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Russian invasion of Ukraine: analyzing linguistic means describing the enemy in Ukrainian media

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Abstract: The current study covers changes in the corpus of the Ukrainian language as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on 24th February 2022. This research addresses the issue of rapidly changing worldviews and attitudes of the Ukrainian people, which have had a direct impact on the development of anti-aggressor narratives and an explosion of various linguistic means in the language when describing the war, the occupiers, and their atrocities committed on the territory of Ukraine. The period since the invasion is characterised by both a boom of neologisms and an expanding use of some lexical items in the mass media of Ukraine. The paper examines articles and news stories in two major Ukrainian information agencies *Ukrinform* and *Unian* since 24th February 2022 and their use of specific linguistic means to describe the enemy. The analysis and discussion of the new lexical items and the development of other linguistic means in the Ukrainian language are based on our findings as well as research publications which have appeared since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This research specifically explores how these linguistic means support war narratives in the Ukrainian media when describing the enemy and its actions. The portrayal of the enemy is increasingly pivotal in these narratives, which bolster the Ukrainian people's fight for survival and territorial integrity.

Keywords: Ukrainian language; war; neologisms; linguistic means; narrative

1 Introduction

Each time a country is engaged in a war or major historic upheaval, a reimagination of language and culture takes place, as described by Dawes (2005) when he analysed the situation and the amplified effect of violence upon language in the United States

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during the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. He specifically examined how languages could change their functions and become more emotive and "how the pressures of violence in each historical event gave rise to significant changes in aesthetic forms and cultural discourses" (Dawes 2005, 23). The 21st century and the spread and development of mass media have introduced certain differences and allowed people to participate more actively in the process of language change and the development of new language means and narratives. This area has not been researched extensively and requires more attention from linguists working in media studies. Keeping this in mind, the current study only addresses some issues relevant to traditional mass media in the time of war in Ukraine and how the language has begun to change in a new environment of aggression and occupation, and how the people's resistance to aggression and their struggle to liberate the country from the enemy was reflected in the media and the language.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine which began on 24th February 2022 gave rise to significant changes in the worldviews and attitudes of peoples in Ukraine and many other countries, and how they began to describe the realities of the new world. For Ukrainians, not only did their perception of the world dramatically change, but there was also a newfound willingness to take individual and collective actions in these new circumstances. Petriv offers numerous examples of how celebrities and many Ukrainians decided to swich from speaking Russian to Ukrainian in their public and private life in protest against the aggression since February 2022 which she calls "gentle Ukrainization" (2022, 13). The Ukrainian language has become a generator and symbol of patriotism as well as a "language shield" which also enables Ukrainians to unite and identify the occupiers with the help of specific Ukrainian words like *palianycia*, *molodytsia*, *svitlytsia* and many others, which Russian speakers are unable to pronounce the way native Ukrainian speakers do (Grytsenko 2022, 10).

The fact that war could start again in Europe in the 21st century shocked many people and transformed their perception of world affairs in our contemporary world. The very idea that someone could attack another country in Europe and justify the killing of innocent people while disregarding national borders and internationally accepted rules of warfare and humanitarian law was reminiscent of past wars. However, the war unleashed by Russia takes place within the century of the expanded use of mass media and has therefore manifested in an explosion of information warfare on both sides of this conflict with the aim of shaping new narratives (Park et al. 2022). These war narratives, which represent stories aimed at securing "the support of the population for participating in military operations" (Kvernbekk and Bøe-Hansen 2017, 215) or defending the country, have a direct impact on worldviews, causing considerable shifts in perceptions and attitudes in Ukraine and other countries. In order to express these new worldviews or attitudes, scores of

new linguistic means appeared in the Ukrainian language. Although previously it was considered that the government had to present good and "persuasive reasons" (Kvernbekk and Bøe-Hansen 2017, 215), during the invasion of Ukraine, people actively engaged in media and became the driving force in the process of creating new ways of expressing new realities and their emotional states and attitudes. Calvet (1998), who considers changes in languages as linguistic translations of deeper social movements, specifies three different levels of changes in the form of language: writing, lexis, and dialect forms. The first two will be mostly considered in our research. At the same time, it is worth analysing whether the changes, neologisms,[1] or borrowings, were spontaneous or programmed, or whether there were other ways of lexical developments.

The analysis of narratives and their structure, as conceptualized by Labov (1972), plays a crucial role in this research. Narratives are considered as more than simply stories, but rather as a salient way of presenting individual and collective experience (Brunner 1990; Schiffrin 2001) or a series of events about others and ourselves in time and space (Jones and McBeth 2010), while war narratives represent "a critical element in developing support and directing the war effort" (Callahan et al. 2006, 554). Narratives play a crucial role in wars and conflicts, as they help shape public perception and can influence the course of events. In the context of the current Russia-Ukraine war, elements such as defending the country, its integrity, and the people of Ukraine and their culture have become key to creating war narratives (Butcher 2022).

Our primary objective is to investigate what linguistic means are used in these war narratives when portraying the enemy and how they have evolved in Ukrainian since Russia's full-scale invasion. Linguistic means are understood here as lexical items, such as individual words, phrases, and expressions, and their usage within specific contexts. The term also encompasses grammar, orthography, syntax, morphology, and all other linguistic forms and tools that facilitate the expression of an intended message in narratives.

