Gimaletdinova Gulnara Kamilevna
Khalitova Liliia Kamilevna
Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University
UDC 81'27

Participatory News Article: Genre Clarification

participatory news article, media text, reader comment

The research investigates the phenomenon of the ***participatory news article*** (PNA) which is viewed as a hybrid web genre of an online news article followed by postings of reader comments [Bruce 2010: 333]. The authors provide arguments to support the idea that news articles presented in the Internet and readers' responses (reader comments) should be structurally and semantically considered as a single whole.

Reflecting on the problems of speech genres, scientists note the dialogic nature of language, the diversity of ways in which language might be used for interaction and the idea that a speech of any individual is built via interaction with other people's individual utterances [Bakhtin 1979]. In the developing era of globalization the dynamics of socio-political life and modern technology contribute to social communication which is becoming more open and accessible. Communication on the Internet could be characterized as a global polylogue, each participant having ample opportunities for self-expression.

Due to the World Wide Web, participatory media features have become the subject of scientific interest. Research in the area of participatory journalism, being focused on the news consumers' practices [Almgren 2015; Understanding 2010], states that "news consumption is a socially-engaging and socially-driven activity, especially online. The public is clearly part of the news process now. Participation comes more through sharing than through contributing news themselves" [Understanding 2010]. Moreover, with the Internet turning into "a new multi-platform media environment, people's relationship to news is becoming portable, personalized, and participatory" [Ibid.].

Studies of public opinion and its forms of expression have been carried out on different genres of the media, including blogs, news articles, internet comments, etc. [Gimaletdinova 2012; Goroshko & Polyakova 2015; Topchii 2020]. In this article, we claim that a focus on a dialogic nature of online collaboration between journalists and readers (i.e. news articles and reader comments) helps clarify the specific features of PNA as a genre. In particular, we analyse stylistic and linguistic features of PNA as a hybrid media genre, since it presents two different language practices: one of a journalist and another of a reader.

The data for the study was collected from the British newspaper *The Guardian* [https://www.theguardian.com/international]. We selected news articles (N=5) [Hosey 2021; Hyde 2021; Reicher 2021; Beckett 2021; The Guardian view 2021] and analysed all reader comments published online after the

articles (N=5,731). The methods of linguistic analysis and interpretation were used. The results are suggested below.

Firstly, a notable feature of the PNA is the presence of a 'starting point', i.e. a news article raising socially significant issues, while reader comments are viewed as spontaneous responses. Different linguistic means are used by journalists in order to capture the readers' attention, such as epithets *('do nothing' party'; 'finger-pointing strategy')*, clichés and idioms *('risky path'; 'draconian measures'; 'to hear the real-world alarm bells'; 'we are not off the hook')*, emphatic vocabulary *('deadly incompetence'; 'cynical optimism'; 'horrendous stories')*, intensifiers *('frighteningly real'; 'increasingly alarming')* [Hosey 2021; Hyde 2021; Reicher 2021; Beckett 2021; The Guardian view 2021].

Our observations align with other studies which claim that "when users participate online, it does not happen in a neutral space, insulated from external influence. Quite the opposite, participatory practices – such as online news commenting – generally take place in spaces that have been structured by various producers" [Almgren 2015: 2]. Electronic media are participatory forms of online communication and this suggests interactivity between readers who can, upon reading the news, share their views and ideas with other participants of communication. Comments sections stimulate online collaboration and increase the ratings of the newspaper [Kushneruk 2007: 141]. We assume that for journalists, carefully selected linguistic means are an effective tool of stating their subjective opinion, generating readers' interest and initiating discussions.

Secondly, a specific feature of PNA is an author-reader online collaboration, i.e. a virtual dialogue of a reader and a journalist. The figure below shows some examples of reader comments that suggest a general assessment of the article: *disapproval* (comments (1)-(4)), *concern* or *emotional response* (comments (5)-(6)) and *approval* (comments (7)-(10) (**see Fig. 1**). Readers frequently address the authors of the articles by names (e.g. *'Marina'* comment (9) or address the newspaper (e.g. *'the Guardian'*).
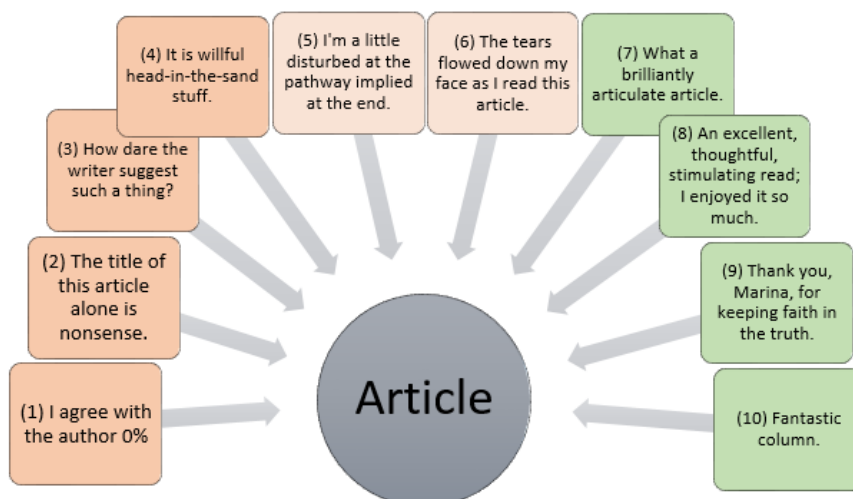

