

COMMUNICATIVE-MEDIATORY FUNCTION OF SECONDARY TEXTREVIEWS

Diana Movchan

Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine
d_movchan@i.ua

Galyna Chulanova

Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine
g_chulanova@ukr.net

Iryna Kobyakova

Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine
kobyakova@ukr.net

The present paper deals with English secondary TextReviews, an increasingly popular and non-trivial mode of computer-mediated communication, which provides popularisation of the book itself as well as the increase of motivation to reading. It is considered that TextReviews are oriented on pragmatically focused impact on the reader and perform communicative-mediatory function in society, creating the algorithm of behaviour of potential readers. Particular attention is focused on the role of a reader, whose task is to extract maximum of the author's thoughts, to grasp as much information as possible, to assess the merits of the book and finally to share emotions with potential readers. We have presented and comparatively analysed the linguistic means with the help of which authors of TextReviews manipulate potential readers. The study relies on such methods as textual analysis, contextual method, interaction analysis, and quantitative method. The results of this research show that audience-oriented type of texts is the most common. Spatio-temporal constraints of impact of TextReviews make their authors create a text in which elements of different levels of language, together with non-verbal components, are to convince the potential readers of the need to commit the actions programmed by the author of the TextReview, i.e. purchase of a book. The paper stipulates that TextReview becomes one of the main strategies of a new approach to the book publishing and book distribution nowadays.

Keywords: TextReview; reader; communicative-mediatory function; pragmatic orientation.

Introduction

In modern linguistic studies there is a significant interest in the communicative processes in a language and in the study of linguistic phenomena from the perspective of communicative linguistics, linguopragmatics, etc. The rapid development of means of communication, being one of the reasons for this growing interest, leads to the transformation of already existing speech genres. The genre of TextReviews in the Internet environment is associated with the formation and spread of aesthetic, cultural, and consumer values. At the same time, the development and transformation of Internet communication forms lead to the genre transformation of the review as a secondary text. This determines the topicality of our research. The purpose of the article is to determine the communicative specificity of secondary TextReviews posted on the Internet that offers fundamentally new conditions for communication, creating a new sphere of information exchange. To achieve the outlined goal we need to accomplish the following objectives: to analyse the scientific literature and to elaborate on the theoretical definition of a secondary TextReview, to analyse the communicative-mediatory potential of TextReviews, to identify means of pragmatic impact on the addressee and explore language means of its realisation, to clarify the status of the reader as the creator of a secondary TextReview.

The empiric material used for carrying out the given research is 1200 English TextReviews of book products, posted on the website amazon.com. The choice of this site is explained by the most complete representation of TextReviews of book production. The object of the research is secondary English Internet TextReviews of book production, and the subject is the means of realisation of communicative-mediatory function of TextReviews.

The main feature of a secondary text is semantic adequacy to the main content of the primary product, limited by a text of a smaller size (Grishechkina, 2004).

In our opinion, these secondary TextReviews are a type of texts-dialogues with the primary text. Accordingly, the communicative-mediatory function here is manifested not only in the transmission of the

information contained in the primary text, but also in the author's evaluation of its content. The presentation of information about the primary book is carried out according to the model:

TEXT-REVIEW = TOPIC OF BOOK + RATING + PROMOTION TO BUY.

Pribytkova (2015) considers the implementation of communicative and mediatory functions of secondary texts from the following point of view: "Properties of a secondary text are the determinacy of a pragmatic component, the implementation of its function determines the nature of informative and evaluative components and is exposed to the addressee for the purpose of a call to action" (p. 6).

Pervukhina (2012) holds a similar position, pointing out that common for the secondary text is "increment of information about the author's attitude to the source text. This may be cognitive and emotive information. For example, in reviews additional information including the evaluation of the source text is mandatory" (p. 42).

The information aspect of a relatively small volume of online TextReview is compensated by its non-linear hypertext structure. Using of hyperlinks as well as other non-verbal means (photos, drawings, video, etc.) in the structure of online TextReviews increases the volume of information provided to the reader. This eliminates the contradiction between the communicative need to submit as much information as possible about the book and the communicative obstacle in the form of a long text.

The tendency of development of the Internet space as the communicative environment for TextReviews functioning is its commercialization. The result is a convergence of TextReviews with advertising texts. Findings indicate a major division of TextReviews into topic-oriented, author-oriented, and audience-oriented (Vitranen, 2017). The latter type is the most common as their prevailing task is the influence on potential readers. The communicative-mediatory function of TextReviews relates to advertising text functions, such as the reader's motivation for buying or reading a book, the creating of a positive image of a book by means of its emotional evaluation.

