A CONTRASTIVE CASE STUDY ON CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE REGARDING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Studiu de caz contrastiv asupra limbajului diplomatic contemporan privind războiul din Ucraina

Rezumat

Articolul abordează utilizarea eufemismelor în limbajul diplomatic contemporan, în special în contextul războiului din Ucraina. Scopul principal al articolului rezidă în investigarea modului în care funcțiile limbajului se reflectă în comunicările cu privire la războiul din Ucraina, acordându-se o atenție deosebită rolului eufemismelor în contextele diplomatice. Accentul este pus, de asemenea, pe aspectele contrastive dintre limbile română, engleză și franceză. Prin investigarea aprofundată a limbajului diplomatic, cercetarea dezvăluie strategiile prin care eufemismele sunt folosite pentru a diminua sau a manipula încărcătura semantică a subiectelor sensibile. Astfel, se observă că funcția referențială a eufemismelor este mai frecvent utilizată, în timp ce funcția fatică este adesea ignorată sau tratată superficial. Totodată, eufemismul servește drept metodă de comunicare persuasivă. Aceasta permite abordarea delicată a problemelor geopolitice sensibile, oferind posibilitatea de a manipula discursul într-un mod care să servească unui anumit scop.

Cuvinte-cheie: eufemism, limbaj diplomatic, războiul din Ucraina, funcțiile limbajului, comunicare, discurs diplomatic, impact semantic.

Abstract

This article examines the use of euphemisms in contemporary diplomatic language, specifically analysing their application in the context of the War in Ukraine. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the reflection of language functions in communications related to the War in Ukraine, focusing on the role of euphemisms in diplomatic contexts, with an emphasis on the contrastive aspects in Romanian, English, and French. Through a comprehensive examination of diplomatic language, the study

uncovers the strategies of using euphemisms to mitigate or manipulate the semantic impact of sensitive issues. The analysis reveals that the referential function is the most frequently utilised, while the phatic one is largely disregarded. Euphemism also serves as a persuasive communication strategy, enabling the address of sensitive geopolitical issues with tact and with a specific goal in mind.

Keywords: euphemism, diplomatic language, War in Ukraine, language function, communication, diplomatic discourse, semantic impact.

1. Introduction

Diplomatic language is more than a mere communication tool; it represents the very essence of diplomacy. From this perspective, diplomatic language possesses the power to shape a particular version of reality aligned with the interests of politicians. It is important to remember that diplomatic language is goal-oriented and deliberately crafted with specific intentions. This purpose-driven quality of diplomatic language prompts politicians to meticulously select their words when communicating with their audiences. Therefore, diplomats resort often to euphemism as a strategy of preserving face, by avoiding any word that might be perceived as inconsiderate and as a persuasive communication that aims to achieve a certain political, social and psychological goal. That is why diplomatic language is often perceived as ambiguous, euphemistic, implicit, or eclectic (Villar, 2008, p. 17), giving rise to increased interest and multiple dimensions of research.

As a complex, permeable, and ever-changing process, euphemism plays a crucial role, not just as a linguistic tool, but as an integral component of a broader and intricate phenomenon. Its usage involves linguistic, pragmatic, and cognitive aspects, skillfully employed to mitigate potentially offensive effects, being "intrinsically linked to the conventions of politeness and social tact" (Crespo-Fernández, 2005, p. 78). In this regard, euphemism preserves social harmony in communication and avoids situations that could jeopardise respect and mutual understanding (Bayram, 2018, p. 23). An in-depth comprehension of euphemisms is essential for both the sender and receiver, as without it, the intended meaning may become lost.

This article focuses on euphemism as the dominant feature of diplomatic language. It explores the interaction between language functions and diplomatic language using R. Jakobson's semiotic framework. Additionally, it places special emphasis on the specific features of euphemism that highlight its ambiguous and manipulative effect. In international relations, diplomatic language serves as a fundamental tool, constantly evolving and adopting new strategies of power and influence, with euphemism playing a constant role. Euphemisms, therefore, serve as powerful linguistic tools, ensuring effective diplomatic communication and maintaining harmony in international relations. They help convey sensitive or

potentially controversial information in less straightforward terms. Diplomats often employ euphemisms to mitigate potential offense, maintain diplomatic relations, and promote amiable communication in international interactions. By using polite-sounding or less explicit language, euphemisms allow diplomats to address sensitive issues without causing unnecessary tension or dispute (Allan and Burridge, 2012, p. 67; Enright, 1985, p. 22; Paratesi, 1964, p. 17). They play a crucial role in diplomatic language, enabling effective communication while navigating complex geopolitical landscapes and fostering constructive international dialogues.

