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Otherness in operation from the systemic-functional perspective: The case of the Russia-Ukraine war

A b s t r a c t : This paper addresses the issue of otherness central to the study of media discourse of the Russia-Ukraine war. Based on Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) framework as the conceptual foundation for describing the context of situation, I characterise the relevant features and macrostructure patterns that pertain to a functional structure in society. I developed a research framework for media discourse that is based on the components of a speaking grid model, elements of proximisation theory, speech acts theory, and the principle of seven standards of textuality to research media communication during the disturbing times of war. This study identifies the mechanisms of otherness and its social impact. After revisiting the threefold distinction between the field, tenor, and mode, a proposal is made to single out the category of *credible otherness* to capture practice performed by media. It rests on validating news content by means of strategies of proximising and objectivising, which are intended to decrease a spatio-temporal dimension and convey truthful propositions. Finally, the analysis shows how otherness has been projected by the media and how media's framework of negative depictions of Russia provides discursive contexts for the potential aggravation of conflict.

K e y w o r d s : systemic-functional linguistics; Russia-Ukraine war; otherness; proximisation; media discourse

1. Introduction

Otherness as a research concept holds significance for linguists and for philosophers, especially for those with an interest in (socio)semiotics (Kress 2010; Halliday 1978; Halliday and Martin 1993), social theory (Krippendorff 2009; Burr 2003; Gergen 2009), social media discourse (García-Marín and Luengo 2019; Kopytowska 2020; Mannarini *et al.* 2020), discourse analysis (*e.g.*, Chilton 2004; Chovanec 2010; Duszak 2002; Engel and Wodak 2013; van Dijk 2000; van Leeuwen 2008; Tekin 2010; Engesser *et al.* 2017; Wodak *et al.* 2009) specifically political discourse analysis (Cap 2017; Oddo 2018; Filardo *et al.* 2016), cultural anthropology (Burszta 1998; Duranti 2015) including ethnography of speaking (Hymes 1962; Saville-Troike [1982] 2003), pragmatic linguistics (Cap 2013; Sego 2000; Kulikova and Detinko 2020), or rhetoric studies (Hartelius 2015; Verkuyten 2013) especially war rhetoric (Martikainen and Sakki 2023; Okulska and Cap 2010; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). This article addresses the topic of otherness with regard to a systemic-functional account of this social phenomenon in media discourse. In order to meet this objective, the author offers a conception of otherness that is positioned in relation to all of the mentioned disciplines and has drawn extensively on the semiotic orientation. The basic concept here is that of environment or 'context of situation' (Malinowski 1923; Firth 1950), *i.e.*, the Russia-Ukraine war, which anchors otherness in the actual cultural-configurations deriving from social roles, speech situations, events, and processes. The matrix of texts produces by media discourse on the first day of the war acts as information system which imparts data about the meaning potential which is socially imprinted but actualised by means of texts viewed as linguistic forms of social interaction (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Halliday 1978).

Like any social phenomenon, otherness is viewed as a social semiotic structure that constitutes culture and allows for the formulation and interpretation of the systems within the social reality or 'a culture'. Working in the tradition of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) (*e.g.*, Eggins 1994; Halliday 1978, 1994; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2008), Halliday highlights that social action actively creates an environment (Halliday 1978: 3) that is activated through the three socio-semiotic

variables of *field, tenor*, and *mode* (Halliday 1978: 122). The tripartite entity presupposes the type of information that is crucial for interpretation of the social context of the unfolding the Russia-Ukraine war which becomes evident in the relations of otherness.

The underlying aim of this article is to demonstrate and characterise the working context of otherness presented in media discourse reporting the Russia-Ukraine war. In its conceptual design otherness can be explored according to certain narrative schemas which operate with the spatio-temporal frame of localness and globalness (Cap 2023: 133).

However, I take one step further and point to the 'Ripple-Effect' (RE) narrative recognised in the study that serves to present the Russia-Ukraine war as a trigger that has far-reaching consequences that extend far beyond the single invasion. It concerns the impact of war that is researched through language and how it functions in the social structures, much like the way ripples expand outward when a stone is thrown into a calm surface of water.

