

**WUT2018**  
**IX International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive,  
Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”**

**THE CATEGORY OF TIME IN TEXTS OF POSTCARDS OF THE  
POSTCROSSING PROJECT**

Lubov Lasitsa (a)\*, Ulyana Baimuratova (b)  
\*Corresponding author

(a) Senior lecturer, Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russian Federation, lasitsa-la@mail.ru, 89123518527

(b) Senior lecturer, Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russian Federation, ulyanam@bk.ru, 89226263182

*Abstract*

The paper deals with the representation of the category of time in the texts of Postcrossing postcards. The choice of the object is explained by the appearance of a new genre of natural written English speech and the necessity for its study in various aspects. The use of statistical methods and the method of graphosemantic modeling allowed us to present ways of expressing the time category in the form of a system with a complex hierarchical structure with a prognostic potential, which makes it possible to assert that the presented lexical and grammatical markers of the time category and those clusters that they formed as part of the model, are typical for the texts of the project "Postcrossing". The article presents the model of linguistic time characteristic to Postcrossing postcards, describes the grammatical and lexical-semantic markers of time characteristic to natural written speech. The results of the research can be used in teaching theoretical and practical grammar of the English language, as well as in teaching written communication.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Postcrossing, postcards, time category, time model, natural written speech.



## **1. Introduction**

Time is recognized as a fundamental characteristic for any existing object. It has repeatedly been the object of a multidisciplinary study in various areas of science (Simeonov, 2015, Howard, 2018, Leone, 2018, Durhan, 2018). In the text, the category of time functions in two forms: external and internal (Lasitsa, 2008). External time is the functioning of the text in extralinguistic reality from the moment of its creation. The internal time of the text is considered in two aspects. Firstly, this is an ontological time, i.e. the passage of the text phases from beginning to end in the process of its formation. Secondly, this is the linguistic time represented by a certain set of lexical and grammatical units with temporal meaning.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In this paper, we consider the features and language tools for expressing the category of internal time in Postcrossing postcards (Postcrossing).

We used a set of postcard texts of the "Postcrossing" project, consisting of 500 texts, totaling 25,675 word forms as a research material.

This type of texts refers to the genre of natural written speech, which attracts the interest of representatives of various scientific fields. Thus, in recent years, the results of scientific research on postcard texts (Foltête, 2015), personal letters (Wheatley, 2015), thank-you letters (Herblanda, 2015), SMS (Hooker, 2018) have been published.

The relevance of this work is due to the novelty of the research material as the "Postcrossing" project has existed since 2005, but during a huge number of participants who regularly exchange postcards around the world appeared. Specificity of the texts of this project dictates the need for a multiaspect study. "Postcrossing" postcards have already been research material in the works (Agarkova, 2017, Baymuratova, 2015, Belova, 2015, Evstafiadi, 2015).

In this paper we use the terminology proposed by N.B. Lebedeva, however, we note that the type of communication we are studying is also referred to as "written phatic communication". A postcard is understood as a written, small-format, fictitious text, and written phatic communication as a formalized situation of communication with certain rules of communicative interaction (Zaitseva, 2012).

This genre is characterized by the main features of natural written speech, which was in the focus of attention of representatives of the scientific group under head of N.B. Lebedeva. They have been already studied personal letters, a diary, a private note, etc. (Lebedeva, 2011). This writing activity is characterized by the following features: "functioning in everyday life, spontaneity, unprofessional authors, the absence of intermediaries and instances between the a sender and a recipient of the text" (Altukhova, 2012).

However, U.S. Baymuratova highlights the features inherent to the texts of "Postcrossing" postcards: openness of information (postcards are sent without envelopes), one-time remote communication with an unknown addressee, compliance with ethical standards, being written by hand (Baymuratova, 2015). The results of our work will contribute to the study of this type of texts.

