

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2019.19.07>

UDC: 81'1[82-1/-9+130.2]

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THE INTERNET-APHORISMS AS SIMULACRUM AND A PRECEDENT GENRE

Bibliographic Description:

Mashkina, O. M. (2019). The Internet-aphorisms as simulacrum and a precedent genre. *Scientific Journal of National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. Series 9. Current Trends in Language Development*, 19. 109–117. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2019.19.07>

Abstract

Internet aphorisms are considered as unique phenomena of virtual communication. The definition of the Internet aphorism, which is understood as a kind of small-format text that is characteristic of modern media. It is focused on the distinction between aphorisms and online aphorisms. It is specified that the distinctive features of the Internet aphorism are due to their interrelation with the cultural and value spheres of a man, and, as a consequence, its national marking, speed and quantity of its appearance, which indicates both the temporary nature of this genre form and the dynamic of its life cycle.

It is commented on the question of the authorship of these entities, which is in opposition to author specified – author unknown. It has been found that aphorism on the Internet is created without a linguistic context, but always functions as part of cultural, social and individual contexts. Internet aphorism, which is created, perceived and widespread by people, reflects their views and mentality, and can be regarded as an expression of that part of the philosophical system that is always bound to the individual value system of man.

The Internet aphorism is a polycode or creolised text that differs significantly from the aphorism genre. It is also suggested to consider the Internet aphorism as a simulacrum and a precedent genre. Internet aphorism as a precedent genre correlates with an aphorism in form, but its content lacks intellectual depth. At the same time, it is a simulacrum because it is built on the asymmetry between the expression plane and the content plane. In addition, the Internet aphorisms are differentiated according to its gender specificity.

As a conclusion, it is stated that the Internet aphorisms are a new independent phenomenon of virtual communication with their unique characteristics and inter-genre specificity of simulacrum and precedent text.

Keywords: *Internet aphorism, simulacrum, precedent genre, virtual communication.*

1. Introduction.

In the accelerating pace of life in modern society, the tendency toward the realization of the language economy principle is intensifying, which in turn contributes to the popularity of small-format texts, which are increasingly attracting the attention of linguists. Developing of technologies in the modern world determined appearing of new discourse types, what in its turn had an impact on the conventional genre system in particular thorough understanding of the problem of small seized-texts, their genre status and are those to be solved. And although it is referring to an ancient genre form, the study of which has a long tradition in both native and foreign linguistics, taking into account the technological progress and the appearing of the World Wide Web, the need of understanding especially popular nowadays small format genre forms opens up great opportunities for linguists to research. As the author of *A theory of the aphorism* Hui mentions: “In our short-attention-span age of tweets, memes, and GIFs, the aphorism is the most enduring microform of all. For all the ubiquity of the aphoristic form as a medium of communication and method of thinking – or precisely because of its pervasive presence – the genre has escaped sustained critical attention.” (Hui, 2019: 21).

2. Aim.

The aim of the article is to investigate the internet aphorism as a unique virtual simulacra genre in the context of the theory of precedence as a part of modern philosophical system.

Achieving this aim involves solving the following **objectives**:

- to outline the characteristic features of the genre of aphorism;
- to consider Internet-aphorism as a precedent genre;
- to highlight the characteristics of Internet-aphorism as a simulacrum of the genre of aphorism;
- to identify the features of Internet-aphorism and a unique phenomenon in the modern space of the Internet.

3. Distinctive features of the Internet-aphorism.

Internet-aphorism is a special kind of small format text, peculiar modern mass media: “The tiny aphorism is also one of the oldest and smallest literary genres on earth” (Hui, 2019: 7). Dmitrieva defines aphorism as “an author’s statement, expressed in a concise, honed graceful form, having the character of an independent utterance, the main characteristics of which are textual autosemanticism and depth of meaning” (Dmitrieva, 1997: 43). Geary mentions such main features of the aphorism as its brevity, personal character, definitive character, philosophical character, and it “must have a twist” (cited in: Cosmin, 22–68).

Scholars emphasise the *generalising role* of the aphorism: “aphoristic expression generalizes and typifies the diverse manifestations of personal and social life” (Bagapov, Gasheva, 2016: 59). Generality, as a distinguishing feature of the aphorism, is also noted by Dmitrieva (Dmitrieva, 1997: 43). According to Boychenko, “aphorisms in a brief original form express the value orientations of an individual, which, being shared, become a reflection of the value orientations of society” (Boychenko, 2010: 105).

