

Discourse Worldview on *Freelancing* in the Contemporary Job Market (Based on the English Language Material)

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Abstract

This article outlines discursive representation of key notions, categories, and scripts constituting the worldview on employment in the contemporary job market in regards to freelancing. A new conceptual model of working relations is described, as well as its verbal means, including discourse neologisms that nominate various forms and ways of professional activity. The most common nominations for the notional field under discussion are *freelancing*, *patchworking*, *gig-economy*, *binge-time careerism*, *zig-zag careers*, and *nomadic workers*, which illustrate integral and differentiating qualities of the notional field of freelancing, along with discursive specifiers that concretize the worldview of the contemporary job market. The integral semes of the notional field of freelancing are ‘employment/work/job/business’ and ‘work from home or different places’. The differentiating semes specifying the notional field of freelancing include the following: ‘increasing number of people,’ ‘work for different organizations,’ ‘part-time/temporary/for a short time,’ and ‘not influenced or controlled.’ Discursive representation of the notional field of freelancing highlights the most significant notional qualities and specifiers that characterize the contemporary conditions and tendencies in the English-speaking job market: remote work, flexible schedule, work-life balance, talent realization for the self-employed, multitasking, short-term and intensive labor, frequent job and duty changing, quick adaptability, increase in competitiveness, self-discipline, independence, productivity, and progressive thinking.

Keywords: Discourse Worldview, Integral Semes, Differentiating Semes, Business Discourse, Discursive Representation, Neologisms, Nominations of The Forms of Employment

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the concept of the discursive worldview has attracted considerable attention from researchers whose scholarly interests focus on the interrelation between language, cognition, and culture. The discursive worldview may be understood as a conceptual model that describes how language and discourse shape the perception of reality (Popova & Sternin, 1999). In contemporary linguistics, the following major approaches to the understanding of the discursive worldview are distinguished: the systemic-structural, the functional, the ontological, and the cognitive.

The systemic-structural approach emphasizes descriptive, axiological, activity-related, and semiotic dimensions, whereas the functional approach examines how these dimensions interact and shape the perception of the world (Rezanova, 2011). The ontological approach is oriented toward analyzing the correlation between the discursive worldview and the social order. This approach also considers the process of constructing such a worldview under the influence of discursive practices. As a result, the discursive worldview can be regarded as a dynamic system of concepts that shape both language and reality (Melnik & Shemonaev, 2019).

A number of studies explore the relationship between the discursive worldview and cognitive activity, which makes it possible to describe the processes of world perception by the linguistic personality through language and discourse (Kazydub, 2006). Within the framework of this research, a combined approach is proposed, integrating functional and cognitive components of discourse on the topic of freelancing, since this approach allows us to identify the content-related and socio-interactive features of contemporary professional communication. The methodology for investigating the discursive worldview is based on critical discourse analysis, focusing on the linguistic manifestation of freelancing as well as its discourse coverage in the current social context, which provides the groundwork for critical evaluation of the modern labor market (Leontovich, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Fairclough (2003) characterized discourse as an intermediate level between text and social context, linking internal relations within the text to its external relations. Among the distinctive features of discourse, particular importance is attached to its capacity to construct the social world of communicants (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, the relevance of this research problem lies in its alignment with the current directions of contemporary linguistic inquiry. According to the existing literature on this topic, the issue of freelancing has not yet been examined under scrutiny in terms of critical discourse analysis. The aim of this study is to describe the discursive interpretation of freelancing in the contemporary labor market within the English-speaking community, focusing on the formation of generalized and specific categories, concepts, behavioral scripts, as well as the socio-interactive properties of professional interaction between the employer and the employee.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employed both general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis) and specialized linguistic methods (component analysis, contextual analysis, discourse analysis). The data source was defined by online accessible English-language corpus of business-related magazines, journals, and professional business blogs published in the first quarter of the 21st century (reaching 2000 data samples overall). Through key search terms (e.g., freelancing, patchworker, digital nomad, self-employed, binge working, gig economy, etc.), 82 contexts of verbal representation of the conceptual field of **freelancing** were selected for in-depth analysis. These texts reveal the specific features of labor relations in the modern conditions of remote work and flexible working schedules.

