

ONTOLOGICAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH MAGICAL DISCOURSE

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Summary

The given research is carried out within the framework of modern discourse analysis. The aim of the work is to highlight the ontological features of the English magical discourse. The material of the study was specialized websites presented on the Internet. The work uses such research methods as descriptive and contextual-interpretative. Magic discourse is a part of occult discourse which can be considered in three aspects: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. There are numerous web pages dedicated to various theoretical and applied aspects of magic on the Internet. The target audience is both professionals engaged in magic, and the general public of readers who, with the help of the instructions, can perform a certain ritual, cast a spell, etc. on their own. They are divided into thematic blocks, for example, *witchcraft*, *crystals*, *divination*, *tarot*, which mostly have a manipulative nature and are built according to the principle of typical instructional texts on the Internet using lexical units with positive connotations: *best*, *peace*, *love*, *joy*, *great*. Spells presented on the site are built on different stylistic devices that create the necessary atmosphere.

Keywords: communication, creolized text, discourse analysis, semiotics, occultism.

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1. Introduction

Since ancient times, mankind has been trying to understand the meaning of the surrounding world. This applies to both nature, products of human activity, and words, facial expressions, gestures. However, the most mysterious phenomenon, which eminent philosophers, psychologists and linguists have tried to unravel for thousands of years, is human consciousness. It is undeniable that magic, like religion, is a product of human consciousness. Human intellectual activity has always been distinguished by creativity, with its help the most elusive and incomprehensible phenomena found their explanation. Thus, people were led to a very detailed conceptualization followed by verbalization of thoughts, with the help of which they tried to describe their so-called "sixth sense" – feelings, intuition, premonitions, fears associated with insufficient knowledge about themselves and the surrounding world. People replaced them with the fiction of magic and charms, which supposedly can be used to explain poorly understood processes and phenomena (*Goncharova, 2012: 167*).

The given research is carried out within the framework of modern discourse analysis, the relevant tasks of which are the study of social, textual and psychological contextualization of discourse, its samples and genres with a certain set of variables (social norms, roles, statuses of communicators, their conventions, strategies, indicators of interactivity and effectiveness of communication); study of the regularities of communicators' achievement of communicative cooperation or the factors causing communicative conflict, ways of implementing communicative rivalry; description of institutional forms and types of discourses, etc. The key problems of discourse analysis remain the structure and stratification of discourse, establishing

its features, units, categories, and types; elucidating ways of organizing various discursive invariants, developing methods and procedures for analyzing and describing discourses, etc. (Selivanova, 2008: 626-627).

Magical discourse is anthropocentric in its nature: it is realized by humans and at the same time directed at them (Malinovskiy, 1996: 515), which emphasizes the relevance of the proposed study.

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2. Theoretical premises of the investigation

In modern humanitarian studies, discourse is both an object and a method of analysis that combines sociocultural, cognitive, and pragmatic approaches to all types of language use. It appears as a kind of diagnostic tool both in relation to language (as it shows the possibility of specialization of linguistic means in a certain area in relation to a complex of parameters), and to society, to various manifestations of socio-cultural states of society, as well as to its mental attitudes and types of social consciousness (Novozhenova, 2016).

By the term "discourse" we understand the communication of people from the positions of their belonging to one or another social group or in relation to one or another typical speech situation (Martyniuk, 2011). Numerous studies focus their attention on the following types of discursive activity of a person as a member of society: political, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, scientific, stage and mass-information types of institutional discourse. It should be noted that institutional discourse is historically changeable: when a social institution disappears as a special cultural system and, accordingly, the discourse characteristic of the disappearing institution dissolves into close, adjacent types of discourse as a holistic type of communication (Karasik, 2016: 21).

In the modern communicative space, formed by the communicative connections of people, groups, various institutions, the interaction of various types of discourse, most of human communication takes place with the help of electronic communication. This type of communication consists of three participants: the user, the computer, the Internet (or any virtual network), which are connected by virtual discourse or Internet discourse (Zagoruyko, 2012).

The main functions of Internet discourse, in which its pragmatic potential lies, can be reduced to the following: informative, communicative, representative, attractive, persuasive, suggestive, manipulative. In oral communication, along with linguistic means of communication, non-verbal means of communication are also used. Since Internet communication is more often carried out in written (printed) form, various signs (italics, font, frame highlighting, etc.) are most often used in Internet discourse. Recently, there has been a rapid movement from exclusively printed texts to texts that include video and audio elements. We can also talk about textual insertions that exist due to the development of creolized texts. They include actual literal, visual and visual-auditory components. Creolized texts have additions of three types: pictures, audio and video inserts (Rusanov, 2016).

