

УДК 81'27:81'373.7

MODERN UKRAINIAN MILITARY JARGON IN THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC DIMENSIONS

Ihor Vozniak

*Lviv Polytechnic National University
Department of Applied Linguistics
30 Stepana Bandery Str., room 407, 79013, Lviv, Ukraine
phone: 032 258 27 00
e-mail: ihor.z.vozniak@lpnu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3224-9121>*

The article examines modern Ukrainian military jargon and slang through the lenses of sociolinguistics and linguistic pragmatics. The relevance of such research is substantiated by the current lack of systematic and comprehensive studies in Ukrainian linguistics. It is emphasized that military discourse encompasses a large number of lexemes, which include jargon and slang terms, which, although sharing core features with other forms of jargon and slang, have their own characteristics, determined by the realities of the military personnel's lives and professional duties. It is noted that military jargon and slang should be divided into positive-evaluative, negative-evaluative, and neutral-evaluative according to their pragmatic and expressive functions. The most common archisemes of military jargon are identified.

Although military jargon and slang function in military discourse, which is divided into official and unofficial, they actively penetrate other types of discourse. It has been established that military jargon forms bijargon fields when interacting with other types of jargon. In addition, military jargon exhibits a multi-level structure, including general military jargon and specialized jargon.

Various types of word-forming models are demonstrated, on the basis of which new jargon and slang lexemes arise, as well as the pragmatic potential of such lexemes. Particular attention is given to expressions that convey sarcasm, irony, or ridicule—key features of this sociolect. It is demonstrated that military jargon is closely related to the realities of the lives of servicemen and that its composition evolves under the influence of extralingual factors such as war and military reforms. Special emphasis is placed on the role of jargon in counteracting enemy propaganda narratives. All conclusions are based on specific examples of actual military jargon.

Conclusions are drawn about the sociolinguistic and pragmatic characteristics of military jargon, and the potential for further research is outlined.

Key words: military jargon, military slang, military discourse, sociolect, jargon word formation, sociolinguistics, linguistic pragmatics.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30970/ufl.2026.21.5160>

Formulation of the problem. The lexical composition of a language undergoes constant changes. These changes arise from both intralingual (for example, quantitative, qualitative, and axiological semantic shifts) and extralingual factors. The main extralingual factors that lead to changes in the lexical composition of a language are the emergence of new realities of social and everyday life, scientific and technological progress, social phenomena, political processes and ideology, cultural and linguistic contacts, changes in the cultural paradigm, and other societal developments. In addition, language is closely connected with both society as a whole and each individual, so our speech reflects not only the general state of development of our native language driven by broader social processes, but also our life, profession, interests, and psychological characteristics. Thus, linguistic change will always remain at the centre of scholarly attention, because language will continuously develop, responding to changes in the lives of its speakers.

Ukrainian linguistics has traditionally tended towards prescriptivism, but this ap-

proach distorts the understanding of language and awareness of its internal processes and its true potential to reveal the features of thinking and worldview of the Ukrainian people and society to the fullest extent possible. Sociolinguistic research and pragmatic analysis should, in my opinion, counterbalance this bias and open Ukrainian linguistics to the widest coverage of all linguistic phenomena, a full-scale understanding of the diversity of linguistic means, and a deeper understanding of the conditions of their existence. Therefore, this research, which is part of the author's consistent work in the field of sociolinguistics, should contribute to solving the problem of fragmentary research in the field of descriptive linguistics.

While it would definitely be a mistake to claim that sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies occupy the periphery of Ukrainian linguistics, one cannot ignore significant potential in their expansion, as this will help shatter enemy propaganda about the meagreness of the Ukrainian language and its inability to fully serve the communicative needs of its speakers.

Relevance, purpose, and objectives of the study. The greatest impact on the socio-political life in Ukraine and the fate of every Ukrainian is being made by the war, which has been going on since 2014. During this time, Ukrainians have actively acquired various military-related words. Whereas fifteen years ago many speakers might not have been familiar with what artillery was, now many native speakers of Ukrainian not only understand this concept, but also have some knowledge about various types of artillery weapons. The language of the military has firmly entered the use of all segments of the population: it can be heard not only in the news broadcasts or official reports, but also in social networks, films, songs, and conversations with friends. Therefore, the relevance of this study is motivated by the deep and active integration of elements of military discourse into practically all other types of discourse over the past decade: socio-political, legal, scientific-educational, cultural, and media discourse.

It is worth noting that not only formal terms, but also completely informal units – jargon – have come into use. Being a sociolect, that is, a special stratum of vocabulary that reflects the distinctive speech practices of a separate group of people by professional affiliation, jargon is sometimes ignored during linguistic research, since it is difficult to study, primarily due to its non-standardisation, variability, short life cycle, and the difficulty of collecting empirical materials for research. However, in my opinion, military jargon more than deserves attention from the linguistic community, and therefore, I define it as the object of this study, the subject of which is the emergence and formation of jargon units in military discourse, which are known to a relatively wide audience of Ukrainian speakers. After all, as V. Tarasova concludes, substandard linguistic elements functioning as markers of subcultural values may eventually migrate into the standard literary language [17 : 263]. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to reveal the multifaceted nature of military jargon and its creative and cognitive potential in the social dimension.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set: first, to characterize the state of research on military slang in Ukrainian linguistics and identify existing gaps; second, to compile a sample of military jargon units that have been actively used in Ukrainian-language discourse from 2014 to the present; third, to conduct a morphological and semantic analysis of the collected lexical material; fourth, to characterize military jargon through the lenses of sociolinguistics and linguistic pragmatics; fifth, to make a generalisation about modern Ukrainian military jargon and outline prospects for further research.

Research methodology. This study is based on a functional understanding of language. The empirical material was collected through non-involved observation from a

range of sources, primarily research literature and journalistic articles [12]. In addition to the traditional general scientific methods of description, synthesis, and analysis, the component method (for the study of semantics) and the method of direct components (for the study of morphology) were applied. From the arsenal of sociolinguistic methods, the discursive analysis was used to characterize the functioning of language units in military discourse, and from the arsenal of linguistic pragmatics methods, the intentional analysis was used to identify subjective factors influencing speech production.