2. Theoretical framework

In order to establish a connection between the choice of words (euphemisms) and communications related to the context of the War in Ukraine, we utilize the political discourse analysis. This specific branch of discourse analysis focuses on language within political contexts such as interviews, speeches, press conferences, and critically examines how language is strategically employed to achieve political objectives. By adopting a critical viewpoint toward diplomatic language, this study falls within the wider framework of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), which primarily focuses on the ways in which language constructs social and political knowledge and how power, ideology, and manipulation become evident in modern public discourse. The goal of CDS is to comprehensively understand how language acquires the power to convey and shape knowledge. From this perspective, political discourse is perceived as a type of social and political action with various roles: maintaining social control, legitimizing power, and influencing people's behavior. Given that diplomats manifest their power and sway their audiences through language, it becomes imperative to critically analyse the strategies of discourse involved in this process and to look into the intricacies of diplomatic language, shedding light on the implications of euphemistic expressions in the context of the War in Ukraine.

Euphemism, like a masterful veil, deftly conceals the explicit or offensive terms, allowing for delicate conversations that would otherwise stumble in the face of direct expression. It transcends mere lexical substitution or the use of polite language becoming a powerful tool that empowers discussions of topics too sensitive for straightforward discourse. Euphemism is a versatile and purpose-driven strategy, serving diverse communication goals – shielding offense, subtly misrepresenting, and embellishing truths. This linguistic chameleon adapts to context and time, evolving in tandem with society's evolving sensibilities – a phenomenon defined "euphemism treadmill" by S. Pinker (2002, p. 42).

Today's political environment faces numerous and challenging issues, sparking interest in shaping social consciousness. In the realm of diplomacy, figures like H. Nicolson, J. Nye, and J. Cambon, along with diligent researchers such as

A. Cooper, L. Dembinski, S. Gaselee, and B. White, provide invaluable insights into diplomatic practices, illuminating our understanding of current events. Moreover, the extensive studies conducted by eminent scholars including K. Allan, K. Burridge, E. Crespo Fernández, D. Enright, S. Ullman, B. Warren, E. Benveniste, D. Jamet, B. Munteano, J. Tournier, P. Zumthor, and N. Galli de'Paratesi form the bedrock of our research, grounding our theoretical analysis.

Embedded within these scholar's insights, euphemism emerges not merely as a lexical tool but as a dynamic verbal behaviour occurring within diplomatic communications. This verbal behaviour operates beyond simple substitution, substantially safeguarding both the speaker's and the interlocutor's social standing. As we delve into the intricacies of euphemisms and their synergy with language functions in diplomacy, R. Jakobson's semiotic framework guides our exploration, encompassing the emotive, conative, poetic, metalingual, phatic, and referential functions. We have also draw upon S. Marcus's observations on diplomatic communications, highlighting the therapeutic or arbitrating function within diplomatic exchanges (Marcus, 1981, p. 30). This therapeutic function emerges in instances of disagreement when two speakers do not find a common consensus, and a third participant is called in for mediating purposes. By distancing themselves from the conflict, this observer adopts an impartial stance, fostering resolution among opposing voices. Hence, diplomatic communication often hinges on such mediation, aiming to avert conflict or forge an agreement. Its efficacy lies in monitoring political developments, notably in other nations (Marcus, 1980, p. 547).

We endeavour to unveil and elucidate the functions' presence or absence, meticulously unravelling their intricate interplay, and enriching the tapestry of diplomatic studies. At the same time, scholars acknowledge euphemism as a coding process (Allan and Burridge, 2012, p. 66) that demands decoding to grasp the underlying meaning concealed beneath its veil. These codes possess the power to accentuate or obscure facets of the euphemized concept, influencing recipients' perspectives. Consequently, deciphering these linguistic enigmas through astute interpretation and analysis becomes paramount. When decoding euphemisms, various perceptual dimensions and the senders' intent are taken into account, shaping the strategic impact of their message. Euphemisms add a layer of ambiguity, inviting interpretation and crafting attitudes that align with the addresser's motive – casting diplomacy as a profound art of manipulation.

From our corpus analysis, five distinct functions come into focus: strategic, protective/attenuating, persuasive, misrepresentative, and manipulative. Proficiency in decoding these linguistic codes is imperative for the addressee, unveiling the true essence hiding behind the veil of euphemism (Allan and Burridge, 1991, p. 230), the cornerstone of constructive dialogue.