## **3. Research Questions**

The linguistic time of the text is nominated by a number of lexical and grammatical means. The analysis of the relevant scientific literature and material made it possible to identify 29 types of time markers of time category. They were classified into lexical or grammatical way of representing the category of time. The words of different

parts of speech, containing a root morpheme with a temporal meaning are the markers of the lexical way. The tense forms of a verb, the non-finite forms of the verb (participle), the prepositional constructions are grammatical means of expressing time. A complete list of markers with examples is presented in the paper (Lasitsa, 2007).

The main issues to be addressed in the course of the work are:

- to reveal the ratio of lexical and grammatical ways of expressing time;
- to find out which of the grammatical tenses is the most frequently used: the present, the past or the future;
- to establish stable clusters, i.e. those markers of time that demonstrate regular sharing;
- to present a graphic model of time markers characteristic to "Postcrossing" postcards.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of our work is to identify the functional features of linguistic markers of the time category in the texts of "Postcrossing" postcards and to present them in a form of a graphic-semantic model with a prognostic potential.

#### **5. Research Methods**

In the research the following methods and techniques were used: continuous sampling method, component analysis, correlation analysis, method of graphic-semantic modeling, and a technique for determining the frequency of parameters under study.

#### **6. Findings**

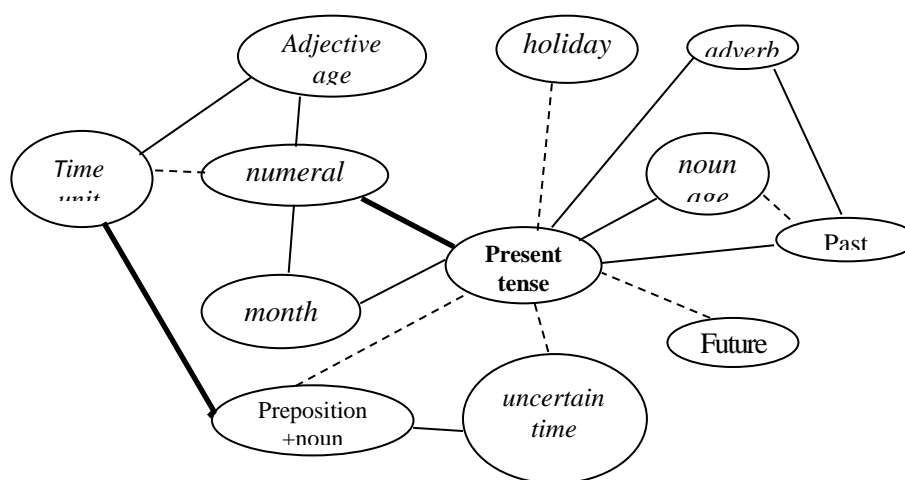
Our research consisted of several stages. At the first stage, linguistic markers of the time category were marked in each text of the sample. Analysis of the material found that 96% of the texts explicated this category, while 4% demonstrated zero temporality, i.e. complete absence of any means of expressing the category of time.

We obtained quantitative data of time markers in each text, which were then subjected to statistical processing - the correlation analysis procedure with the help of the specialized computer program "Statistica". The correlation between markers means similar distribution of them i.e. similar frequency of use (Belousov, 2005). Using the method of graphic-semantic modeling, the results of correlation analysis was presented in the form of the model depicted in Figure 01.

It allows to show the totality of temporal markers used in the texts of postcards in the form of "a system in which each component has a clear hierarchical and topological certainty in relation to other components and the whole system" (Belousov, 2005). The advantage of such model is that "all elements of the structure are given in it at a time, and hierarchical dependencies, connections between elements, and the strength and relevance of these links acquire additional prognostic potential" (Belousov, 2005).

We identified in the texts of the studied genre 26 markers of the time category from 29 presented in the classification we used. However, not all markers are included in the model. This is explained by the fact that in the structure of the lexical-grammatical model only those ways of expressing time are presented, the frequency indicators of which have overcome the reliability threshold which is equal the arithmetic mean. These are the lexical-grammatical means of time category most likely used by the authors to express time when writing postcard texts that participate in the "Postcrossing" project.

