

SEMANTICS OF V. ZELENSKY'S ADDRESS TO HIS CITIYENS: BETWEEN POLITICS AND EMOTIONS

DARIIA MYTSAN*

*Corresponding author: dariia.mytsan@pnu.edu.ua

Abstract. Since the end of February, the whole world has been watching the terrible events unfolding on the territory of Ukraine. The Russian-Ukrainian war became a forced impetus to the daily addresses of the President of Ukraine to his people and to world leaders. The President of Ukraine clearly understands that the whole world is watching him, and he knows that when he talks to his people, he is also talking to an international audience. On the example of elaborated speech texts, Zelensky proved himself as a true leader of the Ukrainian people. Since the beginning of the war, his identity with the Ukrainian people has been growing. And one can see how this identity deepens, forming an organic integrity. In addition, Zelensky demonstrates skill in strategic communications. His short, concise phrases lend themselves well to news headlines, social media posts, and conversations between people. Thanks to his good oratorical skills, a new vision of the Ukrainian people and the Armed Forces of Ukraine is emerging in the world. The prospects for further such research are determined by the need to study various linguistic discourses.

Keywords: speech, address, discourse, propaganda, war.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is famous for being one of the principal functions of a language. Using eloquence, the orator can express their opinions, transmit information to others, or even influence them. Individuals can be affected differently: through preferences, moods, actions, reasons, or gestures. People get influenced by political eloquence when widely broadcasted in the media (Stets, 1998, p. 16). Specific criteria allow people to develop their oratory skills, including psychological, technical, linguistic, and didactic. Technical and linguistic factors are the most effective in terms of data transfer. They can help interpret some of the information and strengthen (or weaken) it. To avoid misunderstandings, the speaker must be aware of the audience's differences which determine the ability to speak correctly (Osypova, Vodnik, Klimova, 2006).

In today's world, a high level of speech culture is an integral part of a successful speaker. Successful public speaking is impossible without experience, competence, and knowledge. Ignorance of the basic principles of public speaking limits the impact on public opinion.

The President of Ukraine clearly understands that the whole world is watching him. He knows that by talking to his people, he also speaks to an international audience.

In each address to the audience, Zelensky competently uses the nonverbal aspect of his speeches. From the first day of the war on February 24, V. Zelensky mainly addressed his nation and the whole civilized world from the president's office in an ordinary T-shirt or khaki long sleeve, five o'clock shadow. In the background, there is always a national symbol - the flag and the emblem of Ukraine. Sometimes his appeals are recorded from the central part of the capital. He communicates with his audience through video. Such an image is a crucial part of his speeches, strengthening their influence on the average citizen of Ukraine. Every Ukrainian sees that his president is non-fugitive and present. Like an average Ukrainian, the president does not get enough sleep and fights side by side on the information front. This alone deserves respect and faith in Ukrainian victory—a strategically correct move.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Hoping This article is an attempt at a structured analysis of the texts of Volodymyr Zelensky's speeches to his citizens. All texts of speeches during the period on the first two months of the war were taken for the study. The chronological limitation is due to the large number of such appeals to the Ukrainian people. The president writes them down daily, and there are cases when several a day. For example, in the first month there were 60 such speeches, and in the second – 51. In all addresses, vivid signs of language propaganda can be traced, such as: discrediting the enemy, the principle of opposition between us and them, creating a positive image of Ukraine and Ukrainians, rhetorical questions, and phrases that are remembered. The study provides many interesting and diverse examples of such propaganda.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Propaganda and manipulation in the speeches of V. Zelensky

a) Text structure. Before analyzing the addresses of the President of Ukraine, it is necessary to briefly mention the text structure, which is always clear and well-constructed. It always contains greetings, body text, and endings. After the greeting, Ukraine's number of resistance days in the Russian-Ukrainian war is always indicated. This statement intends to strengthen the faith of Ukrainians in themselves in their victory because no one in the world believed that Ukraine would not give up and last for at least three days. Next, the President reports on the situation at the front for the past day - in detail in all areas and cities and on the progress in negotiations with foreign partners. Before conclusions, he provides information on awarding specific individuals for special merits. All Ukrainian speeches are written in the native language, but some of them have small Russian fragments addressed to residents, mothers, and military personnel of the Russian Federation. This explains the fact that some examples from speeches are given in Russian.

