

**LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES OF DELIVERING INFORMATION
ABOUT UKRAINE AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR WITHIN THE TEXTS
OF THE WESTERN MASS MEDIA**

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The paper analyses articles in online newspapers and publications on social networks, which reveal an understanding of how the world sees Ukraine and the power of mass media influencing public opinion during the war in Ukraine. For a better understanding of the author's motives and the military situation in the country, linguistic semantic analysis and analysis of linguistic interpretation were applied to search for hidden meanings of the authors' statements used in scientific articles. When implicitness is noticed, linguistic semantic analysis is used to find hidden meanings in the text in order to make it clearer. It has also been vital to establish the differences between newspapers and social media because those texts can be different with their specific way of rendering information and semantics that is put in them.

Since the 24th of February, 2022, the name of Ukraine has been a great phenomenon. A lot of articles in online newspapers and posts on social media have been written. There are a lot of examples how Ukraine was shown in that kind of texts. It is necessary to analyze them when trying to understand how the world sees Ukraine and power of impact that mass media has on society's opinion. Nowadays, because of information that can be found online, it became easy for people to receive news, facts, and other needed things. This huge amount of information that people deal with from day to day has enormous impact on society's life. They contain information that forms people's vision of certain events, people, situations. One of such situations is the current war in Ukraine. Since its beginning, it has been one of the most relevant topics in the modern world. The war has been constantly discussed in global mass media. Such articles are written in order to inform people about the war and that whole situation. Editors need to make information clear for people who are not specialists in politics. And sometimes these articles and posts can be very manipulative and a little far from reality, which can have a huge impact on people's minds. They are used by propagandists and their purpose is to form, or in some cases to change, society's opinion about something.

Key words: *social media, war, news, article, mass media, linguistic semantic analysis, hidden senses, the method of linguistic interpretation.*

ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПОДАННЯ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ ПРО УКРАЇНУ ТА РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКУ ВІЙНУ В ТЕКСТАХ ЗАХІДНИХ ЗМІ

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У статті проаналізовано публікації в інтернет-газетах і пости у соціальних мережах, які розкривають розуміння того, як світ бачить Україну в період російсько-української війни, й обґрунтовано вплив ЗМІ на громадську думку.

Для розуміння авторських мотивів висвітлення воєнної ситуації в нашій країні зарубіжними масмедіа застосовано лінгво-семантичний аналіз; для пошуку прихованих смислів висловлювань авторів, використаних у проаналізованих статтях, – методику лінгвістичної інтерпретації текстів.

У дослідженні встановлено відмінності між газетними статтями та постами соціальних мереж. З'ясовано, що такі тексти можуть відрізнятися специфічним способом передачі інформації та своєрідністю закладених у них значень.

***Ключові слова:** соціальні мережі, війна, інформаційні новини, ЗМІ, лінгво-семантичний аналіз, приховані сенси, метод лінгвістичної інтерпретації.*

Problem statement. In order to understand society's opinion, it is necessary to realize that information may be very subjective. For example, for people who have not experienced war, it may be traumatizing to read about somebody's reality. People who live in peaceful places cannot understand the whole meaning of war. Therefore, writers have to be careful while having a duty to inform about such important thing. Understanding author's motives is essential if somebody tries to understand why information is shown in a certain way. It also must be kept in mind that many people (they are huge consumers of social/mass media) will never understand the whole situation, so a writer must be careful with sayings and should provide readers with only short key facts.

The main purpose of the paper is to analyze these articles and render the meaning of the writers' opinions, discover hidden senses and contexts of the authors' statements used in the analyzed scientific articles, which help understand an author's motives and the reader's mind. Analysis of the author's text can lead those, who are trying to learn more about people's way of thinking, to a desirable result. Scientists can explore mind of people that live in a certain area and understand why information is given in that way and not another. And that is the reason why linguistic semantic analysis is important in that kind of research. It leads scientists to a deeper understanding of a question they are trying to find an answer to. It shows all hidden senses that have been put in certain words, sentences, paragraphs. These senses will be analyzed through applying linguistic semantic analysis and linguistic interpretation, and they are the key to understanding the motives of the articles.

Studies referring to the issue. There is an article about the Western reaction to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. It has been published on the page of Ukrainian media named "24 Channel" (Komar, 2023). The author analyzes the reaction of Western countries in the first hours and days of the war.

At the beginning of his article, the author explains how the Ukrainian side was warning Western countries about the Russian army's invasion. However, this article is written in Ukrainian, so here's the translation of key phrases: "*Oh my God, it is really happening!*" (semantics of shock but not a surprise) – the article with that name was published by Politico because of the anniversary of the war's outbreak in Ukraine (Komar, 2023). By these sentences, we imply that Europe was ready for this war. European countries' leaders knew that something was going to happen. By using the name of the country (Ukraine), the writer wants to remind readers that he is talking about one particular war. He also wants to emphasize the importance of this war. We linguistically interpret (Albota, 2021, c. 772) that Western countries realize how essential it is to protect Ukraine.

