

# LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER: PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

## A LINGUAGEM COMO INSTRUMENTO DE PODER: PERSPECTIVAS FILOSÓFICAS E SOCIOLINGUÍSTICAS

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**Abstract:** Language is widely recognised as an instrument of power, particularly in the context of sociopolitical transformation, national identity formation, and full-scale Russian aggression in Ukraine. This study aims to identify and analyse the discursive mechanisms through which language constructs power relations in contemporary Ukrainian political discourse, while also assessing the impact of historical and sociocultural factors on its development. A qualitative discourse analysis method was applied. Following the relevance screening and final validation, 73 texts were selected for analysis. The findings reveal that Ukrainian political discourse operates on both philosophical and sociolinguistic levels. Philosophically, it involves aestheticisation, symbolism, and normalisation. Sociolinguistically, it reflects historical bilingualism and the concept of linguistic capital. The discourse employs various linguistic tools, including rhetorical appeal, metaphor, euphemism, repetition, historical reference, polarisation, passive voice, and hyperbole. These elements function to enact and maintain power within society. Among the most frequently used tools are euphemism, metaphor, and rhetorical appeal. Political discourse contributes to shaping both positive and negative public images. Positive representations are formed through patriotic references, heroisation, historical legacy, success narratives, and inclusive pronouns. In contrast, negative images emerge through crisis framing, fear appeals, enemy demonisation, accusatory language, and manipulative comparisons. In conclusion, this study enhances the understanding of modern discourse theory by illustrating the interplay between language, national

identity, and political power. The results offer practical value for improving political communication strategies in Ukraine and for further research in political linguistics.

**Keywords:** Political Discourse. Narrative. Language Of Power. Linguistic Tools. Rhetoric Techniques. Positive And Negative Image.

**Resumo:** A linguagem é amplamente reconhecida como um instrumento de poder, especialmente no contexto da transformação sociopolítica, da formação da identidade nacional e da agressão russa em larga escala na Ucrânia. Este estudo visa identificar e analisar os mecanismos discursivos pelos quais a linguagem constrói relações de poder no discurso político ucraniano contemporâneo, além de avaliar o impacto de fatores históricos e socioculturais em seu desenvolvimento. Aplicou-se o método qualitativo de análise do discurso. Após a triagem de relevância e validação final, 73 textos foram selecionados para análise. Os resultados revelam que o discurso político ucraniano opera nos níveis filosófico e sociolinguístico. Filosoficamente, envolve estetização, simbolismo e normalização. Sociolinguisticamente, reflete o bilinguismo histórico e o conceito de capital linguístico. O discurso utiliza ferramentas linguísticas como apelo retórico, metáfora, eufemismo, repetição, referência histórica, polarização, voz passiva e hipérbole, as quais funcionam para exercer e manter o poder na sociedade. Entre as ferramentas mais frequentes estão o eufemismo, a metáfora e o apelo retórico. O discurso político contribui para formar imagens públicas positivas e negativas. As representações positivas baseiam-se em apelos patrióticos, heroização, legado histórico, narrativas de sucesso e pronomes inclusivos. Imagens negativas surgem por meio de enquadramento de crise, apelos ao medo, demonização do inimigo, linguagem acusatória e comparações manipuladoras. Concluindo, este estudo contribui para a teoria contemporânea do discurso, demonstrando a interação entre linguagem, identidade nacional e poder político, além de oferecer implicações práticas para a comunicação política na Ucrânia.

**Palavras-chave:** Discurso político. Narrativa. Linguagem do poder. Ferramentas linguísticas. Técnicas de retórica. Imagem positiva e negativa.

## 1. Introduction

Power is one of the most contested concepts in political, philosophical and sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks. Definitions of the notion widely range from the ability to influence, control, or shape the actions and decisions of individuals or groups despite of their resistance (ALI *et al.*, 2024) to the capacity to achieve desired outcomes or to bring certain transformations (AVELINO, 2021). Usually, power tends to operate through established institutions or legal frameworks that ensure order and predictability in the social dynamics (SURYAJIYOSO, 2021). Some works focus on the studying of the concept power in the context of crises. It is stated that during war, pandemics, or natural disasters, power often becomes concentrated since urgent decisions require fast actions to mobilize the resources and to realize collective goals (DEVTEROV *et al.*, 2023). According to PETROSYAN and KHAMRAKULOVA (2022), power is manifested through language, as words possess the ability to build relationship between society and individual, construct and interpret realities, and shape collective consciousness.

Through strategic use of persuasive techniques, contextualization, and thematic vocabulary, language frames the way people understand the surroundings world, interpret events, and form own judgments (YUHAN *et al.*, 2024). At the same time, language disseminates information rapidly and influences public discourse significantly forming social phenomena, particularly through social media (BABENKO *et al.*, 2024). It is worth mentioning that modern discourse has been profoundly transformed by electronic elements, as digital platforms facilitate instant communication, reshaping traditional nature of power through the possibility to introduce interactive content (STEPANOVA *et al.*, 2023). Importantly, the philosophy of human cognition offers a framework for the examination of language of power and its shaping of narratives of authority as well as discursive patterns of dominance, memory, and cultural continuity (CHATTERJEE *et al.*, 2025). Politicians often focus on language creativity to create powerful discourse that is able to attract people's attention to particular issues and legitimize certain ideologies (HALYTSKA-DIDUKH *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, military discourse, rooted in strategic communication, emphasizes control and discipline, orienting towards the normalization of violence, justification of military actions, and creation of clear distinctions between allies and enemies (BHINDER, 2022).

