

## The genesis and dynamics of secondary discourse phenomenon

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**Abstract.** The study objective is the investigation of the process of secondary discourse production. The secondary type of discourse is defined as a complex linguistic phenomenon and a specific secondary creativity. Being a dynamic process of information, ideas, feelings, and emotions exchange, secondary discourse presupposes the subjective interpretation of modern mass culture text corpora. Thus, the research is carried out on the material of G.R.R. Martin's bestselling epic fantasy novels *A Song of Ice and Fire* and its secondary textspaces, published on Fanfiction.net.

**Keywords:** communication, secondary discourse, precedential text, secondary text, interpretation

**Introduction.** Recently, discourse has been examined from various academic perspectives. The rapid development of discourse practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and so-called "discursive turn" [12] in the humanities emphasize a high relevance of this paper. As a widely-used concept, discourse becomes a unifying element for communicative linguistics, rhetoric and semiotics. Thus, it involves a lot of scientific interpretations. Currently, there is no exact definition of "discourse", since various disciplines and paradigms of linguistics conceptualize it differently. Each definition depends on the specific field and the object of research.

Discourse can be interpreted as a form of verbal communication, which involves the relationship between the speaker and the listener; as a sociolinguistic structure produced in a particular situation of communication aimed at the implementation of cognitive, emotional, physical and pragmatic impact on the recipient, or as a cognitive process associated with the formation of verbal behavior etc. According to T.A. van Dijk, "discourse" is a communicative event that takes place between those who speak and those who listen to a specific temporal and spatial context [3]. It is a communicative action which can occur both orally and in writing, and contains all features of communicative events. Thus, typical examples of discourse include a conversation with a friend, a dialogue between a teacher and a student, or even reading a book. Within present cognitive-communicative paradigm of linguistics modern researches examine discourse as an integral unit of speech, combining both cognitive and communicative aspects [11; 16; 17]. Discourse is also defined as a coherent text combined with its external factors, as a text taken in terms of events, as socially-oriented action [1, p. 136-137; 15, p. 119]. Thus, the term "discourse" gets a variety of definitions and interpretations and is mostly determined by the text, or through it.

There are different types of discourse (e.g. *the media discourse* (M. Bednarek, A. O'Keeffe), *political discourse* (Van Dijk, Wodak), *medical discourse* (Howard Waitzkin, James M. Wilce), *discourse of education and science* (Gaile S. Cannella) etc.), depending on the sphere of communicants' professional activity. Each type of discourse has its own characteristic features and lingual signs, and performs certain functions in the communicative process. This paper attempts to conduct a case study of the *secondary type of discourse* as a multidimensional linguistic phenomenon, its genesis, dynamics and specific features. Therefore, the paper clarifies such interdependent notions as "communication" and "secondary discourse" / "fanfiction", "precedential text" / "primary text" / "source text"

/"original text" and "secondary text" / "fan text". The **object** of our research is the secondary discourse phenomenon, and the **subject** is distinctive features of secondary discourse production in cyberspace. The **empirical material** is bestselling epic fantasy novels written by the American novelist and screenwriter George Raymond Richard Martin, such as: *A Game of Thrones*, *A Clash of Kings*, *A Storm of Swords*, *A Feast for Crows* and *A Dance with Dragons*, and its secondary discourse texts, published on Fanfiction.Net.

**Discussion.** Undoubtedly, communication plays a crucial role in human society. The major feature of human society that differentiates us from animal world is our ability to keep and pass information. All the previous ways of communication serve as the background for the present unprecedented integration of communication options, which we call the Internet. It has become a worldwide broadcasting mechanism for spreading the information, a means for interaction and collaboration between individuals and institutions.

Instant communication of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has no time or space limits. Computer-mediated communication as online textual interaction provides a distinct space for social interaction and cultural contact, with new and inventive forms of language generated. The interrelation of computer technology and literature led to new forms of communication. Within cyberspace, one can be a part of any online community, as cyberspace enables users around the world to hold discussions, raise questions or concerns, and express observations. Social limitations and conventional norms are not barriers for a potential friendship or partnership anymore. The Internet is a vibrant and living web of interconnected links crossing the globe, background of multiple avenues to information. New technologies enable fans from all over the globe to meet online in order to share, critique, and build upon each other's fictions'. Thus, the Internet adds a zest of creativity to communication. The phenomenon of secondary discourse is the evidence of this statement.

