

LINGUO-AXIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE *WASHINGTON POST*'S WAR NARRATIVE ON RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

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Abstract: *This study examines the concept of war narrative, a discursive construct intrinsically linked to military and media discourse. We define war narrative as a narrative form that (1) represents armed conflict through narration and persuasion strategies, (2) elucidates conflict logic, and (3) proposes argumentative and axiological interpretations to influence audiences. Our research investigates the axiological modality expressed in the Washington Post's war narrative, analyzing key rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy, euphemism, logical attribution, and irony. Particular attention is given to evidentiality strategies, which delineate authorial voice from reported information. The analysis of evidentiality is conducted along two axes: morphological-syntactic and lexical-semantic. The former yields a typology of syntactic structures in complex sentences with indirect discourse, revealing narrative flexibility in service of pragmatic goals. The latter identifies lexical markers indicating the provenance of reported information. This dual approach illuminates the multifaceted role of values within the Washington Post's war narrative, contributing to our understanding of how media discourse shapes public perception of armed conflicts. Our findings have implications for the study of journalistic practices, narrative theory, and the intersection of linguistics and media studies in conflict reporting.*

Keywords: *war narrative; linguo-axiology; media discourse; linguistic stylistics; lexical-semantic field;*

1. Introduction

Language, as a cognitive representation system, reflects the multifaceted nature of our external reality. This intricate interplay between linguistic structures and human cognition merits rigorous examination across diverse domains of human experience.

The ongoing military conflict in Ukraine, particularly since the escalation in February 2022, has garnered significant global media attention. This geopolitical event provides a compelling case study for analyzing the discursive construction of war narratives in international media. Of particular interest is how foreign media outlets frame and disseminate information about the conflict, given their crucial role in shaping global public opinion.

Our lexical-semantic analysis of the concept WAR in the *Washington Post*'s war narrative revealed the intricate relationship between individual lexical units and the overarching textual meaning. However, narratives are complex constructs that extend beyond mere lexical composition. They

employ a diverse array of linguistic and rhetorical devices to influence readership, necessitating a more comprehensive analytical approach.

This study aims to elucidate the linguo-axiological dimension of contemporary American war narrative as manifested in the *Washington Post's* coverage of the Ukraine conflict. Our investigation focuses on the implicit and explicit modalities through which journalistic narratives convey evaluative stances, despite professional norms of objectivity. We examine both morphological parameters (e.g., modal particles, verbal mood distribution, discourse organization) and semantic-pragmatic features, with particular attention to figurative language and its role in conveying axiological nuances.

The primary objectives of this research are threefold: (1) to delineate the boundaries of the axiological component within the *Washington Post's* war narrative; (2) to identify and categorize the linguistic mechanisms employed in representing axiological modes; and (3) to conduct a detailed analysis of specific instances that exemplify the linguo-axiological aspects of the narrative.

2. Theory and Methodology

This study's examination of the linguo-axiological dimension within contemporary American war narratives necessitates a precise delineation of key concepts. Primarily, we must establish a working definition of 'war narrative' within the context of contemporary linguistics, acknowledging its intrinsic connection to the broader domain of military discourse.

Iryna Stadnik conceptualizes military discourse as an expansive communicative sphere encompassing all war-related and military-oriented interactions. This discourse emerges from the confluence of political, sociocultural, psychological, and historical processes, manifesting across diverse textual genres including military fiction, journalism, and political communications, whether produced collectively or individually (Stadnik 64). Within this framework, strategic narrative assumes a pivotal role, particularly in domains where intentional influence on public attitudes or decision-making is paramount, such as in economic or military-political spheres.

Nina Zrazhevskaya further elucidates the nexus between narrative and media discourse, positing that journalistic narratives function as organizational mechanisms for the phenomenological diversity of semantic perception. This perspective necessitates a recalibration of media narrative analysis, focusing on systems of intertextual movements and the strategic omission or fulfilment of specific conditions (Zrazhevskaya 55). In journalistic practice, the transmission of news and factual information is mediated through narratives, which construct particular realities rather than presenting alternative ones. These narratives are subject to various transformative processes, including coding, editing, selection, and visual framing. Notably,

even syntactic arrangement can yield significant narrative variations (Zrazhevskaya 58).

The pervasive focus on global conflicts in contemporary media discourse necessitates a rigorous analysis of war narratives. Ajit Maan, a prominent military analyst and narrative strategist, underscores the criticality of such investigations, positing that narrative occupies a central role in cognitive processes. She argues that weaponized narratives pose significant threats to national and international security, potentially undermining homeland stability by eroding citizen trust in democratic institutions and the rule of law, thereby precipitating civil unrest (Maan 2018).

