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Specificity of small-format text of English educational discourse

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to analyze small format texts used in the coursebook “English Unlimited” (Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced) that represent modern English-language educational discourse. The main methods of the research were the analysis of linguistic literature, the method of content analysis, as well as the qualitative comparative analysis. The text component in the coursebook is considered in the paper as an educational discourse existing in the context of academic communication. The paper also considers some features of small-format texts, their systematization is carried out, and their main characteristics are described. The analysis of small-format texts of the textbook ‘English Unlimited’ showed that they were related in the educational discourse to human activities, character traits, professional spheres, knowledge and integration of information technologies into human life. The author also finds that small-format texts characterized by intertextuality are situations, stories, articles, dialogues, abstracts, bloggers’ reviews and monologues.

Keywords: small-format text, features of small-format texts, characteristics of small-format texts, English-language educational discourse, intertextuality, anthropocentrism, educational materials, conceptosphere, academic communication, communication

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Специфика малоформатного текста английского образовательного дискурса

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Аннотация. Целью настоящего исследования является анализ малоформатных текстов (МФТ), используемых в учебных пособиях “English Unlimited” (Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced), репрезентирующих современный англоязычный образовательный дискурс. Основными методами исследования послужили анализ лингвистической литературы, метод контент анализа, а также качественный сравнительный анализ. Текстовый компонент

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учебника рассматривается в статье в качестве образовательного дискурса, существующего в контексте академического общения. В работе также рассматриваются особенности малоформатных текстов, осуществляется их систематизация, а также описываются их основные характеристики. Анализ малоформатных текстов учебника “English Unlimited” показал, что они в образовательном дискурсе связаны с деятельностью человека, его чертами характера, профессиональными сферами, знаниями и интеграцией информационных технологий в жизнь человека. В работе также отмечается, что малоформатные тексты, характеризующиеся интертекстуальностью, представляют собой ситуации, рассказы, статьи, диалоги, аннотации, обзоры блогеров и монологи.

Ключевые слова: малоформатный текст, особенности малоформатных текстов, характеристики малоформатных текстов, англоязычный образовательный дискурс, интертекстуальность, антропоцентризм, учебные материалы, концептосфера, академическое общение, коммуникация

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Introduction

Small-format texts often stand as research material within the framework of business discourse¹, advertising texts on tourism topics², Internet discourse³. There are some works that discuss methods of typological research of small-format texts, in particular, structural and semantic types of small-format texts and their functioning in various types of discourse, features of small-format texts categorization, their pragmatic potential and ways of intertextuality demonstration (E. S. Kubryakova⁴, I. B. Ruberg⁵ etc.).

To observe the topic under consideration, research philosophy was chosen as a core method of scientific investigation. It is an important basis of every research, no matter

¹ Kharkovskaya A. A., Ponomarenko E. V., Radyuk A. V. *Minitexts in modern educational discourse: Functions and trends. Training, Language and Culture*. Moscow: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumbe, 2017. vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 62–76.

² Cherkunova M. V., Trenina A. A. Kommunikativno-pragmatische parametry maloformatnykh reklamnykh tekstov turisticheskoi tematiki [Communicative and pragmatic parameters of small-format texts containing advertising of tourist services]. *Vestnik Permskogo natsional'nogo issledovatel'skogo politekhnicheskogo universiteta. Problemy iazykoznanii i pedagogiki* [Bulletin of PNRPU. Issues in Linguistics and Pedagogics], 2017, no. 1, pp. 68–74.

³ Gatina Iu. A. Diskursivnye aspekty shkol'noi kommunikatsii: na materiale angliiskikh maloformatnykh internet-tekstov [Discursive aspects of school communication based on the English mini-format Internet-texts]. *Vestnik Samarskogo universiteta. Istoriia, pedagogika, filologiya* [Vestnik of Samara University. History, pedagogics, philology], 2016, Iss. 22, no. 1, pp. 230–237.

