



## CORPUS-BASED MODELING OF THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF JOY IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

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The article proposes a practice-oriented corpus-based model for describing the semantic field of joy in contemporary English. The relevance of the study stems from the fact that positive emotions constitute one of the most frequent yet semantically dynamic segments of the English linguistic worldview: they are verbalized not only through direct nominations such as joy, happiness, delight, and pleasure, but also through numerous context-dependent units whose meanings vary in intensity, duration, evaluative charge, and causation. The aim of the article is to reconstruct the structure of the semantic field of joy on the basis of corpus data, to distinguish its core, near-core, and peripheral zones, to describe the typical patterns of collocability of the relevant units, and to clarify the discourse conditions of their functioning. The empirical base includes data from contemporary English corpora, dictionary definitions, and contexts drawn from different discourse types. The study combines continuous sampling, lexical-semantic modeling, contextual interpretation, selected elements of cognitive-metaphorical analysis, and corpus verification. The findings show that the semantic field of joy is hierarchically organized: its core consists of units with the most general meaning of positive emotional experience, whereas the near-core and peripheral zones represent nuances of intense delight, inner satisfaction, relief, gratitude, pride, and emotional uplift. Corpus evidence demonstrates that the boundaries between these zones are determined not abstractly but through actual collocability, recurrent syntactic patterns, repeated contexts, and discourse-specific uses. Joy in contemporary English is objectified as an inner state, an external manifestation, a positive evaluation of an event, and a resource for interpersonal interaction. The practical value of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results to corpus semantics, emotion studies, lexicography, discourse analysis, English language teaching, and the development of automated systems for recognizing emotionally marked speech.

## КОРПУСНЕ МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ СЕМАНТИЧНОГО ПОЛЯ ЕМОЦІЇ РАДОСТІ В СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

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**Ключові слова:** *семантичне поле, емоція радості, корпусне моделювання, емотивна лексика, ядро і периферія, концептуальна метафора, дискурсивні функції.*

У статті запропоновано практично зорієнтовану модель корпусного опису семантичного поля емоції радості в сучасній англійській мові. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена тим, що позитивні емоції належать до найчастотніших і водночас найсемантично рухливіших фрагментів англійської картини світу: вони вербалізуються не лише прямими номінаціями joy, happiness, delight, pleasure, а й численними контекстуально зумовленими репрезентантами, які в реальному мовленні виявляють різний ступінь інтенсивності, тривалості, оцінності та каузативності. Метою статті є реконструювати структуру семантичного поля радості на основі корпусних даних, визначити його ядро, приадресну зону й периферію, описати типові моделі сполучуваності та з'ясувати дискурсивні умови функціонування відповідних одиниць. Матеріалом слугували дані сучасних англійських корпусів, словникові дефініції та контексти різних типів дискурсу. У роботі поєднано методи суцільної вибірки, лексико-семантичного моделювання, контекстуально-інтерпретаційного аналізу, елементів когнітивно-метафоричного опису та корпусної верифікації. Доведено, що семантичне поле радості має ієрархічну організацію: його ядро утворюють одиниці з найзагальнішим значенням позитивного емоційного переживання, тоді як приадресна зона і периферія репрезентують відтінки інтенсивної втіхи, внутрішнього задоволення, полегшення, вдячності, гордості та емоційного піднесення. Корпусний аналіз засвідчує, що межі між цими зонами визначаються не абстрактно, а через реальну сполучуваність, типові синтаксичні моделі, повторювані контексти та функціонування в різних дискурсивних практиках. Показано, що радість у сучасній англійській мові об'єктивується як внутрішній стан, зовнішній прояв, позитивна оцінка події та інструмент міжособистісної взаємодії. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в можливості використання одержаних результатів у корпусній семантиці, емотіології, лексикографії, дискурс-аналізі, методиці викладання англійської мови та в побудові систем автоматичного розпізнавання емоційно маркованого мовлення.