Therefore, language as an instrument of power is an important aspect of studies in the field since it contributes to the understanding of contemporary processes in Ukraine,

particularly in the context of ongoing sociopolitical transformation, national identity formation, and full-scale Russian aggression. Language in Ukraine has historically been more than a communicative tool. It is often called a symbol of cultural heritage by a number of scholars (BETLII, 2022; NEDASHKIVSKA *et al.*, 2024). Since the end of February 2022, language is not of little importance because it has become a tool of resistance against the invasion of the Russian federation (GERGAŁO-DĄBEK, 2023). The dominance of the Russian language during the Soviet era assisted the marginalization of Ukrainian, establishing asymmetrical linguistic hierarchies that can be obvious nowadays (BETLII, 2022). As Ukraine asserts its sovereignty and European trajectory of development, the strategic use of language in official communication, media, and education serves as a mechanism for the representation of national identity and increase the attention to collective memory as a set of indigenous knowledge, experiences, and interpretations of the past (TASHCHENKO, 2024).

Presently, state-led initiatives promoting the Ukrainian language are acts of linguistic reclamation. These activities, along with the adoption of 2019 Law on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language, demonstrate the transformation of language policy into ideological struggle for political and cultural sovereignty and the restoration of historical justice (CHORNYI; YELNIKOVA, 2023). Scientific works describe many examples when language influences the ability of communities to resist dominant narratives. For example, in the Donbas region linguistic identity has been highly manipulated by pro-Russian actors to support separatist sentiments. This vividly demonstrates the potential of discourse to polarize populations through labeling, stereotyping, or naming opponents as irrational or dangerous (NEDASHKIVSKA *et al.*, 2024). In Crimea, the Ukrainian language played a limited role in the public sphere even prior to the Russian annexation of 2014 (MOSER, 2023).

It follows that the main problem under investigation is to reveal the contribution of language practices to the legitimation of power and the formation of public perceptions of power. While previous studies have analyzed the language of power from the perspectives of persuasion and manipulation, this research offers a comprehensive exploration of the impact of language practices on the acceptance of power constructing the specific narratives that legitimize authority and create pragmatic ideological frameworks.

Taking this into consideration, the *research aim* is to identify and analyze the discursive mechanisms through which language constructs power relations in the contemporary Ukrainian political context, as well as to determine the influence of historical and

sociocultural factors on the formation of this discourse. The *research questions* refer to the following: (1) How does political discourse in Ukraine shape the concepts of power and national identity? (2) What linguistic tools are used to legitimize power structures? (3) What rhetorical techniques contribute to the formation of a positive or negative image?

## 2. Theoretical framework

To reveal the philosophical and sociolinguistic perspectives of language of power, it is necessary to investigate the notion of discourse itself and explain the theoretical approaches to critical discourse analysis. Since discourse refers to structured forms of language that reflect and construct accurate social realities within specific contexts, it serves as a “vehicle” through which power is originated, exercised and sustained (BHINDER, 2022). At the same time, critical discourse analysis has undergone a process of development and has proven to be a useful method for examining written or spoken texts in a detailed and explicit manner. Further, this analysis provides actors with a discursive framework whose characteristics are inseparable components of language and are used to influence the outcome of communication (DURMAZ; YOĞUN, 2022).

One of the pioneers of critical discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough agreed that it chiefly concerns predicted and unpredicted speakers’ actions and outlines one of the main discourse functions – to contribute to the construction and reinforcement of power dynamics (DURMAZ; YOĞUN, 2022; MUNTHE *et al.*, 2023). As a result, people actively create appropriate social norms and boundaries through particular communicative behaviours and language practices (STJERNSWÄRD; GLASDAM, 2022). The findings show that Fairclough-inspired critical discourse analysis can be implemented in a wide range of fields where language both reflects and shapes power relations. For example, it examines religious sermons, texts, or institutional discourse to uncover building of belief systems (HAVRYLIUK, 2022). It is also introduced to support dominant ideologies or corporate ethics (HAVRYLIUK, 2024). In medical environment, critical discourse analysis is analyzes doctor-patient communication and to explore how power is distributed within the healthcare system (BERESTETSKA, 2024; STJERNSWÄRD; GLASDAM, 2022). Critical discourse analysis is used to study educational materials and classroom interactions (NGUYEN, 2024; STEPANOVA *et al.*, 2023). Besides, critical discourse analysis helps investigate media coverage, political speeches, and interviews to maintain or challenge power structures

(DURMAZ; YOGUN, 2022). MUNTHE *et al.* (2023) analyzed Fairclough's ideas on discourse and language management in economy.

Teun A. van Dijk's theory of critical discourse analysis emphasizes the relationship between discourse, cognition, and society, focusing on the ability of language to reflect social power (HAIDAR; HAQQU, 2024). His approach reveals the dimensions of the text and explains how discursive practices contribute to the establishment of dominance, particularly through politics, media, and elections campaigns (APRILIA; FIRDAUS, 2024; VAN DIJK; LAZAR, 2019). In the context, the author considers that no mass media is completely neutral and objective since they create reality using views, support, and bias by certain groups (FAYRUZA *et al.*, 2021). Besides, the author presented the analysis of elite discourse and race relations which refers to the texts generated by powerful institutions or actors and enables critical understanding of the contribution of language to the persistence of social inequality (SERAFIS, 2023). The recent findings demonstrated that Teun A. van Dijk's theory connects discourse structures with social and mental representations and it is useful in the analysis of media discourse (FAYRUZA *et al.*, 2021). It helps study discourse of certain groups and reveal implicit stereotypes or biased framing. Especially, it is applicable (DEVTEROV *et al.*, 2023). In political discourse, the theory is introduced to describe the use of language by political elites to persuade the audience (APRILIA; FIRDAUS, 2024). In legal context, van Dijk's theory maintains the power of judicial institutions (VAN DIJK; LAZAR, 2019).