In this article I investigate how otherness is manifested through the lexico-grammatical choices within a chosen discourse type, in response to the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. Such insight provides a bigger picture into the cascade of actions that lead to a broader social change, *e.g.*, through certain conceptual media representations that may help generate certain attitudes and behaviours and that can impact the whole cultural system as well as inspire similar movements within societies. In this article, the RE scenario is a complex, systemic pattern stemming from the language functions generated in the context of the unfolding war.

With this in mind, this study examines the social contexts which are a nexus of a tripartite entity in the form of a field, tenor, and mode that crucially construe the identities of otherness as social action and act as a conceptual framework for representing relations of otherness within the sociocultural context of war. In this article I specifically investigate the genre category of a news article in order to (1) identify the linguistic resources that are typically recognised in news articles associated with the specific situation type of war, and to (2) find out what are the context-specific semantic descriptions within the functional components of the tenor, mode, and field that significantly create otherness representations.

2. Towards the SFL approach to otherness

In this section the author tries to tease out a number of components of the sociosemiotic space that relate to otherness, the assumption being that the matrix of relations and their functions is the foundation of the system of meanings that constitute the created 'reality' of otherness. I suggest here the reality-constituting capacity of language is not only situated in the structure of language itself, but most importantly in how various forms of expression are created and negotiated in interaction. Therefore, the task is to establish the scope of the multimodality, *e.g.*, the evaluation/assessment of various modes that operate within, text which is the basic unit of a semantic process and goes beyond a purely linguistic category. In this sense, texts are approached from social context and language use. In other words, the sociosemiotic character of the analysis in this article manifests itself in the light of regular patterns of language as social behaviour, and the effects of social representation of otherness, in the functional framework of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual component.

The question to be answered is, how the context of the situation becomes fuel for creating "otherness potential" in the analysed texts. The issue that will be discussed here is what features of the environment establish the selection of given language options that are typically associated with otherness in media discourse on war. What this implies is that I am looking for a 'patterning mode' that would serve to define otherness in the analysed media discourse. It provides readers with knowledge of rules and patterns that are responsible for cognitive representations and associations that text receivers create based on media displays. Therefore, it is worth to investigate *the communicational grammar* (Chruszczewski 2007: 146) of news media discourse on the Russia-Ukraine war in order to reveal the interplay between the situational, the social, and the cultural embedding that convey otherness.

Given that news media texts about war are trouble messages, the projected associations that are created in the receivers' minds are significant, which consequently lead to specific forms of responsive behaviour. This has crucial implications in the context of stories recipiency and building social resilience in crisis times. Thus, endorsing the communicational grammar perspective, media texts not only serve informative function but are inherently

performative and the otherness conveyed in them predominantly "[t]riggers certain socially and culturally specific behaviours [that, M.S.] can be called the communicational grammar of a particular discourse" (Chruszczewski 2007: 146). What follows is a theoretical account of a semiotic structure of the situation that is a hub of texts central to the creation of otherness in media discourse.

2.1. The social action – Field

The first sociosemiotic variable that forms the war context is *field*. This component represents the 'content', *i.e.*, the ideational function of language. In general, the field is a total event, the socio-cultural *in situ* in which texts are functioning and it refers to the nature of the communicative event. The field embraces both the subject matter and the whole activity that participant(s) in the situation perform (Halliday 1978: 33). The 'field of discourse' is also intended to make explicit the purposes that the specific language forms serve to communicate within the context of war. The subcategory of field provides a means of investigating the texts from the angle that is complementary to the ethnographic one (Hymes 1964; Saville-Troike [1982] 2003; Duranti 2015); it considers how the patterns in communication are organised within the local contexts of situation as well as in the global frames of communities and their habits. Taking this aspect as a departure point in this discussion, it serves as the feature of texts that embodies the system of speaking about the other(s). This component refers to the text-generating activity that informs about 'what is going on' and determines the nature of the situation type. The basic components of the situation are to be found in the Hymesian *SPEAKING Grid* model (Hymes 1974) which includes such elements as *Setting, Participants, Ends, Acts of sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms of interaction* and *Genre*. These characteristics allow to build a framework of a communicative event which is a mirror image of a text-in-situation that can be regarded as a basic unit of semantic structure, *i.e.*, of a semantic process (Halliday 1978: 60). The organisation of these components is centred on the concepts that map the spatiotemporal dimension of the event.

