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(Kyiv, Ukraine) lannbilas@gmail.com**“ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHE” AMID THE WAR IN UKRAINE IN BRITISH
AND AMERICAN MEDIA: CDA**

The article introduces an ecolinguistic method for examining English-language media discourse about the environmental challenges resulting from the war in Ukraine. The research is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and places particular emphasis on the functional aspect of language, encompassing the applied discursive strategies and linguistic tools. The article's relevance is evident in light of recent studies exploring the effectiveness of discourse strategies, as well as their linguistic representation. The main objective is to analyse how the language in English-language media influences readers' emotions and shapes their views on ecology. The corpus of the material for the analysis was carefully chosen by the content and semantic analyses and by the continuous sampling from various English-language sources, including newspapers, magazines and websites covering the war in Ukraine and its impact on the environment. The research provides a comprehensive account of the examined patterns of communication and portrays the figurative representations of the aftermath of the Russian military actions on the environment. Within thorough analysis, the article identifies and discusses several applied discourse strategies: labelling, personalization, evidentiality, number game, and victimization. The language employed in the conflict rhetoric contains both pragmatic and semantic elements that convey a negative assessment of Russian military actions. The study focuses on lexico-semantic means and stylistic figures, with particular attention to the role of metaphors regarding significant environmental problems and hazards resulting from the military invasion in Ukraine, both locally and globally. The metaphors vividly depict the military actions as a disaster, an ecocide and a crime. The study demonstrates how powerful emotional triggers can be employed to engage readers and lays the groundwork for potential larger-scale analysis of stylistic figures in wartime ecological discourse, providing insights into how media language can influence public perception of environmental issues.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, media ecological discourse, war in Ukraine, environmental problems, discursive strategies, linguistic means, metaphor.

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«ЕКОЛОГІЧНА КАТАСТРОФА» ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ: КДА

У статті представлено еколінгвістичний підхід до аналізу англомовних медійних дискурсів про екологічні виклики, спричинені війною в Україні у 2022 році. Дослідження ґрунтується на методі критичного дискурс-аналізу і приділяє особливу увагу функціональному аспекту мови, який охоплює вивчення відповідних дискурсивних стратегій та лінгвістичних засобів. Актуальність статті є очевидною у світлі нещодавніх наукових досліджень, які вивчають ефективність функціонування дискурсивних стратегій, а також їх репрезентацію мовними засобами. Основна мета дослідження – проаналізувати, як мова англомовних медіа впливає на емоції читачів, формує їхні погляди на нагальні екологічні питання. Корпус матеріалу для аналізу було ретельно відібрано шляхом змістового та семантичного аналізу та методом постійної вибірки з різноманітних англомовних джерел, зокрема з газет, журналів та веб-сайтів, які висвітлюють війну в Україні та її вплив на довкілля. У роботі комплексно висвітлюються досліджувані моделі спілкування та яскраво змальовуються образні уявлення про військовий конфлікт та військові дії російської армії в Україні. Лінгвістичний аналіз дає змогу виокремити такі дискурсивні стратегії: маркування, персоналізація, доказовість, гра чисел, віктимізація. Було виявлено, що мова конфліктної риторики англомовних ЗМІ містить як прагматичні, так і семантичні елементи, які передають негативну оцінку дій російської армії в Україні. Дослідження зосереджено на лексико-семантичних засобах і стилістичних фігурах, з акцентом на ролі метафори щодо значних екологічних проблем і небезпек, спричинених військовим вторгненням в Україну, як на локальному, так і на глобальному рівнях. Метафори яскраво змальовують військові дії російської армії як катастрофу, екоцид і злочин. Дослідження також демонструє, як потужні емоційні тригери можуть бути використані для залучення читачів, і закладає основу для більш масштабного аналізу стилістичних фігур у медіа екологічному дискурсі, надаючи цінну інформацію про те, як мова ЗМІ може впливати на суспільне сприйняття нагальних екологічних проблем.