The linguistic situation since the beginning of the full-scale war has been different from the situation before 24th February 2022, even though for many people in Ukraine the war with Russia began in 2014 following Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and supported pro-Russian separatists fighting the Ukrainian military in the east of the country. In this respect, it

1 There are numerous definitions of neologisms in present-day linguistics (Oreški 2021), but many of them revolve around the idea of the 'new' when applied to the lexicon (Rodríguez Guerra 2016). In this research, neologisms are considered newly coined words or word combinations that have started to be used in traditional media. Some neologisms enter the language and are eventually registered in dictionaries, and others may disappear after a short period of usage. Their longevity may depend on such factors as cultural relevance, frequency of use, and public acceptance.

is good to remind ourselves that political systems and elites have always been instrumental in shaping or changing the meaning people attribute to various notions, such as 'state', 'nation', 'motherland', 'individual', 'freedom', etc. especially in the times of war or other social upheaval (Foucault 2004; Goatly 2007; Lakoff 2016; Underhill 2011). The analysis of previous events in Ukraine and other countries has shown that as a result of significant systemic transformations in various societies, such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union or the fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, numerous revolutions and conflicts inevitably led to considerable changes in the narratives of regimes, with new ones emerging that align with the new values, approaches, and aspirations (Calvet 1998; Clyne 1997; Kontra 1997; Krouglov 1997, 1999, 2003; Underhill 2011; Wierzbicka 1990, and many others). However, the changes in narratives were articulated more distinctly after 24th February and affected the entire Ukrainian society, as well as the status and corpus planning of the Ukrainian language (Kulyk 2023; Renchka 2023; Tsar 2023). This article will only address some changes in the Ukrainian language, more specifically in relation to new developments in the presentation of the enemy in mass media. Status planning actions proposed by various organisations and individuals and undertaken by the government of Ukraine in response to the Russian aggression are not covered in this paper.

First and foremost, the new situation in Ukraine has demanded completely new approaches in unifying the nation in response to the aggression and occupation. Although the government aimed at shaping war narratives and media reports, this may be a daunting task in present-day Ukraine since almost all media corporations have been present not only on their official websites but also on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube channels, Telegram, and other social media posts and podcasts where they can receive immediate feedback and suggestions from people. Nevertheless, the creation of new war narratives was a necessary move by the Ukrainian government to fight Russian information manipulation campaigns, propaganda, and disinformation, and support the actions of the Ukrainian army and people in defending their country (Hanley et al. 2022; Park et al. 2022). There was a need to create a new way of thinking in the battle over ideas and perceptions. The legitimacy of this battle has not been questionable as Ukraine was attacked by another country, and military and other actions undertaken by the Ukrainian government were in self-defence in light of that aggression. President Zelensky and the Ukrainian leadership clearly understood the importance of developing appropriate narratives, creating a negative image of the aggressor and influencing perceptions in the struggle for their survival (Yarchi 2022). Therefore we will analyse new and existing linguistic means and how they have been used in creating war narratives and describing the enemy in Ukraine in new circumstances since February 2022.

2 Methodology

In order to identify and select new linguistic means in war narratives, we analysed publications in Ukrainian by two major Ukrainian information agencies, *Ukrinform*[2] (1,765 articles and news items) and *Unian*[3] (1,436 articles and news items[4]), over the period from 24th February until 7th October 2022. The main reason for selecting these two agencies was that the National Agency of Ukraine or *Ukrinform* is a Ukrainian state information and news agency,[5] while *Unian* or Ukrainian Independent Information Agency of News is a Kyiv-based Ukrainian news agency which positions itself as the first and the biggest independent information agency in the country.[6] At the outset of the project, our assumption was that the analysis of information provided by these two agencies, one promoting state driven narratives while another one – with more independent views – would offer us different perspectives and approaches to presenting news items and the use of language means. The decision to focus on the first seven months of the full-scale invasion stems from our aim to analyse how the media influenced the development of war narratives during that pivotal period.

In the initial stage of our research, we examined all articles and news items published between 24th February and 7th October 2022 by *Ukrinform* and *Unian.* Specifically, we focused on articles or news items containing linguistic means that describe the enemy, which were selected and stored in the corpus of the study. During the second validation stage, we verified each linguistic item by cross-referencing it with the information databases of both news agencies. Overall, 92 lexical items and around 340-word combinations describing the enemy or their actions were identified and analysed in this research. Our primary aim was to elucidate the role and function of these linguistic means within the text and to establish broader contextual dimensions – crucial for shaping war narratives and specific ideological or political perceptions (Stubbs 1996). In addition to textual analysis, the context was analysed drawing on Baker's (2006) narrative theory as elaborated in social and communication theory which she applied to conflict situations in her research. Narrative analysis allowed us to examine wider issues related to the way something was presented in a news item or an article and in what context. The application of narrative analysis enabled us to describe and account for

2 See https://www.ukrinform.net/.

3 See https://www.unian.ua/.

4 In this research, news items are considered as any published short piece of news aiming to inform the readers about specific events.

5 See Davidson College Library https://davidson.libguides.com/c.php?g=1221237&p=8933985.

6 See https://www.unian.ua/static/about.

sometimes complex and dynamic lexical items which may be used depending on various factors, e.g. agents that perform the action, specific events, time or location, etc. (Harding 2011). Lexical items can be attributed varying degrees of emotive force which Baker calls "weighting" (2006, 28). They can be intensified "through the inclusion of greater details, allotted a greater proportion of the whole narrative through repetition and reiteration" (Harding 2011, 45).

