

TRANSMEDIAL WORLD-BUILDING AND ITS DISCURSIVE AUTHENTICATION IN THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE

Olha Chepokova

5th year student of the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University

oschepokova.frgf25m@kubg.edu.ua

ТРАНСМЕДІЙНЕ СВІТОБУДУВАННЯ ТА ДИСКУРСИВНА АВТЕНТИФІКАЦІЯ ВСЕСВІТУ «ЗОРЯНИХ ВІЙН»

Ольга Чепокова

студентка 5 курсу Факультету романо-германської філології

Київський столичний університет імені Бориса Грінченка

oschepokova.frgf25m@kubg.edu.ua

The article examines the linguocognitive and sociocultural strategies involved in the formation and maintenance of a cohesive discursive space in the Star Wars media universe. It focuses on the phenomenon of transmedia world-building through M. Wolf's concept of the "Secondary Encyclopedia" and G. Jenkins' theory of convergence culture, which together ensure the logical coherence and relative autonomy of the fictional galaxy. The novelty of the study lies in the synthesis of J. Gavins' Text World Theory, N. Fairclough's, and T. van Dijk's approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis, and systemic-functional linguistics.

The work demonstrates that Master Yoda's unusual sentence structure is a marker of foreignness, while the use of technical jargon serves as a linguistic cue that creates an illusion of reality within the story and of scientific progress in the fictional world. The political rhetoric of Palpatine is analyzed, showing how the manipulation of the security theme encourages the perception of totalitarianism as a necessity. Particular attention is given to how fictional concepts are assimilated into language. They become markers of social identity for digital communities and gradually integrate into modern English.

Keywords: *transmedia world-building, text-world theory, Secondary Encyclopedia, discursive authentication, convergence culture* У статті аналізуються лінгвокогнітивні й соціокультурні стратегії формування та підтримки цілісного дискурсивного простору у медійному світі «Зоряних війн». Досліджується феномен трансмедійного світотворення крізь призму «Вторинної енциклопедії» М. Вольфа та теорії конвергентної культури Г. Дженкінса, що забезпечують логічну цілісність вигаданого світу та його автономність. Новизна дослідження полягає у поєднанні теорії текстових світів Дж. Гевінс, критичного дискурс-аналізу Н. Фейрклафа й Т. ван Дейка, а також системно-функціональної лінгвістики.

У роботі показано, що незвична побудова речень магістра Йоди є маркером чужинності, тоді як використання технічного жаргону працює як мовна підказка, яка створює ілюзію реальності історії та наукового прогресу всередині вигаданого світу. Проаналізовано політичну риторичку Палпатіна та показано, як маніпулювання темою безпеки спонукає сприймати тоталітаризм як необхідність. Окрему увагу приділено тому, як вигадані концепти асимілюються в мові. Вони стають маркерами соціальної ідентифікації для цифрових спільнот та навіть інтегруються у сучасну англійську мову.

Ключові слова: трансмедійне світобудування, теорія текстових світів, Вторинна енциклопедія, дискурсивна автентифікація, культура конвергенції.

Introduction. Today, linguistics increasingly moves away from purely structural analysis of texts. Current research focuses on a more complex objective: understanding how large-scale media franchises construct their own convincing reality. The most prominent example of such a phenomenon is the *Star Wars* universe. What began as an ordinary film series has transformed into a full-fledged “text-world” (Gavins, 2007). This universe functions as a complex, living ecosystem where films, books, TV series, and fan communities intertwine to form a cohesive hyperreality that establishes its own logic and rules.

Problem Statement. Although media discourse research typically focuses on visual representation, the linguistic component is crucial for structuring a “Secondary Encyclopedia” (Wolf, 2012). This term refers to a set of systematized knowledge about an imaginary world that ensures its internal coherence and recognizability across media platforms. The problem lies in how an imaginary reality is constructed through grammatical inversions, specialized terminology, and ideologically marked rhetoric, which the viewer perceives as a cohesive civilization. This necessitates a study of language as a tool of subcreation. Within this research, the concept is defined as the “transmedial expansion,” namely the process of transferring and further detailing an already-formed reality across various semiotic environments (Wolf, 2012, p. 249).

In this case, the development of the *Star Wars* universe proceeds in reverse order compared to traditional adaptations. From the original film discourse (*Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*), the world is transferred to the realm of books, comics, games, and digital platforms (Jenkins, 2006; Wolf, 2012). The linguistic elements embedded in the original discourse become the foundation for the further development of this universe, ensuring its coherence and recognizability across various media.