Ключові слова: критичний дискурс-аналіз, медіа екологічний дискурс, війна в Україні, екологічні проблеми, дискурсивні стратегії, мовні засоби, метафора.

The problem statement. Wars posing significant threats to the survival of humanity result in widespread devastation, environmental and humanitarian disasters, technological crises and climate change are intricately linked to all the risk factors affecting various ecosystems. The ongoing war in Ukraine has a substantial influence on the environment and results in the emerging key ecological consequences: the destruction of natural habitats, soil and water contamination, pollution from military activities, disruption of wildlife and ecosystems balance and cascading effects on other organisms within the ecosystems, damage to infrastructure and industrial sites and consequently impact on agricultural practices.

The destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Station Dam on June 6, 2023, known as the Kakhovka Disaster, is considered both a war crime and a potential act of ecocide perpetrated by the occupying forces of the Russian Federation. The blowing up of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam has resulted in catastrophic environmental consequences. This event stands as the largest act of ecocide committed during the period of full-scale invasion by Russia. The ramifications for the surrounding ecosystem are profound and will persist for many decades to come. The restoration of the biosystems affected by this disaster is an extensive process that can span up to 10 years or even a century. So, fostering environmental awareness and ecolinguistic consciousness within society becomes crucial in achieving harmony and balance (Heuberger, R., 2018; Materynska, O., 2021).

Research analysis. The chosen research methodology for this study is the ecolinguistic approach, which focuses on examining the relationship between language and environmental destruction (Mühlhäusler P. Babel, 2001; 2003). This research area aligns with contemporary scientific trends that integrate social, psychological, and philosophical perspectives within linguistics, incorporating elements of sociology and ecology. The primary objective of ecolinguistic research is to identify the ideologies held by specific societal groups, encompassing their beliefs about the past, present, future, and desired state of the world. These ideologies are reinforced through discourses, which represent the standardized ways in which particular groups in society employ language, imagery, and other forms of representation (Stibbe, 2015).

We employ an integrated approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focusing on the analysis of news reports to examine media discourse and language patterns. This approach is supported by the works of Tenerio who provides an overview of CDA (Tenerio, 2011).

In accordance with the principles of CDA, our analysis centres on understanding social practices, social power dynamics, and ideologies within the media discourse. This approach draws inspiration from the works of Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2012). By incorporating these theoretical perspectives, we aim to gain insights into the social, political, and ideological dimensions present in the studied media discourse.

To shed light on political actors and events, this research explores the discursive strategies and linguistic means employed in their communication. Van Dijk (2006) distinguishes specific discursive strategies such as “actor description”, “evidentiality”, “generalization”, “self-glorification”, “number game”, and “victimization” that verbalize positioning. Historical, cultural contexts and political implicatures are also taken into consideration. The research methods employed in this article combine three analytical vectors proposed by Fairclough with explanatory tools by van Dijk. They are further enriched by elements of stylistic analysis and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, J., 2004), with metaphor being a cognitive device providing in-depth insights into ideologies and having an influential role.

The illustrative material for the study consists of data gathered from open-access newspapers and magazines published in the United States and Great Britain, including such sources as The Guardian, The NY Times, The Economist, The ABC News, The Washington Post and others.

The aim of the article. By analysing quotations and linguistic elements, our objective is to reveal the hidden ideologies and power dynamics that impact the portrayal of this environmental catastrophe. The article focuses on the analysis of framing (the way in which information is presented and interpreted, influencing how events, issues, or individuals are understood and perceived by the audience), linguistic means of its employment in the media ecological discourse, and namely:

a) uncovering different power dynamics and conflicting viewpoints, investigating how the media attributes responsibility for the Kakhovka Dam explosion, analysing the language used to assign blame, highlighting any patterns in the media’s portrayal of the parties, identifying recurring themes and concerns highlighted in media reports, exploring how these narratives align with or challenge dominant environmental ideologies;

b) comparing the ecological discourse in British and American media coverage, analysing any differences or similarities in the representation of the Kakhovka Dam explosion, considering environmental policies, and cultural values;

c) analysing lexical choices employed in media reports paying attention to the connotations in the language used to depict the events and the main political actors involved, and determine the patterns or biases evident in the word choices;

d) metaphorical language as metaphors play a crucial role in shaping public understanding by evoking certain emotions or associations, investigat-

ing how metaphors construct specific narratives or perspectives about the incident.

