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**THE THEME CATEGORY IN THE GENRE OF THE ESSAY BY**  
**V.M. PESKOV**

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**Abstract**

In practice the essay genre is undergoing a transformation process, so for accurate and convincing studies of the typological features of the genre we need to choose exemplary essays. At the same time, the material of this study is the essays of the famous journalist V.M. Peskov, recognized as a representative and typical subject of study in the humanitarian sphere. The aim of our study is to describe the features and roles of the topic category, as well as to identify ways to reflect the topic category in the essay texts. The research method is a categorical-textual analysis based on the category of communicativeness. For analysis in this study, the topic category was selected as reflecting the contextual reality. The topic category is one of the leading text categories that reflects the subject of speech in the text. The analysis of methods explicating the topic category in the essay genre shows the combination of several functions in one nomination (primary, basic and main), the use of various additional nominations (synonyms, reference identical nominations, taxonomic nominations, grammatical transforms, substitutes and zero nominations). The use of such a diverse range of additional nominations indicates that the essay as a genre is at the intersection of several functional styles.

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## 1. Introduction

In connection with the development of philological science, the study of the topic category is becoming one of the most topical aspects of modern linguistics. A lot of researchers pay attention to the role of the topic category and special features of its explication in texts of various styles and genres. The topic category is studied in the poem (Bortnikov, 2014) in the hagiography text (Iekovich, 2013), in the professional text (Levkevich & Radievskaya, 2019), in the text of informational and colloquial styles (Zvyaginceva, 2016), in Neo-Gothic novel (Pashkov, 2019), in business correspondence (Shirinkina, 2018). Studying the topic category certainly helps us to understand the content and the structure of the text deeply and completely. Studying the topic category is constantly continuing in linguistics, which gives researchers the opportunity to discover new facets in the texts of various styles, genres as well as identify peculiar features of individual style.

## 2. Problem Statement

The essay as a genre traditionally refers to journalistic style: "The essay is an artistic and journalistic genre that combines documentalism (reliance on real-life facts), analyticity (research), and artistic form of the text" (Matveeva, 2003, p. 48).

As far as the essay develops, more and more scientists begin to study its classification. As Kantorovich (1962) notes three genre types of the essay: a problematic essay, a portrait essay and a moral essay. Cherepahov (1966) notes four genre types of the essay: portrait, eventive, travel writing, and sketchy. Kolosov (1977) defines five types of the essay: journalistic, narrative, portrait, a sketch/an essay, travel writing. According to Kim (2011), the essay can be divided into three categories: artistic and pictorial (a travel writing, an essay, a sketch), artistic and journalistic (portrait), research (problematic, research, journalistic). Tertychnyj (2002), Ukueva and Zhusueva (2016) distinguish subgenres depending on the subject: a portrait essay, a problematic essay, and a travel writing essay. In our study we focus on the travel writing essay, which "contains a sequential description of places and events during a particular trip or journey, near or far" (Matveeva, 2003, p. 65).

The material of this research is the essays of V.M. Peskov, whose works are considered exemplary and representative for scientific research in Humanities. The essays of V.M. Peskov occupy a particular place among the essays of the soviet period and still appear relevant.

## 3. Research Questions

Eventually, the essay as a genre is losing ground, and today it is on the periphery due to the changing priorities of the contemporary culture and language arts (Skibickaya, 2014), as well as the new digital reality. Meanwhile, the genre of the essay is converting, for example, travel (a travel writing essay) and long-read (a problematic essay) (Zheltukhina et al., 2017). The essay retains its invariant, on the basis of which we can distinguish characteristic features of the genre and generate new texts by this pattern.

1. How is the topic category specified in linguistics?
2. How is the topic category explicated in the texts of V.M. Peskov's essays?

3. What functional-semantic types of speech are used in the texts of V.M. Peskov's essays?

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

The aim of our study is to describe the features and role of the topic category, as well as to identify ways of the topic category reflection in the essay texts.

