

**STANKO Daryna V.,**

Doctor of Philology, Associate Professor at the Department of English Philology Uzhhorod National University;  
3 Narodna Square, Uzhhorod, Zakarpattia Region, Ukraine;

e-mail: [daryna.stanko2021@gmail.com](mailto:daryna.stanko2021@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7858-8663>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY OF THE FANFICTION TERMINOLOGICAL SYSTEM**

**Summary.** The article investigates the English terminological system of fanfiction as an emerging linguistic, cultural, and communicative phenomenon within the global digital environment. Fanfiction, defined as amateur creative writing based on pre-existing literary, cinematic, or media sources, has evolved into a productive sphere of lexical innovation and semantic transformation. The **purpose** of this study is to analyze the terminological system of English-language fanfiction. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are set: to outline the theoretical foundations of the research; to identify the motivational and word-formation features of English fanfiction terminology; to describe the systemic and structural characteristics of English fanfiction terms; to determine the thematic domains represented within the fanfiction terminology. The object of the study is the terminological system of English fanfiction. The **subject** of the research is the linguistic structure, motivational mechanisms, and semantic organization of English fanfiction terms as elements of digital and participatory discourse. The **object** of the study is the terminological system of English-language fanfiction as a subsystem of contemporary digital discourse. The study **aims** to analyze the structural, motivational, and functional organization of English fanfiction terminology, tracing how informal lexical units evolve into specialized terms through processes of terminologization, determinologization, and reterminologization. The

research draws on authentic materials from major fan platforms such as *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, *FanFiction.net*. Using a combination of descriptive, structural-semantic, and operational methods, the study identifies the mechanisms by which fan communities generate, stabilize, and disseminate terminology. Particular attention is given to neologisms and word-formation models typical of fandom discourse, including *AU (Alternate Universe)*, *OTP (One True Pairing)*, *slash*, *canon*, *fanon*, *headcanon*, and *fluff*. The results demonstrate that the fanfiction terminological system functions as a dynamic and self-regulating subsystem of English characterized by systematicity, specialization, precision, and high linguistic creativity. It operates at the intersection of professional terminology and subcultural slang, reflecting the hybrid nature of participatory media communication. The study highlights how the digital context, community practices, and intertextuality contribute to lexical stabilization and cross-cultural diffusion of English fanfiction terminology. Theoretically, the **research contributes** to the expansion of modern terminology studies by situating fanfiction discourse within the broader framework of cognitive and communicative linguistics. Practically, the findings are relevant for translation studies, lexicography, discourse analysis, particularly in the field of digital communication and creative writing.

**Keywords:** fanfiction, terminology, terminologization, digital discourse, lexical innovation, online communication.

**Introduction.** Fanfiction has long become an integral component of contemporary popular culture, and the study of its English terminological system is highly relevant for several reasons encompassing cultural, linguistic, and social dimensions. The term *fanfiction* refers to literary works created by fans of popular books, films, television series, comics, and other media. These works are based on existing source texts but expand their plotlines, reinterpret characters, or imagine alternative developments of the original narrative. From a linguistic standpoint, the terminological system of fanfiction represents a particularly fertile ground for analysis, as it comprises numerous neologisms and phraseological innovations that reflect ongoing processes of linguistic creativity. Given that English functions as a global language, examining its terminological system within the context of fanfiction enables researchers to trace how language adapts and evolves under the influence of emerging cultural phenomena.

The social dimension of fanfiction terminology studies is equally significant. It elucidates how online fan communities are formed, maintained, and linguistically represented. Fanfiction-related terminology embodies group identity and a sense of belonging within specific fandoms, serving as a marker of in-group communication and shared cultural literacy. Moreover, fanfiction possesses considerable educational value: engaging with English-language fanfiction enhances learners' abilities in text analysis, literary criticism, and genre awareness [7].

Overall, fanfiction constitutes a cross-cultural phenomenon, and the investigation of its English terminological system provides insight into global trends in participatory culture. The analysis of the terms and conceptual structures used in English fanfictions contributes to the understanding of how these works can be adapted and translated across cultural and linguistic boundaries. The development of a fanfiction-specific terminological framework is also instrumental in exploring digital culture and user behavior on text-sharing platforms [8].