Greetings and conclusions. On the first day, the standard phrase "Citizens of Ukraine!" sounded in the Ukrainian people's address, emphasizing the formality of President Zelensky's address. It shows the distance between the head of state and the people. During the next two months, it never happened again. All subsequent speeches began with the following neutral phrases: *"Ukrainians!", "Ukrainian men and women!" "Good evening, everyone!", "Glory to the Armed Forces of Ukraine," "People of Ukraine!"* (the

concept of people is much broader than the concept of citizens¹). The last address already emphasizes the integrity and indivisibility of all residents of Ukraine, regardless of citizenship, religion, and social status. *"Our defenders!"* - the pronoun "our" is emphasized because we represent the integrity of the people and the President, and Zelensky identifies as a part of his nation. The word defender is used deliberately, meaning that men and women are fighting altogether in this war.

Besides neutral phrases, many greetings were repeated and contained epithets exalting the state and its people: *"Great people of a great country!"*, *"Free people of a free/ bravest/ most beautiful country!"*, *"Brave Ukrainians of an unconquered country!"*, *"Strong people of steel / of an indomitable country!"*, *"Wise people of a strong/ powerful country,"* *"Our strong people of an invincible country!"*, *"Indomitable people of the bravest country!"*, *"The bravest people of the most beautiful country in the world!"*. In all the examples given, adjectives can be synonyms, equally variably used both for the noun people and for the noun country (identification of the inseparability of these two concepts). The phrase *"Peaceful people of a warring country!"* is somewhat different. It is the only time a semantic contrast is used. Such appeals demonstrate that the only way to end the war would be the victory of the Ukrainian people. Interesting are the addresses from the president containing wishes: *"Wishing health to the Ukrainian heroes!"*, *"Wishing health to the united country!"*, *"I wish you victory, Ukrainian people!"*. The most stylistically developed address is *"Wishing health to native Ukrainians, strong and kind! But not kind to the enemy!"*.

There was only one time when the president's address did not have an addressee of congratulations. This was on April 3, after the mass media published information about the atrocities committed by the Russian army against the civilian population of Bucha (a town in the Kyiv region). This format of Zelensky's speech was developed deliberately to better convey that day's tragedy. He emphasized, *"Today's address won't greet you. I don't want any extra words. Presidents don't usually record addresses like this..."* (one (!) of the few times Zelensky highlights him being the President).

As for the addresses' endings, they all, without exception, end with the Ukrainian slogan *"Glory to Ukraine!"*². This is also not accidental. This phrase symbolizes the struggle for Ukraine's independence, and Ukrainians primarily associate it with the Russian confrontation. Kremlin propaganda interprets this slogan as radical nationalistic, which has always terrified supporters of the "Russian world." Sometimes, Zelensky adds: *"Glory to the Armed Forces of Ukraine!"*, *"Glory to each of our soldiers!"*, *"Glory to you!"*, *"Glory to the army!"*, *"Eternal memory to those who died for Ukraine!"*.

b) Discrediting the enemy. One of the main goals of propaganda is the merciless and total humiliation of the enemy. Propaganda seeks to dehumanize its opponent so that the viewer loses any potential sympathy for the other side. The consumer of propaganda should in no case perceive the

¹ The word "people" is a synonym for the population, all the country's inhabitants. It is also a form of national and ethnic unity developed in a particular territory. It has stable features of language, culture, and awareness of its unity and difference from others. A citizen is simply a person who belongs to the permanent population of any state, enjoys its rights, and fulfills the duties established by the laws of that state (Dictionary, vol. 2, p. 175)

² Ukrainian greeting, national slogan. Appeared at the beginning of the 20th century. It became widespread during the Ukrainian Revolution (1918-1921). It became the slogan of Ukrainian nationalists and fighters for the independence of Ukraine. It was revived after the declaration of independence of Ukraine (1991). It gained popularity during Euromaidan (2013) and the Russian Ukrainian war (2014). Since 2018, military salute in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Police.

enemy as an ordinary person with different, perhaps even opposing, views. Moreover, the enemy must be not just a stranger but something disgusting, dangerous, unnatural, and even otherworldly.