⁴ Kubriakova E. S. O tekste i kriteriakh ego opredeleniia [About the text and criteria of its definition]. *Tekst. Struktura i semantika: doklady VIII Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii (Moskva, 1 ianvaria – 31 dekabria 2001 g.)* [Text. Structure and Semantics: Papers of the VIII International Conference (Moscow, 1 January – 31 December 2001); ed. by E. I. Dibrova]. Moscow: Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi oblastnoi pedagogicheskii universitet imeni M. A. Sholokhova, 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 72–89.

⁵ Ruberg I. B. *Tipologicheskie kharakteristiki angliiskikh maloformatnykh tekstov “Retsept” i “Polezni sovety”* [Typological characteristics of English small-format texts ‘Recipe’ and ‘Useful advice’: Abstract Cand. Thesis in Philological Sciences]. Leningrad, 1991. 19 p.

what scientific field the paper is referred to. With the help of research philosophy method, it was also decided to use data collection which was done by the authors while working. Comparative and qualitative analysis were used to understand and interpret definitions applied in the paper.

The main part

The English language is a subject of research from both linguistic and philological perspectives in the present day. Currently, English holds the status of a global language for worldwide communication due to the military, economic, technological, and political influence of countries where English is the native language or an official language¹.

In the realm of modern English-language education, which is evolving within the context of globalization and the diminishing of information barriers, the number of English learners is undoubtedly increasing. The primary focus is on developing effective English communication skills due to these scientists: A. A. Ilyicheva², V. B. Kashkin³, L. A. Kozlova⁴, N. A. Komina⁵, E. N. Malyuga⁶, A. I. Pichkur⁷, E. V. Ponomarenko¹, G. A. Radko², A. A. Kharkovskaya³.

¹ Crystal D. *English as a Global Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 212 p. Available at: [http://culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/pdf/research/books/nation_branding/English As A Global Language – David Crystal.pdf](http://culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/pdf/research/books/nation_branding/English%20As%20a%20Global%20Language%20-%20David%20Crystal.pdf) (accessed: 07.11.2023).

² Ilicheva N. V. *Kommunikativnye strategii v angloiazychnom uchebnom delovom videodiskurse* [Communicative strategies in English-language educational business video discourse: Cand. Thesis in Philological Sciences]. Samara, 2005. 164 p.

³ Kashkin V. B. *Vvedenie v teoriyu kommunikatsii* [Introduction to the theory of communication]. Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta, 2003. 170 p.

⁴ Kozlova L. A. *Mezhkul'turnaia kommunikatsiia i problemy obucheniia angliiskomu iazyku studentov-nelingvistov* [Intercultural communication and the problems of teaching English to non-linguistic students]. *Inostrannyi iazyk v natsional'nom issledovatel'skom universitete: novye zadachi i tsennostnye orientatsii: sbornik statei po materialam mezhvuzovskoi nauchno-metodicheskoi konferentsii (Nizhnii Novgorod, 19 fevralia 2010 g.)* [Foreign language in a national research university: new tasks and value orientations: Proceedings of the interuniversity scientific and methodological conference (Nizhny Novgorod, 19 February 2010)]. Nizhnii Novgorod: Nizhegorodskii filial Natsional'nogo issledovatel'skogo universiteta "Vyshei shkoly ekonomiki", 2011, pp. 194–199.

⁵ Komina N. A. *Organizatsionnye parametry uchebnogo diskursa v situatsii kommunikativno-orientirovannogo obucheniia iazyku* [Organisational parameters of educational discourse in the situation of communicative-oriented language teaching]. *Iazykovoe prostranstvo lichnosti: funktsional'no-semanticheskie i kognitivnye aspekty: materialy mezhvuzovskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (Tver', 2003 g.)* [Language space of personality: functional-semantic and cognitive aspects: Proceedings of the interuniversity research and practice conference (Tver, 2003); ed. by A. A. Romanov]. Moscow; Tver': Institut iazykoznanii RAN, Tverskoi gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2003, pp. 9–15.