Presentation of the main research material.

This research considers discourse strategies that embody framing of the ecological discourse on the war in Ukraine in British and American media and argues that they are the following:

1. Labelling

Labelling is a discursive strategy commonly employed in media ecological discourse analysis with a focus on understanding the interplay between media, communication, and their impact on society and the environment. Labelling is an essential aspect of this analysis as it reflects the power dynamics, ideologies, and values embedded within media discourses:

1. *Nova Kakhovka Dam explosion risks plunging Europe into ‘ecological disaster’ (6).*

2. *The war in Ukraine is a human tragedy. It’s also an environmental disaster (11).*

The terms “ecological disaster”, “environmental disaster”, and “human tragedy” are utilized to underscore the seriousness of the situation stemming from the dam’s collapse. Through this label, the focus is on the substantial environmental impact of the incident, presenting it as a calamity. Additionally, the reference to Russia’s desperate attempt further accentuates the portrayal of the event as a deliberate action with significant ecological consequences. The use of personalization is evident in the phrase «*explosion risks plunging Europe into “ecological disaster”*» attributing the ability to cause serious international consequences.

The terms “human tragedy”, “ecological disaster”, and “environmental disaster”, as labels convey the deliberate destruction of the environment, suggesting that the attack on the dam has severe ecological consequences for many European countries. These terms are metaphors that characterize the attack on the dam as an act of environmental destruction on a massive scale. They suggest that the damage inflicted is akin to the intentional killing of an ecosystem or natural environment. The labels are employed to depict the destruction of the dam and power plant as a deliberate and catastrophic assault on the environment emphasizing the severe ecological impact of the collapse and portraying it as an intentional act of environmental destruction.

3. *A ‘Silent Victim’: How Nature Becomes a Casualty of War (1).*

The labels “silent victim” and “casualty of war” express strong disapproval and condemnation of the intentional attack on civilian infrastructure, and destruction of the dam, emphasizing the irreversible consequences for nature. By characterizing

nature as a "silent victim", and "casualty of war", the author underscores the magnitude of the damage and suggests a sense of urgency in addressing the ecological consequences.

2. Personalization

The discursive strategy of personalization involves presenting environmental issues in a way that emphasizes their impact on individuals or human societies. It aims to create a connection between the audience and the ecological concerns by framing them in personal terms: humanizing nature, emphasising impact on daily lives, including emotional appeals.

1. *Ukraine war deals 'massive blow' to nature as Belarus's largest wildlife NGO shut down (23).*

This statement personifies the war and nature blaming the deterioration of the environment on it. It suggests that the audience should consider the environmental impact as a significant concern when nature needs healing as a living being.

2. *The war has devastated Ukraine's environment, too (20).*

This headline employs personalization by highlighting the war's effects on nature, emphasizing the profound impact it has had. Metaphorically, the phrase "massive blow" is used to depict the war's consequences on the environment, characterizing it as a destructive force, much like a physical attack.

3. *Destruction of Kakhovka dam prompts 'ecocide' investigation (21).*

The personalization strategy is employed by using the phrase "prompts 'ecocide' investigation" about the necessity to explore the impact of the destruction on the ecosystems and organisms living near the coast. It brings attention to the fragility of these ecosystems when faced with the effects of the explosion, arousing a sense of worry among readers. In conclusion, these examples utilize a personalization technique to underscore the environmental consequences of the war in a repeatable and compassionate manner, with the intention of evoking empathy from the audience.

