The Russia–Ukraine War: Power Relations and Political Orientations in News Reportage

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Abstract:
During wars, language is one of the most powerful weapons that warring parties use to justify their actions, attack opponents, shape narratives, and influence public perception. Relevant media outlets are also often influenced by political, ideological, economic, or national affiliations, causing them to present selective representations of events to distort realities, conceal intentions, and manipulate audiences into adopting particular political judgments and actions that may not be fair or objective. Nevertheless, approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and intertextuality help reveal the hidden meanings and ideologies concealed from the public. By analysing a corpus of 101 news articles collected from 46 international media outlets published between March and April 2025, this paper shows how discursive strategies such as reification, demonisation, synecdochization, patronage, and false equivalence have been systematically employed to expose and reinforce hidden geopolitical hierarchies, alliances, and power relations in the Russia-Ukraine War. Furthermore, the analysis reveals how geopolitical terms such as “Europe,” “NATO,” “Ukraine,” and “Russia” are used strategically and ideologically to include, exclude actors, and legitimise political positions on the one hand, while delegitimising, lowering the status of particular nations and institutions in global discourse, on the other hand. The analysis contributes to a fairer and more critical understanding of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and geopolitical and economic dynamics, enabling societies, policymakers, and media consumers to recognise underlying biases, question dominant narratives, and make more informed decisions regarding alliances, security precautions, and evolving geopolitical realities.

Keywords:
Framing, language politicisation, language and power, language of crisis, fuzziness, vagueness, language and politics, dynamic meanings of political terms.