Figure 1. Author-reader online collaboration

Thirdly, there is a correlation between the informativity of the journalistic text and the amount of reader comments, the latter being marked by *participatory* character. The figure below shows how the idea about "personal responsibility' mantra" suggested in the lead of a news article (1) initiates, first, individual responses (comments (2)-(5)) and then threads where readers participate in further discussion creating online dialogues (comments (2) and (6); (3) and (7); (5) and (11) and what is more, building a polylogue (comments (4), (8), (9) and (10) [Beckett 2021] (**see Fig. 2**).
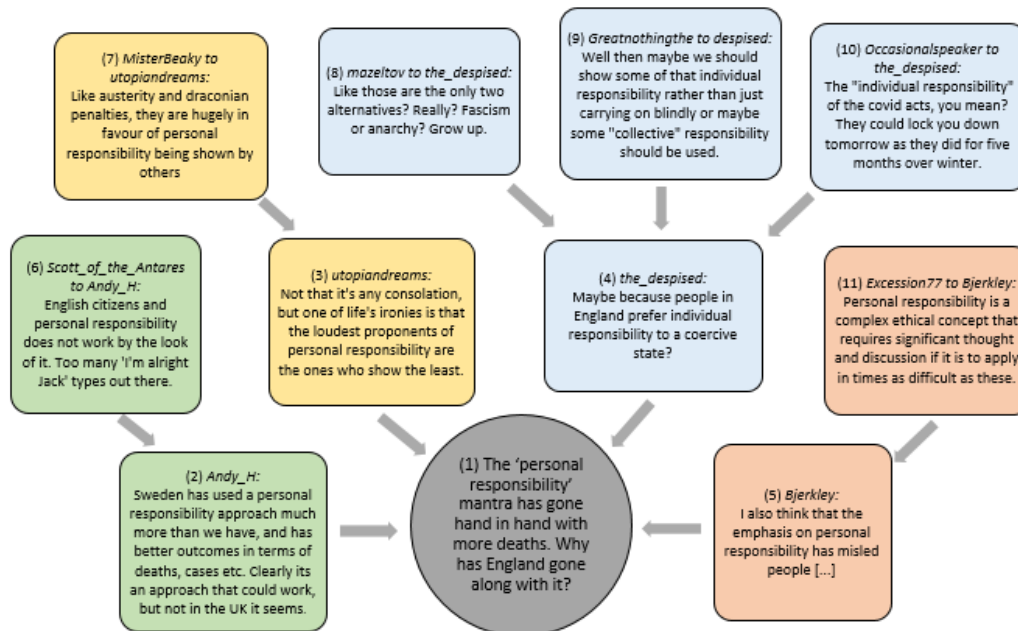

Figure 2. Readers' responses and threads of comments in PNA

To sum up, clarification of PNA revealed the main features of the web genre: interactivity, participatory nature and online collaboration between readers and journalists. In fact, within the PNA the roles of journalists and Internet users are not limited simply to reporting and receiving news. Modern authors of newspaper articles create a response-oriented text and express greater dialogism than in previous decades, while readers demonstrate social engagement co-creating and shaping media content.

References

Almgren S.M. 'Let's Get Them Involved' … to Some Extent: Analyzing Online News Participation / S.M. Almgren, T. Olsson // Social Media + Society. – 2015. – P. 1–11. – URL: https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115621934 (accessed: 01.09.2023).

Bakhtin M.M. Aesthetics of Verbal Creativity / M.M. Bakhtin. – M.: Iskusstvo, 1979. – 424 p.

Bruce I. Evolving Genres in Online Domains: the Hybrid Genre of the Participatory News Article / I. Bruce // Genres on the Web. Computational Models and Empirical Studies / ed. by A. Mehler, S. Sharoff, M. Santini. – Dordrecht: Springer, 2011. – P. 323–348.

Gimaletdinova G.K. Linguistic Fundamentals of Participatory News Article: The Presentation of the Problem / G.K. Gimaletdinova // Political Linguistics. – No. 3. – 2012. – P. 143–148. (In Russian)

Goroshko E.I. On the Development of the Genre Typology for Social Media / E.I. Goroshko, T.L. Polyakova // Zhanry Rechi. – 2015. – No. 2. – P. 119–127. (In Russian)

Kushneruk S.L. Expansion of the Communicative Space: the Specificity of Electronic Media Texts in Comparison with Printed Ones / S.L. Kushneruk // Political Linguistics. – 2007. No. 3 (23). – P. 140–143. (In Russian)

Topchii I.V. Creative Commenting in Social Media: A Review of Studies / I.V. Topchii // Izvestiya Ural'skogo Federal'nogo Universiteta. Seriya 1. Problemy Obrazovaniya, Nauki i Kul'tury. – 2020. – Vol. 26. – No. 2, – P. 22–28. (In Russian)

Understanding the Participatory News Consumer // Pew Research Center. Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010. – URL: https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2010/03/01/understanding-the-participatory-news-consumer/ (accessed: 01.09.2023).

Sources of the data
Beckett A. With Covid infections rising, the Tories are conducting a deadly social experiment. (Fri 22 Oct 2021), 2,033 comments. Url: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/22/england-covid-ethics-personal-responsibility

Hosey M. Post-illness symptoms like long Covid are probably more common than we think. (Sun 12 Sep 2021), 131 comments. Url: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/12/long-covid-post-illnes-symptoms-common

Hyde M. The Covid report should damn this government: it's tragic that it won't. (Tue 12 Oct 2021), 1,453 comments. Url: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/12/covid-report-government-boris-johnson-scientific-advisers-polls

Reicher S. Covid measures give us choice. They are not restrictions on British life. (Thu 28 Oct 2021), 1,335 comments. Url: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/28/covid-measures-choice-restrictions-science-freedom-infections-safe

The Guardian view on Covid's second winter: act now or pay later. Editorial. (Thu 4 Nov 2021), 779 comments. Url: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/04/the-guardian-view-on-covids-second-winter-act-now-or-pay-later