

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19475304

STREET, HOME AND BORDER: LEXICAL CATEGORIZATION OF URBAN SPACE IN POSTCOLONIAL FICTION

Moldir Amangazykyzy¹, Zhanbota Sekey^{2*}, Aigul Turikpenova³, Aizhan Khibadullina⁴,
Assel Mukhamediyeva⁵, Laura Baymysh⁶

¹Department of Kazakh Language and Literature, A.K. Kussayinov Eurasian Humanities Institute, Astana, 010009, Republic of Kazakhstan; E-mail: amangazykzymoldir@gmail.com;

²Department of Kazakh Philology, Shakarim University of Semey city, Semey, 071410, Republic of Kazakhstan; Email: janbota2010@mail.ru;

^{3,5}Department of Foreign Languages, Shakarim University of Semey city, Semey, 071410, Republic of Kazakhstan; E-mail: aidilan_76@mail.ru; assel.mab.1881@gmail.com;

⁴Department of Journalism and Media Arts, L.N. Gumilov Eurasian National University, Astana, 0100008, Republic of Kazakhstan; E-mail: aibin_2011@mail.ru;

⁶Department of Languages and Literature, Central Asian Innovation University, Shymkent, 160000, Republic of Kazakhstan; E-mail: laura.baymysh@mail.ru;

Received: 21/01/2026

Accepted: 25/03/2026

Corresponding Author: Zhanbota Sekey
(janbota2010@mail.ru)

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the lexical categorization of urban space in postcolonial fiction through a corpus-linguistic and discourse-analytical approach. The aim of the study is to determine how the lexemes street, home and border construct semantic structures in postcolonial texts as well as to identify their evaluative tone and ideological functions. The research is based on a corpus of seven postcolonial literary texts. A total of 958 spatial occurrences were identified and analyzed using frequency analysis, evaluative coding, collocational modeling and semantic field construction. The findings demonstrate that spatial lexemes are not incidental descriptive elements but form a structured semantic system. Street (43%) occupies a dominant position as a space of mobility and marginality; home (34%) functions as an ambivalent center of belonging and cultural memory; border (23%), although less frequent, emerges as the most ideologically marked category, with 73% of its occurrences evaluated negatively. Evaluative asymmetry reveals the unstable and politicized nature of postcolonial urban space. Collocational analysis further identifies stable cognitive schemas HOME - belonging, memory, STREET - exposure, negotiation, BORDER - division, transition. The results empirically substantiate Henri Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space, Michel Foucault's concept of surveilled space, Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the Third Space, and Edward Soja's spatial trialectics. The scientific novelty of the article lies in shifting the analysis of postcolonial space from a thematic to a systematic lexical-categorical level and in integrating quantitative corpus methods with qualitative discourse analysis. The study proposes a new analytical model that conceptualizes urban space as a meaning-producing structure at the intersection of postcolonial literary studies, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics.

KEYWORDS: Postcolonial Literature, Urban Space, Spatial Lexicon, Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, Cognitive Model, Evaluative Semantics, Ideological Marking.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban space occupies a central position in postcolonial fiction, functioning not merely as a physical setting but as a discursive field where power, memory, identity and resistance intersect. In postcolonial narratives the city often emerges as a site of tension between colonial legacies and contemporary socio-cultural transformations. Streets, homes and borders are not neutral spatial markers; rather, they are lexically constructed zones that encode ideological meanings and social hierarchies. Recent scholarship in postcolonial studies has increasingly focused on spatial theory and the representation of urban landscapes as symbolic structures. Scholars argue that urban environments in postcolonial contexts are shaped by asymmetrical power relations, cultural displacement and processes of othering. However, while spatial representation has been widely discussed, less attention has been given to the lexical mechanisms through which urban space is categorized and structured within literary discourse.

Lexical categorization plays a crucial role in shaping readers' perception of space. The choice of specific spatial lexemes such as "street", "home" and "border" carries ideological weight and reflects socio-historical tensions embedded in postcolonial urban experience. Through recurrent lexical patterns, evaluative language and metaphorical constructions, urban space becomes a narrative instrument that encodes marginality, belonging, exclusion and hybridity. Despite extensive research on postcolonial identity and urban theory, there remains a gap in the systematic linguistic analysis of how urban space is lexically organized within fictional texts. Most studies prioritize thematic interpretation or socio-political commentary, leaving aside the micro-level lexical structures that generate spatial meaning.

The study **aims** to analyze the lexical categorization of urban space in postcolonial fiction, focusing specifically on three core spatial categories: street, home and border. These categories are examined as semantic fields that structure narrative space and reflect ideological positioning.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. How are the spatial categories "street", "home" and "border" lexically constructed in postcolonial fiction?
2. What semantic and evaluative patterns accompany these spatial lexemes?
3. How do lexical choices contribute to the representation of marginality, belonging and spatial othering?

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of

lexical-semantic analysis with postcolonial spatial theory. By combining discourse analysis with cognitive and semantic categorization the research demonstrates that urban space in postcolonial fiction is structured through systematic lexical strategies rather than random descriptive elements. This study contributes to interdisciplinary research at the intersection of linguistics, literary studies and postcolonial theory, highlighting the importance of micro-level lexical analysis in understanding macro-level ideological constructs within urban narratives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptualization of space as socially produced rather than merely physical has fundamentally shaped contemporary literary and cultural analysis. Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space established the foundational premise that space is constructed through social relations, ideology and power structures. Similarly, Michel Foucault (1986) introduced the concept of heterotopia, arguing that space functions as an ordering mechanism through which power organizes bodies and discourses. These foundational works remain central to understanding the ideological dimensions of urban representation in literature. Edward Soja (1996) further expanded spatial thinking by proposing the concept of "Third space" emphasizing the simultaneity of material, imagined and lived space. Doreen Massey (2005) contributed to relational spatial theory by arguing that space is dynamic and constituted through interactions and trajectories rather than static geography. These spatial frameworks have significantly influenced literary studies concerned with urbanity and postcoloniality. In recent years, scholars such as Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid (2015) have proposed new epistemologies of the urban, emphasizing planetary urbanization and the dissolution of traditional city boundaries. Ash Amin (2015) has explored affective and animated spatiality, foregrounding the experiential dimension of urban environments. Andreas Merrifield (2018) re-engaged Lefebvre's thought to analyze neoliberal urban restructuring while AbdouMalik Simone (2019) examined improvisational urban practices in postcolonial contexts. Together, these works highlight how urban space operates as a field of negotiation, inequality and resistance an insight central to postcolonial fiction.