**Problem Statement.** Emotional semantics belongs to those areas of contemporary linguistics in which lexicology, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and corpus methods intersect with particular clarity. In the case of English, this issue is especially significant, since emotional meanings are realized not only through a limited set of direct nominations, but also through a broad system of context-sensitive units capable of modifying their intensity-related, evaluative, and functional profile across different discourse types. For this reason, the semantic field of joy cannot be reduced either to a simple

synonymic series or to a dictionary list of semantically adjacent words. Rather, it emerges as a complex, hierarchically organized, and dynamic system within which the linguistic representation of positive emotional experience correlates with the cognitive categorization of experience, the communicative situation, and recurrent patterns of usage.

The practical relevance of such a study is determined by the fact that it is precisely the corpus-based approach that makes it possible to move from intuitive generalizations to a verified description. Dictionaries record meanings, but they do not always show

the combinations, syntactic patterns, and discursive roles in which a given unit actually functions. Corpus data, by contrast, make it possible to identify which lexical items constitute the core of the field, which gravitate toward the near-core zone, which contexts stabilize their semantics, and which, on the contrary, blur the boundaries between adjacent positive states. In this sense, corpus-based modeling of the semantic field of joy is important not only for the theory of emotional lexis, but also for lexicography, translation studies, discourse analysis, and natural language processing.

The problem also lies in the fact that, within the scholarly tradition, joy is often given an overly generalized interpretation: joy, happiness, delight, pleasure, gladness, bliss, and contentment are frequently treated as almost interchangeable designations of a positive state. Actual language use, however, reveals a different picture: some of these units denote a deep and intense emotional experience, others convey calm inner satisfaction, still others express a short-lived reaction to an event, while a number of words actualize positive evaluation more indirectly through causative, expressive, or ritual-communicative patterns. This calls for a description that combines semantic differentiation, cognitive explanation, and corpus-based verification.

#### **Analysis of Recent Research and Publications.**

In Anna Wierzbicka's work, emotional lexis is understood as a culturally and conceptually motivated system rather than as a mechanical set of names for inner states. The scholar convincingly demonstrated that words denoting emotions reflect the specificity of the linguistic categorization of experience, and that their meaning is not exhausted by dictionary definition, since it is linked to naïve scenarios of experiencing, evaluating, and reacting [Wierzbicka, 1999]. For the present article, this conclusion is of fundamental importance: the semantic field of joy is treated not as a formal list of correlates of joy, but as a mental-linguistic structure reflecting the way positive emotional experience is conceptualized in contemporary English.

Zoltan Kövecses, in his analysis of the conceptual metaphors of emotion, showed that happiness and joy are systematically construed through spatial, bodily, and energetic models such as HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, and HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER [Kövecses, 2000]. The value of these observations lies in the fact that they make it possible to explain not only figurative uses, but also stable imaginative patterns that organize the emotive vocabulary of English. This is important for the proposed study because corpus-based modeling of joy must take into account not only direct nominations, but also metaphorically motivated means through which positive experience acquires discursive expressiveness.

Within cognitive semantics, Dirk Geeraerts substantiated the prototypical and gradual nature of lexical categories, showing that the boundaries between semantically adjacent units are fluid and depend on profiling, context, and frequency [Geeraerts, 2010]. A similar conclusion was reached by Ulrike Oster, who, on the basis of English and Spanish data, demonstrated that the vocabulary of happiness does not constitute a rigidly closed set, but is organized as a multicomponent network with shifting centrality of individual units [Oster, 2010]. These approaches provide the theoretical foundation for distinguishing the core, the near-core zone, and the periphery of the semantic field of joy.