Tone Kvernbekk and Ola Bøe-Hansen further elucidate this perspective, conceptualizing war narratives as a distinct subcategory within the broader narrative taxonomy. They posit that war narratives, as national constructs, effectively integrate logos, ethos, and pathos. Their analysis incorporates Ornatowski's structural framework for war narratives, which delineates key elements: conflict parties, conflict nature definition, stakes involved, desired end-state, means identification, and war duration estimation (Kvernbekk and Bøe-Hansen 218).

Luis F.V. Tamayo extends this discourse by framing strategic narratives as a form of warfare in themselves. He observes a dichotomous reflection in contemporary conflict narratives: oscillating between the spectacle of technological warfare and the profound awakening of conscience that transforms experienced events into collective sorrow (Tamayo 100).

Building upon extant scholarly efforts to conceptualize war narratives, we propose an operational definition that synthesizes key elements from previous research while incorporating novel insights. We posit that a war narrative constitutes a distinct narrative typology characterized by its representation of armed conflict through a strategic amalgamation of narration and persuasion techniques. This narrative form encapsulates the broader logic of conflict comprehension while proffering argumentative structures and axiological interpretations designed to exert both direct and indirect influence on its audience.

The **axiological dimension** of war narratives warrants meticulous examination through the lens of linguistic axiology, or *linguo-axiology*. As Oksana Kovtun elucidates, this subdiscipline has undergone significant evolution, its scientific and methodological foundations shaped by various linguistic paradigms, including structural linguistics, semantics, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and discourse linguistics (Kovtun 278-289).

Within the realm of cognitive semantics, Lakoff's seminal work on the verbalization of thought through linguistic categories has been instrumental in advancing *linguo-axiological* inquiry. George Lakoff proposes a tripartite hierarchy of values: (1) sensory experience, (2) life and health, and (3)

spiritual dimension (Lakoff and Jonson 1980). Concurrently, the study of values in verbal communication has gained traction within discourse studies, with the value category being contextualized and imbued with novel semantic loads within discursive frameworks. This development has precipitated the emergence of discourse axiology, a subfield that scrutinizes scientific style and the neutralization of stylistic differentiation (Kovtun 284).

Our methodological approach seeks to synthesize these diverse theoretical strands, particularly in the analysis of the figurative aspect of narrative discourse. The corpus selected for this study presents a rich tapestry of stylistic devices employed to amplify narrative impact, often functioning as integral components of the narrative's conceptual sphere. Moreover, the linguistic peculiarities of military discourse, as mediated through journalistic channels, necessitate a nuanced analytical approach.

The final stratum of our analytical framework focuses on the role and manifestation of **evidentiality** within war narratives. Oksana Nika offers a comprehensive definition of evidentiality as

a category that characterizes the mode as the result of the speaker's cognitive process, aimed at correlating the expressed content with personal perception or with information from external sources, while simultaneously providing an evaluative perspective. (Nika 22)

The XX century witnessed a surge in scholarly attention to evidentiality, with researchers examining linguistic mechanisms employed by communicators to reference information sources regarding verbalized situations. This scholarly trajectory has yielded diverse typologies of evidentiality and elucidated its expression across various languages. However, the identification of evidentiality markers and strategies within specific linguistic systems remains a subject of ongoing debate. Moreover, the interface between evidentiality and modality, both in terms of morphological indicators and semantic characteristics, continues to be a contentious area of inquiry.

Our analysis of narrative material derived from media discourse necessitates a nuanced differentiation between the author-narrator's account and information attributed to secondary sources. This distinction facilitates the unveiling of additional axiological dimensions within the narrative structure.

To operationalize this theoretical framework, we employ a multifaceted analytical approach:

1. formal-syntactic analysis to identify evidentiality markers at the sentence level.
2. semantic-syntactic analysis to elucidate the relationship between evidentiality and propositional content.

3. discourse analysis to examine the interaction between evidentiality markers and broader narrative structures.

4. axiological analysis to discern the evaluative implications of evidentiality strategies within the war narrative context.

This methodological synthesis enables a multidimensional analysis of war narratives, encompassing lexical, semantic, stylistic, and discursive dimensions. By integrating these diverse analytical approaches, we aim to contribute to the evolving scholarly discourse on the intersection of linguistics, axiology, and media studies in the context of conflict reporting, offering nuanced insights into the complex linguistic mechanisms that shape public understanding of geopolitical realities.

