

## German SMS Communication: A textual Aspect

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**Abstract.** SMS communication is an important segment of electronic communication that was established in the society of XXI century and its system of communication. The article is devoted to the investigation of German SMS messages alleged to be popular form of communication. According to conceptual semantic features German SMS messages are divided into SMS messages providing technical service and support, mass media SMS messages, private SMS messages, conventionalized SMS utterances, SMS aphorisms and SMS jokes. Different interpretations of the term "text", one of the most relevant categories of modern linguistics, are considered. Communicative approach to studying German SMS messages allows to explain SMS communication as an interaction that is realized by means of the text. SMS text exists in the system of mobile communication in electronic written form of communicative activity of mobile phone users – SMS communicators. Technical space of SMS communication directly influences the process of text generation and stipulates appearance of peculiar characteristics of SMS messages texts.

**Keywords:** SMS communication, SMS message, SMS text, features of German SMS texts.

**Introduction.** Scientific-technical revolution of the second half of the 20th century contributed greatly to the development of innovative communication technologies that gave broad opportunities for communication. At the beginning of the 21st century SMS – Short Message Service was widely recognized. Originally, SMS messages were the product of secondary importance of mobile communication services that started to use them with the view of informing clients of network failure and providing technical information [20, p. 13].

The absence of integral approach to SMS messages determine the need for identification of the nature of SMS communication, in particular German SMS messages. Resorting to theoretical consideration of relevant SMS texts' characteristics reveals new possibilities in studying electronic communication texts. The relevance of the research stems from necessity of analysis of different aspects of SMS communication functioning and its attendant socio-cultural and linguistic changes that requires scientifically based definition and justification.

The study of German SMS messages in linguistics is closely connected with the following names of national and international linguists as M. A. Aakhus, J. E. Katz, P. Schlobinski, J. Schwitalla. Linguistic peculiarities of German SMS messages are thoroughly investigated in scientific works of J. Androutopoulos, K. Dürscheid, N. Döring, T. Sievel, A. V. Palkova, P. Schlobinski, N. Döring, P. Rössler and J. R. Höflich analyze communicative characteristics of German SMS messages.

The purpose of the article is to determine categorial, classificational characteristics of German SMS messages and consider German SMS message being the text with its special, peculiar characteristics. Private German SMS messages constitute the material of the investigation.

Transformation of SMS messages from the instrument of professional communication into practical, universal way of private communication and their intended function – to transfer information determined wide-scale and private character of SMS messages. SMS messages are classified according to different characteristics, the main of them are the characteristics from conceptual semantic sphere:

– SMS messages that provide the user of mobile communication with technical services and technical support. These SMS messages are technically determined and sent in case of necessity to inform a client about objective changes in mobile communication. Mobile phone opera-

tors inform their clients by SMS messages about services and service conditions, give individual information on host account, missed calls, appearance of the relative addressee in network etc.

These SMS messages are characterized by conventionalism, similarity of the content, actual changes in data of certain subscriber and one-wayness – the absence of feedback communication with operator by SMS messages.

– mass media SMS messages. On the level of mass communication SMS messages are represented by various information SMS services: news, football matches results, stock-exchange prices and horoscopes [18, p. 99-100].

Extending of mobile communication network that is connected with ever-growing communication needs and demands of communication subjects is revealed through the appearance of new kinds of mass SMS services: SMS advertisements, SMS votings, SMS church services etc. Mass media SMS messages reach numerous anonymous, heterogeneous recipients with different social attitudes [19, p. 51] and remain anonymous for addresser. The addresser of mass media SMS messages is a social producer [15] that addresses the recipient on behalf of public structure – firm, enterprise and public organization, promotes certain social, group, and corporate interests, provides different information and offers various services in the form of commercial, political and social SMS advertisement which is the effective means of marketing policy.

– private SMS messages. The most wide spread is the service of SMS messages in interpersonal communication [18, p. 99], that presents mostly 1:1-communication [21, p. 320] and occurs between identified communicators.

