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One Event, Multiple Media Frames: A Case-Based Protocol for Journalism Education

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HIGHLIGHT — CORE CONTRIBUTION

1. This study proposes a case-based analytical protocol that operationalises evidence-bounded media analytical competence for journalism education.
2. The protocol transforms comparative framing analysis into seven sequential learning operations: Observation, Attribution, Differentiation, Framing, Comparison, Interpretation, and Inferential Control.
3. The study introduces the Media Analytical Competence Matrix (MACM), a study-specific rubric comprising Frame Recognition, Source Attribution, Evaluative Differentiation, Multimodal Interpretation, and Inferential Discipline.
4. The pilot case demonstrates three pedagogically important distinctions: semantic presence is not equivalent to frame dominance; representational presence is not equivalent to communicative agency; and evaluative content is not equivalent to editorial evaluation.
5. The framework treats methodological restraint as a positive learning outcome: analytical competence is demonstrated not only by producing interpretations, but by keeping their scope proportionate to the available evidence.

Existing media literacy and framing approaches provide strong conceptual foundations for critical media analysis, yet they offer less explicit guidance on how students can move step by step from observable textual or multimodal evidence to a defensible interpretation while simultaneously identifying the point at which further inference is no longer warranted.

Abstract

This study develops and analytically pilots a case-based protocol for journalism education that operationalises media analytical competence as evidence-bounded interpretation. The protocol integrates framing analysis, source and voice attribution, evaluative differentiation, multimodal interpretation, comparative reasoning, and explicit control of inferential scope. A purposive corpus of 15 independently identifiable news publications reporting the Academy Award received by the documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* was used as the pilot case. The corpus comprised nine Ukrainian publications and six international English-language publications from the immediate post-award news cycle. Historical National Achievement was the dominant frame in eight of nine Ukrainian publications (88.9%), whereas the international subcorpus was evenly divided between War Testimony and Journalism as Witness (three publications each). More importantly for the educational design, the analysis demonstrated that semantic presence did not necessarily equal frame dominance, representational presence did not necessarily entail communicative agency, and evaluative content could not be attributed to editorial voice without identifying its communicative source. These distinctions were formalised in a seven-stage protocol: Observation, Attribution, Differentiation, Framing, Comparison, Interpretation, and Inferential Control. A study-specific Media Analytical Competence Matrix translates the protocol into five assessable dimensions: Frame Recognition, Source Attribution, Evaluative Differentiation, Multimodal Interpretation, and Inferential Discipline. The study does not claim causal improvement in student competence or psychometric validation of the rubric. Instead, it demonstrates the analytical and pedagogical feasibility of a reproducible framework in which interpretations remain traceable to observable evidence and their inferential limits are explicit.

Keywords: journalism education; media analytical competence; case-based learning; framing analysis; evidence-bounded interpretation; inferential discipline; news literacy.

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Appendix A. Analytical Coding Summary

1. Introduction

Journalism education increasingly operates in an information environment characterised by multimodal news production, platform-dependent circulation, accelerated verification demands, generative artificial intelligence, and intensified contestation over evidence. These conditions make critical media literacy necessary but insufficient for professional preparation. Future journalists must not only recognise that media representations differ; they must be able to explain how an analytical conclusion has been derived, which observable elements support it, who is responsible for evaluative propositions, and where the available evidence ceases to justify further inference.

International frameworks for journalism education have long emphasised critical thinking, research, verification, specialised literacies, and the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. UNESCO's journalism education curricula and subsequent handbooks on disinformation and media and information literacy similarly position analytical judgement, verification, and contextual understanding as core elements of professional preparation (UNESCO, 2007; Banda, 2013; Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Muratova et al., 2019). Recent

scholarship has moved further toward treating news literacy and metacognition as professional journalistic competencies rather than capacities relevant only to audiences (Johnson, 2026).

The wartime context makes these requirements particularly consequential. Research on journalism education during the Russian-Ukrainian war has identified critical thinking, information literacy, ethical judgement, digital competence, and adaptation to wartime professional conditions as important educational priorities (Fiialka & Kornieva, 2024). Ukrainian wartime media discourse also provides a particularly demanding analytical environment because professional and digital media combine documentary evidence, national and international contexts, moral evaluation, traumatic experience, strategic narratives, symbolic meaning, and competing structures of salience (Maslova, 2025, 2026b; Shulyk, 2025; Zubarieva et al., 2026).