⁶ Maliuga E. N. *Funktsional'naia pragmatika mezhkul'turnoi delovoi kommunikatsii* [Functional pragmatics of intercultural business communication]. Moscow: Librokom, 2008. 313 p.

⁷ Pichkur A. I. *Mezhkul'turnaia kommunikatsiia v uchebnom diskurse (na materiale autentichnykh uchebnikov nemetskogo iazyka)* [Intercultural communication in educational discourse (based on the authentic German textbooks)]. *Iazykovye protsessy v diskurse: mezhdunarodnyi sbornik nauchnykh statei* [Language processes in discourse: international collection of scientific arti-

One of the challenges in modern educational discourse is the difficulty in finding suitable teaching resources. Additionally, there is a need to broaden the scope of English language coursebooks and incorporate texts from various discourse practices into educational materials.

Currently, small-format textual materials are becoming increasingly prevalent and are among the most common forms of written information. Their quantity and quality vary in different communicative contexts, steadily growing. Therefore, this study aims to analyze “small-format text” and identify its main characteristics. To clarify the concept of a “small-format text”, let's categorize its key features.

The study of small-format texts as a subject of linguistic research has received significant attention in recent years. In today's world, any text can be considered a “small-format text” regardless of its genre and content, as long as it adheres to the primary formal feature – brevity. Due to the widespread distribution of these types of texts, modern linguists are actively interested in this phenomenon. Small-format texts are studied from various angles, including their structure, semantics, functions, style, genre, linguistic and cultural contexts, comparisons, and their use in different languages, among others.

Currently, both Russian and foreign linguists have defined foreign-language educational discourse as primarily defining the status of an educational text as a piece of speech created for didactic purposes, encompassing content, style, and composition. An educational text is a component of the overall information presented in a textbook and is designed to facilitate controlled development of textual skills. It serves as the basis for imparting knowledge and necessary skills to individuals within a specific group at a particular stage of education.

cles; editor-in-chief V. D. Shevchenko.]. Samara: Samarskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2013, pp. 107–113.

¹ Ponomarenko E. V. O funktsional'noi samoorganizatsii rechevykh sredstv v angliiskom delovom diskurse [About functional self-organisation of verbal means in English business discourse]. *Vestnik Samarskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [Vestnik of Samara State University], 2013, no. 5 (106), pp. 80–84.

² Radko G. A. K voprosu o spetsifike angloiazychnoi delovoi kommunikatsii [To the question of the specifics of English-language business communication]. *Universitetskie chteniia-2011 (Piatigorsk, 13–14 ianvaria 2011 g.)* [University Readings-2011 (Pyatigorsk, 13–14 January 2011)]. Piatigorsk: Piatigorskii gosudarstvennyi lingvisticheskii universitet, 2011, part III, pp. 139–144.

³ Khar'kovskaia A. A. Kommunikativnye strategii v sovremennom mezhkul'turnom prostranstve [Communicative strategies in modern intercultural space]. *Kognitivnye aspekty izucheniia iazykovykh iavlenii v germanskikh iazykakh* [Cognitive aspects of studying linguistic phenomena in Germanic languages: interuniversity collection of scientific articles; ed. by A. A. Kharkovskaya, E. P. Vasilieva, N. K. Danilova]. Samara: Samarskii universitet, 2000, pp. 81–90. Khar'kovskaia A. A. Sovremennyy obrazovatel'nyi diskurs. Lingvisticheskie osobennosti uchebnykh materialov po obucheniiu angliiskomu iazyku kak inostrannomu [Modern educational discourse. Linguistic features of educational materials for teaching English as a foreign language]. *Aktual'nye problemy sovremennogo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia: tezisy dokladov VI Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. (Samara, 26–27 maia 2011 g.)* [Topical issues of modern socio-economic development: Abstracts of the VI International research and practice conference (Samara, 26–27 May 2011)]. Samara: Mezhdunarodnyi institut rynka, 2011, pp. 421–422.