– conventional SMS messages, SMS aphorisms that occur in private communication and directed at maintenance of close relations, expressing passions of SMS communicators that perform the functions of SMS salutations, SMS good wishes and SMS congratulations, for example: *Hallo Du Geburtstagskind, sei nicht traurig dass Du schon wieder ein Jahr älter geworden bist. Alles Gute!*

The indirect way of birthday congratulation characterizes the practice of communication between close SMS communicators. Communicative space of electronic communication is the ideal environment for the existence and development of comicality elements [17, p. 220]. Thus, telling jokes often occurs within private, familiar SMS communication. For example, SMS message that

belongs to the genre of SMS jokes: *Heute zu erledigen: 1. Aufstehen 2. Überleben 3. Wieder ins Bett.*

SMS communication influences poetry and results in change from traditional to electronic form of lyrics presentation. For example: *Regen, Dunkelheit, Kälte-alles egal, weil ich an meinen Sonnenschein-Felix denke. Ich liebe Dich so sehr!*

The appearance of poetical SMS messages as a genre of modern poetry is caused by speakers' desires to poetically express their feelings within technically indirect communication.

**Discussion.** A person in its human nature always expresses her/himself – speaks, creates the text [3, p. 286]. Electronic communication generates new types of texts, linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics of which vary depending on technical parameters of certain communication type.

The concept of text is one of the most important categories in modern linguistics, complicated and comprehensive phenomenon [13, p. 13]. Various criteria are taken as a basis for text interpretation. The existing definitions and descriptions of a text give the evidence of system-oriented approach to it. Polysystemic character of research approaches to text studying is related to polysystemic character of the text itself [11, p. 64]. The term text is broadly used to define any comprehensive product of person's linguistic competence [12, p. 5]. Text as a main unit of communication is a complete and coherent message, structured in such a way as to achieve information delivering and storing [1, p. 38-39].

During the last 20 years of the XX-th century the earlier demonstrated tendency to study the text as a complex communicative device, communication mediator that formalizes addresser's strategic programme, received and interpreted by the addressee came to the fore in linguistics [14, p. 10]. The process of communication is identified with the text, being regarded the embodiment of the communication itself [4, p. 146-147]. Communication occurs through the texts, by which the partners of communication interchange [24, p. 14].

The communicative approach to the study of German SMS messages allows to treat them as a focused process, activity, one of which means is language and sign-oriented, complete form of its organization – text [14, p. 34]. SMS text exists in the system of mobile communication in electronic written form of communicative activity of mobile phone users – SMS communicators. Within SMS communication, the reader's engagement into life occurs by SMS messages – intratextual contact with reality [13, p. 10]. SMS text incorporates speech and mental activity of the person writing and presupposes appropriate reader's activity, his/her perception [8].

The constituents of text activity structure apart from the text include the author (text addresser), the reader (text addressee), represented reality, knowledge about which is reported in the text and system of language, from which the author chooses linguistic means, enabling him to adequately realize his creative concept [2, p. 13]. As a product of text activity text is directed at organization of meaningful information for communication [7, p. 15]. In text the author shares information he got due to his cognitive activity with the reader [6, p. 48]. The reader under the influence of the text seeks to understand it, to gain an insight into the author's creative concept [2, p. 14]. Consequently, the following interconnected triad appears the

author (creator of the text) – the text (realization of speech and mental activity) – the reader (interpretator) [8]. This communicative triad, where the SMS text is the mediator can be represented in SMS communication in the following way the addresser of SMS communication – the text of SMS message – the addressee of SMS communication.

Texts of private SMS messages are oriented toward certain communication partner – certain addressee and created by the addresser who has wide private apperceptive background in common with the addressee. This background includes factors common for both addresser and addressee, their common knowledge, experience, common for the present moment activity etc. [10, p. 102]. Common apperceptive background enables speakers to leave a lot implicit, to keep unexpressed, unexplained [9, p. 17]. Furthermore, rich private apperceptive SMS communicators' background allows to understand each other adequately.