2.2. The role structure – Tenor

Tenor includes these parameters of the situation which are constituted by the relationships between speakers and indicate the probability of the type of the role relationships and status occurring in the given discourse (Halliday 1978: 113). Tenor in this sense is the domain of an interpersonal function representing the 'participation' mode of language. What we need to know is that the phenomenon of otherness in the context of the unfolding Ukraine-Russia war endorses important features which are building blocks of discursive otherness. Specifically, they are manifested by "us" *vs.* "them" narrative that is inherent to the mechanism of inclusion-exclusion (Van Dijk 2003; Chilton 2004; Okulska and Cap 2010: 3; Chovanec 2010: 63; Ruiz-Sanchez and Alcántara-Plá 2019: 105). This type of projection is in accord with the Proximisation Theory proposed by Piotr Cap (2013) and derived from Chilton's (2004) Discourse Space Theory (DST), which accounts of otherness as proximising physically and temporally "remote" events as negatively consequential to the speaker and her addressee (Cap 2013: 3). The orientation of distant entities markers as ODC (outside-deictic-center) foreign elements encroaching upon the speaker- addressee territory represents its core ability to account for a manipulative-persuasive function of language.

This approach can help to pave the way for further work on otherness since it provides for the conceptual and methodological tools that are in the service of building up specific cognitive-linguistic, pragmatic, and most importantly, strategic orientations. In other words, in analysing tenor processes, the systemic-functional perspective draws extensively on patterned, organisational, and generative format of linguistic forms distribution that can benefit from the explanatory power of "proximisation" tools that "[m]ark an organised, strategic deployment of cognitive-pragmatic construals of/in discourse (Cap 2013: 5). Tenor variable encompasses itself a set of relations that are a part of a sociosemiotic complex but the one that serves to make it a rhetoric practice of conflict management and threat recognition. In examining the role relationships and status occurring within a given discourse lead to the concept of *acceptability* as a standard of textuality concerning the text receiver's attitudes based on reference to his knowledge of the world (de Beaugrande and Dressler [1972] 1981: 113). What is most significant, if

the acceptability standard is flouted or restricted, communication can be diverted resulting in uncooperativeness or in the case of understanding media discourse, in discouragement to read specific types of news or losing its credibility.

2.3. The symbolic organisation – Mode

The field of mode has to do with the focus on the textual component of the semantics of the situation representing the 'relevance' function of language and being the synthesising variable of *field* and *tenor* (Halliday 1978: 123). Mode is commonly considered as the channel of communication adopted; spoken or written as well as the pattern of pragmatic speech, so called language-in-action or language as a mode of action (Austin [1962] 1975; Duranti 2015; Keating and Duranti 2011; Enfield and Sidnell 2017; Malinowski 1922; Nassenstein and Völkel 2022; Searle 1969, 2010). In identifying the symbolic organisation of Mode, the environment of language can readily be tested by the selection of options such as theme, information, cohesion, reference, substitution, ellipsis and the like (Halliday 1978: 144; Rodríguez 2006: 152). The meaning of otherness that constitutes Mode is also systematically related to the rhetorical status achieved by texts which brings us to the rhetorical concepts of expository, didactic, persuasive and descriptive semiotic functions of texts. The analysis of otherness in an aspect of Mode is highly correlated with a dynamic and non-deterministic account of text structure. Just as textual systems depend on the combined effects of "performative" messages which specific role is to serve various functions such as to persuade, to control, to criticise, to explain, *etc.,* the "mode of discourse" derives its potency from the communicative property of the configuration of concepts and relations underlying texts which are a matter of choice.

Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler ([1972] 1981) offer an interesting discussion of how coherence and informativity, among other parameters of an effective communication, function as credible tools for establishing structural patterns and units driven by certain types of operation. The relevant potential of the field of Mode resides in its "continuity of sense" (de Beaugrande and Dressler [1972] 1981: 115) that allows for trancing the continuous knowledge and controlling meanings in the ongoing flow of coherent semiotic narrative. Introducing the notion of coherence derived from

text linguistics methodology, de Beaugrande and Dressler state that coherence refers to the "[w]ays in which the components of the surface text, *i.e.* the actual words we hear or see are mutually connected within a sequence. […] All of the functions which can be used to signal relations among surface elements are included under the notion of cohesion" (de Beaugrande and Dressler [1972] 1981: 3). As such, coherence is an organised, internally patterned hub of meanings that ought to be discussed in terms of the functions that it has developed to serve.

