

## THE MANIFESTATION OF SEMANTIC AMBIVALENCE IN LITERARY TEXTS

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**Abstract:** This article highlights one of the less-studied issues in modern linguistics – the problem of semantic multidimensionality, in particular ambivalence, in literary texts. It analyzes the manifestation of the text as a holistic unit, the interrelation of its elements, and the simultaneous embodiment of two or more semantic layers. At the same time, theories of various scholars regarding ambivalence are comparatively examined, and examples are provided to demonstrate how the semantic versatility of a text is reflected through lexical means. The results of the study contribute to improving methods of semantic analysis in text linguistics and to forming a more complete understanding of the nature of polysemy in speech.

**Keywords:** text, semantic multidimensionality, ambivalence, lexical-semantic relations, literary text, dual meaning, context, paradigmatic relations, wordplay (pun).

In recent years, linguistic scholars have increasingly focused on the problem of how language units function in speech, particularly in literary and journalistic texts. However, many issues that are highly relevant for modern linguistics still remain outside the scope of researchers' attention. Solving these issues would help achieve a more accurate understanding of the systematic nature of language and its manifestation in speech. One such understudied problem is the multidimensionality of literary texts. In analyzing literary works, researchers often emphasize the impossibility of interpreting the content of a work or its parts in a single, unambiguous way. Furthermore, a text may be evaluated from different methodological perspectives, and its interpretation may depend on the viewpoint adopted.

It is evident that the linguistic aspect of literary texts arouses considerable scholarly interest. Literary texts, regardless of the reader or interpreter, can often be regarded as dual-layered. Such texts are, by their very nature, not univocal, and their comprehension depends on the recipient's cognitive and interpretive abilities.

Texts of this type have not been widely analyzed to date, and the present study is aimed at addressing this issue. Texts that are not semantically univocal serve as an important source for the following lines of research:

1. identifying types of contexts and demonstrating their lack of semantic uniformity;
2. revealing various syntagmatic relations within contexts that are not semantically uniform;
3. showing the role of derivational relations in the emergence of semantic duality in texts based on identical or semantically similar words.

In this dissertation, texts of a specific type serve as the object of analysis. Therefore, it is first necessary to define the concept of "text" and then restrict the material to the type of texts under consideration.

In modern linguistics, a "text" is not understood as a mere sum of elements but rather as an integral whole [1;45]. Each element of the text is interconnected with other elements and functions only as a part of the whole. The semantic relations the text are not limited to a sentence, a remark, or a character's monologue but permeate the entire structure [2;159–160].

Thus, a text is any sequence of words constructed according to the rules of language and conveying a certain type of information. In this sense, any literary work, its fragment, or any passage of speech may be regarded as a text, provided that such a sequence of words satisfies the requirements of the given type of information.

Within the scope of this study, only texts that contain at least two semantic layers are analyzed, and they are formed through lexical means. Not only words but also word combinations, sentences, and larger textual units can be multidimensional. In our research, however, the primary focus is on texts where a word or word combination is understood as dual-layered.

In this dissertation, semantic duality is referred to as *ambivalence*. It should be noted that a text may contain more than two semantic layers. However, since most texts are dual-layered, we consider the term *ambivalence* to accurately convey the essence of this concept.

The term “*ambivalence*” is widely used in both linguistics and literary studies. A logical-philosophical interpretation of ambivalence can be found in the works of Y. M. Lotman: “*Ambivalence is the abolition of difference (opposition). An ambivalent judgment becomes most evident when the main thesis is replaced with its opposite (contradictory or alternative) thesis*” [3;159–160]. Such an interpretation of ambivalence is considered traditional in literary studies and psychology [4;15].

From a linguistic perspective, ambivalence was defined by O. S. Akhmanova as “*a property of embodying opposing meanings within itself*” [5;42]. Moreover, in terms of its interpretation, ambivalence corresponds to *enantosemy*: both terms refer to the merging of opposite or antonymic meanings of a word [5;526].

According to V. D. Devkin, in colloquial speech, many words are characterized by ambivalence/duality or opposition [6;240]. This phenomenon can be observed when words are used ironically in discourse or when meanings become polarized in language [6;241].

S. N. Sirovatkin examined ambivalence within the framework of what he calls “*parasyntagmatic relations*.” In his view, such relations are described as a set of “*semantic differential features*” that characterize ambivalent texts as judgments. In contrast, our study limits itself to describing the emergence of ambivalence as a process.

Unlike the perspectives mentioned above, we define ambivalence as a paradigmatic aggregation of two or more semantically opposing elements within the content plane, which may consist either of the individual meanings of words or of semes.

It should also be noted that the secondary plane may be not only semantic in nature but specifically lexical-semantic. The secondary lexical-semantic variant may not always be realized; instead, it may be actualized through a “*semantic theme*,” which characterizes the words of a semantic paradigm.