At the present stage of semantic research, the works of Tony McEnery, Andrew Hardie, and Stefan Th. Gries, Mark Davies, and Adam Kilgarriff are of particular importance, since they treat the corpus not as an instrument of illustration but as a means of testing semantic hypotheses [McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Gries, 2009; Davies, 2010; Kilgarriff et al., 2014]. McEnery and Hardie argue that meaning cannot be described outside typical contexts of use; Gries demonstrates the analytical value of statistically relevant patterns of collocability; Davies substantiates the research potential of large electronic corpora of contemporary English; and Kilgarriff and his co-authors show how corpus managers such as Sketch Engine make it possible to model the lexical behavior of a word through frequency, collocations, and word sketches. For the purposes of this article, these studies are valuable because they provide the methodological foundation for a corpus-based description of the field of joy on verified empirical material.

In her monograph on emotional communication across different corpora, Monika Bednarek shows that emotion in language functions not only as an object of description but also as a means of evaluation, positioning, and interpersonal alignment [Bednarek, 2008]. She demonstrates that even words with closely related emotional semantics are distributed differently across genres, discourse types, and communicative purposes. This conclusion is directly relevant to the present study, since joy in contemporary English cannot be assigned one fixed set of functions: in news, literary, conversational, and digital discourse alike, it is actualized in different ways.

In Ukrainian linguistics, corpus methodology has been systematically conceptualized in the works of S. Holoshchuk, who outlines the current state of corpus linguistics, its tools, analytical possibilities, and prospects for semantic studies [Holoshchuk, 2021]. M. Bihdai, analyzing the potential of the Corpus of Contemporary American English, convincingly shows that corpus resources constitute an effective means of investigating word usage, semantic distribution, and the contextual behavior of linguistic

units [Bihdai, 2022]. H. Kryvenko emphasizes the importance of corpus procedures for discourse studies, while A. Kyrysiuk offers a detailed characterization of corpus tools relevant to different types of linguistic analysis [Kryvenko, 2017; Kyrysiuk, 2023]. The value of these works for the present article lies in the fact that they adapt corpus methodology to the Ukrainian scholarly context and confirm the appropriateness of its use specifically for lexical-semantic modeling.

Conclusions of fundamental importance for Ukrainian linguo-emotiology are contained in the works of Ya. Hnezdilova, T. Krysanova, O. Malynenko, and I. Lelet. Ya. Hnezdilova defines emotionality and emotivity as independent, though interrelated, parameters of linguistic organization; T. Krysanova generalizes the current state of the linguistics of emotion and demonstrates its interdisciplinary nature; O. Malynenko focuses on the problem of the linguistic categorization of emotions; and I. Lelet provides a reasoned distinction between emotionality and emotivity as two different research perspectives [Hnezdilova, 2007; Krysanova, 2014; Malynenko, 2014; Lelet, 2021]. For the purposes of this article, these studies are conceptually significant because they make it possible to describe joy not only as a psychological state, but also as a linguistically organized system of signs, meanings, and communicative effects.

The works of O. Zaluzhna and her co-authors, as well as the studies of M. Olkhovych-Novosadiuk and O. Nikolenko, bring us directly to the problem of the verbalization of positive emotions. In their article on the verbalization of emotional states, O. Zaluzhna and V. Mahlona analyze linguistic means of representing emotions and conclude that their semantics is formed at the intersection of lexical meaning, communicative intention, and context [Zaluzhna & Mahlona, 2023]. In their study of the structural and semantic features of linguistic representations of emotion, O. Zaluzhna and V. Sokolova show that the internal organization of emotional vocabulary can be systematized through the core-periphery model [Zaluzhna & Sokolova, 2021]. In their work on linguo-emotiology as an interdisciplinary field, O. Zaluzhna and D. Kolisnyk emphasize the necessity of combining semantic, cognitive, and discursive approaches [Zaluzhna & Kolisnyk, 2024]. In her studies of the JOY conceptual sphere, M. Olkhovych-Novosadiuk demonstrates that the verbalization of this concept has an extensive figurative and associative structure, while O. Nikolenko shows that the concept HAPPINESS in the English-language worldview is realized not only through direct lexical items, but also through culturally established scenarios of positive emotional experience [Olkhovych-Novosadiuk, 2020; Nikolenko, 2020]. These conclusions most directly lead

toward a corpus-based description of the field of joy in contemporary English.

