

## TO THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH OCCULT DISCOURSE

## ДО ІСТОРІЇ АНГЛОМОВНОГО ОКУЛЬТНОГО ДИСКУРСУ

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The article is devoted to the consideration of the history of English occult discourse. The term "discourse" is used in different meanings and is the subject of study in different scientific areas. The purpose of the article is to provide a brief overview of the history of development of occult discourse and to outline the prospects for its study on the basis of the English language. The opposition of personality-oriented and status-oriented discourse is relevant. In the first case, communicators who know each other well take part in communication, in the second case, communication is reduced to a dialogue between representatives of one or another social group. Among its varieties are political, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, scientific, stage and media types of institutional discourse. The researchers note that the list may be supplemented or modified. The article proposes the term "occult discourse", which contains such basic genre varieties as astrological, magical, alchemical. The first two varieties are the subject of many researches, and the latter is hardly covered in linguistic works. Astrological discourse, represented by horoscopes, is studied mainly from psychological, sociological, anthropological and cultural points of view. The horoscope was developed as a media genre, which contributed to its status as one of the defining features of modern mass culture. Magical discourse has a pronounced suggestive potential, is symbolically rich and implements basic strategies of warning, correction and protection. The key problems of occult discourse analysis remain the structure and stratification of discourse, the establishment of its features, units, categories, types; elucidation of ways of organizing various discursive invariants, development of methods and procedures of analysis and description of discourses.

**Key words:** discourse, discourse studies, institutional discourse, occult discourse, typology.

Стаття присвячена розглядові історії англomовного окультного дискурсу. Термін «дискурс» вживається у різних значеннях та є предметом вивчення різних напрямів. Мета статті – надати стислий огляд історії становлення окультного дискурсу та окреслити перспективи його вивчення на матеріалі англійської мови. Актуальним є протиставлення особистісно орієнтованого і статусно орієнтованого дискурсу. У першому випадку в спілкуванні беруть участь комуніканти, які добре знають один одного, у другому випадку спілкування зводиться до діалогу представників тієї або іншої соціальної групи. Серед різновидів виділяють політичний, адміністративний, юридичний, військовий, педагогічний, релігійний, містичний, медичний, діловий, рекламний, спортивний, науковий, сценічний та масово-інформаційний види інституційного дискурсу. Дослідники зазначають, що наведений список може бути доповнений або видозмінений. У статті пропонується термін «окультний дискурс», який містить такі основні жанрові різновиди як астрологічний, магічний, алхімічний. Перші два різновиди є об'єктом багатьох досліджень, а останній майже не знаходить висвітлення у лінгвістичних роботах. Астрологічний дискурс, представлений гороскопами, вивчається переважно з психологічної, соціологічної, антропологічної та культурологічної точки зору. Гороскоп був розроблений як медіажанр, що сприяло його статусу однієї з визначальних рис сучасної масової культури. Магічний дискурс має яскраво виражений сугестивний потенціал, символічно насичений та реалізує базові стратегії застереження, корекції та протекції. Ключовими проблемами вивчення окультного дискурсу залишаються структура та стратифікація, встановлення його ознак, одиниць, категорій, типів; з'ясування способів організації різних дискурсивних інваріантів, вироблення методів і процедур його аналізу.

**Ключові слова:** дискурс, дискурсологія, інституційний дискурс, окультний дискурс, типологія.

**Problem statement.** The interest in the study of discourse is associated with a change in the priority of the subject of linguistic research in the second half of the twentieth century, with the transition from the study of language structure to its functioning. Historically, the concept of discourse was considered in terms of formal and functional linguistics, which later became part of a systematic approach, initiated in the 70's – 80's of the previous century. At the present stage, scholars are actively trying to distinguish between the concepts of *text* and *discourse*, proposing different oppositions, such as functionality VS structure, process VS product, speech VS written text [3, p. 12].

Since ancient times people have been trying to understand the meaning of the world around them. This interest applies to nature, products of human activity, and words, facial expressions, gestures. However, the most mysterious phenomenon that prominent philosophers, psychologists and linguists have been trying to unravel for thousands of years is human consciousness. It is indisputable that occultism, like religion, is a product of human consciousness.

Human intellectual activity has always been creative, with its help the most elusive and incomprehensible phenomena are explained. Thus,

a very detailed conceptualization with subsequent verbalization led people to think, through which they tried to describe their so-called "sixth sense", i.e. feelings, intuition, premonitions, fears associated with lack of knowledge about themselves and the world. People have replaced and continue to replace them with fiction about magic and enchantments, which allegedly can be used to explain poorly understood processes and phenomena.