By following the lexical chain *Russia - the army of the Russian Federation*, it is possible to notice the President of Ukraine is not skimping on other characteristics. He uses words exclusively with a negative connotation. For him, *Russia is one of the most powerful countries in the world* (without a negative connotation, this was said once on 25.02), *a terrorist state, an aggressor, an enemy, a virus, tyranny, a stubborn opponent, a sponsor of terrorism, and a source of absolute evil*. In the words of Zelensky, *Russian Federation and humanitarian catastrophe* are full-fledged synonyms.

Instead, President refers to the Russian army as *the enemies, not soldiers of a superior state, but confused children being used* (about young recruits). *The bottom, godless, bastards, barbarians, non-humans, Russian murderers, intruders, experienced terrorists, invaders, hordes, executioners, pure evil, and nobodies*. Entire phrases dedicated to this army are filled with negativity, contempt, and disgust: *Murderers. Executioners. Rapists. Marauders who call themselves "an army"; No soul. No heart (Russian); Not all serial rapists reached the level of brutality that Russian soldiers did; Misfits under the Russian flag; They see a toilet for the first time in their lives and steal all household appliances; The brutal and inhuman army of the world; The assassination of civilians is the signature of the Russian army. And a final verdict: They have such a thirst for destruction that it resembles something otherworldly ... monsters, hellish chimeras*.

Concerning the actions of the Kremlin, Zelensky always uses the derogatory verbs *to lie, to pretend* (instead of *to deceive, to tell a lie*), which are used in a conversational style and have a negative connotation: *they lie that the Malaysian Boeing fell by itself. The corpses were thrown in the air* (also, *frontline liars* is used).

c) The principle of the image "us" – "them." One of the most widespread strategies in creating a picture of the political situation is the division into "ours" and "theirs." Such a mechanism is inherent in the language of politics in general. K. Ožóg notes that the strategy of building the opposition is based on listing the positive traits typical for "us" and the negative traits attributed to "them." At the same time, manipulation is used (Ozug, 2004, p. 174–175). Such opposition is closely related to the image of the enemy. It occupies an important place in the language of propaganda since most linguistic means, especially metaphors and epithets, are concentrated around this image. In such cases, words that describe the enemy have a negative connotation and value and are often used ironically.

Speaking about "us," the President reminds us of being Ukrainians: *We are on our land; When running for a President, I said each of us was a President; The country's fate depends entirely on our army, our heroes, our security forces, and our people and wisdom; We will fight for every meter of our land, for every one of our people; We are together with God; We became above the superpower of the spirit*. In all speeches, the pronoun "I" is rare, except in the cases of informing about negotiations with the leaders of other states. Instead, the pronoun "we" is frequent: *we persevered, had a hard night ahead, and succeeded*. This form of presenting information highlights President's identification with his people and creates an image of a single whole.

Relating to "them," - *Russia has turned into an analog of the so-called DPR, which is complete isolation, An acute attack of aggression, megalomania, and persecution mania. Complicated psychological complexes* (in a veiled way, this phrase related to the President of the Russian Federation, Putin, who isolated himself from everybody, fearing for his safety); *the occupiers have no roots, memory, or soul. This is an absolute absurdity* -

from all points of view; Russian ships can go ... unless to the bottom³; Russia lost Ukraine forever, ... the whole world lost; They are organically unable to make life normal; There is no freedom of speech, freedom of choice, poverty flourishes and human life is worthless; Degradation, destruction, and death were brought (in the DPR and LPR) under the Russian flag; a Russian passport is an unequivocal condemnation from all decent people, a total reluctance to cooperate. As a summary of all the negative epithets and metaphors addressed to Belarus: Be Belarus, not Russia! (Russian).