In our analysis, we cross-referenced the identified linguistic means with some studies primarily conducted in Ukraine (Bulik-Verhola 2022; Cherednyk 2022; Grytsenko 2022; Suprun 2022; Zhylenko and Serobian 2022), which examined changes in the Ukrainian media discourse since the full-scale war began in February 2022, focusing on the use of new and existing terms to describe the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the actors involved, and their actions. The lists of enemy nominalisations as well as other linguistic means presented in these studies are compared with our findings in the analysis of publications in *Unian* and *Ukrinform*. In this research, our aim is to analyse how the Ukrainian language responded to new war realities during the first seven months of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and to identify linguistic means that emerged as a result of the war. At the same time, the research examines the growing use and reimagining of some other linguistic items that existed in Ukrainian prior to the invasion. To achieve this, we analyse a corpus comprising all linguistic means selected during our textual and narrative analysis of articles and news items published by Ukrainian information agencies *Ukrinform* and *Unian*. Their use in the Ukrainian media is explored further in this study through analysing the specific narratives in which they were used. Our approach is qualitative, focusing on identifying these linguistic means, analysing their usage, and understanding how they contribute to current war narratives. Additionally, we explore how they enhance reader engagement and potentially convey new perspectives or emotions.

3 The new image of the enemy: findings and discussion

3.1 Changes in orthography

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 there has been an explosion of linguistic innovations in the presentation of news items and stories in the Ukrainian mass media (Ogeviuk et al. 2023; Petriv 2022; Renchka 2023). Apart from neologisms, some of which we will discuss further in this article, there has been an expanded use of military vocabulary, vulgar lexis (especially at the

beginning of the full-scale invasion), the use of humour, and lexical items that previously had limited usage before (Izotova and Potapenko 2024).

The image of the enemy has become central in war narratives of the media in Ukraine since the start of the invasion. The newly created image reflects the perception of the enemy and their actions in Ukraine and incorporates emotional components and associations. It is important to note from the beginning of the paper that the presentation of the enemy was not static over the period covered by this study between 22nd February and 7th October 2022. The presentation of the enemy and media war narratives were dynamic and continually evolving, leading to the emergence of new terms or reinterpretation of existing ones in response to various actions or events in the field. Almost since the beginning of the invasion, the orthography began to change when several Ukrainian media outlets[7] responded to the invasion by introducing small initial letters in presenting proper names associated with Russia or its leadership, e.g. *rosiia* 'Russia', *rf* short for Russian Federation, *rosiis'ka federatsia* 'Russian Federation', *putin* 'Putin', *shoigu* 'Shoigu', *lavrov* 'Lavrov', etc., which is in line with the Ukrainian Orthography clearly stating that whenever the author wishes to underline derogatory attitude to something or someone a small letter is used in writing (Bulik-Verhola 2022). In September 2022, Ukraine's National Commission of Language Standards[8] permitted for all letters in terms such as "Russia," "Russian Federation," "Russian Empire," "Moscow," and other related words to be written in lowercase.[9]

Our data also show that the derogatory meaning was usually intensified by avoiding the use of first names with the surnames of Russian leaders or the omission of their actual positions in the Russian government, armed forces, or other organisations. The practice of using lowercase letters for proper names related to Russia gained widespread attention in mass media during March and April 2022. However, the majority of information agencies and mass media organisations continued to use capital letters, especially at the onset of the full-scale war, while others[10] eventually transitioned to the use of lowercase letters. For example, *Unian* continued to use capital letters in all their reports and news items, while *Ukrinform* used a small letter more and more often, even at the beginning of the sentence, when the news item or story began with a name of the country or someone in the leadership of the Russian Federation. The availability of different approaches and some variations in narratives, or the way news items were presented, indicates that even during the war

7 For example, *Ukrinform*, *Holos Ukrainy* http://www.golos.com.ua/, *24 kanal* https://24tv.ua/.

8 See for more information: https://mova-ombudsman.gov.ua/en.

9 Reported by RadioFreeEurope https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-lowercase-russia-related-words-language/32604577.html.

10 For example, Holos Ukrainy and 24 kanal.

traditional mass media organisations had some freedom in presenting the news and ideas in line with their editorial policy. However, in May 2022, the Commission of Journalism Ethics of Ukraine[11] published Recommendations[12] regarding the use of stylistically or emotionally charged vocabulary. Specifically, they addressed the use of lowercase letters in proper names associated with Russia and recommended capitalization, except when the information is quoted from blogs, social media, or letters of readers. In other words, the Commission disagreed with journalists and government publications that used lowercase letters for proper names linked to Russia.

Our study also shows that some publications in *Unian* and *Ukrinform* exhibited the tendency of avoiding the use of the name of the country 'Russia' altogether and substituting it with other lexical items, such as *ahresor* 'aggressor', *zaharbnyk* 'invader', or *okupanty* 'occupiers' in both singular and plural forms, since the last two lexical items have been used not only to substitute the name of the country but also to denote people and more often military personnel. This approach allowed a clear negative identification of the country and supported and intensified narratives presented in the text through repetition or reiteration. In many instances, the lexical items *kraïna* 'country' or *derzhava* 'state' were used in combination with such lexical items as *ahresor* 'aggressor', *okupant* 'occupier', *teroryst* 'terrorist', or even a longer phrase, such as *sponsor teroryzmu* 'sponsor of terrorism', e.g. *kraïna-ahresor* 'country-aggressor', *derzhava-teroryst* 'a country-terrorist', *kraïna-okupant* 'country-occupier', *kraïna-sponsor teroryzmu* 'a country sponsoring terrorism', etc.