Therefore, the study of the English terminological system of fanfiction remains pertinent across cultural, linguistic, social, educational, and intercultural domains.

To begin with, it is essential to outline the key concepts underpinning this study. *Terminology* is understood as a set of specialized naming units within a given field of human activity, representing an isomorphic system of its concepts and serving relevant communicative needs. A *terminological system* is an organized set of terms within a specific area or sub-area of scientific or technical knowledge that supports a particular theory or conceptual framework [1].

The development of a terminological system does not coincide with the emergence of a science itself but evolves in accordance with the stages of theoretical advancement. The foundation of a terminological system may derive not only from a well-established theory but also from general conceptual or philosophical principles. Scholars identify three major stages in the formation and functioning of a terminological system: the transition from an unstructured set of terms to a coherent, systematized framework; the expansion of terminology through scientific, technological, and cultural progress; the transformation of the system following theoretical change, when previous terms are reinterpreted or replaced to represent new concepts. This process results in the construction of a new conceptual network, within which each new term occupies a defined position, while some older terms persist but acquire new meanings [3].

A mature terminological system emerges when a field has established its theoretical foundation, objects of study, and relationships among them. Its key features include integrity, reflecting a coherent conceptual model of the domain; stability, since it captures the disciplinary worldview at a particular stage of development; and structured organization, which may be hierarchical or multilevel, representing generic-specific, part-whole, and causal relations [4].

A terminological system organizes knowledge within a discipline, ensures effective communication among experts and general users engaged in secondary communication, facilitates teaching and knowledge transfer, and promotes the standardization and unification of terms to prevent ambiguity. Every terminological system forms part of a broader language system yet differs from it in structural principles. Terms are typically created through metaphorization, borrowing, calquing, morphological derivation involving international morphemes, abbreviation,

and analogy. Interaction between general language and specialized subsystems manifests in determinologization (a term's transition into general vocabulary) and terminologization (a common word's transition into a specialized system). Additionally, reterminologization denotes the transfer of a term from one system to another, either preserving or modifying its meaning. These processes constitute the focus of *terminology studies* [ibid].

The **purpose** of this study is to analyze the terminological system of English-language fanfiction. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are set: to outline the theoretical foundations of the research; to identify the motivational and word-formation features of English fanfiction terminology; to describe the systemic and structural characteristics of English fanfiction terms; to determine the thematic domains represented within the fanfiction terminology. The object of the study is the terminological system of English fanfiction.

The **subject** of the research is the linguistic structure, motivational mechanisms, and semantic organization of English fanfiction terms as elements of digital and participatory discourse. The **object** of the study is the terminological system of English-language fanfiction as a subsystem of contemporary digital discourse.

The **empirical material** comprises English fanfiction texts and glossaries published on major fan platforms such as *Archive of Our Own* (AO3), *FanFiction.net* communities. These sources reflect authentic user-generated discourse, providing a representative corpus of contemporary fanfiction terminology.

**Materials and Methods.** The research employs a combination of methods: descriptive and analytical – for defining and classifying terminological units; structural-semantic analysis – to determine internal organization and interrelations among terms; motivational and word-formation analysis – to identify derivational models and semantic shifts.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that it offers the first comprehensive analysis of the English fanfiction terminological system as a distinct subsystem of digital discourse, characterized by hybrid linguistic creativity and high intertextuality. The theoretical value of the research consists in expanding the understanding of terminology formation within non-traditional, user-generated genres of online communication. It also contributes to the development of contemporary terminology theory, particularly regarding hybrid and evolving discursive environments. The practical value lies in the possibility of applying the findings to teaching English terminology, translation studies, lexicography, and discourse analysis. The identified models can serve as the basis for compiling specialized glossaries and for comparative studies of terminological evolution in digital subcultures.

**Researches.** Modern research identifies several approaches to defining and analyzing terms as linguistic phenomena. The normative approach conceptualizes a term as a word or phrase with a specific meaning that represents a professional concept, characterized by precision, monosemy, and systematicity. However, critics note that this approach treats the term as a static linguistic element, overlooking its variability and semantic shifts [6]. The functional (descriptive) approach addresses this limitation by viewing the term as a dynamic linguistic unit capable of semantic change, synonymic variation, or integration into general vocabulary [2]. The systemic approach emphasizes that a term exists only within an ordered conceptual system and maintains relationships with other elements of that system through structural and semantic links [4, p. 207].