Due to the implementation of the evaluating function in online TextReviews Pribytkova (2015) determines commercial and non-commercial reviews: "There are many large and small sites, where book lovers can order any book they like. These sites use electronic reviews as means of attracting and convincing potential readers and buyers. This review is akin to the expandable advertising. But there are also other sites, which are non-profit and are not directly related to the purchase of the book, where you can find a more objective judgment on modern book publishing, and where a reviewer evaluates the basic text, expresses his/her opinion. On such sites a reader can find a negative review of the book, which is quite impossible in the first form of reviews" (pp. 10-11). The main task of the reviewer in this case is to inform and evaluate, rather than impose to purchase the book. We will refer to such reviews as to non-profit ones.

In terms of our research, the division of online reviews into commercial and non-commercial ones means the predominance of one of the functions: advertising for commercial and communicative-mediatory for non-commercial reviews.

Functional differences of these kinds of reviews occur on levels of language: topical units in commercial reviews are relatively structured while non-commercial reviews are characterised by free composite structure; a more frequent usage of emotionally coloured language units in the texts of commercial reviews in comparison with non-commercial ones, etc.

However, we note that in the analysed material the differences between commercial and non-commercial reviews in the pragmatic aspect are insignificant. Editorial review, correlating with commercial review according to the considered classification, is in the relationship of complementarity with customer review. In such cases pragmatic customer review implementation consists in providing the independent evaluation of the book.

The evaluative factor is created with the help of combinations of certain words and their semantics which form a fixed pattern of information perception and an automatic response (Glinka, Usyk & Ilchuk, 2016, p. 95).

Evaluative judgments can be described as explicit and implicit (Gawronski, 2014). Explicit in the sense that their evaluative meaning is explicit in the observed response (e.g. authors of TextReviews explicitly report their attitude towards the book) and implicit in the sense that their evaluative meaning is implicit in the observed response (the author of TextReview "push" the potential readers to buy a book).

The location of both types of review on the same web page is used for the implementation of the general pragmatic strategy of forming the reader's positive image of the book.

Some researchers complement the above-considered set of features, which form the specifics of online TextReviews. For example, Govorunova (2014) examines reviews in the system of virtual communication genres and describes the main features differentiating the virtual form of implementation of the genre from other forms: "The main features of virtual communication are the following: an electronic signal as a channel

of communication; interactivity, time and space remoteness of the participants of communication; mediation; high perceptiveness; the presence of hypertext; chiefly status equality of participants; transmission of emotions using iconic symbols; specific computer ethics” (p. 44).

Thus, the communicative-mediatory function and the system of mediation and pragmatic orientations are implemented in the texts of online reviews comprehensively.

Method

To perform the analysis and implement the objectives of the present paper we used several methods. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of TextReviews. The important considerations in textual analysis include selecting the types of texts to be studied. Text Reviews were defined as secondary advertising texts and identified in the paradigm of small communicative units, which actualize both informative and communicative-mediatory functions. With the help of contextual method we analysed the mechanisms of influence on the recipient, taking into account not only the external, but also the internal structure of TextReviews. While studying the texts, we paid attention to the specific devices that help the author express the main ideas and arguments: the emotions to which the text appeals; expressive means; the primary texts to which the author of the TextReview refers. Interaction analysis was applied to describe the presupposed interaction between the author of the TextReview and potential readers. We focused on a number of characteristics including the analysis of particular words and sentence components; the purposes of utterances; the persuasive force of messages embedded within TextReviews. Quantitative method contributed to defining the text volume via counting the number of words in each TextReview and enabled us to come to certain generalised conclusions.

Results and discussion

Communicative specificity of the secondary TextReview is significantly formed by the web space, which serves as a communication medium, in which the text implements its mediatory function. Characteristic features of a review indicate tendencies of communication spheres in which these texts function. In particular, there are differences between the reviews that operate in traditional print form (they include a review as a genre of scientific communication, reviews, published in magazines, newspapers, brochures, located on the covers / endpapers of books and so on) and reviews on websites. Let us consider the basic parameters that determine the specificity of online reviews as a secondary text.

The genre of online reviews is different from that of printing genre in terms of the parameter text volume. Extralinguistic factors (the cost of an advertising word, the lack of time for perception of the text, the limitation of the printing space) form TextReviews as cut in form texts and maximum semantically rich, like small-format texts.

