

**Everyday texts: the speech genre of menu**Ludmila Alekseevna Araeva<sup>1</sup>, Irina Vladimirovna Evseeva<sup>2</sup>, Olga Victorowna Felde<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Kemerovo State University, Krasnaya Str., 6, office 6306, Kemerovo City, 650043, Russia<sup>2</sup>Siberian Federal University Institute of Philology and Language Communication, Svobodny St., 82A, office 242, Krasnoyarsk City, 660041, Russia

**Abstract.** This article is devoted to analysing the contemporary menu texts. The main attention is paid to the composition of the texts of this genre. Menu is a special text type, a speech genre of the informative advertising type, which contains the evaluation, ritual and even imperative elements, reflected in separate texts - the basic genres, which constitute the integrated genre of menu. Put it otherwise, menu - is some utterances, semantically and syntactically consolidated into the unified fragment of a specific composition.

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**Introduction**

The issue related to the food code, has become the most popular in Russia and the European countries during the last two decades. This issue reflects our everyday practices, what could not fail to be seen by linguists. The first linguistic studies, concerning the thematic group "food", are presented in the works by [1; 2]. Nowadays scientists consider food as a special identifier in the culture which allows differentiating similar concepts and comparing widely different phenomena. The linguists' attention to this issue is due to, including but not limited to, the ethnocentrism in the consumer behaviour in the market, supported by the European economic chambers [3].

The importance of this issue for the linguists is expressed, for example, by the proceedings of the International Conference "A Food Code in the Slavic Cultures" (December 2008, the Institute of Slavic Studies, RAS), where the linguists have rather for the first time raised the issues concerning the national food as a marker of the national identity [4]. Put it otherwise, nowadays food is classed as the main natural channel of communication between a person and the nature, as well as a special ritual item included in the cultural macrotext.

Nowadays in the context of this issue the linguists' attention is directed to studying the separate gastronomic texts [5; 6, etc.], the ways of naming dishes in food service outlets [7, etc.], the analysis of the linguistic and ethnocultural gastronomic features [8, etc.] The special place is taken by the discourse study of food advertising [9].

The texts of cafes, bars and restaurants menus are directly relevant to the issues, which define the contemporary food code. In the multi-author book "The Food in Russian, Reflected in the Language" the menu texts are considered by the linguists as the

hypertexts containing, on the one hand, the language game, on the other hand - a some kind of the cultural code which comprises the background knowledge [10]. In this book the study objects are the texts fixed in the food service outlets of the central Russian cities, mainly in Moscow.

In this article the attention is directed to the description of the cafes, bars, restaurants menu in the Siberian cities (Russia), in this case - the cities of Krasnoyarsk and Lesosibirsk (the Krasnoyarsk Territory).

We consider menu as a special text type, which has its specific features and is customer-oriented. We identify the following objectives among the main ones: (1) the analysis of the menu genre peculiarities when perceiving it as a collection of the specific texts, (2) the detection of elements of the text menu typical model.

**Body**

One of the contemporary text definitions, which are anthropocentrism-oriented is as follows: the text is a language formation, which ensures the communicative interaction between people. To this extent the text is classed as a tool, which generates the meaning and is characterized by such functions (according to M.Y. Lotman), as: the creative one, the function of packing the meaning and the memory function. This definition is taken as a basis when analysing the text outline of the *menu* genre.

The word *menu* has borrowed by the Russian language from the French one, where *menu* means "something small, elegant, detailed". In France it was mentioned in two sentences, which could be considered as the prototype of the contemporary *menu*. This word was used in the notes which were sent to the kitchen from the Louis's XIV stationary office, contained the orders for the next day breakfast

or lunch and called "Menu note à propos de la table" ("Small notes concerning cooking") and at the prettily written cards of thick paper submitted to the king before dinner, which were entitled in such a way: "La carte du menu des plaisirs" ("Menu (a list) of delicate pleasures"). Thus, in the source language, the word *menu* itself does not denote any gastronomic objects. But in Russia, where the people actively, often in virtue of fashion, used the French terms this short and easy- to-pronounce word has been quickly asserted itself, and now it is used to mean 'Selecting the dishes, as well as the paper with the dish list on it'. In modern France, the meaning of the word *menu* used in Russian is unknown. In the French restaurant one asks for "a list", moreover, "the lunch list" ("La carte du déjeuner") apart from "the wine list" ("La carte de vins").