In sum, three major paradigms can be distinguished in terminological theory: (1) the semiotic approach, which regards the term as a special sign within a specific semiotic system; (2) the lexical-linguistic approach, which treats the term as a lexical unit of the general language; and (3) the systemic-functional approach, which situates the term within a network of professional concepts and highlights its nominative function in the conceptual system of science and technology. The third approach appears the most comprehensive and productive for studying complex terminological systems [6].

From a structural perspective, researchers distinguish three main types of terminological units [5]: simple (one-word) terms; compound terms; terminological phrases. The distinction between these types lies in the morphological and syntactic integration of their components. In terminological phrases, elements remain syntactically independent, whereas in one-word terms they are morphologically fused.

From a semantic standpoint, terminological phrases fall into three categories: both components are specialized terms that, when combined, form a new concept; one component is specialized, the other belongs to general vocabulary (typically adjective–noun or noun–noun structures); both components originate from general vocabulary but together create a specialized, often idiomatic, expression [ibid]. Terminological word combinations are considered equivalents of one-word terms, since they function as fixed lexical units within scientific and professional discourse, expressing a single integrated concept identical to that of their one-word counterparts [ibid, p. 83].

**Discussion.** The formation of a terminological system may follow different methodological principles, among which the hierarchical, genetic, and operational methods are the most productive. The hierarchical method relies on generic-specific relations, structuring terms through taxonomic dependency. Within the fanfiction domain, *fanfiction* itself serves as the hypernym denoting all literary works created by fans based on pre-existing canonical sources. Subordinate terms include *AU* (*Alternate Universe*), describing narratives situated in non-canonical settings; *Crossover*, integrating characters or worlds from different sources; *Canon*, referring to officially recognized events or characters within the original text; *Fanon*, meaning collectively accepted interpretations within a fandom that lack canonical confirmation; and *Pairing*, indicating romantic or sexual relationships between characters, further specified in subcategories such as *OTP* (*One True Pairing*), *Slash*, *Femslash*, and *Ship*. The genetic method produces derivative forms from key lexical bases, for example, *fanfiction* → *fanfic*, *ficwriter*.

Fanfiction is a dynamic phenomenon that continuously evolves in real time through user-generated creativity, leading to linguistic innovation. Frequent-term analysis captures these shifts and facilitates the documentation of emerging lexical trends. The genre's diversity necessitates a methodological framework capable of recognizing genre-specific lexical sets. Fan communities function as socio-cultural microcosms; frequency-based analysis allows the identification of culturally salient expressions reflecting group identity and communicative norms. A terminological system, therefore, represents a hierarchically organized network of interrelated concepts within a particular field of knowledge or practice. The fanfiction terminological system exhibits the essential characteristics of any specialized lexicon: systematicity, through logical interconnections among terms; specialization, via domain-specific meanings; precision, ensuring unambiguous interpretation; standardization, providing communicative consistency; and dynamism, reflecting the ongoing evolution of media and communication theory.

Within this framework, it is necessary to distinguish between slang, jargon, and terminology – categories often blurred in popular discourse. Fanfiction-related vocabulary may overlap these categories, but their functions differ. Slang performs a social function, expressing group identity and belonging, typically in informal contexts among fandom participants. Jargon serves professional or in-group communication, encoding meanings accessible only to members of a specialized community, such as dedicated fanwriters. Terminology, in contrast, performs a nominative and cognitive function, providing precise conceptual definitions used in scholarly or systematized contexts. Thus, while slang emphasizes identity, jargon facilitates coded interaction, and terminology ensures accuracy and conceptual clarity—especially relevant in the linguistic study of fanfiction as a form of mass participatory culture.

