
**LEXICAL FUNCTIONING IN MODERN DISCOURSE:
SEMANTIC, PRAGMATIC AND COMMUNICATIVE
DIMENSIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, increasing attention is being paid to language as a dynamic communicative phenomenon functioning in constantly changing social, cultural, and technological environments. Within this perspective, vocabulary occupies a particularly important place, since the lexical level of language is the most responsive to external influences and most directly reflects transformations in communication practices, public interaction, and patterns of meaning production. The study of lexical functioning in modern discourse is therefore of special relevance, as it makes it possible to trace not only changes in the lexical system itself but also the mechanisms through which language adapts to new communicative conditions¹.

Modern discourse is characterized by semantic mobility, contextual dependence, pragmatic intensity, and the growing importance of evaluation. In contemporary communication, a word rarely functions only as a neutral naming unit. On the contrary, lexical items increasingly reveal their meaning through discourse, where they acquire additional semantic shades, evaluative connotations, pragmatic force, and text-forming potential. This is especially evident in public, media, digital, academic, and interpersonal communication, where lexical choice is closely connected with the speaker's intention, the expected effect on the addressee, and the broader sociocultural framework within which discourse unfolds².

¹ Hromko T. V. Theoretical dimension of internet discourse as an innovative linguistic phenomenon. *Scientific papers of the V. I. Vernadsky TNU. Series: Philology. Journalism*. 2025. Vol. 36 (75). No. 1. Part 1. P. 244–254. DOI: 10.32782/2710-4656/2025.1.1/40; Semak L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416.

² Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Herring S. C., Androutsopoulos J. Computer-mediated discourse 2.0. In: Tannen D., Hamilton H. E., Schiffrin D. (eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Hoboken : Wiley Blackwell, 2015. P. 127–151. DOI: 10.1002/9781118584194.ch6.

The relevance of the research is determined by several interrelated factors. First, the rapid development of digital communication has significantly transformed the conditions under which lexical units are produced, distributed, interpreted, and normalized. Second, the expansion of media discourse and public communication has intensified the evaluative and pragmatic role of vocabulary. Third, the modern linguistic situation is marked by continuous lexical renewal, semantic shifts, contextual reinterpretation, and the active interaction between codified language norms and discursive practice. Under these conditions, vocabulary should be examined not merely as a system of lexical units but as an active instrument of communication, meaning construction, and social interaction³.

The problem of lexical functioning in discourse lies in the fact that a word cannot be adequately interpreted outside its communicative environment. Dictionary meaning represents only one level of lexical description, whereas actual usage demonstrates that the full semantic potential of a word is realized only in context. In discourse, lexical items participate in the construction of coherence, the expression of evaluation, the representation of identity, the organization of perspective, and the shaping of the recipient's interpretation. Thus, the study of vocabulary in modern discourse requires an integrative approach combining semantic, pragmatic, functional, and communicative dimensions⁴.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the peculiarities of lexical functioning in modern discourse and to identify the principal semantic, pragmatic, and communicative factors that determine the actualization of lexical units in contemporary communication. To achieve this purpose, it is necessary to address several objectives: to outline the theoretical foundations for the study of vocabulary in discourse; to define the relationship between systemic and contextual meaning; to characterize semantic transformations of lexical units in contemporary communication; and to determine the pragmatic and communicative roles of vocabulary in modern discourse.

The structure of the chapter is determined by the logic of the research objectives. The first section focuses on the theoretical foundations of lexical functioning in modern discourse. The second section examines semantic

³ Herring S. C., Androutsopoulos J. Computer-mediated discourse 2.0. In: Tannen, D., Hamilton, H. E., Schiffrrin, D. (eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Hoboken : Wiley Blackwell, 2015. P. 127–151. DOI: 10.1002/9781118584194.ch6.

⁴ Aijmer K., Simon-Vandenberg A.-M. A model and a methodology for the study of pragmatic markers: The semantic field of expectation. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2004. Vol. 36. Issue 10. P. 1781–1805. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2004.05.005; Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Lascarides A., Copestake A. Pragmatics and word meaning. *Journal of Linguistics*. 1998. Vol. 34. Issue 2. P. 387–414.

transformations of lexical units in contemporary communication. The third section analyzes the pragmatic and communicative dimensions of vocabulary in modern discourse. The conclusions summarize the main findings and outline prospects for further research.

