**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE HUMANITY & MANAGEMENT RESEARCH**

ISSN (print) 2833-2172, ISSN (online) 2833-2180

Volume 05 Issue 11 November 2026

DOI: 10.58806/ijsshmr.2026v5i11n04, Impact Factor: 7.888

Page No. 2718-2723

# Military Discourse as A Linguistic Phenomenon: Lexical, Semantic, and Pragmatic Dimensions of Modern Military English

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**ABSTRACT:** The present article investigates Military English as a specific type of institutional discourse characterized by lexical specialization, semantic mitigation, and pragmatic control. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and register theory, the study examines how military language functions simultaneously as a technical communication system and as an ideological instrument, shaping both operational and social realities. Particular attention is paid to the use of specialized terminology, acronyms, euphemisms, metaphorical expressions, and grammatical structures that regulate internal military communication, command execution, and public representations of armed conflict. The analysis highlights how military discourse frames actions, structures perceptions, obscures agency, and legitimizes institutional decisions while managing emotional and social responses to warfare. The study also explores neologisms and lexical borrowings that have emerged in response to contemporary military events, demonstrating the adaptive and dynamic nature of Military English in the Ukrainian context. By integrating authentic military texts, media reports, and instructional materials, the research provides a comprehensive account of the linguistic mechanisms through which authority, responsibility, and operational efficiency are enacted and communicated. The article contributes to philological and sociolinguistic research by offering insights into how language functions not merely as a medium of description but as a constitutive instrument of military practice, shaping ideology, perception, and collective understanding of conflict and defence.

**KEYWORDS:** military discourse, Military English, euphemism, metaphor, pragmatics, institutional language

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in the functioning of the military sphere. It is used not only to convey orders and operational information, but also to maintain discipline, subordination and a sense of belonging to the military community. At the same time, military communication extends beyond the professional sphere and is reflected in political speeches, official statements and media reports. Consequently, it has a significant influence on the formation of public perceptions of military events and armed conflicts. This is precisely why English-language military discourse is of considerable interest to contemporary linguistic research. From a linguistic perspective, military communication is characterised by a combination of high demands on functionality and the presence of ideological factors. On the one hand, its primary task is to ensure maximum accuracy, clarity and speed in the transmission of information, as any error can have serious consequences. On the other hand, it is linked to issues of social responsibility, moral considerations and the maintenance of the authority of military institutions. As a distinct variety of professional discourse, military English encompasses specialised terminology, imperative speech patterns and a system of metaphorical imagery that influence the way events are interpreted and decisions are made. Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has significantly heightened the relevance of this linguistic variety, a trend reflected in the professional sphere as well as in the media, political and public spheres (Brailko, O., & Kysla, H., 2024).

According to the British researcher Norman Fairclough, one of the founders of critical discourse analysis, institutional communication cannot be regarded as neutral, as it always reflects the interests, power structure and strategic objectives of the organisation in question (Fairclough, N., 1995). Military discourse is a striking example of this principle in action.

An analysis of military English in the Ukrainian context reveals the emergence of new lexical and semantic phenomena. These include neologisms, euphemistic terms and loanwords that have arisen under the influence of contemporary combat realities and the needs of operational coordination. Such linguistic changes not only serve a practical function but also influence public sentiment, contribute to the formation of certain assessments of events, and help maintain the morale of the population and military personnel. Within the scope of this study, military English is examined as a complex social and communicative

phenomenon, in which the interrelationships between precision of word usage, the characteristics of the semantic structuring of information, and the pragmatic objectives of military discourse in Ukraine are of particular significance.

**Analysis of Recent Research**

The intensification of military conflicts worldwide and Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine have led to a significant rise in interest in the study of military communication. In contemporary linguistics, military discourse is viewed not only as a means of exchanging information between combatants, but also as an important mechanism for influencing public consciousness. It is through linguistic means that perceptions of military events are shaped, images of those involved in the conflict are created, and notions of national security and state sovereignty are constructed. This is precisely why, in recent years, Ukrainian researchers have devoted considerable attention to analysing the specific features of how military language functions in various communicative contexts.