**Literature review.** In modern linguistic research, discourse is both an object and a method of analysis that combines sociocultural, cognitive and pragmatic approaches to all uses of language. It appears as a kind of diagnostic tool in relation to language (because it shows the possibility of specialization of language in a particular area on a set of parameters), and to society, to various manifestations of socio-cultural states of society, as well as its mental attitudes and types of social consciousness.

In modern linguistic literature we find numerous definitions of discourse, some of which combine different interpretations of this phenomenon and are rather complex. The Ukrainian linguist F. Batsevich in the textbook "Fundamentals of Communicative Linguistics" defines discourse as follows: synthesis of cognitive, linguistic and extralinguistic (social, mental, psychological, etc.) factors that are determined by a specific range of "life forms"; dependent on the subject of communication, results in the formation of various speech genres [1, p. 138].

O. Selivanova defines the following tasks of discourse analysis at the present stage:

- study of social, textual and psychological contextualization of discourse, its patterns and genres with a set of variables (social norms, roles, statuses of communicators, their conventions, strategies, interactivity and communication efficiency);

- study of the regularities of communicators' achievement of communicative cooperation or factors of generating communicative conflict, ways of realization of communicative rivalry;

- description of institutional forms and types of discourses, etc. The key problems of discourse analysis remain the structure and stratification of discourse, the establishment of its features, units, categories, types; finding out ways to organize different discursive invariants, developing methods and procedures for analyzing and describing discourses, etc. [4].

The opposition of personality-oriented and status-oriented discourse is relevant for our research. In the first case, communicators who know each other well take part in communication, in the second case, communication is reduced to a dialogue between

representatives of one or another social group. Among its varieties are political, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, scientific, stage and media types of institutional discourse. The researchers note that the list may be supplemented or modified.

**Purpose statement.** The article is dedicated to highlighting the history of English occult discourse as well as its study from the linguistic point of view.

**Research results.** The term *occult sciences* was first used in 16th-century Europe to refer to astrology, alchemy, and natural magic, which today are considered pseudosciences. The term *occultism* emerged in 19th-century France, where it came to be associated with various French esoteric groups connected to Éliphas Lévi and Papus, and in 1875 was introduced into the English language by the esotericist Helena Blavatsky [14].

Throughout the 20th century, the term was used idiosyncratically by a range of different authors, but by the 21st century was commonly employed – including by academic scholars of esotericism – to refer to a range of esoteric currents that developed in the mid-19th century and their descendants. Occultism is thus often used to categorise such esoteric traditions as Spiritualism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and New Age [12].

Today the term occultism is understood as various theories and practices involving a belief in and knowledge or use of supernatural forces or beings. Such beliefs and practices – principally magical or divinatory – have occurred in all human societies throughout recorded history, with considerable variations both in their nature and in the attitude of societies toward them. In the West the term occultism has acquired intellectually and morally pejorative overtones that do not obtain in other societies where the practices and beliefs concerned do not run counter to the prevailing worldview [14].

From the linguistic point of view, we propose the usage of the term **occult discourse** to denote the general direction of discourse, which studies the features of communication in various mystical practices, magic, astrology, etc., i.e. all areas of institutional activity that go beyond science and official religion.

Let us consider the etymology of this term. The lexical unit *occultism* was first recorded in English in 1870 and denoted the doctrines, principles and practices of occult sciences:

"*occultism (n.)*" *The doctrine, principles, or practices of occult sciences, "1870, from occult + -ism. Related: Occultist"*[9].

The dictionary article also illustrates the use of this lexical item and explains that it refers to a system of pseudo-sciences that must be distinguished from pre-scientific magic practice:

*"Occultism, I should add, is distinguished from the primitive magic described by anthropologists, which is prescientific, prephilosophical, and perhaps prereligious, whereas occultism is a pseudo-science or system of pseudo-sciences, often supported by an irrationalist philosophy, and always exploiting the disintegrated débris of preexisting religions"* [9].

We conclude that the lexical unit *occultism* comes from the adjective *occult*, which was first recorded in English in the early 16th century as "*secret, not made public*", which came from Latin through French meaning "*hidden*". Later, the lexical unit *occult* developed the meaning of "*beyond reason*", while the association with the supernatural sciences (magic, alchemy, astrology, etc.) appeared only a century later.

