

## Epistolary text in the context of text linguistics

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**Abstract.** This article considers epistolary text as one of the types of text. This type of the text has all the system of general text categories such as cohesion, coherence, wholeness, openness, completeness and so on. But at the same time epistolary text also possesses some special text categories such as dialogization, address, implicity, communicativeness and some other specific peculiarities which are revealed in the article.

**Keywords:** *epistolary text, text categories, structure, functions.*

**Introduction.** Research of the texts belonging to various functional styles and genres, held in text linguistics initiated the tendency for their meaning, semantic and structure investigation.

Epistolary text (letter) is a part of the sum of objects which are the subject of text linguistics research and which refer to epistolary genre texts. The lasts show the elements of some or simultaneously several functional styles depending on author's communicative aims, addresser's and addressee's social statuses and field of use.

**Brief review of publications on the subject.** Epistolary texts have always been of many linguists' focus of attention. The analysis of theoretical resources revealed that previous epistolary text studies dealt mainly with lexical structure (I.A. Ivanchuk, A.V. Kurianovich and so on), syntactical peculiarities (A.I. Sumkina), stylistic originality (A.S. Grigorieva, T.P. Zorina, L.N. Ketsba), linguo-pragmatic features (T.V. Kovaliova) and some communicative aspects (N.I. Belunova, N.A. Kovaliova).

But the object of research turned out to be so multifaceted that cognition of its essential features can be hardly considered as completed. This fact stipulates the topicality of our research.

**Objective.** The objective of the article is to determine the characteristic features of the epistolary text as a type of text in general and to reveal its specific peculiarities.

**Materials and methods.** The materials for the research are the theoretical works devoted to epistolary text study and the epistolary texts themselves which make up a Ukrainian encyclopaedic scientist of the XIXth century M.A. Maksimovich's epistolary heritage in which the letters depending on author's communicative aim, character of communicants' relations and field of use can be correlated with different functional styles.

The main methods of this research are descriptive, typological, functional and systemic, structural and semantic ones but some related methods of communicative linguistics and pragmatic linguistics are also used in this work.

**Results and discussion.** Letter (epistolary text) is a unit of communication characterized by its written character. Besides, epistolary text shows in this regard its own originality.

Being a written form of communication epistolary text has all the features of monologue. First of all it means the use of special literary vocabulary, extended sentences, and its logical sequence and completeness.

At the same time epistolary text exposes some features of dialogue. Firstly, epistolary communication presupposes

feedback. When an addressee writes back, he or she becomes an addresser and vice versa. Secondly, each letter can be considered as a separate line in a dialogue which takes place in indefinite time and space within the exchange of letters with some addressee. Thirdly, epistolary text contains initiative and answering lines which are dependent and have incomplete meaning that is typical for dialogue. Besides, there is topical continuity between some letters within the exchange of letters.

Thus, epistolary text contains both monologue and dialogue features. So the neutralization of opposition between monologue and dialogue takes place in this case. This fact makes epistolary text possible to hold a special place among other types of written texts. This type of texts can be identified as a marginal one which actually is a kind of distant mono-dialogue combining the features of written and oral speech.

As a pragmatic, psychological and speech formation epistolary text as any other type of the text has a system of text categories.

Among text categories which are the most frequently defined by linguists, epistolary text is characterized by the following: cohesion which is the linking within a text that holds it together and coherence which ensures meaning continuity between text extracts; wholeness; openness; completeness and so on (I.P. Galperin, M.B. Hrapchenko). At the same time in our opinion some more categories must be mentioned as dominant for this type of the text.

Firstly, the category of dialogization can be referred as one of them. N.I. Belunova while studying the texts of creative intellectuals' friendly letters of the late XIXth – the first quarter of XXth century marked the category of dialogization as a dominant one of epistolary text, 'as its main purpose and function is communicative function which has two-sided character "addresser – addressee" and it is the most highly showed itself in exchange of letters' [3, p. 20]. Dialogization of epistolary text is connected with such a genre feature as existence of communicative and pragmatic axis 'I – You' which provides text with the hierarchy of linguistic means marking addresser and addressee. N.I. Belunova defines dialogization 'as marking of dialogization in written speech reflecting its two-sided character (addresser – addressee) fulfilled with a system of syntactic addresser means ('I – Sphere') and a system of syntactic addressee means ('You – Sphere') representing the fact of person-centered character of communication' [3, p. 36].

An integral feature of epistolary text is its addressee orientation, in other words modeling of addressee's reaction by the author. O.P. Vorobiova undertook the detailed analysis of the mentioned text characteristics in her doctoral thesis and named it as 'address'. The category of address is defined by the scientists as 'a certain characteristic of text as a verbal unit which represents the idea and knowledge about an expected addressee and peculiarities of his or her interpretation activity' [4, p. 9].

Judging by the definition address reflects not only the content parameter of text (its focus on an addressee), but as L.A. Aznabayeva mentioned it also has an influence on speech forms, in particular making author take into account social, educational, professional, personality related and other addressee's parameters [2, p. 314]. Therefore address is one of the leading text categories of epistolary genre text which defines peculiarity of its content, composition, stylistic and functional characteristics.