It is important to note that this study does not draw a strict distinction between military jargon and military slang, but combines these two categories, since they are quite close and still cause controversy among linguists regarding drawing any clear boundary between these sociolinguistic phenomena (at the same time, I generally support the view that jargon consists of specialized lexemes characteristic of professional speech but divergent from the codified norm, whereas slang comprises colloquial, stylistically marked units [9 : 54]. In addition, such a combination allows for a more comprehensive investigation of the relevant linguistic phenomena and more conceptual conclusions, and therefore, for the purposes of this study, the terms “military jargon” and “military slang” are used interchangeably.

The examples of Ukrainian military jargon and slang in this article are, if possible, translated using common and/or neutral English vocabulary and not with corresponding British or American jargon and slang to give the reader a better understanding of the lexical and morphological motivation of the respective Ukrainian lexemes. The meaning of Ukrainian military jargon and slang is provided, as well.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Military slang has often been addressed in smaller-scale studies or qualification papers produced by students at various levels of higher education. However, it can be stated that this issue has not yet been sufficiently studied within the framework of serious multidimensional research in Ukraine.

Among Ukrainian scholars, I. Basaraba and O. Lemeshko examined the definition of military slang and the methods of its formation [5]. T. Levchenko studied the functioning aspects of military jargon in the modern Ukrainian press [10] and the formation of contemporary military jargon [11]. The work of T. Chernyshova is noteworthy, in which the researcher considers the development of Ukrainian military vocabulary during the Russo-Ukrainian war [18]. Her study supports the thesis put forward in this article that military jargon develops most intensively during periods of war and armed conflict, as she demonstrates the lexical changes occurring among Ukrainian military servicemen during the full-scale invasion.

Notably, Ukrainian translation scholars have paid considerable attention to military slang and jargon. In this context, we highlight the significant contribution made by V. Balabin in his dissertation “Modern American Military Slang as a Translation Problem” [4]. Nevertheless, research in the field of jargon and slang translation issues is also valuable for relevant sociolinguistic studies and pragmatic analysis.

Pragmatic aspects of military vocabulary were considered by I. Anderson and T. Ivasyshyna [2]. A psycholinguistic experiment to study the patterns in the development of substandard military language in 2019–20 was conducted by V. Tarasova [17]. These works indicate that Ukrainian scholars increasingly address military jargon not only from lexicological or translation-related perspectives, but also from the standpoints of linguistic pragmatics and psycholinguistics. Therefore, a need for deepening and greater diversification of relevant research is noticeable.

Main body. Military discourse encompasses a wide range of linguistic means. For

example, military terminology constitutes a rather extensive lexical cluster that is constantly expanding, reflecting technological achievements and evolving trends in tactical and strategic military thinking through new terms. Naturally, military terminology has been the object of numerous (primarily) terminological and translation studies. However, military discourse, which is broad in both content and range of participants, also includes military slang, jargon, and colloquial (informal) vocabulary. This group includes emotionally charged elements that are heterogeneous in their functional characteristics and often act as stylistic synonyms for military terms [13 : 15]. They are of considerable value for lexicological, translation, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and psycholinguistic studies. In this article, I propose to focus on the sociolinguistic and pragmatic characteristics of military jargon and slang.

Military jargon and slang share many features with other types of jargon and slang. Thus, jargon units are characterized by emotional semantics, sometimes even a certain vulgarisation or profanity, and have a neutral, commonly used synonym in the standard language [7 : 84]. Within a professional domain or social group, their use facilitates comprehension, interpersonal communication, and communicative efficiency [7 : 84]. Usually, jargon units denote something already known (subject, quality, state), i.e., they are expressive-evaluative synonyms [7 : 86]. According to the definition of S. Miroshnyk, slang comprises expressive, mainly ironic, words used to create new words for some things that are frequent topics of conversation [14 : 127]. Taking into account this definition, it is necessary to emphasize that slang is used in relation to what is often talked about, i.e., the high frequency of the need for verbalisation of a concept increases the chances that a corresponding slang (jargon) unit will emerge.

The ties of slang vocabulary with social processes mean that it is historically variable, since slang lexemes not only compete with each other, with less expressive units tending to disappear over time [7 : 85], but also the disappearance of certain realities leads to the disappearance of the corresponding lexemes. Thus, slang and jargon can also be studied diachronically. In this context, the prominent dictionary of English slang by Jonathon Green (*Green's Dictionary of Slang*) [1] is notable, as it covers various jargon and slang terms (in particular, military jargon and slang) from various territorial varieties of English, providing information on their periods of use. In my opinion, Ukrainian lexicography should fill such a gap in the Ukrainian language as well.

Military jargon is a subsystem of Ukrainian jargon that has certain features rooted in the social distinctiveness of its speakers, which is shaped not only by their specific professional duties, but also by a rather different way of life. The commonality of the language of military personnel as a separate social group, as a result, is manifested through a special sociolect, characterized by a number of certain distinctive features at the lexical (and phraseological) level, which helps reveal the essence of value orientations, the nature of relationships between military personnel as well as their worldview [5 : 139]. Military slang (jargon), according to Ukrainian researchers, is characterized by the following: emotional tonality of vocabulary with a wide spectrum of shades (joking, ironic, mocking, disdainful, contemptuous, rude or even vulgar); its non-standard, non-literary nature; incomprehensibility or limited comprehensibility for the rest of society [2 : 40–41]. And although these features largely coincide with the general features of jargon and slang, it is worth emphasizing that the range of emotions conveyed by military jargon will be somewhat broader, which is due to the psychological characteristics of the military, the social diversity in their ranks, and the difficult conditions of their professional and service duties. This is especially clear in modern Ukrain-

ian military discourse, because full-scale war and general mobilisation have significantly expanded the Ukrainian army in terms of demography, sociology, and psychology.

V. Balabin rightly noted that all units of American military slang can be divided into negative-evaluative, positive-evaluative, and neutral-evaluative [4 : 8]. The same can be applied to Ukrainian military slang, which is shown in Table 1 on the examples compiled by me. V. Balabin also identified the following groups of vocabulary in military jargon (although he does not specify the criteria for this classification, and the terminology used for several categories appears inconsistent): colloquialisms, military-professional jargon, group and social jargon, slang abbreviations, code names, military slang phraseology, argot, vulgarized terms, euphemisms, foreign-language borrowings, neologisms, historicism-based slang [4, pp. 8–9]. Despite the conceptual shortcomings of such a classification, it demonstrates how versatile and multifunctional military slang and jargon are.