Also important are the works of F. Batsevych and O. Selivanova, in which linguistic meaning is considered in an inseparable connection with communicative situation, cognitive modeling, and functional dynamics [Batsevych, 2004; Selivanova, 2008]. These studies provide the broader methodological horizon required for interpreting corpus findings: they remind us that no frequency-based or distributional regularity has explanatory force in itself unless it is related to the communicative function and semantic organization of the utterance. Particularly indicative in this respect is the more recent study by L. Soloviova and I. Snikhovska, in which the emotive component of a word is described as a carrier of evaluative and pragmatic information rather than merely as a fragment of its denotative content [Soloviova & Snikhovska, 2025].

Despite the considerable theoretical and methodological achievements in this field, the scholarly literature still lacks a comprehensive practical description of the semantic field of joy based specifically on contemporary English-language corpora. Some studies focus on the concept of joy, others on metaphors of happiness, and still others on general problems of the linguistics of emotion or corpus methodology; however, insufficiently developed remains a model that would combine the identification of the core and periphery, the analysis of typical patterns of collocability, the description of lexical-semantic subfields, and the discursive-pragmatic interpretation of corpus data. It is precisely this gap that the present article seeks to address.

**Aim and Objectives of the Article.** The aim of the article is to carry out corpus-based modeling of the semantic field of the emotion of joy in contemporary English and, on this basis, to reconstruct its internal organization as a hierarchical system of interrelated lexical, phraseological, and discursive units.

Achieving this aim involves addressing the following objectives: 1) to refine the principles for identifying the semantic field of joy in contemporary English; 2) to determine its core, near-core zone, and periphery; 3) to describe its principal lexical-semantic subfields; 4) to identify typical patterns of collocability and the syntactic realizations of the units constituting the field; 5) to establish the conceptual-metaphorical and discursive-pragmatic parameters of the verbalization of joy; 6) to outline the practical prospects for applying the results obtained.

**Object, Subject, Material, and Methodology of the Study.** The object of the study is the linguistic means of verbalizing the emotion of joy in contemporary English.

The subject of the study comprises the lexical-semantic organization, collocability, discursive

realizations, and corpus-verified patterns of functioning of the units that constitute the semantic field of joy.

The research material consists of contemporary English contexts selected from the electronic corpora COCA, iWeb, and BNC, as well as dictionary definitions and thesaurus sets used to initially identify the range of field representatives. At the stage of sample formation, the nuclear lexemes *joy*, *happiness*, *happy*, and *joyful* were taken as the point of departure; subsequently, the analysis incorporated units that systematically displayed semantic, derivational, or contextual proximity to the center of the field.

The research methodology combines the descriptive method, the method of continuous sampling, elements of componential analysis, lexical-semantic modeling, contextual-interpretive analysis, and corpus-based verification of typical patterns of collocability and functioning. Such an integrated set of methods enables combining semantic precision with empirical verification.

**Presentation of the Main Research Material.** In the present study, the semantic field of the emotion of joy is interpreted as a hierarchically organized, open, and dynamic system of units united by the invariant sense of positive emotional experience. Such an understanding makes it possible to take into account both direct nominations and context-dependent representatives which, in actual language use, may acquire different degrees of emotional saturation, evaluative force, and communicative weight. The field of joy requires corpus-based modeling precisely because its structure is revealed not only through dictionary definitions, but above all through recurrent linguistic practices.

Corpus material shows that the core of the field is primarily composed of *joy*, *happiness*, *happy*, and *joyful*. These units have the most general meaning of a positive emotional state, the broadest distribution, and a high capacity to enter a wide range of syntactic

patterns. They are used both to denote inner experience and to evaluate an event, as well as to characterize a person, that person's behavior, or a life situation. The core status of these words is determined not abstractly, but by the fact that they regularly function in contexts of different genres without significant stylistic restrictions and serve as the point of departure for broader series of positive emotional semantics.