The level of informativity, being a significant option in determining the scope of mode can also provide description of these properties of text which are aligned with an information focus based on a speaker's selection between the GIVEN and the NEW information (Halliday 1978: 61). A bulk of information-based language structures can be derived from the analysis based on the research parameter called the Lexical Density (LD) (Johansson 2008; Ure 1971) which serves as a quantitative tool to evaluate the degree of informativity in texts. This easily operationalizable measure significantly points to the complexity and applicability of lexicon of texts in their sociocultural milieu. In the case of putting linguistic forms into the category of otherness, results obtained by means of the LD potential reflect *information packaging* essential to the meaning of otherness.

3. The study

I take the sociosemiotic approach to otherness to determine various types of relations within the larger sociocultural context of the Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore, this situation becomes a determinant for the production of texts which are imbued with otherness meaning potential. With the aim of investigating the systematic relationship between the environment and language (*e.g.*, Eggins and Martin 1997), the author puts forward the following classification in the form of a model according to which the representation of otherness in media discourse can be recognised and explained. Using the proposed model I examine how online news texts relate to the functional component of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual frame of reference. In answering questions about the ways in which otherness is projected onto the texts through these functional components I put forward the units of analysis that are specific to the contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode.

Table 1. The model of the sociosemiotic space of otherness
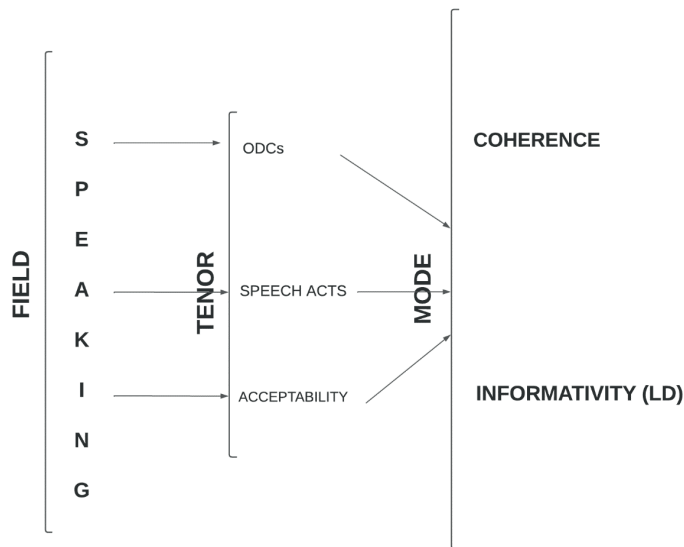
Source: Author's own elaboration.

3.1. Otherness in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war: interpretative analysis

All the data consisting of a corpus data set of 49 texts has been gathered from the online media coverage prepared by Reuters (www.reuter.com) on the first day of the war, *i.e.*, 24th Feb 2022, and coded according to the proposed model. This exploratory tool allowed for the thematical coding of data and provided ample evidence for the construction of otherness through elements of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The process of coding was facilitated by the QDA Miner Lite which was used to identify the thematic patterns that were predominant in the analysed corpus. In analysing the data, the author paid attention to lexico-grammatical choices, categorisations signalled by means of role-based attributes, and a lexical density (LD) parameter which indicates information packaging.

Adopting the tenets of the systemic-functional approach established by Halliday, I present what functions language has evolved to serve in the process of building the 'otherness meaning potential.' By analysing data from

this discourse context, it enabled to capture those features which are relevant to the context of the situation. In the study that follows I consider the substantial parts of the sociosemiotic space of otherness.

3.1.1. Analytical framework

3.1.1.1. Components of field

This section reports on a corpus-assisted study of the Reuter's media coverage on the first day of the Russia-Ukraine war. Providing a formal definition of field which is strongly anchored in situatedness, reference to the ethnographic approach to language as action and interaction seems to be the correct approach. As such, the analysis of field in relation to otherness is designed to highlight those aspects of the context of situation that is the most relevant from the analysed perspective, *i.e.*, the context of the unfolding war. Therefore, the analysis of the communicative event, *e.g.*, online news, takes the form of a patterned structure consisting of features and structures which serve as an orienting framework in the analysis of otherness in the context of the war. This section seeks to explore the field resources that create the sociosemiotic space of otherness in the analysed data. Table 2 below lists the categories of the Speaking Grid, providing examples and the interpretation of each category.