1. Theoretical foundations of lexical functioning in modern discourse

The study of lexical functioning in modern discourse is situated at the intersection of several major branches of contemporary linguistics, including lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, stylistics, and communication theory. Such an interdisciplinary perspective is necessary because vocabulary, as a level of language organization, cannot be fully understood only within the boundaries of systemic description. The lexical unit reveals its real functional potential not in isolation but in discourse, where meaning is actualized through context, communicative intention, textual environment, and sociocultural conditions. For this reason, the theoretical foundations of lexical functioning in modern discourse require attention both to the internal properties of lexical units and to the external conditions of their use⁵.

In traditional linguistics, vocabulary was primarily studied as a structured system of lexical units related to one another through semantic, stylistic, derivational, and syntagmatic relations. This system-oriented approach made it possible to define the place of the word in the lexical structure of language, to describe lexical meaning, polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, lexical fields, and the principles of lexical organization. However, the development of functional and communicative approaches to language gradually shifted the focus from the word as a system element to the word as a unit of use. In other words, linguistics moved from asking what a word means in the abstract to asking how a word functions in communicative reality.

This shift is especially important for modern discourse studies. Discourse is now widely understood not merely as a sequence of sentences or a finished text but as a form of language in action, embedded in a specific communicative situation and shaped by social, cultural, cognitive, and pragmatic factors. From this point of view, a word is not simply a carrier of codified meaning but an active participant in the construction of discourse. Its meaning is negotiated, specified, intensified, softened, reframed, or reinterpreted depending on the

⁵ Döring N., Mohseni M. R. Gendered language use in user-generated content: Contexts, forms, and effects. *Feminist Media Studies*. 2020. Vol. 20. Issue 5. P. 681–698. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2019.1639342; Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Lascarides A., Copestake A. Pragmatics and word meaning. *Journal of Linguistics*. 1998. Vol. 34. Issue 2. P. 387–414.

speaker's intention, the communicative setting, the addressee's background knowledge, and the conventions of a particular discourse type.

Thus, vocabulary in discourse should be regarded as a dynamic rather than static phenomenon. The dynamic nature of lexical functioning manifests itself in several ways. First, lexical meaning is context-sensitive. Second, lexical units demonstrate a high degree of functional flexibility. Third, words participate in various processes of semantic transformation and pragmatic enrichment. Fourth, the lexical level is especially sensitive to social and technological change, which makes it one of the most mobile zones of language development. These characteristics explain why vocabulary occupies a central place in studies of contemporary communication.

A key theoretical issue in the study of lexical functioning concerns the relationship between systemic meaning and contextual meaning. Systemic meaning refers to the semantic core of the lexical unit as it is represented in the language system and fixed in lexicographic description. Contextual meaning, by contrast, emerges in actual discourse and may either correspond to or differ from the systemic meaning. This distinction is essential because in real communication words rarely function as neutral realizations of dictionary meaning. Instead, they are shaped by context and acquire additional semantic, emotional, evaluative, or pragmatic layers. In this sense, contextual meaning should not be seen as secondary or accidental; rather, it is the actual form in which lexical meaning becomes communicatively relevant.

The contextualization of lexical meaning is closely connected with the pragmatic dimension of language. Pragmatics has shown that meaning is not exhausted by what linguistic units encode directly. It also includes what is implied, presupposed, suggested, signaled, or strategically highlighted in communication. Vocabulary plays a particularly important role in this process because lexical choice often determines not only what is said but also how it is interpreted. Through the selection of one lexical item instead of another, the speaker may change the evaluative tone of the utterance, intensify or mitigate its force, express solidarity or distance, indicate irony, create emotional resonance, or frame the object of speech from a particular perspective⁶.