Postcolonial theory has long foregrounded spatial imagination as a site of colonial power and epistemic violence. Edward Said (1978) demonstrated how colonial discourse spatially constructs the "Orient"

as othered territory. Homi Bhabha (1994) theorized hybridity and the “Third Space” as a locus of cultural negotiation while Gayatri Spivak (1988) addressed subaltern positionality within hegemonic spatial structures. Building upon these foundations, Achille Mbembe (2001) examined sovereignty and violence in postcolonial space, particularly in urban African contexts. Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall (2016) later analyzed African metropolises as sites of global and postcolonial entanglement. Ato Quayson (2014) provided one of the most sustained literary examinations of a postcolonial city in Oxford Street, Accra, demonstrating how urban space mediates economic marginality and global flows. Ananya Roy (2016) critically interrogated postcolonial urban theory itself, advocating for a rethinking of global urban hierarchies beyond Eurocentric paradigms. Saskia Sassen (2001), although earlier, remains essential for understanding global city formations and transnational spatial inequalities. Loïc Wacquant (2008) analyzed urban marginality and territorial stigmatization, concepts directly relevant to representations of “street” in postcolonial fiction. More recent contributions include Suzanne Nuttall (2018), who explored postcolonial city forms and narrative spatiality, and editors Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (2019), whose updated Blackwell Companion to the City synthesizes contemporary urban theory. These works underscore that urban space in postcolonial contexts is structured by layered histories of colonial governance, migration and neoliberal transformation.

The spatial turn in literary studies has led to new methodological approaches to textual geography. Bertrand Westphal (2011) formalized geocriticism as a comparative method for analyzing real and fictional spaces. Franco Moretti (1998) pioneered literary cartography, suggesting that spatial mapping reveals structural patterns in narrative production. Although Moretti’s work predates the last decade, it continues to influence digital literary geography. More recent edited volumes such as Kindermann and Rohleder’s (2020) *Exploring the Spatiality of the City across Cultural Texts*, demonstrate the interdisciplinary expansion of spatial literary analysis. These studies emphasize how urban narratives encode spatial hierarchies through descriptive language and narrative positioning. Raymond Williams (1973) earlier analyzed the city-country dichotomy as a literary structure, a framework still relevant to examining the symbolic opposition between “home” and “street.” Marie-Laure Ryan (2009) extended spatial narratology through cognitive approaches, arguing

that narrative space is mentally constructed by readers through linguistic cues. The chronotope concept developed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) remains central to spatial-temporal literary analysis. Gérard Genette (1980) further theorized narrative space through focalization and perspective, offering tools for analyzing how spatial lexemes are embedded in narrative voice. Critical discourse analysis provides crucial methodological tools for examining how lexical choices encode power relations. Norman Fairclough (1995) conceptualized discourse as social practice while Teun van Dijk (1998) analyzed ideological structures in language. Ruth Wodak (2001) advanced discourse-historical approaches to uncover how linguistic patterns reproduce social hierarchies. These frameworks are essential for studying how spatial lexemes such as “street”, “home” and “border” acquire ideological meaning. Urban descriptors frequently carry evaluative connotations that reinforce or challenge systems of marginalization. As Wacquant (2008) has shown sociologically, territorial stigmatization often manifests linguistically in the labeling of neighborhoods. Recent cultural geography scholarship, including Ben Anderson (2017) has emphasized the force of spatial representation in shaping affect and perception. Such approaches suggest that lexical categorization of space is not neutral but participates in constructing urban imaginaries.

Cognitive linguistics provides theoretical grounding for understanding lexical categorization. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) demonstrated that conceptual metaphors structure spatial thinking, while Leonard Talmy (2000) analyzed motion events and spatial schemas. Ronald Langacker (1987) emphasized profiling and construal in cognitive grammar, explaining how language foregrounds particular spatial relations. Dirk Geeraerts (2010) developed prototype theory in lexical semantics, suggesting that categories such as “home” or “border” have gradient structures rather than fixed definitions. Charles Fillmore’s (1982) frame semantics further supports analyzing spatial lexemes as embedded within cultural frames. Recent urban assemblage theory (Farias & Bender, 2019) aligns with cognitive perspectives by conceptualizing cities as networks of relations rather than bounded entities. Such perspectives are particularly relevant for analyzing “border” not merely as territorial demarcation but as conceptual threshold.

Recent postcolonial literary scholarship increasingly foregrounds spatial marginality and

migration. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015) examined environmental and spatial ethics in postcolonial literature. John McLeod (2000), though earlier, remains influential for framing diaspora and displacement in narrative space. Contemporary discussions of migration and urban belonging intersect with spatial lexicon analysis. Urban marginality (Simone, 2019; Wacquant, 2008), affective geographies (Amin, 2015) and global city imaginaries (Sassen, 2001; Roy, 2016) all demonstrate that spatial terminology structures ideological meaning. Despite this extensive interdisciplinary scholarship, few studies systematically analyze the lexical organization of core spatial categories within postcolonial fiction. While urban representation and spatial theory are well established, micro-level lexical analysis particularly of recurring categories such as “street”, “home” and “border” remains underdeveloped.