When describing those days, it was frequently used such a word as Kyiv. It is used in sentences: “*Chairman of the European Council, Charles Michel remembered that around 3 am that night he received a call straight from the Kyiv*”. In this sentence *Kyiv* means President of Ukraine, not a city or its residents. Using the name of the city instead of the president’s one creates an impression that something big had happened. By this change in words, the author wanted to emphasize the importance of that phone call.

In the example above, where instead of using the president’s name the author used the country’s name, we imply nation that lives there. There are no mentions of the name of a particular person, but by using the name of the city, the writer means the Ukrainian president. We state that the example of using *Kyiv* is implicit rendering a hidden sense.

Main body of the article. While writing their articles, authors use as many methods of making the text as interesting as they can. They can be very different, and they are numerous. One thing that is commonly used in articles is changing name of something particular to a name of something general. This method is widely used especially in articles referring to political issues. Creating such implicitness is important for writers because sometimes it helps to make the text easier to read. For example, many politicians represent their countries in the global political arena. When someone says or does something important, journalists need to write an article or to publish a post on social media. To make information more comprehensible for readers, an author uses the name of that politician and then just changes it to a country’s name. This linguistic semantic implicitness is widely used in the media all over the world (Waights Hickman, 2021).

One of such examples is following quotation from an article that was posted on 06.05.2023 in British newspaper called “The Sun” about the war in Ukraine: “*Ukraine claims to have shot down a hypersonic Russian “Dagger” missile for the first time since the war began*” (Iona Cleave. 2023). This is a clear example of implicitness: the name of something particular was changed to the country name. The word *Ukraine* stands for the Ukrainian army or even someone or a group of soldiers that shot down that missile. By this change author made text easier for those, who would read it.

There is an article about that exact accident that was also posted on 06.05.2023 in American newspaper called “The New York Times”. The following sentence is a quotation of that text: “*An American – made Patriot air – defense missile successfully intercepted one of the most sophisticated conventional weapons in Russian’s arsenal for the first time over Kyiv on Thursday night, the Ukrainian air – force claimed on Saturday*” (Marc Santora, Eric Schmitt and John Ismay, 2023). In this example there are no hidden senses but explicitly we have an understanding of what happened on that Thursday night. The one thing that has been changed is the name of a person, who is responsible for connections with public, to the name of an air – force.

Both above articles stand for the same accident. But something interesting can be noticed when comparing them. As can be seen from an extract of the article posted in the British newspaper “The Sun”, from the beginning sentence we linguistically interpret that the Ukrainian army did something significant – there is a semantics of emphasizing the importance of Ukrainian army’s actions. To describe that the author starts his article with following words: “*Ukraine claims to have shoot down*” (Iona Cleave. 2023). So, here we refer to the semantics of Ukraine and its actions.

The article posted in “The New York Times” starts with words about the American system that was used to shoot down hypersonic missile: “*An American – made Patriot air – defense missile successfully intercepted one of the most sophisticated conventional weapons...*” ((Marc Santora, Eric Schmitt and John Ismay. 2023) From that sentence, readers can understand how powerful American weapons are if they can shoot down one of the best Russian weapons. It seems like the authors were proud of American weapons and wanted to emphasize how powerful they are. This conclusion can be done after reading the first sentence of the article. Here is the quotation: “*An American – made Patriot air – defense missile successfully intercepted one of the most sophisticated conventional weapons...*” (Marc Santora, Eric Schmitt and John Ismay). In this case, the linguistic semantic analysis reveals the explicitness of weapons, not an emphasis on the accident that had happened. Although these articles relate to the same accident, it is obvious that they represent different images of Ukraine. In the article posted in “The Sun”, the author draws readers’ attention to the fact that something significant had happened in Ukraine. On the other hand, the article posted in “The New York Times” emphasizes the power of American – made weapons and only after mentions that the accident happened in Ukraine and that the Ukrainian army has the skills needed to work with that kind of weapon.

There is an example of an article that contains both explicitness and implicitness. It was posted on 06.05.2023 in BBC News. The text starts with the following words: “*Ukraine has accused Russia of attacking the besieged city of **Bakhmut** with phosphorus munitions*” (Murphy, 2023). Here we linguistically trace that the author changed the name of something particular to the name of something general. The word *Ukraine* means official representatives of the country whose duty is to inform other countries about the war.