Thus, language functions not only as a means of representation but also as a mechanism that allows the audience to carry out interpretative and projective reconstruction of the worldview, maintaining the integrity of the “Secondary Encyclopedia.”

Analysis of recent research and publications. The theoretical basis of transmedial world-building is laid out in Wolf’s (2012) work, where the parameters of completeness and autonomy for

fictional worlds are justified. The researcher emphasizes that the ultimate goal of world-building is the formation of “secondary belief” (p. 25), a cognitive state in which the viewer perceives the fictional space as real. Jenkins (2006) examines in detail the issue of convergence culture, characterized by the blurring of boundaries between author and consumer. At the same time, cognitive mechanisms for the formation of mental representations are grounded in Gavins’ Text World Theory (2007), particularly on the concept of text-drivenness. For the analysis of the socio-political dimension, this study relies on critical discourse analysis as interpreted by Fairclough (2010) and van Dijk (2008). The issues of ideological influence and linguistic characteristics have previously been addressed by Espindola (2016) and Atkinson (2022). An important aspect is the functioning of digital resources such as Reddit and Wookieepedia, which serve as platforms for the collective construction of the “Secondary Encyclopedia.” The work of Sanchez-Stockhammer (2023) also provided a significant foundation. The researcher examined how artificial lexemes from *Star Wars* have assimilated into everyday English. In light of this, the article aims to investigate the role of linguistic strategies in the process of discursive authentication of the *Star Wars* universe and to determine how linguistic mechanisms transform the fictional galaxy into a self-sustaining reality. Additionally, we seek to demonstrate the role of the fan community in transferring this universe into our everyday discourse.

Research findings. Discursive authentication in the *Star Wars* universe functions as a multi-layered linguo-cognitive procedure that facilitates the formation of a “secondary belief” in the recipient. This process is initiated by the authors by inserting specific markers into the text and completed when the audience verifies their effect. This allows viewers to perceive the fictional galaxy not merely as a narrative backdrop but as an autonomous, living reality. This procedure aims to overcome the barrier between fiction and reality, creating a dense network of linguistic and socio-political markers that confirm the logic of the “Secondary Encyclopedia” (Wolf, 2012).

Grammatical authenticity. The linguistic manifestation of Master Yoda. The unusual syntax of certain characters serves as a textual cue. It marks the cultural and temporal distance within the “Secondary Encyclopedia.” A classic example is Master Yoda’s address to Count Dooku in the second episode of the saga, *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*: “Powerful you have become. The dark side I sense in you” (Lucas, 2002, 02:08:30).

The inversion of word order (OSV – Object-Subject-Verb) emphasizes the semantic dominants “Powerful” and “The dark side,” elevating them to the thematic position. In the standard word order (SVO), these concepts typically function as the rheme (new information); however, through the inversion, they become a marked theme of the sentence. From a systemic-functional linguistics perspective, this is a semiotic resource that signals the “otherness” and foreignness of

Master Yoda (Espindola, 2016). This transforms the grammatical structure into an instrument of authentication.

The theme-rheme organization functions as a textual cue that confirms the character's authority as a bearer of archaic tradition. From the perspective of Text World Theory, Yoda's specific syntax serves as a key element in world-building. Such linguistic anomalies shift the cognitive center of the viewer's origo "I-here-now" (Gavins, 2007, p. 37). This approach compels the audience to construct a text-world in which the character embodies ancient wisdom.

Political authenticity. Rhetoric of technosecurity and manipulation of power. An important aspect of the *Star Wars* universe is that the transition from democracy to totalitarianism is legitimized through the discourse of a state of emergency. Within this framework, the technological might of the clone army is presented as the sole guarantee of security. This stage of analysis is best illustrated by Fairclough's (2010) three-dimensional model, which shows how ordinary speech becomes a tool that breaks the old social order.

A notable example in this context is the climactic scene in *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*. Declaring the creation of the Empire before the Galactic Senate, Palpatine states: "In order to ensure our security and continuing stability, the Republic will be reorganized into the first Galactic Empire!" (Lucas, 2005, 01:35:48).

At the first level (textual analysis), we see a game with abstract concepts of "security" and "stability." These terms resonate against the backdrop of fierce battles and chaos; this is a classic example of securitization – a process in which security issues are addressed solely through technological and military solutions. We are led to believe that political problems can only be solved through brute force (Atkinson, 2022).

At the level of discursive practice, Palpatine masterfully employs what van Dijk (2008) calls the ideological square. This creates a polarized worldview where the Empire is "Us" – the only salvation and bastion of order – while "Them" are the source of chaos and threat.