People participate in many different communities at any given time, and can thus draw on many discourses as they move through their daily lives [5]. Today anyone with access to television, Internet and computer has access to countless discourse communities. It is presumed that anyone can join any discourse in cyberspace. Everyone starts their life with a primary discourse. As people expand their communities of participation, they learn new, or secondary discourses. According to James Paul Gee [5, p. 202] "secondary discourse", is viewed as an interaction with large

public social institutions outside one's family or early socializing group, whether this is a church, school, government agency, workplace, or interest-driven group. This study presents *secondary discourse* as a secondary creativity, a dynamic process of textual communication, mediated by precedential text corpora. It is aimed primarily at information, ideas, emotions and intense feelings exchange, thus reflecting the productivity, creativity and empowerment of the secondary authors who create a fandom.

The term "*fandom*" refers to the fan-based community dedicated to a particular cult-inducing medium, including books, movies, music, comics, and any other *canon / source material*. It can be used to represent fans and diverse ways they follow and enjoy the original source material. Also, fandom is a generic way of the original source material reference that supports a fan-based community itself. Fandom includes both the Internet presence and real-life existence, and is expressed in many ways including websites, mailing lists, archives, fanart, fanfic, Cons, etc. In other words, this discursive community includes fans who share a common interest focused on writing (essays or stories). It implies unity, identity, shared responsibility, exclusion, restriction, admission or non-admission [14, p. 53]. Source material may also come from films or TV-shows, and in the latter two cases it does not derive purely from writers, but also from directors, producers and even actors, all those, who have a hand in the character creation [13, p. 25-26].

According to John Fiske [4, p. 37-39], there are three aspects of productivity in fandom: semiotic, which indicates the ability to build own meanings and unique interpretations of a particular text (in this case the word text refers to various types of original sources for example books, TV-shows, moovies); the second aspect emerges from the discussions of these meanings and makes them productions of their own; the third aspect of fandom is textual, which refers to all texts that fans produce, and circulate among them, i.e. *fan fiction stories / secondary texts*. Various ways of re-writing can serve as a means of getting as much as possible from the primary text. Fanfiction writing can be seen as practicing writing skills and perhaps as a rehearsal for writing own stories, which are not based on anyone else's works. Furthermore, writing is used for emotional relief, and as means of empowerment and getting one's voice heard.

It is rather difficult to define whether someone is a fan or not. Recently, the meaning of "fan" has been changed and territorialized by both scholars and fans. The audience's role in the production of popular culture texts has increased. A rapid expansion of mass media, especially the Internet, has caused audience members to differentiate between interested viewers, who simply enjoy the book or show, and true fans, who often buy memorabilia and readily quote novel lines and facts. According to Grossberg's [6] definition people can be thought of as fans if they identify themselves with the media product or a particular media star or a particular style presented in the media. However, watching regularly or simply liking a certain book, film or a TV-series, buying certain products and reading about the subjects of admiration doesn't make you a fan. Being a fan means a more intense relationship to its source. The sole consumption of certain media products does not necessarily make a person a fan.

Fans are more emotionally charged than typical consumers, their power comes from their proximity to the text, which allows them to critique, predict and rework it [8, p. 56, 58]. The critical power is generated by multiple re-readings of the text. Jenkins does not separate writers and readers. He sees fan reading as a social process because individual interpretations are made and discussed with other readers [8, p. 44-45]. In Jenkins' [8, p. 23-24] opinion, fans experience a combination of adoration and frustration for popular texts, and it motivates their active involvement with the narratives. He explains that since *the original text* is seldom satisfying, fans aim to express the unfulfilled possibilities within the original to themselves and others. He concludes that in the process, they become active participants in the circulation of textual meanings instead of being simply the audience for popular texts. Thus, we assert that "media fans are consumers who also produce, readers who also write, and spectators who also participate" [7, p. 30].

Being the social relationships and context through which the communication is mediated, the secondary discourse is the way in which secondary texts are produced, transmitted and consumed by fans using computers. The tendency to the formation and active functioning of the secondary discourse defines indisputable relevance of the modern mass culture precedential textspaces. A *precedential text* means an axiological sign functioning within a semiotic space of culture. It is important for a person at the cognitive and emotive levels, and is well-known within the person's social environment (both of his / her own as well as previous generations); it is fore-grounded in the discourse each time it is generated by the linguistic person [10, p. 216]. A wide range of precedential phenomena can be used in the secondary discourse. They are precedential phrases (quotations and set expressions), names of characters that are verbal phenomena, and also precedential texts and situations that belong to phenomena which can be verbalized by means of symbols presented by precedential names and phrases.