> **Kraïna-ahresor** takozh napevno vysnazhyla bil'shu chastynu syl, dyslokovanykh ranishe na rosiis'kykh bazakh v kolyshnikh respublikakh.
>
> The aggressor country has also probably exhausted most of the forces previously stationed at Russian bases in the former Soviet republics.
>
> (*Unian*, 16.09.22 https://www.unian.ua/war/rosiya-vdvichi-posilila-prihovanu-mobilizaciyu-pislya-porazki-na-shodi-ukrajini-isw-11980749.html)

Apart from the masculine form of the word *ahresor* 'aggressor' in word combinations with *kraïna* 'country', the use of the feminine noun *ahresorka* 'aggressor' was recorded in our data, e. g. *kraïna-ahresorka*:

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11 See https://cje.org.ua/en/.

12 See "Recommendations of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics regarding the use of stylistically charged vocabulary in journalistic materials about the war" https://cje.org.ua/statements/rekomendatsii-komisii-z-zhurnalistskoi-etyky-shchodo-vzhyvannia-stylistychno-zabarvlenoi-leksyky-v-zhurnalistskykh-materialakh-pro-viynu/.

Finliandiia z 30 veresnia pochala obmezhuvaty turystychni vizy dlia hromadian **kraïny-ahresorky**.

From September 30, Finland began to limit tourist visas for citizens of the aggressor country.

(*Ukrinform*, 30.09.2022 https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3582586-finlandia-vidsogodni-zakrila-kordoni-na-vizd-dla-rosijskih-turistiv.html)

Our study reveals that both the masculine noun *ahresor* and the feminine noun *ahresorka* are used interchangeably in news items published between February and October 2022 by *Unian* and *Ukrinform*. Nedashkivska, who studied new changes in Ukrainian Orthography and the use of the Ukrainian language on social media, contends that social media users embrace the use of new feminine forms as a distinctive feature of Ukrainian, highlighting its distinctness from Russian (2023). Nevertheless, the adoption of feminine forms for traditionally male professions or other activities, "for which only masculine forms existed until recently," remains a highly contentious issue in Ukrainian (Nedashkivska 2023, 120).

3.2 Ruscist and Ruscism as central terms

Another term, which became extremely popular in both *Unian* and *Ukrinform*, was *rashyst* 'Ruscist' (as well as *rashyzm* 'Ruscism'), which was often mistakenly considered as a neologism in the Ukrainian language. However, the term appears to be coined during the First Chechen War (1994–1996) when the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria fought for its independence against the Russian Federation. This compound word was formed of two Russian words *russkii* 'Russian' and *fashizm* 'fascism' and was used to define the policy of the Russian authorities during the war in Chechnya and later during the rule of Vladimir Putin. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and especially after the atrocities discovered in Bucha and Irpin in Kyiv region, a new theme of war crimes became key in narratives and as a result, the use of the borrowed terms *rashyst* 'Ruscist' and *rashyzm* 'Ruscism' notably expanded in publications by many mass media organisations (Izotova and Potapenko 2024; Ogneviuk et al. 2023; Rohalska-Yakubova and Chepelyuk 2023). Our study shows that the term *rashyst* 'Ruscist' was mostly used in plural form when referring to the Russian troops or authorities, e.g.:

Rashysty ziznaiut'sia, shcho vprytul rozstriliuiut' ukraïns'kykh zhinok.

Ruscists admit that they shoot Ukrainian women at close range.

(*Ukrinform*, 17.04.2022 https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3459899-rosiani-vpritul-rozstriluut-ukrainskih-zinok-sbu-perehopila-rozmovu.html)

In the majority of our examples, the term *rashyst* (both singular and plural forms) was used especially when media organisations or journalists reported the killing, torturing, or raping of women, men, and children, or the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

The lexical item *rashyst* 'Ruscist' was not confined to a single grammatical category in the analysed news items and stories. The word expanded its derivational possibilities and was often used as an adjective *rashysts'kyi* in mass media, e.g. *rashysts'kyi polon* 'Ruscist captivity', *rashysts'ki okupanty* 'Ruscist occupiers', *rashists'ky rakety* 'Ruscist missiles' (all examples from *Unian*) or *rashysts'kyi sklad boieprypasiv* 'Ruscist ammunition warehouse', *rashysts'ki terorysty* 'Ruscist terrorists', *rashysts'kyi plakat* 'Ruscist poster' (all examples from *Ukrinform*). The adjective *rashysts'kyi* has expanded its use in Ukrainian media, and the list of the nouns it can describe is endless. It intensifies the negative description of the enemy and their actions in Ukraine and contributes to the creation of pejorative and derogatory comments which served to support new war narratives as in the following example:

> "Liudy tut naibil'she poterpaiut' vid naslidkiv **rashyts'kykh provokatsii** i vzhe faktychno perebuvaiut' na mezhi humanitarnoï katastrofy", – naholosyv mis'kyi holova.
>
> "People here suffer the most from the consequences of Ruscist provocations and are actually on the verge of a humanitarian disaster," the mayor emphasized.
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 7.09.2022 https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3566110-v-energodari-bez-elektropostacanna-zalisautsa-dva-mikrorajoni.html)

In the example above and in the majority of stories and news items analysed in our study, the adjective *rashysts'kyi* 'Ruscist' was used either in direct speech or in quotes. This usage demonstrates its limited prevalence, and it aligns with the reluctance of information agencies to employ such emotionally charged terms in their reporting, consistent with the Recommendations of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics of Ukraine.[13]

3.3 Orcs, hordes and other terms used in Ukrainian media

Based on our data collected from articles and news items in *Unian* and *Ukrinform*, along with the lexical item *rashyst* 'Ruscist' the term *orky* (referring to 'Orcs') was