It is obvious, that menu, in its main meaning, presented in the Russian language - is 'a drawn up list of the gastronomic specialties' and a consolidated text, characterized by the certain genre specifics. The fact that the menu text - is a separate genre, is reflected by its structural and organizational aspect. Thus, the (1) thematic content, the (2) style and the (3) composition are peculiar to the menu texts. All these three elements are closely related in a whole utterance, which correlates to a specific communication field - the food service system, which has developed its own relatively stable types of utterances. In M.M.Bakhtin's [11] interpretation, such utterances are called the speech genres.

M.M. Bakhtin's concept of separating the primary and secondary genres, joining the secondary ones by the primary ones, has formed the basis for classifying the speech genres by M.Y. Fedosyuk, who has suggested to differentiate the "basic" and "integrated" genres [12]. Under the basic ones the researcher means the thematic, composite and stylistic texts types, which do not include the elements, which could be classed as the texts of the certain genres (a statement, a praise, greeting, an order). The integrated genres - are the texts consisting of the elements, which are relatively complete and represent a text of a certain genre.

Menu is defined as a special text type, the secondary integrated speech genre of informative advertising, which contains the evaluation, ritual and even imperative elements, contained in the basic genres, which fill the menu. Menu has its own composition and linguistic features. Let's give a brief description of the main options of the menu texts, which prove it's belonging to the speech genres.

Menu is very important for the successful operation of such food service outlets and is its indispensable attribute. Menu - is not just a sales tool, a catalogue of the gastronomic ideas or a way of

offering it the customers. Menu performs very important tasks, the most relevant for the outlet of which are the following ones: 1) to clearly define the outlet price category and style; 2) to inform the visitor about the cuisine, dishes and house service standards; 3) to help the visitor in making his choice; 4) to entertain him and afford him an aesthetic pleasure; 5) to allow the outlet to sell the most expensive and image dishes. The listed tasks suggest that menu should be characterized by creativity, and drawing up such texts is the art itself.

In the contemporary food service outlets menu is often a hardcover (or the stable information cards, standing on the tables or at the bar counter in bars, cafes or coffee shops), which contains the section list, including the dish list, arranged in a special order. The characteristics of each dish could indicate: the components used for cooking, the portion weight and its price, the dish presentation and the flavour description. These elements in a certain text could be represented to the different extents. In the aforesaid study "The Food in Russian, Reflected in the Language", intended for analysing the menu texts of the Moscow food service outlets, such informative index, as the product nutritional value is also specified [10: 491]. In the Siberian menu text this has not been detected yet. It is meaningful, that in the United States and many European countries indicating the nutritional value and the dish composition on menu is normal, but in Russia this practice faces the special problems, therefore, even in the metropolitan restaurants such informative index is not always presented (it is usually indicated in the children and dietetic menus only).

A certain thematic content is peculiar to the menu texts. They define and describe the "first" and "second" courses, snacks, beverages, confectionery, etc. It has been already said, that menu is an integrated speech genre, which includes the basic genre texts. Among the basic genre texts on menu there are addresses, greetings, warning texts, pieces of advice for visitors (for example, the chef's offer), headings of the menu sections and names of the separate dishes, etc. A set of such texts arranged in a certain order, is a model of the integrated menu genre. Each of these basic genres has its own structure.

