



**JOURNAL OF ADVANCED  
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

**ISSN: 0976-9595**

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## **THE STUDY OF POLYSEMY OF DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL APPROACHES**

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### **Abstract**

The article deals with the polysemy of the term "discourse". The research provides an analysis of the essence and content of discourse. Functional, formal, situational and cognitive are the main approaches to defining discourse. In the context of this study, discourse is referred to as the unity of linguistic and cognitive structures in their interaction, since the linguistic sphere cannot function in isolation from the cognitive one. This interaction constitutes a process of communication.

**Keywords.** Discourse, text, speech, communication, cognitive linguistics, situational approach.

### **Introduction**

Polysemy, the phenomenon where a single word or phrase has multiple meanings or interpretations, is a crucial aspect of discourse analysis. Understanding how words acquire different meanings in different contexts is central to deciphering the complexities of language use. This paper delves into the study of polysemy within discourse, exploring the theoretical frameworks and empirical methods employed to analyze this intricate linguistic phenomenon. The study of polysemy is deeply rooted in linguistic theory, drawing from various frameworks such as cognitive linguistics, semantic theory, and pragmatics. These frameworks provide valuable insights into how meanings are constructed and negotiated in communication. Cognitive linguistics, for instance, emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in shaping linguistic structures and meanings, highlighting the dynamic nature of polysemy. Semantic theory, on the other hand, focuses on the relationship between words and their meanings, elucidating the mechanisms through which polysemy emerges.

Empirical approaches to studying polysemy involve the analysis of language use in authentic contexts. Corpus linguistics, for example, offers a systematic method for examining large bodies of text to identify patterns of meaning variation. Psycholinguistic experiments, on the other hand, provide insights into how individuals process and interpret polysemous expressions.

This paper aims to synthesize the diverse theoretical and empirical approaches to studying polysemy within discourse. By examining the intersection of theoretical frameworks and empirical methods, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of how polysemy operates in natural language use.

## Author`s preview

One of the urgent problems of modern linguistics is the study of the essence of discourse and its various types. Having been widely used in the 60s and 70s, the term "discourse" became an object of study in sociology, philosophy, and computer linguistics, which in turn led to an increase in the number of definitions of discourse, taking into account its interdisciplinary nature.

The polysemy of the term "discourse" is fixed in 1978 [Khurmatullin, [www.cyberleninka.ru](http://www.cyberleninka.ru)], in the "Short Dictionary of Terms of Text Linguistics" by T.M. Nikolaeva: "Discourse is a polysemous term of text linguistics used by a number of authors in meanings that are almost homonymous. The most important of them are: 1) a coherent text; 2) an oral-colloquial form of the text; 3) a dialogue; 4) a group of statements related in meaning; 5) a speech work as a given – written or oral" [Nikolaeva, 1978:467].

One of the first researchers of discursive analysis as an object of scientific work were scientists I.R. Galperin, E.A. Referovskaya, Z.Ya. Turaeva (1981-1986). Modern scientists continue to study the phenomenon of discourse, and despite the many interpretations of the concept of "discourse", they agreed that the social context is an inseparable part of discourse; it should be taken into account that the object of study represents «text in a social context», i.e. "context" is the basic component of discourse.

According to V. G. Borbotko, discourse is a text that is a single whole of the communicative speech units of the language, which are sentences, as well as when they are combined into other units, only larger, and they are in a semantic continuous connection, allowing us to perceive this text as a whole formation. V.G. Borbotko separately highlights the fact that the linguistic material, which is the text, is not always coherent speech, that is, discourse [Borbotko, 1981: 8]. Text is considered as a more general concept than discourse. Therefore, discourse is always a text, but "not every text is a discourse." Discourse is a special case of the text [Khurmatullin, [www.cyberleninka.ru](http://www.cyberleninka.ru)]. E.I. Sheigal in his works designates "discourse" and "text" as real and virtual, text finds its realization in discourse as a mental constructor, and discourse is an actual speech event in real time. [Sheigal, 2002: 11]. Other scientists isolate text and discourse as a part and a whole. "Text" is expressed as a fixed object of speech activity, i.e. static, and "discourse" is presented as a communicative phenomenon that develops rapidly and dynamically over time.

An analysis of the literature on the research topic allows us to conclude that there is no definite precise position in understanding these two concepts (discourse as an act of speech generation and discourse as a text). If we turn to scientists who study cognitive linguistics, they mainly compare the totality of the process (discourse as an act of speech generation) of verbalized speech-thinking activity with discourse, and the result (discourse as a text) [Temnova, 2004: 31]. Therefore, according to I.K. Arkhipov, discourse is all "pre-text and post-text processes taking place in consciousness" [Arkhipov, 2000: 203].