13 "Recommendations of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics regarding the use of stylistically charged vocabulary in journalistic materials about the war" https://cje.org.ua/statements/rekomendatsii-komisii-z-zhurnalistskoi-etyky-shchodo-vzhyvannia-stylistychno-zabarvlenoi-leksyky-v-zhurnalistskykh-materialakh-pro-viynu/.

used by both information agencies. The usage was particularly prominent when information agencies published interviews or extracts from interviews in their stories and news items, as in the following examples:

> V nashomu misti-fortetsi – Kryvomu Rozi – tse iedynyi mozhlyvyi "parad", iakyi mozhut' provesty **orky**.
>
> 'In Kryvyi Rih, our fortress city, this is the only possible "parade" that *Orcs* can hold.'
>
> (*Unian*, 28.07.2022 https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3538823-u-krivomu-rozi-vidkrilasa-vistavka-znisenoi-vijskovoi-tehniki-rosian.html)
>
> Z liutoho rashysty til'ky te i robyly, shcho rozhrabovuvaly Luhanshchynu. KamAZamy do okupovanoho Luhans'ka chy rf **orky** vyvozyly te, choho nikoly ne bachyly: vysokotekhnologichne medychne obladnennia, osvitians'ki gadzhety, mebli…
>
> Since February, the *Ruscists* have been doing nothing but looting the Luhansk region. The *Orcs* used KamAZ trucks to transport something they had never seen before to occupied Luhansk or the Russian Federation: high-tech medical equipment, educational gadgets, furniture…
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 28.09.2022 https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3581473-zagarbniki-vidkrili-u-lugansku-medcentr-iz-nagrabovanim-obladnannam.html)

This comparison with J. R. R. Tolkien's *Orcs* underlined the idea of creatures which took pleasure in all kinds of cruel, brutish, and wicked acts. Such presentation of the enemy was a direct response to atrocities suffered by Ukrainians as the result of the Russian invasion and attempts to impose the so-called *Russkii mir* (Rus.), which can be translated into English as 'Russian world' or 'Russian peace' and is often considered as the foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation or Russian integration project in relation to the Russian diaspora overseas (Lozoviuk and Shevchenko 2022; Lutsevych 2016; O'Loughlin et al. 2016). Like Tolkien who blamed Nazis "for perverting and abusing the majestic Nordic mythologies and folklore to serve their own foul ideological ends" (Tally 2019, 55), Ukrainian media blamed the Russian authorities for revising history, denying the existence of the Ukrainian nation, and abusing their power and presenting themselves as a nation who knew what was right for other peoples, especially their neighbours. *Orcs*, when used metaphorically, are often associated with a vast number of evil invaders and are frequetnly substituted by the term *orda*, meaning 'horde'.

> Cherez desiatky rokiv v Ukraïnu povernulysia **ordy** vbyvts', zarazhenykh ideolohiieiu nenavysti.
>
> Tens of years later, *hordes* of killers infected with the ideology of hatred returned to Ukraine.
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 30.09.2022, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/3582818-ermak-zaprosiv-evrejski-pravozahisni-organizacii-dolucitisa-do-miznarodnogo-tribunalu-dla-rf.html)

In the above example, the comparison is made with the *ordy* 'hordes', usually associated with 'fascist hordes' during World War II or the Mongol Horde which brought devastation from the East to many lands in Europe in the 13th century. It is important to note that lexical items, like *Ruscists*, *Orcs*, and *hordes*, were used in direct quotes or interviews in articles published by both information agencies considered in this research. It is likely that the agencies aimed to avoid too many emotive lexical items in presenting their news but regularly provided quotes from other people or interviewees who offered their emotive description of events and presented their attitudes. Nevertheless, in some instances, both information agencies used these lexical items in the titles of their news items or articles. Here is an example of another noun *rusnia* which is a derogatory collective noun for Russians used in the title, e.g.:

> Pekel'na kukhnia: iak ZSU "smazhat" **rusniu**.
>
> Hell's kitchen: how the Armed Forces of Ukraine "fry" Russians.
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 31.05.2022, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3496599-pekelna-kuhna-ak-zsu-smazat-rusnu.html)

The derivational possibilities of the noun *rusnia* are still somewhat limited in Ukrainian traditional mass media, however an adjective *rusniavyi* was already used to describe some nouns such as in *rusniavi propahandysty* 'Russian propagandists' (*Unian*). Numerous publications on recent developments in the Ukrainian language mentioned the noun *rusnia* as well as other neologisms expressing hate, contempt, and fury, like *ruzki* (deregotary term for Russians), *ruso-natsysty* 'Russian Nazis', *van'ky* (derived from the typical Russian name Ivan), *tiktok-viis'ka* (derisive term for Russian troops who post videos on TikTok), *z-okupanty* (occupiers with letter Z as the symbol of their war in Ukraine), *niash-miash* (a meme, which appeared from a nickname of a Russian politician) which were used in relation to Russians and Russian troops (Grytsenko 2022). In addition, they report the use of derogatory and disparaging names of Russia like *rasha*, *rashka*, *katsapstan*, *katsapiia* (the last two were derived from ethnic slur for Russians – *katsap*), and their numerous derivatives, *orkostan*, *mordor* (from J. R. R. Tolkien's fictional world of Middle-earth), *boloto* (literally from the noun 'swamp' hinting that Russia is a country of swamps), *rosiis'ka orda* 'Russian horde' (Bulik-Verhola 2022), or a meme *porebryk* which appeared in 2014 from the Russian word 'porebrik' mostly used in St Petersburg meaning 'a curb on the road' (although this did not exist in Ukrainian before) and has been used in Ukrainian in lexical items *zaporiebier'ie* or *za poriebrikom* as a mocking name for Russia, while *zaporiebriky* has been used when describing Russian troops or Russians (Kyryliuk 2019, 117), *zombilend* 'Zombieland', *moskoviia* (when referred

to Russia), *moskovyty* (when referred to Russians) (Zhylenko and Serobian 2022). These and some other authors presented and analysed numerous lexical items which described the enemy; however, our data shows that both traditional mass media agencies *Unian* and *Ukrinform* did not use them during the period covered in this research.