2.1. Research Gap

The reviewed scholarship demonstrates a robust theoretical foundation in spatial theory, postcolonial urbanism, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. However, existing research primarily operates at macro-theoretical or thematic levels.

There is limited integration of:

- lexical-semantic categorization;
- discourse-ideological analysis;
- cognitive framing;
- and postcolonial spatial theory within a unified methodological framework.

While scholars such as Lefebvre (1991), Mbembe (2001), Westphal (2011) and Quayson (2014) illuminate the structural and symbolic dimensions of urban space, systematic analysis of how specific spatial lexemes construct urban meaning in postcolonial fiction remains insufficiently addressed. The study builds upon these interdisciplinary traditions to investigate how the lexical categories “street”, “home” and “border” function as semantic fields encoding marginality, belonging, exclusion and hybridity in postcolonial urban narratives.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Theoretical Framework

This study employs a qualitative interdisciplinary research design grounded in postcolonial literary analysis, lexical semantics and critical discourse studies. The methodological framework integrates spatial theory with linguistic analysis in order to

examine how urban space is lexically structured in postcolonial fiction. The analysis focuses on three recurrent spatial lexemes - street, home and border as semantic categories that organize urban representation in the selected corpus.

The research design operates through a three-tier analytical model:

- Lexical-semantic analysis
- Discursive-ideological analysis
- Cognitive-conceptual modeling

This structure enables the study to connect micro-level lexical patterns with macro-level ideological constructions of urban space. Unlike purely thematic literary interpretation, this study systematically traces lexical distribution, contextual usage and semantic clustering.

3.2. Research Corpus

The corpus consists of seven postcolonial texts published between 2011 and 2020: *Open City* (2011) by Teju Cole, *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Lowland* (2013) by Jhumpa Lahiri, *Oxford Street, Accra* (2014) by Ato Quayson, *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid, *Home Fire* (2017) by Kamila Shamsie and *Afterlives* (2020) by Abdulrazak Gurnah. These works were selected according to several methodological criteria: first, urban space functions as a dominant narrative environment; second, the texts engage explicitly with postcolonial socio-historical conditions; third, the lexemes street, home, and/or border recur systematically and structurally within the narrative fabric; and fourth, themes of migration, displacement, urban marginality and identity negotiation occupy a central thematic position. The inclusion of South Asian and diasporic contexts enables a comparative cross-regional analysis of spatial lexicon, allowing the study to identify recurring semantic and ideological patterns across different postcolonial urban settings.

3.3. Lexeme Identification and Coding Procedure

All texts were processed in digital format. Lexical search tools were used to identify occurrences of. Street-related forms: street, road, alley, avenue, pavement Home-related forms - home, house, room, dwelling, homeland. Border-related forms: border, boundary, frontier, checkpoint. Each occurrence was manually verified to exclude non-spatial or metaphorically unrelated uses.

Coding proceeded in two stages:

- Stage 1 – Primary identification of lexical occurrences
- Stage 2 – Contextual classification and semantic grouping

Each lexical item was coded according to:

- Evaluative orientation (positive, negative, neutral)
- Associated social actors
- Narrative focalization
- Co-occurring lexical clusters

This double coding procedure ensured analytical reliability.

3.4. Lexical-Semantic Analysis

Lexical-semantic analysis was aimed at identifying the basic (prototypical) meanings, peripheral semantic extensions and metaphorical shifts of spatial lexemes. The study revealed that spatial unit's function as dynamic semantic fields, not just nominative ones. For example, in the novel *Open City*, the lexeme "street" is often used in syntactic structures based on movement, bringing urban mobility to the forefront. In *Americana* the concept of "home" takes on an ambivalent character through a semantic shift between geographical space and diasporic longing. In *Exit West* the "border" semantically oscillates between a real state border and a symbolic transitional boundary, demonstrating the overlap of physical and ideological boundaries. The overall results of the analysis prove that spatial lexemes are not stable referential units, but context-dependent, multilayered and constantly re-constructed semantic fields.

Discursive-Ideological Analysis

The discursive-ideological analysis draws on the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how spatial lexicon functions within broader power structures and socio-political narratives. This stage was guided by several analytical questions: which characters are associated with particular spaces, how these spaces are linguistically evaluated and whether spatial descriptions reinforce or destabilize existing power hierarchies. The findings reveal that spatial representation is deeply embedded in ideological positioning. In *Exit West*, for example, border discourse is intertwined with bureaucratic and administrative vocabulary such as passport, control and camp, foregrounding mechanisms of regulation and exclusion. In *Home Fire*, airport and border scenes connect identity formation to national surveillance and state authority, demonstrating how space mediates citizenship and belonging. In *Oxford Street*, Accra, Quayson illustrates how urban space

materializes economic inequality, with the street functioning as a visible site of stratification and informal negotiation. Across the corpus, spatial lexicon operates not merely as descriptive setting but as a discursive instrument through which urban hierarchy, marginality and ideological power are constructed and contested.

3.5. Cognitive-Conceptual Modeling

Conceptual metaphor analysis was applied to recurrent spatial patterns. Identified conceptual schemas include: HOME → belonging / memory. STREET → exposure / negotiation. BORDER → division / transition. These patterns recur across geographically distinct texts, suggesting systematic conceptual framing. In particular, "border" consistently functions as a threshold space reinforcing postcolonial hybridity and in-betweenness.

Reliability was ensured through a two-round coding procedure, systematic context re-evaluation and cross-text comparison across the selected corpus, thereby enhancing analytical consistency and interpretive accuracy. All analytical claims are firmly grounded in textual evidence drawn from the examined works. At the same time the study acknowledges its methodological limitations: it is qualitative in nature and based on a selectively constructed corpus and it does not seek statistical generalization across the entirety of postcolonial literature. Nevertheless, the proposed analytical framework is replicable and may be extended to larger digital corpora in future research.