3.1. Relationship with a context and the authorship problem.

An important characteristic of the aphorism is its relationship with a context. By some researchers the aphorism is regarded as an independent from a context (G. S. Morson (Marco A. Angel Lara, 2011: 35)), another draw attention to its “contextual nature” (Băiaș, 2015: 68), by the other it is stated the existence of so-called “aphoristic context” bound to the

source of the aphorism (Skornyakova, 2015), according to the point of view of Marco A. Angel Lara: “for aphoristic texts, isolation from immediate linguistic surroundings functions as the appropriate context to trigger a generic reading” (Marco A. Angel Lara, 2011: 35). This is especially true for an Internet aphoristic text, which is produced without a linguistic context, but always functions as a part of cultural, social and individual contexts. More importantly the creating of the aphorism is very often limited by a frame of a certain “infosocial bulb” (Karelov): it is created and widespread in a certain internet group, represented by a social group.

According to its relationship with a context it is distinguished *case-based aphorisms* (“they are actualized in speech outside their author’s context, that is, they are reproduced (in the broadest sense, both as a mass and as an individual-verbal quotation of someone else’s speech” (Ivanov, 2016: 94) and *unprecedented* (“made in a concrete speech act to express a particular generalized and complete thought through a free combination of words and their lexical meanings according to the syntactic models existing in the language” (Ivanov, 2016: 94).

One of the controversial questions about the aphorism is obligatory author availability (Masalska, 2013: 73). According to some researchers, the aphorism “goes back to a certain literary source, has an author” (Dmitrieva, 1997: 44), “have a definite, well-known author” (Boychenko, 2010: 105), “originally characterized by the presence of the author” (Jakovleva, 2010: 824). The controversy of the form is also controversial (Masalska, 2013: 73). Scholars agree on the following characteristics of the aphorism: “conciseness, generalization, high independence from the context, sophistication and high artistry of form” (Masalska, 2013: 74).

3.2. Internet aphorism as part of a value-cultural system.

Internet aphorism being created, perceived and widespread by people reflect their views and mentality: “Aphorisms in a brief original form express the value orientations of an individual personality, which, being shared, become a reflection of the value orientations of society” (Boychenko, 2010: 105), aphorism as an expression of the part of the philosophical system is always been juxtaposed with an individual value system of a person perceiving it: “in the process of aphoristic expression perception, the degree of its truth for a specific individual is established” (Jakovleva, 2010: 822). Khairy and Said point out that aphorism aims is to “make a point or illustrate a commonly held belief” (Khairy, Said, 2012: 249).

For the Internet aphorism is also true that their amount being created every day is impressive. There exists a huge number of websites, “specialised” on so-called ‘clever thoughts’. Most of them have the same ‘wisdom’ or ‘thoughts’ in its name. Common comprehension of such a phenomenon as the production and consumption of aphorisms has led to the emergence of such concepts as “pseudo-wisdom”, “bumper stick wisdom” etc. Modern version of the aphoristic genre demonstrates a kind of devaluation of meaning, which Baudrillard associates with the activities of modern media, emphasizing that “the loss of meaning is directly related to the corrupting, horrendous impact of information, media and mass media” (Baudrillard, 2013: 111). Modern rapidly growing amount of the Internet-aphorisms are similar to the increasing flow of information in which it is difficult to examine the details, and even more to remember them: “Everywhere information is aimed at producing an accelerated circulation of meaning, surplus value of meaning, identical economic value, arising from accelerated turnover of capital” (Baudrillard, 2013: 111). This leads to a kind of hollowing-out of the genre. When using the aphoristic form for expressing of the so-called “folk philosophy”, the genre is devalued; Internet-aphorism becomes a kind of simulacrum of aphorism. There is a whole series of sites devoted to such aphoristic forms

that produce such statements, and at the same time the army of consumers of this product is growing. Internet aphorisms are rapidly appearing and also quickly forgotten.