This leads to another important theoretical point: the lexical unit in discourse performs a set of interrelated functions. The nominative function remains

⁶ Aijmer K., Simon-Vandenberg A.-M. A model and a methodology for the study of pragmatic markers: The semantic field of expectation. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2004. Vol. 36. Issue 10. P. 1781–1805. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2004.05.005; Döring N., Mohseni M. R. Gendered language use in user-generated content: Contexts, forms, and effects. *Feminist Media Studies*. 2020. Vol. 20. Issue 5. P. 681–698. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2019.1639342; Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Lascarides A., Copestake A. Pragmatics and word meaning. *Journal of Linguistics*. 1998. Vol. 34. Issue 2. P. 387–414.

fundamental, since words still serve to name objects, actions, qualities, states, and relations. However, in discourse this function is supplemented by a number of others. Vocabulary also performs an evaluative function, because words can express positive, negative, or ambivalent attitudes. It performs a pragmatic function, because lexical choice influences the addressee and organizes communicative effect. It performs a text-forming function, because lexical repetition, variation, thematic clustering, and associative networks help create coherence and thematic development. It performs an identificational function, because vocabulary often signals social belonging, professional identity, ideological positioning, or cultural affiliation. Finally, it may perform a stylistic function by marking the register, tone, and discursive type of the utterance.

2. Semantic transformations of lexical units in contemporary communication

One of the most visible features of lexical functioning in modern discourse is the constant transformation of meaning. In contemporary communication, lexical units rarely remain semantically fixed in the form in which they are recorded by dictionaries or traditionally described in linguistic sources. Instead, they enter discourse as semantically flexible units whose actual meaning is shaped, specified, expanded, narrowed, or reinterpreted in accordance with the communicative situation. This semantic mobility is one of the key characteristics of present-day vocabulary and one of the clearest indicators of language adaptation to social and cultural change⁷.

Semantic transformations of lexical units do not arise accidentally. They are conditioned by the development of new communicative environments, the emergence of new social realities, the expansion of media influence, the intensification of interpersonal and public interaction, and the growing role of evaluation in discourse. Under such conditions, the lexical system becomes especially sensitive to contextual pressure. Words begin to function not only as elements of denomination but also as carriers of dynamic, discourse-dependent meanings. For this reason, the study of semantic transformations in contemporary communication is central to understanding lexical functioning as a whole⁸.

⁷ Lascarides A., Copestake A. Pragmatics and word meaning. *Journal of Linguistics*. 1998. Vol. 34. Issue 2. P. 387–414; Semak L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416.

⁸ Hromko T. V. Theoretical dimension of internet discourse as an innovative linguistic phenomenon. *Scientific papers of the V. I. Vernadsky TNU. Series: Philology. Journalism*. 2025. Vol. 36 (75). No. 1. Part 1. P. 244–254. DOI: 10.32782/2710-4656/2025.1.1/40; Semak L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416; Xie C., Yus F. Introducing Internet Pragmatics. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 1. P. 1–12. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00001.xie.

A major form of lexical transformation in discourse is semantic broadening. This process occurs when a lexical unit begins to denote a wider range of objects, phenomena, or situations than before. In modern communication, semantic broadening is often stimulated by technological development, media discourse, and changes in social practices. A word that initially refers to a narrow sphere may gradually expand its usage and become applicable in broader contexts. This process demonstrates the adaptive potential of vocabulary, since language seeks economical and communicatively effective ways to respond to new realities without necessarily creating completely new lexical units in every case.

The opposite process is semantic narrowing, in which the range of meaning becomes more specific. In discourse, this often happens when a word is repeatedly used in a specialized communicative environment and gradually acquires a more focused interpretation. Semantic narrowing is particularly characteristic of professional, academic, institutional, and technical communication, where precision and unambiguity are often prioritized. However, it also occurs in wider public discourse when certain lexical units become strongly associated with specific events, groups, or interpretations. In such cases, discourse itself shapes the limits of lexical meaning and stabilizes a narrower semantic profile.