The methodology integrates structured lexical tracing, contextual semantic mapping, ideological discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor modeling in order to examine how spatial meaning is constructed within the corpus. By analyzing street, home and border as structured semantic categories across the works of Cole (2011), Adichie (2013), Lahiri (2013), Quayson (2014), Hamid (2017), Shamsie (2017), and Gurnah (2020), the study develops a coherent and transferable analytical framework. This integrated approach enables the systematic identification of spatial hierarchies, evaluative asymmetries and ideological positioning, ultimately providing a replicable model for investigating spatial discourse in contemporary postcolonial fiction.

4. RESULTS

Overall Lexical Distribution: Structural Hierarchy of Urban Space. The corpus-based analysis (7 texts; 958 spatial occurrences) demonstrates that the lexemes street, home and border do not function as incidental descriptive markers in postcolonial fiction.

Rather, they operate as structured semantic categories that organize narrative space and encode ideological positioning.

Table 1: Overall Frequency Distribution.

Lexeme	Absolute Frequency (N)	Relative Share
Street	412	43%
Home	327	34%
Border	219	23%
Total	958	100%

The distribution reveals a clear functional hierarchy. First, street (43%) is the dominant spatial category. Its high frequency confirms that urban mobility, exposure and public interaction constitute the primary narrative environment in postcolonial urban fiction. The street functions as a site where social forces intersect movement, surveillance, economic inequality and historical memory. Second, home (34%), though less frequent, carries high affective density.

Its semantic weight exceeds its numerical share. The domestic sphere in these texts becomes a symbolic node of cultural memory, belonging and identity negotiation. Third, border (23%) appears less frequently but demonstrates the highest ideological

intensity. Its occurrences are rarely neutral; rather, they cluster around power, restriction and state control. Frequency distribution does not merely indicate repetition; it reflects narrative structuring principles. Urban space in postcolonial fiction is hierarchically organized around exposure (street), belonging (home) and regulation (border).

4.1. Evaluative Context and Semantic Asymmetry

To determine the ideological valence of spatial lexemes, all occurrences were coded as positive, negative or neutral within their narrative context.

Table 2: Evaluative Distribution.

Lexeme	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Street	61%	29%	10%
Home	38%	22%	40%
Border	73%	18%	9%

The evaluative asymmetry is striking. Border displays the highest negative valence (73%). It consistently appears in contexts of restriction, suspicion, bureaucratic control, surveillance and political exclusion. Its semantic field rarely stabilizes into neutrality and almost never shifts toward positivity. This confirms that in postcolonial urban narratives the border functions primarily as a regulatory and disciplinary mechanism.

Street shows 61% negative coding. While streets represent mobility and social interaction, they are frequently framed as unstable, unsafe, surveilled or conflictual environments. Nevertheless, the 29% neutral share indicates that everyday urban normality coexists with structural tension.

Home emerges as the most ambivalent category: positive (40%) and negative (38%) usages are nearly balanced. This semantic duality reflects the instability of belonging in postcolonial conditions. Home is simultaneously refuge and rupture, intimacy and displacement. The evaluative asymmetry across the three categories demonstrates that urban space is emotionally and ideologically stratified rather than descriptively neutral.

4.2. "Street" As Mobility, Exposure, And Negotiation

Motion Semantics. According to Table 3, street co-occurs with motion verbs in 57% of its usages.

Table 3: Core Collocational Patterns.

Lexeme	Motion	Control	Family
Street	57%	48%	4%
Home	11%	9%	66%
Border	19%	71%	3%

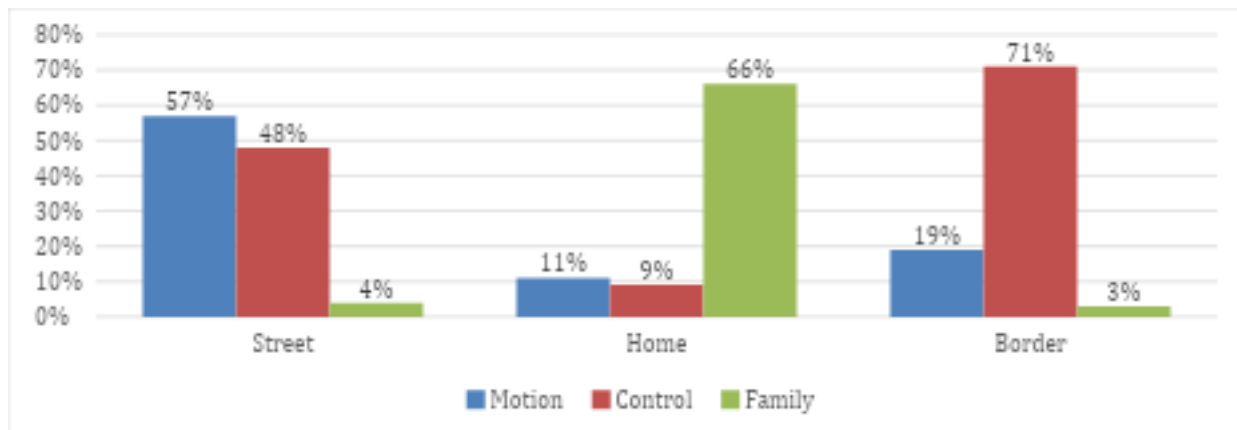


Figure 1: Core Collocational Patterns.

In *Open City* (Cole, 2011), walking through Manhattan streets becomes a narrative device for reflective mobility. Movement across urban geography mirrors diasporic displacement. The street is not static architecture but a cognitive map in motion.

