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QUESTIONS OF INTERNET FOLKLORE STUDIES IN MODERN COMMUNICATION

The study of internet folklore, a relatively new field of research dating back to the late 1990s, examines the unique ways folklore manifests in the digital age. Researchers have identified such main areas of focus as analyzing traditional folklore genres with new content (like online fairy tales or memes), studying the subculture of online communication, exploring folklore genres online, and focusing on folklore genres that exist solely online, like memes.

A key challenge in this field is understanding how folklore is disseminated online. While some research exists, a comprehensive analysis of the development and functioning of internet folklore is still lacking. This gap is partly due in part to the rapid evolution of the digital information space, which has significantly altered the mechanisms of folklore communication.

The text highlights the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of internet folklore communication. Unlike traditional folklore, which relies on oral transmission, internet folklore utilizes a hybrid form of communication that blends oral and written elements. This hybridity is evident in the use of written text that mimics the characteristics of spoken language, such as intonation, emotions, and pace, to create a sense of live communication.

The text also emphasizes the role of collectiveness in internet folklore. While the original author of a piece of internet folklore may be unknown, the text itself is shaped and refined through the collective contributions of users. This process is similar to the traditional folklore model, where the significance of the original creator is often lost over time as the text becomes a shared cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the text argues that internet folklore represents a significant evolution of traditional folklore, adapted to the unique environment of the digital world. Further research is needed to fully understand the complexities of this new form of communication and its impact on contemporary culture.

Key words: folklore genres, folklore elements, internet communication, internet folklore, online communication, online communities, online forum, internet linguistics, simplification method.

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ПИТАННЯ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ РОЛІ ІНТЕРНЕТ ФОЛЬКЛОРУ В СУЧАСНІЙ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

Дослідження Інтернет фольклору є досить новою галуззю досліджень, яка починаючи з кінця двадцятого століття вивчає способи використання фольклорних одиниць у цифрову епоху. Основна увага науковців у вивченні функціонування сучасного фольклору у цифровому форматі приділена аналізу традиційних фольклорних жанрів з новим контентом, вивченню субкультури в онлайн комунікації, дослідженню фольклорних жанрів в Інтернеті, особливо існуючих виключно в Інтернет культурі.

Ключовим завданням у вивченні зазначеної теми є аналіз способів розповсюдження фольклору в Інтернет просторі. Попри існування ряду окремих досліджень, комплексний аналіз розвитку та функціонування інтернет фольклору досі не проводився. Цей факт частково пояснюється швидкістю еволюції цифрового інформаційного простору, що суттєво ускладнює механізми дослідження фольклорної комунікації.

У роботі підкреслюється важливість визнання унікальних характеристик фольклорної Інтернет комунікації. На відміну від традиційного фольклору, який головним чином покладається на усну передачу тексту, Інтернет фольклор використовує гібридну форму спілкування, яка поєднує усні та писемні елементи. Ця гібридність очевидна у використанні письмового тексту, який імітує характеристики розмовного мовлення, наприклад, передача елементів інтонаційності, емоцій та темпу, щоб створити відчуття реального спілкування.

Стаття також підкреслює роль колективності в Інтернет фольклорі. Хоча оригінальний автор Інтернет фольклору як правило, невідомий, сам текст формується та вдосконалюється завдяки колективному внеску різних користувачів. Цей процес схожий на традиційну модель фольклору, де значення оригінального автора втрачається з часом, а текст стає спільним культурним надбанням.

Інтернет фольклор є природною еволюцією традиційного фольклору, який адаптувався до унікального середовища цифрового світу. Необхідно провести ряд подальших досліджень для повного розуміння складності цієї нової форми спілкування та його впливу на сучасну культуру.

Ключові слова: Інтернет комунікація, Інтернет спільноти, Інтернет фольклор, Інтернет форум, Інтернет лінгвістика, метод спрощення, онлайн комунікація, фольклорні жанри, фольклорні елементи.