Some authors report neologisms with 'stan', such as *orkostan*, *katsapstan*, or *laptiestan* (from Russian word *lapti* meaning 'bast shoes') hinting at the Asian origin of the country and people, underlining that they had little in common with the European values and liberties (Alexandruk et al. 2023; Bulyk-Verhola 2022; Kozinets 2022).

Nonetheless, our research indicates that Ukrainian information agencies *Unian* and *Ukrinform* employ less emotionally charged language in their news reports and articles. This aligns with the findings of a study by Zhylenko and Serobian (2022), in which they examined the use of lexical terms such as *Orcs* and other pejorative designations for the occupiers in posts shared on Instagram, TikTok and Ukrainian mass media online platforms such as *Suspil'ne*, *Dzerkalo tyzhnia,* and *Ukraïna moloda*.

3.4 The creation and reimagining anthroponyms

Using a similar word formation pattern as presented in the lexical item *rashyst* 'Ruscist', an anthroponym with negative connotation *putler* 'Putler' has been revived since the beginning of the invasion in February 2022. The anthroponym was created in Russian by combining two names of Putin and Hitler well before the invasion in February 2022 (Kabanova 2016). The slogan *Putler kaput!* (Rus.) 'Putler kaput!' first appeared in Russia during mass protests in 2009 and was banned from use at public gatherings and meetings in Russia. However, the slogan and the borrowed term were revived in Ukrainian, and their use has expanded significantly after the annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Consequently, many other words were derived from this borrowing, e.g. *putlerivets'* or sometimes *putlierivets'* (our data shows that this lexical form describing a person supporting Putin's ideology has not been established yet in the Ukrainian language), an adjective *putlerivs'kyi* or a noun *putleryzm* 'Putlerism' which can be illustrated by the following example:

> Aleppo ta Mariupol' – symvoly XXI storichchia vid **putleryzmu**.
>
> Aleppo and Mariupol are symbols of the 21st century Putlerism.
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 17.03.22, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3432188-aleppo-ta-mariupol-simvoli-hhi-storicca-vid-putlerizmu.html)

There were many other examples showing considerable derivational possibilities of the noun *putler* and its use in Ukrainian mass media. For example, *putleriugend* was used to describe youth movement in Russia, officially called *Iunarmiia*[14] in the Russian language, which is a military oriented organisation for children and young people between 8 and 18 years old. The use of the word *armiia* (Rus.) 'army' in the Russian proper name shows its militaristic dimension of educating children in Russia. However, the neologism *putleriugend* is an allusion to *Hitlerjugend* (Germ.) 'The Hitler Youth' which was the youth organisation of the Nazi Party in Germany (from 1936 until 1945). Such lexical items were used in war narratives, underlining similarities between the current government in Russia, its supporters, and the fascist movement in Nazi Germany in the 20th century. It is also worth noting that the new anthroponyms in Ukrainian that emerged in 2022 referred not only to adversaries but were also formed from the surnames of officials in Ukraine and allied countries, e.g. *makronyty*, a verb which was derived from the name of the French President Emmanuel Macron with an added suffix *-yty* (Petriv 2022). Since this is a neologism in the Ukrainian language, there are still differences in the definitions of the verb presented by various dictionaries. While *The Dictionary of Contemporary Ukrainian Language* defines it as « pretending to be concerned about a certain situation, showing it to everyone, but not actually doing anything»,[15] the online dictionary *MySlovo* provides a dissimilar definition, i.e. "constantly calling and talking for a long time without a specific topic".[16] It may take some time before the dictionaries and language users develop a comprehensive definition which will incorporate all possible meanings.

Vusyk and Pavlyk document the emergence of other anthroponyms, such as the verb *shol'tsnuty* and a perfective counterpart *poshol'tsiaty* of the imperfective verb *shol'tsiaty*, derived from the surname of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (2023). These terms convey the meaning of "being cunning" or "attempting to sit on two chairs." Similarly, the imperfective verb *baidenkuvaty* originates from the name of US President Joe Baiden, signifying "incessant chatter about trivial matters" (2023, 56). Despite the proliferation of these novel anthroponyms referencing prominent politicians (Petriv 2022; Vusyk and Pavlyk 2023), our data reveals that neither *Unian* nor *Ukrinform* employed them in their publications.

Another term identified in the current study is *Putinism,* which is a form of conservative, populist, and personalistic autocracy (Fish 2017). The term gave rise

14 See https://yunarmy.ru/ for more information.

15 See the article in *RBK-UKraina* https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/styler/shoyguvati-arestovlennya-zatridni-ukraintsy-1648713076.html Accessed on 24th April, 2023.