The use of the correlation analysis made it possible to identify those time clusters (two or more markers connected by a correlation) that are non-random for a given sample. The relationship between the elements can be of different strength, indicating how strongly the joint variability of the time markers under study is manifested. The correlation strength varies from zero (the case when the connection is not detected) to unity (the absolute joint variability of the two markers). After carrying out the necessary calculations, the values from 0.4 to 1 are selected from the entire array of correlations obtained; we recognize the correlation with the correlation index equal to [0.4-0.5) as background (weak); with an index [0,5 - 0,6) – usual (average); with an index [0,6 - 1] – strong. In the figure, the dashed lines indicate weak correlation links. The usual lines denote average links; bold lines – strong links.



**Figure 01.** The lexical-grammatical model of time in postcard texts.

Figure 01 shows a system consisting of 12 elements. The number of lexical markers within this model (adverbs with the temporal meaning, names of time units and their parts, names of uncertain time segment, names of months, names of holidays, numerals, adjectives and nouns expressing correlation with age) is 66% and the number of grammatical markers is 34% (verb forms of the present, past, future tense and prepositional constructions containing a temporal noun). The names of the lexical markers are in italics. However, it should be remembered that grammatical markers are more in demand, and therefore more frequent than lexical markers.

It is obvious that the system is structured around the most frequent marker the present tense, which is the nuclear component of this model, grouping around itself a significant number of system elements. Its valence is 8, which indicates the number of correlations established by it.

It is important to note that the postcard writers used different types of present time: Present Perfect, Present Continuous and Present Simple.

The authors used Present Perfect in those cases when they asked about whether the addressee was in their country

*Have you ever been to HK?* (postcard from HongKong)

*Have you ever been to Taiwan?* (postcard from Taiwan)

or shared information about destinations they visited themselves

*I've been to 4 continents & Everest Base Camp.*

*I've been to many different countries. I've never been to Russia though...*

The Present Continuous form was used to expressing an action that occurs at the moment of speech or during the writing period.

*I'm drinking tasty cocoa and looking through the window.*

*I'm from Brazil, the country of the World Cup. But these games are destroying here.*

*2015 New Year is coming soon!*

However, the most frequently used tense is Present Simple, which is not surprising. It is used to describe the actions that realize not only at the moment of speaking but before and after it, or even constantly in Present.

*My name is Marlen.*

*Taiwan is a small country next to China. We are small, but we have delicious food, beautiful view and kind people.*

*I live in Holland nearby the sea.*

*I hope you enjoy this postcard of Katherine Hepburn.*

The speaker is able to comprehend the named and similar actions, since for him, due to their stability, they are actual characteristics of objects valid for the moment of speech. "These characteristics of action as well as specific one-time actions of the present, have the status of the actual reality for the speaker where he lives and with which he interacts".

The most frequent verbs are *to be, live / live, work / work, like / love, hope / hope, learn, wish / wish*. The authors tell about their names, where they come from, where they live, in what sphere they work or study, what they like to do, express the hope that the addressee will like the card they chose and wish them happy holidays, birthdays or a good day or year .

9.10.2014

*Hello Nadya,*

*Nice greeting from Czech Republic. I live in Pleen, city in west Bohemia.*

*I have one cat (his name is Kocour, it's man) Have a nice time*

*Bye*

Past Simple and Future Simple tenses are much less in demand: their frequency rates are 6% and 4% respectively.

*Last year, I studied abroad one year in France. And I was very lucky to have a wonderful hostfamily that treats me really well and had taught me many things.*

*But the government spent 26 billion to build stadiums. Even 250.000 families lost their houses because of the stadiums.*

The Future Simple in most cases is used in the etiquette courtesy formula inherent in this genre of natural written speech "I hope you enjoy my postcard".

*I hope this post card of the many pretty sea shells we have here will make you happy and smile.*

But there are rare cases when the author tells about his plans for future using this tense.