Another highly productive process in modern communication is semantic shift, which involves the reorientation of the lexical unit's central meaning. A semantic shift does not necessarily eliminate the old meaning altogether, but it changes the hierarchy of semantic components within the lexical structure. Certain previously marginal or secondary meanings may move to the center, while the former semantic core may recede into the background. Such shifts are especially common in periods of rapid social change, when lexical units are reused to interpret new experiences, name unfamiliar realities, or frame emerging public concerns. In discourse, semantic shift is often accelerated by repetition, media circulation, and the persuasive power of collective usage.

A closely related phenomenon is resemanticization, that is, the acquisition of a new semantic profile by an existing lexical unit. Resemanticization may involve reinterpretation, ideological reframing, emotional recoding, or discursive reassignment of meaning. In contemporary communication, this process is especially visible when certain words begin to function differently in public debate, media language, digital interaction, or identity-oriented discourse. The same lexical item may retain its formal shape while undergoing significant changes in what it implies, evaluates, or symbolically represents. This proves once again that vocabulary in discourse is not simply used but constantly renegotiated.

An especially important role in modern discourse belongs to connotative transformation. Lexical units do not function only through denotative meaning; they also carry evaluative, emotional, associative, stylistic, and ideological overtones. In contemporary communication, such connotative layers often become more significant than the denotative core itself. A word may appear formally neutral and yet evoke strong approval, irony, distrust, solidarity, alarm, or social distinction depending on the discursive setting. Connotative transformation is one of the main mechanisms through which vocabulary becomes a tool of influence. Through it, lexical meaning becomes not only descriptive but also interpretive and persuasive⁹.

This phenomenon is closely connected with evaluation, which has become a central component of modern discourse. Contemporary communicative environments, especially public and digital ones, are deeply evaluative. Words are selected not merely to refer to reality but also to position it, frame it, and guide its interpretation. As a result, many lexical transformations in modern discourse involve the strengthening, weakening, or reorientation of evaluative meaning. Positive lexical units may acquire ironic or negative undertones. Neutral ones may become ideologically marked. Technical or abstract words may gain emotional force through repeated contextual use. Thus, semantic transformation in modern discourse often means not only a change in reference but also a change in value orientation.

A particularly productive mechanism of transformation is metaphorization. Metaphor remains one of the most important ways in which vocabulary expands its semantic possibilities and adapts to new communicative tasks. In modern discourse, metaphor is not limited to literary or poetic language. On the contrary, it actively functions in media, political, academic, digital, and everyday communication. Through metaphorization, lexical units move from one semantic field to another, enabling speakers to conceptualize complex or abstract phenomena in more accessible and emotionally charged ways. Metaphorical transfer thus enriches the semantic structure of words and allows discourse to generate new meanings without abandoning existing lexical resources.

Alongside metaphorization, metonymic transfer also contributes to semantic change. In this case, the transformation is based not on similarity but on contiguity, association, or functional connection. In discourse, metonymic shifts

⁹ Aijmer K., Simon-Vandenberg A.-M. A model and a methodology for the study of pragmatic markers: The semantic field of expectation. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2004. Vol. 36. Issue 10. P. 1781–1805. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2004.05.005; Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Semak L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416.

often become conventionalized very quickly, especially in media and institutional communication, where lexical economy and interpretive efficiency are highly valued. Metonymic usage may simplify reference, condense complex realities into recognizable labels, and contribute to the rapid circulation of discourse-specific meanings. This again demonstrates that semantic transformation is not merely a lexical phenomenon in the narrow sense but also a communicative strategy.

Another major factor shaping semantic transformation in contemporary communication is neologization. The emergence of new lexical units is one of the most obvious signs of language development, but in discourse new words do more than name new realities. They also introduce new ways of conceptualizing and evaluating those realities. A neologism often enters discourse not as a neutral label but as a semantically charged unit connected with novelty, urgency, technological development, social change, or group identity. As a result, neologisms frequently possess a particularly strong pragmatic and ideological potential during the early stages of their circulation.