Each person with an access to the Internet could become an author of the aphorism and of even greater importance is the fact that he / she has a possibility to spread it, which means, excluding variables, the possibility of becoming a precedent often cited text for each aphorism. As linguists mention, “at the present stage of development of human society, any person can become a source of precedent phenomena” (Zolotarev, 2016: 42), so creating and spreading of aphorisms nowadays is characterized by the wide accessibility and the high speed of spread: “modern realities, characterized by a rapid change of information, its rapid spread and rapid “forgetting”, are reflected in the process of formation of precedent phenomena” (Zolotarev, 2016: 42).

A. Hui suggests a theory, which states interconnection of the aphorism and philosophy, stating that “at least in Chinese and European cultures, the aphorism’s affordance developed alongside philosophy, either in anticipation of it, in an antagonism with it, or in its aftermath. As such, it oscillates between the fragment and the system” (Hui, 2019: 7), emphasizing the special place of the aphorism in fragmentary systemic relationships: “aphorism is a dialectical play between fragments and systems” (Ibid.: 12), specifying that “the aphorism is against the architectonic systems of philosophy” (Ibid.: 14). Marco A. Angel Lara (2011) points out that however a lot of researchers regard a philosophical feature of aphorisms as one of the main, “the philosophical status of the genre is not an ontological fact, but rather an assumption of a group of users of the aphoristic communication, i. e. cultural practice” (p. 34). Sites of small-format Internet texts, aphorisms, and others often have a certain discordant philosophical system that claims integrity, create it, and the spreading of the texts of these sites contributes to its distribution.

Internet-aphorism has a symbolic nature, which ensures compliance of their communicative function. As Eleanor Nevins (2008) points out, “mass media texts, to the extent that they form a stock of recognizable semiotic forms that people ostensibly hold in common, provide the means through which people perform relationships to larger communities in everyday talk” (p. 2). Posting Internet-aphorisms and reacting to them by putting likes and adding comments creates a mass of communicative situations, which allows us to talk about the communicative function of Internet aphorism, its interactive nature. The possibilities of spreading Internet aphorism in the network make it possible to disseminate and share system of views.

It is worth noting that the aphorism has a great influential potential: “Due to its memorable nature, the aphorism is frequently quoted when the situation “requires it”. The condensed definition is one of the forms chosen for persuasion by the media, but also by the propaganda” (Băiaș, 2015: 2268). From this point of view, Internet aphorism, which speed of spreading and frequency of quotation is immense, can have a huge impact on people. The aphorism “affects consciousness with an original formulation of thought and does not prove, does not argue a judgment” (Boychenko, 2010: 105).

The Internet-aphorism functions both as fragment of a wide cultural context: “the fragment’s incompleteness expresses an impossible desire for endless signification. In this sense the fragment is both a philological contingency of history as well as a philosophical exigency of the system” (Hui, 2019: 14) and an independent text.

It is worth noting also the gender specificity of sites of Internet aphoristic units – for example, Facebook pages, “specializing” in producing wisdom aphorisms can have some “male” / “female” in its name. For example, at least five sites with the name “Мужские мысли”, two named “Женский Клуб”, pages named “Мужской разговор”, “Мужской

клуб”, “Женский дневник”, “Я – ЖЕНЩИНА (женский мир)” etc. were found in the Russian-language Facebook segment.

3.3. The precedent nature of the Internet aphorism.

The genre of the Internet-aphorism cannot be entirely equated to classical genre of the aphorism as it is understood in literary studies, Internet-aphorism functions as a precedent genre. Research on the problem of **precedence** has a long tradition. This phenomenon, having appeared in the studies of Karaulov, Krasnykh, Gudkov, has been widely observed within the framework of the theory of precedence. Precedent genre can be defined as “a speech genre that has value significance for a particular cultural group” (Proskurina, 2004: 5). For achieving of a pragmatic effect genres can be transformed in such ways as: changing the communicative goal of the genre, changing the typical recipient, or changing the content of the genre. (Proskurina, 2004: 5). For a precedent genre of aphorism most characteristic change is a changing the content of the genre: substitution of philosophical meaning with pseudophilosophical statements, truisms, etc. Expanding of the recipients audience and the viral spread of information on the Internet changes the ‘typical recipient’ of the aphoristic genre: any person with Internet access can become one, the decrease in the targeting of texts in this genre significantly changes the characteristics of their perception. It is worth mentioning that “the conditions for the formation of precedent phenomena appear to be different in different historical epochs. The intensity of the process of accumulation and consolidation of precedent phenomena ... is directly related to the process of information exchange between people” (Zolotarev, 2016: 41).