*But tomorrow the temperature will go down by 12 degrees. It will feel cold for me and I will have to wear a sweater!*

*In Sep. I'll go to Europe again.*

Another grammatical marker of the time category is a prepositional construction that includes a noun with a temporal meaning. It can be the name of a time unit (eg. day, year). These two markers have a strong correlation in the model.

*Надеюсь, ко дню Рождения она дойдет. (I hope you will get it for your Birthday.*

*В щасливу годину И в радости жить, Любить годину незгоду! (...To have a happy year and an unhappy one...)*

The lexical way of expressing time in our model is represented by 8 elements. Let's consider the existing temporary clusters.

The marker *the name of the time unit* correlates to the marker *adjective, expressing the correlation with age* and to the *numeral* since these methods are often used in the same context. Authors indicate their age with the help of construction "to be several years old". It is one of the most frequent topics in the content of postcards.

*I'm 14 years old.*

*She's a young girl of 59 years old.*

*I'm 17 years-old, currently a freshman.*

Grammatical marker *a prepositional construction that includes a noun with a temporal meaning* correlates to a lexical marker *the name of uncertain time segment* (eg. time, moment).

*At this time, let me say in Indonesia words: "selamat Tahun Baru 2014" or Happy New Year 2014.*

The marker *a name of a holiday* forms only one weak connection - to the *present tense verb forms*. The most frequent are the names of such holidays as New Year, New Year, Christmas and birthday.

*Happy 18<sup>th</sup> birthday soon ☺*

*I wish you a merry Xmas and a Happy New Year!*

*We wish you a Merry Christmas!*

Let's consider the cluster including *numerals - the name of the month - the present tense*. In 46% of postcards the authors indicated the date of writing, which included the number, month and year, so we took these cases into account as an example of the implementation of the *month name* marker.

*Hello, greetings from Hong Kong. Have you ever been to HK? This **shows** the celebration of some festivals.*

*Have a nice day!*

*Hoiman*

*20 Oct 14*

A lexical marker *nouns expressing correlation with the age* correlates to the grammatical markers *the present and past tense*. The addressees write about themselves, about their children, or recall something from their own lives, indicating when it happened.

*Since I was a little boy, I was deeply attracted by France, no matter their rich culture, history or food!*

*My name is Debbie and I am a married 52 year old mom of two... Zane (boy 29) and Brittany (girl 28). Brittany and her husband Matt blessed us with twin girls, Isla and Macy, on Halloween night, October 31, 2014. I am very excited about being a grandmother for the first time! It is such fun! Except for the new babies, we were all born and raised in a small town on the Pacific Ocean called Tillamook.*

*Temporal adverbs* give a time characteristic of the action; therefore, most correspond to the meaning of the verb category. It is reflected in the model we consider. This marker correlates to grammatical markers present and past tense.

*It reminded me of the film that I recently watched - Interstellar.*

*It is always delight to know someone who shares the same interests!*

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, we examined the functional features of linguistic markers of the time category in the texts of “Postcrossing” postcards, revealed all the lexical and grammatical means of expressing the time category and presented them in a form of a graphic-semantic model with a prognostic potential.

We have determined that texts of this genre of natural written speech are characterized by the existence of texts with zero temporality. In 4% cases the category of time is not explicated.

We have established that in the model obtained the grammatical way of expressing time is represented by such markers as: *a prepositional construction that includes a noun with a temporal meaning, Past, Future and Present tense forms*, the latter one is the most frequently used mean of expressing time in the genre under study.

The lexical way of expressing the time category in the “Postcrossing” texts is represented by such markers as *temporal adverbs; the names of time units and their parts; names of uncertain time segment; names of months; names of the holidays; numerals; adjectives and nouns expressing correlation with age*.

The model described in the paper has a prognostic potential, which allows us to assert that the presented lexical and grammatical markers of the time category and those clusters that they formed as part of the model are the most regular in use and typical for the postcards of the “Postcrossing” project.