The establishment of fanfiction terminology as a legitimate system is justified by several factors. The proliferation of online platforms such as *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, *FanFiction.net* has generated vast corpora of user-created texts and communicative exchanges, necessitating a specialized lexicon for effective interaction. The stability of key lexical items like *AU*, *OTP*, *fluff*, and *angst*, along with the existence of fan-created glossaries, demonstrates terminological consolidation within the community. Moreover, the global scale of fanfiction readership and its growing academic recognition underscore its cultural and linguistic significance. As the genre continues to evolve, new subgenres and collaborative writing formats contribute to ongoing terminological expansion.

In summary, fanfiction terminology constitutes a dynamic, structured, and socially grounded linguistic subsystem that reflects the cognitive, cultural, and communicative practices of digital fandom communities. Its study not only illuminates the mechanisms of linguistic creativity in participatory media but also contributes to understanding the processes of terminology formation in contemporary digital discourse.

Given the current popularity of amateur literary production, reading, commenting on, and writing fanfiction now attract participants across age groups, and many notions from internet communication have migrated into popular-scientific and scholarly discourse. Consequently, expressions from this sphere acquire terminological status as official designations of specialized concepts anchored in a particular domain of knowledge and practice. Importantly, this shift is recognized not only by researchers but also by the communities that actively use and refine this lexicon.

Terminologization in English fanfiction is a multi-stage, recursive process. It begins with lexical emergence, where new forms arise to name novel practices or textual phenomena – *fanfiction* itself combines *fan* ‘an ardent enthusiast’ with *fiction* ‘imaginative narrative’, signaling derivative creativity grounded in prior cultural products. Diffusion follows, as items circulate through forums, social media, and dedicated platforms; *slash* spread rapidly via community debate about same-sex pairings and has since been codified in general dictionaries as a genre label. Subsequent stabilization yields relatively fixed definitions and usage conventions, as with *AU*

(*Alternate Universe*) for non-canonical settings. Finally, terms may transcend fandom and enter broader cultural vocabulary – *shipping* (“relationship” support) now appears widely beyond fan texts.

Several properties shape this pathway. Creativity and flexibility drive rapid coinage and semantic adaptation; borrowing and recontextualization import items like *canon* from religious-literary discourse to denote the authorized narrative of a source text; and the internet accelerates circulation, negotiation, and standardization across blogs, wikis, and archives. Because meanings are often community-specific, many units remain highly specialized, indexing the interpretive habits of particular fandoms.

In practice, terminologization is sustained by platformed discourse. Communities on *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, *FanFiction.net* continually produce, test, and entrench terminology; resources such as *Fanlore* document usages, facilitating uptake and pedagogical stability. As terms recur in stories, tags, reviews, and meta-commentary, they solidify within fandom culture. Productive mechanisms include reanalysis of existing words (*headcanon*), playful blendings and abbreviations (*OTP*, *AU*), and community metadiscourse that forges categories for emergent practices.

Historically, the lexicon expands alongside media ecologies: early fan zines of the 1960s–1970s (notably around *Star Trek*) incubated items like *slash*; the franchise boom of the 1980s and the web of the 1990s normalized *AU*, *Mary Sue*, *OTP*, and *headcanon*; the 2000s–2010s consolidated genre-semantic labels (*fluff*, *angst*) and infrastructural terms (*beta reader*, *kudos*); the 2020s add techno-cultural descriptors such as *AI-generated fanfiction* and *virtual fandom spaces*. Today’s inventory continues to diversify – *crackship*, *fix-it fic*, *whump*, *slow burn*, *coffee shop AU*, *bed sharing* – illustrating ongoing innovation in sense extension, word-formation, and discourse tagging.

Overall, the fanfiction terminological system both reflects and drives change in English: it generates neologisms, repurposes existing lexemes, internationalizes via global circulation, and encodes evolving social concerns (e.g., *trigger warnings*, *non-binary*). As a dynamic, community-regulated subsystem, it offers a clear window onto contemporary mechanisms of terminology formation in digitally mediated, participatory culture.