To illustrate the points made above, we shall present two examples, one of which is a pun (wordplay, *tajnis*), while the other is not:

1. Reason and Justice grip the remotest and the loneliest star. Look at those stars. Don't they look as if they were single diamonds and sapphires? Well, you can imagine any mad botany or geology you please. Think of forests of adamant with leaves of brilliants. Think the moon is a

blue moon, a single elephantine sapphire. But don't fancy that all that frantic astronomy would make the smallest difference to the reason and justice of conduct. On plains of opal, you would still find a notice-board, "Thou shalt not steal... Just hand over that sapphire cross of yours, will you? We're all alone here, and I could pull you to pieces like a straw doll."

Chesterton, Stories, 48.

2. Investigators of psychic phenomena In America claim that a certain railway train is haunted. One passenger reported that he was awakened from a dose by a bony tap on the shoulder and looked up to see the grisly face of a ticket-inspectre. - 28, 201, 501.

To fully and accurately understand the first text, one would need a much broader context than what is presented in this excerpt. Nevertheless, the passage in its given scope is sufficient to reveal certain semantic structures. A closer look at the text shows that it contains several semantic layers, each expressed through particular lexical choices. At least three themes can be identified here:

1. the theme of truth (justice, fairness, righteousness) and reason (intellect, perception, mind);
2. the sapphire cross (idol) and, presumably, the intent to steal it;
3. based on two additional clues, a third theme emerges—doubt about the success of the theft undertaken by the thief.

These three themes are represented in the text by distinct sets of words.

The passage presents a conversation between a priest and himself, the famous detective Father Brown, and a thief disguised in a clerical robe – Flambeau – who is thinking about the sapphire cross (idol) he has always intended to steal. In his monologue, Father Brown warns Flambeau that stealing the sapphire cross (idol) would be as difficult as taking the moon, which is as enormous as the jewel itself.

In Father Brown's monologue, words belonging to three semantic groups appear, while the word *sapphire* used by Flambeau adds yet another group. Thus, the passage contains four semantic planes, each realized through the shared meaning of what is termed a "*semantic theme*" [7;107]:

1. the semantic theme of "*precious stones*" expressed through the words *diamond, adamant, sapphire, brilliant*;
2. the theme of "*reason*" conveyed by the words *reason, justice, conduct*, as well as the phrase "*Thou shalt not steal*";
3. the theme of "*celestial bodies*" as symbols of distant, unattainable objects, expressed through the words *star* and *moon*.

These three themes create independent semantic planes within the text. Each semantic plane carries a specific function or task within the narrative. The first part of the text contains an extended metaphor formed by the words of one thematic group. The communicative value of this metaphor lies in its implication that the task undertaken by Flambeau – the theft – is impossible to accomplish.

In the second text, at the level of the graphic expression of the word, the content is materially distorted: instead of the component *spector* in the compound *inspector* ("inspector, auditor"), the word *spectre* ("phantom, shadow") is used. This text is designed not for the listener but specifically for the reader, as the approximate graphic similarity of the word is preserved. The disruption of absolute graphic similarity results in an occasional derivative word [8;82], the semantics of which are dual-layered.

The original meaning of *inspector* is fully retained in the acoustic image and in its collocation with the word *ticket*. Meanwhile, *spectre*, as part of the fused form *inspectre*, acquires contextual connections with the words *grisly* and *haunt*. Thus, the material distortion of the word's form is justified through its context.

In speech, only relative similarity of the word is preserved. In ambivalent texts, such similarity manifests as a relation between the speech unit and its systemic standard (the correlate of the invariant). Therefore, it is appropriate to address the problem of word similarity both in material and semantic planes.

The word differs from other linguistic units primarily in two parameters: (1) selectability and (2) integrity, i.e., psycholinguistic relevance (words are perceived by speakers as the primary elements of language). These two properties constitute the main factors that underlie the notion of word similarity in both content and expression planes.

These two parameters were highlighted separately by A. I. Smirnitsky. According to him, the identity of a word is ensured by "treating the word as identical across different instances of use." The distinctiveness of a word is based on its repetition in speech. The recurrence and repetition of a word constitute a self-evident fact, serving as the necessary prerequisite for the object expressed by the basic communicative unit.

When determining word similarity, one must approach it from the perspective of the material representation of the text in terms of sound and graphics. The facts under analysis are expressed at different levels – phoneme, grapheme, morpheme, or word – each level representing an unlimited series of stages. These stages embody an abstract object, namely the *acoustic image* in F. de Saussure's theory. Materially, words are embodied in written texts through the sequence of sounds or the configuration of graphemes. At the stage of generalization, deviations from the ideal material or semantic form may be disregarded by the speaker/listener, since such deviations fall within the scope of conventional variation. Thus, for the listener, it is immaterial whether the speaker is speaking in real time or whether the speech is recorded (unless paralinguistic factors are taken into account).

*"The distinctive feature of discrete units is that they remain independent of changes in context or other situational details; these units constitute the primary and necessary condition of any language system"* [9;418].

The analysis of ambivalent texts allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of "emergence" – that is, the realization of a unit without altering its form, while retaining the sound or visual representation of the word. The human capacity for generalization makes it possible to unify different situations under a single abstract unit – whether this unit is the graphic form, sound form, or meaning of a word. Such "deviation" frequently occurs in ambivalent texts based on homonymous or phonetically similar words.

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