In addition, it is necessary to review the main principles of Michel Foucault's theory of critical discourse analysis. A number of findings show that this theory is grounded on the relationships between knowledge, power, and language (ALI *et al.*, 2024; KHAN; MACEACHEN, 2021). The author did not view discourse as a way of speaking or writing but as a system of knowledge that focuses on the truth production. According to Foucault's theory, discourse is not neutral; it regulates behaviour and people's social roles (ALI *et al.*, 2024). The approach has been widely applied in education (NGUYEN, 2024), management (SAYED, 2023), and gender studies (ARYAL, 2025). In politics, Foucault's theory is used to analyze the discursive practices reproduced by different powers where language functions within systems of domination and resistance (KHAN; MACEACHEN, 2021). ZINCHENKO (2024) differentiates political power and psychiatric power in the works of Michel Foucault. It was found that political power refers to the strategies used by governing bodies to control populations through surveillance or administrative regulation. Psychiatric

power is incorporated in the psychiatric institutions and it emerges as a modern tool of social control.

Historical approach to critical discourse analysis was explained by Ruth Wodak. The main findings emphasize the importance of understanding discourse within its specific socio-historical context referencing past events, ideologies, and national myths (ISLENTYEVA; DUNKEL, 2022). According to some scholars, discourse integrated historical, political, cultural, linguistic, and sociological knowledge (ISLENTYEVA; DUNKEL, 2022; MOROZOVA; POZHARYTSKA, 2021). The theory is effectively implemented in the context of the language of power since it states that power is enacted through direct coercion as well as subtle discursive strategies used in texts, speeches, or institutional communication (CILLIA; WODAK, 2021). Wodak's framework is introduced in the studies on anti-Semitism and right-wing populism (WODAK, 2019). Besides the theory is extensively applied in media discourse when examining the peculiarities of power narratives (BURNETT, 2021). It is important to add that the author reveals the use of euphemism, vagueness, or appeals to tradition as linguistic mechanisms in language of power (ALI; SOOMRO, 2020; WODAK, 2019). Currently, Ruth Wodak's theory is applied in political communication to analyze political speeches (CILLIA; WODAK, 2021; WODAK, 2019). Its fundamental principles are observed in modern media studies, especially during times of war and political conflict, where discourse is expressed as a tool influencing public thoughts (NEDASHKIVSKA *et al.*, 2024).

The problem of media discourse on Russo-Ukrainian war was described by KAMYANETS (2024). Some works investigated the interrelation between war and language (DVORIANYN; TELIACHYI, 2024). The notion of war discourse was revealed by USHCHYNA (2022). The author analyzed the construction of Russian and Ukrainian identities in discourse and attempted to explain the reasons of the Russian military aggression Russia on the basis of various situations of communication. The communicative and cognitive aspects of Ukrainian institutional political discourse was outlined in the works of GOLUBOVSKAYA *et al.* (2022). Here, the authors determine four types of communicative behavior of Ukrainian politicians while demonstrating power: conflict, conflict-neutral, conflict-cooperative, and cooperative-conflict. LADNYI, (2019) described the phenomenon of ethnopolitics in Ukrainian historical and political discourse and defined a language as an instrument to realize interethnic processes in the domestic arena. Moreover, some sources focus on the analysis of discursive strategies of Russian official discourse to legitimate

aggression and restore Soviet era geopolitical power (KAMYANETS, 2024; SHEVKO, 2020)

Despite a number of scientific works in the field, the topic of language as an instrument of power remains understudied by Ukrainian scholars. Predominantly, the investigations focus on various aspects of language, including its role in communication, culture, and identity. This is important scientific area considering socio-political history of Ukraine. The absence of relevant studies restricts clear understanding of the strategic role of language in political sphere. Moreover, the explanation of the impact of language on power dynamics in this context is essential for developing strategies to protect national identity and foster social cohesion that are essential ingredients to address common challenges in the society caused by war. Also, recognizing the language of power can contribute to the creation of more effective policies to counteract external influences and strengthen cultural and political resilience in Ukraine during this critical period.

To achieve the research aim the conceptual framework was developed. It was based on the fact that language is not only a means of communication but also a strong mechanism through which power structures are formed and maintained. This perspective presents language as a social tool that constructs meaning and identity within the society as well as a channel of domination, depending on the specifications of socio-political contexts. Firstly, the conceptual framework is based on critical discourse analysis focusing on language functions and its possibility to shape power relations (FAYRUZA *et al.*, 2021; HAIDAR; HAQQU, 2024). Secondly, critical discourse analysis was supported by the theory of language relativity suggesting that the structure of a language influences the way the speakers perceive and experience the real world (WU *et al.*, 2021). Thirdly, Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge was applied to explore the ways of power implementation through the information and knowledge (ALI *et al.*, 2024; KHAN; MACEACHEN, 2021). In the context of language as power, this theory helped define the notion of power as an objective reality and describe its realization among individuals and groups using discourse.

### **3. Research design and methods**

To conduct the research, qualitative discourse analysis was selected. It appeared to be an efficient methodology characterized by the diversity of its approaches which enabled to provide a comprehensive examination of textual data and to outline the principles of

