The total number of abbreviations used in communicational sphere is very large and continues to increase because communication as process is very diverse and provides a lot of material for coining shortenings. All the abbreviations are not only easy to use but also not hard to remember. Skillful writers can even substitute most of their message by such abbreviations. Though these items shall never become a part of literary language they will not cease to exist as social phenomenon. Moreover, with the appearance of electronic means of communication such items will only increase in number. It should be noted that shortenings used in communicational sphere do not receive a proper attention from scientists, there is no classification for such items as emoticons, phonographs and smileys. It is rather a disputable question whether they can be considered shortenings. And we cannot say what rules govern their creation and how to predict their development. That is why it is necessary to understand that processes happening in speech can have a big value together with processes within a standard literary language when a phenomenon becomes global.

Though many scientists deny the fact that shortening is important subject for investigation, it is quite possible that in the nearest future shortening may start playing a considerable role in a language. That is why it should be thoroughly studied as any other linguistic phenomenon. The stream of information increased greatly which caused the need to save time and convey as much information as possible. Shortenings help to save the content of the message but reduce its size. This valuable feature presents interest especially in communicational sphere. Though much have been done to study shortenings in general, we still know little about shortenings used in communicational sphere, Internet sphere and Internet communication in particular. Moreover, shortenings represent an interest for computational science. All programming languages and operating systems are based on shortened items. So this sphere of shortenings' usage deserves careful study as well. Being a developing trend in English language shortenings need theoretical description and analysis. All the studies done before should be systematized and generalized into a single theory.

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UDC 81'42

CHARACTERISTICS OF ORAL ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

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The paper considers the term 'discourse' in modern linguistics, its structural and functional division based on the opposition of personality-oriented and status-oriented types. Leading approaches to the study of academic discourse are described. Oral academic discourse is defined and analyzed. It is also compared with written academic communication.

In modern linguistics the notion 'discourse' is interpreted ambiguously, even now the principles of its description and interpretation remain controversial, and maybe these facts contribute to the widespread popularity of the concept. Among the wide variety of approaches to the understanding of the term 'discourse' we can conventionally determine the following main directions of its study, correlated with the contribution of certain researchers. É. Benveniste, R. Barthes, M. Makarov consider discourse as *speech*. V. Demyankov, Y. Stepanov, V. Borbotko treat it as a *text*.

In our research we refer to the approach that investigates discourse as *unity of a text and context* in which this text is realized. Among the supporters of this approach are N. Arutyunova, T. van Dijk, Y. Karaulov,

E. Kubryakova. According to this point of view discourse is not limited only to text or using language, but includes the so-called 'external' aspect of communication, in which the priority is given to social conditions and communicants within these conditions. In this case discourse is an integral part of social reality where situational characteristics and participants of communication play the main role.

Structural and functional division of discourse is based on the opposition of its *personality-oriented* and *status-oriented* types. According to the *first type* a speaker acts as a personality in the process of communication. In this case communicants are intimate people who reveal their inner world and take into account all significant features of a personality and behaviour of each other. Communicants talk about everyday cases and have no need to discuss complex matters or explain obvious things to each other. So in this situation a short, highly context dependent code is used. In the *second type* a speaker acts as a representative of a particular society where communication is represented within certain status-role relationships and is reduced to a dialogue between unfamiliar members of a social group. While meeting strangers people are forced to create necessary background information based on the assumptions about what their interlocutor probably does not know. Thus, the extended, less context dependent code is used [1, 2, 3].

Status-oriented discourse can have *institutional* and *non-institutional* character. The main difference is that the interaction within the *first type* takes place in the officially fixed areas of communication, i.e. in social institutions, while the *second type* of discourse does not belong to any kind of the existing public institutions (e.g. philatelic discourse). Despite its double nature status-oriented discourse is predominantly revealed through institutional communication, i.e. speech interaction between representatives of social groups or institutions [1].