To achieve this goal we need to perform the following tasks: firstly, to select nominations reflecting the topic categories; secondly, to analyze these nominations in the categorical and textual aspect; thirdly, to summarize the ways of the topic category explications in the texts of V.M. Peskov's essays; fourthly, to summarize the features and roles of the topic category in the essay texts.

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

The method of the study is categorical textual analysis, based on the the communicativeness category. The textual category is considered as a "representation of a particular part of the text meaning by various language, verbal, and composite means" (Matveeva, 2003, p. 74). In this regard "the topic category is considered as one of the interrelated essential features of its communicative and rational systematicity" (Sidorov, 1986, p. 427). The entire text is considered as a communicative system, the text category is one of "communicative lines of this system, conveyed by language means" (Matveeva, 1990, p. 102).

We have chosen the topic category as reflecting a non-textual reality for analysis in this study. The topic category is one of the basic text categories, reflecting the subject of speech in the text, that is, the subject of reality with which the author works.

The theme of the entire text retains the unity of text idea: "one text – one idea". The topic category related to the author's intention is an essential and indispensable attribute of any text. The theme is a reduced content that is compatible with the intention (Novikov, 1983). Thus, when we think over the notion of the text theme we must take into account not only the textual denotation but also the author's intention.

Razinkina (1989) investigates the theme in the content-related and language spheres. She believes that a definiteness of the theme is created by the action of heterogeneous binary oppositions: a concrete/generalized sub-theme; a sub-theme associated with author's assessment; a sub-theme implementing retrospective/prospective connections; a sub-theme having textual/non-textual character; sub-themes implementing explicit/implicit meanings of a communicative act, etc.

The theme of the text is represented by means of referential and significative words. These lexical groups are combined in the thematic composition – in the thematic groups, in other words, the totality of the thematic groups composes the thematic text integrity. In thematic groups a direct nomination plays an important role both in the structural aspect and in the semantic aspect. It is a main type of all existing nominations (Gak, 1977). A set of nominations for the subject of speech in the text or in its fragment is called a nominative chain (Gak, 1972). There is a main theme reflecting the basic subject of speech and some additional ones called sub-themes or micro-theme reflecting peripheral subjects of speech in the text. So the main nominative chain which is designated by the term "thematic chain" gets through the text

and is a representation of the entire text theme. It "contains the title of the entire text, allow you to distinguish major information from minor" (Matveeva, 1990, p. 103).

## 6. Findings

Let us turn to research results.

The title – a strong position, reflects the topic category. The analysis of the titles in the Complete works of V.M. Peskov shows that the title of the essay consists of two or three words. Most of the titles are nominative (*A forest fairy-tale, A communist's daughter, Gagarin's tulips, Seeds*), few titles are predicative (*The family takes the exam, Meet, People go to Lenin*). In the essay the title, as a rule, corresponds to the theme and the content, clearly reflects what is being discussed: for example, *The River of my childhood* shows the time and the place of action; *The Black swan* represents the object of description. Sometimes the title reflects evaluativity expressing the author's emotions, for example, *The Beauty* expresses the author's love of nature; *The Happiness of the first path* shows the author's positive attitude to the first journey; *Clever geese* reflects the love of animals.

Let us turn to the text of the essay "Forest's meetings" (Peskov, 2014), devoted to nature. The author employs a dynamic description that is one of the important functional-semantic types of speech. It is built "on the characteristic of the subject motion, recitation of equal actions, a sequence of event's elements, changing the aspect or the point of view" (Matveeva, 2003, p. 81).

The essay "Forest's meetings" has three subtitle and is divided into three parts. The first part "A forest glade of joy" describes a rescue of a young deer; in the second part "Night friends" a character rescues six fox-cubs; in the third part "Ivanok" characters shelter a bird from winter freeze.

Firstly, let us turn to the title of the essay "Forest meetings". The title is a strong position of the text, which reflects the topic category. In this essay, the title expresses the category of space and indicates the place where the scene took place.