At the same time, semantic transformation is not limited to entirely new words. It is often existing lexical units that prove most productive in contemporary communication because they can be reinterpreted quickly and effectively. This gives rise to hybrid processes in which traditional vocabulary absorbs new meanings while preserving part of its previous semantic structure. Such processes are especially characteristic of digital communication, where linguistic innovation tends to be fast, informal, and context-driven. In digital discourse, lexical units often acquire additional meanings through repeated circulation in specific platform cultures, communities, or communicative genres¹⁰.

3. Pragmatic and communicative dimensions of vocabulary in modern discourse

In modern discourse, vocabulary functions not only as a means of naming reality but also as an instrument of communicative action. This fact becomes especially evident when lexical units are examined from a pragmatic perspective. In such an approach, the word is viewed not merely as a semantic entity but as a communicative choice made by the speaker in a particular situation and directed toward a particular addressee. The pragmatic and communicative dimensions of

¹⁰ Bou-Franch P., Garcés-Conejos Blitvich P. Relational work in multimodal networked interactions on Facebook. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 2. P. 134–160. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00007.bou; Tagg C., Seargeant P., Brown A. Taking offence on social media: Conviviality and communication on Facebook. *Discourse, Context & Media*. 2017. Vol. 22. P. 52–64. DOI: 10.1016/j.dcm.2017.07.002; Xie C., Yus F. Introducing Internet Pragmatics. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 1. P. 1–12. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00001.xie.

vocabulary reveal how lexical items participate in the construction of meaning, the organization of discourse, the expression of evaluation, and the production of intended effects in contemporary communication¹¹.

The pragmatic perspective makes it possible to move beyond the traditional understanding of vocabulary as a neutral component of the language system. In actual discourse, lexical choice is always motivated to some degree. Even when a word seems descriptively accurate and stylistically unmarked, it still occupies a specific position in relation to alternative lexical possibilities. The speaker selects one word and not another, and this selection influences the way in which reality is framed, interpreted, softened, intensified, or evaluated. Thus, vocabulary becomes one of the key means through which discourse performs action rather than merely reflects facts.

One of the most important pragmatic roles of vocabulary in modern discourse is the expression of speaker stance. Through lexical choice, the speaker reveals attitude, involvement, evaluation, degree of certainty, emotional orientation, and positioning in relation to the subject of speech. In many communicative situations, vocabulary works as a marker of approval or disapproval, solidarity or distance, neutrality or emotional investment. Even when such meanings are not explicitly formulated, they may be conveyed through lexical nuance, connotation, intensity, or contextual association. In this sense, vocabulary is directly involved in the construction of subjectivity in discourse.

The role of vocabulary in representing speaker stance is especially prominent in media, political, digital, and interpersonal communication. In these communicative environments, lexical units often function as markers of ideological alignment, interpretive framing, or emotional tone. A speaker's perspective may be conveyed not only through overt evaluative words but also through apparently ordinary lexical items whose pragmatic force becomes visible only in comparison with other possible choices. Such lexical variation demonstrates that discourse meaning is deeply shaped by the communicative intentions embedded in vocabulary¹².

¹¹ Aijmer K., Simon-Vandenbergen A.-M. A model and a methodology for the study of pragmatic markers: The semantic field of expectation. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2004. Vol. 36. Issue 10. P. 1781–1805. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2004.05.005; Döring N., Mohseni, M. R. Gendered language use in user-generated content: Contexts, forms, and effects. *Feminist Media Studies*. 2020. Vol. 20. Issue 5. P. 681–698. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2019.1639342; Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5.

¹² Bou-Franch P., Garcés-Conejos Blitvich P. Relational work in multimodal networked interactions on Facebook. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 2. P. 134–160. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00007.bou; Tagg C., Seargeant P., Brown A. Taking offence on social media: Conviviality and communication on Facebook. *Discourse, Context & Media*. 2017. Vol. 22. P. 52–64. DOI: 10.1016/j.dcm.2017.07.002; Xie C., Yus F. Introducing Internet Pragmatics. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 1. P. 1–12. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00001.xie; Zappavigna M. *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How We Use Language to Create Affiliation on the Web*. London : Bloomsbury, 2012. DOI: 10.5040/9781472541642.