One of the current areas of academic research is the study of the linguistic means used to describe the events of war. The choice of specific terms, definitions and characteristics influences how society assesses particular phenomena. An analysis of works by Ukrainian linguists shows that the naming of military events is never random, as every linguistic unit carries additional semantic weight and reflects the speaker's position. The works of Brailko and Kysla (2024) note that the ways in which the Russian-Ukrainian war is named may differ depending on the type of discourse—official, media or public. Such differences demonstrate the link between language and the ideological processes taking place in society.

Military terminology also plays an important role in research. Scholars regard it as a distinct system of specialised concepts necessary for effective professional communication. In particular, N. Akulshina (2022) points out that military terms must be as precise and unambiguous as possible, as the successful completion of tasks often depends on the correct understanding of the message. In this context, military English emerges as a clearly structured system in which each term fulfils a specific function and ensures effective interaction between the participants in the communication.

The spread of military vocabulary beyond professional circles has become a subject of study in its own right. Researchers note that, under the influence of war, specialised words and expressions have come to be actively used in journalism, political rhetoric and everyday communication. As a result, many linguistic units have acquired new shades of meaning and emotional connotations. According to the observations of Kucherenko and Demyanchuk (2024), this process indicates the interpenetration of different types of discourse and the gradual adaptation of military vocabulary to wider public use.

At the same time, foreign researchers emphasise the hidden mechanisms of linguistic influence in the context of military communication. Using methods from cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis, they investigate the role of euphemisms, metaphorical patterns and grammatical constructions in the process of conveying information. Such linguistic devices can influence the interpretation of events, mitigate negative perceptions of certain actions or shape the necessary public sentiment. Similar patterns have been identified in contemporary Ukrainian military discourse, where linguistic strategies are often aimed at supporting ideas of resistance, resilience and national consolidation.

Studies focusing on the translation of military texts are no less important. Scholars emphasise that the rendering of specialised vocabulary requires particular precision, as even minor deviations can alter the meaning of a message or its pragmatic effect. This issue takes on particular significance in the context of international military cooperation and the training of specialists working in multilingual environments.

Thus, contemporary academic works demonstrate the multifaceted nature of military discourse and its important role in society. Military language combines the characteristics of a professional terminological system, a tool for communicative influence, and a means of shaping social narratives.

Despite a considerable body of research, the interplay between the lexical, semantic and pragmatic features of military English in the Ukrainian context requires further comprehensive study. It is this issue that forms the basis of the present study, in which military English is examined as an important element of contemporary institutional discourse.

The **aim** of this study is to examine military English as a specific form of professional communication through an analysis of its lexical, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. The study examines the influence of linguistic devices on the establishment of the authority of messages, the specific features of presenting information about military operations, and the ways in which the recipient's perception is influenced. Furthermore, military discourse is considered in relation to concepts such as power, ideology and public communication.

To achieve the stated aim, the following **tasks** are set:

1) to examine military English as a form of institutional discourse and identify its characteristic linguistic features;
2) to investigate the peculiarities of the lexical composition and semantic organisation of military English, focusing on specialised terminology, euphemistic units and metaphorical constructions;
3) to analyse the pragmatic aspects of military communication, in particular the specifics of command language and the means of linguistic influence within an institutional environment;

4) to ascertain the role of military discourse in shaping public perceptions of war and to identify its communicative and ideological functions.

**Methods and Methodology of the Research**

The methodological framework of the study is based on a comprehensive approach that combines the tools of discourse analysis, semantic and pragmatic analysis, as well as certain principles of cognitive linguistics. To achieve the stated aim, authentic military texts, official documents and media materials were analysed. This analysis made it possible to identify specific features of the functioning of military English at the lexical, semantic and pragmatic levels.

The research employed methods of functional analysis and contextual interpretation, which made it possible to trace the characteristics of the use of linguistic units within the system of military institutional communication. The use of these methods facilitated a comprehensive study of military English as a variety of institutional discourse and enabled us to determine its role and specific characteristics within the contemporary Ukrainian communicative space.

**Presentation and Discussion of the Main Material**

**Military discourse in linguistic theory**

In contemporary linguistics, military discourse is predominantly regarded as a type of institutional discourse, alongside political, legal and medical discourse. It operates within a clearly organised social structure, where communication is governed by established norms and rules. N. Fairclough notes that institutional discourse is characterised by a defined distribution of communicative roles, the presence of power asymmetry between participants in communication, and the use of standardised genre forms (Fairclough, N., 1995). The military sphere fully meets these criteria, as interaction between participants in communication is based on a system of military ranks, chain of command and adherence to established protocols.