Urgency of the problem. The study of internet folklore appeared in the late 20th century and investigates the adaptation of traditional folklore within the digital environment. The researchers have identified several primary areas for internet folklore studying. They include the analysis of traditional genres used in online communication, subcultural studies, ways of internet folklore spreading and distribution and types of folklore entirely developed in a digital environment. The genre analysis is important for learning how traditional folklore genres have been recontextualized with new content related to the digital world. The subcultural studies focused on the unique linguistic and cultural practices of online communication. The internet folklore distribution and evolution of modern folklore genres within online communities should also be considered. The digital folklore studies of analyzing genres exclusive to the digital environment, such as memes and viral content are also important for linguistic studies.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Notable scientific works have explored the intersec-

tion of language, folklore, and linguistics. T. Blank focused on the cultural aspects of language within folklore texts, emphasizing how language reflects cultural identity (Blank, 2012, p.5-7). W. Labov's research delves into the social stratification of language, examining how folklore interacts with sociolinguistic factors in communities (Labov, 1997). Scientists discuss the role of language in social life, highlighting how folklorists contribute to sociolinguistic studies. They also investigate the relevance of folklore language studies to sociolinguistics, providing insights into how folklore can inform our understanding of language use (Bronner, 2009; De Seta, 2020). These works collectively illustrate the rich relationship between language and folklore within the field of linguistics.

The role of internet folklore in communication was studied by D. Ben-Amos, T. Blank, V. Dewanty and others. They discussed how internet communication endows digital folklore with unique features that significantly alter traditional folk culture. (Ben-Amos; Blank, 2014; Dewanty et al., 2021). M. Kõiva and L. Vesik explore

the architecture and typology of digital folklore, emphasizing its role in global communication (Kõiva et al., 2009). In this work, D. Ben-Amos discusses the context of folklore in the digital age, providing insights into how folklore manifests online (Ben-Amos). G. Hansen delves into the approach of studying folklore on the internet, highlighting its evolving nature (Hansen, 2009). These works study the intersection of folklore and digital communication.

Purpose and main objectives of the study. The article aims to study the characteristics of Internet folklore within the digital environment, highlight the differences between traditional folklore and its online counterpart as a hybrid form of communication that blends oral and written elements, and emphasize the importance of collective creativity blurring authorship in online contexts.

Presentation of the main research material. Internet folklore as a special object of linguists' studying, is identified relatively long ago, in the late 90s of the twentieth century. The researchers distinguish the four main directions of folklore research on the Internet: classification and analysis of traditional genres with new content (fairy tales, jokes, responses to the latest events, etc.); network communication as part of a special subculture; modern folklore genres on the network; folklore genres existing exclusively on the network (for example, memes) (Blank, 2018; Havrylenko et al., 2024).

The most significant deficiency of Internet folklore research is the lack of information on the specifics of folklore distribution on the Internet. Undoubtedly, we can find some facts about the features of folklore communication in some scientific works. The Internet folklore functions in a certain artificial sociotechnical environment as a natural type of communication. One of the main features of the internet folklore is the impression is impersonality and absence of control combined with the ability of linguistic self-regulation of the language of folklore (Frank, 2011). The actual research on the development and functioning of Internet folklore in the network has not been conducted yet, and the existing scientific research looks more like metaphorical observations than analytical studies. Obviously, the lack of scientific research is conditioned by the recent changes in the mechanisms of the folklore type of communication caused by the development of the mod-

ern information space. They should be recorded and defined first.