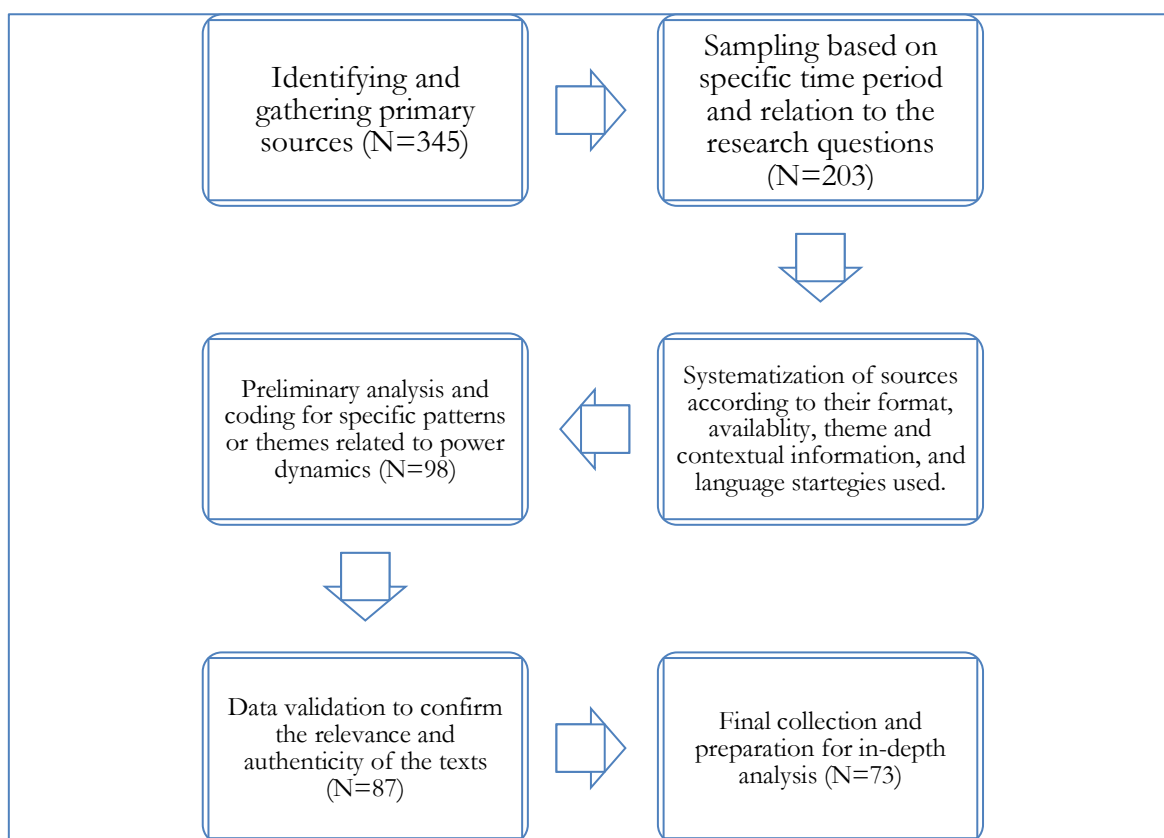
power relations within the specific context through language. This method contributed to the presentation of implicit ideologies incorporated in language use. During the research, qualitative analysis facilitated tracing of the potential discursive strategies which are used within power dynamics. According to OBENZA; RABACA (2024), qualitative discourse analysis is an appropriate tool for investigating persuasive power of language as a means of control and influence. It was also revealed that qualitative discourse analysis explored the socio-political functions of language during times of crisis, such as war (TASHCHENKO, 2024). To add, USHCHYNA (2022) stated that the application of qualitative discourse analysis in this study supported a deeper understanding of language as an instrument of power in wartime Ukraine. This method facilitated the critical examination of political speeches and media texts to understand the language patterns used to describe important events and sustain authority within the society as well (LADNYI, 2019). Besides, discourse analysis revealed the role of language in the formation of power.

The sources included political speeches, government statements or press releases, media texts, policy documents, educational materials in the field of language of power, and social media communications. Such sources provided valuable data about the mechanisms of using language in power dynamics. The selection of sources was guided by certain principles. They referred to the following: (1) sources referred to the socio-political context, particularly within the framework of wartime Ukraine; (2) texts were produced in the times of political tension, national mobilization, or ideological conflict; (3) sources illustrated dominant discursive patterns (conflict, authority, social norms, war or social unrest, victimization and heroism, depiction of an enemy or opposing group, ideology or worldview, patriotism); (4) connection to the Ukrainian context. At the same time, the relevance of texts was evaluated through topical (text should directly relate to war in Ukraine), discursive (text should use certain language strategies that construct narratives about the war and affect people's attitudes towards the ongoing situation), and contextual tiers (the position of the text in the larger socio-political and military discourse).

The data collection involved four steps that ensured that the sources were relevant and reliable and provided a comprehensive understanding of the problem. Initially, the research involved 345 primary sources (news articles, television broadcasts, social media posts from public figures, official documents like policy statements, reports, and government publications). When the relevance of texts was confirmed and final validation was performed, there were 73 works designed for in-depth analysis. These works were systematized

according to (1) format (political speeches – 10, official statement – 9, media articles – 18, social media posts – 15, interviews – 8, press releases – 11, policy documents – 2); (2) availability (publicly available – 65, real-time sources – 8); (3) theme (national identity – 7, patriotism – 2, justification of military actions – 5, war trauma – 2, enemy – 7, international relations and diplomacy – 9, security – 12, civil society – 3, misinformation and propaganda – 14, authority – 12); contextual information (political event – 23, military event – 29, social event – 21); language strategies used (framing – 50, metaphors and analogies – 37, polarization – 62, repetition of key words – 17, appeals to emotions – 42, command language – 19, euphemisms and coded language – 43, symbolic references 39). Figure 1 presents the data collection procedures to study the language as an instrument of power.

**Figure 1.** Data collection steps.



*Source:* author's own development.

To analyze the data critical discourse analysis was used to examine the texts and their linguistic features. Thematic analysis was used to analyze political speeches, media reports, or wartime propaganda in order to apply the findings on national identity, enemy images, or

military actions. Both methods enabled to conduct the systematic classification of textual material to identify patterns and themes. Importantly, comparative analysis was applied as well. It focused on the comparison of political discourses and war-time narratives from different sources. In addition, semiotic analysis was introduced to explore verbal symbols and visual elements in texts using language of power. The reliability and validity of the texts used in the research was approved by 6 experts in the field. They studied the material coded on the basis of linguistic and thematic criteria and verified the findings generated on the basis of discourse sources examination.