Also, the texts of Zelensky's speeches contain vivid examples of opposition in our favor: *hell is with them, and God is with us; Russian propagandists thought of our people as themselves. We are proud. We are warriors of the light; Us and terror (the Russian Federation) are different universes.* Such presentation and description of them and us convinces even the most ardent Kremlin supporter in Ukraine that Russia is pure evil. This understanding can also be reinforced by videos, pictures, and eyewitness stories. This is a phenomenon of manipulation inherent in military propaganda.

d) Creation of the image of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Since February 24, Ukraine and the events taking place have not left the headings of worldwide publications and Internet news. If all world leaders thought that this war would last 3-5 days, now they understand being profoundly mistaken and underestimating Ukraine, its citizens, and its President. In his speeches, Zelensky always points up the beauty of his country: *Our country is the only and the best; Many places of our beautiful country, its cities; Peaceful, proud, strong Kharkiv; Kyiv is the heart of our country; Good, quiet, soulful region of Sumy; Mariupol is a peaceful and hard-working city.* Aside from the beauty, the country's fortitude is indicated: *Ukraine will not give away what belongs to us, and we do not need what belongs to someone else!*

Similarly, people with the best traits live in a beautiful country: *We have our people and land. And for us, it is golden (in the first place are the people which Zelensky values above all); I am the president of an adequate country and adequate people (Russian); The fate of Ukraine depends only on Ukrainians; And if someone thinks that after overcoming all this, Ukrainians - all of us - will get scared, break down or give up, he does not know anything about us, about Ukraine; Ukrainians will not give what belongs to them.* And as a summary for the whole world: *Our brand is to be Ukrainian and brave.*

As we can see from the presidential addresses, the images of Ukraine and its citizens somewhat coincide. A beautiful country of brave and fair people.

e) Rhetorical questions and memorable phrases. Zelensky often focuses on expressive and emotionally saturated fragments of his speeches. Encouragement to fight can be implemented at the level of language manipulation. Among many manipulation techniques, rhetorical questions are the most widespread. President Zelensky actively uses them: *Who else has done what Ukrainians do? What do they do? What do they want? What is all this for you? And what then? (Russian) How did the world respond to this? Who is ready to fight us?* The peculiarity of using rhetorical questions is that the politician asserts or denies an opinion in the form of a question. In this way, he provokes the addressee, brings him to an internal dialogue with the speaker, and ultimately affects the listener's attitudes and planned activity. Such questions are intriguing and remain unanswered, while the answers are apparent.

In addition, Zelensky successfully acts as a soundbite master⁴. His texts contain many messages reduced to a few words or phrases, which are easy to remember and frequently quoted by the media.

³ This is a paraphrase of a well-known expression by a border guard of Zmiinyi Island in response to the Russian warship's offer to surrender.

⁴ Soundbite (English) - a short striking extract of a speech.

Some expressions have already become idiomatic: *The fight is going on here. I need weapons, not a taxi; When you attack us, you will see our faces, not our backs; Each generation will perceive Russia as a threat; If we win, and I am sure we will, it will be a victory for the whole democratic world.*

f) Strategy and tactics. Zelensky's internal and external speeches can be exemplary in climax cases for other leaders, as he uses the right tactics. He speaks briefly and succinctly emphasizes the thoughts he wants to share with the audience. In the first two months of the war, it is possible to single out the primary thematics of his speeches addressed to Ukrainians and the whole world. It includes:

- An appeal to the Kremlin to stop the war;
- Heroism of the Ukrainians;
- An appeal to Europe and the whole world to support Ukrainians and help militaristically;
- An appeal to NATO to close the sky over Ukraine.