However, according to Fairclough (2010), the decisive level is the social practice. This speech does not merely speak about new rules. The performative power of the word instantly transforms a free Republic into a totalitarian Empire. This demonstrates the transformative power of discourse within social practice, where linguistic change leads to institutional change. The world seems real because it mirrors actual historical processes. According to Atkinson (2022), this serves as a direct allegory of the decline of the Roman Republic and its transition to the Empire. The author argues that through the discourse of technosecurity, Palpatine's authority appears legitimate in the name of societal safety. In our world, the language of national security has also become a justification for the destruction of democratic freedoms.

Palpatine's speech about the formation of the Empire constructs not only the current text-world but also a modal world of the future, by employing obligation constructions such as "in order to ensure," he models a hypothetical projection of security that stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing chaos. Following the principle of text-drivenness (Gavins, 2007, p. 29), the recipient constructs a mental model of the future strictly in accordance with the parameters set by the speech. This principle implies that linguistic units serve as direct instructions guiding interpretation in the desired direction. Such linguistic programming lays the foundation for the emergence of "secondary belief" (Wolf, 2012), in which the audience comes to perceive the transition to dictatorship as the only logical and coherent reality.

Ideological authentication. The conflict between the organic and the mechanical. Within the saga's discourse, elements of technophobia imbue the universe with mythological depth through the opposition between the spiritual and the technical (Brode & Deyneka, 2012). This opposition forms the ideological autonomy of the fictional space. The world feels real because it has its own philosophical foundation – the struggle between spirit and machine, a theme with universal resonance. This conflict is clearly shown in Darth Vader's quote in *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*: "Don't be too proud of this technological terror you've constructed. The ability to destroy a planet is insignificant next to the power of the Force" (Lucas, 1977, 00:38:10). Vader linguistically labels the Death Star as a "technological terror," contrasting artificial metal with the spiritual power of the Force. From the perspective of subcreation, this filling of the discourse with values strengthens the "secondary belief" of the audience (Wolf, 2012). The viewer sees the conflict not as a movie script, but as a clash of fundamental worldviews, which makes the universe look like a self-sufficient civilization.

Semiotics of technological discourse. Names as parameters of world-creation. A sense of authenticity is largely achieved through specialized terminology. Specifically, this creates the illusion of technical depth. Recall the purchase of droids in *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, where Luke and his uncle casually discuss the technical specifications of the machine: "This R2 unit has a bad motivator" and "I need a droid who understands the binary language of moisture vapourators" (Lucas, 1977, 00:17:55). The use of terms such as "binary language" and "moisture vapourators" functions as a textual cue (Gavins, 2007). This suggests that the world of Tatooine is inhabited through language. The viewer believes in the reality of the desert planet not through visual effects, but through the characters' use of professional jargon, which integrates fictional technologies into their everyday, mundane reality. It is worth noting that the same droids exist not only on the screen but also in consumers' hands. According to Jenkins (2006), the reality of technological discourse is reinforced through the materialization of objects, starting with children's play. The release of the first line of Kenner toys allowed children to literally touch this imaginary world. Thus, the

“Secondary Encyclopedia” gradually integrated into popular culture (Jenkins, 2006, p. 132). As Jenkins rightly points out, transmedia storytelling has long gone beyond traditional marketing. It is a form of art that requires constant audience engagement, transforming passive viewers into active “hunters and gatherers” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 21).

Cognitive authentication of time. Discourse of an ancient era. Certain linguistic devices artificially age the story, lending it historical weight. Events on the screen begin to resemble ancient myth. The most illustrative example is the cult caption “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...”, as well as Obi-Wan Kenobi’s words in *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*: “For over a thousand generations, the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic. Before the dark times, before the Empire” (Lucas, 1977, 00:33:55). The use of temporal markers like “thousand generations” and the contrast between “Old Republic” and “dark times” create an effect of historical significance. In this case, discourse functions as a tool for forming temporal sub-worlds (Gavins, 2007). Through these linguistic cues, the recipient cognitively reconstructs a millennia-long history that remains off-screen, effectively authenticating the fictional world as a full-fledged civilization with its own deep historical memory.