*The precedential text / primary text* is introduced into a secondary one by giving the name of the character, borrowing settings, plots and ideas or just quoting it. The most specific means of "A Song of Ice and Fire" "secondary" world reproduction are proper names taken from the *canon* (the "official" source material upon which *fanfiction / secondary discourse* can be based). They perform the creative function, causing new connotations and extra semantic associations, expand semantic boundaries of the precedential text corpora in the process of secondary discourse production. Both types of proper names – anthroponyms and toponyms – used by G.R. R. Martin in the primary textspace and by the secondary authors in the texts of the series' secondary discourse create such onomastic background that would make the reader believe in the credibility of the "secondary" world of the novels.

There are also clear tendencies in the secondary discourse of "A Song of Ice and Fire" to make allusive references to precedential text corpora. Secondary authors create new tales within the accepted canon or blending several ideas from different sources together in a type of fiction called "*Crossovers*", and sometimes imagining new possibilities for additional characters (*Original character* i.e. a character created by the author of the fanfiction, as opposed to one already existing in canon), exploring them and their relationship, different histories or different settings to build

on existing stories, called “*Alternative Universe*” fiction. “*Alternate Universe*” (AU) is a story that makes major changes to the canonical storyline or premise, such as killing off a major character, changing characters’ motives or alliances, annulling major events or changing the setting. AU means the world (universe) is different. The physics, geography, technology etc. are different. Alternate universe is the term for stories where the original story is set in a way that it is not presented in the canon, whereas crossover can mix universes or/and characters [13, p. 36]. There might be more flexibility with minor characters because their personalities and opinions are not so well established in the canon. That said, staying in character seems to be the one thing a fan fiction writer must accomplish and no clever plot, nor wonderful ideas will compensate for it [13, p. 69-71]. Moreover, there are also fan fiction writers who prefer to write secondary texts with no action at all but lots of interaction and reflection instead. They alter the original story line and make up their own plots.

There are numerous fans and various fan fiction communities. Membership of such discursive communities is a matter of choice: members of fandoms actively share common interests and goals and communicate with other members to pursue those goals. The common feature of all communities seems to be the devotion the fans have for their fandom. The most popular site, where people upload their own writing based on one of several fan categories: anime, book, cartoon, comic, game, movie, television show or other, is Fanfiction.net. Members of the fandom are able to read each other’s stories, write reviews of each other’s stories and seek assistance with aspects of their writing such as plot, characterisation, grammar, paragraphing and so on through the help of a “*beta writer*” – somebody who is responsible for the forms of literary practice, or a “*beta reader*” – someone (not necessarily an editor) who reads, edits and proof / reads a fanfiction author’s writing before the author publishes it. The community itself is a place for talking about the canon and engaging in a range of discursive practices beyond individual narrative writing. It provides spaces for exploring, discovering and celebrating the strengths of individuals as they play together to create a new culture. There are different writing and communication strategies within any discursive community. Henry Jenkins suggests ten strategies of fans rewriting [8, p. 162-175]. We’ll study eight of them on the material of George R.R. Martin’s epic fantasy novels “*A Song of Ice and Fire*” secondary discourse.

1. *Re-contextualization* means that fans write stories, which fill in the gaps in the source text corpora and give alternative explanations for the characters’ behaviour. These stories might be about the past of the character that will provide more information for the character’s conducts. For example: “*He could still remember the first time he saw her, descending with her draconic children over the Wall, taking on the White Walkers in a storm of fire and smoke*” (the first meeting of Daenerys Targaryen and John Snow);

2. *Expanding the timeline* is another way of changing the original story. Fans write about things that happened before the original story starts or continue stories (Alternate universes) that in their opinion have ended before their time. For example: “*An alternate version of George*

*R.R. Martin’s ‘Game of Thrones’, based on the books, asking what would happen if Ned Stark had lived*”.

3. *Re-focalization* means that most of fans concentrate on the secondary characters, they want to give more attention, for example to *Robert Baratheon, Viserys Targaryen, Gregor Clegan, Gendry etc.*

4. *Moral realignment* means a story in which the good guys are the bad guys. Secondary writers offer explanations why the character turned evil in the first place, for example violation of the sacred vows of the “*Night Watch*”: “*I had broken my Oath to the Night’s Watch*”.

5. *Character dislocation* means that the characters can be taken from the original context and can be placed to a totally different environment, for example: “*Yet, there she (Daenerys Targaryen) sat, atop her Iron Throne, ready to rule the kingdom*”.

6. *Personalization* is a term used when fans write themselves into the stories: “*A first person narrative set in A Song of Ice and Fire. A maester sets out to expand the map of the known world. An Original Character*”. Such stories are often called *Mary Sue-stories* i.e. any original female character which is too perfect, too extreme, or otherwise badly done or its male counterpart *Marty-Sam*.