Also, Zelensky adapts his addresses to different audiences. He separately addresses the Jews worldwide after the rocket attack on Babi Yar. He congratulates the Ukrainian Muslims on Ramadan and the Catholics on Easter. Zelensky calls on the Belarusians not to escalate the war. He tries to reach out to the Russian population so that they protest the war and their soldiers do not participate in military operations. Such appeals are delivered in Russian. He does not forget to congratulate the people on professional holidays like Security Service Day, National Guard Day, Firefighter Day, etc. T. Shevchenko is mentioned separately during Shevchenko days. Happy birthday to Lina Kostenko on behalf of all Ukrainians. All these tactics reflect the unity of Zelensky and Ukrainians.

A correctly chosen strategy of the speaker cannot fail to captivate.

Lexical and semantic analysis of speeches

Lexical composition. Generally, Volodymyr Zelensky uses flexible vocabulary in his speeches: general political and military terminology, international terms, and idioms. He realizes that speaking in a language understandable to the people is necessary. Therefore, his addresses mostly contain everyday vocabulary and idioms, which intensify these speeches emotionally. The Ukrainian language was enriched with new or thematically limited words thanks to the mass media and Zelensky's war speeches.

Words-symbols. Since the beginning of the war, new words-symbols have appeared in the linguistic composition of the Ukrainian language. Mainly being the proper names, they have become popular and bear a hidden meaning. Thus, *Zmiinyi Island* became a symbol of indomitability, and *Chornobayivka* reflects the resistance of Ukrainians against the occupiers' military forces. "Azov" represents the defenders of Azovstal and Mariupol, while *Bucha*, *Gostomel*, and *Irpil* stand for the cities of national tragedy.

Words as reflections of the war. For Ukrainians, words related to war have become regular and casual. This vocabulary includes *mine*, *territorial defense*, *air raid*, *air alarm*, *martial law*, *occupied territory*, *evacuation*, *humanitarian corridor*, etc. The term "resettlers" is attractive by its broad meaning. The President deliberately never uses the word "refugee" in his speeches, emphasizing that these are temporarily resettled persons, not those fleeing the war.

Loanwords. In his addresses, the President introduced new or rarely used words into the Ukrainian language, which are borrowed. Recently launched terms are *Stingers*, *Javelins*⁵, *embargo*, *de-occupation*, *demilitarization*, *unblock*, *collaborator*, *reparation*, *contribution*, *denazify*, etc.

The President is responsible for introducing a new word, “gauleiter” - the temporary head of the occupying power⁶.

Phraseological units. Single phraseological units sometimes appear in the texts of speeches. Their task is to emotionally strengthen the text and make it more eloquent and versatile. Some of them are repeated several times, for example, *the new iron curtain*, *sooner or later*, *cherish empty hopes*, *put a shoulder to the wheel*, *wipe off the face of the earth*, *turn to ashes*, *before the eyes of the whole world*, *corridors of power*, *the grey area*, *my heart breaks*, *sick ambitions*, *send to hell*, *the last argument* (Russian). The favorite and most frequent idiom of Zelensky is *the matter of time* (victory of Ukraine).

The President's authorship also includes the disparaging paraphrase of the well-known saying: *the greatest dream is to see Paris and die - their* (Russian soldiers') *dream is to steal a toilet and die*.

The wordplay can also be traced in Zelensky's phrase, “*We have lost our “Dream,” the old one. But we are building the new one now.*” The word *dream* has a deeper meaning here. It combines the hope of every Ukrainian for something desired (victory, a happy future) and the image of the world's largest and most potent Ukrainian transport plane, which was destroyed by the Russian army during the first days of the war.

Quite often in the texts of appeals, the popular recent years' phrase *never again* is used. Its history stretches back to the Second World War. By this, the President of Ukraine consciously draws a parallel between the two wars.

In all of Zelensky's addresses, *war* as the key concept bears an extensive and diverse interpretation. Starting chronologically with the first speech, he uses the words *invasion*, *the beginning of the war against Europe*, *confrontation*, etc. Then, the President introduces negatively saturated epithets and nouns, which have a significant impact on the emotional state of the addressee: *terror*, *full-scale*, *brutal invasion*, *domestic war*, *not improvisation but war*, *terroristic*, *genocide*, *monstrous* (Russian), *national*, *our* (with the implication that no one can help us except ourselves), *of all humanity*, *the patriotic war against Russia*, *a terrible*, *infinitely cynical war*, *not a “special operation” but a shameful invasion*.