T. A. van Dijk made an important contribution to understanding the nature of institutional communication, viewing discourse as one of the means of establishing and maintaining power relations (van Dijk, T. A., 1998). In a military context, this feature takes on particular significance, as speech acts not only convey information but also directly influence the behaviour of the addressees. Orders, instructions and directives have practical consequences that extend beyond linguistic interaction. This is precisely why the analysis of military discourse requires consideration not only of its linguistic form, but also of its social, political and ideological aspects.

From the perspective of register theory, military English belongs to the category of professional varieties of language used in specialised fields of activity. According to D. Biber, such registers are characterised by a high level of informativeness, the active use of nominalisations, and a tendency towards standardised syntactic constructions (Biber, D., 1995). These characteristics are particularly evident in official documents, instructions, training materials and reports for military purposes, where the primary objective is the accurate and unambiguous conveyance of information.

At the same time, military discourse cannot be regarded as a homogeneous phenomenon. It encompasses various types of texts and communicative situations: from combat orders and service instructions to strategic documents, ceremonial addresses and public speeches by representatives of the military leadership. Despite differences in genre, all these forms of communication share a common institutional basis and fulfil tasks related to ensuring the functioning of the military organisation (Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R., 1998).

In Ukrainian linguistics, interest in military discourse has increased significantly since the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Contemporary research combines approaches from discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, cultural studies and philology, which allows military communication to be viewed as a multidimensional social phenomenon. Particular attention is paid to linguistic changes that occur under the influence of military events and reflect transformations in public consciousness.

One of the most extensively studied areas is military terminology. V. Karaban emphasises that the system of military terms is characterised by a high degree of organisation and requires the utmost semantic precision (Karaban, V. I., 2004). In professional communication, even minor deviations in meaning can lead to misunderstandings; therefore, the issue of terminological standardisation is of great importance both for military practice and for translation work. This is particularly relevant in the training of future military specialists and in the teaching of English for professional purposes.

Ukrainian researchers are also taking a keen interest in the relationship between language and ideology. I. Shevchenko emphasises that institutional forms of communication play an active role in shaping public perceptions of power, responsibility and the legitimacy of social processes (Shevchenko, I. S., 2016). In this context, military discourse serves not only as a means of informing but also as a tool for interpreting events. Through linguistic means, emphases are determined, evaluations are formed and specific social meanings are constructed. This approach resonates with the concepts of critical discourse analysis proposed by N. Fairclough and T. van Dijk, whilst also taking into account the specific nature of Ukrainian socio-political conditions.

A separate strand of research is devoted to the semantic and pragmatic features of military communication. In particular, scholars focus on the functioning of military metaphors, which in Ukrainian discourse are often linked to themes of national defence,

national unity and the struggle for independence. As a result, they fulfil not only a descriptive but also an important symbolic function.

The issue of the representation of military discourse in the media also remains a topical area of academic research. Research by S. Potapenko shows that journalistic texts often reproduce linguistic patterns characteristic of official military communication, in particular euphemistic expressions and nominalised constructions (Potapenko, S. I., 2018). As a result, military vocabulary is gradually being integrated into everyday speech and is influencing the formation of public perceptions of war. This provides grounds for asserting that military discourse has long since transcended the confines of the professional sphere and has become a significant factor in the contemporary communicative landscape.

**Lexical features of Military English**

One of the defining features of military English is the active use of specialised terminology. Terms such as 'rules of engagement', 'area of responsibility', 'close air support' and 'force multiplier' make it possible to convey complex operational concepts using concise linguistic constructions. Such **terminology** ensures a high level of precision and standardisation, which is particularly important during multinational operations, where a shared understanding of concepts is crucial (Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R., 1998).

At the same time, the precision of terminology serves not only a practical but also an ideological function. By presenting actions as technical procedures, military vocabulary contributes to the depersonalisation of violence. Events are described in terms of systems and processes rather than the actions of specific individuals, which influences the linguistic representation of responsibility (Fairclough, N., 1995).