3. Research results

Our systematic investigation into the axiological modality of war narratives, as exemplified in the *Washington Post* corpus, has been conducted through a multi-tiered analytical framework. This approach has allowed for a nuanced examination of the phenomenon's various facets, yielding a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic mechanisms employed in axiological modulation within conflict discourse.

The corpus analysis has yielded a rich dataset of axiological markers, which have been subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. Our findings reveal a taxonomic distribution of value markers across five primary categories: metaphor, metonymy, euphemism, logical attribute, and irony. The corpus yielded a total of 225 instances of these markers, each of which has been subjected to multi-parametric classification.

The quantitative distribution of these markers provides a foundational framework for understanding their relative prevalence and significance within the war narrative corpus. This distribution can be represented as follows: (Table 1).

Table 1. The statistical analysis of the quantitative ratio of means for expressing image and value aspect in the processed segment of the *Washington Post*

| Value markers | Metaphor | Metonymy | Euphemism | Logical attribute | Irony |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total: 225 | 20 (8.9%) | 138 (61.3%) | 15 (6.7%) | 50 (22.2%) | 2 (0.9%) |
| Examples | <i>a silver bullet; a major</i> | <i>Ukraine; Kyiv; Russia; the United</i> | <i>a significant escalation; withdrawal of</i> | <i>illegal annexation; occupied</i> | <i>an underdog triumph;</i> |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|
| | <i>milestone; weapons package; a parade of armour and steel; a symphony of specialties, etc.</i> | <i>States; Washington; the United Nations; NATO; the Pentagon; the Bundeswehr; etc.</i> | <i>troops; more advantageous positions; more sophisticated campaign; confrontation, etc.</i> | <i>territories; unsupported allegation; humiliating loss; the gruelling conflict; blue and yellow flags, etc.</i> | <i>the vaunted empire</i> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|

As has already been mentioned, the first level of our research is meant for investigating the linguo-axiological potential of metaphor within the war narrative of the newspaper *Washington Post*. In the process of analysing selected excerpts of narrative texts, a total of 20 cases subsuming metaphor use have been attested. It has been found, in particular, that standard metaphors are the most frequent when it comes to the degree of integrity of their internal form (10 cases of use, i.e. 50%), dead metaphors being somewhat less common (8 cases of use, i.e. 40%); thus, metaphorical clichés turn out the least frequent (only 2 cases of use, i.e. 10%). To illustrate this assumption, one could consider the following context, which embraces a metaphor that for a reason might be branded as standard: *Their response to the brutal onslaught unleashed by Russia last February has been **a parade of armor and steel**: Javelins, howitzers, drones, strike vehicles, anti-aircraft systems, HIMARS and, most recently, battle tanks* (WP, February 1, 2023), in which the list of weapons is named by the lexeme *parade*. The given metaphors, whilst preserving their internal form, clarify the concept to which they refer, making it more vivid and contributing to a less cumbersome expression of thought. Instead, one might think of a cliché with a hardly perceptible modification regarding the other example: *As morale suffers, Russia and Ukraine fight **a war of mental attrition*** (WP, October 13, 2022), in which *a war of mental attrition* could be understood in terms of undermining warfare; in this case, the primary meaning of the lexeme *attrition* associated with the physical action of rubbing (*Dictionary by Merriam-Webster*) falls under the influence of the word *mental* having an abstract meaning. The phrase *littered with rockets* in the example is on the border between standard and dead metaphors: *The day before, the field behind this short trench line was **littered with rockets*** (WP, October 5, 2022). However, it should be borne in mind that in practice it may be difficult to determine the degree of distance emerging between the newly formed meaning and its internal form, as is the case of the third example, where the word *litter*, albeit seldom associated with names of

weapons itself, still tends to imagery, conveying ideas about a large number of something (here, that of rockets).

According to the ways of complicating the secondary meaning, simple metaphors are oftenest used (11 cases of use, i.e. 55%), while compound ones occur somewhat less often in the texts of the publication (8 cases of use, i.e. 40%); complex metaphor is an exceptional layer in this system and is represented by only one case of use (tantamount to 5%). Let there be given examples for each of the sub-groups: (a) simple: *And yet, Ukraine was fighting back. Ukrainians resisted **the nuclear blackmail**, scorned the vaunted empire and took risks for their democracy* (WP, February 22, 2023); (b) compound: *With Kyiv facing rolling electricity outages, authorities on Tuesday raced to repair the damage from a barrage of Russian missiles that **slammed into the heart of the Ukrainian capital**, in a significant escalation of the nearly eight-month-old war that drew international condemnation of Moscow* (WP, October 11, 2022); (c) complex: *Their response to the brutal onslaught unleashed by Russia last February has been **a parade of armor and steel**: Javelins, howitzers, drones, strike vehicles, anti-aircraft systems, HIMARS and, most recently, battle tanks* (WP, February 1, 2023), where the lexeme *parade* is metaphorised twice, referring to the words *armour* and *steel* at once.