**Conclusions.** The conducted study demonstrates that the English fanfiction terminological system represents a complex, dynamic, and evolving linguistic subsystem that has emerged at the intersection of digital communication, participatory culture, and amateur creativity. Its development reflects both universal principles of terminology formation and distinctive features of online discourse shaped by user-generated content. Fanfiction terminology, originating from informal, community-driven communication, has undergone a process of gradual terminologization – from spontaneous lexical creation to conceptual stabilization and academic recognition. Terms such as *AU*, *OTP*, *canon*, *slash*, *fluff*, and *angst* illustrate how the lexicon of fandom communities evolves from subcultural slang into standardized units of digital linguistic practice. This process is governed by mechanisms of metaphorization, borrowing, blending, abbreviation, and semantic reanalysis, reflecting the creativity and adaptability of English as a global language. The operational, hierarchical, and genetic methods of terminological system formation reveal that fanfiction terminology is hierarchically organized, conceptually interconnected, and responsive to genre diversity. Its systemicity, specialization, and dynamism align it with recognized scientific and professional terminologies, while its social embeddedness and intercultural diffusion highlight the participatory and communicative nature of contemporary digital discourse. Moreover, fanfiction terminology functions as a marker of group identity and in-group communication within online fandoms, facilitating both creative expression and social cohesion. Its lexical innovations – documented through platforms such as *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, *FanFiction.net* – illustrate how collaborative interaction among readers and writers generates and consolidates new linguistic conventions. Theoretically, the study contributes to the broader understanding of terminology as a dynamic category that extends beyond traditional scientific domains into cultural and digital environments. Practically, the results can inform lexicographic, translation, and pedagogical work focused on modern digital communication and fan discourse. In sum, the English fanfiction terminological system exemplifies the linguistic creativity of participatory online culture, demonstrating how collective imagination, technological mediation, and social interaction shape the evolution of English vocabulary in the twenty-first century.

#### Література

1. Задиський М. С. Актуальні проблеми українського термінознавства : підручн. для студ. вищих навч. закл. Київ : Політехніка: ТОВ «Фідма “Періодика”», 2004. 124 с.
2. Івашенко В. Л. Фреймове і комунікативне термінознавство в зарубіжній лінгвістиці. *Мовознавство*. 2013. № 1. С. 51–58.

3. Кияк Т. Р. Семантичні аспекти нормалізації термінологічних одиниць. *Мова і культура. Серія «Філологія»*. Київ : Навкове вид-во. 2008. Вип. 3. Т. 1, ч. 2. С. 57–71.
4. Попович Ю. В., Бялик В. Д. Поняття термінології та терміносистеми в сучасній лінгвістиці. *Вчені записки Таврійського національного університету імені В. І. Вернадського. Серія : Філологія. Соціальні комунікації*. 2020. Т. 31(70). № 2(2). С. 206–211.
5. Циткіна Ф. О. Термінологія й переклад. Львів : ВЛІ, 2003. 187 с.
6. Cabré M. T. Theories of Terminology : Their description, prescription and explanation. *Terminology*. 2003. No. 2. pp. 163–199.
7. Hills M. From fan culture/Community to the fan world: possible pathways and ways of having done fandom. *Palabra Clave*. 2017. 20(4). pp. 856–883.
8. Jenkins H. Textual poachers : Television fans and participatory culture. New York. 1992. 352 p.
9. FanFiction.net. URL: <https://www.fanfiction.net/>
10. Archive of our own. URL: <https://archiveofourown.org/>