16 See for more information http://myslovo.com/?dictionary=%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8-2 Accessed on 24th April, 2023.

to the development of a number of neologisms in the Ukrainian language which supported the overarching narrative in the Ukrainian media. Lexical items such as *putinist* and a synonym *putinets'* existed before the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and were used to describe supporters of Putin's policies and were often associated with aggressive nationalism (Ruane 2022). Both *Unian* and *Ukrinform* used the terms in the articles and news items published since 24th February. The word *putinist* was often used on its own or in front of surnames in order to specify someone's convictions or political views, e.g. *putinist Kirkorov* (Putin's favourite singer). It also forms numerous hyphenated compound noun + noun constructions, e.g. *rodychi-putinisty* 'Putinist relatives', *komik-putinist* 'Putinist comedian', *bloherka-putinistka* 'Putinist blogger', *rosiianka-putinistka* 'Russian Putinist', and many others. Overall, a trend of creating hyphenated compound nouns describing the enemy was observed in the Ukrainian mass media.

The term *pushkinist* 'Pushkinist', which was originally used to describe academics or researchers who specialised in Pushkin and his works, was reimagined in Ukrainian media and received a new derogatory meaning in the language, i.e.: supporters and promoters of the Russian culture and the so-called *Russkii mir* (Rus.) 'Russian world', or applied to Russian intellectuals and members of the opposition who are often referred to as "good Russians" as they are trying to distance themselves from the Putin regime but nevertheless support some pro-Putin or pro-Russian imperial narratives. The term appeared when local authorities in Ukraine made the decision to remove monuments to Russian poets, writers, military commanders, and Catherine the Great, the Empress of Russia who was instrumental in the process of absorption of Ukrainian lands and the Crimea into the Russian Empire. The war has only intensified the ongoing process of derussification, desovietization, decommunization, and decolonisation in the country. There have been numerous examples of renaming streets, squares, parks, or anything else which could remind people about any links with the country and the people who invaded Ukraine and killed Ukrainian people. At the same time, our current study confirms that throughout the initial seven months of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the term's semantic scope expanded. It is used in mass media, frequently denoting Russian soldiers and civilians actively involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, the term *pushkinist* 'Pushkinist' is still mostly used outside the domain of traditional media, and our data showed that it was still in the process of semantic identification. There were not many examples of this lexical item in either *Unian* or *Ukrinform*; however, other mass media publications have used it when describing Russian soldiers or any other Russians supporting the war in Ukraine.

3.5 The response of the Ukrainian media to partial mobilisation in Russia

A major escalation of the war took place when Russia announced its partial mobilisation on 21st September 2022. This development gave rise to new narratives of Russia using newly mobilised personnel in military actions in Ukraine without any proper training. These narratives especially addressed the issue of the inhumane attitude of the Russian authorities towards their citizens who were sent to Ukraine as "cannon fodder". At the same time, Ukrainian media narratives on Russia's partial mobilisation often included mockery and ridicule, particularly regarding institutional weaknesses, the combat readiness of new recruits, and their effectiveness against the Ukrainian army.

In order to support these new narratives new lexical items were coined in the Ukrainian language to describe the newly mobilised troops fighting in Ukraine. One of them labels newly mobilised personnel in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk republics as *mobiky*, a noun derived from a shortened adjective *mobilizovanyi* 'mobilised' and a suffix *-ik* which adds a meaning of irony (Rohalska-Yakubova and Chepelyuk 2023, 105).

> **Mobiky** buntuiut' – ïkh ne prosto ne vchat', a i ne hoduiut'.
>
> The mobilised rebel as they are not taught, but also not fed.
>
> (*Unian*, 5.10.22, https://www.unian.ua/multimedia/video/war/10386999-mobiki-buntuyut-ih-ne-prosto-ne-uchat-no-i-ne-kormyat.html)

In order to highlight the novelty of the term *mobiky*, it was sometimes enclosed in inverted commas, as demonstrated in the example below:

> I pov'iazano tse z tym, perekonanyi Berns, shcho **"mobiky"** ne matymut' ani dostatnikh znan', ani neobkhidnoho sporiadzhennia.
>
> And this is due to this, says Burns, that "mobiks" do not have sufficient knowledge or necessary equipment.
>
> (*Ukrinform*, 20.09.22, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3581770-mobilizacia-ne-virisit-problemi-rosijskoi-armii-direktor-cru.html)

The term *mobik* appeared in the Ukrainian armed forces and then spread in the mass media in Ukraine. Apart from derogatory meaning, the noun *mobiky* has a somewhat derisive and diminutive meaning, since the suffix *-ik* imparts the meaning of smallness to many masculine nouns. Perhaps this is because the Russian authorities

allegedly acted hastily, calling up all men, including those with serious illnesses, to fight without any proper military training. Quite often, they were equipped with only outdated weapons used during World War II.

Similar term *chmobiky* appeared in the language of social and mass media at the end of September 2022, which described newly mobilised personnel across the Russian Federation. The additional letter *ch* at the beginning of the word refers to the Russian word *chastichnaia* 'partial (mobilisation)'.[17] The term has been often accompanied by the adjective *rosiis'kyi* 'Russian' in mass media, e.g.:

> **Rosiis'ki chmobiky** vzhe zdaiut'sia u polon: "druha armiia svitu" pyiachyt' i khovaiet'sia.
>
> Newly mobilised Russians are already surrendering: the "second army of the world" is drinking and hiding.
>
> (*Unian*, 4.10.22, https://www.unian.ua/multimedia/video/war/10386276-rossiyskie-chmobiki-uzhe-sdayutsya-v-plen-vtoraya-armiya-mira-pet-i-pryachetsya.html0)

However, our data suggests that the term *mobiky* was prominently featured in several articles and news items. Both *Unian* and *Ukrinform* employed the term, even in reference to individuals mobilised within the Russian Federation. In most instances analysed in this research, news authors and article writers explicitly linked it to Russians or those mobilised in the self-proclaimed Donetsk or Luhansk republics. Conversely, the term *chmobiky* did not feature in articles and news items published by *Ukrinform*. This serves as a compelling illustration of neologisms undergoing a selection process, with some gaining widespread acceptance while others are gradually fade into obsolescence shortly after their emergence.