Looking at context of news discourse from the point of view of field, we can recognise the following relevant sociosemiotic processes which deal with 'what's going on' (Matthiessen 2013: 450):

Table 2. Speaking Grid context in terms of field

Speaking Grid components	Information
S(ETTING):	the first day of the Russia-Ukraine war/Ukrainian territory
P(ARTICIPANTS):	The people representing Russian/Ukrainian interests: *e.g.*, Putin, Russia, Ukraine, Ukraine's armed forces, Russian troops/forces, Russia's army, diplomats, military forces, Joe Biden, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the United States and our allies and partners, Russian oligarchs, financial institutions and exports, Ukraine's prime minister, military analysts, six Russian warships and a submarine, warships, direct neighbours,
E(NDS):	The goal of texts is to inform about the war and specifically to point to the antagonistic relations between Russia and Ukraine, to express disapproval or even contempt with a Russian attack
A(CTS SEQUENCE):	summarises, reports, describes, evaluates
KEY:	serious
I(NSTRUMENTALITIES):	written texts (online)
N(ORMS):	Informing about a conflict, disapproval of violating humanitarian norms by Russia
G(ENRE):	news article

It can be seen from Table 2 that field describes this dimension of context which reflects the otherness potential of the social situation presented by media discourse. This contextual parameter presents the subject matter; the invasion, as one special aspect of the text-generating activity. I postulate that we are dealing here with the systematic-functional approach to language used in media texts that is predicated on the existence of a "frame", the metaphorical label that we give to the background, setting, or context which is governed by the unstated rules and principles (Goffman [1974] 1986: xiii). The specific identity of social action presented within this frame is the reporting process and the discussion about the war which is brought into being by language. The exploration of field crucially underlies the ideational meta function of language that shows the negative patterning of the first day media discourse. The study of media practices shows the shift into the transformational mode that refers to the reformulation of

a 'geopolitical' spaces of Eurasia, the Euro-Atlantic and the Asia Pacific that Russia has been a member of and which is defined by the political leadership in Moscow (Svarin 2016: 129). It is argued that Russia has always strived to be recognised as a great power (Mankoff 2009; Tsyganov 2005) and its power status, coupled with the Russia-Ukraine war crisis, is in a deadlock. As such, this is a tendency within the ideational resource of language- pattern that we recognise as the potential of culture that construes our experience of the world.

Field in the analysed context is essentially concerned with the role that language plays in this situation. As presented in Table 2, otherness in the analysed situation type is primarily concerned with the subject under discussion which is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. A close look at the data shows that otherness potential is mapped by the military tokens, specifically nouns which denote an invasive type of Russian activity. At the level of goal orientation, it is classified as expository discourse that explains reality and provides sufficient information to society.

3.1.1.2. Components of tenor

Tenor denotes the social relations enacted between the interactants and the degree of emotional charge, however I also postulate that tenor relations concern the roles that come into being through language within discourse itself. To illustrate how language is related to practices that make up culture, I offer a short analysis of speech acts viewed as linguistic acts which are the building blocks of social reality (Searle [1969] 2011: 16). Following the perspective of speech acts theory, media texts reflect the type of performance that creates mental representations "[c]apable of being realised in the form of actions" (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 31). Therefore, studying media war discourse at the level of speech acts, allows one to investigate otherness as a cultural phenomenon specific to context.

The study of media practices includes as their main action an assertive, that is, commitment(s) to the truth of the stated propositions. Hence, media representations are ways of creating the cognitive representations of war. This assertonic class of action directly refers to communicating credible information through the deployment of distant entities markers, here, ODC (outside-deictic-center). The study shows that news commentaries convey

media attitudes towards the war and create the reality of here and now that is anchored in threat, uncertainty and fear. Working within the premises of speech act theory and proximisation framework, this analysis provides a useful elaboration of how otherness is projected and what lexicogrammatical choices are made to create parameters which describe the presented reality. In the study that follows, I consider the tenor features that are mapped according to the corresponding ODC selections[1]: The dataset was categorised and counted according to ODC elements and the table below shows their patterned distribution.