Table 1. Classification of Modern Ukrainian Military Jargon and Slang by Emotional Tone.

Negative-evaluative	Positive-evaluative	Neutral-evaluative
<p><i>м'ясник</i> ([a] butcher; 'a commander who loses a lot of personnel in battles')</p> <p><i>сепар/сепар</i> (short for separatist; 'a fighter of separatists groups in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk')</p> <p><i>ловити мордою каби</i> (to catch guided bombs with one's face; 'to be heavily bombed with Russian guided bombs, esp. in very unfavourable conditions')</p> <p><i>кабінетний щур</i> ([a] cabinet rat; 'an officer who does not engage in actual combat but remains on a base located far away from the frontline')</p> <p><i>котел</i> ([a] cauldron; 'a pocket, i.e., a friendly formation totally isolated and surrounded by enemy forces')</p>	<p><i>пташка</i> ([a] birdie; 'an unmanned aerial vehicle')</p> <p><i>відпрацювати по площі</i> (to work upon a territory; 'to shell enemy forces located on a specific territory')</p> <p><i>кабачки</i> (courgettes; artillery shells)</p> <p><i>тигр</i> ([a] tiger; 'a soldier who fights fiercely')</p> <p><i>братюня</i> ([a] brother; 'a fellow soldier')</p>	<p><i>нора</i> ([a] hole; 'a trench')</p> <p><i>вкопуватися</i> (to dig oneself deeply into the ground; 'to dig deep trenches')</p> <p><i>сушка</i> (based on the name of Sukhoi military aircraft; homonymous with the word for small, crunchy bread rings eaten for dessert)</p> <p><i>арта</i> (short for artillery)</p> <p><i>воги</i> (short for grenade launcher shot VOG-25)</p>

In general, military jargon and slang are a linguistic-mental figurative picture of the world, which includes words, terms, expressions, symbols, associations and emotions related to weapons, combat operations, war strategy and tactics, soldiers, war victims, war monuments, military equipment and other dimensions of military life [6, pp. 6–7], which

defines the versatility of informal military speech. For example, T. Levchenko identifies the following thematic groups of military jargon: designations of fortifications, equipment, weapons, uniforms, terrain and localities, wartime actions, military operations, and death [11, pp. 168–169]. As we can see, Ukrainian researchers classify military jargon differently according to the thematic affiliation of the corresponding lexemes, yet in any case, the central themes of military discourse and, accordingly, the dominant archisemes for military jargon and slang will be “weapons and equipment”, “combat operations”, “military personnel”, “everyday life” (Table 2). These archisemes form the conceptual foundation of the military worldview and therefore provide the semantic basis for the emergence of new jargon and slang units.

Table 2. Classification of Modern Ukrainian Military Jargon and Slang by Archisemes.

Archisemes	Weapons and equipment	Combat operations	Military personnel	Everyday life
Examples	<p><i>калашмат</i> (portmanteau word for “Калашиникова автомат”, the Soviet-era assault rifle AK-74)</p> <p><i>мотолига</i> (of unknown origin; a Soviet multi-purpose, fully amphibious, tracked armoured fighting vehicle MT-LB)</p> <p><i>бронік</i> (short for “бронезилет”; ‘a body armour’)</p> <p><i>шайтан-труба</i> ([a] Shayatin-tube; man-portable, single-use, rocket-assisted thermobaric weapon PRO-A Shmel)</p> <p><i>сапог</i> (surzhyk word for a boot; tripod-mounted man-portable, 73mm caliber recoilless gun SPG-9)</p>	<p>4.5.0 (everything is fine)</p> <p><i>плюс-плюс</i> (on the radio, ‘I have received your message’)</p> <p><i>мінуснути</i> (to minus [somebody]; ‘to kill an enemy’)</p> <p><i>зачистка</i> (cleaning-up; ‘detecting and eliminating enemy forces who left on conquered or reclaimed territory’)</p> <p><i>продавлювати</i> (to squeeze through; ‘to break through enemy defence lines’)</p>	<p><i>замок</i> (portmanteau word for “заступник командира”, the second-in-command)</p> <p><i>кіборги</i> (cyborgs; ‘Ukrainian servicemen who participated in defense of Donetsk International Airport from 26 May 2014 till 22 January 2015 during the war in eastern Ukraine’)</p> <p><i>єноти</i> (raccoons; ‘paratroopers’)</p> <p><i>контрабаси</i> (double basses; derived from “контракт”, contract; ‘contracted soldiers’)</p> <p><i>аватару</i> (avatars; ‘heavy-drinking soldiers’)</p>	<p><i>ніштяки</i> (possibly from Russian slang for ‘nice things’; ‘posh or newfangled gear’)</p> <p><i>обвісу</i> (hang-downs; ‘all the things that a serviceman carries with him, esp. those hanging around his waist or from his backpack’)</p> <p><i>піксель</i> (pixel; ‘typical Ukrainian military camouflage’)</p> <p><i>мультик</i> ([a] cartoon, originally from English; short for MultiCam-patterned uniform)</p> <p><i>корч</i> ([a] snag; ‘a civilian vehicle, typically an SUV, used by military’)</p>

Military jargon, occupying a distinct place in the corpus of social dialects, performs several functions, among which researchers most frequently identify the nominative (designation of specific military realities), identificational (demonstration of belonging to a certain social group), conspiratorial (concealing the content of what is said from people outside the social group), and worldview-expressive (shaping and expressing a collective worldview) functions [10 : 116]. For example, the conspiratorial function of military jargon is illustrated by lexemes such as *еспешка* (from *СП – спостережний пункт*, ‘observation post’), *маслята* (slippery jacks) – ‘cartridges’, *бобрини* (beavers) – ‘engineering unit’, etc., which are words whose meaning is unlikely to be accessible to those outside military circles.