While the above-considered sub-groups are characterised by unequal distribution of attested specimens of metaphors, it is practically uniform within the limits of differentiation by conceptual potential, though in some cases the clarification of every instance may hinge upon the influence of subjective perception. Thus, the analysis of the collected card index has shown the same number of examples of orientational and ontological metaphors (7 cases of use, i.e. 35% respectively), with a slightly smaller number of structural metaphors having been found (6 cases of use, i.e. 30%). By way of example, the already examined case of metaphor, represented by the phrase *to lift morale*, has been classified as orientational. Other similar examples, in their turn, also convey the meaning of movement in space, which is imaginatively transferred to certain processes called abstract concepts: *Ukraine has **ramped up its calls for aid**, building on the trust it gained in fighting with the Western weapons that dominated its requests earlier in the war* (WP, February 2, 2023).

To the same extent the selection presents ontological metaphors actualising abstract ideas as deriving from concrete concepts, such as: *After Ukrainian forces reclaimed Kherson in November, many of those who had fled returned home. **The victory fueled national optimism**, and the government began to repair war-ravaged infrastructure. Some would say life was returning to normal* (WP, March 2, 2023), where the metaphorical expression *the victory fueled national optimism* describes the moral elation ‘fueled’ by the victory (that is why the word *fuel* is used with the specific meaning ‘to

provide with fuel’). Structural metaphors, per contra, represent an abstract concept in terms of another one having a concrete meaning. In this sense, the boundary between them and ontological metaphors is sometimes less perceptible, which leads to ambiguity in their interpretation: *As morale suffers, Russia and Ukraine fight a war of mental attrition* (WP, October 13, 2022), the notion *war* being correlated with a concrete one, cf. WAR IS ATTRITION; *The decisions end months of debate among Western allies and pave the way for a major shift in the balance of power on the Ukrainian battlefield* (WP, January 25, 2023) – here the words *shift* and *balance* are likewise used for designating the concept of physically changing the balance to get across the abstract idea POWER IS BALANCE; at the same time, this metaphor refers to specific actions unfolding in the combat space.

In so far as the axiological content is concerned, metaphors having a neutral colour tend to prevail, for they convey no pronounced emotive shade. Most of the given specimens include neutral metaphors (16 cases of use, i.e. 80%): *The day before, the field behind this short trench line was littered with rockets* (WP, October 5, 2022); *The first supply of Western mobile armor is another major milestone in the escalating provision of advanced weaponry to Ukrainian forces, including heavy artillery and long-range precision rocket launchers* (WP, January 4, 2023). See also: *For much of the past year, the United States and its allies have been playing catch-up in supplying Ukraine* (WP, December 23, 2022); *The decisions end months of debate among Western allies and pave the way for a major shift in the balance of power on the Ukrainian battlefield* (WP, January 25, 2023). Only the context of the war narrative makes it possible to ascertain whether a particular metaphor is emotionally coloured, as isolated units from such excerpts appear to be: *Ukraine hammers Russian forces into retreat on east and south fronts* (WP, October 4, 2022); *At Kyiv, Kharkiv and, later, Kherson, they beat back the Russians, halting the torture, the murder and the deportation* (WP, February 22, 2023). For all that, even a holistic analysis of a single article having marks of war narrative does not always provide enough grounds for distinguishing metaphors by the axiological parameter, which complicates the study. Yet even a putative ‘impartiality’ of most attested metaphors is itself an axiological phenomenon, as long as a ‘zero value’ can sensitise readers to perceiving an event in an objective manner or testifying the author’s choice of an external focalisation as being distant by its nature.