The contemporary menu usually begins with the texts which contain general information for visitors and could be conditionally indicated as "the introduction". These texts could contain: "an address" (*Dear Guests!*), "greeting" (*We welcome the citizens and visitors of Krasnoyarsk to dine in our restaurant!*), "an invitation" (*Welcome to our restaurant!; Welcome you to warm up in our place in the cold evenings! or If you would like to dine out Or have a good rest – You should hurry up to hit the*

“Bekker” by Pobeda well dressed!), “an advertising offer” (*Glogg or a shot of vodka as a present for you!; As autumn sets in we have renewed the lunch and main menus, as well as the wine list. The menu will contain: Steak list with **special sauces and oils**, as well as already composed dishes of the traditional and unexpected flavour combination. There are a lot of new, unusual, interesting things in store for you; In autumn when ordering a dish from the main menu you will get a present - a glass of white or red wine.*), “a wish” (We wish you have a good time and enjoy the unique taste of the delicious dishes!), “extra information” (*On Tuesdays - the chef's dinner for everyone!*), as well as “warning” (*Please, note! For drinking the alcoholic and other beverages brought along - there is a fine of 500 rubles. The restaurant "Beijing" is a private property and you could be expelled without any explanation. The Administration / the "Beijing" restaurant; Price list for the broken dishware / the "Tashkent" café*). The warning texts are often provided at the end of menu. While being fully aware of that this information is required, we believe anyway, that the texts of such content do not allow visitors to relax, could initiate a negative response and leave a bad impression about the outlet. We believe that each of the restaurant visitors has an advanced knowledge of where he has come, the prices and the visiting requirements of such outlets.

Such “introductions” in menu are often a genre variety. For example, in the text *Dear guests! Welcome to our restaurant. We are pleased to offer you a rather wide variety of dishes, which will outline a comprehensive concept of the Chinese cuisine with its millennial traditions for you. We congratulate you on the beginning of an exciting journey to the world of the Chinese gastronomic fantasies!* The “address”, “greeting invitation”, “advertising”, “congratulation” genres have been well represented. The most frequent elements of such introductory texts are “an address”, “an invitation” and “advertising”.

Then on menu there is a traditional list of dishes, ranged according to the sections. The section sequence is usually as follows: 1. “Signature Dishes and Snacks”, 2. “The Latest Offers”, 3. “Cold Dishes”, 4. “Salads”, 5. “Hot Dishes”, 6. “First Course”, 7. “Second Course”, 8. “Puddings”, 9. “Beverages”, 10. “Desserts”, 11. “Fruits”. The order of presenting these sections in menu basically reflects the sequence of meals.

The dishes in each section are also arranged in a certain order. Thus, for example, there is a certain sequence of presenting the “Second course”, here the cooking procedure and the plate service order are taken into account. For the fish dishes the boiled ones are first of all inserted onto the menu (e. g., boiled pike-perch), then there are the dishes in sauce

(sturgeon in tomato), the fried ones (a pike-perch pie), the baked ones (cod baked in a pan). For the meat course the meat dishes are firstly indicated (fillet, rib steak, beef-steak), then there are the dishes in sauce (goulash, beef stroganoff), the poultry and game dishes. The second course list ends with the vegetable dishes, various omelettes, scrambled eggs, pancakes with all kinds of fillings.

Each dish in these sections also has its essential elements, among them - there are the name (the “Caesar” salad), the portion weight (150 g) and the price (120 rub.). In addition, providing the components list of a particular dish is widely spread now, for example: “Vegetable Salad with Calmars” (*cabbage, bell pepper, the Korean carrot, calmars, garlic, salad dressing*).

In any outlet the deviations from the standard list of the sections could be on menu. Thus, the cold course is often identified in a different manner: “Cold dishes”, “Cold Dishes and Snacks”. The “Salad” section could be separated on the menu as an independent one if there is the “Cold Dishes” section, or it could be included in this section. On menu of the outlets focused on the national cuisine (e.g., the Chinese or Kazakh ones), the “Hot Dishes” section is not represented, as there is not apparently such concept in the gastronomic culture of these nations.