Convergent authentication, the role of “participatory culture” in expanding the world. While Wolf (2012) describes the architecture of the “Secondary Encyclopedia” as static, Jenkins (2006) explains its functioning mechanism through the culture of convergence, meaning it is the engine. This driving force causes the world to expand and be supplemented with new details, where the boundary between the fictional world and reality disappears. For example, consider the platform Reddit, where discussion of the phrase from the series *The Mandalorian*: “This is the Way” (Favreau, 2019, 1:3, 00:11:00) has become part of real online communication. Fans discuss why the phrase “May the Force be with you” is gradually being replaced by “This is the Way” (Darth-Binks-1999, 2020). This is a vivid example of how the language of cinema becomes our own. Fictitious phrases become embedded in our consciousness, and we start using them to describe real events. These expressions from a fictional universe gradually become recognizable elements of contemporary language (Sanchez-Stockhammer, 2023). The most comprehensive implementation of the “Secondary Encyclopedia” (Wolf, 2012) is evident on Wookieepedia, where the fan community functions as a collective linguist. Analysis of article talk pages reveals debates over color classification and object features that vary across media sources. Community members perform detailed comparisons of canonical texts, verifying each linguistic detail. This process turns individual textual cues (Gavins, 2007, p. 175) into established facts of the fictional universe, ultimately affirming its status as a self-contained world.

Conclusions and prospects of the research. The analysis demonstrates that the phenomenon of *Star Wars* is grounded in a complex system of discursive authentication. The existence of this

mechanism is confirmed by the stability of specific linguistic markers – such as inversions, technical jargon, ideologemes – as they transition from the film screen to fan wiki resources, games, and everyday speech. Language in this franchise has long gone beyond being a tool for storytelling – it has become a building material for a new reality.

The key feature of transmedia world-building is that language serves as a cohesive thread across different media platforms. On a micro-linguistic level, these markers act as cognitive triggers. They compel the audience to believe in the technological and historical depth of the fictional galaxy, forming a “secondary belief” in the recipient.

Looking at the macro-discursive level, the mechanism of legitimizing power becomes evident. The rhetoric of technosecurity and ideological square used by the Empire resembles real political processes, thereby enhancing the immersion effect and making the fictional socio-political model more convincing.

It is worth noting the role of digital platforms such as Reddit and Wookieepedia. Fans have essentially taken on the function of a collective linguist; they verify terminology and transfer film quotes into everyday communication. The synthesis of the Text World Theory with the concept of the “Secondary Encyclopedia” allows us to make a key conclusion: transmedia world-building enables the media universe to acquire realness only when its discourse attains sufficient discursive coherence to exist autonomously, beyond the confines of cinema. The fan community completes the construction of an autonomous universe, transforming the “Secondary Encyclopedia” into a dynamic entity in which the boundary between fiction and reality dissolves. The prospects for further research lie in a detailed study of the mechanisms of hyperreality formation through language in the context of modern digital culture.

References

1. Atkinson, C. (2022). Security politics and techno-securitization in Star Wars. *Contemporary Social Science*, 17(5), 501–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2022.2097733>
2. Brode, D., & Deyneka, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Myth, Media, and Culture in Star Wars*. Scarecrow Press.
3. Darth-Binks-1999. (2020). Re: Is “this is the way” becoming a more popular phrase among Star Wars fans than “may the force be with you”? [Online forum post]. *Reddit*. https://www.reddit.com/r/StarWars/comments/jxshht/is_this_is_the_way_becoming_a_more_popular_phrase/
4. Espindola, E. (2016). A systemic functional translation analysis of Yoda’s linguistic manifestation. *WORD*, 62(1), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.2016.1141938>
5. Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
6. Favreau, J. (Writer), & Chow, D. (Director). (2019, November 22). Chapter 3: The Sin (Season 1, Episode 3) [TV series episode]. In J. Favreau, D. Filoni, K. Kennedy, & C. Wilson (Executive Producers), *The Mandalorian*. Lucasfilm; Disney+.
7. Gavins, J. (2007). *Text World Theory: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
8. Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.
9. Lucas, G. (Director). (1977). *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* [Film]. Lucasfilm; Twentieth Century Fox.
10. Lucas, G. (Director). (2002). *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* [Film]. Lucasfilm; Twentieth Century Fox.

11. Lucas, G. (Director). (2005). *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* [Film]. Lucasfilm; Twentieth Century Fox.
12. Sanchez-Stockhammer, C. (2023). The impact of Star Wars on the English language: Star Wars-derived words and constructions in present-day English corpora. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 9(s3), 233–245. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lingvan-2023-0029>
13. van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan.
14. Wolf, M. J. P. (2012). *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. Routledge.
15. Wookieepedia. (n.d.). *Kyber crystal*. Fandom. Retrieved March 24, 2026, from https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Kyber_crystal
16. Wookieepedia. (n.d.). *Talk: Kyber crystal*. Fandom. Retrieved March 24, 2026, from https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/Talk:Kyber_crystal