The textual content of a textbook can be viewed as a form of discourse, specifically, academic discourse that exists within the context of academic communication.

According to our research, the structure of contemporary English language teaching materials includes several components within the framework of written educational discourse. This structure encompasses elements of instructional content, encompassing all communicative signals and cultural language facts, as well as verbal texts and visual information (illustrations, photos, diagrams, charts, symbols) across various spheres of social activity:

“The panic about the dollar”¹ ;

“This is the cutest soap that you will steal from a hotel, enjoy it”² ;

“I’m lovin’ it”³;

“I’m Katrin Mendes. The one on the right”⁴.

Simultaneously, as components of the learning content, various textual samples are incorporated into a comprehensive model representing the learning process aimed at achieving practical, educational, and developmental objectives. Authentic educational discourse is distinguished by its feature of intertextuality. Essentially, the textuality of contemporary textbooks organizes the intertextual field, comprising a collection of verbal texts and symbols from other semiotic systems. The specificity of authentic educational texts lies in their reference to discourse as the primary source, represented by texts in scientific, journalistic, official, and business styles, ultimately connecting the reader to specific referents.

The intertextual nature of educational discourse, as extensively explored in O. A. Klimanova’s study, is also evident in small-format texts found in English language teaching materials. Small-format texts exhibit specific structural and formal characteristics as well as employ various non-linguistic elements systematically. The primary feature of such texts is their limited length, typically not exceeding fifty sentences. Some types of small-format texts display noticeable variability in their structure. Educational scenarios and their linguistic representations identify significant variability while emphasizing the dominant components and features of small-format texts in educational discourse.

Previous research by linguists has documented the distinctive aspects of small-format texts, considering both their structural and semantic features as well as their cognitive foundations. Clearly, small-format texts, as a textual form, serve various functions in society and are formally defined by their brevity. Key properties of modern small-format texts include positional independence (autonomous written pieces), semantic conciseness, and structural simplicity. Researchers commonly agree that a distinguishing characteristic of such texts is their “visual brevity”, stemming from the specificity of both schematic depth and communicative aspects of language. Small-format texts, despite their relative

¹ Tilbury A., Clementson T., Hendra L. A., et. all. *English Unlimited Cambridge Advanced Coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. P. 93.

² Там же. P. 91.

³ Там же.

⁴ Там же. P. 21.

autonomy and self-contained nature, possess not only nominative but also considerable communicative-pragmatic potential¹.

Next, considering the existence of various definitions of small-format texts in contemporary linguistics, we adopt the definition proposed by E. S. Kubryakova², which we mentioned earlier, as a working definition. Our research interest lies in uncovering the linguistic nature of small-format texts based on their communicative functions, which facilitate complex interactions with the addressees or consumers. These small-format texts are part of our study samples.

Another crucial fact to note is the increasing role of effective teaching materials in foreign language instruction. This is because not every modern textbook can guarantee successful language learning and cultural understanding.

In modern teaching materials, authors consider the linguistic cognitive characteristics of learners in the educational process. The primary goal of contemporary authors is to create English teaching materials that can cater to students of various nationalities, helping them assimilate the presented content.

Furthermore, textbooks should meet the needs of individuals from diverse social backgrounds interested in learning English as a foreign language. An innovative aspect of modern English-language educational discourse is its focus on the topical conceptual sphere of educational content. Each knowledge level expands vocabulary resources, and at the core of each section lies the anthropocentric paradigm, which is currently one of the most prominent and relevant concepts in linguistics.

Almost all current teaching materials incorporate anthropocentrism as a central theme. Anthropocentrism is the inclination to place humans at the center of theoretical premises³. Considering anthropocentrism in the lexical system involves addressing numerous tasks and perspectives, including studying natural vocabulary to express the “Naive model of man”. Implementing anthropocentrism in texts and situations requires special attention to word functionality within the limited space of the text. Indeed, contemporary teaching materials published today place special emphasis on anthropocentrism.