The sociolinguistic and pragmatic characteristics of military jargon and slang shape its discursive properties. Although military jargon and slang typically function within the framework of military discourse, they have recently been actively penetrating other types of discourse in the Ukrainian linguistic and cultural space – a tendency addressed below. Military discourse, which reveals aspects of military activity and communicative practices related to military service and the conduct of military operations, is not homogeneous: it is divided into formal military discourse (military documents, statutes, orders, official events, etc.) and informal [8 : 66]. Military slang and jargon belong to the latter. However, this division is neither strict nor static: lexemes often cross the boundary between the formal and informal spheres, contributing to the mutual enrichment of both types. For example, it is difficult to unambiguously determine the source of the term *сіра зона* (grey zone; ‘contested territory next to the front line’), which can be both a borrowing (from the English grey-zone with a similar meaning), and an original phraseological unit based on linguistic-cognitive connections between the word “gray” and such semes as “undefined”, “intermediate”, or “illegal”, however, it is clearly jargon-like in nature (metaphorically motivated) and its almost equally active existence in both unofficial and official military discourse, as well as in a figurative sense in civilian discourse.

The permeability between formal and informal military discourse has a significant impact on derivational processes. Military slang is characterized by the use of highly specialized military terminology both figuratively and for word formation of various kinds, intensive use of abbreviations, and strongly marked emotional colouring (with the dominance of elements with a negative and roughly familiar colouring) [19 : 68]. Thus, the term *позиція* can be used not only in the direct sense to refer to the location of personnel, firing point, etc., on the front line, but also in a figurative, sometimes ironic sense to denote the location of anyone or anything.

Sociolectal vocabulary of the groups of the population interacting with soldiers form, together with jargon, the so-called *bijargon* field, for example, among musicians, soldiers and offenders (*лабух* – ‘musician’, *лабать* – ‘play musical instruments’); among the military and musicians (*ракета* [rocket] – ‘electric guitar’, *сирена* [siren] – ‘music’) [10 : 117]. In military jargon, we also come across a case where the jargon of marginalized groups, three axes to denote cheap wine, has migrated into military jargon to denote the American M777 howitzer.

Jargon reinterpretation is also characteristic of lexemes with broad semantics (primarily verbs) in combination with other jargon items, such as *працює арта* (arty – short for artillery – is working; ‘artillery is firing’), *накрити вогнем* (to cover with fire; ‘to shell a certain place’), *розібрати піхоту* (to disassemble infantry; ‘to annihilate enemy infantry formations’), *тримати удари* (to hold blows; ‘to withstand enemy attacks’), *кинути*

цифри (to throw numbers; ‘to communicate intelligence’), *зняти охорону* (to take off the guard; ‘to kill the sentry’). Masterful use of a certain professional jargon presupposes fluency in such verb-noun collocations, which may be far less noticeable to the “external observer-listener” than monolexemic slang units.

In this regard, we should agree with I. Basaraba and O. Lemeshko that military slang can be conditionally divided into two large groups according to the breadth of use: general slang, i.e., well-known slang and jargon units, and special slang, i.e., those lexical units that are used within rather limited circles, primarily among service members of the armed forces of English-speaking countries [5 : 140]. O. Andriyanova, characterizing cadet slang, notes that it includes general military jargon, which is familiar to all military personnel, jargon of a certain professional sublanguage (for example, the jargon of tankers, logisticians, gunners, etc.), and cadet jargon itself, which in some aspects is close to student jargon [3 : 6]. For example, the cadets use the slang term *сампо* (a portmanteau word for *самонідготовка*, ‘self-preparation’) that would be unfamiliar to Ukrainian students in civil universities. Therefore, military jargon is not homogeneous, including subcategories and having to a certain extent a hierarchical structure with the base layer (general military jargon) and superstructural layers (group-specific military jargon).

The word formation of military jargon is characterized by morphological and lexical motivation. Morphological motivation is mainly associated with various types of affixal derivation and abbreviations. The method of truncation is productive (sometimes in combination with suffixation): *калаш* from *автомат Калашникова* (‘a Kalashnikov assault rifle’), *бронік* від *бронежилет* (‘a body armour’), *передок* від *передній край оборони* (‘a front line of defense’). As is known, the military uses a large number of abbreviations, which over time are transformed into full-fledged jargon words. Typically, the consonantal framework of the abbreviation serves as the base to which vowels and productive suffixes or endings are added to construct a grammatically complete lexeme. Thus, the already mentioned lexemes *еспешка* (from *СП – спостережний пункт*, ‘observation post’), *сапог* (from *СПГ – станковий протитанковий гранатомет*, mounted anti-tank grenade-launcher SPG-9), as well as *дашка* (from *ДШК – станковий кулемет Дегтярова–Шпагіна*, DShK – Degtyaryov–Shpagin large-calibre machine gun), *сушка* (from *Су*, the Su series of aircraft), *саушка* (from *САУ – самохідна артилерійська установка*, ‘self-propelled artillery system’), *мехвод* or *меховод* (from *механік-водій*, ‘mechanic-driver’) were formed.

In the context of lexical motivation, one should agree with T. Levchenko, who rightly notes that military slang is characterized by vivid imagery and is heavily based on metaphorization [9 : 117]. First of all, such imagery can be observed in the example of jargon words used to denote different types of ammunition: *лимони* (lemons; ‘grenades’), *поросята* (piglets; ‘mortar shells’), *маслята* (slippery jacks; ‘cartridges’), *огірки*, *морква*, *кабачки* (cucumbers, carrots, courgettes; ‘shells for ATGMs, ATGs, RPGs’). As we can see, associations with fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, and animals, together with the positive emotions linked to the consumption of the corresponding products, form a positive halo of these jargon words and expressions. Metonymy also plays a role in the formation of military jargon: names of weapons often shift to denote their ammunition or instances of their use. One should consider the following example: *нас били градами*, *били вогами* (literally “we were hit with grads, we were hit with vogs”; from the song *За териконами* by the Ukrainian band МЮСЛІ UA), *де гради* (homonymous with the

Ukrainian word for hail) – shells of the Soviet BM-21 “Grad” multiple launch rocket system, and *воги* – VOG-25 fragmentation grenades for under-barrel launchers.