The near-core zone includes *delight*, *pleasure*, *gladness*, *enjoyment*, as well as the verbal representatives *rejoice*, *delight*, and *gladden*. Unlike the core units, they represent not a generic positive experience, but its more profiled varieties: *intense delight*, *inner satisfaction*, an emotional response to a desired result, a situation of willing acceptance, or a pleasant experience. They are somewhat more sensitive to context type and more often actualize not simply a state, but its cause, duration, or evaluative mode. It is precisely for this reason that the near-core zone is crucial for understanding the gradability of joy as an emotional experience.

The periphery of the field is formed by *bliss*, *ecstasy*, *elation*, *exhilaration*, *contentment*, *relief*, *gratitude*, *pride*, and other units that only partially intersect with the center of joy. Some of them convey the extreme intensity of positive experience, others denote a calmer, background, or more durable state, while still others enter the field of joy only in certain contexts, when a positive emotion arises as a result of overcoming difficulty, receiving recognition, achieving success, or moral evaluation. The periphery most clearly demonstrates that the semantic field of joy is not closed: it extends into adjacent zones of satisfaction, relief, pride, gratitude, and emotional uplift.

A generalized model of the zonal organization of the semantic field of joy is presented in Table 1.

The lexical-semantic structure of the field of joy reveals several interrelated subfields. The first comprises affective states proper: *feel joy*, *feel happy*, *experience delight*, *be full of happiness*. The second

Table 1

### Zonal Organization of the Semantic Field of the Emotion of Joy in Contemporary English

Field Zone	Main Representatives	Semantic Profile	Typical Realizations
Core	<i>joy</i> , <i>happiness</i> , <i>happy</i> , <i>joyful</i>	Direct generalized designation of positive experience	burst of joy; tears of joy; feel happy; a happy life; joyful occasion
Near-core zone	<i>delight</i> , <i>pleasure</i> , <i>gladness</i> , <i>enjoyment</i> ; <i>rejoice</i> , <i>delight</i> , <i>gladden</i>	Differentiated varieties of joy: <i>delight</i> , <i>satisfaction</i> , <i>pleasant experience</i> , <i>emotional response</i>	much to one's delight; with pleasure; take pleasure in; rejoice at; bring delight
Periphery	<i>bliss</i> , <i>ecstasy</i> , <i>elation</i> , <i>exhilaration</i> , <i>contentment</i> , <i>relief</i> , <i>gratitude</i> , <i>pride</i>	Intense, background, or context-dependent positive states adjacent to the field of joy	sheer bliss; ecstatic joy; deep relief; quiet contentment; pride and joy
Discursive satellites	<i>smile</i> , <i>laughter</i> , <i>celebration</i> , <i>triumph</i> ; <i>wonderful</i> , <i>lovely</i> , <i>great</i>	Units that do not name joy directly but signal its manifestation or evaluation	beam with joy; laugh with delight; what wonderful news; a joy to watch

is formed by the external manifestations of joy: *smile with joy, laugh with delight, beam with happiness*. The third is connected with the evaluative interpretation of a positive event: *wonderful news, a delightful evening, a pleasant surprise, pure joy*. The fourth consists of causative structures in which joy is treated as the result of a certain influence or event: *bring joy, give pleasure, fill somebody with happiness, gladden the heart*. The interaction of these subfields shows that joy in contemporary English is verbalized as a state, as a reaction, as an evaluation, and as the result of an action.

A practically important result of the corpus analysis is the description of typical patterns of collocability. For core units, characteristic patterns include attributive combinations such as *great joy, pure joy, sheer happiness, deep happiness, quiet joy*; predicative models such as *feel happy, be joyful, be delighted*; causative constructions such as *bring joy, give pleasure, fill somebody with joy*; and genitive and prepositional structures such as *tears of joy, cries of delight, with pleasure, for joy*. These patterns make it possible to argue that the semantic status of a unit within the field is determined not only by its dictionary meaning, but also by stable directions of contextual unfolding.