Additionally, explanatory materials should be selected with great care to accommodate individuals from various cultures and knowledge levels adequately. The axiological approach to the selection of lexical material is pertinent, as it applies to reading and listening texts, the compilation of lexical and grammatical elements, and situations that foster speak-

¹ Klimanova O. A. *Autentichnyi uchebnyi diskurs v kontekste sovremennykh lingvisticheskikh issledovaniy (na materiale mikrotekstov formulirovok uchebnykh zadaniy)* [Authentic educational discourse in the context of modern linguistic research (based on the microtexts of educational task): Abstract Cand. Thesis in Philological Sciences]. Samara, 2001. 20 p.

² Kubryakova E. S. O tekste i kriteriakh ego opredeleniya [About the text and criteria of its definition]. *Tekst. Struktura i semantika: doklady VIII Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii (Moskva, 1 ianvaria – 31 dekabria 2001 g.)* [Text. Structure and Semantics: Papers of the VIII International Conference (Moscow, 1 January – 31 December 2001); ed. by E. I. Dibrova]. Moscow: Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi oblastnoi pedagogicheskii universitet imeni M. A. Sholokhova, 2001, Vol. 1, pp. 72–89.

³ Kamambet E. V. *Proiavlenie antropotsetrizma v sovremennoi leksikografii: na materiale lingvisticheskikh slovari* [Manifestation of anthropocentrism in modern lexicography: based on the linguistic dictionaries: Cand. Thesis in Philological Sciences]. Krasnodar, 2007. 177 p.

ing skills development. In other words, it contributes to updating the verbal structure of task formulations in English language textbooks.

Based on our analysis of the current English textbooks, specifically “English Unlimited”, it is evident that this series of materials is characterized by the following key aspects:

At the elementary level of “English Unlimited”¹, the following topics are covered:

– PEOPLE: Explored in sections like “People in Your Life”, “Away from Home”, and “What’s she like”. This topic includes linguistic markers related to family, friends, and guests.

– TECHNOLOGY: Addressed in the unit “Changes” with markers indicating important events.

– PLACE: Covered in the unit “Your Place”, featuring markers such as flat, room, and personal space.

– WORK: Examined in the unit “Work-life balance” with the workplace as a prominent marker.

– JOURNEY: Presented in chapters like “Journey”, “Getting Around”, and “Experiences”, with markers including airport, flight, great places, visitor, tickets, information, and recommendations.

These topics are suitable for small talk as people often prefer to discuss themselves, their occupations and related subjects. According to our survey, men in the UK spend over six hours per day on leisure, sports, and hobbies, while women allocate just two hours to similar activities.

At the intermediate level of “English Unlimited”², the following topics are covered:

– TECHNOLOGY or MASS MEDIA: Explored in units like “Media Around the World” and “Good Communication” with linguistic markers such as entertainment, TV, Fact and Fiction, TV show, communication, and Internet.

– PEOPLE, ATTITUDES, FEELINGS: Addressed in chapters like “Success”, “Personal Qualities”, “Truth and Lies”, “Make up your mind”, and “Impressions”, with markers including ideas, hopes, dreams, ambitions, abilities, achievements, success, character, roles in life, gossip, secrets, friends, attitudes, witnesses, and memory.

– MONEY: Examined in sections like “Looking back” and “Let me explain”, with markers related to money, mistakes, rules, and risk.

– JOURNEY: Presented in sections like “Any questions?”, “Impressions”, and “Lost and Found”, with markers including memories, complaints, disputes, strangers, surveys, nightmare journeys, rubbish, freecycle, stuff, and property.

– At the advanced level of “English Unlimited”³, the following topics are explored:

– PEOPLE: Discussed in units like “Childhood”, “Self”, and “Health”, with markers related to memory, children, and self.