Allen notices that intertextuality relates not only the literary arts: “Despite the common-sense association between literature and the word “text”, we need only remember the connection between the early articulations of intrertextual theory and the development of Saussure’s notions concerning semiology to make intertextuality’s use in studies of non-literary art forms understandable” (Allen, 2000: 174). In this understanding intertextuality coincides the precedence. The perception of the internet-aphorism is provided by the presence of a common intertextual thesaurus acquired in the process of personality inculturation (Nosova, 2018: 12–14), as far as “the usage of the precedent phenomenon in speech activates a stable associative connection in the consciousness of the addressee, providing an adequate comprehension of the message” (Nosova, 2018: 16).

Artemjeva points out sign nature of the precedent phenomenon, which has subsequently expression plane and content plane (Artemeva, 2016: 29). The expression plane of the Internet-aphorism therefore is not in conformity with its content plane. Internet-aphorism copies the form of the aphoristic genre, pretending to have the same profundity, its philosophical element, and what is more its trustworthiness, “ring of authority”, what approximates it with a concept of simulacrum. Simulacrum could be defined as a “a sign that has its own being, creates its own reality, and, in fact, brings the very idea of a sign to absurdity, to elimination” (Yemelin, 2016: 90), that is real as something which appears to have a referent, it is real in its virtual reality (Yemelin, 2016: 90), “the simulacrum gains its virtual being, in relation to which our reality becomes constitutive, generating. But in its reality, which we perceive as virtual, he becomes a referent, a model, only without an image” (Yemelin, 2016: 90). According to Baudrillard, “the simulation [...] is wedded to the idea of the utopia of the principle of equivalence, proceeds from the radical negation of the sign as value, proceeds from the sign as reversion and the destruction of any reference” (Baudrillard, 2013: 22). Yemelin states that “simulacrum goes beyond opposition original – copy” (Yemelin, 2016: 88). Gubanov mentions that “Simulacrum is not a consequence of degradation-devaluation of symbols, symbolic. It is not post-symbolic and not quasi-

symbolic, it is essentially different, absorbing the symbolic and deconstructing, draining it” (Gubanov, 2012: 79). Internet-aphorism could be considered not the simple copy of aphorism in its literary meaning, but a copy and a symbol of modern philosophical and value system of modern people at the same time.

One of the most important feature of the genre of the Internet-aphorism is its need of attention, let us agree with Yemelin, that “attention is blood and veins of the simulacrum” (Yemelin, 2016: 92), producing a huge amount of an aphoristic texts content on the Internet today is a way of gripping and holding the attention of the audience. The genre of the Internet-aphorism could be considered as a part of the vast simulation process, as far as a simulation today becomes total and appears to be a stigma of modern society (Yemelin, 2016: 92).

Internet-aphorism is nearly always a polycode or creolized text, that is, “text that includes components of two or more sign systems” (Michurin, 2014: 38), since it often includes pictures or a kind of background, which differs its way of perception from a ‘classical’ aphorism. It is worth stipulating that aphorisms themselves are also often published on the Internet, becoming a polycode text.

In addition, special reference must be made to fake aphorisms, meaning the text attributed to the famous author, which he / she did not write / tell. For example, the following text was multiple times published on the Internet as a quote of Ray Bradbury, famous American writer:

Август надо цедить медленно, как грушевый ликер.

Наливать в маленькую рюмочку, отхлебывать по капельке, а сквозь рюмочку смотреть на солнце. Августовские ночи надо разбавлять огоньками свечей, молоком, налитым в плошку для домового, мурлыканьем кота и стрекотом кузнечиков. Августовские дни надо закладывать меж страниц книг, как закладки, чтобы потом вытряхивать их жар в промозглom ноябре достав эту книгу с полки. И заклинаю вас, ну не кричите вы на всех углах “ой, вот и август, вот и осень”. Ну куда вы торопитесь? Остановите часы. Пейте по капле.

Автор: Рэй Брэдбери (Cont).