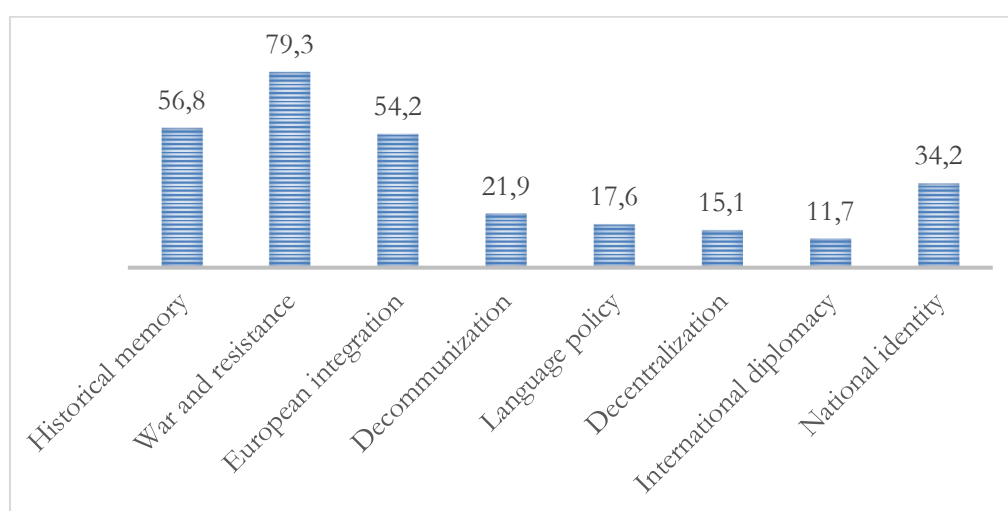
#### 4. Results

The findings prove that political discourse is the main domain of texts where language is used as an instrument of power (KAMYANETS, 2024; SHEVKO, 2020). These texts fall under the notions of “influence,” “evaluation,” and “value” (GOLUBOVSKAYA *et al.*, 2022) and often reflect key themes including national sovereignty, historical memory, use of Ukrainian language, national identity, geopolitical role of Ukraine in the European arena, and its integration into the EU and NATO as a fundamental transformation of Ukrainian state. Politicians in Ukraine frequently refer to citizenship patriotism, recognition of national unity, and resistance narratives to declare power and differentiate the existing Ukraine’s political trajectory from its Soviet past. The emphasis on democratic reforms as well as progression on the EU membership path reinforce the idea of power based on sovereignty arguments and coordination with Western institutions.

As the role of mass media has expanded, the world, political influence and manipulation of public consciousness through political discourse have increased considerably. In times of armed conflict, the media play a central role in shaping political narratives and public opinion (BABENKO *et al.*, 2024; DVORIANYN; TELIACHYI, 2024). Information warfare has become an integral part of the Russian-Ukrainian war discourse, and the media influence not only domestic texts but also international relations. The findings showed that Ukrainian political discourse concerns a wide range of topics. These discussions through news texts or political speeches serve as effective mechanisms for establishing efficient civil society, declaring authority within the country, and fostering a national consciousness. Political rhetoric not only influences public perception of leadership of Ukraine but also shapes collective identity through the detailed explanation of social values

and norms. Politicians and authority representatives form the narratives through media and public communication that bring specific ideological, historical, and war context. Importantly, these texts show the understanding of power and national identity by citizens and outline the relevant principles for their maintenance. The analysis of sources revealed that political discourse in Ukraine shapes the concepts of power and national identity through various theme patterns. Figure 2 presents the profile of Ukrainian political discourse according to the selected sources.

**Figure 2.** The effect of Ukrainian political discourse on the concepts of power and national identity.



*Source:* author's own development.

The findings demonstrate that political discourse affects the concepts of power and national identity implementing the themes of historical memory (56,8%) that refers the certain historical events such as the Holodomor, World War II, Ukraine's independence in 1991, and the Revolution of Dignity. War and resistance are mentioned in 79,3% of texts and emphasize the ongoing struggle of Ukraine against Russian aggression. Other themes include European integration (54,2%), national identity as a complex phenomenon ensuring that all citizens feel valued in the country (34,2%), decommunization (21,9%), language policy (17,6%), decentralization and regional autonomy (15,1%), international diplomacy (11,7%). Each of these themes demonstrates that political discourse is a powerful tool and it is able to shape both national identity and perceptions of political power in Ukraine through linguistic and content items. In addition, the findings prove that political rhetoric sets socio-

political and military priorities, highlight main issues facing citizens, and shape policy directions appropriately.

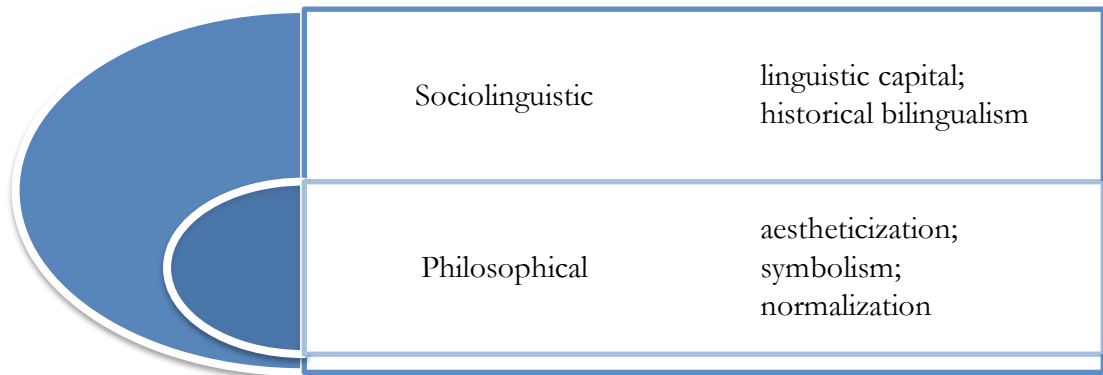
At the same time, Ukrainian political discourse in the context of language of power is realized through two perspective – philosophical and sociolinguistic that help to outline the ideological foundations and social implications of discourse in the Ukrainian political landscape. Philosophically, Ukrainian political discourse appears from the questions of sovereignty, national self-determination, and authority. Originated from post-colonial theory and political philosophy, Ukrainian political discourse serves as a mechanism for constructing truth and defining national identity (LADNYI, 2019; USHCHYNA, 2022). Additionally, this kind of discourse is involved in power relations and suggests authority legitimization.