Closely connected with stance is the evaluative function of lexical units. Modern discourse is highly evaluative, and vocabulary is one of the primary means through which evaluation is encoded. Evaluation may be direct, when the lexical unit openly carries positive or negative meaning, or indirect, when the evaluative component emerges through context, contrast, repetition, or discursive framing. The communicative significance of evaluation is particularly great because it does not merely add emotional coloring to discourse but actively guides interpretation. Through lexical evaluation, the speaker can encourage approval, provoke criticism, create empathy, establish authority, or shape collective perception.

This evaluative potential is especially strong in public discourse, where vocabulary often serves to define what should be considered normal, problematic, desirable, threatening, legitimate, or unacceptable. In such cases, lexical units do not simply reflect already established meanings; they contribute to their social construction. The pragmatic effect of this process lies in the fact that lexical choice influences not only comprehension but also judgment. Therefore, the evaluative dimension of vocabulary should be seen as a central mechanism of discourse influence.

Another major communicative function of vocabulary in modern discourse is addressee orientation. Lexical units are chosen not only in accordance with what the speaker wants to express but also with regard to who the anticipated recipient is. Different discourse situations require different levels of precision, accessibility, emotionality, stylistic markedness, and cultural familiarity. As a result, vocabulary often reflects adaptation to the communicative competence, expectations, background knowledge, and social identity of the addressee. This makes lexical choice a means of negotiating relationship and communicative alignment.

In contemporary discourse, especially in digital communication, addressee orientation has become increasingly important. Communication is often immediate, interactive, and audience-sensitive, which encourages speakers to select vocabulary that is quickly recognizable, emotionally effective, and pragmatically efficient. At the same time, the diversity of online audiences creates conditions in which lexical units may function differently depending on the interpretive community involved. What is perceived as ironic, neutral, supportive, critical, or persuasive in one context may be interpreted differently in another. This variability further

demonstrates the communicative complexity of lexical functioning in modern discourse¹³.

The pragmatic dimension of vocabulary is also manifested through its participation in speech acts. Lexical items contribute to how discourse performs acts such as informing, evaluating, requesting, warning, persuading, accusing, legitimizing, or inviting. Although speech act theory often emphasizes utterance-level functions, the lexical level remains crucial because it helps determine the force, tone, and acceptability of the act. A request may sound polite or imposing depending on lexical choice; an evaluation may appear restrained or aggressive; an argument may seem objective or manipulative. Thus, lexical functioning is directly connected with the performative capacity of discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis carried out in this chapter makes it possible to conclude that lexical functioning in modern discourse is a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained within the limits of a purely systemic description of vocabulary. In contemporary communication, lexical units function not only as means of naming objects, actions, states, and relations, but also as active instruments of meaning construction, evaluation, pragmatic influence, discourse organization, and social positioning. For this reason, vocabulary should be regarded as one of the most responsive and functionally significant levels of language in present-day discourse practices¹⁴.

The study has shown that the functioning of lexical units in modern discourse is determined by the interaction of several key factors. Among them, the most important are contextual dependence, semantic variability, pragmatic intention, discourse type, evaluative orientation, communicative purpose, and sociocultural conditions of language use. Lexical meaning in discourse is not limited to its dictionary core. On the contrary, it emerges as a result of the

¹³ Bou-Franch P., Garcés-Conejos Blitvich P. Relational work in multimodal networked interactions on Facebook. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 2. P. 134–160. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00007.bou; Hromko T. V. Theoretical dimension of internet discourse as an innovative linguistic phenomenon. *Scientific papers of the V. I. Vernadsky TNU. Series: Philology. Journalism*. 2025. Vol. 36 (75). No. 1. Part 1. P. 244–254. DOI: 10.32782/2710-4656/2025.1.1/40; Tagg C., Seargeant P., Brown A. Taking offence on social media: Conviviality and communication on Facebook. *Discourse, Context & Media*. 2017. Vol. 22. P. 52–64. DOI: 10.1016/j.dcm.2017.07.002; Xie C., Yus F. Introducing Internet Pragmatics. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 1. P. 1–12. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00001.xie.