3. English magical discourse as part of occult discourse

Today, discourse is the subject of many branches of scientific knowledge: philosophical, psychological, linguistic, cultural, etc., which refers to the relevant interdisciplinary studies. In this work, we use the term "magical discourse" as a variant of "occult discourse." We use the latter to denote the general direction of discourse studies, which deals with the peculiarities of communication in various mystical practices, magic, astrology, etc., that is, all directions of institutional activity that go beyond science and official religion. Let's turn to the dictionary definitions of the corresponding nominations in modern lexicographic sources of the English language:

"Occult sciences – those sciences of the Middle Ages which related to the supposed action or influence of occult qualities, or supernatural powers, such as alchemy, magic, necromancy, and astrology" (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary); *"Occult sciences alchemy, astrology, magic, etc"* (The free dictionary).

As we can see, they fix a certain structural composition of occult sciences. So, we conclude that the occult discourse contains such basic genres as *astrological, magical, and alchemical*.

The specified discursive formations, with all their diversity and differences, can be united by such type of mental attitude as irrationality. Irrational consciousness and world view presupposes the existence of spheres and concepts inaccessible to the mind and comprehended only through intuition, feeling, instinct, revelation, faith, insight. It strives to exclude the rational, logical reality from the process of understanding and explaining many events and facts of the surrounding world; it is dominated by the desire for an intuitive, religious, mystical way of understanding reality. "Irrational is something that cannot be grasped by conceptual thinking... Irrationality is an appeal to non-logical methods of thinking" (*Surkov, 2012: 152*).

The presented paper proposes consideration of occult discourse in three aspects: ontological (what is occult discourse: genre, lexical, stylistic, and pragmatic features of occult discourse), epistemological (what society knows about occult discourse: hyperconcept OCCULTISM and its component concepts ALCHEMY, ASTROLOGY, MAGIC) and axiological (what is the attitude of the society to occult discourse and what value orientations are actualized in it: evaluative characteristics of occultism in English speech). In our opinion, such a multifaceted analysis of language and speech manifestations of the phenomenon of occultism will contribute to a comprehensive elucidation of its own characteristics and its perception by the English-speaking society.

4. Lingual and structural peculiarities of English magical discourse

Magic is the ability of people to forcibly change reality in the necessary direction with the help of thought and will. But in itself the thought of desired events is worth little in our physical world, as the authors of the Book of Magic point out. Only when our desires are supported by real action, their implementation becomes possible. Therefore, in everyday life, in order to have any things, profit, it is necessary to do certain actions (Book of magic).

Phenomena related to magic include forms of mysticism, medicine, paganism, sorcery, shamanism, voodoo, and various superstitions. Sometimes magic is divided into "high" magic of the intellectual elite, bordering on science, and "low" magic of common folk practices. A distinction is also made between "black" magic, which is used for evil purposes, and "white" magic, which is allegedly used for good purposes. Although these boundaries are often blurred,

magical practices have a sense of "otherness" due to the supernatural power believed to be transmitted through the practitioner, who is a marginalized or stigmatized figure in some societies and central in others (Magic).

Magical discourse is distinguished on the basis of system-forming features: its goals and participants. Communication takes place within the given framework of status-role relations. The purpose of magical discourse is to implement the basic strategies of warning, correction, and protection. The participants are: the client is a person who asks for help and the agent is a carrier of secret knowledge, an intermediary who communicates between the client and supernatural forces. The fundamental inequality of communication participants is specifically demonstrated by the appearance of the agent, his behavior, the presence of symbolic attributes of the magical process, and the specific way of pronouncing magical texts (*Goncharova, 2012: 168*).

Magical discourse implements a protective function related to exorcism and cleansing magic, and is aimed at neutralizing household phobias (fear of illness, failure, mystical negative influence of others on the fate of a person) with the help of magical semiotics (charms, amulets, talismans, tools, etc.); magical verbiage (texts – incantations, spells, omens, etc., describing the mechanism of human influence on the surrounding world in order to protect against its negative influence); mystical artifacts (dummies, wax figure, bell, candle, magic recipe, brew, broth, needle, thread, filter, potion, jar, moly, wand, wand, magic ring, magic mirror), which are attributed suggestive power within the protective magical ritual.

In the modern Internet space, there are numerous web pages dedicated to various theoretical and applied aspects of magic. The target audience is both professionals engaged in magic, and the general public of readers who, with the help of the "instructions", can perform a certain ritual, cast a spell, etc. on their own. Let's consider the structural and linguistic features of these web pages using the *Welldivined* site as an example. The website is divided into four thematic blocks: *witchcraft, crystals, divination, tarot*.