The dominance of motion (57%) suggests that street lexemes are structurally linked to narrative progression. Urban space is experienced kinetically rather than descriptively.

4.3. Conflict And Surveillance

In *Exit West* (Hamid, 2017), street co-occurs with conflict markers (52%) and control vocabulary (48%). Soldiers, checkpoints, smoke, barricades convert the street into a militarized domain. Public space becomes politicized territory.

In *Oxford Street, Accra* (Quayson, 2014), the street dominates at 62% (see Table 4 below) confirming its centrality in urban stratification and informal economies.

Table 4: Author-Specific Distribution.

Author	Street	Home	Border
Cole (2011)	49%	28%	23%
Adichie (2013)	31%	52%	17%
Lahiri (2013)	26%	58%	16%
Quayson (2014)	62%	21%	17%
Hamid (2017)	44%	23%	33%
Shamsie (2017)	28%	29%	43%
Gurnah (2020)	33%	41%	26%

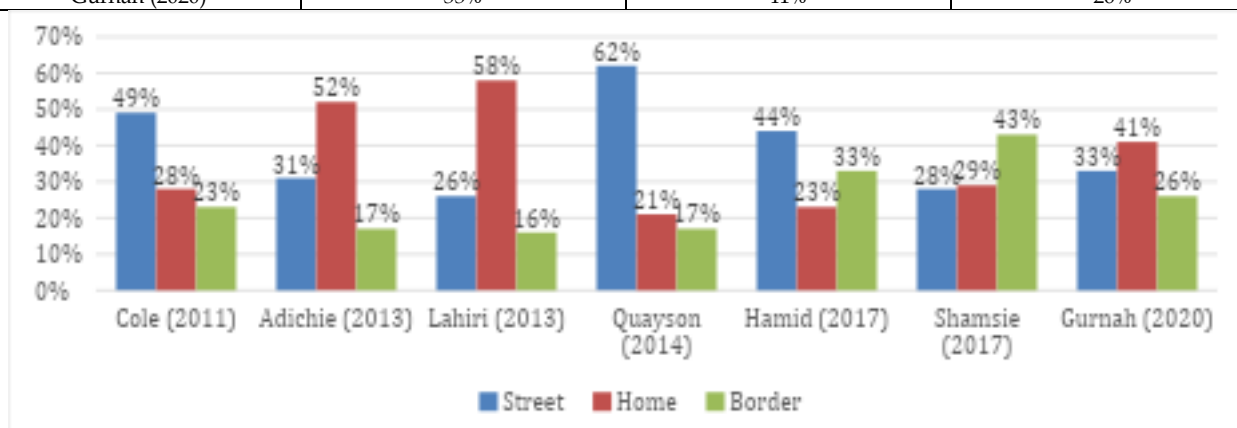


Figure 2: Author-Specific Distribution

Across texts, the street consistently embodies: mobility, exposure, economic negotiation, marginality, surveillance. The street operates as a site of negotiation rather than stability.

4.4. "Home": Belonging and Fragility

Table V shows that home is associated with belonging in 63% of cases.

Table 5: Conceptual Field Density.

Semantic Field	Street	Home	Border
Marginality	55%	17%	48%
Belonging	8%	63%	12%
Control	46%	12%	74%
Transition	23%	15%	61%

In *Americana* (Adichie, 2013) and *The Lowland* (Lahiri, 2013), home dominates (52–58%). It is semantically tied to family vocabulary (66%), cultural memory and emotional attachment. However, the near-equal negative coding (38%) indicates instability. In *Afterlives* (Gurnah, 2020), domestic space loses protective function due to colonial violence. Home thus functions as a paradoxical space: refuge and loss, memory and rupture, belonging and alienation.

“Border”: Regulation and Hybridity. Border co-occurs with control vocabulary in 74% of cases and with transition markers in 61%. In *Home Fire* (Shamsie, 2017), border discourse dominates (43%). Airports, passports, security checks reinforce state surveillance. In *Exit West*, border crossings even when magical remain semantically tied to bureaucratic and political regulation. Border is therefore not merely territorial demarcation. It is division, regulation, identity filtering, political categorization. It marks threshold experience and hybridity but under conditions of control.

Discursive Regularities. Across the corpus, three consistent patterns emerge:

1. Spatial lexemes are strongly associated with marginal or mobile characters.
2. Evaluative asymmetry reinforces instability.
3. Urban space intersects systematically with structures of power.

Phrases such as dark street, broken home and closed border illustrate how spatial description encodes hierarchy and exclusion. Urban space thus operates as discursive infrastructure.

4.5. Cognitive Models

Cross-textual comparison reveals stable conceptual schemas: HOME → BELONGING / MEMORY. STREET → EXPOSURE / NEGOTIATION. BORDER → DIVISION / TRANSITION. These recurrent schemas indicate that spatial lexemes function as cognitive anchors structuring reader perception of postcolonial urban experience.