A typological feature of small-format texts is their visual brevity (Inozemtseva, 2013). Their volume on covers and flyleaves of books does not exceed 86 words, while on the Internet there is no limit for the volume of a text (Chulanova, 2014). The whole body of TextReviews can be conditionally divided into three groups: 1) short text covering TextReviews from 1 to 135 words, 2) middle text – from 136 to 270; and 3) prolonged text – from 271 to 450. The most productive are middle texts, which constitute 69.9% (839 texts) of the total corpus of TextReviews. The least productive are short TextReviews (12.8%, i.e. 154 texts). Mid-frequency are prolonged texts (17.3%, i.e. 208 texts). According to Pribytkova (2015), “this is due to the fact that a modern man lives in a world of information aggression and perceives small-format texts better. While reading them, people experience no fatigue or loss of concentration (p. 4). Thus, we can establish the relationship of small-format TextReview with the successful implementation of its pragmatic functions.

Changes in communicative environment entails transformation of the online reviews genre, changes in its pragmatic orientations, as well as its linguistic specificity. The model of the communicative situation, provided by TextsReviews looks like this:

AUTHOR OF THE PRIMARY TEXT → PRIMARY TEXT → AUTHOR OF THE TEXTREVIEW →
TEXTREVIEW → POTENTIAL READERS.

The authors of TextReviews (100%, i.e. 1200 texts) are readers who participate in evaluating a text. Such readers are helpful not only in revising the text under evaluation, but in planning and revising future text (Shriver, 1990, p. 25), i.e. TextReviews. 58 % (696 texts) of them sign their real names:

“Not a great book. Interesting premise though. The heavy use of the f-word by the married couple seemed to be unrealistic and unnecessary”. – Daniel Porter (Customer Reviews: Crouch B. “Pines. The Wayward Pines Series”).

Such reviews attract more trust among potential readers as a real name indicates that the author of the review is a real person who wants to share his point of view with others. 42% (504 texts) of reviews authors

prefer nicknames:

"I love Joe Mckinney books. In Mutated the action starts on the 1st page and just keeps going. I highly recommend read Dead City & Flesh eaters 1st. His books are written to be stand alone's but it is very helpful to the reader to read the other 2 books 1st" – Kim71321 (Customer Reviews: Menapace J. "Bad games").

The sequence of implementation of the functions in the text is also displayed in its compositional structure, in partitioning it into thematic blocks. Typically, information about the content of the book is the main part of the TextReview and evaluation and pragmatic functions are implemented in the introductory and concluding paragraphs. Let us consider a typical compositional structure of a TextReview:

"The single most resonant and carefully imagined book of Dick's career" – *New York Times*. *It's America in 1962. Slavery is legal once again. The few Jews who still survive hide under assumed names. In San Francisco, the I Ching is as common as the Yellow Pages. All because some twenty years earlier the United States lost a war – and is now occupied by Nazi Germany and Japan.*

This harrowing, Hugo Award-winning novel is the work that established Philip K. Dick as an innovator in science fiction while breaking the barrier between science fiction and the serious novel of ideas.

Winner of the Hugo Award" (Customer Reviews: Dick Ph. K. "The Man in the High Castle").

This text consists of four thematic blocks. The introduction of its content is close to the genre of annotation. Its function is to attract the reader's interest, motivate to reading the whole review. It can be reached by quoting the authoritative American newspaper *New York Times* with the source of citation and evaluative vocabulary (*most resonant, carefully imagined*) used in quotation. Such introduction is used by analogy with the advertising texts and implements pragmatic orientation in communicative aspect.

The information block gives the summary of the plot of the book. Evaluating information in this section is missing and the reader has the opportunity to relate information about the book with his own reading preferences.

In the third paragraph, the informational component prevails. Pragmatic function is implemented through the selection of information, which is given in this block (data about literary awards of the author of the book), as well as the use of lexemes with evaluating semantics (*innovator, breaking the barrier*).

The final block duplicates information displayed in the third block. It has an expressive pragmatic orientation. This block is organised according to the principle of "edge effect", which is widespread in advertising: the greatest efficiency in the implementation of pragmatic orientations is in the first and the final parts of the text.

Implementation of communicative-mediatory function, as well as pragmatic orientation in TextReviews, is primarily associated with the selection of linguistic means, which are most suitable for the implementation of communicative goals. In this aspect, researchers traditionally consider lexical and grammatical means.

Lexical means of a language are the key in evaluation of the source text by the author of the TextReview. According to Arnold (2002), "the word evaluation has a component value of meaning if it expresses a positive or negative judgment about what it calls, namely approval or disapproval" (p. 81).

The evaluation function is mainly performed by the adjectives:

"A charming, imaginative, magical confection of a novel... A glorious debut, a book of wonderful comic pleasures and dizzying imaginative flights" (Customer Reviews: Rowling J. K. "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone"); (cf. **charming** – "very pleasing or attractive" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 54); **imaginative** – "containing new and interesting ideas" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 127); **magical** – "very enjoyable, exciting or romantic, in a strange or special way" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 357); **glorious** – "having or deserving great fame, praise, and honour" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 85); **wonderful** – "making you admire someone or something very much" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 963).