3. Current Trends in the Labor Market: Defining Key Concepts

Due to the ability of concepts to undergo transformations (i.e., to lose certain components and acquire new ones as a result of historical and social changes), the issue of the temporal and existential limitations of concepts has become a subject of scholarly debate (Makarov, 2003). Therefore, in order to obtain verifiable knowledge, the scope of the analyzed linguistic material should be restricted according to temporal and sociocultural parameters. Accordingly, the material for this study was delimited by the genre-specificity of the texts (official-business and journalistic) as well as by the time of their production, which was the first quarter of the 21st century.

It is essential to consider the existential (vertical) context of this period. According to Verbickaya (1981), particular attention should be paid to such factors as cultural-historical, social, and political facts, since the meaning of any written work is tied to its real-world setting. When discussing contexts, it is also necessary to take into account the *horizontal context* as a correlate of the notion of *vertical context*. The horizontal context is presented explicitly in the text to the reader, functioning as the immediate linguistic environment of a language unit and as the trajectory of the author’s thought, whereas the vertical context is only implied in the discursive unfolding of the text. Thus, to fully investigate the layers of information embedded in discourse, the analysis of the explicit linguistic components (horizontal context) and the aggregate of the recipient’s implied background knowledge (vertical context) are equally significant.

When considering the vertical context, it is important to highlight that the 21st century business environment has been influenced by a variety of factors, most notably the disruptions caused by the two-year pandemic and the transition from a capitalist to a digital economy. The vertical context of this historical period encompasses such features as economic recession, rising prices, market instability, self-employment, the necessity of unconventional business solutions, and the principle of maintaining a balance between work and personal life. These factors play a decisive role in the semantization of a wide range of concepts, including neologisms, whose content reflects the distinctive features of the discursive worldview of the labor market.

4. Semantization of Key Concepts

Since semasiology views meaning as a multi-component structure consisting of several minimal semantic units, referred to as semes, it is appropriate to distinguish between integral and differential semes in the context of **freelancing** and other related lexical items, defined through its synonyms. The next step involved a component analysis of their lexical-semantic variants, as recorded in such dictionaries as the Cambridge Dictionary (2025) and the Urban Dictionary (2025). The results are manifested in the following table:

Table 1. Semantic properties of the thesaurus of freelancing

Lexis/notion	Meaning	Integral Semes	Differential Semes
Freelancer	Someone who does particular pieces of work for different organizations, rather than working all the time for a single organization	‘someone’ ‘work’	‘pieces of work’ ‘particular’ ‘different, not single organization’
Self-employed	Not <u>working</u> for an <u>employer</u> but <u>finding work</u> for yourself or having <u>your own business</u>	‘work’	‘yourself/your own’ ‘not for an employer’ ‘business’
Out-of-house	If an <u>employee</u> of a <u>company</u> <u>works</u> out of <u>house</u> , they <u>work</u> from <u>home</u> <u>rather</u> than in the <u>offices</u> of that <u>company</u>	‘employee’ ‘work’	‘from home rather than office’
Independent (worker)	A person who agrees to do a particular job for someone else for an agreed amount of money but who is not an employee	‘person’ ‘job’	‘particular’ ‘agreed amount of money’ ‘not an employee’ ‘for someone else’
Temporary	A temporary <u>worker</u> is <u>employed</u> only for a <u>short period</u> of <u>time</u>	‘worker’	‘temporary’

Digital nomad	Someone who does not have a <u>permanent office</u> or <u>home</u> and <u>works</u> from different <u>countries</u> , <u>towns</u> , or <u>buildings</u> using the <u>internet</u>	'employed' 'someone' 'work'	'for a short period' 'not permanent office/home' 'different places' 'the internet'
Remote worker	An employee working at their home, or in some other place that is not an organization's usual place of business	'employee' 'work'	'home' 'place of business'
Patchworker	One of an increasing number of people unable to find full-time employment, and who resort to taking many part-time jobs without benefits	'one of people' 'employment'	'increasing number' 'many part-time jobs' 'without benefits'