Depending on the outlet specifics the “Pizza” and “Sushi” sections could be presented on its menu. The “Beverage” section is arranged by restaurateurs in a different manner: “The Wine List”, “Teas and Beverages” and “Alcohol”, “Hot Beverages”, “Refreshment Beverages”, “The Bar”, “Beer”. On the menu of some outlets, typically the cafes and bars, there is the “Cigarettes” section. The specific of some restaurants is that at the end of the sections the cooking time is indicated, what seems to be very important. The other structural element of the menu which reflects the dish visual image - is a photo. Sometimes the visual image is provided only for the unfamiliar dishes.

Because the main menu option is the focus on a consumer, most of the menu texts come closer to advertising by many criteria. In this case, the menu texts could be defined as the “low text - high context” [13] phenomenon. Therefore, the owners of the modern food service outlets have incentives to make the menu texts more creative and full of creativity. The speech situation, where the consumer is drawn into the terms of the language game is intentionally created [14]. For example, the menu of the “Stoves-and-Benches” restaurant (the city of Lesosibirsk) includes the following section headings: “The Summer Speciality”, “The Old Believer's Pickles”, “Meat and Vegetable Variety”, “Dinner Salads” “Hot Dishes: the first course, evening dishes, meat dishes”,

"Trimblings" (side dishes), "Fruits and Sweet Eatables", "Teas and Beverages", "A'lkogol". Using the obsolete food names and old graphics on the restaurant menu marks its specifics, where everything corresponds to the old Russian rural flavour.

When examining menu in the context of the functional and semantic structure, this text type could be defined as descriptive texts, what allows specifying the following characteristics. Firstly, an enumerative structure of the homogeneous text elements and the enumerative intonation; the aspect-time relationship (there are a few verbs on menu, they are only used in the welcome addresses to the visitors, and are usually the imperfective ones in the present tense: *we wish, we congratulate, one receives*; in the menu text itself when describing the cooking subtleties there are often the passive participles in the past tense, for example: *the daily sauerkraut shchi with cracklings*); statics (the scene described on menu is static, there is no plot development or the discourse), a dish is described through the description of its features (*One for the road!!! – pieces of herring in vinegar with onions on a slice of bread, with vodka*); consistency (the menu text is drawn up according to the certain logic, based on the plate service order). In addition, for the descriptive genres a product presentation could be the possible speech situation. This is the another argument for that the menu refers to the descriptive text type, as one of the most important menu objectives - is to present the product and to help the outlet with selling as much dishes, as possible.

From the aforesaid material the inference, that menu is very important for the successful operation of any kind of the food service outlets and is its indispensable attribute, could be drawn.

### Conclusions

The conducted study allows describing menu as a special integrated speech genre, which includes the basic genres.

In the context of the functional and semantic communication menu is a descriptive text, as it has the following characteristics: an enumerative structure of the homogeneous elements and the enumerative intonation; the aspect-time relationship; a thing (a dish) is described through the description of its features.

Menu has a special structure, which is basically consistent with the typical structure of any text, i.e. menu has an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Contemporary menu begins with the texts containing general information for visitors. Such "introductions" in menu are often a genre variety (an address, a greeting invitation, advertising, congratulation). Then there is a traditional list of dishes, ranged according to the sections, which

presentation order basically reflects the sequence of meals. Each section in the menu texts is characterized by its own linguistic features, which primarily relate to the names of dishes, its specific graphical and colour schemes.

A certain thematic content, which defines the gastronomic vocabulary (the "food" and "cooking method" lexical groups) is peculiar to the menu texts.

Thus, menu is a special text type, a speech genre of the informative advertising type, which contains the evaluation, ritual and even imperative elements, reflected in separate texts - the basic genres, which constitute the integrated genre of menu. Put it otherwise, menu - is some utterances, semantically and syntactically consolidated into the unified fragment of a specific composition. The units of the semantic and grammatical, as well as composite level are interrelated and interdependent.

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