In the center of our scientific interests is *academic discourse* that is surely a form of institutional communication. The research of academic discourse is an urgent and relatively young field of linguistic studies. Academic communication attracts attention of many researchers, and each scholar gives their own name to this type of discourse according to their research goals. For example, Y. Zubkova, K. Shilihina consider it as academic discourse; T. Astafurova, I. Kirillova – as university one; G. Dimova – as university pedagogical discourse; V. Maksimov, N. Denisova – as scientific-educational one, etc.

Under *academic discourse* we mean 'normatively organized verbal interaction having both linguistic and extralinguistic plans, using a certain system of career-oriented signs, taking into account status-role characteristics of the main communicants, interpreted as a culturally marked system of communication' [4, p. 297]. Academic discourse is associated with a particular area of human activity – training graduates in a particular field of science and production. This type of discourse is an area of increased responsibility [5]. That is why academic discourse unlike many other types of discourse is not spontaneous but needs a purposeful social preparation and organization. The main proof of this fact is the planning of class hours, centrally compiled schedule for all students of university, etc.

Analyzed sources allow us to conclude that some researchers consider academic discourse as a kind of pedagogical one (G. Dimova, N. Fairclough); others investigate it as a particular case of implementation of scientific discourse (R. Alikaev, I. Galperin). But it seems reasonable to agree with the authors that use an integrated approach to the study of academic discourse and consider it as a merger of pedagogical and scientific ones (Y. Zubkova, T. Astafurova, V. Maksimov, L. Kulikova, A. Litvinov). Modern university is not limited to training and educational activities. Teachers, students, postgraduates undertake various research and development projects, and there is free exchange of information and views among them. In addition, depending on the specialization of university or faculty, elements of other types of discourse can be incorporated into the academic one.

Academic discourse exists in *oral* (during classes, talks, lectures, conference presentations, etc.), *writing* (regulations, programs, tutorials, materials for the control of knowledge, students' works, etc.) and so-called *electronic* form (distance learning, online conferences, online debates, etc.).

Original, basic form of academic discourse is the oral one, based on sound interaction between a teacher and students. Verbal communication is not only a source of new information, but also provides material for conversations, discussions and creative criticism.

It is necessary to take into account non-verbal characteristics that accompany oral academic discourse and are based on visual interaction of communicants in the moment of speaking. In oral academic discourse we can notice the following non-verbal linguistic means: communicatively significant movements (standing for greeting), gestures (lifting a hand as an indication of knowing the answer), facial expression (a wide range of emotions), specific postures of the communicants (students sit at the tables, a teacher stands in front of them), expression of eyes, etc. [6, 7].

No doubt that oral academic discourse should be built and structured in the best possible way. It is necessary for precise, logical and definite expression of discursive messages by a speaker and for better perception of information by their listeners. In some genres of oral academic discourse (lectures, presentations, reports, etc.) a lot of attention is paid to the interaction with the audience: the application of different tactics to attract and hold listeners' attention, the use of rhetorical questions, repetitions, paraphrases – in other words the speaker tries not only to present the material, but also to interest the audience. Efficiency and expressiveness of oral speech are important but often omitted or insufficiently practiced aspects (esp. by students) in academic field.

Situations of oral academic communication give more freedom in choosing speech means, while the canons of organization of written academic text on the contrary have greater rigidity [8]. For oral academic discourse the use of colloquial words and phraseological units, the implementation of jokes, sometimes different kinds of allusions and sayings are quite common. All these means emphasize oral nature of interaction [9].

Oral academic discourse is much more difficult than the written one and is characterized by multilevel nature of its organization on the one hand and by comprehensive taxonomy of situations within this discourse on the other hand [10]. At university we always hear speech, its space is filled with talking people among which not only short lines of communication are set but also delayed ones. Oral interaction at university has interpersonal, team, group, and even in some cases mass character [11]. All these facts confirm the multidimensional and complex nature of oral academic discourse.