In modern lexicographic sources of the English language there are the following definitions:

*"Occult sciences – those sciences of the Middle Ages which related to the supposed action or influence of occult qualities, or supernatural powers, as alchemy, magic, necromancy, and astrology"* [10];

*"Occult sciences alchemy, astrology, magic, etc"* [11].

Based on the above definitions, we conclude that the occult discourse contains such basic genre varieties as **astrological, magical, alchemical**.

The Western tradition of occultism, as popularly conceived, is of an ancient "secret philosophy" underlying all occult practices. This secret philosophy derives ultimately from Hellenistic magic and alchemy on the one hand and from Jewish mysticism on the other. The principal Hellenistic source is the Corpus Hermeticum, the texts associated with Hermes Trismegistos, which are concerned with astrology and other occult sciences and with spiritual regeneration. Alchemy was also absorbed into the body of Hermetism, and this link was strengthened in the early 17th century with the appearance of Rosicrucianism, an alleged secret brotherhood that utilized alchemical symbolism and taught secret wisdom to its followers, creating a spiritual alchemy that survived the rise of empirical science and enabled Hermetism to pass unscathed into the period of the Enlightenment [14].

A review of the available research has shown that the first two varieties (astrological and magical discourses) are the subject of many studies, and the latter (alchemical) is hardly covered in linguistic works.

Astrological discourse represented by horoscopes is studied mainly from a psychological, sociological,

anthropological and cultural point of view. The horoscope was developed as a media genre, which contributed to its status as one of the defining features of modern mass culture [5; 6; 7].

We agree with the view that astrology today is a significant phenomenon for most members of society, a special system of knowledge based on the idea of the necessary connection between the movement of celestial bodies and processes occurring on earth. Researchers' analysis of language material confirms that horoscope texts do have their own specific discursive features. Being pragmatic, astrological discourse in addition to cognitive (astrologers have long been people who were engaged in the search for truth, explaining the deterministic laws of the universe) can also perform socio-political (manipulative) and psychotherapeutic functions.

G. Kryzhanivska researches the texts of English horoscopes according to the genre-functional model. The researcher claims that the genre structure of astrological forecasting is quite rigid and includes several steps. "The first step in the genre model of the horoscope provides general information about the probable development of events in this period of the future, as indicated by the adverb *overall*. The functioning of the nouns *relationship, affairs, family, partner* and the adjective *married* makes it possible to identify the next, second step in the genre model – the development of relationships. The lexical markers of the third step are the nouns *money, business, cash, funds, expenditures* and the verb *invest*, the semantics of which indicate that its communicative orientation is to inform about the possible development of financial affairs. <...> The semantics of lexical units of each step explicitly reflects its communicative orientation" [2, p. 260].

Magical discourse is distinguished on the basis of system-creating features: its goals and participants. Communication takes place within the given framework of status-role relations. The purpose of magical discourse is to implement basic strategies of warning, correction and protection. The participants are: the client – the person who seeks help and the agent – the bearer of secret knowledge, the mediator who communicates between the client and supernatural forces. The fundamental inequality of the participants in communication is specially demonstrated by the appearance of the agent, his behavior, the presence of symbolic attributes of the magical process, a specific way of pronouncing magical texts. In modern society, magical discourse is presented as a kind of institutional communication [13].

Thus, the magic text has a distinguished suggestive potential, it is symbolically rich and

implements basic strategies of warning, correction and protection. The warning is manifested in prognostic installations (verbal-prognostic genre), embedded in warnings about possible dangers, reflected in the ethnospecific system of warning signs. Correction is aimed at treating illnesses and normalizing the deviant psychosomatic state through clearly algorithmic, semiotically saturated rites and orders (verbal-suggestive genre). Protection from hostile external influences is carried out through spells (verbal-action genre) and symbolically rich rituals. Based in the attempt to influence nature or human behaviour, magic's instrumental function is measured by its efficacy in achieving the desired result. Anthropologists identify three main types of instrumental magic: the productive, the protective, and the destructive [12].

**Conclusions.** Occult discourse contains such basic genre varieties as astrological, magical, alchemical. The first two varieties are the subject of much research, and the latter is hardly covered in linguistic works. Astrological discourse, represented by horoscopes, is studied mainly from psychological, sociological, anthropological and cultural points of view. The horoscope was developed as a media genre, which contributed to its status as one of the defining features of modern mass culture. Magical discourse has a pronounced suggestive potential, is symbolically rich and implements basic strategies of warning, correction and protection. The key problems of studying occult discourse remain the structure and stratification, the establishment of its features, units, categories, types; finding out ways to organize various discursive invariants, developing methods and procedures for its analysis.

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