Table 3. ODC elements according to tenor

Category	Lexico–grammatical items
1. Noun Phrases (NPs) constructed as elements outside the deictic centre of the DS (ODCs)	[Russia / Putin / President Vladimir Putin / Moscow / Moscow's missiles/ Russia's invasion, Russia's military action, Russia's forces/ Russian attack, Russian invaders, Russian troops, Russian soldiers, Russian leader]
2. Verb Phrases (VPs) of <u>action</u> construed as markers of impact of ODCs upon IDCs	– [President Vladimir Putin was undeterred as his forces invaded on Thursday / Putin told Russian state TV he had authorized a military operation in eastern Ukraine, In the last 10 days before the invasion Putin sent out false signals / Putin repeated his position that / Putin oversaw strategic nuclear drills / delivered a message / declared war / announced his military operation] – [Russia meanwhile suspended domestic flights to and from several airports near its border with Ukraine / Russia's missiles struck Ukrainian / Russia launched its attack, massive military operation / Russia has also moved some troops] – [its troops poured across the borders, Russia's forces showed in Syria that…/ Russian missiles rained down on Ukrainian cities / Russian troops had landed / invaded] – [Moscow has mounted an assault / Moscow has described warnings of an invasion as anti-Russian hysteria / Moscow described as "false information"]

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[1] This part of the study is partly based on the findings and interpretation presented in "Mapping and Projecting Otherness in Media Discourse of the Russia Ukraine War" (Strukowska 2023).

Table 3. ODC elements according to tenor (cont.)

Category	Lexico–grammatical items
3. Verb Phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODC to deictic center	– Present Simple (are in a position to launch a full-scale invasion / wants to block / begins / aim to install "their own method of governance.") – Present (Past) Perfect tense (had made advances, had re-introduced / has partially closed / has long denied / has embarked) – Would/Could (would be rejected, would be condemned, would seek to use / could find itself facing stubborn and protracted resistance) – Gerund (-ing) (they are capable of moving swiftly across large distances, assembling floating bridges to cross rivers, and synchronising ground manoeuvres with air and drone attacks / targeting / prompting Ukrainians to flee their homes / while creating a land corridor on the southern coast / conforming the worst fears) – Past Simple (poured across / aimed to block the Ukrainian capital Kiev)

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The first group of tenor relations has been the (1.) Noun Phrases (NPs) constructed as elements outside the deictic centre of the DS (ODCs). As presented in the Table 3, the most frequently used ODC noun phrases refer to those "threatening elements" which are not only physical objects such as missiles, troops, or personalised social actors like soldiers, invaders, leader, but also include abstract concepts such as attack, invasion, or military action. All of the representational choices were assigned a Russian quality to them. As for the macro-category of otherness, the results of the present study reveal the mechanism of *objectivation* (van Leeuwen 2008: 48) realised by metonymical reference, specifically spatialisation that directly backgrounds the Russian identity which is the force of the antagonistic action against Ukraine. This strategy functions to elevate the credibility status of the media propositions, thus strengthening the verifiability and justification of the proposition advanced by news media (Hart and Fuoli 2021: 18). It ought to be noted that NPs as ODCs suggest imminent, tangible and unavoidable catastrophic future that is bound to develop.

Another category of (2.) Verb Phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of impact of ODCs upon IDCs creates a frame that implies the scope and scale of attack resulting in the construction of a spatially distributed destruction map. The VPs draw on the real and ongoing processes of devastation and terror which become the rationale for war in the future. Also, in terms of security issues, they may become triggers for legitimising the Ukrainian as well as other countries' involvement in military action in the longer perspective. This discursive frame constitutes the groundwork for creating otherness derived from *spatialisation* of conflict and its real presence. In terms of information transfer, we might see these markers that project negative future consequences.