In one respect, ascribing the text of unknown or not very famous author to a prominent personality raises its credibility and the status of the aphorism, lets this simulacrum functioning in the informational space as something more serious, lets an unknown person to publish and widespread his / her text under the guise of a famous name, on another note, it creates the fake reality: simulacrum of the author-reader relationship. It should be noted that the existence of such simulations does not go unnoticed, fakes generate dispelling, one of the ways to comprehend “simulacrum of wisdom” becomes humour, which demonstrates such names as “bumper stick wisdom”, “pseudoscience” and humorous:

Главная проблема цитат в интернете в том, что люди сразу верят в их подлинность.

Цитаты замечательных людей. На самом деле нет (wisnotw).

Thuswise, for the Internet-aphorism is specific not only absence of the author, but also fake author – a famous person, whose authority can increase an influential potential of the aphorism.

4. Conclusions.

Based on the results stated earlier, the following **conclusions** have been drawn. The genre of aphorism is characterized by the brevity, definitive character and generalizing role, it should have a twist. The question of the authorship, while it’s a controversial issue, lies within the opposition “author indicated-author unknown”, whereas in contrast for the

Internet-aphorism is also characteristic fake authorship. Unlike with the aphorism, Internet-aphorism is almost always a polycode or creolized text – that differs it from the genre of aphorism itself. Internet-aphorism could be regarded as a precedent genre and simulacrum insofar as the exists a contradiction between its expression plane and a content plane. Internet-aphorism is congruent with an aphorism in form, but it often lacks its intellectual profundity, pretending to be a sign of a philosophical sense, Internet-aphorism often turns out to be a nothing burger. Internet-aphorism has interaction nature as contrasted with an aphorism. It is also worth emphasising a gender specificity of the Internet-aphorism form, its targeting. What substantially differs Internet-aphorism from the aphorism is amazing speed of appearing aphoristic texts on the Internet, immense amount of their ‘production’ and quick obliviscence. Consequently the Internet-aphorism could be regarded as an independent genre with its unique characteristics, a simulacrum of the genre of aphorism and a precedent genre.

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Бібліографічний опис:

Машкіна, О. М. (2019). Інтернет-афоризм як симулякр і прецедентний жанр. *Науковий часопис Національного педагогічного університету імені М. П. Драгоманова. Серія 9. Сучасні тенденції розвитку мов*, 19. 109–117. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2019.19.07>

Анотація

У статті розглядаються Інтернет-афоризми як унікальні явища віртуальної комунікації. Запропоноване визначення Інтернет-афоризму, під яким розуміється вид малоформатного тексту, характерного для сучасних засобів масової інформації. Основну увагу приділено розмежуванню афоризму та Інтернет-афоризму. Установлено, що відмінні риси Інтернет-афоризму зумовлені їх взаємозв'язком з культурною та ціннісною сферами людини, і, як наслідок, його національною маркованістю, швидкістю та кількістю появи, що вказує як на тимчасовий характер цієї жанрової форми, так і на динамічність її життєвого циклу.

Прокоментовано питання про авторство цих одиниць, яке лежить в опозиції “автор вказаний – автор невідомий”. Виявлено, що афоризм в Інтернеті створюється без мовного контексту, але завжди функціонує як частина культурного, соціального та індивідуального контекстів. Інтернет-афоризм, який створюється, сприймається та поширюється людьми, відображає їхні погляди та менталітет, і його можна розглядати як вираження тієї частини філософської системи, яка завжди поєднується з індивідуальною ціннісною системою людини. Інтернет-афоризм є полікодовим чи креолізованим текстом, що суттєво відрізняє його від жанру афоризму.

Запропоновано також розглядати Інтернет-афоризм як симулякр та прецедентний жанр. Інтернет-афоризм як прецедентний жанр співвідноситься з афоризмом за формою, але за змістом йому бракує інтелектуальної глибини. Водночас він є симулякром, оскільки побудований на асиметрії між планом виразу та планом змісту. Окрім того, диференційовано Інтернет-афоризми за гендерною специфікою.

Як висновок, зазначено, що Інтернет-афоризми є новим самостійним явищем віртуальної комунікації з унікальними характеристиками та міжжанровою специфікою симулякру й прецедентного тексту.

Ключові слова: афоризм в Інтернеті, симулякр, прецедентний жанр, віртуальна комунікація.