Despite its institutionality academic discourse has personal components [6], esp. in such oral genres of academic communication as debates, discussions, seminars, etc. It should be remembered that oral academic discourse is not entirely objective and impartial. It contains subjective-modal component that is involved in the expression of a wide range of emotions, such as categoricity, restraint, doubt, hesitation, boredom, irony or even sarcasm [8, 12].

So, oral academic discourse is a form of institutional communication specified by social functions of its participants. Its main purpose is to train a graduate in a particular field of science and production. Considered ideas allow us to come to the conclusion that oral academic discourse is the original, basic form of university interaction that in most cases is accompanied by non-verbal characteristics. Its important properties are optimal construction of discursive message, interaction with audience, efficiency, expressiveness, etc. Oral academic communication is characterized by relative freedom in the choice of speech means. This kind of discourse has multilevel nature of organization and comprehensive taxonomy of situations. A very important role in oral academic interaction is played by interpersonal relationships of its members, which in turn suggests that oral academic discourse is not always entirely objective and impartial.

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UDC 821.111.09=111

MASKS IN THE WORKS OF W.M. THACKERAY

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This paper is devoted to the phenomenon of mask in general and about masks in the works of a famous English writer of the Victorian age W.M. Thackeray in particular.

When we start thinking about a mask the first thing that comes to our mind is that it is an object used to cover a face in order to hide it or to protect it. If we continue thinking about a mask we'll remember about carnival masks, sport mask, medical masks, military masks, literature masks, etc.

Masks make up an inalienable part of a person's life, we see them and we wear them everywhere.

The key element of masking is simultaneous concealing and revealing of the content, by selecting aspects to be shown and those to be hidden, which enables manipulating the expressed message.

Today plenty of scientists of numerous scientific fields are interested in the phenomenon of mask. Mask is a focus point in the researches of historians, philosophers, psychologists, etc.

There are several approaches towards the analysis of this problem; I mean the problem of mask. They are the following: psychological approach, sociological approach, linguistic approach, literary approach, etc. These approaches focus on different aspects, but remain complementary.

According to sociological approach everyone, when in a social situation (in the company of others), behaves like an actor on stage. The mask is a synonym of role of which everyone has many types and constantly chooses the one most appropriate to the given situation, using various strategies of selection to make the best possible impression on observers in the interaction.

In psychology the mask is one's whole public personality, "the social self" which may be called an "interface", as it is a mediator between the human inner world and the external world.

The mask is expressed in roles and social customs, and it is an inevitable element of an individual's functioning in a society; the mask also possesses a function of protecting the most vulnerable

A mask in language may be seen as a type of a sign (such as a word or expression) where the signified is intentionally profiled depending on the perspective and will of the user. Certain aspects (elements) of meaning are concealed, while other ones are selected to be revealed or stressed.

Masking may employ various language tools. Common ones include: metaphor, metonymy, euphemism, passive and impersonal strategies, hyperbole, riddles (to be guessed from the context).

A separate broad category of masking language tools is humour, including irony.

Its most common masking function is entertaining and creating a sense of solidarity or common ground, and a distance to reality.

W.M. Thackeray is known for his humour, irony, skepticism, mockery and sarcasm and while getting acquainted with his works we meet masks, we figuratively speaking stub toe against them at every step.

If we take his fairy tales for example "The rose and the ring" we'll find there nice examples of masks: The rose and the ring here are masks which when worn make the princess Angelica and the prince Balbo the most beautiful and wisest in the world but without them they looked exceedingly plain and foolish, ridiculous and ugly.

During his carreer as a journalist Thackeray often used pseudonyms for example Yellowplush and Titmarsh. Use of these temporary personalities helped to shorten the distance between the reader and the writer, gave room for irony, mockery, satire and sarcasm and released from some responsibility.

And now let's pass to Thackeray's the most popular novel, novel that brought him fame and recognition, I mean "Vanity fair". This novel simply bursts with masks. We find here numerous examples of different kinds of masks. It seems that every personage in this novel wears a mask.