## References

- Agarkova O.A., Baymuratova U.S. (2017). Illocutionary speech acts in texts of Postcrossing postcards. *Bulletin of the OSU*, 2017, №4 (204), Pages 22-26.
- Altukhova T.V., Lebedeva N.B. (2012). Virtual communication: a new stage in the development of written communication. *Bulletin of KemsSU*, No. 1 (49), 2012, Pages 105-111.
- Baymuratova U.S. (2015). Postcards of Postcrossing Projects in speech communication of English-language discourse. *Bulletin of the Orenburg State University*, 2015, № 11 (186), Pages 126 - 130.
- Belousov K.I. (2005). Text: space, time, tempo-rhythm. Novosibirsk: Siberian Lights, 2005, 248 p.
- Belova N.A., Baymuratova U.S. (2015). Analysis of English verbs of visual perception in texts of postcards of “Postcrossing” project. *Fundamental research*, 2015, №2-18, Pages. 4062-4066.
- Bunnag Anawat (2017). The concept of *time* in philosophy: A comparative study between Theravada Buddhist and Henri Bergson's concept of time from Thai philosophers' perspectives. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, In press, corrected proof, Available online 4 August 2017
- Durhan S., G. Sciavicco (2018). Allen-like theory of *time* for tree-like structures. *Information and Computation*, Volume 259, Part 3, April 2018, Pages 375-389.
- Evstafiadi O. V., Baymuratova U.S. (2015) Complex sentences with subordinate conditional clauses in texts of “Postcrossing” postcards. *Bulletin of the Kemerovo State University*, 2015, №4 (64) V1, Pages. 134 – 137.
- Foltête Jean-Christophe, Jean-Baptiste Litot (2015) Scenic *postcards* as objects for spatial analysis of tourist regions. *Tourism Management*, Volume 49, August 2015, Pages 17-28
- Herblanda A. , MichelG. Garric, OlivierLesieur (2017) Thank you letters from patients in an intensive care unit: From the expression of gratitude to an applied ethic of care. *Intensive and Critical Care Nursing*, Volume 43, December 2017, Pages 47-54.
- Hooker Emily D., Belinda Campos, Sarah D. Pressman (2018). It just takes a text: Partner text messages can reduce cardiovascular responses to stress in females. *Computers in Human Behavior*, in press, accepted manuscript, available online 23 February 2018.
- Howard Marc W. (2018) Memory as Perception of the Past: Compressed *Time* in Mind and Brain. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Volume 22, Issue 2, February 2018, Pages 124-136.

- Lasitsa L.A. (2007). On the relationship of time markers in Russian texts. *Bulletin of the Orenburg State University*, 2007, No. 77, Pages 95-101 .
- Lasitsa L.A. (2008). Internal text time: lexico-grammatic and ontological models. Chelyabinsk, 2008, 24 p.
- Lebedeva N.B. (2011). Genres of natural written speech: student graffiti, marginal pages of notebooks, private note. Moscow.: Editorial URSS, 2011, 256 p.
- Leone M. J., Alejo S., Alejandro P., Diego A. G., Mariano S. (2018). Time drawings: Spatial representation of temporal concepts. *Consciousness and Cognition*, Volume 59, March 2018, Pages 10-25.
- Postcrossing - a project that allows anyone to receive postcards from random places in the world. URL: <https://www.postcrossing.com>
- Simeonov P. L. (2015) Yet another time about time ... Part I: An essay on the phenomenology of ePhysical time. *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*, Volume 119, Issue 3, December 2015, Pages 271-287
- Wheatley A. (2015). Other People's Letters: Simulating Archival Intimacy Through Theater. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Volume 41, Issue 4, July 2015, Pages 511-513.
- Zaitseva E.V. (2012). Sociocultural conditioning of written phatic communication (on the example of texts of postcards in the British language culture). Voronezh, 2012, 24 p.