3. Corpus data and methodology

This case study places significant emphasis on analysing a linguistic corpus, which provides a robust framework for both qualitative and quantitative analysis in all three languages under examination. Through this curated collection of pertinent and cohesive examples, our objective is to gain insights into the intricate nuances of diplomatic language and its application within the realm of international affairs. Considering that euphemism is a contextual phenomenon, which responds to a particular communicative need and aims to produce a particular effect on hearers/readers in a given communicative situation (Crespo-Fernández, 2018), we initiate our analysis by exploring the context, which aids in perceiving the use and meaning of euphemisms.

Our research is centred around pivotal events within the current landscape of shaping a novel regional security architecture, where regional conflicts are escalating into conventional wars with far-reaching global implications. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, we delve into the communications delivered by diplomats in Romanian, English, and French. These encompass press releases, speeches, interviews, and briefings sourced from the official websites of distinguished international organizations and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. We strive to examine the full scope of these communications by considering the status of diplomats, with a particular focus on their role as promoters of state policy. This includes deconstructing discourses from presidents of states, heads of international organizations, foreign ministers, and ambassadors.

In crafting our data corpus, we have carefully established a temporal framework that encompasses communications issued since the onset of the War in Ukraine over a four-month period, from 24 February 2022 to 31 May 2022. This comprehensive range comprises a sample of 300 euphemisms extracted from 220 political discourses. By utilizing these rich sources of data, we aim to deliver a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the application of euphemisms in diplomatic language, contextualized against the background of the specific circumstances of the War in Ukraine.

Therefore, the prominent role of euphemism as a dominant feature of diplomatic communication lays in facilitating diplomatic discourse by mitigating offence, promoting understanding and avoiding direct confrontation, while maintaining harmonious relations between nations and enhancing diplomatic strategy. The technique employed for data collection and understanding aligns with the implementation of a "bottom-up" methodology, involving: 1) selecting euphemisms from communications referring to the War in Ukraine, spanning from its inception up to 31 May 2023; 2) interpreting/decoding euphemisms based on the context in which they appear, relying on the pragmatic purpose (notably, words are not inherently euphemistic, but rather the context imparts euphemistic

qualities to specific words); 3) determining the function of language according to R. Jakobson's semiotic framework; and 4) identifying the function of the euphemism from a pragmatic-semantic perspective, as it constitutes a purpose-driven strategy aiming to shape the receiver's perceptions of a certain reality. Hence, this approach seeks to establish that diplomats intentionally employ euphemisms to influence the recipient's opinion in a way that benefits the sender. Understanding the mechanisms of encoding and decoding diplomatic messages, as well as interpreting the information concealed behind euphemisms, is of significant interest. Additionally, the contrastive study aids in identifying principles and trends that govern diplomatic relations in these languages.

4. The reflection of language functions in communications regarding the War in Ukraine

On 24 February 2022, the armed forces of the Russian Federation were engaged in military aggression against Ukraine, the scale of which exceeded all expectations. The attack is a consequence of the annexation by Russia of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and its intense involvement in the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine. The president of the Russian Federation stated that one of the aims of the *special military operation* against Ukraine was to *denazify* and *demilitarise* the country. This speech offers three main arguments invoking the logical motivation for launching this invasion: 1. Ukraine is a country created entirely by Russia, which means that the Ukrainian people and the Russian people are the same nation and need defence from *the Nazis* in charge of Ukraine, who for eight years have suppressed the Russian people from the territory of the country; 2. the purpose of this *operation* is to protect the people who have faced *humiliation and genocide* committed by the Kyiv regime; 3. NATO is using Ukraine as a weapon against Russia. We consider using the term *genocide* is morally wrong and deeply offensive to the memory of millions of victims of Nazism and those who fought against that regime. During this *military operation*, the arguments initially put forward for a limited and restricted military response are supplemented by others, the most worrying of which are the allegation of the presence of chemical weapons laboratories on Ukrainian territory and the accusation that Ukraine could make use of the potential of weapons of mass destruction. All these reasons invoked by the Russian Federation aim at justifying its actions, influencing the opinion of the popular masses on the rightness of these actions, and increasing its political, economic, and social influence. Indeed, Russia will not be able to regard Ukraine as a foreign country as long as the history and culture of the two entities provide strong arguments in this regard. The Russian Federation labelled the intention of Ukraine to join NATO as a violation of *red lines* and an extension of NATO territory beyond the limit which is acceptable by Russia. The same is said for the outbreak of War in Georgia in 2008, but also for Finland and

Sweden, which applied to join the North Atlantic Alliance in May 2022. This step was received calmly but vigilantly by Vladimir Putin, saying that the accession of these countries *does not create a threat* to Russia, but that *the placement of military infrastructure on the territory of these countries will provoke a response from Russia*. The president of the Russian Federation believes that NATO enlargement is being used aggressively to aggravate an already dire global security situation.