In the first part, the title "A forest glade of joy" is a metaphor indicating the place where the event took place. The metaphor provokes readers to think over what joyful happened in the forest glade. This title is a strong position of the text reflecting the topic category. There are four micro-theme "A Forest glade", "Joy", "A Smell of flower" and "Deer" in the first part.

The first micro-theme is explicated by means of grammatical transforms, that get through the entire text keeping its content integrity. Only at the end there is a periphrasis, a reference identical nomination occurs: polyana (forest glade) (a) – u polyany (at the forest glade) (a) – polyana (forest glade) (a) – polyana (forest grade) (a) – polyanu (forest grade) (a) – nad polyanoj (above the forest glade) (a) – na polyane (at the forest glade) (a) – na polyane (at the forest glade) (a) – na polyane (at the forest glade) (a) – na meste turnira (at the place of the event) (b).

A nominative chain: a a a a a a a a b – shows that the forest glade combines three types of nominations. There is a primary nomination as it is used in the title in a strong position. There is a basic nomination as it reflects the subject of the text. There is also a main nomination as it is repeated nine times in the text.

The second micro-theme "Joy" is explicated in the following way: radosti (joy) (a) – radosti (joy) (a) – k svetu (to the light) (b) – prostora (spaciousness) (c) – svet (light) (b) – cerkvi (church) (d) – svet

(light) (b) – solnechnyh (sunny) (e) – strunah (string) (f) – ozero (lake) (g) – solnca (sun) (e) – svetlyj (bright) (b) – zajchiki (hares) (h) – ozero (lake) (g) – sveta (light) (b).

The second nominative chain is a a b c b d b e f g e b h g b.

The chain contains the nomination *joy* that is both primary and basic. It is primary because it appears in the title and then is repeated two times at the beginning of the text. It is basic as it the most accurately reflects the subject of the text (of whom and what is said in the text). Svet (light) (b) is main nomination, as it is repeated five times in the text, this is more than any other nominations (radosti (joy) (a) – two times, ozero (lake) (g) – two times, solnca (sun) (e) – two times). In the fragment there are additional nominations: grammatical transforms k svetu (to the light) (b), sveta (light) (b), svetlyj (bright) (b), which refer to the nomination of svet (light) (b); possessive adjective; reference identical nominations: prostora (spaciousness) (b), cerkvi (church) (d), solnca (sun) (e), strunah (strings) (f), ozero (lake) (g), zajchiki (hares) (h), including strunah (strings) is a metaphor in relation to zajchiki (hare) (h), solnechnyh (sunny) (e) – is possessive adjective, belonging to strings.

The analysis shows that this fragment contains various nominations. There is almost no repetition of nominations in sequence. There is a high density at the beginning of the fragment.

There are the following nominations in explication of the third micro-theme "A Smell of flower": tonkij (subtle) (a) – draznyashchij (tempting) (b) – zapah (smell) (c) – on (it) (d) – rodnik aromata (a spring of fragrance) (e) – zapah (smell) (c) – zapah (smell) (c) – zapah (smell) (c).

The third nominative chain is a b c d e c c c.

The primary nomination is represented in the chain: tonkij (subtle) (a), used for description of flower's smell. The basic nomination is represented by zapah (smell) (c), as it reflects the subject of the text. The main nomination is zapah (smell) (c), as it is repeated four times, other nominations are repeated only one time. Additional nominations are used in the fragment: an expanded nomination in relation to smell: draznyashchij (tempting) (b); a substitute-personal pronoun: on (it) (d); reference identical nomination: rodnik aromata (a spring of fragrance).

The analysis shows high density of nominations in the middle of the text in a single paragraph; employment of various nominations to describe flower's smell more vividly and metaphorically.