The electronic environment expands the personal space almost literally enriching his abilities, enhancing and expanding vision, etc. (Blank, 2012; Blank, 2014). New data we receive is associated with the objectification of the communication process and its principles. Under folklore communication, we mean to recall the basic features of folklore as an oral art. There are serious differences in the understanding of folklore by various researchers. Traditionally they define folklore as an oral collective type of various creative texts, widely distributed throughout some ethnic group. Folklore is a verbal creative linguistic system based on tradition. However, he regards communication as secondary and limited to oral transmission. Meanwhile, the folklore type of communication can and should be considered as a different approach to communicativeness (Frank, 2011). The communication process is carried out on condition of availability of a sender, a recipient, information and a transmission channel. A sender encodes the information according to the channel used and the recipient must decode it (Bronner, 2009). The researchers distinguish folklore type of communication from non-folkloric and at the same time, agree that the message can be not only a text but a video, a photo, a symbol, a drawing, etc.

The folklore in communication features the following conditions: oral interaction; insignificance of the first author of the spreading message; traditional rules, genres, formats, and forms of communication recognized by all participants; collective opinions as the only regulators for folklore message selection, except for consciously inaccurate replication (improvisation) of a folklore message.

The main principle of Internet communication is the global connection of individuals for exchanging collective thoughts and ideas. The exchange of collective ideas is the core of both offline and online communication, which permits the researchers to study Internet folklore as an integral part of communication. Such types of web pages as forums, newsgroups, and messengers follow the principles of oral communication, although paradoxically the exchange of opinions goes in written form as posted texts.

As a rule, Internet communication is used for instant responses and cannot be considered as an opposition to oral-written speech therefore,

modern linguistics recognises Internet communication as a hybrid form of communication (AbuSa'aleek, 2015). The hybridization of communication contradicts one of the fundamental postulates of the theory of communication, which contrasts oral and written types of speech, and results in revising the key aspects of internet language. The written words on the Internet function under the laws of oral communication (spread from mouth to mouth). The network changes individual words into collective printed words and vice versa. Internet folklore offers new, original ways of text organization and as in traditional folklore verbal acts are always supported by visual manifestations (by rituals, gestures, clothes, etc.). In Internet folklore, they are represented by intonation, emotions, and pace of transmitted utterance, which fill the written text with live intonation. The researchers define it as an oral-written text representation of spontaneous speech (Blank, 2014). Different forums are examples of such communication, which is organised according to the principles of oral speech transferred in written forms.

The idea of collectiveness in folklore requires special attention. In the classical theories of folklore, the collectiveness in the text creation is generally by unimportance of the creator. The text becomes known and is honed by thousands of speakers, so the significance of the author becomes fundamentally unimportant. The Internet text authorship is in most cases unknown and unsigned. The only information may contain the user's name, and avatar, which is usually lost with the rapid spread of the text. Moreover, the uniqueness of the primary source is not granted as a meme may be a ready-made template based on a film frame and the inscription can be a proverb or other well-known text with a new aptly meaning precisely coined for the specific context, which complicates the authorship even more. The concept of creativity in this case acquires truly folklore features.

Internet communication has the potential for levelling authorship, which is a fundamental principle of such communication. Some individuals might become known and receive a large number of likes, but the general interest of communication is drawn to the created text, not the author.

The rapid distribution of information on the network is similar to the folklore principles of assimilation, circulation and consolidation of new texts.

Folklore is a local culture, an integral part of a collective, where an individual is not so important (Bergstrom, 2011). However, individual and group self-identification takes a special place.

The Internet space is an analogue of real social relationships where group identity is represented more than personal self-identification. The understanding of values and tradition is significant. Usually, the analysis of large forums represents traditions of individual and group communication on the Internet. Social networks are less occupied with verbal text organization and perform such functions as the exchange of links or resources. Forums, on the contrary, are designed for user group gatherings and follow special rules (traditions) for discussing different topics according to certain thematic blocks. The analysis of communication on these sites shows unique communication models abiding by local rules (rituals) shared by all participants. Communication takes place both diachronically (in time) or cyclically, fixing the main stages of its development and creating its history. Traditions are passed to beginners or new generations of users. Thus, large forums have a high potential for developing folklore types of communication.