The analysis of the examples under discussion investigates the use of diplomatic language in each of the three languages concerning the functions of language, focusing on the pragmatic purpose pursued by the sender. The results aim to reveal, on the one hand, their dominant line in terms of the strategies used to increase the effectiveness of diplomatic language and to prove, on the other hand, the peculiarities and relevance of language functions in the current diplomatic language. The escalation of the protracted conflict in Ukraine into a full-fledged war, which started on the night of 24 February 2022, is a logical consequence of the lack and ignorance of the importance of the phatic function, which ensures the maintenance of linguistic contact between speakers (Zahraa, 2022) being focussed towards communication (text) and involves the establishment, maintenance or interruption of linguistic contact. In another order of ideas, the importance of the phatic function is complemented by establishing a relationship not only at the physical level through the communication channel but also by establishing and maintaining a psychological relationship which aims to verify the functionality of this channel. All of these aspects prove to be vehemently neglected by both antagonistic parties, which unfortunately forces us to witness a bleak picture of broken diplomatic relations, with dire implications for those involved and the entire international community. Therefore, the importance of the phatic function by maintaining contact is becoming an increasingly fierce challenge in the contemporary period, guided by the supremacy of power and totalitarian ego, and contradicts the assumptions that the evolution of modern society is shaping a new form of unconventional warfare. We are thus witnessing the decreasing or even the ignoring of the most important function of diplomatic language, which has caused a regional crisis on the European continent and a global catastrophe with long-lasting political, economic, and social repercussions.

We also observe that the dominant function in all three investigated languages is the referential one, followed by the conative and the metalinguistic functions. The emotive function is detected in impressively small numbers in English and slightly higher in Romanian and French, proving the empathy and humanity of those who speak out about the facts of War. The poetic function is absent in Romanian and French but is present in only a few examples in English.

The referential function is context-oriented and intended to convey information through language to express a certain reality. We consider that the example with

the most significant impact of the referential function is the speech of the President of the Russian Federation on the morning of 24 February 2022, in which he informs the society of his country, as well as the international community, about the decision to launch a *special military operation* on Ukraine: "In this regard, in accordance with Article 51 of Part 7 of the UN Charter, with the sanction of the Federation Council of Russia and in pursuance of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance ratified by the Federal Assembly on 22 February this year with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, I decided to conduct a special military operation. Its goal is to protect people who have been subjected to bullying and genocide by the Kyiv regime for eight years. And for this, we will strive for the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine, as well as bringing to justice those who committed numerous, bloody crimes against civilians, including citizens of the Russian Federation." (www.spectator.co.uk). The speech is supported by the Russian diplomat Sergei Lavrov, who guarantees that this *military operation* is aimed at defending by surgical strikes and incapacitating military infrastructure: "Russian Defence Ministry reassured that Russian troops are not targeting Ukrainian cities but are limited to surgically striking and incapacitating Ukrainian military infrastructure." (www.tass.com).

At the same time, we consider it important to mention that the referential function of diplomatic language is also widely perceived in the reactions of most world leaders who refer to this situation: "It is great to be together with all of you here today. This really demonstrates NATO solidarity. That we stand together, facing a critical moment for our security caused by the brutal invasion of Russia on a peaceful country in Europe – Ukraine; Nous nous sommes réunis aujourd'hui pour faire le point sur ce qui constitue la plus grave menace pour la sécurité euro-atlantique depuis des décennies. Nous condamnons, avec la plus grande fermeté, l'invasion à grande échelle de l'Ukraine par la Russie, facilitée par le Bélarus." (www.nato.int).

The referential function, also known as cognitive or denotative, emphasises the description of events currently happening and allows the sender to provide real information to the receiver. In this way, the referential function does not consider the inner reality of the sender but rather focuses on referents in the external world. Therefore, the purpose of this function is to complement the conative one that allows the sender to influence the receiver in a certain way to require a response action or behaviour from the receiver: „Cerem Rusiei să-și înceteze agresiunea militară și să își evacueze trupele de pe teritoriul Ucrainei. În același timp, condamnăm pierderile de vieți în rândul civililor și atacurile Rusiei asupra civililor și asupra obiectivelor civile." (www.mae.ro); "We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, enabled by Belarus. We call on Russia to immediately cease its military assault, withdraw all its forces from Ukraine, and turn back from

the path of aggression it has chosen. This long-planned attack on Ukraine, an independent, peaceful, and democratic country, is brutal and wholly unprovoked, and unjustified. We deplore the tragic loss of life, enormous human suffering and destruction caused by Russia's actions." (www.nato.int); "À cet égard, nous dénonçons catégoriquement la campagne de désinformation malveillante et sans fondement menée par la Russie contre l'Ukraine, un État qui respecte pleinement les accords internationaux de non-prolifération." (www.consilium.europa.eu).