The fourth and the most extansional micro-theme is "Deer" explicated in the following way: oleney (deer) (a) – oni (they) (b) – golova (head) (c) Ø(g olenya) – golove (head) (c) Ø (g olenya) – sheya (neck) (e) Ø (g oleney) – ushi (f) Ø (g oleney) – roga (antlers) (g) Ø (g oleney) – zverej (animals) (h) – stado (entire herd) (i) Ø (g oleney) – razvedchikom (scout) (j) – golov (heads) (c) Ø (g olenya) – materi (mother) (k) – olenyat (young deer) (l) – vsyo stado (i) Ø (g oleney) – samca (male) (m) – roga (antlers) (g) – u samcov (males) (m) – roga (g) Ø (g oleney) – eti (these) (o) – dvoje (two) (o) – rogov (antlers) (g) Ø (g oleney) – samki (female) (p) – samok (females) (p) – pobeditel' (winner) (q) – pobeditelej (winner) (q) – vsyo stado (entire herd) (i) Ø (g oleney) – oleni (deer) (a) – samcu (female) (p) – pacana (boy) (r) – pacan (r) – olenyonok (young deer) (l) – malyutka (baby) (s) – oleniha (female deer) (t) – ego (his) (u) – sheyu (neck) (e) – oleniha (female deer) (t) – olenyonka (young deer) (l) – mat' (mother) (k) – emu (him) (u) – oleshka (deer) (v) – oleshka (deer) (v) – golovu (head) (c) – Ø pripodnyal (lifted) (g oleshka) – oleniha (female deer) (t) – syna (son) (w) – on (he) (u) – u nego (him) (u).

The fourth nominative chain is a b c d c d e d f g f d h i d j c d k l i d m g m g d n o g d p p q q i d a p r r l s t u e t l k u v v v v c d t w u u.

The chain contains primary nomination: olenej (deer) (a), that indicates whom they watch for at the forest glade; basic nomination: oleni (a), as it the most accurately reflects the subject of the text. This fragment tells about deer. The main nominations oleni (deer) (a), as it is repeated thirteen times (oleni (deer) (a) – two times, Ø (g olonej) – eleven times is a zero nomination to deer), it is more than any other nominations. Additional nominations are also used in this fragment. There is a grammatical transform of nomination olenej (deer) (a), which refers to the nomination oleni (deer) (a); jego (his) (u), jemu (him) (u), u nego (him) (u), which refer to on (he) (u). The zero nominations are Ø pripodnyal (oleshka) (lifted a young deer), which refers to oleshkam (young deer), other Ø (d), zero nominations is related to deer. There is a taxonomic nomination: zverej (animals) (h), materi (mother) (k), samki (females) (p), oleniha (female deer) (t), samca (male) (m), pobeditel' (winner) (q), pacan (boy) (r), olenenok (young deer) (l), malyutka (baby) (s), oleshka (deer) (v), syna (son) (w). There are reference identical nominations: golova (head) (c), sheya (neck) (e), ushi (ears) (f), roga (antlers) (g), vsyo stado (entire herd) (i), razvedchikom (scout) (j). In this fragment, the substitute can be divided into two types: demonstrative pronouns: eti (these) (n), dvoje (two) (o); and a personal pronoun: on (he) (u).

The analysis shows that there are a lot of nominations of the main theme (sixty nominations), high density in the second part of the fragment. They widely use a total of twenty two out of sixty taxonomic nominations. The author employs metonymy: golova (head) (c), sheya (neck) (e) kak struna (as a string), ushi (ears) (f) (as two locators). The author uses personification – the transfer of human relations to the life of deer, for example, mat' (mother), syn (son), pacan (boy), malyutka. The author uses a metaphor: razvedchikom (j) – a metaphor indicated a single deer going ahead.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of explication ways of the topic category in the genre of essay shows a combination of several functions in one nomination (primary, basic, and main). There are also various additional nominations (synonyms, reference identical nominations, taxonomic nominations, grammatical transforms, substitutes, and zero nominations). The use of such a diverse range of additional nominations indicates that the essay as a genre is at the overlapping of several functional styles. Thus, the use of various means of nominating the topic category, the near absence of repeating the nominations one after another is a characteristic feature of the journalist style. The use of expressive means (metaphor, metonymy and personification) helps to depict the subject of speech vividly, which is more a feature of artistic style. A high density of using substitutes, including first-person pronouns, allow you to see features of the colloquial style in the essay.

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