

**СЕКЦИЯ «ПРОБЛЕМЫ ЛИНГВОДИДАКТИКИ
В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОЙ
КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ У СТУДЕНТОВ
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TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRONIC LITERATURE

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Electronic literature, as opposed to digitized print literature, comprises literary works that were created on a computer and designed to be read on a computer. Having evolved together with digital computers, it is the result of man`s interaction with computers that provide us with access to abundant information from around the world. Although electronic literature retains many features of print literature, such as fonts and many print conventions, it transforms them under the influence of digital art, computer games, computer -associated culture, and is intermediate, syncretic by nature. In contrast with printed literature, electronic literature can be accessed if its code is executed. According to N.K.Hayles [5, p.5], the code to the text`s performance is essential for understanding electronic literature, and to a large extent determines its genres. The first electronic fiction texts were written according to the linking structure of a hypertext. The term “hypertext” was coined by Theodor H. Nelson in the 1960s to refer to a form of electronic writing that is best read on an interactive screen and is non-sequential, a text that branches and allows possibility of choices to the reader. Hypertext as a term denotes a text that is composed of semantic blocks, which R. Barthes [2] calls “lexia”, and electronic links that join them. Lexia is a part of a text that has a different meaning or effect from the neighbouring units. The significance of a lexia depends on the reader`s ability to recognize it as a meaningful unit and interpret it according to a certain semantic code. Semantic codes are based on what composes “common culture”, i.e., everything that has been previously read, heard, and generally experienced prior to the reading.

This literary trend was initiated by Michael Joyce`s hypertext “*afternoon, a story*” [6]. It tells the story of a recently divorced technical writ-

er, Peter, who one afternoon suddenly remembers a car crash he had seen in the morning. Recalling the witnessed accident and two bodies on the ground, he suspects that the wrecked car belonged to his former wife Lisa, and that the victims of the accident might have been she and their son Andy. Psychological by nature, the story features the narrator, who fears he has lost his son in a car accident. The haunting recollections of the scene by the protagonist are objectified as a change of the main plot line if a reader chooses a different path, and express a stream of consciousness of a disquieted mind. While the central lexia: "*I felt certain it was them. I recognized her car from that distance...*" is repeated five times during the reading, other memories also haunt the narrator's mind, such as remembered by association a snowmobile accident "... *all these indices pointing somewhere, and the thing becomes a web.*" Various layers of hypertextuality reflect the protagonist's bereavement, feelings of guilt and failed responsibility, as well as general inability to come to terms with the existential situation. Quotations from and allusions to literary texts by Cortazar, Sterne, Tolstoy, and references to the films of Michelangelo Antonioni add meaningful dimensions to the text. However all these links return readers to the main lexia: "I may have seen my son die this morning." Nevertheless the reader does not get an answer to the question of what had actually happened.

The work is traditionally attributed to Postmodern, poststructuralist literature due to such tenets as decentralization, de-linearization, non-closure and rhizomatic nature, i.e. it gives access to various, non-hierarchical possibilities of entry and exit to the representation and interpretation of the data. Electronic literature has been changing together with the development of the Web incorporating graphics, colour, sound, animation and its other capabilities. Instead of links, that were the distinguishing feature of the first electronic works, authors of later works started to use *various navigation schemes and interface metaphors that tend to deemphasize the link as such* [5, p. 7]. This led to the second generation of electronic literature to which Michael Joyce's "Twelve Blue" [7] is attributed. Contrary to the first generation works of electronic literature where a screen was seen just as a page of a printed book, "Twelve Blue" is a flow of associational thinking expressed via surfing the Web. The hypertext includes 269 links in 96 spaces. A column on the left displays coloured threads representing links in the network of the StorySpace passing through eight points on a grid. The reader moves on

by clicking on the threads, or on hyperlinks within the text which appears as light blue segments on a dark blue background on the right, larger part of the screen. Each page is named splitting the story into separate poetic fragments, each of them repeating the word “blue”. The narration is nonlinear, links bring to various associations of characters connected with people, events and places. The epigraph taken from William Gass’s *On Being Blue* [4] expresses the structure of this hypertext: “*So a random set of meaning has softly gathered around the word the way lint collects. The mind does that.*”

The twelve threads on the left are coloured silk threads from which one of the main characters, Lisle was weaving a quilt of the river “twelve feet long and eight feet wide, the covering for a giantess” – the symbol of the flowing life, and at the same time an exact replica of the hypertext’s grid. Browsing the text in a random way of selection, the reader assembles interlaced segments into a coherent whole, a story told from twelve different perspectives, and psychologically deep characters with complex inner lives begin to appear before his imaginative eye. The beginning of one part of the story “*Many ways to go over Niagara Falls*” is applicable both to the structure of the hypertext, and to its content, as well as several mentions of different roads all *leading to Rout 9*. The hypertext may be read in different ways and still retain its original meaning. The duality of life is expressed through the structure as well as through described events. Randomness of life events is paralleled with randomness of reading options, however the story remains the same thus likening life with a hypertext.

Further development of electronic literature has led to so-called “hybrid forms” of literature that activate different possibilities of human perception and is explained by the role the computer has started to play in the life of man as “*the evolution of Homo sapiens has co-developed with technologies* [5, 112].” As in the real world our perception comes from our senses, inclusion of sound, colour and other visual aids into electronic media makes interaction with computer and virtual world less estranged from reality by incorporating the work of human senses into interaction with the Web. With the creation of literary works especially for tablets and smartphones that require a touchscreen, the third sense – touch – was added to the interaction between man and electronic media, thus activating three out of five basic human senses: touch, sight and hearing, merging real and virtual worlds and providing extra possibilities

to users. These possibilities come not only from the overwhelming abundance of information accessible via net in a matter of seconds, but also from activated function of its users. Electronic media, and electronic literature in particular, developed alongside with computer games and acquired their gambling element. Possibility to choose different links or navigation schemes turns readers into active users, co-creators of the work they are reading by activating not only senses, but also mental abilities. This means that the reader does not merely interpret the text but “*performs actions such as active choice and decision-making through navigation option* [8, p.27]”. Existence of a feedback loop between the reader and the text plays an important role in the process of reading [3, p.22]. This represents the main attraction of what Espen J.Aarseth [1] called Ergodic Literature, or literature that requires nontrivial efforts from the reader to traverse the text.

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