Sharing O.Yu. Podyapolskaya's opinion we recognize the category of implicity as one of dominant categories. In scientist's opinion implicit furnishing of information in epistolary text is the result of epistolary communication intimacy and reflects orientation on a personal addressee which has the same background knowledge (presupposition) as an addresser. It allows omitting certain information in a text which is sometimes surplus without any harm for right understanding of the written [6, p. 47-48].

Implicity in epistolary text is realized with the process of information compensation which is made with the use of proper names (sometimes shortened to just one letter), nicknames; mentioning some facts and notions without clarifying them; making allusions; answering questions put in communication partners' letters without mentioning them previously; usage of various kinds of responding lines.

On text level information compression is realized with the help of implicatums. Implicatums are defined by O.Yu. Podyapolskaya as 'text components containing implicit information as a result of divergence between what is verbally expressed on surface, explicit text level and what is meant implicitly and can be reconstructed by virtue of presuppositions' [6, p. 49].

As O.Yu. Podyapolskaya mentioned, the set and the character of presuppositions which underlie the communication by means of epistolary texts are formed under several factors which are influenced by the orientation on a particular letter addressee. Among these factors are:

1) the duration of acquaintance between addresser and addressee (including direct communication of correspondents), that, for example, determines the amount of everyday presuppositions which are common for correspondents;

2) the role of exchange of letters in the process of communication between addresser and addressee, i.e. whether the exchange of letters is a base of correspondents' communication or it's just a part of communication;

3) the duration and regularity of exchange of letters that determine the prevalence of textual presuppositions in letters [6, p. 52-53].

In addition the leading place in the system of text categories of epistolary text is taken by the category of communicativeness. It was found out that communicativeness as a text category in general and as a category of episto-

lary text in particular is a language realization of the unity of a purpose of communication and linguistic means of its achievement in certain speech conditions predetermined by speech genres (G.I. Bubnova, N.K. Garbovski, M.A. Pirogova).

However, realization of mentioned categories in text expanse is featured due to content, communicative and structural integrity between text units regardless dominant position of some text categories.

In our opinion it is reasonable to regard supra-segmental unit as the main structural unit of epistolary text as it is easily singled out of the text both semantically and formally. Proceeding from this approach it must be mentioned that epistolary text is characterized by frequent usage of two-parts supra-segmental units (without endings or introductions). It can be explained with epistolary genre's peculiarities such as interruptible ideas, skipping from one topic to another, author's tendency to provide an addressee as complete as possible with different information, author's individual style. All of them influence supra-segmental unit's and epistolary text's structures. In this respects letters correlated with colloquial and publicistic styles can be taken as a model, because here supra-segmental units are more structurally diversified than supra-segmental units of letters correlated with official and scientific styles where the margins of supra-segmental units and the text itself frequently coincide and often have three-parts composition.

Examining the structure of epistolary text it is impossible to avoid the study of composition, as analyzing letters a lot of researchers appeal just to this notion.

A.A. Akishyna and N.I. Formanovskaya single out three compositional parts of a letter: 1) introduction (greeting); 2) information part 3) ending (saying goodbye) [1, p. 3]. At the same time the scientists mention that filling of semantic parts depends on the type of a letter and its correlation with a certain style.

The analysis of every separate communicative object presupposes its functions implementation which at the same time with other parameters reflects the essence of phenomena.

Almost all the researchers, using different terminology, single out communicative, phatic (function of contact), informative (function of information transfer), appealing (function of influence) functions (N.I. Belunova [3, p. 51-52]; N.A. Kovaliova [5, p. 73-74] and others).

In our opinion the leading function of epistolary text is communicative one in which phatic function (function of setting, keeping and breaking a contact), informative function (function of information transfer) and also appealing function (function of influence) are realized.

Every mentioned function can be overlapped with emotional function (function of expressing author's feelings), evaluative function (function of evaluation), aesthetic function (function of aesthetic feelings reference) or etiquette function (function of speech etiquette realization) depending on addresser's pragmatic purpose and field of use.

**Conclusion.** Summing up the above mentioned we can make a conclusion that epistolary text is one of text types which is characterized by general text features as well as specific ones:

- letter is a kind of 'mono-dialogue' showing both written and oral speech features;
- epistolary text has a system of general text categories (coherence, cohesion, wholeness, openness, completeness and so on) which are typical for texts of different functional styles and genres and also has special categories (dialogization, address, implicitness, communicativeness) which are dominant for this type of texts;
- letter is conventional, it means established by traditions and time structural and semantic integrity of compositional elements;
- the leading function of epistolary text is communicative one which presupposes a certain set of derivative

functions: phatic, informative, appealing, emotional, evaluative, aesthetic, etiquette ones. They prevail depending on pragmatic purpose and field of use.

This research does not solve all the problems of epistolary text studies. Being one of the means of communication, epistolary text can be studied not only in text linguistics, but also within the theory of communication where text is considered as dynamic phenomenon; and taking into account situational context and purposes of communication play the dominant role. In our opinion such an approach let us deeply understand epistolary text essential characteristics.

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#### Эпистолярный текст в аспекте лингвистики текста

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**Аннотация.** В статье эпистолярный текст рассматривается как один из типов текста, которому присуща система таких общетекстовых категорий, как связность, цельность, открытость, законченность и др., а также выявляются такие специфические текстовые категории как диалогизация, адресованность, имплицитность, коммуникативность и другие существенные особенности, характерные для текста именно этого типа.

**Ключевые слова:** эпистолярный текст, текстовые категории, структура, функции.