According to the data presented in this table, integral semes in the meanings of the above-mentioned lexemes include 'someone/one of people/person/worker/employee' and 'employment/work/job/business.' These semes indicate a commonality of nominative concepts related to people and the sphere of business and employment. Differential semes relevant to the thesaurus of freelancing are composed of additional semantic features: 'increasing number of people,' 'work for different organizations,' 'from home/different places,' 'part-time/temporary/for a short time,' 'the internet,' 'agreed amount of money,' and 'without benefits.' These features are not exhaustive, as the content and scope of the concepts examined are refined through the discursive representation of freelancing, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5. Discursive Analysis of Key Concepts

Over the past two decades, scholars have recognized business discourse as an independent field of discourse studies (Stebletsova, 2015). Today, business discourse is understood as textualized communication constructed by communicants in the process of carrying out their everyday duties, solving business-related issues, and performing other professional tasks.

At present, the following principal interpretations of business discourse are distinguished:

1. official, administrative-institutional business discourse;
2. business discourse as the speech practice of a particular sphere;
3. business discourse as business communication.

In this study, the second interpretation is adopted as the understanding of business discourse in terms of speech practice in a specific domain, focusing on such genres as blogs and analytical articles, in which the nature of new concepts in the English-speaking business environment is examined and substantiated: *freelancing, patchworking, gig-economy, binge-time careerism, compressed hours, zig-zag careers, nomadic workers, virtual office, keyboard corporations, cluster communities, techvilles, shadow careers, demuting, non-linear working patterns, swing time, etc.* Let us consider the following example:

In the book 'The 9-to-5 Cure,' author and career coach Dr. Kristin Cardinale argues that "traditional, full-time jobs aren't everything they're cracked up to be...So what's the solution? Freelancing, except apparently Cardinale calls it "patchworking." In her words, the Patchwork Principle is "a freelance career strategy based on the simple idea that working for a number of employers simultaneously presents unique business opportunities and insulates an individual from sudden and total job loss. In short, enjoyable work in abundance is the signature of this business model" (Kaufman, 2011, p. 1).

In this fragment, the concept patchworker is equated with that of a freelancer, whose priority is to secure multiple sources of income in order to guarantee financial stability in the event of losing one of the jobs. This context highlights the necessity of such professional diversity and mosaicism within the theme and problematics of business discourse—namely, the proposal of strategies to address current issues such as unemployment, burnout, and instability in the market economy.

As a result, the concept patchworker reveals a latent feature determined by the imagery of its initial form: versatility as a unique business quality that opens up opportunities for professional growth and income security. In addition, the patchworking style proves to be more motivating and fulfilling due to the constant change of activity and content. In the modern business environment, the concept of patchworking is becoming so prominent that it acquires the status of a career prospect:

It's a new concept, but if you were to ask the question 30 years from now, I'm confident that people would know exactly what you meant. It might have a different name – a jigsaw career or a jumble career, but in principle it's a freelance career path where you choose to work simultaneously for several employers. The often-talked-about gig economy is a step toward this model – it typically features people completing short term assignments for an employer before moving on. It's been a proven model in many industries for years now and we know that it's a viable and attractive career path for legal professionals these days, too (Kay, 2019, p.1).

The principal discursive meanings include multitasking within a limited time frame (short-term assignments), collaboration with multiple employers (work simultaneously for several employers), unpredictability, zigzagging, puzzle-like character (a jigsaw career or a jumble career), and project-based work constrained by market demand (gig economy). In business discourse, the main characteristics of a career in the patchworking style are revealed as follows:

Connections and networking. This concept refer to supplying enough work.

It will be important to have contacts and links into a range of organizations. That ability to drive your own business will be crucial.

Discipline. There will no doubt be a wealth of temptations when planning a day. Walk the dog, nip to the shops, head to the gym, watch just one more episode of your favorite Netflix program; the focus required to work a sensible amount of hours will be critical to ensure the mortgage gets paid at the end of the month!

Changing direction. In addition to multitasking and prioritizing skills which are important, I think the ability to switch focus from one client to another is even more essential; or maybe even complete further training if industry changes are swinging toward a different path than yours.

When a patchwork career is mentioned, it can be presented with conviction as a viable and appealing career path. This mode of working may become increasingly prevalent in the near future (Kay, 2019).