Equally revealing are the syntactic patterns in which representatives of joy acquire different functional loads. The stative model reproduces the very fact of emotional experience: *She was happy; He felt joy*. The causative model actualizes the source of positive emotion: *The news brought joy; The reunion filled them with happiness*. The expressive model brings to the surface an external behavioral reaction: *She smiled with delight; He almost cried for joy*. The evaluative model makes it possible to turn joy into an instrument for interpreting an event or object: *It was a joy to watch; What delightful news*. The totality of these patterns confirms that the field of joy has not only a nominative, but also an extended syntactic-discursive organization.

Corpus material also reveals stable conceptual and figurative patterns through which joy is represented in contemporary English. These include, first of all, metaphors of light, upward movement, fullness, and vital energy: *glow with joy, light up with happiness, uplifted spirit, filled with delight, overflowing with joy*. In these models, positive experience is conceptualized as something that lifts a person up, illuminates the inner world, fills it, or pours outward. For corpus-based modeling, this is essential, because metaphorical patterns are not a peripheral ornament of speech, but a regular mechanism for structuring emotional meaning.

The discursive dimension of the field of joy is no less important than the lexical-semantic one. In conversational and digital discourse, joy often serves as a means of emotional rapprochement, approval, sup-

port, or ritual solidarity. In literary discourse, it serves as a means of psychological profiling of a character and of compositional contrast between states. In media and public discourse, joy often acquires an axiological character, marking socially significant events such as victories, achievements, meetings, and liberation from danger. Thus, the semantic field of joy functions not in isolation, but as part of broader practices of evaluation, self-presentation, and social interaction.

The study's results clarify the relationship between core and peripheral units. The core sets the most generalized meaning of positive experience, the near-core zone specifies the ways in which it unfolds emotionally, and the periphery reflects transitions to adjacent psycho-emotional states. This model is important because it makes possible not a static description, but a reconstruction of the field's internal dynamics: the same unit, depending on context, may either move closer to the center or shift toward the periphery. Context, rather than dictionary definition alone, is therefore the principal factor actualizing its place in the field.

The study's practical orientation manifests itself at several levels. For lexicography, the proposed model makes it possible to differentiate more precisely between closely related positively charged lexemes according to the type of experience, intensity, duration, and discursive behavior. For English language teaching, it allows instructors to demonstrate not isolated translation equivalents, but living patterns of word usage. For computational linguistics and the automatic analysis of emotionally marked speech, such a reconstruction of the field is important as a basis for corpus annotation, thesaurus building, and more accurate recognition of positive states in text. Corpus-based modeling of joy thus has not only descriptive, but also clear applied value.

**Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research.** The semantic field of the emotion of joy in contemporary English appears as a hierarchically organized, open, and dynamic system in which direct nominations of positive experience are combined with context-sensitive units, phraseological models, and discursive realizations. Its structure cannot be reduced to a mere set of synonyms, but is revealed through the interaction of the core, the near-core zone, and the periphery.

Corpus-based modeling has shown that the status of a unit within the field is determined in a complex way: by dictionary meaning, frequency, typical patterns of collocability, syntactic behavior, and discursive function. The core representatives joy, happiness, happy, and joyful form the most generalized center of positive experience, whereas delight, pleasure, enjoyment, bliss, relief, gratitude, pride, and other units specify particular ways of experiencing, evaluating, and verbalizing it.

An important result of the study is the establishment that joy in contemporary English is objectified in at least four principal dimensions: as an inner affective state, as an external expressive manifestation, as an evaluative characteristic of an event or object, and as the result of a causative influence. It is precisely this multidimensionality that ensures the field's functional mobility and explains its broad representation across different discourse types.

Further research prospects include a comparative analysis of the field of joy across different national varieties of English, the study of its genre-specific features in digital communication, and the creation of a corpus-verified thesaurus of positive emotions for lexicography, translation studies, and computational text processing.

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