The evaluative semantics of adjectives is enhanced by using the grammatical forms of the superlative degree of comparison:

"In the most well-written books you get of a sense of what the characters look like and follow them throughout the book" (Customer Reviews: Doerr A. "All the Light We Cannot See").

A similar function of positive evaluation in TextReviews are also implemented by nouns:

"This is a book you read for the beauty of Doerr's writing" (Customer Reviews: Doerr A. "All the Light We Cannot See"); (cf. **beauty** – "a quality that people, places, or things have that makes them very attractive to look at" (Soanes, Hawker, & Elliott, 2006, p. 29).

It is worth noting that such explicit means of expression of evaluation have certain limitations in the TextReviews. Frequent use of these means with the purpose of advertising the book production creates the reader's sense of compulsion and as a result a negative attitude to the original text. Therefore, when using language means, it is important to consider the context. Thus, due to the above mentioned, nouns and

adjectives with an evident evaluative semantics are rarely used in editorial reviews. However, their use in texts of customer review may contribute to the formation of reader's positive attitude to the source text, since such language means are perceived as an organic element of spontaneous writing, examples of which are the readers' feedback.

Most impressively, such function is implemented by the imperative mood of the verbs:

*"I look forward to read new books from Crowe. **Come and join** the fan club!"* (Customer Reviews: Whitworth M. "Bethlehem Road").

The use of the imperative mood of verbs gives the imperative character to the text. According to researchers, frequent use of this grammatical form in the advertising text is undesirable because it can form a reader's negative attitude to the object referred to in the text. Therefore, grammatical means which implement the pragmatic strategy of recommendations implicitly rather than emphatically are frequently used in TextReviews.

Thus, modal verbs are often used with such a communicative purpose. For example, the modal verb *must* is semantically close to the imperative verb forms, but it is less categorical:

*"It completes the trilogy of the author's essential works. A **must** read for Dickheads or for anyone who considers himself a serious fan of science fiction"* (Customer Reviews: Dick Ph. K. "The Man in the High Castle").

The use of the verbs *may*, *can* etc. in reviews gives the nature of non-categorical recommendations to the texts and contributes to the formation of readers' positive attitude to the advertised object:

*"By purchasing a book, you **can** help HONY continue to grow in a way that remains focused on telling people's stories – and nothing else"* (Customer Reviews: Stanton B. "Humans of New York").

The grammatical category of future tense of verbs is used for implementation of pragmatic orientation of TextReviews. The researchers relate this grammatical category to the indirect means of imperative expression. The author of the review makes a conclusion for the recipient:

*"If you identify yourself as a nerd, geek, gamer, 1980s history buff, a fan of science, fantasy, or dystopian fiction, otaku, 1980s movie fan, romantic, someone who grew up in the 1980s, or a human with emotions – you **will enjoy** Ready Player One"* (Customer Reviews: Cline E. "Ready Player One").

A similar role in the implementation of pragmatic orientation also belongs to different shapes of expressive syntax. The structure of TextReviews is characterised by frequent usage of interrogative sentences. They aim at establishing a kind of a dialogue with the reader, thus attracting his/her attention. The characteristic rhetorical device is the fact that the author himself/herself gives the answer to this question:

*"**Does the world need yet another novel about WWII?** It does when the novel is as inventive and beautiful as this one by Anthony Doerr"* (Customer Reviews: Doerr A. "All the Light We Cannot See").

Conclusions

Thus, the communicative-mediatory function and the system of pragmatic orientation are used in TextReviews in an integrated manner. The sequence of implementation of these functions is determined by the sequence of thematic blocks that form the text. In general, the composite structure of the text is subject to the advertising purposes: the evaluative information focuses on the principle of "edge effect" in the introductory and concluding parts. The main part of the review is the information section that displays the main characteristics of the source text.

TextReviews may become one of the main strategies of a new approach to the book publishing and book distribution. Nowadays a book in the anthropological sense is not only the author's creativity but the result of creative work of the whole group of people – publishers, booksellers, reviewers, critics and readers who having read a fiction book are hurrying to share their emotions with its potential readers. The importance of TextReviews is determined by the fact that while choosing a new book, a potential reader tries to "peek" into the book before buying it with the aim of finding out whether the work will meet his/her expectations. TextReviews will help potential readers to do it. The results of the research suggest that further comparative study of different kinds of TextReviews (for example, aimed at different target audiences) will be of high priority.

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