The addresser, addressee and possible response reaction of the latter are responsible for the choice of the SMS message's linguistic style and linguistic means. SMS message structure reveals direct dependence on the partners of communicative act and such extralinguistic communicative factors as role and individual characteristics of communication partners (age and social status equality – inequality of communicators); social relations between communication partners: a) the degree of acquaintance (close, not close, the degree of communicators' relationships), b) the area of communication (private – professional; easiness – formality of communication); linguistic situation, involving topic and subject of conversation; aims of communicative act (e.g. the request to give information, giving information, agreement about the meeting, communication etc.); the conditions of communicative act (availability of enough time to consider SMS text); the choice of linguistic means and the final result [22, p. 40].

The important aspect of electronic communication is private but not official correspondence of different social segments as far as it is private correspondence that helps to reveal communicators' personalities, feelings and emotions [5, p. 72]. Conditions of electronic SMS communication influence the cultivation of language communication and cause special characteristics of SMS texts, among which are:

- space-time discretization which is provided if money is available on the user's cell phone account by the coverage of their mobile phone operators, their presence within the limits of reach on the one hand, and their desire to start communication act on the other hand, quick message sending.

- thematic polyphony that combines several plot themes to discuss within one communicative act. For example: *Liebe Sweta. Meine reisepläne haben sich zerschlagen, weil mein fuß noch nen gips-schuh kriegen musste. in g wird n schöner typ mit mir studieren. kenn bisher nur email. Große umarmung! Sonja*

In SMS text, the sender reveals the information in two theme-lines – the failure of plans to travel and new pleasant-looking person – fellow-student;

- brevity: the form and content of personal letter are characterized by suddenness of their origin. The letter is usually not intended for long-term existence and further reproduction [16, p. 87]. In addition, text is communica-

tively psychological phenomenon that exists exclusively at the moment of creation and perception [13, p. 13].

The next SMS message where the addresser/sender states his delay reveals the importance of information at the time of sending and receiving SMS message: 01/09/2014 11:34 *Ich komme in 2 Stunden.*

However, the received and sent SMS messages can be stored and systematically archived in the mobile phone memory endlessly. The degree of SMS texts' relevance for the mobile communication user determines their storing time.

– relative level of SMS texts' confidentiality that is influenced by the individualistic and technical parameters of SMS communication by which we imply the desire and possibility of storing SMS messages' information. SMS communication act occurs in public places without the loss of confidentiality or violation of privacy of surrounding persons. In this case the individualistic parameter of SMS messages information storage combines the interest of SMS communicators to save information from unauthorized persons whereas technical parameter – the reliability of transmission and storing of information by the mobile phone operator.

The next SMS communication addressee having told about difficult period in her life explicitly asks addresser not to give information to third persons:

– *Erzähl was gibt's neues?*

– *bin eine exmatrikulierte Studentin ohne Zukunft in einer Art Dreiecksbeziehung und ohne Ahnung was ich machen soll (nicht an Dritte weiterleiten Bitte)*

The main reason to reveal SMS message information is personal factor and individualistic parameter, the example of which is the publication of private SMS messages of the former Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs I. Kanerva and J. Tukiainen. I. Kanerva is not the only known politician whose private SMS messages appeared in the Internet and were publicly displayed.

Leaving mobile phone unattended, the addresser's inattention while choosing the addressee, the factors that we consider to be privately subjective, are regular reasons of SMS messages disclosure. Technically subjective factors of SMS communication that lead to information disclosure involve technical deficiencies in the work of mobile phone operator. The possibility of SMS texts' information disclosure is connected with SMS messages storing in the mobile phone operator's service center [18, p. 97].