Each of these blocks, in turn, is also divided into parts, for example:

1. *Witchcraft For Beginners*
2. *The Sabbats*
3. *Spells*
4. *Candle Magic*
5. *Magical Herbs*
6. *Magic Symbols & Sigils*

The preface notes that in today's world, witchcraft begins differently for everyone. Immersion in this magical craft can be motivated by anything related to it – love of nature, animals, yoga, wisdom and much more. It doesn't matter where anyone came from or how they started. A person is free to practice different styles of sorcery, depending on what they like:

"This guide will help you understand the basics of witchcraft and give you some fundamental information that you can always come back to when you're feeling like advancing your understanding of your craft" (Welldivined).

It should be noted that this guide to the world of sorcery is quite manipulative in nature and is built on the principle of typical instructional texts on the Internet. It offers five easy steps for those new to magic:

"So if you're brand new to this, a great starting place is to take the following 5 steps into your mind and dwell on them often" (Welldivined).

At the same time, it is emphasized in every possible way that a person will be able to find inner harmony by engaging in various practices, emphasizing the positive aspect of this activity:

"Being a witch is about being your best self no matter what path you choose to advance with. There is no wrong or right path, but rather a path where you find peace, love, and joy, or otherwise" (Welldivened).

As you can see, the above descriptions are dominated by vocabulary with a positive connotation: *best, peace, love, joy, great*.

In the section devoted to the magical function of crystals, the positive influence of this magical attribute is also emphasized in every way:

"Crystals are a fantastic way to manifest our spiritual desires into the physical world. When we infuse them with our desires, hopes, dreams and intentions, they become a powerful symbol of that intention to improve our lives and selves. If you're new to crystals, this guide will help you find the information you need to know to get started using crystals. If you have like a hundred crystals already, but you need some new information and insight, this guide will help you expand your knowledge and understanding. Enjoy!" (Welldived).

Let's consider the linguistic features of the English spells presented on this resource. They are also structured by subject:

1. Protection Spells
2. Love Spells
3. Healing Spells
4. Money Spells
5. Banishing Spells
6. Full Moon Spells
7. New Moon Spells
8. Binding Spells

It is also noted that protection from negative energies, harmful spirits that want to harm us, is vital to the magical craft. You can protect yourself spiritually, emotionally, and physically with spells that target the negative thoughts, feelings, and intentions of others. In one of the examples, not only the spell itself is given, but also the magical attributes that are necessary for it:

What You'll Need

1. Coarse sea salt
2. Five tea lights
3. One black taper candle
4. One taper candle holder

Below is a step-by-step detailed instruction on what to do with these attributes and the actual spell text:

"Banish the harmful and all the bad, Keep out the anger and the sad. Ancestors, Angels, and Spirit Guides, Guard me through my daily strides. Against all ill thoughts, hex, and curse, A protective shield shall disperse. As I do will it, so mote it be!" (Welldived).

The spell is built on the stylistic devices of assonance and parallel constructions that create the rhythm of the utterance. The use of the ritual archaic phrase *so mote it be* gives the spell a mystical coloring and creates the necessary atmosphere.

It should also be noted that the analyzed website is a creolized type of discourse, as it contains photos and video materials that illustrate or duplicate textual information (for example, there is a video instruction of the ritual analyzed above).

5. Conclusions

In this study, "magical discourse" is considered as a variety of "occult discourse". The latter denotes the general direction of discourse studies, which investigates the peculiarities of communication in various mystical practices, magic, astrology, etc., that is, all directions of institutional activity that go beyond science and official religion. Magical discourse is considered by us from the standpoint of ontological characteristics within the Internet discourse as a whole. The main functions of Internet discourse, in which its pragmatic potential lies, can be reduced to the following: informative, communicative, representative, attractive, persuasive, suggestive, manipulative. Recently, there has been a rapid movement from exclusively printed texts to texts that include video and audio elements. In the modern Internet space, there are numerous web pages dedicated to various theoretical and applied aspects of magic. The target audience is both professionals engaged in magic, and the general public of readers who, with the help of the "instructions", can perform a certain ritual, cast a spell, etc. on their own. They are divided into thematic blocks, for example, *witchcraft, crystals, divination, tarot*, which mostly have a manipulative nature and are built according to the principle of typical instructional texts on the Internet using lexical units with positive connotations: *best, peace, love, joy, great*. Spells presented on the site are built on the stylistic devices of assonance and parallel constructions that create a rhythm of speech. The usage of the ritual archaic phrase *so mote it be* gives the spell a mystical color and creates the necessary atmosphere.

We see the prospect of further research in the study of lexical and stylistic features of various genres of English magical discourse.

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