of colloquial phrases and whole sentences that are frequently used. For example AAMOF = As A Matter Of Fact; GON = God Only Knows; TTYL = Talk To You Later; TYVM = Thank You Very Much; IMHO = In My Humble Opinion, etc.

As participants in computer-based communication are often people familiar with mathematics, they transfer the use of formulas and a variety of symbols to computer-based discourse, thus compressing it as much as possible. For

example, PMJI = Pardon My Jumping In, PGY = Post Graduate year, PGY-1, PGY-2, etc.

Since communication on a computer network is predominantly in written form, unusual forms of expressive reinforcement are used alongside the usual ones. For instance: U instead of you (in the examples BSU=Be Seeing You, SU=Seeing You); 2 instead of too; B instead of be; 4 instead of for; 2B instead of to be; B4 instead of before.

Limitability is a social function, the content of which is to limit the circle of participants in communication. In our opinion, abbreviations in computer texts can be called "code", since they are known only to the participants of communication in the computer environment and for the inexperienced, they become a secret language.

Computer discourse is characterized by a variety of topics, a mixture of words belonging to different lexical layers, a combination of scientific terms and colloquial words, and lofty and crude vocabulary, which undoubtedly gives specificity to computer communication. Depending on the topic of computer conferences a variety of terminology can be found in the discourse - scientific, philosophical, political, medical, etc. For instance, radio waves, electrons, protein molecules, biofield, dermatome, acupuncture points, photon, sensorics, relativism, orthogonal, kingdom of god, ontogenesis, neutrino, opposition, etc.

Computer communication is characterized by several features at the lexical level: 1) active invasion (incrustation) of English terms, expressions in Latin spelling (Привіт All! (Hello All!); Прийшли мені file, plz (Send me a file, plz)); 2) use of transliteration and transcription to convey English words (мануал – from English manual, спам – from English spam; гейт – from English gate, сабж – subj; 3) the use of word-formation and semantic derogations (залізо – hardware); 4) playing around with English words (most often to create a humorous effect (бебеска – BBS – Bulletin Board System; яга – EGA – Enhanced Graphics Adapter); 5) inventory - the composition of words, the emergence of words on foreign soil (зафіксити – from English to fix; юзати – from English to use).

Hybrid formations at the morphological level, where the root is given in English letters and the ending in Ukrainian, are noteworthy, e.g.: screw dimm'u, subj'u; dialup'a, html'ки, analog getweb'a, send via MIME'ом, e-mail'ом, getweb'ом, fill with refid'ами, MID'ами, etc. This mixing of English and Ukrainian scripts within a single text, combining seemingly incongruous elements, gives an ironic mocking tone to the analyzed message, often characteristic of young people.

The vocabulary that makes up computer jargon is divided into the following thematic groups:

- 1. Names of parts and components of computers (батон mouse button, key; гріб computer case).
- 2. Names of software products (including games), individual programs, commands, and files (дося disk operating system DOS; презерватив antivirus program Aidstest).
- 3. Names of operations and individual actions related to the computer (hang, die (about the computer) refuse to respond to any external influences; take a chord restart the computer using three keys).
 - 4. System messages to the use (гамовер game over the end of the game).
- 5. Names of equipment and software manufacturers (Сантехніка equipment from Sun Microsystems Computer Corporation; Дрібний м'якуш Microsoft company).
- 6. Designations of people who work with computers: Professional computer programmers (безсистемник system programmer, програмер a computer professional who knows how to create his or her programs) and users (юзер a novice user with a modem, ламер an aggressive or completely incompetent user).
 - 7. Non-specific concepts related to evaluative content (broken, crooked, rotten not working).

Ukrainian computer slang derived from computer terms and slang words of the English language is characterized by a great variety of forms, developed synonym and word-formation rows, and incomparably higher emotional expressive coloring than English. At the same time, the majority of words contain ironic, negative evaluations.

English computer slang is dominated by metaphorical and metonymic transfer, not usually related to word-formation actions, and the very expressiveness of words is much lower. Many slang expressions do not go beyond the literary norm ("Trojan horse" - hidden commands introduced into an already existing program, which by a certain point works fine).

Sound associations play an influential role in Ukrainian jargonisms (клавіатура (keyboard) — клава, мило — e-mail і ін.). There is an element of the game in the appearance of such words, which is so attractive to young people. They play around with the sound of the word, searching for the most expressive, playful, and ironic version.