The practices of Internet exchange demonstrate that users value witty, fresh, and new ideas which immediately become popular and then quickly go to the category of obsolete. Any new text on the Internet gets users' approval precisely because it is based on some well-known cliché, which gives the reason to insist on the correlation of communication on large Internet forums with traditional folklore type of communication. The features of folklore can be noticed in any online group that has at least one rule shared by everyone and this rule (tradition) also acts as a creative stimulus for composing folklore texts (Bergstrom, 2011).

The folklore elements are clearly seen in the communication of large forums with thousands of participants. The classic folklore texts survived due to their exact and clear wording, which helped them to be remembered and transmitted from mouth to mouth. On the contrary, for modern information the condition for survival is the ability to be liked by big number of users: the more forum participants support the publication with plus, the higher it rises in the ranking and gets an opportunity to become the basis of a meme or other special neo-folklore genres (a meme is an image or

video widely replicated and supported by a witty commentary, which rises the probability of its selection higher than of a neutral text). Users with a certain number of points for their wit receive more reactions from other readers for the clever post, which makes each user treat communication on forums seriously. This is the process of natural selection that is suitable for scientific analysis of the process of the collective selection and folklorisation of texts.

The analysis of modern Internet platforms for information exchange gives the possibility to define certain principles of selection from the general chaos of texts based on common unique rules of acceptability adopted for each forum. Internet folklore can be correlated with the perception developed by a certain Internet community as a system of conventional signs associated with previously recognized witty texts. It can cause a communicative failure among forum participants who are not accustomed to the inherent communication code and their ignorant posts can be disliked or banned and, as a result, their comments disappear from the discussions, which leads to the physical elimination of their texts from the information field.

Consequently, a large forum with its own rules can be considered as a representative of folklore type of communication with a conscious selection of a collective creative response. Unlike the author's model of text creation, the folklore model involves the creation of a text simultaneously assigned by many, and collectively acceptable, correlated with traditions but with an effect of witty novelty at the same time. The large forums and other sites specified for online communication can be an excellent source of information for comprehension and analysis of the processes of selection and approval of folklore texts and genres.

The development of capabilities of the Internet facilitated the use of various semiotic systems in the communication process. The popular method of language simplification applied in the Internet language is often a combination of verbal and non-verbal signs including textual samples as well as photographs, memes, emoticons, graphics, etc. The combination of the verbal language means with other semiotic systems increases the effectiveness of information transmission and perception. It should be noted that the information scope of non-verbal means is higher than verbal.

Simplification is one of the common trends in language development reflected in Internet communication. It helps to simplify language communication and creates the most comfortable conditions for information exchange between representatives of different cultures and countries in virtual communication. Simplification and self-identification in folklore communication are performed at universal and specific levels. The universal level is demonstrated by large groups of participants and is understandable for all while the specific level represents the communication in a small group of participants with specific language units understandable only for them (Kõiva et al., 2009). A large forum is an example of a cultural local sub-ethnos connected by common language parameters as something whole and a collection of smaller units from numerous groups of participants with specific communication rules.

The forum participants suggest some text and wait for a response and attention, counting on pluses and likes as a sign of interest. Their participation in the forum is intentional and they seek self-identification, which makes them follow the rules of forum communication. The forum culture has specific rules not amenable to manipulations, which permits to consideration of folklore Internet communication as an objective collective process.

Conclusions and prospects for further exploration of this issue. All components of folklore communication present in the Internet language do not necessarily produce folklore samples. The centuries of creative language exploitation brought only hundreds of folklore texts transmitted from generation to generation with many others being rejected during folklore communication or lost due to various factors. Large forums today permit numerous participants to generate folklore texts among many others.

The classification of Internet folklore communication is considered a serious task for the researchers studying Internet communication providing folklore texts based on creative stimulus, tradition, selectiveness, absence of the author, collectiveness and a hybrid of oral-written speech. All these specifications of Internet folklore communication demand thorough scrutiny of this type of text as a kind of timeless metamodel of folklore generation.

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