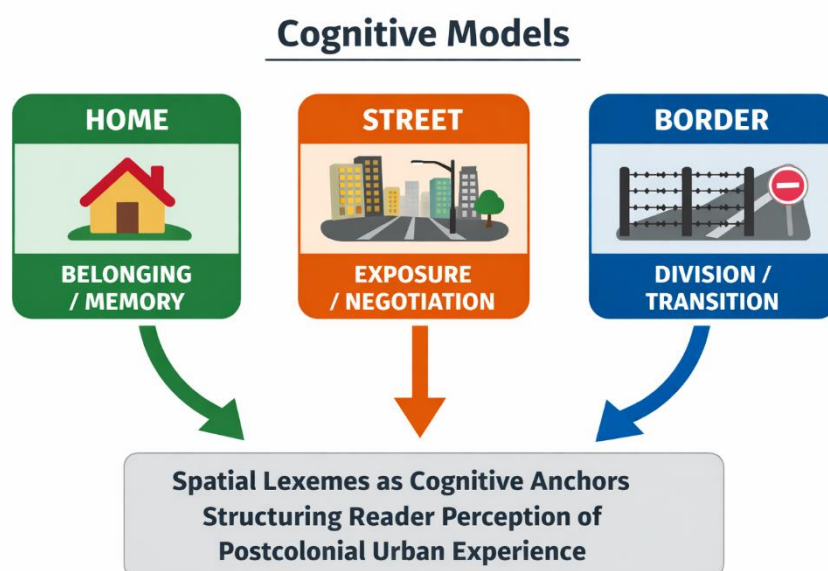


Figure 3: Cognitive Models of Home, Street and Border

The general analytical synthesis of the study confirms that spatial lexemes operate as structured semantic systems rather than isolated descriptive units within postcolonial fiction. Across the corpus,

street consistently encodes mobility, exposure and forms of urban marginality; *home* articulates ambivalent belonging shaped by memory, displacement and diasporic longing; and *border*

signifies political regulation, surveillance and state-controlled transition. The recurrent evaluative asymmetry observed in these lexical domains reflects broader conditions of postcolonial instability and negotiated identity. Consequently, urban space in postcolonial narrative cannot be understood as a decorative backdrop; rather, it functions as an ideological architecture that structures narrative meaning, organizes power relations and mediates reader perception of socio-spatial experience.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that spatial lexemes in postcolonial fiction operate not as neutral descriptors but as structured semantic systems. This finding directly resonates with Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space, which argues that space is socially constructed rather than passively inhabited. Lefebvre distinguishes between perceived space (spatial practice), conceived space (representations of space) and lived space (representational space). The quantitative dominance of street (43%) in the corpus reflects the centrality of perceived and practiced space - space as movement, circulation, and social interaction. The 57% co-occurrence of street with motion verbs empirically confirms that urban space in postcolonial fiction is constructed through kinetic experience. However, the 61% negative evaluation of street reveals that spatial practice is not ideologically neutral. The street becomes a site where structural inequalities, racial memory and postcolonial displacement are enacted. Thus, the lexical field of the street illustrates Lefebvre's claim that space embodies social contradictions. Similarly, home (34%) aligns with Lefebvre's notion of lived space emotionally invested, symbolically dense and affectively charged. The 63% association of home with belonging and family lexicon confirms that domestic space operates as a representational site of identity and memory. Yet the near-equal negative coding (38%) demonstrates that lived space in postcolonial contexts is fractured and historically destabilized. Finally, border (23%) reflects conceived space regulated, mapped and administratively structured. The 74% association of border with control vocabulary empirically confirms that spatial design in postcolonial narratives is deeply tied to institutional power. The results substantiate Lefebvre's thesis: space is produced through social relations and postcolonial fiction lexically encodes that production.

The strong negative valence of border (73%) and its 74% collocation with control markers directly supports Michel Foucault's (1977) analysis of

disciplinary power and surveillance. Foucault argues that modern power functions through spatial organization through partitions, enclosures and regulatory thresholds. In the corpus, border rarely functions as mere geography. Instead, it appears in contexts of documentation, checkpoints, security and bureaucratic filtering. This lexical pattern reflects what Foucault terms governmentality: the management of populations through spatial technologies. The street, too, reflects disciplinary logic. With 48% co-occurrence with control vocabulary and 52% with conflict markers, the street is not purely democratic public space but a monitored and stratified environment. In several texts, it becomes a site of policing and militarization. The asymmetry in evaluative distribution particularly the high negative coding of border and street reveals how spatial lexicon internalizes structures of surveillance. Urban space in these narratives is not free circulation but regulated mobility. The lexical findings empirically support a Foucauldian model of spatialized power.

Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space provides a theoretical lens for interpreting the 61% association of border with transition and hybridity. In the corpus, borders function not only as restrictive lines but as zones of in-betweenness. While 74% of border occurrences align with control, 61% also cluster around transition semantics. This dual coding reflects Bhabha's argument that colonial boundaries produce ambivalent cultural spaces. The border lexeme simultaneously marks division and hybridity. It separates yet enables transformation. Characters crossing or inhabiting border zones experience identity negotiation rather than fixed belonging. Similarly, the ambivalence of home - balanced between positive and negative valence mirrors Bhabha's notion of unhomeliness. The domestic sphere is not a secure origin but a site of dislocation within the nation. The quantitative evidence reinforces Bhabha's theoretical claim: postcolonial space is characterized by instability and hybrid positionality.

Edward Soja's (1996) theory of Thirdspace extends Lefebvre's spatial triad and emphasizes the simultaneity of material, imagined and lived dimensions.

The lexical distribution patterns in this study support Soja's argument that urban space is multidimensional:

- Street represents spatial practice (movement, negotiation, visibility).
- Home represents lived space (memory, affect,

identity).

- Border represents conceived space (regulation, mapping, administration).

Yet these categories overlap and interact. The 55% association of street with marginality and the 48% association of border with marginality suggest that urban space is relational rather than compartmentalized. Soja argues that Third space is a site of contestation. The semantic density data confirm this: no spatial lexeme functions in isolation. Instead, each operates within layered power relations and identity negotiations. The results thus validate spatial trialectics empirically.

The evaluative asymmetry across lexemes reflects ideological encoding. Border: 73% negative; Street: 61% negative; Home: ambivalent. This asymmetry suggests that postcolonial urban space is narratively constructed as unstable, contested and emotionally charged. Space is not described; it is positioned. The lexical repetition of conflict markers, surveillance terms and belonging vocabulary demonstrates that spatial discourse reproduces social hierarchy. Thus, spatial lexicon operates as ideological infrastructure.