Since the purpose of the conative function is to elicit a response or reaction from the receiver, this function enjoys popularity in diplomatic language with propagandistic characteristics: "Russia could not remain indifferent to the fate of four million people in Donbass amid the most blatant violations of rights of ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine and the eight-year-long war against them with all signs of genocide, as well as the West's stubborn refusal to bring the Ukrainian authorities to order." (tass.com); "Ukrainian troops were killed in Russia's special operation in Ukraine while casualties among the Russian forces amount to 498" (tass.com). We observe in these statements the effort of the sender to impose his point of view on the war argument and to influence the recipient to form beliefs in line with the sender. This art of persuasion (rhetoric), based on *pathos, logos, and ethos*, proves to be quite effective in persuading and influencing the recipient. On the one hand, the receiver appeals to emotion (*pathos*): *Russia cannot be indifferent to the fate of four million people*, which is why it takes responsibility for launching a special operation on Ukraine. On the other hand, the sender resorts to hard persuasion (*logos*) by using words with harsh, direct connotations: *Ukrainian troops have been killed* while *Russian casualties/casualties* number 498. Not specifying the exact number of Ukrainian casualties as opposed to the exact number of Russian casualties serves the purpose of subtle, clever influence and persuasion (*ethos*). The conative function in these examples plays the role of a propaganda instrument, as it persuades the receiver of the rightness of their actions.

The effectiveness of the conative function amplifies the metalinguistic one, which aims at the correct and complete understanding of the message by explaining the language code and is directed at the addressee: „Oamenii vor putea, în continuare, să-i comemoreze pe eroii care au luptat în Cel de-Al Doilea Război Mondial, în acea conflagrație sângeroasă îndreptată împotriva umanității și a bunei conviețuiri între popoare" (presedinte.md); "Putin's attack on Ukraine is an attack on all the principles we hold dear. This crisis has indeed made us face up to our responsibilities in the face of a new reality." (ec.europa.eu); "Planifiée de longue date, cette attaque brutale contre l'Ukraine, pays indépendant, pacifique et démocratique, a été perpétrée en l'absence totale de provocation et sans aucune justification." (www.nato.int).

The identification of emotional or expressive function in the investigated contexts, intended to convey emotions, feelings, and moods to the receiver, betrays the degree of humanity and empathy of the sender. The presence of this function contradicts the hypothesis we started from in our approach that diplomatic language is a language of power, self-mastery, and shaping collective perception. This presence of the emotional function, even if reduced, tells us about a fact that has not been observed in any crisis or war situation so far: we are witnessing an unprecedented reaction of unanimity and determination both on the part of the European Union and of the entire international community: „Din primele ore ale atacului armat asupra Ucrainei, Moldova a primit pe teritoriul său cetățenii din țara vecină care fug din calea bombelor." (presedinte.md); "Ukraine is being «decimated before the eyes of the world» with Russia's military offensive against civilians reaching terrifying proportions." (news.un.org); "Nous accueillons à bras ouverts les Ukrainiens qui sont contraints de fuir les bombardements de Poutine et je suis fière de l'accueil chaleureux que les Européens leur ont déjà reserve." (ec.europa.eu); "En ces heures sombres, notre unité et notre solidarité avec l'Ukraine et les victimes de cette guerre atroce sont un rai de lumière." (ec.europa.eu). The sender thus becomes responsible in the process of communication, as it becomes a reference to the statements made. Thus, through its expressive function, the sender expresses their emotions and inner feelings, which betray their personality.

Contrary to expectations confirming the absence of the poetic function in contexts referring to the War in Ukraine, the presence of this function in just a few examples in English emphasizes the depth and importance of the addressed issues: "Besides the hour-to-hour devastation inside Ukraine, the UN chief said the war was reaching far beyond its borders, with a Sword of Damocles now hanging over the global economy – «especially the developing world»; We must do everything possible to avert a hurricane of hunger and a meltdown of the global food system; It is time to stop the horror unleashed on the people of Ukraine and get on the path of diplomacy and peace." (news.un.org). We note that the poetic function focuses the form of the message, which gives it greater meaning and intensity, as well as a more impactful way of communication, which is embellished by various figures of speech.