**Acronyms and abbreviations** (e.g. NATO, UAV, IED, *ROE, KIA*) are widely used in military discourse. The British linguist D. Crystal emphasises that the use of acronyms is a characteristic feature of professional communities seeking to achieve maximum communicative efficiency (Crystal, D., 2010). In the military sphere, they also serve as indicators of professional affiliation and competence. At the same time, for an uninformed audience, such abbreviations can make it more difficult to understand the content. In public communication, their use often reduces the transparency of information and limits opportunities for critical reflection, thereby widening the gap between military structures and civil society (van Dijk, T. A., 1998).

Another characteristic feature of military discourse is **nominalisation**, that is, the transformation of actions and processes into abstract nouns, such as 'conducting operations' or 'neutralising targets'. According to Fairclough, nominalisation is an effective ideological tool, as it removes the agents of the actions from the grammatical structure and presents events as objective phenomena rather than as the result of human choice (Fairclough, N., 1995).

Such **grammatical condensation** makes communication more efficient, yet at the same time contributes to the concealment of responsibility at the linguistic level. Attention is shifted away from the agent performing the action and onto the result itself or the fact of its occurrence.

**Semantic strategies in military discourse**

**Euphemisation** is one of the most extensively studied features of military language. Expressions such as 'collateral damage', 'kinetic action', 'neutralise' or 'combat engagement' are used in place of direct references to death, destruction and killing. R. Fowler, a world-renowned British linguist with many years' experience, emphasises that euphemisms in institutional discourse are intended to mitigate the emotional impact and steer interpretation in line with the institution's interests (Fowler, R., 1991). In military discourse, they make it possible to describe acts of violence as technically necessary operations.

Such **semantic mitigation** influences not only public perception of events, but also the internal understanding of military activity, gradually normalising violence as a routine component of operational practice.

**Metaphors** play a significant role in shaping military discourse. George Lakoff (linguist) and Mark Johnson (philosopher) have demonstrated that metaphors are a fundamental mechanism of human thought and determine the way in which abstract phenomena are conceptualised (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M., 1980). Military lexicon is characterised by conceptual models such as 'WAR AS A GAME', 'WAR AS A SURGICAL OPERATION' and 'WAR AS MANAGEMENT'.

Expressions such as 'strategic move', 'surgical strike' or 'conflict management' portray war as a controlled, logical and purposeful process. Consequently, the emphasis is placed on professionalism and planning, whilst human suffering and the chaos of combat take a back seat. As Paul Chilton, a British cognitive linguist and discourse analyst, notes, **metaphorical framing** is one of the main means of political and military legitimisation (Chilton, P., 2004).

The constant use of euphemisms and metaphors can lead to a phenomenon known as **semantic bleaching**, whereby words gradually lose their emotional connotations and come to be perceived merely as technical terms. For example, concepts such as 'strike' or 'target' may, over time, cease to be associated with destruction and human casualties, becoming neutral elements of operational vocabulary. Such a process contributes to the **routinization** of violence within institutional discourse (van Dijk, T. A., 1998).

**Pragmatic dimensions of Military English**

From a pragmatic perspective, military discourse is characterized by a predominance of directive speech acts. Orders, directives, and instructions are mostly conveyed through imperative constructions or concise statements (Hold your position; Ensure security in the area). Such linguistic devices reflect the clear system of subordination inherent in the military environment and also promote the most unambiguous understanding of messages (Fairclough, N., 1995).

At the same time, the impact of such statements is determined not only by their grammatical structure. The speaker's status within the military hierarchy plays an important role. That is why military rank and official position directly influence the perception and interpretation of the message.

In communication with the civilian population, military discourse employs somewhat different pragmatic mechanisms. During official briefings and public speeches, neutral or cautious phrasing, evaluative vocabulary, and generalized concepts are often used to help present actions as necessary and justified. According to Paul Chilton, this linguistic strategy aims to minimize the potential for criticism and to present the decisions made as a natural response to existing threats (Chilton, P., 2004).

Thus, the pragmatic features of military discourse serve to legitimize military decisions and help shape public perception in line with institutional narratives.

In addition to its informational function, military language also has a significant psychological impact. The use of specialized terms and standardized linguistic constructions helps create a certain emotional distance between the participants in communication and events associated with violence. R. Fowler notes that such methods of distancing can help alleviate moral and psychological strain, as actions are presented as components of an impersonal institutional system (Fowler, R., 1991).