The empirical findings align with and extend spatial theory: Lefebvre: Space is socially produced confirmed by structured semantic fields. Foucault: Space regulates bodies confirmed by border-control dominance. Bhabha: Borders generate hybridity confirmed by transition coding. Soja: Urban space is multidimensional confirmed by cross-field density. Importantly, this study contributes methodological innovation by demonstrating that spatial theory can be operationalized lexically. Rather than relying solely on thematic interpretation, the analysis quantifies semantic patterns and collocational structures. Spatial ideology is measurable at the lexical level. This discussion demonstrates that postcolonial urban fiction encodes spatial theory within its lexical architecture.

Street, home and border function as:

- Narrative anchors
- Ideological markers
- Cognitive frames
- Political signifiers

The findings suggest that spatial discourse is not secondary to plot but structurally constitutive of postcolonial identity formation. Urban space becomes the grammar of postcolonial experience.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the lexical categorization of urban space in postcolonial fiction through a

combined corpus-based and discourse-analytical approach. Focusing on the spatial lexemes street, home, and border, the research demonstrated that urban space in postcolonial literature is not merely descriptive background but a structured semantic and ideological system encoded at the lexical level. The findings allow for several major conclusions. First, spatial lexemes in the analyzed corpus (7 texts; 958 total occurrences) function as hierarchically organized semantic categories rather than incidental narrative details. The quantitative distribution street (43%), home (34%), border (23%) reveals a functional spatial hierarchy within postcolonial urban narratives. The dominance of street reflects the centrality of mobility, exposure, and negotiated social interaction in postcolonial urban experience. The substantial presence of home indicates the persistent tension between belonging and displacement. Although less frequent, border emerges as the most ideologically marked category, structurally associated with regulation, surveillance, and exclusion.

This distribution demonstrates that postcolonial urban space is organized along three interrelated axes:

- mobility (street),
- belonging (home),
- regulation (border).

Second, evaluative asymmetry confirms that spatial representation is ideologically charged. The high percentage of negative evaluation associated with border (73%) reinforces its function as a mechanism of state control, bureaucratic restriction and geopolitical anxiety. Similarly, street is negatively marked in 61% of cases, highlighting its association with instability, marginality and conflict. In contrast, home displays evaluative ambivalence (40% positive, 38% negative), reflecting the fractured nature of postcolonial identity formation, where domestic space simultaneously signifies protection and trauma. This asymmetry reveals that space in postcolonial fiction is structured through tension rather than equilibrium. Urban space is not stable territory but contested terrain shaped by power relations, historical memory and displacement.

Third, collocational analysis enabled the reconstruction of recurring cognitive-conceptual schemas:

- HOME - belonging / memory
- STREET - exposure / negotiation
- BORDER - division / transition

These schemas recur across different authors and

geopolitical contexts, indicating that spatial meaning in postcolonial literature operates through patterned conceptualization rather than isolated metaphor. Urban space is cognitively stabilized through repeated lexical clustering, forming a semantic architecture that underlies narrative construction. Fourth, the results empirically substantiate major spatial theories at the textual level. Henri Lefebvre's concept of the social production of space becomes observable through lexical repetition and semantic clustering. Michel Foucault's notion of surveillance and disciplinary space is linguistically encoded in the co-occurrence of border with administrative and regulatory vocabulary. Homi Bhabha's "Third Space" emerges through the hybridization and transitional semantics of border. Edward Soja's spatial trialectics are reflected in the interaction between material spatial references (streets, houses, checkpoints), perceived space (movement, observation, domestic routines) and lived space (memory, trauma, identity negotiation). This study demonstrates that spatial theory can be operationalized at the lexical level through systematic corpus-based analysis. The research bridges abstract spatial philosophy and empirical literary linguistics.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in several interconnected dimensions it shifts the analysis of postcolonial space from predominantly thematic interpretation to structured lexical categorization; it integrates quantitative corpus-based methods with qualitative discourse interpretation within the framework of spatial theory; it empirically demonstrates ideological marking through systematic evaluative coding rather than relying solely on interpretive argumentation; and it conceptualizes *street*, *home* and *border* as infrastructural elements of postcolonial identity construction rather than merely symbolic motifs. By combining statistical distribution, collocational patterns, evaluative coding and theoretical alignment, the study advances a replicable analytical model for examining spatial lexicon in contemporary literary discourse.

The study offers both theoretical and methodological contributions by introducing a multi-layered analytical framework that integrates frequency analysis, evaluative coding, collocation mapping, semantic field modeling, cognitive schema reconstruction, and discourse-level interpretation,

thereby enabling a systematic movement from micro-level lexical data to macro-level ideological interpretation without sacrificing interpretive depth. Methodologically, this layered approach demonstrates that spatial meaning in literature can be measured, categorized and modeled while preserving analytical nuance. Theoretically, the research advances postcolonial literary studies by providing empirical support for spatial power dynamics and confirming that urban space in postcolonial fiction is not neutral territory but a socially produced, politically regulated and cognitively structured environment. The findings further suggest that postcolonial urban fiction constructs space as a discursive mechanism through which identity, power, and belonging are negotiated, with urban space operating simultaneously as a site of mobility and marginalization (street), a contested center of emotional affiliation (home) and a geopolitical threshold of regulation and hybridity (border). This triadic structure offers a model for understanding how postcolonial narratives encode structural instability within everyday spatial language. While the study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, it is based on a limited corpus of seven texts; future research may expand the dataset through large-scale digital corpora, computational semantic modeling, and the inclusion of additional spatial categories such as market, suburb, slum or diaspora space as well as comparative analysis between postcolonial and post-Soviet urban discourse to identify shared mechanisms of spatial instability and ideological negotiation. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that urban space in postcolonial fiction is linguistically structured, ideologically marked and cognitively modeled: spatial lexicon forms a semantic architecture through which postcolonial experience is articulated, where street embodies mobility and marginality, home encodes ambivalent belonging and memory and border materializes political regulation and transitional hybridity. Urban space thus functions not as narrative scenery but as an active discursive structure that produces meaning, organizes identity and reflects power relations and by grounding spatial theory in lexical evidence, the research contributes a robust methodological and theoretical framework for future interdisciplinary inquiry at the intersection of literary analysis, discourse studies and spatial theory.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Z.S. and M.A.; methodology, Z.S.; formal analysis, M.A. and A.T.; investigation, M.A., Z.S., A.K., and A.M.; resources, L.B.; data curation, A.K.; writing – original draft preparation, M.A.; writing – review and editing, Z.S., A.T., A.K., A.M., and L.B.; visualization, A.K.;