The lexico-semantic method is based on expanding the meanings of commonly used words and assigning them additional, jargon-specific senses. In modern Ukrainian military jargon, this mechanism is highly productive. For example, *вихід* (exit; ‘the launch of missiles or artillery shells’), *приліт* (arrival; ‘the impact of missiles or shells at a particular location or target’), *аборт* (abortion; ‘the procedure of removing a misfired mortar round from the barrel’), *нора* ([a] hole; ‘a blindage’), *стрічка* ([a] belt; ‘a column of military vehicles’). Such lexico-semantic word formation is quite productive.

Surzhyk plays a significant role in the formation of military slang. This is largely due to objective factors: the prevalence of surzhyk as a sociolinguistic phenomenon across most of Ukraine and the Ukrainian-Russian diglossia. Consequently, a considerable number of military jargon and slang units have emerged at the intersection of these social phenomena and psychological factors. For example, the Soviet SPG-9 anti-tank grenade launcher, still in service with the Ukrainian army, acquired the nickname *canoз*, the emergence of which can be explained by the convergence of the following factors: the military’s extensive use of abbreviations encourages the creation of words from such abbreviations, and the consonantal structure of SPG completely resembles the word *canoз*, which with a high probability can be heard from the speakers of surzhyk. Additionally, an associative connection may exist between the shape and colour of the SPG and a typical army boot, with the ironic connotation reinforcing the association and solidifying the corresponding jargon. Another example is the pair *ночник* and *глаза* used to denote ‘a night vision device’ (the latter, which is surzhyk for eyes, arose through metaphorical transfer, since the night vision device functions as eyes in the dark). An interesting example is *улітка/равлик/бубон* (snail/snail/tambourine) — ‘a drum magazine for an RPK machine gun’. The name is motivated by its appearance, but here we see a variation: not only is the surzhyk nomination common, but also Ukrainian-language terms (one of the few examples of synonymy among jargon nouns for the same object). In this context, we can mention the competing jargon words *самоделка* and *саморобка* (literally self-made) employed to designate ‘a homemade explosive device’.

The internationalisation of the military conceptual sphere leads to the borrowing of various lexemes to denote the realities of life and service of military personnel. Thus, the jargon term *мультикам*, which refers to a characteristic deformation military camouflage developed in 2002 in the USA and widespread in many armies around the world, is a calque of the American term MultiCam (itself an abbreviation of Multi-Camouflage), and from this jargon term the lexeme *мультик* was formed by truncation creating a homonymous relation with the colloquial diminutive word *мультик*, meaning ‘animated film’, which can further complicate comprehension for individuals outside the military social group. The nominations of Western weapons used by the Armed Forces of Ukraine have similarly become the basis for the formation of jargon-verbs to denote actions involving the use of these types of weapons (the verbs formed are usually transitive and contain the seme of ‘use against the enemy’): *відбайрактарити* (from the name of the Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 UAV), *відджавелініти* (from the name of the American portable anti-tank missile system Javelin), *застінгерити* (from the name of the American portable anti-aircraft missile system Stinger), etc. However, these lexemes should be treated cautiously, as their survival in the military lexicon is potentially casuistic; the removal or obsolescence of the corresponding weapons may lead to the rapid disappearance of the associated verbs.

From the pragmatic viewpoint, jargon often imbues communication with a wide range of tones, from negative-contemptuous to humorous-elevated and ironic tones. For example, irony is evident in the nickname *весло* ([a] paddle) for the Degtyaryov self-loading rifle, or in the use of *бумер* and *беха* for infantry fighting vehicles (the latter also reflects cultural and social associations, as both words refer to BMW cars, whose drivers are stereotypically perceived as reckless and impudent drivers violating traffic rules and speed limits). Contempt for enemy weapons is exemplified by the lexeme *мопед* ([a] moped) in the meaning of the loitering munition Shahed-136, based on the resemblance of its flight sound to that of a moped. The combination of irony and figurative ingenuity, based on the functional purpose and appearance of ambulances, which are often old Soviet-made vans, led to the emergence of the jargon lexeme *таблетка* ([a] pill). Irony is conveyed by the jargon *дискотека* ([a] discotheque), which means ‘the start of hostilities in an area that had previously been quiet for some time’. The lexeme *тактикульний* (from the English *tactic* and *cool*, *тактичний* and *крутий*, respectively), which is widely used in relation to ‘fashionable military equipment’, is filled with positive energy, but at the same time this jargon word acquires a sarcastic connotation when used in relation to civilians wearing military-style clothing or wearing *оливи* (olive; used to denote ‘clothes of a dark green shade characteristic of some types of military uniforms’).

T. Levchenko highlights the functioning of units in modern Ukrainian military jargon that appeared during the First and Second World Wars and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (the most striking examples are *двохсотий*, *трьохсотий* (the two hundredth, three hundredth; ‘killed in action’ and ‘wounded’, respectively) [11 : 167]. The jargon of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military structural units, as noted by a group of Ukrainian researchers, should be singled out as a fairly significant layer of words, which includes both words borrowed from the jargon of the armies of the last century to denote outdated military equipment and weapons, and new words that reflect the realities of modern warfare [20 : 304]. First, this demonstrates the transmission of military jargon from generation to generation. Secondly, this shows that the most active replenishment of the military jargon occurs precisely during wars and armed conflicts, which act as catalysts for word-formation processes in military discourse.

As T. Levchenko rightly observes, the core vocabulary of military jargon, unlike some social dialects such as youth slang, is relatively stable, which can be explained by the centuries-old traditions of the military community and the stability of their subculture [10 : 116]. Consequently, several jargon terms from the Soviet era have persisted into the modern Ukrainian army: *чілок* (‘a café or a small convenience shop on the territory of a military unit’), *ніджак* ([a] suit jacket; ‘a graduate of a military department mobilized into an officer position’), *200/двохсотий* (‘killed in action’), *300/трьохсотий* (‘wounded’). In some cases, these Soviet-era lexemes serve as the basis for the formation of new jargon terms: *500/н’ятисотий* (‘deserter’).

