



Structural and semantic methods in English political linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the structural and semantic techniques employed in English military-political discourse to construct meaning, legitimize military actions, and influence public opinion. Drawing on frameworks from critical discourse analysis (Fairclough), conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson), and framing theory (Entman), the study analyzes 150 articles from BBC, Reuters, and The Guardian. The research reveals a prevalent use of compounding, acronyms, and metaphorization in political language, facilitating communication that is both concise and ideologically charged. The findings underscore the significance of linguistic strategies in shaping narrative, public perception, and the challenges of cross-linguistic translation.

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Ingliz siyosiy tilshunosligidagi strukturaviy va semantik usullar

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

siyosiy lingvistika,
harbiy diskurs,
tanqidiy diskurs tahlili,
metafora,
kadrlar tahlili,
terminologiya,
semantika,
strukturaviy xususiyatlar.

Ushbu maqolada ingliz harbiy-siyosiy diskursida ma'no yaratish, harbiy harakatlarni legitimlashtirish va jamoatchilik fikriga ta'sir ko'rsatish uchun ishlatiladigan strukturaviy va semantik usullar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot Norman Faircloughning tanqidiy diskurs tahlili, Lakoff va Johnsonning metafora nazariyasi hamda Entmaning kadrlar nazariyasiga asoslangan. BBC, Reuters va The Guardian nashrlaridagi 150 maqola misolida terminlarning birikmasi, qisqartmalar va metaforalar keng qo'llanilayotganligi aniqlanadi. Natijalar siyosiy tilning g'oyaviy xabarlarini siqilgan holda yetkazishdagi rolini ko'rsatadi hamda tarjima jarayonidagi muammolarga e'tibor qaratadi.

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Структурные и семантические методы в англоязычной политической лингвистике

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

политическая
лингвистика,
военный дискурс,
критический дискурс-
анализ,
метафора,
фрейминг,
терминология,
семантика,
структура.

Статья посвящена анализу структурных и семантических методов в английском военно-политическом дискурсе, направленных на формирование смысла, легитимацию военных действий и влияние на общественное мнение. В исследовании применены подходы критического дискурсивного анализа (Фэркло), теории концептуальной метафоры (Лакофф и Джонсон), а также теории фреймов (Энтман). На материале 150 статей из BBC, Reuters и The Guardian выявлены ключевые лингвистические стратегии – словосложение, акронимизация и метафоризация. Выводы подчеркивают значимость языка как инструмента идеологического воздействия и проблемы перевода терминов в межкультурном контексте.

INTRODUCTION

Political language functions as a powerful instrument shaping public opinion, framing conflicts, and legitimizing military action. Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) underlines how political texts construct social reality (Fairclough, 1995). George Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory further demonstrates how recurring metaphors – such as WAR IS A SPORT or THEATRE – guide audience interpretation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In English military reporting, terms like “precision strike” or “shock and awe” encapsulate complex operations and moral justifications in a few words. This study investigates the apparatus and terminology of political linguistics in English military discourse, focusing on both structural patterns (compounding, acronyms, neologisms) and semantic strategies (metaphorization, framing, terminologization), with examples drawn from recent Reuters, BBC, and The Guardian reports.

METHODS

We compiled a corpus of 150 English-language military articles (2021–2023) from Reuters, the BBC, and The Guardian. Applying a mixed-methods approach, we conducted:

1. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2008) to reveal power relations and ideological stances.
2. **Frame Analysis** (Entman, 1993) to identify problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral judgments, and treatment recommendations.
3. **Conceptual Metaphor Analysis** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to catalog metaphors modeling WAR, BATTLE, and PEACE.
4. **Structural Linguistics** to classify compounding patterns, acronyms, and neologism formation.
5. **Semantic Field Analysis** to trace shifts in denotation and connotation across contexts.

All instances of military terminology were annotated in NVivo and tallied for frequency; illustrative examples were extracted for qualitative interpretation.

RESULTS

Structural Patterns: Compounds constituted 45% of term formations. Frequent types included:

- **Noun-Noun compounds:** “precision strike,” “missile defense,” “battle damage assessment” (Reuters, 2022).
- **Verb-Noun compounds:** “counterinsurgency operations,” “preemptive action.”
- **Acronyms and Initialisms:** “IED” (Improvised Explosive Device), “ROE” (Rules of Engagement), “ISR” (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) appeared in 30% of articles (BBC, 2023).
- **Neologisms:** “Brexit army” in political-opinion pieces to metaphorically describe a nationalist bloc (The Guardian, 2021).

Semantic Strategies:

- **Metaphorization:** WAR portrayed as SPORT (e.g., “scoring precision hits,” Reuters, 2022) and THEATRE (e.g., “opening act of regional conflict,” BBC, 2022).
- **Framing:** U.S. strikes framed as “precision” to highlight technological superiority and minimize civilian harm; by contrast Russian actions framed as “indiscriminate bombardment” (The Guardian, 2023).
- **Terminologization:** Common words like “shield” acquire technical sense in “missile shield,” signaling defensive posture (Entman, 1993).
- **Emotive Labeling:** Use of “regime” vs. “government” to delegitimize opposing forces (Van Dijk, 2008).

DISCUSSION

The predominance of compounding aligns with Crystal’s (2003) observation that English favors morphological bundling for precision. Acronyms foster brevity in high-stakes contexts but risk opacity for lay audiences (Bhatia, 2010). Metaphorization, per Lakoff & Johnson (1980), shapes cognitive framing: describing intervention as “surgical strike” suggests medical precision and moral neutrality. Entman’s (1993) frame elements – problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation – manifest clearly in military reportage, guiding reader attitudes toward legitimacy and fairness. Fairclough’s CDA highlights how structural choices – passive constructions (“civilians were evacuated”) – obscure agency and responsibility.

Translators and analysts must navigate these layers: a direct translation of “shock and awe” fails to convey its dual marketing and psychological dimensions; instead, adaptation as “потрясение и устрашение” (Russian) captures the intended effect. Similarly, “kinetic action” requires contextual rendering as “боевое применение силы” in other languages to preserve both denotation and evaluative force.

CONCLUSION

English political linguistics in military discourse employs an interplay of structural mechanisms (compounding, acronyms) and semantic strategies (metaphor, framing, terminologization) to convey complex operations succinctly and persuasively. Theoretical frameworks by Fairclough (1995), Lakoff & Johnson (1980), and Entman (1993) elucidate how terminology constructs realities and influences public sentiment. Future research should expand cross-linguistic comparisons, develop unified glossaries, and refine translation guidelines that balance technical accuracy with pragmatic intent.

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