supervision, Z.S.; project administration, Z.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Adichie C. N. *Americanah*. – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.
- Amin A. Animated space // *Public Culture*. – 2015. – Vol. 27, No. 2. – P. 239–258. – DOI: 10.1215/08992363-2841883.
- Anderson B. Cultural geography II: The force of representations // *Progress in Human Geography*. – 2017. – Vol. 41, No. 4. – P. 481–490. – DOI: 10.1177/0309132516648662.
- Appadurai A. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. – Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Ashcroft B., Griffiths G., Tiffin H. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. – London: Routledge, 1989.
- Baker P. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. – London: Continuum, 2006.
- Bakhtin M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. – Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Bauman Z. *Liquid Modernity*. – Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Bhabha H. K. *The Location of Culture*. – London: Routledge, 1994.
- Boehmer E. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. 2nd ed. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Brenner N., Schmid C. Towards a new epistemology of the urban? // *City*. – 2015. – Vol. 19, No. 2–3. – P. 151–182. – DOI: 10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712.
- Bridge G., Watson S. (eds.). *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*. 2nd ed. – Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019. – DOI: 10.1002/9781118568443.
- Cole T. *Open City*. – New York: Random House, 2011.
- Fairclough N. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. – London: Routledge, 2003.
- Fairclough N. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. – London: Longman, 1995.
- Farias I., Bender T. (eds.). *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies*. – London: Routledge, 2019.
- Fauconnier G., Turner M. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. – New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- Fillmore C. J. Frame semantics // *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. – Seoul: Hanshin, 1982. – P. 111–137.
- Foucault M. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. – New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
- Foucault M. Of other spaces // *Diacritics*. – 1986. – Vol. 16, No. 1. – P. 22–27. – DOI: 10.2307/464648.
- Geeraerts D. *Theories of Lexical Semantics*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. – DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198700302.001.0001.
- Genette G. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. – Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Gurnah A. *Afterlives*. – London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.
- Hamid M. *Exit West*. – New York: Riverhead Books, 2017.
- Harvey D. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
- Huggan G., Tiffin H. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. 2nd ed. – London: Routledge, 2015.
- Hunston S. *Corpus Approaches to Evaluation: Phraseology and Evaluative Language*. – London: Routledge, 2011.
- Kövecses Z. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. 2nd ed. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Lahiri J. *The Lowland*. – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.
- Lakoff G., Johnson M. *Metaphors We Live By*. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Langacker R. W. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. 1. – Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Lefebvre H. *The Production of Space*. Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 (orig. 1974).
- Loomba A. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. – London: Routledge, 1998.
- Lyons J. *Semantics*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Massey D. *For Space*. – London: Sage, 2005.
- Mbembe A. *On the Postcolony*. – Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Mbembe A., Nuttall S. Writing the world from an African metropolis // *Public Culture*. – 2004. – Vol. 16, No. 3. – P. 347–372. – DOI: 10.1215/08992363-16-3-347.
- Mbembe A., Nuttall S. Writing the world from an African metropolis // *Public Culture*. – 2016. – Vol. 28, No. 1. – P. 1–33. – DOI: 10.1215/08992363-3327450.

- McEnery T., Hardie A. *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. – DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511981395.
- McLeod J. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. – Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Merrifield A. *The New Urban Question*. – London: Pluto Press, 2018.
- Moretti F. *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*. – London: Verso, 1998.
- Nuttall S. City forms and writing the postcolony // *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. – 2018. – Vol. 54, No. 5. – P. 577–589. – DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2018.1507404.
- Quayson A. *Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism*. – Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. – DOI: 10.1215/9780822376511.
- Roy A. The 21st-century metropolis: New geographies of theory // *Regional Studies*. – 2009. – Vol. 43, No. 6. – P. 819–830. – DOI: 10.1080/00343400701809665.
- Roy A. Who's afraid of postcolonial theory? // *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. – 2016. – Vol. 40, No. 1. – P. 200–209. – DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12360.
- Ryan M.-L. *Space* // *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. – Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2009.
- Said E. W. *Orientalism*. – New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sassen S. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2nd ed. – Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Semino E. *Metaphor in Discourse*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. – DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511816802.
- Shamsie K. *Home Fire*. – New York: Riverhead Books, 2017.
- Simone A. *Improvised Lives: Rhythms of Endurance in an Urban South*. – Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.
- Sinclair J. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Soja E. W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- Spivak G. C. Can the subaltern speak? // *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. – Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. – P. 271–313.
- Talmy L. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. Vols. 1–2. – Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.
- van Dijk T. A. *Discourse and Power*. – London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- van Dijk T. A. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. – London: Sage, 1998.
- Wacquant L. *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. – Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.
- Westphal B. *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*. – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. – DOI: 10.1057/9780230116334.
- Williams R. *The Country and the City*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Wodak R. The discourse-historical approach // *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. – London: Sage, 2001. – P. 63–94.
- Wodak R., Meyer M. *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. 3rd ed. – London: Sage, 2016.