The obtained outcomes are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. The statistical analysis of the quantitative ratio of metaphor examples in the processed textual segments from the *Washington Post* by types

| Type of metaphor | | Quantity | Percentage |
|---|-------------------------------|----------|------------|
| By the degree of the internal form integrity | standard metaphor | 10 | 50.0% |
| | dead metaphor | 8 | 40.0% |
| | cliché | 2 | 10.0% |
| By ways of complicating the secondary meaning | simple metaphor | 11 | 55.0% |
| | compound metaphor | 8 | 40.0% |
| | complex metaphor | 1 | 5.0% |
| Based upon the conceptual sphere | orientational metaphor | 7 | 35.0% |
| | ontological metaphor | 7 | 35.0% |
| | structural metaphor | 6 | 30.0% |
| By axiological implications | neutral metaphor | 16 | 80.0% |
| | emotionally coloured metaphor | 4 | 20.0% |
| Total in groups: 20 (100%) | | | |

Be that as it may, metaphor is not the only means of representing the category of value in the context of war narrative. Alongside it, metonymy, logical attribute, euphemisms, and irony have proved to be other common means of constructing the value modality of the narrative. All these means can overlap at the level of lexical meaning; hence, it is worthwhile to set forth a caveat about a somewhat subjective nature of correlating a phenomenon with a specific term.

The main functions of metonymy are reflected in the lexical system of the war narrative of the periodical *Washington Post*, which is confirmed by the data obtained in the course of our research. In particular, metonymy is presented in the largest number of examples (138 cases of usage, i.e. 61.3%). However, this ought to be explained by the assumption that the most frequent among them are generalised names of countries (in the grammatical forms of common (nominative), possessive (genitive), and objective (oblique) cases, as they are known to be called in traditional grammar), used to designate their state apparatuses, as well as capitals. Specifically, the lexemes *Ukraine* and *Russia* occur in most fragments. Although it might be reasonable that such a significant predominance of them as compared to other lexemes should have been left beyond the scope of this analysis, it is nonetheless necessary to draw attention to the argument that their high frequency is not accidental and serves its evaluative purpose. It may seem that narrators, when making use of these lexical units, strive to present a country in the unity of its government and its people. It is to be noted that the lexeme *Ukraine* occurs most frequently in this context: *The missiles are used for air defense and fired from launchers that Spain provided **Ukraine** (WP, December 21, 2022); Officials and experts had warned at the start of the winter that **Ukraine** was on the brink of a humanitarian disaster, when a slew of Russian airstrikes targeted the country's energy infrastructure, leaving citizens across the country facing blackouts and an absence of heat and running water (WP, March 1, 2023).* It suffices here to say that lexemes *Kyiv*, *Moscow*, and *Washington* have a similar semantic function, performing not only the same role as the names of countries, but also occur in those narratives in which one would rather imply an actual foreign policy aspect or a position of the authorities in relation to the war, and the lexeme *Kyiv* proves to be used most often, which may underline particular attention that the present periodical devotes to Ukraine: *Ukrainian officials say this process should give **Washington** confidence about providing **Kyiv** with longer-range weapons (WP, February 9, 2023).*

In the meantime, one can also find within the collected material lexemes denoting entire international organisations, such as *the United Nations* and *NATO*, all designed to emphasise the unity of their participants or to draw heed to a specific official position of their representatives: ***The United Nations** is reinforcing efforts to track the devastation inflicted on **Ukraine's** architecture, art and historical sites by using satellite imagery to verify reports of destruction, two of its agencies announced (WP, October 27, 2022).* It is worth noticing that metonymy is characterised by the subsidiary role of its evaluative function as opposed to their ability to ensure textual cohesion and lingual economy. Instead, the frequent use of lexical units such as *Ukraine*, *Russia*, *U.S.*, *Poland*, *Britain* etc. could be perceived as the authors' desire to

present them in metaphorical terms as international players, which would be, again, owing to external focalisation.

If one should consider the euphemisms in war narrative of the *Washington Post*, it could be acknowledged that they might be divided into two groups: (a) euphemisms deriving from the author's individual choice, which may be explained by unconscious willingness to neutralise negative shades associated with phrases, and (b) euphemisms that are rooted in the English language, being common names of warfare terms (e.g. names of weapons). Unlike the words included in the first group, fixed chunks should be understood as lexical means whereof the entry into the lexical space of war narrative is owing to the need to use general technical terms that would be more apprehensible to a wide readership. At any rate, both groups share the same tendency to neutralise the tone of the narrative so as to minimise the number of its figurative and emotive components.