The given fragment reveals such discourse-relevant features as maintaining contacts and connections (contacts and links), discipline (planning a day), a proper work–life balance (the focus required to work a sensible amount of hours), prioritization, shifting attention from one client to another (switch focus from one client to another), flexible acquisition of new professional skills (further training), **and** attractiveness (an attractive career option). The following example illustrates the distinctions between patchworking **and** freelancing: Freelancing has been associated with *gigonomics*. Gigonomics is described as a penny ante slog trying to survive another day and piece it together. Freelancing has been depicted in a negative light, focusing on desperation and it's myopic view of the landscape.

Carindale (Patchworker, 2011) argued that freelancing (patchworking) is a more stable form of employment: when you simultaneously work for a number of employers, you're able to make a connection with multiple companies, multiple decision makers, and, perhaps, in multiple fields or industries. If one of those jobs accounts for ten percent of your total workload and that job goes away, then only ten percent of employment is lost rather than losing one 9-to-5 job accounting for 100 percent employment (Patchworker, 2011).

As can be seen from the given example, freelancing is evaluated negatively, since this form of income does not provide security for the future and is perceived as a short-sighted approach to the opportunities available in the market. Patchworking, by contrast, which combines work in different fields, makes it possible to preserve a portion of one's income even in the event of job loss in one area. Consequently, the concept of patchworking predominantly connotes positive meanings, images, and evaluations.

A more attractive form of employment is represented by the work of the digital nomad, which gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees with this status do not lose their position within the company (corporate nomad) and have the opportunity for free mobility across different locations where the company maintains its interests and increasingly participate part-time in geographically dispersed initiatives and projects within their employer's global network. The rise of the corporate nomad will be inexorable in the wake of the pandemic. These are individuals who, while maintaining full-time employment with their organizations, will increasingly participate part-time in geographically dispersed initiatives and projects within their employer's global network. The benefits are many. It gives individuals a sense of financial stability while also allowing them be exposed to new people, new geographies, new cultures, new values, and new work projects without having to leave their current organization (Fernández-Arúz, 2022).

In contemporary English-language discourse, the model of the digital nomad occupies a significant place, as it enables the implementation of corporate values associated with the selection and further promotion of particularly distinguished employees. Fostering this type of global exposure and contribution will also become an increasingly important and effective way for organizations to retain and develop top talent. It can provide individuals and corporations alike with an extraordinary chance to reap the benefits of job enrichment and change, without requiring individuals to jump into the wrong place with the wrong fit, and without creating a situation where organizations must replace great employees who should never have been lost in the first place (Fernández-Arúz, 2022).

In business discourse, particular emphasis is placed on the conscious transition of corporations to a model of labor interaction based on the digital nomad, which makes it one of the most likely and popular pathways for career advancement. At the linguistic level, this approach is reflected in the nomination career nomads, the meaning of which can be revealed through its discursive representation: People who tend to move from job to job, changing companies or careers more frequently than average workers. Career nomads are not mediocre talent, leaving before their lackluster performance is discovered. They are highly talented, highly learning agile, sought-after professionals that are not content to stay in one place, and seek out progressive challenges and learning opportunities. Organizations with best-in-class talent practices leverage more value from career nomads and reduce the risk of losing these learning-oriented high performers (Korn Ferry, 2025). This description highlights such salient features of the career nomad as 'outstanding talent,' 'a highly sought-after progressive specialist,' **and** 'an individual capable of learning and retraining.'

In the discursive worldview, the modern labor market is represented as a sphere of innovative searches and solutions, which make an effective economy possible. The time is ripe for innovation and a dynamic forward-thinking approach to how the workplace is organized and how individuals access opportunities in the 21st Century with the goal to attract a more diverse workforce and raise productivity by opening up new ways of working (Equal Opportunities Coalition, 2010). Other distinctive features of the economy of new labor relations include "multifaceted and diverse work," "flexibility," "simplicity," "speed of response," and "an energetic production pace." For example, many people are surprised by the level of workplace flexibility at Listawood and by how smoothly it functions. This approach has helped us evolve into an agile manufacturing operation, capable of rapid and adaptable responses to clients. Our work schedules vary widely, and we have learned that flexibility must operate in both directions (Equal Opportunity Coalition, 2010).