The findings demonstrate that philosophical perspective is based on the communicative rationality in public discourse and the concept of social control. In this case political discourse outlines power dynamics between the state and society. According to some findings (CHORNYI; YELNIKOVA, 2023; KRUPA, 2024; KRZYŻANOWSKI, 2020), political discourse consists of three components: aestheticization, symbolism, and normalization that is also applicable for Ukrainian narratives. These components require deep analysis. For example, aestheticization refers to the process of presenting political ideas and events in an artistic, emotional, or visually striking manner. This is observed in speeches of Ukrainian politicians who often employ poetic and emotional language, portraying Ukraine's struggle for independence. At the same time, symbolism relies on the use of various symbols such as trident, blue and yellow colours, or names of political figures to strengthen political communication. And normalization means the process aimed at transforming certain political ideas into natural or unquestionable patterns in society. As an example of normalization, the narrative of European integration has been normalized as a fundamental goal of Ukrainian foreign policy and politicians usually name EU membership as inevitable consequence, associating it with democracy and modernization.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Ukrainian political discourse is shaped by historical bilingualism and the struggle between Ukrainian and Russian linguistic influences. The findings demonstrate that the promotion of Ukrainian as the official language reinforces national identity and sovereignty, especially in response to Russian influence (CHORNYI; YELNIKOVA, 2023). Sociolinguistic research also emphasize the concept of linguistic capital that helps understand the use of linguistic tools and rhetoric techniques by political actors to establish their authority or power. The scholars admit that these components are

sustained and incorporated in context-dependent formats (KRZYŻANOWSKI, 2020). Figure 3 reveals the theoretical components of Ukrainian political discourse – philosophical and sociolinguistic.

**Figure 3.** Theoretical components of Ukrainian political discourse.



*Source:* author's own development on the basis of CHORNYI; YELNIKOVA (2023), KRUPA (2024), and KRZYŻANOWSKI (2020).

These outcomes facilitated the investigation of linguistic tools used in Ukrainian political discourse to perform power. The deep analysis of political narratives demonstrated the use of specific linguistic tools responsible for shaping public perception, reinforcing authority, and establishing political dominance in the society. These tools include rhetoric appeal, metaphor, euphemism, repetition, historical reference, and polarization. Also, passive voice and hyperbole are differentiated as effective linguistic tools to create political discourse in the Ukrainian context. Table 1 analyzes linguistic tools used to legitimize power structures in Ukrainian political discourse. the special attention was paid towards language of power during Russian-Ukrainian war.

**Table 1.** Linguistic tools used to legitimize power structures.

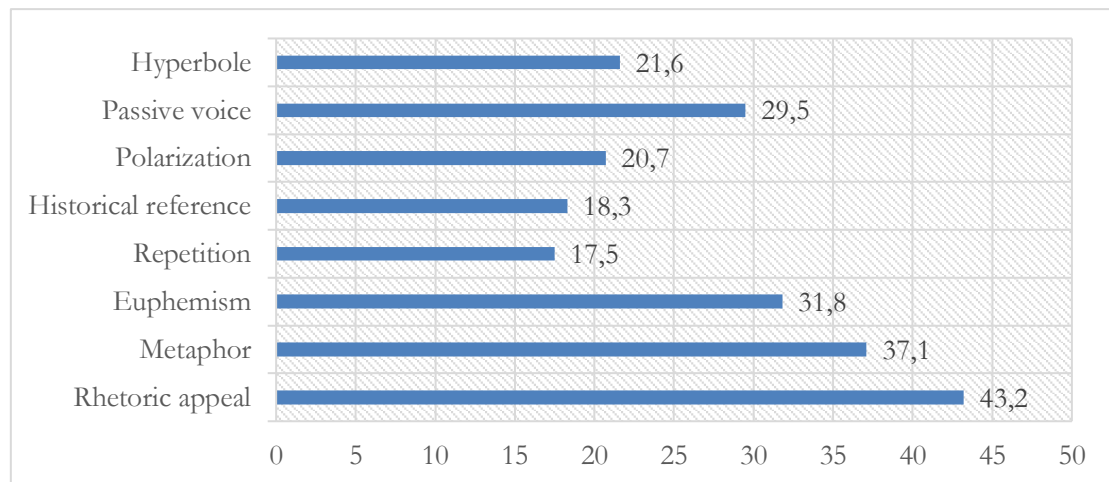
Linguistic tool	Definition and explanation	Examples
Rhetoric appeal	Persuasive strategies used to influence public opinion	<p><i>"I need ammunition, not a ride"</i> (positions the President as a leader who shares the people's will to struggle.</p> <p><i>"Heroes will never be forgotten"</i> (reinforces national unity)</p>

Metaphor	A tool that conveys meaning by describing one concept in terms of another, often evoking imagery and emotions.	<i>"Ukraine is the shield of Europe"</i> (portrays Ukraine as a protective barrier). <i>"Our warriors are made of steel"</i> (describes Ukrainian soldiers as strong and unbreakable in battle)
Euphemism	A tool used to soften harsh, sensitive, or politically charged language.	<i>"Unfriendly state"</i> instead of <i>"enemy nation"</i> <i>"Irretrievable losses"</i> instead of <i>"killed soldiers"</i> <i>"Energy supply difficulties"</i> instead of <i>"blackouts due to missile strikes"</i>
Repetition	A tool that uses the same word, phrase, or idea multiple times to emphasize key message.	<i>"We remember Bucha. We remember Mariupol. We remember every crime."</i> (keeps sorrows in public memories)
Historical reference	A device invoking past events or figures to create continuity between historical events and contemporary challenges.	<i>"Just as our ancestors defended Europe from invaders, today we stand as Europe's shield."</i> (positions Ukraine as a main player in European security)
Polarization	A linguistic tool intensifying divisions between opposing groups.	<i>"This is not just a war between two states; this is a war between democracy and dictatorship."</i> (shows the war as an ideological struggle)
Passive voice	A construction where focus is placed on the action or its result.	<i>"Thousands of homes have been destroyed."</i> (highlights destruction caused by war) <i>"Ukraine's future is being decided on the battlefield."</i> (shows the war as a crucial moment for Ukraine's future).
Hyperbole	A tool of exaggeration to emphasize an item or persuade an audience.	<i>"Millions suffer every second of this war."</i> (exaggerates the intensity of suffering to invoke empathy)

Source: author's own development.