The examples representing the first group are phrases such as *a significant escalation* (this one renders it feasible to avoid a direct nomination of hostilities escalation), *to push back* (the actual name of the action that embraces its direction and force component without, for all that, specifying further details), *a more sophisticated campaign*, and *confrontation*. One can identify two of them in the following sentences: *But as the war nears the one-year mark, with Ukrainian forces fighting to **push back** the Russians in the south and east and Moscow continuing to shell civilians, Ukraine is primarily focused on lobbying the United States and other NATO allies for the sophisticated weaponry required to shift the balance on the battlefield* (WP, February 2, 2023); *The plan, under discussion for weeks, according to senior U.S. defense officials, would build on the billions of dollars in weaponry and other aid Washington has provided Ukraine by showing its military how to wage **a more sophisticated campaign** against the struggling Russian army* (WP, December 1, 2022).

Another group, which is rather more numerous, comprises such units as *weapons systems*, *a 'dirty bomb'*, *nuclear weapons*, *withdrawal of troops*, *redeploy forces*, *air defense*, and *more advantageous positions* (the latter going with neither premise nor any further details and, as such, might be used with reference to particular statements). Here are just a few examples of fragments with the aforesaid terms and fixed chunks: *Waves of Russian strikes across Ukraine brought the war back to downtown Kyiv, a significant escalation that raises pressure on the United States and other European countries to provide Kyiv with the most **advanced weapons systems*** (WP, October 10, 2022); *The Ukrainians also said that it would probably take several more days before their troops could enter the city and that they might still face heavy fighting as Russians dug in to **more advantageous positions*** (WP, November 9, 2022). It can therefore be admitted that euphemisms that

have been singled out within the text corpus of the *Washington Post* are meant to neutralise negative connotations associated with certain phenomena of the war.

Commenting upon the role of attributes in the *Washington Post*'s war narrative (a total of 50 recorded cases of use, i.e. 22.2%), one should highlight their property of introducing additional characteristics that are alike essential for the definition of the noun to which they refer and for the entire syntactic unity in the narrative structure. Such attributes have the advantage of accumulating, by virtue of their brevity, some background information known from other narratives, and that of indicating relevant features of an object or phenomenon in a given context, the presence of which is essential for a thorough comprehension of the situation. Let us consider some more examples, in which logical attributes have a significant part in the construction of the story: *While raining missiles down on Ukrainian land it has failed to capture on the battlefield, Russia is seeking to solidify its **illegal** annexation of four regions by imposing new border controls and limiting travel outside of **occupied** territories* (WP, October 12, 2022); not only do the words *illegal* and *occupied* tend to bespeak narrator's position, but also reflect the connection between the story and the facts known from the events preceding it (i.e. the annexation and the occupation). Attributes from other examples fulfil specifying function: *Jubilant residents swarmed onto the streets of Kherson city on Friday to greet advancing Ukrainian forces with hugs, kisses and a sea of **blue and yellow** flags as Ukraine celebrated yet another major victory over the Russian army* (WP, November 11, 2022), where the combination of colour names *blue* and *yellow* evoke the image of the Ukrainian flag; *Beyond supplying the Ukrainians with **game-changing** weaponry, the United States provided critical targeting information that helped the Ukrainians ration their limited supplies of ammunition* (WP, December 29, 2022), in which the attribute *game-changing* emphasises the qualitatively new nature of the provided weapons, affecting the dynamics of the narrative; *Like the Ukrainians, we are living through a **historical** turning point. Like them, we will need to learn history and defy myth to make it to a **democratic** future* (WP, February 22, 2023), in which the lexemes *historical* and *democratic* specify the character and nature of the events by emphasising their importance. In some texts, there have been found to appear emotionally coloured attributes, which gives grounds to brand them as epithets, as in this example: *Russia's **blatant** attack on civilians here – the worst to strike this city since Russia invaded Ukraine last February* (WP, January 15, 2023), where the adjective *blatant* reinforces the negative connotation of the noun *attack* and thus renders the narrative less impartial.

In addition to the above-considered means, one is liable to come across other few tropes that convey axiological modality. This is, for instance, the

case of using irony, the major distinctive mark of which is the re-interpretation of the meaning of a speech unit, which occurs both within its denotative (changing meaning to the opposite) and connotative, or axiological (converting positive evaluation to negative) components (Kreuz 50): *And yet, Ukraine was fighting back. Ukrainians resisted the nuclear blackmail, scorned **the vaunted empire** and took risks for their democracy* (WP, February 22, 2023).