¹ Tilbury A., Clementson T., Hendra L. A., et. all. *English Unlimited Cambridge Elementary Coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 160 p.

² Tilbury A., Clementson T., Hendra L. A., et. all. *English Unlimited Cambridge Intermediate Coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 168 p.

³ Tilbury A., Clementson T., Hendra L. A., Rea D. *English Unlimited Cambridge Advanced Coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 98 p.

– TECHNOLOGY: Addressed in units like “Knowledge and Technology”, “Self”, and “Brand Awareness”, with markers such as online self, agency, cards, brands, viral ads, products, megabrands, cameras, profiles, and interviews.

– PLACE: Covered in sections like “World” and “Concepts of Space”, featuring markers like world, maps, restaurants, city, surveillance, and square.

– KNOWLEDGE: Examined in sections like “Knowledge and Technology” and “Language and Literature”, with markers including books, language, English, knowledge, and messages.

Conclusion

Thus, analyzing coursebooks of different levels, we have found that these teaching materials are structured to place the human figure in the spotlight. In summary, small-format texts in educational discourse revolve around human activities, character traits, professional spheres, knowledge, and the integration of IT into human life. These texts facilitate the development of global communication conditions.

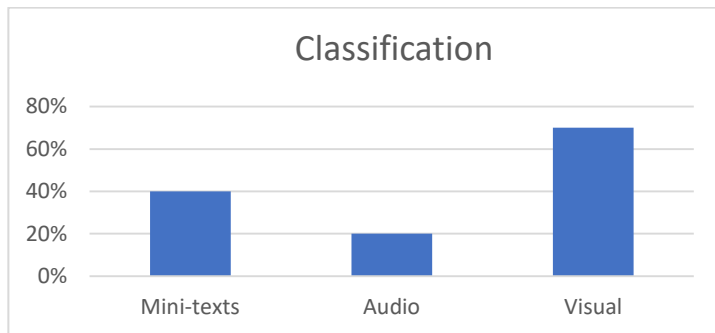
Our research is centered on small-format texts sourced from English language teaching materials called “English Unlimited”. It comprises a six-level course designed for both students and adults, spanning from A1 to C1 proficiency levels. It caters to learners from the Starter to Advanced levels. All units in this course are tailored for focused and individualized learning. They include not only real-world tasks but also universally relevant activities aimed at developing foreign language skills for everyday use. Additionally, this international educational resource assists students in becoming more proficient in real-life communication and broadening their social awareness. Ultimately, this international course offers students excellent opportunities to communicate effectively with people from other nationalities without constraints. The overall framework of this educational resource places a strong emphasis on developing speaking skills alongside self-teaching methods, which are integrated seamlessly with real-life understanding.

One of the key characteristics of small-format texts, widely recognized by linguists, is their intertextuality. It is evident that small-format texts have a linguistic presence within the educational discursive space. Consequently, small-format texts encompass various narrative forms, including situations, stories, articles, dialogues, annotations, blogger reviews, and monologues.

They effectively serve as a structured framework for conveying information and knowledge.

Therefore, analyzing the small-format texts, we draw a conclusion about the most frequent types of their representation in educational discourse. To clarify the texts for reading and listening have interdiscursivity and can be classified according to the principle of stylistic-genre affiliation. As for the small-texts for reading are defined in internet discourse (such as, blogs, internet posts, comments, web pages, websites) and journalistic discourse (for instance, newspapers, magazine articles, weather forecasts, news, announcements). Besides, the audio texts can be divided into dialogues and monologues according to their communicative type. Subsequently monologue texts express opinions or judgments on a certain issue or topic, while dialogue texts include genres such as interviews, radio broadcasts, and numerous dialogue statements in the social-domestic sphere. Furthermore about

70 % of all texts own a visual component, such as photographs, maps, drawings, or screenshots of internet posts or comments.



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