At the same time, we consider it necessary to mention that the therapeutic or arbitration function, identified in the contexts referring to the territorial conflicts in the Black Sea region and which is directed towards a third participant of the communication situation for mediation purposes (Marcus, 1981) is missing in the contexts referring to the War in Ukraine. A reason for this phenomenon is the fact that in a crisis situation the mediating factor is far too insufficient. In other words, the collective consciousness must evolve to perceive that there is no victory in a War, only victims.

5. The functions of euphemisms in the context of the War in Ukraine

The thorough analysis of studies on functions of euphemisms led us to move forward our research by adopting Jervis' perspective of the equivocal character of the diplomatic language at both linguistic and discursive levels and to synthesize the functions of euphemisms in diplomatic language from a semantic-pragmatic perspective. Therefore, diplomatic language is an essential means of influence through which diplomats act on social behaviour and seek to steer it in a direction that is favourable to them. Thus, euphemisms in diplomatic language make the messages conveyed equivocal, which is open to interpretation and consequently proves to generate certain functions such as *strategic, protective/attenuating, persuasive/concealed influence, misrepresentative and manipulative*. Albeit in considerably different proportions, all five functions of euphemisms have been identified in Romanian, English, and French contexts. At the same time, diplomatic language deliberately infused with euphemisms proves to be a strategy for developing persuasive communication focusing on obtaining desired reactions from society. Thus, diplomatic language, as a language of power, can be used as a strategically disguised persuasion and influence.

At the same time, during the process of identification and analysis of the semantic-pragmatic functions, we took into account several factors of both semantic and pragmatic nature, such as the connotation of the term used (Allan, 2007), the status and position of the sender, the promoted state policy, the image the sender wants to leave to the receiver, the communication situation and the context. In this context, we believe it is imperative to distinguish and perceive the intention and function associated with each euphemism in Romanian, English, and French contexts. Since the purpose of the delivered message can sometimes be expressed directly and indirectly (hidden intention), identifying the function of euphemisms in such contexts can cause difficulties. Therefore, while investigating the corpus of data, we observed that leaders exercising greater power and influence are more prone to use certain euphemisms, which are consequently easily absorbed and disseminated by other diplomats as the state policy they promote. In turn, diplomats, as promoters of state policy, quote political leaders to persuade themselves of the accuracy of the claims made.

Considering these significant aspects, we acknowledge it appropriate to elaborate a hierarchy of semantic-pragmatic functions according to argumentative and reactive criteria to the outbreak of the armed attack on Ukraine for each language separately and to observe their degree of contrastivity. Thus, the morning of 24 February 2022 has become crucial for Ukraine and the order of the international community. The speech of the President of Russian, with many subsequent echoes in those of diplomats in the inner circle of the Kremlin regime, is imbued with euphemistic

arguments. Based on the information presented in this research and the carried-out remarks, we consider these euphemisms as an explicit reflection of propaganda fulfilling the manipulative function. Propaganda, which dates back to the work of *Aeneid* by Vergilius, written to infuse a sense of pride for the glory of Rome, began to develop negative connotations from the moment of being used in the political sphere and has numerous strategies of influence. One of these strategies consists in using certain words or expressions instead of others, for mitigating purposes. One such example is the euphemism *special military operation*, which has replaced the lexeme *war*, the use of which has been banned in the Russian Federation by law since 24 February 2022. Special operations refer mainly to unconventional forces conducting hostile, prohibited, or politically sensitive environments. These operations target military, diplomatic, intelligence, or economic objectives, or a combination of these, and are often conducted clandestinely, covertly, or in a low-visibility manner. Such operations can involve any branch of the military (air, sea, or land) and are more physically and politically risky than conventional ones. We note that this form of new language/newspeak, described by George Orwell in the novel 1984, was imposed for use to replace the negative connotation of the word war and, respectively, to change the attitude of society in respect to what is happening (hidden intent). This propaganda strategy derives from the assumption that words can shape thinking. It means that words, concepts, and terms we use affect our perception of the world and how we relate to people and events. In this context, euphemism takes on the nature of doublespeak: politicians aim both to convey politeness or display empathy toward people's attitudes, while also seeking to safeguard their own interests. Euphemism in the guise of doublespeak serves as the primary function within the examined instances: over half of the observed euphemistic elements are deliberately designed to mislead, distort, and ultimately manipulate the audience's understanding.