Our study examines some neologisms which appeared in the language as the result of the Russian invasion, showing the creative approach of Ukrainian speakers who were looking for lexical items and longer phrases which could express their views, attitudes, and emotions, and reflect either the significant sufferings of people or their resolute courage, bravery, spirit, and tenacity. These neologisms supported highly emotive and passionate narratives aimed at uniting all Ukrainians against the aggression. Since 24th February 2022, some newly created lexical items were firmly incorporated into the lexicon of the mass media, while some appeared only for a short period of time and completely disappeared due to various reasons. The use of

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17 According to Rohalska-Yakubova and Chepelyuk, the term *chmobik* may have originated from abbreviation *chmo* in Russian prison argot "with the help of a suffix and an atypical interfix *b*" (2023, 105). This abbreviation is derived from the Russian phrase *chelovek moral'no opustivshiisia*, which translates to "morally degenerate person» – see *Russian online argot dictionary* https://rus-russian-argo.slovaronline.com/. Rohalska-Yakubova and Chepelyuk posit that the term *chmobik* carries a negative connotation due to its clear association with the argot term *chmo* (2023).

mobiky and *chmobiky* is a good example to illustrate this: speakers demonstrated their preference to use the term *mobiky*, either because of similarities in writing and pronunciation or because of a significant overlap in meaning.

Numerous lexical items, orthography, and punctuation contribute to narratives of resisting the enemy for Ukraine's very existence, freedom, and territorial integrity. Ukrainian mass media employed linguistic means to express their disdain and contempt for the occupiers, often ridiculing their actions. Calvet's study affirms that speakers become the collective creators and "driving force of linguistic evolution" (1998, 173), particularly during times of war and social upheaval. The surge in neologisms, borrowings, and the expanded use of previously coined lexical items owes much to the imagination and inventiveness of Ukrainians amidst the full-scale invasion.

4 Conclusions

The war unleashed by Russia on 24th February 2022 brought about significant linguistic changes in the Ukrainian language. The findings of our study reveal that both *Unian* and *Ukrinform* aimed to capture the emotional state of Ukrainians while presenting their views and perspectives. At the same time, our data confirms that these information agencies aimed to maintain neutrality in their news and reports, avoiding the use of derogatory terms. However, when quoting sources, both agencies frequently employed emotive language, often incorporating it into article titles to engage readers. The portrayal of the enemy as a malevolent and destructive aggressor in Ukrainian media reflects the attitudes and perceptions of Ukrainians who have endured immense suffering due to the invasion.

The newly created narratives and depiction of the enemy draw clear allusions to fascism and Nazi Germany, evident in terms like *Ruscist*, *Ruscism*, *Putler*, *Putinism*, *Putinist*, and many others, or the Mongol Horde and J. R. R. Tolkien's Orcs, and, simultaneously, these representations bear similarities to historical terrorism and war crimes. This dominant approach employs straightforward descriptors, justifying counteractions and serving as the moral foundation for defending Ukraine and its freedom. Notably, the emergence of new anthroponyms in Ukrainian during 2022 extends beyond mere references to enemies; some are derived from surnames of officials in allied countries. For instance, *makronyty*, a verb which derives from French President Emmanuel Macron's name, while *shol'tsnuty* originates from the surname of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

The research also identified numerous neologisms, such as *mobiky*, *chmobiky*, *orkostan*, *mordor*, alongside other linguistic means, such as the use of initial lowercase letters in proper names related to Russia and Russian leadership used in

mass media, however the tendency was generally to employ less emotive means of expression even during the full-scale Russian invasion. It is worth noting that differences emerged in approaches used by various mass media outlets. For instance, *Unian* consistently used capital letters in all their reports and news items, while *Ukrinform* and some other media organisations opted for initial lowercase letters, even at the beginning of the sentences when referring to proper names related to Russia.

The study also revealed a tendency to employ hyphenated compound nouns, combining lexical items like *ahresor* 'aggressor, *zaharbnyk* 'invader', or *okupanty* 'occupiers' with terms such as *kraïna* 'country' or *derzhava* 'state'. For instance, compound nouns like *derzhava-teroryst* 'a country-terrorist' and *kraïna-ahresor* 'country-aggressor' were commonly employed by both information agencies. Our research also confirms that both the masculine noun *ahresor* and the feminine noun *ahresorka* were used interchangeably in news items published between February and October 2022 by *Unian* and *Ukrinform*. Additionally, hyphenation was prevalent when describing supporters of Putinism and Putin's policies, as seen in examples like *bloherka-putinistka* 'Putinist blogger' or *komik-putinist* 'Putinist comedian'. Overall, it remains challenging to ascertain whether the changes, the emergence of neologisms, and the increased use of borrowings were spontaneous or deliberate actions. Beyond the Ukrainian authorities, numerous other actors actively contributed to shaping new narratives and linguistic means related to the enemy and various events. Future research should investigate the roles of these actors in developing linguistic means that support narratives during wars, conflicts, and social upheavals, as well as the processes involved in creating and disseminating these means within the language.

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