The frequency of using linguistic tools in Ukrainian political discourse is shown on figure 4. The findings demonstrate that rhetoric appeal, metaphor, and euphemism are most often used. At the same time, repetition appears rarely in Ukrainian political discourse.

**Figure 4.** The frequency of using linguistic tools in Ukrainian political discourse.



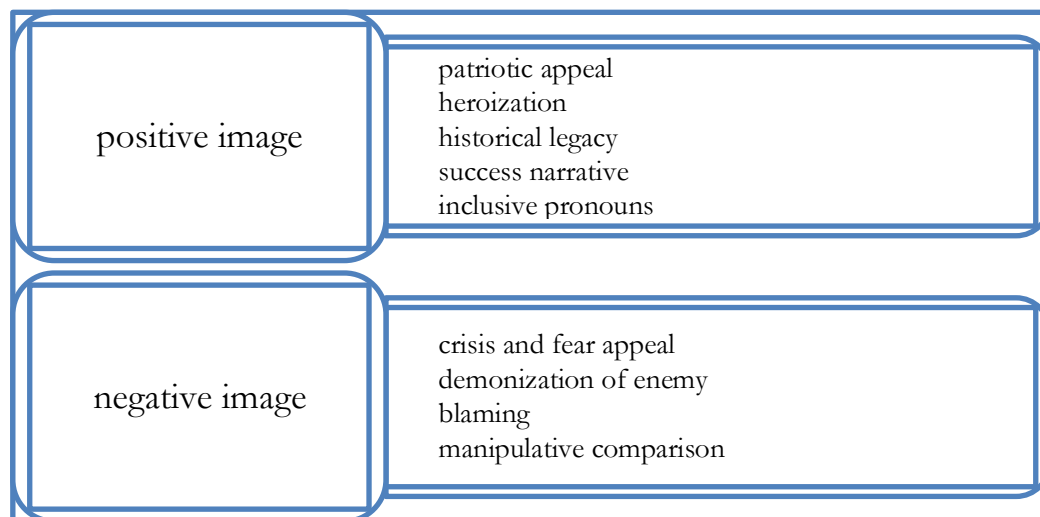
Source: author's own development.

Political discourse is known to shape both positive and negative images of individuals, institutions, and nations by influencing public perception (BABENKO *et al.*, 2024; BURNETT, 2021; TASHCHENKO, 2024). It was found that the formation of a positive image relies on emphasizing leadership qualities, resilience, and collective achievements. Such texts foster a sense of national pride as well. Political discourse selects patriotic appeal, heroization, historical legacy, success narrative, and inclusive pronouns to make the audience feel pride, hope and confidence, and continue struggle. In contrast, negative qualities focus on the description of adversaries and obstacles. Here rhetoric techniques include crisis and fear appeal, demonization of enemy, blaming phrases, and manipulative comparison.

It is important to analyze some of these techniques in details. For example, patriotic appeals (emphasis on national identity or addressing to historical heroes) are used to mention historical resilience and to strengthen a sense of collective identity among citizens. At the same time, heroization as a rhetoric techniques portrays soldiers as heroes who struggle against external aggression and possess unique powers. It was noticed that historical legacy is used to reference Ukraine's long struggle for independence and democratic development. Modern political discourse often combines historical legacy and success narrative to show that importance of reforms, economic growth, or military achievements. And inclusive pronouns we or our help promote solidarity among both citizenship and leadership, particularly during war.

Considering negative image, in Ukrainian political discourse enemy is often shown as corrupt, dishonest, and cruel. Crisis and fear appeals are often used to emphasize threats (e.g., *“If we do not stand together today, tomorrow will be too late. The enemy is already at our borders, and they will stop at nothing.”*) and to justify strong security measures promoted by authorities. Blaming phrases usually describe Russian aggression or Western neglect. For example, the phrase *“The enemy is responsible for the suffering of innocent civilians.”* places blame on enemy and accuses them of bringing the war to Ukraine. One more rhetoric technique, manipulative comparison, is often used in Ukrainian political discourse. It was found that these comparisons are typically designed to change public opinion, evoke emotional responses as well as particular actions. “If we don't stand together now, we will end up like Syria, devastated and divided.” - This comparison uses the image of a war-torn country to manipulate the audience's fear. And the phrase *“The way the West has abandoned us is like how they turned their back on us in 1939, before WWII”* compares current international neglect to the 1939 events. Figure 5 shows the techniques that influence public perception through constructing favorable or unfavorable image in Ukrainian political discourse.

**Figure 5.** Rhetorical techniques of Ukrainian political discourse.



Source: author's own development.

Therefore, political discourse is a complex phenomenon in the Ukrainian communication landscape and possesses a number of components, linguistic tools, and rhetoric techniques to perform its function – to shape national identity and perceptions of political power, and to create the narrative of authority.