Verb Phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODC to deictic center is the third most frequent category distinguished in the study. These findings may indicate a stronger intention of media texts to transmit information that includes high probability of developing a large-scale impact which is not only temporary, but most importantly, will have long-term consequences. In addition, some of the verb phrases at the metaphorical level are linked to the conceptual metaphor of a liquid (Kövecses 2005: 26) which spills out or spreads (Strukowska 2022: 169), thus indicating the status of the war in progress. This type of negative representations constructs a scenario that generates the anticipatory mode in the society (Dunmire 2005: 487). In response to proximising the ODC as directly and unavoidably encroaching the IDC entity (here Ukraine), the addressee may become hypervigilant and recognise this narrative as a trigger for taking prompt action as well as the reason for justifying and legitimising the actions/policies of those in power who can potentially neutralise the growing negative impact (Cap 2019: 35). Apart from this, one of the issues to consider from the legitimisation point of view, is the validation of mainstream news media content. Media texts may elicit a response which is rhetorically powerful in terms of effective persuasion, specifically, credibility of the content. Bearing in mind the fact that the main purpose of news reports involves convincing the readers to believe and accept the media propositions as well as providing factual information, establishing high-credibility content is one step in building the ideational knowledge of the society. As a result, by presenting the perspective of imminent danger and threat that is bound to escalate, proximising otherness through Verb Phrases

(VPs) of motion and directionality in this study creates potentially clear-cut interpretations that are a part of a macro-context of media practices which may span across international spaces and build the community of resilience against oppression.

Overall, what tenor relations indicate is that media discourse on the first day of the Russia Ukraine war communicates a high degree of negatively valenced emotions of fear, threat and uncertainty. Given the findings, media discourse revolves around creating otherness in terms of proximising antagonistic attitudes and values (ODCs) towards Ukraine (IDC). As can be seen from the Table 3, ODC elements, according to tenor, build the representation of otherness that does not creates a certain type of reality through linguistic expressions but also through social participation in the culturally organised and culturally interpreted larger media activities.

3.1.1.3. Components of mode

In the analysed data, mode relations deal with textual components that can be determined by coherence and informativity. The tenor-based understanding of otherness entails the type of sense-making process which is based on the patterns of causality recognised by media texts receivers. In this sense, representations of otherness are not features of texts but assumptions based on cognitive processes of text users. The causal group of relations recognised by text receivers concerns the ways in which the presented information is relevant, accessible, and adheres to context dynamics. The fact that media discourses and their narratives "[p]lay a key role in the construction, reproduction, and circulation of images of otherness, as the representations that they convey are liable to affect public opinion as well as individual orientations, intergroup relationships and policy-making decisions" (Mannarini *et al*. 2020: viii), media representations act as "fragmented" cultural forms" that are negotiated in specific communicative contexts The tenor-based part of this analysis investigates otherness related representations by means of LD parameters, aimed at identifying the information-based structures, underpinning the ways otherness issue was addressed and represented.

With reference to LD, the results demonstrated that the analysed texts had lexical density score of (53%), which exhibits a relatively high rate since the typical range of written texts spans between 36%–57% (O'Loughlin

1995: 221). These results strongly suggest a high degree of 'literacy', *i.e.*, they contain a higher number of lexical words. This observation corroborates Ure's (1971) findings that written texts usually contain a higher degree of lexical (content) words than spoken texts which operate with grammatical (function) items. Lexical density holds for a reliable indicator of text type which carries a crucial implication for organisational patterns in media discourse that consequentially serve discourse functions that allow communicativeness. News reports interaction accounts for the objective component of media discourse which is concerned with the discursive construction of otherness through shaping representations of groups, political narratives (Hamlin *et al.* 2016: 426; Mannarini *et al.* 2020: 9) that eventually contribute to the collective activation and transmission of media portrayal of war. Therefore, newspaper readers process complex units of information ('the new information') based on the 'war context' of news and create a frame through which the social reality is established. Thus, news as text type serves as a strategic organisational device of a rhetorical nature aimed to persuade and negotiate newsworthiness of events.

4. Concluding remarks

The study has offered a small-size attempt to study otherness in the discourse of the Russia-Ukraine war. Following the systemic-functional framework, this study examines media choices in the situation of the first day of the war which is the semiotic structure making up the social system. The exploration of the field focuses on the sociosemiotic space of otherness, examining the communicative event's patterned structure, particularly in online news, and shedding light on the negative patterning of the first-day media discourse. The study underscores the systematic-functional approach to language in media texts, emphasizing the role of the Ripple Effect (RE) frame in shaping the context and setting for discussions about the war. I have used the model of the sociosemiotic space of otherness that serves as analytical tools to single out patterns that pertain to the conceptual scheme.