The manipulative function is also fulfilled by the euphemisms: *demilitarization, denazification, could not remain indifferent to the fate of four million people*. These euphemisms are a straightforward form of propaganda that divides the world into good and evil, black and white, and positive and negative. This intentional bidimensionality forces society towards blind adherence, either to those with high values, who must necessarily emerge as winners, or those with lower values, who must disappear. In this duality, the Russian Federation plays the role of the saviour nation that *could not remain indifferent to the fate of the people of Donbas* and which, in the name of the good, has set itself the goal of *demilitarising* and *denazifying* the Ukrainian population. The ongoing events prove a completely different situation from what is invoked from the rostrum of Kremlin. The separation between mine – good and theirs – evil is proving catastrophic, with immense effects on human consciousness. This situation reminds the reaction

of the society on the death of Stalin, when a huge number of people, oppressed or even deported to remote area of Siberia by the Stalinist regime, deplored that system of government.

The *demilitarisation* term is the opposite of *militarisation* and aims to reduce the armed forces. But demilitarisation is the result of a peace treaty, which implies the end of a war or armed conflict, and in no way serves as a reason for military action. Another euphemism with a manipulative function, which served as an argument for launching the armed attack against Ukraine, is *denazification*. We assume that the Russian Federation invented this lexeme based on Orwell's new language (www.public-library.uk) in response to the Law on Decommunisation in Ukraine, which includes the specification "not to be confused with derussification in Ukraine". The signing of this Law on 15 May 2015 involved the removal of communist monuments, except those of World War II, and renaming public places with communist names. Therefore, adopting this Law in Ukraine served as a signal to the Russian Federation that it attempts to deny or eliminate everything that has Russian origins. To make the enemy even more hostile, it resorts to dehumanising it through the stereotype of a Nazi country, given that this country is led by a president of Jewish ethnicity. This propaganda strategy of creating a vivid image that provokes hatred is the reason for the decision of the Russian Federation to start the war. Along the way, we see other *arguments* being invoked, such as the intention of Ukraine to use nuclear technologies or possession of chemical weapons laboratories, which only emphasises the effort of the Russian propaganda. In response to this dehumanisation, we identify another term, invented by the Ukrainian side, the euphemism *deputinising the world*, whereby Ukraine urges all states and international organisations to join it in the fight against the influence of the leader from Kremlin in all spheres of government.

The manipulative function also supports the function of distortion of facts, aiming to deliberately masking or changing the nature of events and the meaning of words or concepts. Thus, diplomatic language is supplemented by coded euphemisms, the decoding of which reveals the actual facts. The euphemisms *surgical strike, incapacitating Ukrainian military infrastructure, to decapacitate military infrastructure* are used to mask the actions of bombing hospitals, schools/kindergartens, and civilian neighbourhoods and to justify war. The distortion of information that occurs through the function of misrepresentation of facts is another strategy used by propaganda, which induces confusion and, respectively, the difficulty of distinguishing truth from lies. Another euphemism with a distorting function, which has a hidden manipulative intent, refers to nuclear technologies used by the Russian Federation regarding the alleged possession of Ukraine of weapons of mass destructions, a harsh but vague term because it does not specify the exact type of technologies possessed. It is worth mentioning that Ukraine joined

the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1994, after the collapse of the USSR, surrendered its entire nuclear arsenal to Russia, receiving security guarantees from recognised states (the US and Russia) in return. The creation of a false dilemma, based on choosing the lesser evil, is another propaganda strategy associated with Orwellian neologism and aimed at inducing fear and chaos in society: "Ukraine has Soviet nuclear technologies and delivery vehicles. We cannot but react to this real danger. I can promise you that Russia as a responsible member of the international community, determined to adhere to its WMD non-proliferation commitments, has been taking every measure to prevent Ukraine from laying hands on nuclear weapons and the related technologies." (tass.com). We see in this statement a double deviation from the signifier nuclear weapons: signifier 1, *nuclear technologies*, used for the Ukrainian side, is replaced by signifier 2, *Russia's WMD non-proliferation commitment*. The truth is that both options are false: Ukraine gave up its nuclear potential in 1994 in exchange for security guarantees, and Russia mentioned at one point that it might resort to its nuclear arsenal.