There is one more service which provides information to people. This service is named social media. There is a great difference between newspapers (even those ones that are published online) and posts on social networking sites. If we take a closer look at these two sources of information, we can notice that posts on platforms such as Instagram are much shorter than newspaper articles. There are different reasons for that. The main one is differences in consumers. Younger people prefer to use social media as a source of information, while older would most probably read an article. The main problem is that people do not want to read much. Everything needs to be as short as possible nowadays. Even Instagram has its own rules: it is not allowed for users to write posts longer than a certain number of symbols. This fact should be considered when comparing posts on social media and newspaper articles.

As an example, here is the quotation from an Instagram post. It was made on BBC News on 21.05.2023: “*Speaking on a G7 summit in Japan, the **Ukrainian** president insisted the city of **Bakhmut** was not occupied by Russia as of today*” (BBC News, Official Instagram account, 2023). This quotation is ¼ of all that Instagram posted. There is no implicitness when talking about Ukraine. The author did not use the name of something general instead of a particular name. Everything is clear: the only characteristic of a president with a word that mentions his nationality and country that he has under control. Here is another sentence from that post: “*Wagner Russian paramilitary earlier claimed they are in full control of the **Bakhmut**, after months of fighting*” (BBC News, Official Instagram account). In this example, the only implicitness that can be seen is the name of a whole organization (Wagner Russian paramilitary) instead of the name of a person who claimed that fact.

What is interesting that can be seen is comparison of Instagram post mentioned above with the article posted on 21.05.2023 on the official page of BBC News and reports on the same issue. Here is the quotation from that article: “*A **defiant** Volodymyr Zelensky has insisted **Bakhmut** “is not occupied” by Russia after a Moscow-backed mercenary group had claimed control*” (Wong, Waterhouse, Slow, 2023). Here we refer to the words that can be rarely noticed in everyday life. We trace implicitness typical for that kind of texts where Russian authors mean the Russian army. Another interesting thing about that article is its semantics. Authors use the word *defiant* which is clear characteristic of Volodymyr Zelensky. This can be regarded as a method of manipulation of a reader’s opinion because this characteristic shows subjective opinion of writers. As for journalists, it is unprofessional to express their personal opinions about something, especially when they write about war. When reporting such complicated things, it is required not to use subjective opinion. The expression of personal vision may also be seen as a method of making text unique. It stands out from a variety of texts that have already been written and has more chances to attract readers.

We state that the word *defiant* is considered to have negative semantics. By using it, the authors convey a sense that Ukrainian authority is bad because it contradicts Russian propaganda. With this sentence they show their attitude towards both Ukrainian and Russian sides. And it can be easily noticed that they are in sympathy with Russian propagandists. Judging from their words, readers can understand that Ukrainian authority (towards which the authors have negative attitude) stands against the Russian side (towards which the authors have positive attitude). It can be understood that the writers chose one side and wrote their subjective opinion with more belief in Russian claims than in the words of the Ukrainian leader. So, in this particular case, the Instagram post is more objective and shows the event as it is. Readers can clearly understand what has happened and make their own conclusions.

There is another popular Instagram news account. It is an official account of “The Washington Post”. It contains a lot of news, but one about Ukraine is not easy to find. Here is the quotation from one of those posts: “*Ukrainian forces have been pushing back against Russian troops and Wagner group mercenaries...*” (Official Instagram account of “The Washington Post”, 2023). Here we linguistically mark implicitness: there is no mention which specific forces have been pushing back those troops, just reminder that Ukraine is going through the war and that Russia is the main problem. Another quotation from that post shows more hidden senses. To make the text easier for

understanding, the author used the name of capital cities of both countries instead of using presidents' names or names of the countries. Here is this sentence: "*Over the weekend, Moscow claimed to have taken **Bakhmut**, but Kyiv denied this, saying its forces are still holding on to a small part of the city and staging counterattacks as part of a plan to encircle the area.*" ("The Washington Post", Official Instagram account, 2023). The author did this on purpose to make the post easier for understanding.

The articles show that there is a lot of damage that has been done to Ukraine since the war began. For example, here is the quotation from an article posted in BBC News: "*Mr. Zelensky compared **Bakhmut** to Hiroshima, which was hit by an atomic bomb in World War Two, promising a similar reconstruction of his country*" (Wong, Waterhouse, Slow, 2023). We linguistically interpret that in comparing those two cities, Zelensky means that Bakhmut's condition is similar to a Hiroshima's one after it was attacked with atomic bomb. The semantics of ruin dominates: Bakhmut is being destroyed every day, and it has all chances to become a ghost town. Because it is known that after atomic bomb attacks, nothing keeps former good condition. The words "*... promising a similar reconstruction of his country*" mean that Zelensky is full of hope and belief in his country, its nation and army and knows that after war ends, everything will be reconstructed ("The Washington Post", Official Instagram account, 2023).