Stylistic tools. In public speeches, a good orator should master the language variety, emotional impact, expressiveness, accuracy, and logic. To convince the audience, Zelensky's addresses contain stylistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, metaphor, parallelism, polysyndeton, and comparison.

Alliteration is a stylistic device that entails the repetition of homogeneous consonant sounds to increase the intonation expressiveness of the text and deepen its emotional content connection. A similar-sounding word combination focuses on a specific segment of the content. Alliterative sounds create rhythm and mood, thus provoking particular connotations. For example, the repetition of “p”: *Peaceful city. Peaceful residents of Mariupol*. Or “r”: *The enemy used everything against us: rockets, artillery, armored vehicles*.

⁵ Originally a type of weapon, this word has become one of the most popular female birth names in Ukraine.

⁶ A gauleiter (German) was a regional leader of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) who served as the head of a Gau. Gauleiter was the third-highest rank in the Nazi political leadership.

Assonance deals with the repetition of vowel sounds. Speakers use it for the same reasons as alliteration. Sound "a": *Kharkiv. A cruise missile attack in the morning*. Repetition of "o": *We are not afraid to talk to Russia. It is necessary to speak of the cease-fire constantly. Although the world keeps giving constant promises – we'll let it never happen again*.

A metaphor is an artistic device that helps listeners better comprehend the content. In Zelensky's speeches, metaphors occur most frequently: *We are a people who ruined the enemy's plans in a week; If Russian politicians still have eyes left, they can see...; The world has the power to close the sky*.

Parallelism aims to liken and correlate characteristic features or actions (parallel depiction of two phenomena from different spheres of life). This stylistic device increases the effectiveness and balance of the text: *The tenth day is like one endlessly long day; The enemy marked me as target number one, my family as target number two*.

Polysyndeton is a stylistic figure that consists of the accumulation of conjunctions connecting individual words and parts of a phrase. The speaker uses this device to slow down the speech, highlight significant words, and solemnize the address: *We were united and therefore strong, and therefore endured the challenge; And so it will continue, and we will continue to stand*.

Comparisons perform a figurative and emotional-evaluative function: *Go home like a Russian ship; It is necessary to fight in Kherson as we fought in Berdyansk*.

Thus, we briefly and concisely analyzed the lexical-semantic and stylistic tools in Zelensky's military speeches to his nation.

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Dariia Mytsan, PhD, Associate Professor of the Slavic Languages Department of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1430-7121

Address: Dariia Mytsan, Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, 57 Shevchenko St., Ivano-Frankivsk, 76025, Ukraine.

E-mail: dariia.mytsan@pnu.edu.ua

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Структурування 3 кінця лютого весь світ спостерігає за страшними подіями, що розгортаються на території України. Російсько-українська війна стала вимушеним поштовхом для щоденних звернень Президента України до свого народу та світових лідерів. Президент України чітко розуміє, що на нього дивиться весь світ, і знає, що коли він розмовляє зі своїм народом, він також спілкується з міжнародною аудиторією.

На прикладі опрацьованих текстів виступів Зеленський проявив себе як справжній лідер українського народу. З початком війни його ідентичність з українським народом зростає. І видно, як ця тотожність поглиблюється, утворюючи органічну цілісність. Крім того, Зеленський демонструє майстерність стратегічних комунікацій. Його короткі лаконічні фрази добре підходять для заголовків новин, публікацій у соціальних мережах і розмов між людьми. Завдяки його хорошим ораторським здібностям формується нове бачення у світі українського народу та Збройних Сил України. Перспективи подальших таких досліджень визначаються необхідністю вивчення різноманітних лінгвістичних дискурсів.

Ключові слова: мова, звернення, дискурс, пропаганда, війна.