3. Evidentiality

The use of evidentiality in ecological media discourse pertains to employing various linguistic tools and indicators to express the origin and nature of evidence backing a statement or assertion about environmental matters. This practice entails signalling where the information comes from, how dependable it is, and its credibility, thus shaping the perceived legitimacy and reliability of the discourse. Evidentiality in ecological media discourse is carried out through techniques such as reported speech, referencing scientific studies or research, citing official reports or documents, and describing observable evidence:

1. *Catastrophe': Experts fear dramatic consequences from Ukraine dam collapse (16).*

The mentioning of "experts" indicates that the information is based on professional sources or accounts of the events happening during the flooding. The example appeals to the authority and expertise of these individuals, suggesting that their analysis is grounded in professional knowledge.

2. *Russian forces blew up the dam "in a panic", Ukraine's military intelligence agency said on Tuesday, amid reports that Kyiv forces could have used its road for a major counter-offensive (5).*

The reference to Ukraine's military intelligence agency and the inclusion of "reports" suggest that the information relies on intelligence gathered and sources from within the military.

In general, the examined excerpts mainly concentrate on presenting factual data rather than employing literary techniques for stylistic or figurative reasons. In these examples, the primary method used is evidentiality, which involves citing authoritative sources, using direct quotations, and referring to reports, intelligence agencies, government officials, and video evidence. These approaches are employed to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the information being conveyed. By doing so, they effectively enhance the persuasiveness of the discourse and influence the audience's comprehension of the events concerning the war in Ukraine.

4. Number game

The number game strategy is the use of numerical data, statistics, and figures to support arguments, emphasize the scale of an issue, or provide evidence in discussions related to the environment. It encompasses the act of presenting numerical data to create a compelling and powerful message. This technique is frequently applied in ecological media discussions to illustrate the scale of environmental issues, emphasize the severity of damage or consequences, and stress the immediate need for action. Through the use of statistics, the discourse aims to bolster its arguments, establish credibility, and instil a sense of urgency among its audience.

Devastation from Kakhovka dam collapse could take decades to heal (2).

At least 22,000 people were believed to be at risk from the flood threat as millions of litres of water gushed out of the dam (4).

The author notes that a minimum of 22,000 individuals were thought to be in danger due to the flood hazard, underscoring the magnitude of the potential calamity and the number of people who could be impacted by the situation.

3. *The country's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram that there were "about 80 settlements in*

the flood zone” and that he has ordered evacuations. The cities include Kherson, a city that was home to some 300,000 people before Moscow’s invasion (10).

The example, combining the discursive strategies of evidentiality and number game, indicates that approximately 80 communities are located in the flood-prone region, and authorities have issued evacuation orders. While the exact number of settlements is unspecified, the term “about 80” offers a rough estimate of the impacted areas and the extent of evacuation measures. Furthermore, the passage provides a sense of the city’s size by mentioning that it houses around 300,000 residents.

5. Victimization

The discursive strategy of victimization within ecological media discourse involves depicting individuals, communities, or entities as sufferers of environmental challenges or calamities. Its purpose is to elicit emotions like empathy, sympathy, and a sense of urgency among the audience, emphasizing the pain, vulnerability, and injustice experienced by those affected. This approach often aims to attribute responsibility to specific actors or entities who have contributed to or worsened environmental issues. By portraying people or communities as victims, this discourse strategy seeks to rally support for environmental causes, increase awareness about the repercussions of environmental degradation, and advocate for measures to mitigate the suffering and safeguard the affected parties. This may entail sharing testimonies, or narratives that illustrate the hardships and difficulties endured by the victims:

1. In Nova Kakhovka, all the animals except ducks and geese drowned, according to the animal welfare organisation Uanimals. “We tried hard to preserve the zoo during the occupation and now it no longer exists,” the group quoted the zoo management as saying. The disaster will have damaging effects that could last for generations, from the immediate potential for loss of life to the thousands of people forced to abandon their homes and farms. It is expected to have a catastrophic effect on the ecology of the region and will sweep mines from the banks of the Dnipro into villages and farmland downstream (15).