At the same time, the reforms that have taken place in the Ukrainian army since 2014, and which are partly designed to restore the traditions of the Ukrainian People’s Republic army, have led to the emergence of jargon terms motivated by historical figures. Such lexemes include *мазепинка* (from the name of Hetman Ivan Mazepa) to denote the ‘headdress of the Ukrainian military’ and *махновець* (from the name of Nestor Makhno, the leader of Ukrainian anarchists during the 1917-21 Ukrainian War of Independence) to denote ‘a person who does not want to obey orders and the current military hierarchy’. Such lexemes not only reflect social phenomena, in particular the desire to demonstrate to the enemy the continuity of Ukrainian statehood, but also influence the moral and psychological attitudes of their speakers, potentially encouraging them to deepen their knowledge of Ukraine’s historical legacy.

Researchers rightly point out that military slang influences other functional styles of the Ukrainian language and contributes to the expansion of its use across various stylistic contexts [16 : 28]. Military lexemes actively penetrate, for example, the journalistic style [16 : 28; 15 : 121], as evidenced by publications in various media. The existence of military jargon in almost all functional styles of the modern Ukrainian literary language (including colloquial speech) was noted by T. Levchenko [10 : 115]. I support the view that military slang is not only a means of effective communication between the military but also an important tool for understanding the military context for the civilian population [6 : 10]. It easily overcomes communication barriers and is actively used not only among military personnel but also among native speakers because of its expressiveness and imagery [18 : 34]. In addition, military jargon, which was previously limited in use, has become an important element of everyday communication and media discourse, reflecting key aspects of the collective understanding of war [11 : 167]. A vivid example of a lexeme that can be attributed to military and political jargon and which became widespread after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, although the word itself dates back to the German-Soviet War, is the word *гауляйтер* (Gauleiter), which originally referred to a Nazi party official responsible for a territorial district during the Third Reich. However, after 2022, this word is used contemptuously to refer to the ‘heads of administrations that Russia creates in the occupied territories’. From a pragmatic perspective, the use of Gauleiter conveys a negative attitude and even a sense of disgust toward these individuals. Its semantic motivation rests on a historical analogy, comparing the Russian occupation with the Nazi occupation, allowing speakers to cognitively link different subjects through shared terminology.

Jargon is an important tool for countering the enemy’s propaganda narrative. By picking up key words from enemy propaganda, Ukrainian military personnel, politicians, publicists, and the general public transform these words in a way to convey sharp irony and ridicule, exposing the enemy’s attempts to obscure their intentions or soften the perception of war. In this context, several jargon terms have appeared, including *демільтаризація* (demilitarisation; ‘destruction of military facilities’), *бавовна* (cotton; ‘explosions on the territory of the terrorist state’; this jargon term was formed based on a deliberately incorrect translation of the euphemism *хлопки* used by Russian propagandists), *іхтам-нети* (they-are-not-there; ‘Russian occupying troops’, based on the official doctrine of the Russian authorities claiming the absence—“they are not there”—of Russian troops since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2014). Such lexemes not only reflect prevailing social moods but also exert a strong pragmatic impact, shaping the attitudes, perceptions, and emotional responses of participants in communication.

Since military personnel operate within a relatively closed community, shaped by specific living and service conditions, exposed to various risk factors, and adhere to their own social conventions, their language acquires an esoteric character. It is not surprising that in recent years, in the language of at least some of the Ukrainian military, one can hear such lexemes as *вальгалла* (Valhalla), *берсеркер* (berserker), and other references to Romano-Scandinavian mythology, which glorified military service and feats in war.

Conclusions. Modern Ukrainian military jargon and slang, as identified in this study, constitute an extremely heterogeneous lexical layer, which is characterized not only by those characteristics that are inherent in any other group of jargon, such as informality, non-standardisation, and a pronounced tendency toward joking, humorous, ironic, or sarcastic expression, but also by some distinctive features, in particular, special types of word

formation (extensive use of abbreviations as the basis for jargon lexemes, high frequency of use of surzhyk as the basis for jargon).

Jargon is of particular interest to sociolinguistics and linguistic pragmatics. From a sociolinguistic point of view, military jargon is characterized by its restricted use within a specific social group; therefore, it can sometimes perform a conspiratorial function (concealing the content of messages from outsiders). Due to the relatively long-term immutability of the realities of the military personnel's lives, Ukrainian military jargon contains both new lexemes that have emerged since the restoration of independence (especially actively after 2014, with the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and after 2022, with the beginning of the Russian invasion), and lexemes from the period of the Soviet occupation. Furthermore, changes in armament, the introduction of Western military equipment, and structural reforms in the Armed Forces of Ukraine constitute important extralingual factors that contribute to the expansion and renewal of this lexical subsystem. From a pragmatic point of view, military jargon animates communicative situations and brings interlocutors closer together through shared linguistic conventions. Intentional analysis of military jargon shows that it enables speakers to express various emotions: humour, irony, sarcasm, and disgust. In addition, a certain part of military jargon has penetrated into other types of discourse, where it is actively used, so some military jargon terms are capable of functioning in numerous discourses, as well as of entering the official professional dictionary. Military jargon is also a powerful communicative tool for combating enemy propaganda narratives.

The potential for further research lies in the study of the use of slang in military discourse (which T. Levchenko has already begun to explore), bijargon fields (the use of the same slang and jargon words in different spheres), the development of military slang from a diachronic perspective, as well as homonymous relations between jargon and slang terms and commonly used lexemes. At the same time, such research may face a number of significant challenges, including the casuistry and rapid obsolescence of jargon terms, the absence of specialised corpora, and the need for extensive data collection to create reliable collections of jargon vocabulary. Nevertheless, I see great potential in such research, as well as in psycholinguistic research that has already begun in Ukrainian linguistics.

Список використаної літератури

1. Green's Dictionary of Slang. Режим доступу : <https://greensdictofslang.com> (date of access: 30.11.2025).

2. Андерсен І. В., Івасишина Т. А. Військова лексика: класифікація, прагматика, переклад (на матеріалі української та польської мов). *Вісник науки та освіти. Серія: Філологія, культура і мистецтво, педагогіка, історія та археологія, соціологія*. 2023. № 10 (16). С. 38–46.

3. Андріянова О. Уживання військового жаргону в мовленні курсантів. *Гуманітарна освіта в технічних вищих навчальних закладах*. 2019. № 40. С. 5–10.