At the final stage of our analysis, we deem it necessary to consider the role and place in it of such a category as evidentiality. Although the English language does not distinguish special morphological markers of evidentiality (as indicated, in particular, by the data of the *World Atlas of Linguistic Structures*), the very coding of the source of information can be conveyed in it with the help of lexical and other auxiliary grammatical means: namely, modal words (disjuncts), discursive markers, and syntactic constructions. Examples of such means found in various texts of the studied publication are summarised in Table 3 with reference to each of the recorded forms expressing evidentiality. For convenience's sake, we have made use of abbreviated designations of some grammatical terms: [...] standing for an independent clause; (...) – subordinate clause; *V* – verb; *pres.* – present tense form; *past* – past tense form; *perf.* – perfect tense form; *fut.* – future tense form; *fut. pret.* – future in the past (or futurum praeteriti) tense form; *ind.* – indicative mood.

Table 3. Means of evidentiality in the context of the war narrative based upon the material of the *Washington Post*

| Structure | Scheme | Description | Example |
|---------------|--|---|--|
| Structure 1.1 | [<i>V</i> _{pres.} / <i>past ind.</i>] + that + (<i>V</i> _{pres./past ind.}) | Relations of simultaneity / continuity between the event and the moment of reporting it with an indication of the source (for instance, using a verb <i>say</i> , which embraces reporting acceptance). | <i>Russia unleashed a “barrage” of missiles across Ukraine early Saturday morning, Ukrainian officials said</i> (WP, October 22, 2022). |
| Structure 1.2 | [<i>V</i> _{pres. ind.}] | Reference to the source of information (perspective) is expressed by the predicate. The source | <i>The U.S. main battle tank, the original version of which entered service in 1980, is considered</i> |

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| | | itself is not specified, but the narrator presents the information as a view shared by other people rather than a personal opinion. | <i>among the world's most powerful (WP, February 2, 2023).</i> |
| Structure 2.1 | [V _{past.} / perf. ind.] + that + (V _{fut.} pret. ind.) | Relations of continuity, when previously reported information about a forthcoming event is being communicated. So far as regards this structure, one takes notice of strict observance of tense forms sequence principles within the complex sentence. | <i>The United States and its partners announced they would use the time to train thousands of Ukrainian soldiers in a smarter way to attack entrenched Russian lines, with infantry protected by armored vehicles (WP, January 28, 2023).</i> |
| Structure 2.2 | [V _{past.} / perf. ind.] + that + (V _{pres. ind.}) | Statement about reporting events that may or may not be taking place at the time of modelling the narrative. | <i>Ukraine's Western allies have characterized as false Moscow's unsupported allegation that Kyiv is planning to detonate a "dirty bomb" on its own soil and blame Russia for it, and the allies say it is an attempt to create a pretext to escalate the war (WP, October 25, 2022).</i> |
| Structure 2.3 | [V _{past.} / perf. ind.] + that + (V _{fut. ind.}) | Relations of continuity; the earlier acquainted information about a future occurrence is reported without | <i>The country has said it will spend 3 percent of its GDP on defense this year as it updates its equipment and aims</i> |

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|---------------|---|--|---|
| | | observing the principles of tense forms sequence in a complex sentence. In the given example, the event regarded as forthcoming from the past perspective is conveyed using the auxiliary morpheme <i>will</i> in the present tense, which expresses the shade of a more direct possibility, being also relevant at the time of modelling the narrative. This helps the author to do away with an undesirable connotation of a remote probability. | <i>to create “the strongest land force in Europe.”</i> (WP, February 16, 2023). |
| Structure 2.4 | [V _{past.} / perf. ind.] + <i>that</i> + (V _{fut.} pret. ind.) + [V _{fut.} ind.] | Relations of continuity; previously communicated information upon an event to come about in the future is conveyed in two logically connected parts of sentences. It must be observed that the base of the subordinate clause includes a verb in the form of the so-called future in the past tense banking upon the use of a past tense form in the independent clause, whereas the other clause has a verb already taken in a form | <i>The United States announced last month that it would send its Patriot missile system to Ukraine as part of a \$2 billion weapons package. It will include one Patriot battery, which is equipped with up to eight launchers</i> (WP, January 15, 2023). |

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| | | expressing futurity (having the auxiliary component <i>will</i>). | |
| Structure 3 | [V _{fut.} ind.] pret. | A similar relation of continuity, when the framework of a foregoing sentence introduced within the narrative is constructed from the viewpoint of the past. | <i>The plan, under discussion for weeks, according to senior U.S. defense officials, would build on the billions of dollars in weaponry and other aid Washington has provided Ukraine by showing its military how to wage a more sophisticated campaign against the struggling Russian army (WP, December 1, 2022).</i> |