But it should be kept in mind that we are talking about news and image of Ukraine in them and that is where social media sites have their problems. First major problem is the quality of presented information. It is not really checked before posting. Nobody knows if an author provides people with facts that are true or not. Another problem is the number of creators. In order to become popular, people are ready to risk their reputation or post something even if that is a lie, especially during the war when many things happen every day. To become popular, creators want to post news as soon as they hear them or see something interesting. And that is the problem – in most cases they provide their followers with wrong information. When reading that false information, people misinterpret all that happens and hence they cannot understand situation truly.

Another problem is that posts on social media are very short. They are just few sentences long. Those texts are simpler than newspaper's articles. There are less implicit and more explicit senses. This is used to make post easier for understanding because young people tend to read less today. They refuse to understand situation deeply. In this kind of posts Ukraine is shown as it is: damaged, but strong; with huge loss, but with hope at the same time. For example, here is the quotation of an Instagram post that has also been mentioned above ("The Washington Post", Official Instagram account, 2023): "*One year ago, the **eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut**, home for 70.000 people, was known locally for its salt mines and sparkling wine. Today, it is a symbol of Russia's brutal and relentless war. For months, both armies have been heavily shelling the city...*". More semantics of destruction prevail: Russian army destroys everything it can reach. And this quotation emphasizes the pain of the Ukrainian people because once beautiful and important city is totally ruined.

For better understanding how Ukraine is shown in Western mass media, it is vital to understand how those media work. There are differences on social media posts and articles in newspapers.

First of all, there are a lot of them. In one day, a few texts can be posted. Their authors are on duty to inform about everything important that happened. They know that even small details are necessary for a deep understanding of a problem. So, they want to inform their readers about everything. Another important aspect for writers to create their articles is audience. People who read newspapers (especially those ones that are posted online) want to understand what is happening, and they need to read that kind of texts.

One more important note: even though medias such as "The Sun" and "The New York Times" are called newspapers, they are not those stereotypical newspapers anymore. It should be kept in mind they are still printed today but printed ones now have less readers and they are more a symbol than a source of information. And that is not a surprise. Throughout a day happens a lot of accidents and events, especially when there is a war. One such example is everything that has been happening in Ukraine since 24.02.2022. A lot can happen there during the day. And there are a lot to post about this war. It is impossible to fit all that information in a newspaper that is printed on paper, and it is better to post that kind of news online.

Conclusions and further perspectives. To conclude, in articles, the semantics of Ukraine is expressed by implicit and explicit markers of strong, hopeful, with the powerful and ambitious army but, at the same time, as a harmed, destroyed country. To make their texts easier to read and understand,

authors use different methods. But the most popular one is to change the name of something particular to a name of something general. In examples shown above can be seen that the names of organizations (such as *air-force*, *army*, *official representatives of the country*, *nation*) were changed to a country name (*Ukraine*, *Russia*) or, less frequently, to a name of the capital city (*Kyiv*, *Moscow*).

Another huge source of information is called social media. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter are very popular nowadays. Many people use these sites as the only source of information. But there are some differences between such platforms and newspapers. First of all, the quality of information posted online can be very different. There are great posts but also a lot of unnecessary, false, wrong information is posted there. It is vital to understand that social media and newspapers have different purposes in their existence. Instagram and platforms like that are made mostly for entertainment or for better understanding of today's life.

Thus, when comparing newspaper articles and posts about Ukraine amidst the full-scale war, we can notice that both information sources show how brave and powerful Ukraine is.

In their articles, authors want to emphasize different things. Even when reporting to the same accident, they can write articles with different purposes. As can be seen in one of the examples above, where the same accident (shooting down hypersonic missile for the first time) is reported by British newspaper "The Sun" and American newspaper "The New York Times" with completely different purposes. While the author of the article from "The Sun" emphasizes the Ukrainian army and its skills and only then talks about weapon, the writer from "The New York Times" wants to discuss weapon used to do this and only after that he talks about the army which did that.

It also should not be forgotten that during the war, there is such thing as war on the information front. We do not know if information that we consume is true or not so it is very important to read only trusted official media and be conscious about information that we consume.

Therefore, implicitness is marked more frequently than explicitness in articles and Instagram posts reporting to the war in Ukraine. It is noticed in cases where an author needed to emphasize an accident and not people who took part in it wanted to talk about accident, but also mentioned people who were taking part in it needed to describe situation in general without deep understanding of details (in that case, there were no mentions about particular parts of army who were involved, because those facts were not necessary).

In perspective, the research findings will be useful for collecting further linguistic data from social media and communities in order to conduct a thorough linguistic semantic analysis of Ukraine during wartime and contrast and compare the results throughout the entire conflict stages.

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