– linearity which is achieved by linear text production makes impossible both its correction and its canceling after sending, as well as the communicator's influence on the course of SMS communication act. For example:

– *Ich liebe dich! Ich wollte es dir schon lange sagen. Seit ich dich zu ersten mal gesehen habe find ich dich total süß! Deine augen sind so schön blau wie ein wolkenloser sommer himmel und deine braunen haare duften so gut...*

– *BIST DU SCHWUL?!*

– *Shit! Falsche nummer sorry bro!*

The addresser having received the response from addressee and discovered the error in the choice of address-

ee cannot cancel the initially sent SMS message. Therefore, he/she corrects oneself by sending second message where he/she indicates that the SMS message was directed to other person.

SMS communication users are not simply public or recipients, but media producers (Mediaproduzenten). SMS communication recipient acts as active but not passive communicator (aktiver Kommunikator) [23, p. 34-36]. It is suggested to define the recipient as "limited active communicator" as long as SMS communication conditions involve the elements of objective and subjective nature. The elements of objective nature include physical ability and financial capability, communicator's psychological desire to perform communicative actions within the space of SMS communication, and practical active steps towards achieving communicative goal. The communicative goal of SMS communicator lies in giving information to other subject of SMS communication by SMS text. The elements of subjective nature involve the situations independent of mobile phone users and do not predetermine any impact on them. Among them are insufficient technical resources of mobile phone operator to give information fully, the failure of communication channel, unwillingness or impossibility of SMS communication subject to get/read or react/response to the information received.

The distinguished linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics of German SMS messages that are closely interrelated allow to define SMS message as a separate texts class – texts type. By the text of SMS message, the certain type of electronic written text is meant which is characterized by the unity of text categories and typological features and intended to exchange information by the use of mobile phone or Internet.

**Conclusions.** SMS communication that is aimed at transmitting information via technical channel – mobile phone or via Internet service of free SMS messages turned into user friendly communication means and category of objective language reality. As an integral element of modern communicative system, SMS communication is widespread among the representatives of different generations and social statuses that resulted in the mass and private character of SMS messages. According to conceptual semantic features German SMS messages are divided into SMS messages providing technical service and support, mass-media SMS messages, private SMS messages, conventionalized SMS utterances, SMS aphorisms and SMS jokes.

Technical determinants of electronic SMS communication define special features of German SMS texts: electronic recording, conciseness, linearity and technical parameter of relative level of information confidentiality. Variable characteristics of German SMS texts that depend directly on SMS communicator and his communicative goals include redundancy, space-time discretization, polyphony and brevity of SMS message as well as individualistic parameter of relative confidentiality level.

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#### Немецкоязычная смс-коммуникация: текстуальный аспект Е. А. Беззубова

**Аннотация.** Смс-коммуникация является важным сегментом электронной коммуникации, которая утвердилась в обществе XXI столетия и его коммуникативной системе. Статья посвящена исследованию немецкоязычных смс-сообщений, ставших популярной формой коммуникации. За понятийно-семантическими сферами немецкоязычные смс-сообщения классифицированы на смс-сообщения, предоставляющие технические услуги и техническую поддержку, массмедийные смс-сообщения, приватные смс-сообщения, трафаретные смс-выражения, смс-афоризмы и смс-шутки. Рассмотрено различные трактовки термина «текст» – одной из наиболее релевантных категорий современной лингвистики. Коммуникативный подход в исследовании немецкоязычных смс-сообщений позволяет интерпретировать смс-коммуникацию как интеракцию, что реализуется посредством текста. Текст смс-сообщения существует в системе мобильной связи в электронно-письменной форме коммуникативной деятельности пользователей мобильной связи – смс-коммуникантов. Техническое пространство смс-коммуникации оказывает непосредственное влияние на процесс порождения текста и предопределяет возникновение специфических свойств текстов смс-сообщений.

**Ключевые слова:** смс-коммуникация, смс-сообщение, смс-текст, свойства немецкоязычных смс-текстов.