A specific characteristic of Ukrainian computer discourse is the use of slang words, including computer jargon. Such characteristics of computer discourse as a large number of loanwords in a foreign language with the use of Latin graphics attract attention (e-mail, password, MS-DOS), loanwords in Cyrillic script (хост – від англ. host; регістрити – від англ. to register), slang-type loanwords (згідно з рулезом – from English rules; мессага – from English message), as well as hybrid words, when a Ukrainian case ending is appended to a foreign base in the Latin alphabet via an apostrophe (html'ки; e-mail'ом; y pwl'i, etc.).

A comparative analysis of the graphics of computer discourse in Internet conferences has revealed that along with traditional graphical means, specific ones have developed in computer communication: multiple repetitions of exclamation marks and questions; multiple duplications of the same letter; use of emojis; highlighting whole sentences in capital letters; asterisks replacing an aggressive word. These phenomena reflect, first, the increased emotionality and expressiveness of computer-based communication and, second, the observance of a certain etiquette of communication (internal and external censorship). Despite some differences, in general, the inventory of used graphic tools and their

functions coincide in English, Russian, and Ukrainian computer discourses, which allows us to consider these tools to be peculiar to computer communication.

V. DISCUSSION

In contemporary discourse, the game is interpreted as a normative regulator of social life. The creation of shows in the format of infotainment is becoming a new trend in the twentieth century. Another sphere of deployment of gamification is the Internet. A computer game is characterized by the presence of "developmental elements". That is, the program assumes that the game character, whose role is assumed by the player, has some properties usually inherent in living beings (strength, agility, flexibility, tolerance for uncertainty, intelligence, etc.), which must be developed by performing certain acts in the virtual space of the game. The specifics of the virtual world of such games lie in the fact that, more often than not, the main goal of the player's game activity is not the achievement of virtual goals determined by the plot of the game, but the development of the character himself. (Vasileiadou & Makrina, 2017).

To characterize game discourse, recent scientific literature has used the notion of "the scale of a simulated virtual world" (Crystal, 2002). Its interpretation implies the definition of two important parameters - quality and breadth of freedom of a virtual space character. The scale and realism of virtual reality are directly proportional to the strength of the "presence" effect within it. Highlighting these characteristics allows one to identify certain types of computer games due to different configurations of the above parameters (Deterding, 2014):

- games that do not have a virtual world;
- games that create a virtual world with a low degree of character freedom and no character development;
- games that create a virtual world with a high degree of character freedom and no character development;
- games that create a virtual world with a high degree of character freedom and foresee character development.

It should be noted that games of each of these types may include games of different types in the genre classification. However, it is games of the fourth type that are most often role-playing. (PΠΓ from English RPG – Role Playing Game) (Wang et al., 2016).

The rich virtual world creates a strong sense of presence, and the element of character development gives the game subjectively significant meaning. In modern computer games, the development of the virtual character can be enabled by their "defabulation" (Mayer, 2019). For example, in the game "The Sims", there is no plot at all, and the player tries to construct it himself by choosing a certain character action. There is no plot in the traditional sense of the game, there is only the "virtual life" of the characters, carried out through the actions of the player. It is also possible to highlight the phenomenon of "shared defabulation", in which meaning is only present at certain stages of the development of the story in virtual reality. Yes, in the computer game "Corsairs III" the development of the plot becomes possible only when the player gains the necessary level and earns enough points in the game, and until then he can perform various minor tasks and quests, but the main storyline for him remains closed.

Thus, the content characteristics of modern computer game discourse include the scale of the simulated virtual world, the presence in the game of elements of virtual character development, and the phenomenon of defabulation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The specifics of computer discourse consist of a selective combination of features characteristic of other types and forms of communication. Computer discourse is shaped by some communicative features: the presence of an electronic transmission channel; indirectness; remoteness; emotion transmission through emoji symbols; genre heterogeneity; the creativity of discourse participants.

Computer discourse is characterized by the dominance of English-language lexical bases (barbarisms and semantic translations) and a tendency to unify the norms and rules of communication. Despite such specificity, computer jargon in its functioning and especially word formation is subject to the laws of the Ukrainian language. In particular, affixal, non-affixal, and lexico-semantic are the most widespread modes of word formation in the computer lexicon. At the same time, lexico-semantic can be combined with other known ways. Computer vocabulary is characterized by the use of speech play and means of speech expression. The primary trend in the formation of computer discourse is the maximum reduction in the ways of transmitting the information. The prospects of studying computer discourse lie in highlighting the specifics of different genres of this type of communication, in studying the functioning of the two most important types of discourse - mass information and every day - in all other areas of communication, in establishing expressive characteristics of computer discourse arising from it and the use of multimedia in highlighting intercultural features of using English as a means of international communication in virtual space.

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