4. Балабін В. В. Сучасний американський військовий сленг як проблема перекладу : автореф. дис. ... канд. філол. наук: 10.02.16: Перекладознавство. Київ, 1997. 27 с.

5. Басараба І., Лемешко О. Військовий сленг: дефініція та шляхи утворення. *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук*. 2022. Вип. 55. Т. 1. С. 137–142.

6. Ботвин Т., Пилипець О. Формування військового сленгу в сучасному воєнному дискурсі. *Мова – кордон національної безпеки* : зб. тез доп. Всеукр. наук.-практ. конф. (м. Львів, 21 лютого 2024 року). 2024. С. 6–11.

7. Волкова А. С., Сніховська І. Е., Тимчук О. Т. Мовні особливості жаргонів і підкатегорій мови в професійних спільнотах. *Вісник науки та освіти*. 2023. № 10 (16). С. 80–91.

8. Зубач О. А. Детермінація понять «військовий дискурс» та «воєнний дискурс» у мовознавчій парадигмі. *Науковий вісник Міжнародного гуманітарного університету. Серія : Філологія*. 2025. № 73. С. 66–68.
9. Іваненко І. М. Особливості використання військової лексики в сучасному українському мистецтві (на матеріалі книжки та фільму «Позивний „Бандерас“»). *Науковий вісник кафедри Юнеско КНЛУ. Серія : Філологія. Педагогіка. Психологія*. 2019. Вип. 38. С. 52–57.
10. Левченко Т. Жаргонна лексика у військовій тематиці сучасної української преси. *Науковий вісник Міжнародного гуманітарного університету. Сер.: Філологія*. 2019. № 39. Т. 3. С. 115–118.
11. Левченко Т. Концепт війна в українській мовній картині світу. *Теоретична і дидактична філологія*. 2025. Вип. 40. С. 156–172.
12. Маркевич Д. Мінісловник військового сленгу: «муха», «покемон», «улітка». *Інформаційне агентство «АрміяInform»*. 20.08.2019. Режим доступу : <https://armyinform.com.ua/2019/08/20/minislovnyk-vijskovogo-slengu-muha-pokemon-ulitka/> (date of access: 30.11.2025).
13. Мініч Л. С., Стецюк В. М. Функціонування воєнної лексики в сучасному медіадискурсі. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія»*. Серія : Філологія. 2024. Вип. 24 (92). С. 17–20.
14. Мірошник С. О. Поняття «сленг» та його сутнісні характеристики. *Закарпатські філологічні студії*. 2023. Вип. 27. Т. 3. С. 124–128.
15. Панченко Т. Розширення сфери вживання військових жаргонізмів у мові української преси. *Теоретична і дидактична філологія*. 2017. № 26. С. 119–127.
16. Польовик Д. В. Актуалізація військової лексики у мові українських мас-медіа. *Закарпатські філологічні студії*. 2023. Вип. 29. Т. 2. С. 28–33.
17. Тарасова В. Новітні тенденції функціонування військової субстандартної лексики української мови: психолінгвістичний експеримент. *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук*. 2020. Вип. 31. Т. 2. С. 257–264.
18. Чернишова Т. О. Розвиток української військової лексики в період Російсько-української війни. *Вчені записки ТНУ ім. В. І. Вернадського. Серія : Філологія. Журналістика*. 2024. № 3. Т. 35 (74). Ч. 1. С. 31–37.
19. Шум О. В. Вивчення військової термінології у контексті іншомовної підготовки. *Діалог культур у Європейському освітньому просторі* : матер. IV Міжн. конф. (м. Київ, 14 травня 2019 р.). 2019. С. 66–70.
20. Яриновська К. Т., Башманівський О. Л., Вигівський В. Л. Особливості перекладу військових жаргонізмів на позначення військової техніки та озброєння з української мови на англійську за допомогою машинного перекладу. *Вісник Житомирського державного університету імені Івана Франка. Серія : Філологічні науки*. 2023. Вип. 2 (100). С. 298–306.

References

1. Greens Dictionary of Slang. Rezhym dostupu : <https://greensdictofslang.com> (date of access: 30.11.2025).
2. Andersen I. V., Ivasyshyna T. A. Viiskova leksyka: klasyfikatsiia, prahmatyka, pereklad (na materialii ukrainskoi ta polskoi mov). *Visnyk nauky ta osvity. Seriia: Filolohiia, kultura i mystetstvo, pedahohika, istoriia ta arkeolohiia, sotsiolohiia*. 2023. № 10 (16). S. 38–46.
3. Andriianova O. Uzhyvannia viiskovoho zharhonu v movlenni kursantiv. *Humanitarna osvita v tekhnichnykh vyshchyykh navchalnykh zakladakh*. 2019. № 40. S. 5–10.
4. Balabin V. V. Suchasnyi amerykansky viiskovy slenkh yak problema perekladu : avtoref. dys. ... kand. filol. nauk: 10.02.16: Perekladoznavstvo. Kyiv, 1997. 27 s.
5. Basaraba I., Lemeshko O. Viiskovy slenkh: defynitsiia ta shliakhy utvorennia. *Aktualni pytannia humanitarnykh nauk*. 2022. Vyp. 55. T. 1. S. 137–142.
6. Botvyn T., Pylypets O. Formuvannia viiskovoho slenhu v suchasnomu voiennomu

dyskursi. *Mova – kordon natsionalnoi bezpeky* : zb. tez dop. Vseukr. nauk.-prakt. konf. (m. Lviv, 21 liutoho 2024 roku). 2024. S. 6–11.

7. Volkova A. S., Snikhovska I. E., Tymchuk O. T. Movni osoblyvosti zharhoniv i pidkatehorii movy v profesiinykh spilnotakh. *Visnyk nauky ta osvity*. 2023. № 10 (16). S. 80–91.

8. Zubach O. A. Determinatsiia poniat «viiskovyi dyskurs» ta «voiennyi dyskurs» u movoznavchii paradyhmi. *Naukovyi visnyk Mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho universytetu. Seriiia : Filolohiia*. 2025. № 73. S. 66–68.