## 5. Discussion

The research findings insist that language is widely used as an instrument of power (PETROSYAN; KHAMRAKULOVA, 2022; YUHAN *et al.*, 2024). Considering its peculiarities in the Ukrainian context it was found that language of power forms political discourse responsible for realization of communication between citizenship and leadership, presentation of actual views of Ukrainian political context (GERGAŁO-DĄBEK, 2023; GOLUBOVSKAYA *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, language of power is applied to reflect and construct accurate social realities within specific contexts, it serves generate, sustain, and exercise power dynamics (). In the times of war, language of power is a tool to provide the efficient communication between civilian and military groups of population (BHINDER, 2022; DEVTEROV *et al.*, 2023; USHCHYNA, 2022)

A number of works are devoted to the peculiarities of political discourse, its theoretical and practical frameworks. For example, the principles of examination of political language, its reflection and reinforcement of power relations and ideology are presented in the studies of APRILIA and FIRDAUS (2024), VAN DIJK and LAZAR (2019). The analysis of political language and its ability to promote specific worldviews, political sentiments, or economic perspectives were discusses by ARYAL (2025) and BURNETT (2021). Regarding this, the research outcomes supported by theoretical frameworks of critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, Michael Foucault, and Ruth Wodak show that language of power is used in politic narratives and contributes to the formation of war discourse significantly through linguistic tools and rhetoric techniques (ALI *et al.*, 2024; AVELINO, 2021; CILLIA; WODAK, 2021). It was found that critical discourse analysis focuses on language functions and its possibility to shape power relations. Additionally, the findings showed that the language as an instrument of power influences the way the speakers perceive and experience the real world and power dynamics

At the same time, certain literature describes political discourse as communicative and cognitive phenomenon (GOLUBOVSKAYA *et al.*, 2022; SURYAJIYOSO, 2021). It was found that the peculiarities of Ukrainian political discourse reflect the historical, socio-political, and cultural transformations of the country, particularly in the context of war (KAMYANETS, 2024; NEDASHKIVSKA *et al.*, 2024). The themes of the use of Ukrainian language as preferable tool of Ukrainian political discourse were examined by GERGAŁO-DĄBEK (2023) and MOSER (2023). The enemy construction in the Ukrainian political

discourse was discussed by DVORIANYN and TELIACHYI (2024). At the same time, the special attention was paid towards linguistic tools and strategies of political discourse in the scientific literature. Revealing this aspect, it was found that metaphor, repetition, and polarization shape political perception and make the messages stronger to the audience (GOLUBOVSKAYA *et al.*, 2022; SHEVKO, 2020; LADNYI, 2019). In comparison, the research findings demonstrated that Ukrainian political discourse widely uses rhetoric appeal, metaphor, euphemism, repetition, historical reference, polarization, passive voice, and hyperbole. Considering rhetoric techniques, it was found that they include patriotic appeal, heroization, historical legacy, success narrative, inclusive pronouns as well as crisis and fear appeal, demonization of enemy, blaming, and manipulation. The findings demonstrated that these techniques are able to form positive and negative images describing leadership and creating collective memories. This quality of political discourse is especially valuable during war because the efficient narrative contributes to nation's resilience and strengthens the unity.

Despite the detailed analysis of language as an instrument of power, the research possesses some limitations. Firstly, the findings are characterized by subjective interpretation since the sources belong to political speeches, interviews, and media texts that usually carry author's views and have emotional burden. Secondly, the data selected uses only English and Ukrainian language texts that does not show the use of political discourse in different context internationally. It is worth saying that the identified limitations have minimal impact on the findings and the main outcomes remain reliable and applicable.

The results can influence the understanding of power structures by citizens and can be used for the improvement of the theoretical framework of the existing political discourse in Ukraine that is able to maintain power dynamics and shape public opinion through rhetorical strategies, framing, and discourse manipulation. To add, the findings can be used for studying language and ideology interrelation that is extensively applied during information war. The exploration in this field can contribute to the understandings of mechanisms how language constructs and disseminates ideologies. At the same time, it is possible to elaborate the ways to counteract enemy's propaganda. Importantly, the research raises the ethical concerns about the responsibility of political figures for using manipulative political discourse. And the findings can be used for the improvement of transparency of political narratives and the formation of critical thinking among citizens.

## 6. Conclusion

The research proved that philosophical sociolinguistic tiers are natural to Ukrainian political discourse, it was found that philosophical perspective is based on the communicative rationality in public discourse and the concept of social control. And it was demonstrated that philosophically political discourse relates to aestheticization, symbolism, and normalization that is also applicable for Ukrainian narratives. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Ukrainian political discourse is shaped by historical bilingualism and the concept of linguistic capital.

The analysis of Ukrainian political discourse demonstrated the use of specific linguistic tools, including rhetoric appeal, metaphor, euphemism, repetition, historical reference, polarization, passive voice, hyperbole. Their main function is to perform power within the society. These tools are responsible for shaping public perception, reinforcing authority, and establishing political dominance as well. The findings demonstrate that euphemism, metaphor, and rhetoric appeal are most often used in the Ukrainian political discourse. But historical references and repetitions are introduced on a specific occasion or within the particular context where political speech is presented.

Political discourse is known to shape both positive and negative images. Political discourse uses patriotic appeal, heroization, historical legacy, success narrative, and inclusive pronouns to form a positive image of individual or institution. Negative qualities of opponents of the description of negative situation are usually carried out by means of crisis and fear appeal, demonization of enemy, blaming phrases, and manipulative comparison.

To conclude, the article contributed to the expanding discourse theory as it explores language functions and shows it as a tool for maintaining power dynamics. Moreover, the findings outlined that interrelationship between language, national identity, and politics, enriching philosophical and sociolinguistic research. The outcomes can be applied in political communication and training media literacy among different categories of people. Importantly, the findings describe the role of language in war and crisis situations that can improve the use of discursive strategies in the Ukrainian political landscape.

In future, the outcomes of the article can be used to extend the context analysis of political discourse and examine the functions of language of power during war as a significant historical period. Besides, it is important to investigate the influence of digital and media tools in the Ukrainian political landscape and outline the notion of online discourse.

Additionally, comparative discourse studies are necessary for the identification of similarities and differences between political discourses across different countries, facing foreign aggression as a primary concern for their security.

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