¹⁴ Fraser B. What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1999. Vol. 31. Issue 7. P. 931–952. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5; Herring S. C., Androutsopoulos J. Computer-mediated discourse 2.0. In: Tannen, D., Hamilton, H. E., Schiffrin, D. (eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Hoboken : Wiley Blackwell, 2015. P. 127–151. DOI: 10.1002/9781118584194.ch6; Semak L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416.

interaction between systemic semantic potential and actual communicative realization. This explains why vocabulary in contemporary communication so often demonstrates semantic flexibility, contextual sensitivity, and a high capacity for reinterpretation.

Particular attention has been paid to the theoretical foundations of lexical functioning in discourse. It has been established that the study of vocabulary in modern discourse requires an integrative approach combining elements of lexical semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and communicative linguistics. Such an approach makes it possible to move beyond the traditional view of vocabulary as a relatively stable lexical system and to examine it as a dynamic communicative resource whose meanings and functions are actualized through use. The discourse perspective reveals that lexical units enter communication with a semantic potential, but this potential is realized selectively, strategically, and contextually.

The chapter has also demonstrated that semantic transformation is one of the central forms of lexical functioning in modern discourse. Contemporary communication stimulates such processes as semantic broadening, semantic narrowing, semantic shift, resemanticization, metaphorization, metonymic transfer, connotative reaccentuation, neologization, and contextual actualization of meaning. These processes confirm that the lexical level of language remains especially open to social, technological, and cultural change. Lexical units adapt to new communicative environments not only by naming new realities, but also by reframing existing ones, acquiring new evaluative overtones, and participating in discourse-specific interpretation¹⁵.

No less important is the fact that vocabulary in modern discourse performs a wide range of pragmatic and communicative functions. Lexical choice serves to express the speaker's stance, encode evaluation, orient discourse toward the addressee, perform speech acts, construct coherence, frame interpretation, mark identity, and regulate interpersonal or institutional relations. In this respect, vocabulary should be understood not merely as a semantic resource but as a communicative strategy. Through lexical units, discourse becomes purposeful, persuasive, ideologically marked, socially embedded, and interactionally effective.

¹⁵ Herring S. C., Androutsopoulos J. Computer-mediated discourse 2.0. In: Tannen D., Hamilton H. E., Schiffrin D. (eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. Hoboken : Wiley Blackwell, 2015. P. 127–151. DOI: 10.1002/9781118584194.ch6; Hromko T. V. Theoretical dimension of internet discourse as an innovative linguistic phenomenon. *Scientific notes of the V. I. Vernadsky TNU. Series : Philology. Journalism*. 2025. Vol. 36 (75). No. 1. Part 1. P. 244–254. DOI: 10.32782/2710-4656/2025.1.1/40; Semak, L. Dynamics of lexical norm in modern mass discourse. *Ukrainian Sense*. 2024. No. 1. P. 159–169. DOI: 10.15421/462416; Xie C., Yus F. Introducing Internet Pragmatics. *Internet Pragmatics*. 2018. Vol. 1. Issue 1. P. 1–12. DOI: 10.1075/ip.00001.xie.

SUMMARY

This chapter examines lexical functioning in modern discourse as a dynamic process shaped by semantic variability, contextual dependence, and pragmatic intention. It argues that vocabulary in contemporary communication should be understood not only as a system of lexical units but also as an active instrument of discourse formation and communicative influence. The study shows that lexical meaning is realized through the interaction of systemic semantics and actual discourse context. Particular attention is given to semantic transformations such as broadening, narrowing, shift, resemanticization, metaphorization, connotative change, and neologization. The chapter also demonstrates that vocabulary performs a wide range of pragmatic and communicative functions, including the expression of speaker stance, evaluation, framing, coherence-building, identity marking, and addressee orientation. It is emphasized that lexical functioning varies depending on discourse type and communicative environment. The findings confirm that vocabulary is one of the most flexible and socially responsive levels of language. Lexical units in modern discourse do not merely denote reality but actively participate in its interpretation and construction. The chapter concludes that the study of vocabulary from a discourse perspective is essential for understanding contemporary linguistic and communicative change¹⁶.

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