## References

1. Zarytskyi, M. S. (2004), *Current issues of Ukrainian terminology : textbook for students*, [Aktual'ni problemy ukrains'koho terminoznavstva : pidruchn. dlia stud. vyshchykh navch. zakl.], Politehnika. Kyiv : TOV "Firma "Periodyka". 124 p.
2. Ivashchenko, V. L. (2013), *Frame and communicative terminology studies in foreign linguistics, Movoznavstvo* [Freimove i komunikativne terminoznavstvo v zarubizhnii lnhvistytsi, Movoznavstvo], No. 1, pp. 51–58.
3. Kyiak, T. R. (2008), *Semantic aspects of the normalization of terminological units, Mova i kul'tura. Seriiia 'Filolohiia'* [Cemantychni aspekty normalizatsii terminolohichnykh odynts. Mova i kultura. Seriiia «Filolohiia»]. Kyiv : Naukove vydavnytstvo, Vol. 3, Pt. 1., No. 2, pp. 57–71.
4. Popovych, Yu. V. and Bialyk, V. D. (2020), *The concept of terminology and term system in modern linguistics, Scientific Notes of V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University. Series: Philology. Social Communications* [Poniattia terminolohii ta terminosystemy v suchasni lnhvistytsi. Vcheni zapysky Tavriiskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni V. I. Vernadskoho. Seriiia : Filolohiia. Sotsialni komunikatsii], Vol. 31(70), No. 2(2), pp. 206–211.
5. Tsytkina, F. O. (2003), *Terminology and translation* [Terminolohiia y pereklad]. Lviv: VLI. 187 p.
6. Cabré, M. T. (2003), Theories of Terminology: Their description, prescription and explanation, *Terminology*, No. 2, pp. 163–199.
7. Hills, M. (2017), From fan culture/community to the fan world: possible pathways and ways of having done fandom. *Palabra Clave*. Vol. 20(4), pp. 856–883.
8. Jenkins, H. (1992), Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture, Routledge. New York. 352 p.
9. *FanFiction.net*. Available at: <https://www.fanfiction.net/>
10. *Archive of Our Own*. Available at: <https://archiveofourown.org/>

## СТАНКО Дарина Василівна,

доктор філологічних наук, доцент, професор кафедри англійської граматики

Ужгородського національного університету;

Народна площа 3, Ужгород, Закарпатська область, Україна

e-mail: daryna.stanko2021@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7858-8663>

## ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ЗАСАДИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЧНОЇ СИСТЕМИ ФАНФІКШЕНУ

**Анотація.** У статті досліджується англійська термінологічна система фанфікшену як новітнього лінгвістичного, культурного та комунікативного феномену в умовах глобального цифрового середовища. Фанфікшен, що визначається як аматорське творче письмо, засноване на вже існуючих літературних, кінематографічних чи медійних джерелах, перетворився на продуктивну сферу лексичних інновацій і семантичних трансформацій. **Метою** дослідження є аналіз термінологічної системи англійського фанфікшену. Для досягнення цієї мети визначено такі **завдання**: окреслити теоретичні засади дослідження; виявити мотиваційні та словотвірні особливості англійської термінології фанфікшену; описати системні й структурні характеристики термінів фанфікшену; визначити тематичні домени, представлені в термінології фанфікшену. **Об'єктом дослідження** є термінологічна система фанфікшену англійською мовою. **Предметом дослідження** виступають мовна структура, мотиваційні механізми та семантична організація англійських термінів фанфікшену як елементів цифрового та партисипативного дискурсу. Дослідження ґрунтується на автентичних матеріалах великих фан-платформ, зокрема *Archive of Our Own (AO3)*, *FanFiction.net*. Комбінуючи описовий, структурно-семантичний та операційний методи, робота виявляє механізми, за допомогою яких фан-спільноти створюють, закріплюють і поширюють термінологію. Особливу увагу приділено неологізмам і словотвірним моделям, характерним для дискурсу фандому, таким як AU (Alternate Universe), OTP (One True Pairing), slash, canon, fanon, headcanon, fluff. **Результати** дослідження засвідчують, що термінологічна система фанфікшену функціонує як динамічна й саморегульована підсистема англійської мови, якій притаманні системність, спеціалізація, точність та висока мовна креативність, що перебуває на перетині професійної термінології та субкультурного сленгу, що відображає гібридну природу партисипативної медіакомунікації. У дослідженні підкреслено, що цифровий контекст, практики спільнот та інтертекстуальність сприяють лексичній стабілізації та міжкультурній дифузії термінології фанфікшену. **У теоретичному вимірі** робота сприяє розширенню сучасних термінознавчих студій, розміщуючи дискурс фанфікшену в ширшому контексті когнітивної та комунікативної лінгвістики. **У практичному аспекті** результати дослідження є релевантними для перекладознавства, лексикографії, дискурс-аналізу, зокрема в галузі цифрової комунікації та творчого письма.

**Ключові слова:** фанфікшен, термінологія, термінологізація, цифровий дискурс, лексичні інновації, онлайн-комунікація.

Статтю отримано 17.10.2025