While the function of manipulation and misrepresentation of facts have been noticed only in communications issued by Russian leaders, the function of disguised persuasion/influencing has been identified in the communications of both local and international political leaders as a reaction of solidarity against Russia's aggression in Ukraine: *cea mai dificilă perioadă din ultimul timp; vicious attack against Ukraine, the aggressive actions of President Putin against Ukraine, get on the path of diplomacy; l'invasion brutale entreprise par la Russie, catastrophe humanitaire*. It is necessary to note that in the context of the escalation of the War in Ukraine, the function of disguised persuasion/influence sometimes loses its sinuous characteristics of shaping opinions and actions and acquires harsher and blunt features of influencing the aggressive behaviour of the Russian Federation: *Ukraine is being decimated before the eyes of the world*, *call for an immediate end to the attacks*, *to turn back from the path of aggression it has chosen*, *it is time to stop the horror unleashed on the people of Ukraine*, *which continues to be direct and blatant, if they expect (…) Russia to crawl under the bench and give in to someone's dictatorship, their expectations are wrong*. However, we consider that President of the Russian Federation has managed to achieve something unimaginable in the post-Cold War era on the one hand, he has created an unprecedented reaction of solidarity and unanimity on the part of the European Union and the entire international community for Ukraine and, on the other hand, he has radically changed the position of the EU and the US towards Russia.

The function with the highest frequency in the data corpus proposed for investigation in all three research languages, is the protection/attenuation one. This frequency is explained by the reaction of a coordinated and unified

response of the international community which tends to temper the seriousness of the events unfolding since 24 February 2022: *evoluțiile recente ale situației de securitate din regiunea Mării Negre*, *agresiunii militare ilegale a Federației Ruse în Ucraina*, *implicațiile acestui conflict pentru Republica Moldova; illegal Russian invasion, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, invasion à grande échelle, l'agression militaire*.

With the outbreak of War in Ukraine, we are witnessing the most disastrous humanitarian catastrophe since the end of World War II, reflected by thousands of refugees: *măsuri de sprijin pentru copiii aflați în situații deosebite*, *cetățeni ucraineni afectați de război*, *oameni care fug din calea războiului*, *personnes en détresse*, *les Ukrainiens qui sont contraints de fuir les bombardements*, *opération de relocalisation* and thousands of victims: *pierderi de vieți*; *civilian casualties, the tragic loss of life, the deceased; tragiques pertes en vies humaines, pertes de vies*. At the same time, the protection/attenuation function can also be seen in the euphemisms relating to the sanctions imposed on Russia: *măsurile comune și coordonate de răspuns*, *răspuns comun; unprecedented costs on Russia, Russia will pay a severe price, both economically and politically; mesure sans précédent, conséquences sévères/mesures économiques et financières*. At the same time, the *military aggression* of the Russian Federation has served as a *wake-up call* for the EU in terms of expanding its defence policy, expressed through euphemisms with a protective/attenuating function: *busola strategică*, *a consolida capacitățile de analiză a informațiilor*, *diplomația cibernetică; defensive presence; la boussole stratégique, cyberdiplomatique*.

The protective/attenuating function of the euphemisms used in the communications of state leaders implies also the strategic one, for example: *efortul eroic (…) de a respinge agresiunea rusă*, *nu pot accepta impunerea arbitrarului prin forță*, *mediul de securitate mai ostil; reconstruction platform, which constitutes the most serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security; Nous ne ménagerons aucun effort pour exiger des comptes du président Poutine, la continuité de la stratégie de la France dans le cadre du conflit ukrainien*. At the same time, the strategic function is also present in the euphemisms relating to giving up the dependence on the energy resources from Russia. This strategy shall be implemented in the EU by 2025: *to diversify away from fossil fuels, green economy* and *energy security*.

Conclusions

Summarising the above-mentioned, euphemisms play a substantial role in diplomatic communication concerning the War in Ukraine. Diplomats employ euphemisms to mitigate the negative impact of the conflict and prevent the

escalation of tensions. The research findings uncover several notable insights. Firstly, it is apparent that the phatic function has been neglected, leading not only to a regional crisis within Europe but also to a global catastrophe with enduring political, economic, and social consequences. Secondly, the therapeutic function appears to be lacking in the analysed contexts, suggesting an area for improvement in diplomatic discourse. Furthermore, the dominant function of language in these communications is identified as the referential one, underscoring the significance of conveying accurate information amid the intricacies of international conflicts. Importantly, the manipulative function of euphemism plays a pivotal role in shaping society's perception of reality, unveiling concealed intentions in diplomatic language. Lastly, the study highlights the protective/mitigating function as the most frequently employed across all three investigated languages. Overall, this research yields valuable insights into the complexities of diplomatic language, shedding light on the implications of euphemistic expressions within the backdrop of the War in Ukraine. It emphasizes the need for a thorough understanding of language functions to effectively navigate sensitive geopolitical matters. The findings presented in this article serve as a stepping stone for further research on the nuances of diplomatic communication and can contribute to fostering more transparent and constructive international dialogues.

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