One of the defining characteristics represented in business discourse in the last quarter of the current century is the presence of a flexible work schedule, which has recently contributed to the emergence of such a model of labor relations as binge working. This concept is a neologism that has gained active usage in business analytics. Let us consider the following example. Kate Hilpern investigated a growing trend to let workers arrange their own hours in order to work compressed hours and take four-day weekends every single week. Or they could take a month off between one job and the next. And at the most extreme, they want to work for six months and then take six months off. These people are from all ages and all levels of jobs and are part of a new phenomenon: binge working (Hilpern, 2004).

The analysis of the discursive representation of the binge-working model has made it possible to identify the following features of current professional activity: work intensely for weeks, take a chunk of time off of work to travel and for personal development. Many more people are taking up the opportunity, benefiting from deeply concentrated periods of work, forward-thinking employers, and ‘annualized hours.’

Discourse analysis also reveals such characteristics and behavioral scenarios of participants in professional communication as enhanced productivity, the ability to argue for the advantages of working only on certain days, awareness of the negative consequences of a strict nine-to-five presence at the workplace, and an orientation toward mutual respect between employer and employee, which leads to greater productivity and efficiency at work. It’s not only employees who gain from working. More employers are realizing the downsides of presenteeism, where workers are expected to stay at work, even if they have nothing to do. Instead, they are realizing that flexible ways of working make employees more productive. Moreover, the employee feels respected and provides respect for the employer in return (Hilpern, 2004).

Negative scenarios of professional interaction are also possible within the binge-working model. There is the potential for fatigue at work, resulting in exhaustion. Many find they can’t escape the workplace, even during their time off. Finding the motivation required to get back into the swing of hard work after a long break can also be tough. If someone works with clients directly, they are probably not in an ideal position to work compressed hours (Hilpern, 2004). Despite the negative features of the binge-working model, this form of employment remains one of the most desirable among employees across various organizations. Its popularity is explained by the fact that it maximally realizes the principle of maintaining a balance between work and personal life, thereby refining this concept and making it an integral characteristic of the freelancer’s worldview.

In addition, other supplementary features of the freelancing model in the English-language business discourse include *cluster communities* (physical or virtual communities functioning as a single organism, such as online platforms), *techvilles* (technological spaces), *shadow careers* (parallel or accompanying careers), *demuting* (the absence of the need for daily commuting), *non-linear working patterns*, *swing time* (afternoon or evening shifts), among others. Thus, the discursive representation of the conceptual field of *freelancing* makes it possible to identify the most relevant semantic features and qualifiers that reflect the current state and trends of the labor market in the English-speaking community.

6. Conclusion

The concept of freelancing serves as one of the key markers of the business environment of the 21st century. In the vertical context of this historical period, which incorporates economic recession, rising prices, and market instability, the labor market starts celebrating flexibility of hirings and self-employment. The more traditional full-time employment acquires the tendency of becoming peripheral as increasing numbers of people lose their jobs. This study has demonstrated the linguistic response to these changing social and labor factors. These factors play a decisive role in the semantization of concepts that constitute the worldview represented in English-language business discourse.

The integral semes of the conceptual field of freelancing include employment/work/job/business and work from home or different places. Differential semes specifying this conceptual field comprise increasing number of people, work for different organizations, part-time/temporary/for a short time, and not influenced or controlled. The discursive representation of the conceptual field of freelancing allows us to identify the most relevant semantic features and qualifiers reflecting the current state and trends in the labor market of the English-speaking community. Among them are remote work, flexible schedules, work-life balance, the search for ways of realizing talent under conditions of self-employment, multitasking, short-term and intensive work, frequent changes in activity and responsibilities, the need for rapid adaptation, increased competition, self-discipline, independence, productivity, and progressiveness.

The prospects of this research include the following directions:

1. The necessity of further investigation into adequate methods of translating neologisms related to freelancing.
2. The need to explore the terminological nature of such neologisms in business discourse, given their active use in the texts of business analysts and bloggers.

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Authors’ contributions

Prof. S. Issakova and doctoral student A. Rakhimgaliyeva were responsible for study design and revising. Prof. E. Kislyakova was responsible for data collection. Prof. S. Madzhaeva, B. Khairzhanova drafted the manuscript and PhD A. Issakova revised it. All the

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