9. Ivanenko I. M. Osoblyvosti vykorystannia viiskovoi leksyky v suchasnomu ukrainskomu mystetstvi (na materialy knyzhky ta filmu «Pozyvnyi „Banderas“»). *Naukovyi visnyk kafedry Yunesko KNLU. Seriiia : Filolohiia. Pedahohika. Psykholohiia*. 2019. Vyp. 38. S. 52–57.

10. Levchenko T. Zharhonna leksyka u viiskovii tematytsi suchasnoi ukrainskoi presy. *Naukovyi visnyk Mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho universytetu. Ser.: Filolohiia*. 2019. № 39. T. 3. S. 115–118.

11. Levchenko T. Kontsept viina v ukrainskii movnii kartyni svitu. *Teoretychna i dydaktychna filolohiia*. 2025. Vyp. 40. S. 156–172.

12. Markevych D. Minislovnyk viiskovoho slenhu: «mukha», «pokemon», «ulitka». Informatsiine ahentstvo «ArmiiaInform». 20.08.2019. Rezhym dostupu : <https://armyinform.com.ua/2019/08/20/minislovnyk-viiskovogo-slengu-muha-pokemon-ulitka/> (date of access: 30.11.2025).

13. Minich L. S., Stetsiuk V. M. Funktsionuvannia voiennoi leksyky v suchasnomu mediadyskursi. *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu «Ostrozka akademiia». Seriiia : Filolohiia*. 2024. Vyp. 24 (92). S. 17–20.

14. Mirosnyk S. O. Poniattia «slenh» ta yoho sutnisni kharakterystyky. *Zakarpatski filolohichni studii*. 2023. Vyp. 27. T. 3. S. 124–128.

15. Panchenko T. Rozshyrennia sfery vzhyvannia viiskovykh zharhonizmiv u movi ukrainskoi presy. *Teoretychna i dydaktychna filolohiia*. 2017. № 26. S. 119–127.

16. Polovyk D. V. Aktualizatsiia viiskovoi leksyky u movi ukrainskykh mas-media. *Zakarpatski filolohichni studii*. 2023. Vyp. 29. T. 2. S. 28–33.

17. Tarasova V. Novitni tendentsii funktsionuvannia viiskovoi substandartnoi leksyky ukrainskoi movy: psykholingvistychnyi eksperyment. *Aktualni pytannia humanitarnykh nauk*. 2020. Vyp. 31. T. 2. S. 257–264.

18. Chernyshova T. O. Rozvytok ukrainskoi viiskovoi leksyky v period Rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny. *Vcheni zapysky TNU im. V. I. Vernadskoho. Seriiia : Filolohiia. Zhurnalistyka*. 2024. № 3. T. 35 (74). Ch. 1. S. 31–37.

19. Shum O. V. Vyvchennia viiskovoi terminolohii u konteksti inshomovnoi pidhotovky. *Dialoh kultur u Yevropeiskomu osvithnomu prostori* : mater. IV Mizhn. konf. (m. Kyiv, 14 travnia 2019 r.). 2019. S. 66–70.

20. Iarynovska K. T., Bashmanivskiy O. L., Vyhivskiy V. L. Osoblyvosti perekladu viiskovykh zharhonizmiv na poznachennia viiskovoi tekhniky ta ozbroiennia z ukrainskoi movy na anhliisku za dopomohoiu mashynnoho perekladu. *Visnyk Zhytomyrskoho derzhavnoho universytetu imeni Ivana Franka. Seriiia : Filolohichni nauky*. 2023. Vyp. 2 (100). S. 298–306.

СУЧАСНИЙ УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ВІЙСЬКОВИЙ ЖАРГОН У СОЦІОЛІНГВІСТИЧНОМУ ТА ЛІНГВОПРАГМАТИЧНОМУ ВИМІРАХ

Ігор Возняк

Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»
кафедра прикладної лінгвістики
вул. С. Бандери, 30, кімн. 407, 79013, Львів, Україна
тел.: 032 258 27 00
e-mail: igor.z.vozniak@lpnu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3224-9121>

У статті висвітлено сучасний український військовий жаргон через призму соціолінгвістики та лінгвопрагматики. Важливість таких досліджень обґрунтовано їхньою несистематичністю та фрагментарністю в українському мовознавстві. Наголошено на тому, що військовий дискурс охоплює велику кількість лексем, до яких слід зараховувати жаргонізми та сленгізми, котрі хоча й наділені тими характеристиками, що й інші види жаргону та сленгу, проте вони мають свої особливості, зумовлені реаліями життя військовослужбовців і їхньою службовою діяльністю. Зазначено, що військовий жаргон і сленг за їхніми оцінними функціями варто поділяти на позитивно-оцінний, негативно-оцінний і нейтрально-оцінний. Визначено найпоширеніші архісеми військового жаргону.

Хоча військовий жаргон і сленг функціонує у військовому дискурсі, який поділяють на офіційний і неофіційний, він активно проникає в інші види дискурсу. Встановлено, що військовий жаргон формує біжаргонні поля, коли взаємодіє з іншими видами жаргону. Крім того, військовий жаргон виявляє багаторівневу структуру, включаючи загальновійськовий жаргон і спеціалізований жаргон.

Продемонстровано різні види словотворчих моделей, на основі яких виникають нові жаргонізми та сленгізми, а також прагматичний потенціал таких одиниць. Особливо наголошено на тих, які дозволяють проявляти сарказм, іронію, насмішку — важливі риси жаргонного соціолекту. Показано, що військовий жаргон тісно пов'язаний з реаліями життя військовослужбовців і його склад змінюється під впливом таких екстралінгвальних факторів, як війна та реформи збройних сил. Окремо продемонстровано, як військовий жаргон дозволяє протидіяти ворожому пропагандистському наративу. Усі висновки ґрунтуються на конкретних прикладах живого військового жаргону.

Зроблено висновки про соціолінгвістичні та лінгвопрагматичні характеристики військового жаргону й окреслено потенціал для подальших досліджень.

Ключові слова: військовий жаргон, військовий сленг, військовий дискурс, соціолект, жаргонний словотвір, соціолінгвістика, лінгвопрагматика.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 28.01.2026

доопрацьована 03.02.2026

прийнята до друку 06.02.2026