This typology highlights solely the structures of the morphological-syntactic evidentiality strategy within the war narrative of the newspaper *Washington Post*, while the lexical strategy, which relies upon the use of special discursive markers, deserves no less attention. It is worth remarking that some of these lexical tools perform the function of independent disjuncts that modify the meaning of the predicate. Such lexemes attested in the analysed corpus include the words *probably*, *most likely*, *potential*, as well as the already mentioned phrase *unsupported allegation*, which performs the specified function implicitly: *Earlier, explosions shook Kyiv residents awake in what Ukraine's air force said was “most likely” a ballistic missile attack* (WP, January 14, 2023). Another group of lexical markers is closely related to the predicative centre of the sentence and combines various components of syntactic structures associated with indirect discourse, e.g. the construction known in classical grammar as *nominatīvus cum infinitīvo*, as well as the independent and subordinate object clauses introduced by such syntactic chunks as *to be said that* / *to be expected that* / *to be considered that*, *to say* / *tell* / *announce* / *approve* / *pledge* / *contend* / *insist that*: *The U.S. main battle tank, the original version of which entered service in 1980, **is considered** among the world's most powerful* (WP, February 2, 2023); *The United States **announced** last month that it would send its Patriot missile system to Ukraine*

as part of a \$2 billion weapons package (WP, January 15, 2023). While the first group of lexical markers serves to convey nuances of some doubt or a likelihood of performing an action, the second one includes such of them as enable the author either to eschew direct reference to the source or to withdraw his/her responsibility for the information communicated, or to moderate a categorical statement that depends upon the modal content of a specific word. Following the same logic, if the author mentions a source of information, in most cases he/she resorts to its direct nomination (whether it be a person's name or a name of an institution), sometimes using auxiliary phrases such as *according to* and others that go beyond the framework of the collected card index. Nevertheless, the studied examples have not as yet provided sufficient grounds for drawing ultimate conclusions about the most stable prototypical values covering each of the strategies in the broadest perspective.

4. Conclusions

The application of a linguo-axiological approach to the analysis of war narratives in the *Washington Post* has yielded significant insights into the complex interplay between linguistic structures and evaluative attitudes in media discourse. This methodological framework has illuminated the multifaceted nature of axiological expression, encompassing both denotative and figurative linguistic elements.

Our findings underscore the pivotal role of linguo-axiology in elucidating the value paradigms embedded within socio-cultural linguistic contexts. This approach, in conjunction with linguo-stylistic analysis, offers a robust framework for examining the figurative and emotive components of narratives, revealing their dual function in organizational and content-forming capacities.

The investigation of axiological modality in media discourse has focused on five primary linguistic mechanisms: metaphor, metonymy, euphemism, logical attributes, and irony. Quantitative analysis of metaphorical usage reveals a predominance of standard, simple, and neutral metaphors. Furthermore, the distribution of cognitive metaphor types – orientational, ontological, and structural – demonstrates a relatively balanced frequency. These metaphorical constructions serve not only to enhance narrative concision and imagery but also to facilitate a degree of neutrality in storytelling, aligning with the author's preference for external focalization.

Metonymy and euphemism emerge as functionally analogous to metaphor in their capacity to maintain narrative impartiality and linguistic economy. Euphemisms, in particular, serve to mitigate potentially negative connotations associated with war-related phenomena, thereby achieving the requisite level of impersonality characteristic of media discourse.

Logical attributes and epithets function as devices for information foregrounding, sensitizing readers to specific aspects of the reported events. Irony, while infrequent, introduces heightened emotional valence to the discourse when employed.

A significant contribution of this study lies in the examination of evidentiality strategies within the axiological framework of war narratives. This analysis, conducted along morphological-syntactic and lexical-semantic dimensions, has yielded a typology of syntactic structures reflecting the organization of complex sentences with indirect discourse. This typology reveals the flexibility inherent in the syntactic configuration of narratives. Concurrently, the identification of discursive markers specifying the characteristics of reported information provides insights into the lexical mechanisms of source attribution and information qualification.

In summation, this research has illuminated diverse facets of axiological expression within the war narratives of the *Washington Post*, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of value representation in media discourse. The findings of this study open avenues for further investigation into the linguo-axiological dimensions of American war narratives. Prospective research directions may include analysis of spatio-temporal continuum aspects and their relationship to narrative content and eventfulness, exploration of cross-cultural variations in axiological expression within war narratives, investigation of the diachronic evolution of axiological markers in media discourse on conflict. These proposed directions aim to further elucidate the complex interplay between linguistic structures, axiological expression, and socio-cultural contexts in the representation of conflict in media discourse.

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