Although many features of military English are universal in nature, Ukrainian researchers emphasize the importance of cultural and national factors in the formation of military discourse. Renowned Ukrainian linguist Olena Selivanova emphasizes that any discourse is inextricably linked to historical and cultural conditions that influence both the creation of meaning and its perception (Selivanova, O., 2010).

Contemporary Ukrainian military and media discourse is characterized by the use of linguistic devices that emphasize defense, resilience, and the legitimacy of actions. This feature also influences the processes of adapting and translating English-language military terminology into Ukrainian. V. Karaban emphasizes that during translation, it is necessary to take into account not only the accuracy of the content but also the pragmatic and ideological aspects of the text, especially if it is intended for a broad audience (Karaban, V. I., 2004).

In addition, Ukrainian scholars point out that the active infiltration of military vocabulary into everyday speech is causing changes in its meaning and function. Terms that were previously used mainly in professional contexts are gradually becoming understandable to the general public and entering common vocabulary. Similar processes are also observed in English-speaking contexts. This once again confirms the relevance of philological research into military discourse in the context of modern conflicts.

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis showed that military English is used not only to convey information but also serves broader communicative functions. On the one hand, it ensures clear and understandable communication among military personnel through the use of specialized terminology and standardized linguistic structures. On the other hand, linguistic means can influence how people perceive and evaluate military events. The study found that euphemisms, metaphors, and various pragmatic devices play an important role in military discourse. They help not only to convey information but also to shape a certain attitude toward the events being described. As a result, military communication can influence public opinion and support the position of official institutions.

The findings indicate that military English should be viewed not merely as a professional language of the military sphere. It is also part of public communication, as it contributes to shaping perceptions of war, security, and the role of state institutions. The use of certain linguistic devices influences the interpretation of events and determines how they are perceived by different groups of people.

This issue is particularly relevant for Ukraine, where military topics play a significant role in the information landscape. Today, military terminology is widely used not only in professional settings but also in the media and everyday communication. This reflects the growing role of military discourse in society and its influence on linguistic processes.

The practical value of this study lies in the fact that its findings can be applied in teaching Military English, training translators, and working with military texts. Understanding the characteristics of military discourse helps convey the meaning of messages more accurately and account for their communicative impact.

Thus, Military English is not merely a set of specialized terms. It serves as an important communication tool that influences the perception of events, the formation of public opinions, and the dissemination of certain meanings. That is why its study remains relevant and requires further investigation, taking into account contemporary social and communicative processes.

## CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has shown that Military English is not only a means of professional communication but also an important element of public communication. Its function is linked both to the need to ensure a clear and rapid exchange of information in a military environment and to its influence on how events are perceived by the public. The use of specialized terminology, established linguistic constructions, and standardized phrasing helps ensure accuracy in the transmission of information, which is particularly important in the context of military operations.

At the same time, the analysis showed that linguistic devices in military discourse serve significantly broader functions. Euphemisms, metaphorical expressions, and various forms of linguistic influence contribute to shaping a particular view of events, influence the assessment of the actions of conflict participants, and determine how power and responsibility are perceived. As a result, language becomes not only a tool for conveying facts but also a means of shaping social meanings.

The findings indicate that Military English should be viewed not only as a professional variety of speech but also as a sociocultural phenomenon. It contributes to the creation of collective perceptions, influences the formation of social narratives, and helps sustain shared values and beliefs. It is precisely through linguistic means that military institutions can shape their own image, maintain their authority, and ensure internal cohesion.

Promising areas for further research include the analysis of large corpora of military texts, which would make it possible to trace changes in the use of terminology and the characteristics of its development across different periods. Equally important are comparative studies of military discourse across different languages and cultures, which will help identify both common and specific features of military communication. Furthermore, the study of practical aspects of teaching Military English and training translators to work with specialized texts remains relevant.

In summary, it can be noted that military discourse has a significant impact not only on the professional environment but also on society as a whole. Language shapes perceptions of events, determines evaluations, and creates certain models of how they are perceived. That is why the study of military English remains a relevant field in contemporary linguistics and opens up broad opportunities for further interdisciplinary research.

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