The examination of tenor relations delves into the social interactions portrayed in media discourse, emphasizing the emotional charge and roles that language plays in constructing cultural practices Grounded in speech acts theory, the analysis has showcased how media texts function as linguistic

acts, yielding mental representations that shape the social reality. The analysis of ODC elements reveals a deliberate construction of otherness through the selection of threatening noun phrases, impactful verb phrases, and directional phrases, projecting a negative future with tangible consequences. The study highlights the persuasive power of media discourse, creating a narrative that not only conveys information but also seeks to legitimize actions and policies, thus influencing public perception.

The exploration of mode relations focuses on textual components, particularly lexical density, to understand the sense-making processes and cognitive assumptions of text users. The observed high lexical density in the analysed texts suggests a high degree of literacy and information richness, contributing to the discursive construction of otherness. The article emphasizes the role of news reports as strategic organizational devices with a rhetorical nature, shaping representations of groups, political narratives, and contributing to the collective activation and transmission of media portrayals of war.

The RE narrative is related to the transformative potential of media practice. It rests on the significant features of texts such as the: (1) legitimisation of media through high credibility (informativity) texts, (2) the globality of conflict presented through its progressive and highly dynamic power, (3) the territoriality of war reality with the focus on the immediacy of otherness. Thus RE narrative may serves as a compensatory or even a protective type of discourse which may boost social resilience. The anticipatory media action of creating alternative futures which are presented as likely to happen potentialities is a trigger to call for necessary measures to help Ukraine on he one hand but also to gather forces in case of war expansion.

A detailed look at the threefold subcategories shows the social circulation of media discourse in terms of community and language. Essentially, the 'shared meanings' of otherness originating in media texts are based on two major communication strategies: proximising and objectivising (through spatialisation) the reality. As regards the former tactic, through proximising otherness, media contribute to the impression that the terror of war is all-encompassing and the world we inhabit as free countries is getting smaller. Additionally, the sociosemiotic subcategory of *credible otherness* can be proposed, which refers to the production of public events that are accessible, believable, and newsworthy. As such, otherness representations generate

genuine forms of reality that become social facts. This observation is in accordance with van Dijk (1988: 177) who suggests that lexical choice is an aspect that plays an important role in news discourse and its production of hidden opinions or ideologies.

The representation of otherness according to the SFL perspective allowed to recognise that the media narrative is fuel for a high dynamics of war. The dynamic can potentially trigger retaliatory, enemising actions. Conversely, the media narrative can facilitate resilience mechanisms by desensitising the society through exposure to threatening elements, ultimately leading to a reduction or neutralization of threat-based representations in the long perspective. From of systemic functional linguistics view, the article has demonstrated how the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of language contribute to offering an explanation for the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine war.

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Inność w działaniu z perspektywy systemowo-funkcjonalnej: przypadek wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej

(streszczenie)

Niniejszy artykuł porusza kwestię inności, która odgrywa kluczową rolę w badaniu dyskursu medialnego na temat wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej. Bazując na założeniach lingwistyki systemowo-funkcjonalnej (SFL) Hallidaya, stanowiącej podstawę konceptualną prezentowanych analiz, przedstawiam charakterystykę istotnych cech i wzorców makrostrukturalnych, odnoszących się do funkcjonalnej struktury społeczeństwa. Opisuję przyjęte ramy badawcze analizy dyskursu medialnego, które oparte są na składnikach modelu mówienia, elementach teorii proksymizacji, teorii aktów mowy oraz siedmiu wykładnikach tekstualności. Celem jest analiza komunikacji medialnej w niespokojnych czasach wojny. Przeprowadzone badanie wskazuje na mechanizmy inności i jej społeczny wpływ. Po omówieniu przyjętego rozumienia terminów 'field', 'tenor' i 'mode', proponuję wprowadzenie kategorii *wiarygodnej inności*, która pozwala analizować praktyki stosowane przez media. Kategoria ta opiera się na weryfikowaniu treści wiadomości za pomocą strategii proksymizacji i obiektywizacji, mających na celu zmniejszenie wymiaru czasoprzestrzennego i przekazanie prawdziwych stwierdzeń. Przedstawiona analiza pokazuje, w jaki sposób media kreują inność i w jaki sposób stosowane przez nie

negatywne wizerunki Rosji tworzą konteksty dyskursywne, które mogą sprzyjać zaostrzeniu konfliktu.