In our study, we adhere to the opinion of K.D. Kasimova that discourse is understood as a unity of linguistic and cognitive structures in their interaction, since the linguistic sphere cannot function in isolation from the cognitive one. This interaction is a process of communication [Kasimova, 2023:123].

Considering that discourse is a complex communicative phenomenon that has a feature of differentiation, some scientists (T. Van Dijk, V.Z. Demyankov, A.E. Kibrik, I.M. Kobozeva, et al.) designate this as a product of speech action with relevance, semantic uniformity, tied to a certain context and genre. Other scientists (O.V. Alexandrova, E.S. Kubryakova, V.V. Krasnykh et al.) are reflected with verbalized activity when correlated with the nature of culture, social community or a certain historical period.

The term "discourse" includes the concept of consciousness, which distinguishes it from speech or text. T. Van Dijk described two different definitions of discourse [Van Dijk, [www.psyberlink.flogiston.ru](http://www.psyberlink.flogiston.ru)]. In a broad sense, discourse is a complex communicative event that occurs between a speaker and a listener (observer), in a certain temporal, spatial and other context. A communicative action can be verbal, written, and have verbal and non-verbal components (for example, talking with a friend, dialogue between passengers of transport, reading a newspaper) [Temnova, 2004:24].

When considering discourse as a component of speech linguistics, it appears as a process of live verbalized communication, in which there are many changes and deviations from exemplary, i.e. canonical written speech; therefore, discourse is associated with such elements of speech as spontaneity, completeness, intelligibility of conversation for other people, thematic coherence. The structural characteristics of discourse entail tonal and genre changes. The tone of discourse refers to such parameters as everyday life or ritualism, seriousness or frivolity, the desire for conflict or unison, an increase or decrease in the distance of communication, these parameters are interrelated [Karasik, 2004:232-243].

### **Classification of polysemy of discourse**

The above variety of definitions of discourse is explained by the different approaches from which the definitions of this phenomenon are formulated. Functional, formal, situational and cognitive are the main approaches to defining the concept of discourse [Kibrik, [www.kmgosvet.ru](http://www.kmgosvet.ru)].

The formal approach (structurally oriented) defines discourse in the form of a connotational connection of several (two or more) sentences, where coherence is a sign of discourse. In this way of consideration, discourse is a super-phrasal unity, a complex syntactic whole; its unity can be determined using connectors.

In the functional approach, discourse is based on any case, every use of language, this implies the study of the functions of discourse and the analysis of the functions of language.

The situational approach is associated with the context of social, emotional and culturally significant criteria and circumstances in the interpretation of discourse. It is generally believed that this approach connects formal and functional approaches, and it can be considered a compromise.

The cognitive approach positions discourse as a unit of cognitive order, since it is a term containing a specific reference to the transfer and communication of knowledge, accumulation, analysis and creation of new connections.

Linguists study discourse in various aspects listed above, which makes it possible to build up and improve the holistic concept of discourse. Considering that the word "discourse" is translated from French – "speech as an act, speech as an event", this allows scientists to define the concept provided as "speech immersed in life" [Arutyunova, 1990:137], one of the components of activity, human interaction during communication [Isaeva, [www.vii.sfu-kras.ru](http://www.vii.sfu-kras.ru)].

The polysemicity of the term discourse in this work was presented from various points of view of scientists. Discourse is defined as text, speech, coherent conversation, type of speech communication, unity, the process of live verbalized communication, the act of speech production, speech, coherent text, as well as the organization of speech activity. Summarizing the definitions given in this work, we can agree with the point of view that this term is close in meaning to the concept of "text", although it emphasizes the dynamics of development over time and the nature of linguistic communication, this is the unity of linguistic and cognitive structures in their interaction, i.e. in the process of communication.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study of polysemy within discourse is a multifaceted and dynamic field that draws on a range of theoretical frameworks and empirical methods. Through the lens of cognitive linguistics, semantic theory, and pragmatics, researchers have gained valuable insights into how meanings are constructed and negotiated in communication. Empirical approaches, such as corpus linguistics and psycholinguistic experiments, have provided concrete evidence of the complex nature of polysemy in natural language use. By integrating theoretical and empirical approaches, scholars can develop a more nuanced understanding of polysemy and its role in discourse. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches our theoretical understanding but also has practical implications for fields such as language teaching, translation, and communication studies.

Moving forward, future research could explore the cultural and contextual factors that influence polysemy, as well as the implications of polysemy for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. By continuing to investigate polysemy from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, scholars can uncover new insights into the nature of language and meaning.

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