The example highlights how forests, groundwater, soil, people and wild animals suffer as often-overlooked casualties of war. They are depicted as victims of ongoing violence, pollution, and habitat destruction. The use of the hyperbolic expression “will sweep mines” amplifies the destructive effects of relentless force, accentuating the severe impact on the environment.

2. *Such contamination can harm local ecosystems and crops decades after the guns have gone quiet,*

says Olexiy Angurets, the author of an upcoming report on the war’s impact on the environment (20).

The passage emphasizes the negative impact of contamination on local ecosystems and crops, indicating that they might remain vulnerable even after the conflict ends. The metaphorical expression “the guns have gone quiet” symbolizes the cessation of hostilities. This information is attributed to Olexiy Angurets, who has prepared a report on the environmental consequences of the war, lending credibility and evidence to the portrayal of victimization and combining victimization and evidentiality strategies.

The strategy of victimization in discourse revolves around depicting diverse entities and elements, such as individuals, communities, nature, ecosystems, and animals, as casualties of the conflict in Ukraine. The intention behind this strategy is to elicit feelings of empathy, compassion, and indignation by shedding light on the hardship, grief, and ruin endured by these entities. So, the discursive strategy of victimization can serve as a potent instrument for raising awareness and promoting environmental preservation.

The analysed material allows us to conclude that the British and American media tend to emphasize the potential worldwide consequences of the dam’s explosion. Quotations from environmental experts and activists primarily centre around climate change and the importance of enhanced international cooperation to prevent similar incidents in the future. The discourse in the British media often adopts a critical tone, stressing the need for accountability and urging immediate action to mitigate the ecological impact. In contrast, American media frequently emphasized the human cost of the Kakhovka Dam incident focusing on the immediate impact on communities and the need for disaster relief efforts.

Linguistic means, such as metaphors, personification, and intensifiers, play a vital role in shaping the ecological discourse, they evoke emotions, add emphasis, and influence the way the readers perceive the event. Both British and American media often used ecological metaphors, depicting the dam incident as “environmental catastrophe”, “ecocide”, “disaster”, and “human tragedy”. Both British and American media employed intensifiers to emphasize the severity of the Kakhovka Dam’s destruction. Phrases like “massive blow to nature”, “dramatic consequences”, and “catastrophic effect on the ecology” were used to convey the magnitude of the incident, evoking a sense of urgency and concern.

Conclusion. We gained valuable insights into the complexities of environmental reporting enabling us to identify prevailing narratives on the Kakhovka

Dam explosion and other ecological crimes, emphasizing the importance of critically examining media narratives to understand how language shapes public perceptions of environmental disasters and encouraging readers to engage in a nuanced understanding of ecological issues beyond the media discourse.

In the context of war and ecology, the use of different communication strategies aims to influence perceptions and reactions to environmental issues. Labelling attributes to specific terms like "ecocide", "war crime", "human tragedy" etc. to convey the severity of the situation and condemn those responsible. "Personalization" engages the audience in environmental concerns by highlighting personal implications, humanizing nature, and appealing to emotions. Evidentiality involves using linguistic devices and markers to indicate the source or type

of evidence supporting statements or claims about environmental issues. Number game relies on numerical data, statistics, and figures to support arguments, emphasize the scale of an issue, or provide evidence. Victimization portrays individuals, communities, or entities as victims of environmental issues or disasters.

Evidentiality and Number game primarily rely on factual information to make their points, while Labelling often utilizes metaphors, idioms, and phraseological units to drive its message. Victimization leans on idioms, metaphors, and hyperbolic expressions to present the affected parties as victims of environmental challenges.

While British media focus on the global implications and emphasize the need for international actions, American media highlight the local impact and call for immediate assistance.

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