7. *Emotional intensification* focuses on psychological and emotional issues. Fans switch focus from action to emotional scenes and preferably to moments of narrative crisis. These stories are usually full of angst, and fans express their compassionate concern for characters. They are called *hurt-comfort* stories: “*Lord Eddard Stark’s beheading, told by none other than Ned himself*”.

8. *Eroticisation* is the last one of Jenkins’ categories for rewriting. It is also a very popular form of fan fiction. Fans do not have to worry about censors, they only need to mark age-limits to their stories, to give so called “*Ratings*”. Some stories just get inspiration from relationships already hinted by the original text. Also, the homoerotic stories referred to as “*slash*” can be mentioned (*K. Drogo / Daenerys T., Viserys T. / Daenerys T.*). Jenkins [8, p. 177] concludes that fans read and write these stories not only to relive their own expectations of the original texts, but also to see how others have perceived them and how the stories can be retold, and what new elements have been introduced to them.

As we can see “the reader’s activity is no longer seen simply as the task of recovering the author’s meanings, but also as reworking borrowed materials to fit them into the context of lived experience” [8, p. 51]. Fan writers take the source text and populate it with their own intentions and accents. Appropriating characters and worlds, they write alternate endings and propose alternate romantic pairings, or even rewrite an entire novel. Writers use *canon texts* as a jump-off point that can lead to prequels, sequels, fan spin-offs, Alternate universes and Crossovers.

The whole world of secondary discourse operates on established conventions and specialized vocabulary, which are used and modified by each fandom. Secondary authors are struggling for “ever newer ways to mean” [2, p. 346] and generate their own hegemonic forces by creating terms to easily identify their stories (e.g. “*hurt / comfort*”, “*slash*”, “*disclaimer*” and community-accepted fan facts (e.g. “*fan-on*”, “*canon*”). For example: “*hurt / comfort*” means a plot framework in which one character in a particular ship experiences pain (physical or emotional) and the other character offers comfort. May qualify as *darfic* depending on the

origin and amount of focus on the “hurt” aspect of the story; “*slash*” – a subgenre of romance fanfiction which exclusively deals with homosexual relationships. It is a subgenre that addresses a romantic relationship between characters of the same gender, especially males. Stories with male homosexual pairings are the most common. Lesbian relationships are often referred to as “*femslash*” to distinguish them from the male / male pairing stories. The term “*disclaimer*” means a header that must be put before all fan fiction which acknowledges that the fan fiction author owns the copyrights to the material which they are writing for. This is both a courtesy and necessity among fans who write fan fiction. All fan fictions on this archive must include disclaimers. The term “*fanon*” presupposes things that are not strictly canon, but do not contradict it and are widely accepted by most fans. No doubt there are such fan communities which tend to ban stories that commit unforgivable sins such as getting canon facts wrong and portraying characters as acting *Out Of Character* (OOC) [13, p. 40] (When a canon character acts in such a way as to be totally contrary to what they would in the primary text).

**Conclusion.** The specific online discursive communities created by fan fiction writers, which have been moving to cyberspace for over fifteen years, reveal dialogic and heteroglossic interaction with / against producers of primary texts. Fan fiction, which started out as paper fanzines, is now mostly Internet phenomenon in which fans of books, movies, television shows and video games write secondary texts about their favourite characters or world. Thus, the Internet is a unique modern discursive environment. The

discursive cybercommunity comprises individuals’ functioning in the cognitive-communicative secondary discourse matrix, where multilevel interaction (verbal, narrative, conceptual, stylistic) of source-text featuring a relevant concept, and a secondary text as response-text to it occurs, thus producing the secondary discourse. The phenomenon of secondary discourse proves that subcommunities create innovative works.

Secondary discourse is the type of communicative activities, highly interactive phenomenon which has various manifestations (oral, written, paralingual). It occurs within a particular channel of communication strategies and tactics regulated parties. Thus, secondary discourse can be regarded as both a living process of communication and the most common category of interpersonal interaction. It is a complex unity of language practice and extralinguistic factors needed to understand the source-text.

Secondary discourse analysis should be carried out on both macro- and microstructural levels. Macrostructure tends to the full range of semantic information and is often described by different generic notions, such as theme or topic. This level involves discursive formations analysis and outlines two discursive strategies of secondary discourse production. Microstructural level imbues a method of conceptual analysis, identifying certain concepts in the secondary texts and enables to estimate peculiar conceptual patterns in the secondary discourse. It also involves the analysis of various methods of dialogic interaction of the primary and secondary textspaces of G.R.R. Martin’s “A Song of Ice and Fire”.

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