Despite the established importance of critical thinking, media literacy, and practice-oriented learning, a persistent pedagogical problem remains: broad instructions to *analyse*, *critically evaluate*, or *identify framing* do not necessarily make the internal operations of analysis visible or assessable. Students may identify a topic and call it a frame, treat a quoted evaluation as the journalist's position, infer editorial intention from textual organisation, or make claims about audience effects without reception evidence. The problem is therefore not simply whether students interpret media texts, but whether the path from evidence to interpretation is transparent and methodologically bounded.

This study addresses that problem by developing a case-based protocol for journalism education. The protocol uses multiple news representations of one externally identifiable event as controlled comparative material and operationalises media analytical competence through evidence-bounded interpretation. The selected pilot case is news coverage of the Academy Award received by the documentary *20 Days in Mariupol*. The case is analytically productive because the core event remains stable while its journalistic contextualisation varies across outlets: the award can be organised as a historical national achievement, professional recognition, wartime testimony, journalistic witnessing, truth and memory, or a symbolically unwanted victory.

The study aims to develop and analytically pilot a case-based protocol for operationalising evidence-bounded media analytical competence in journalism education through the comparative analysis of multiple news representations of a single event. The contribution lies not in proposing framing analysis as a new method, but in transforming comparative framing analysis into a structured pedagogical sequence in which interpretative claims remain traceable to observable evidence and their inferential boundaries are explicitly stated.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Journalism Education, News Literacy, and Analytical Competence

Contemporary journalism education combines professional skills with epistemic responsibilities. Verification, contextualisation, source evaluation, transparent reasoning, and ethical judgement are not peripheral additions to news production; they shape the conditions under which journalistic claims can be treated as credible. UNESCO's journalism education initiatives explicitly connect curricular development with specialised literacies and changing technological and social environments (Banda, 2013). The handbook Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation similarly combines contextual, theoretical, and practical approaches to verification and information disorder (Ireton & Posetti, 2018).

News literacy research increasingly supports a professional rather than exclusively audience-oriented understanding of these competencies. Johnson (2026) conceptualises News Literate Journalism as a metacognitive approach grounded in reflection, regulation, and critical reasoning. This orientation is compatible with the present study because both approaches make professional reasoning itself an object of education.

Recent work on Editorial Cognitive AI Literacy has likewise argued that the preparation of future media professionals should extend beyond instrumental use of digital tools to critical evaluation, verification, epistemic awareness, and professional responsibility (Maslova, 2026a). Although the present study does not investigate artificial intelligence, it develops the same broader educational concern in a different direction: the observable analytical operations through which journalism students interpret professional media texts.

Accordingly, media analytical competence is defined here as the ability to identify, differentiate, compare, and interpret observable components of media discourse while maintaining a transparent boundary between textual or multimodal evidence and inferential claims. This definition treats analytical competence as a form of disciplined reasoning rather than as the production of increasingly expansive interpretations.

2.2. Framing Analysis as a Pedagogical Tool

Framing theory provides a suitable conceptual basis for this purpose because it directs attention to selection and salience. Entman (1993) described framing as selecting aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicative text. Scheufele (1999) subsequently systematised framing as a theory of media effects and differentiated frame building, frame setting, and related processes. De Vreese (2005) further clarified the distinction between issue-specific and generic frames and emphasised the need for transparent frame identification.

For educational purposes, the central implication is that topic and frame cannot be treated as synonyms. The presence of references to war, Ukraine, journalism, memory, or truth does not establish that any of these meanings is the dominant frame. Frame identification requires attention to the hierarchy produced by headlines, leads, recurrence, source structure, contextualisation, quotations, and multimodal components.

The present protocol therefore operationalises a sequence from semantic presence to textual salience and, only then, to frame dominance. This makes framing analysis suitable for teaching evidential reasoning rather than intuitive labelling.

2.3. Case-Based Comparison and Controlled Variation

In the Ukrainian wartime context, media analysis also requires attention to the relationship between journalistic representation, social values, and changing information practices. Shulyk (2025) emphasises the role of media in wartime value transformation and links professional journalism, media literacy, and critical thinking to the broader challenge of resisting information threats. This context supports the use of bounded comparative cases in which students can examine how a shared event is organised through different hierarchies of salience without treating those differences as direct evidence of audience effects or editorial intent.

Case-based learning is particularly useful when learners must apply conceptual knowledge to bounded situations, compare evidence, justify decisions, and reflect on the quality of their reasoning. In journalism education, a comparative case can be strengthened by holding the underlying news event relatively constant while allowing media representation to vary.

The resulting structure is one event, multiple representations, and controlled comparison. Students can compare headline construction, source selection, evaluative attribution, contextual

background, visual framing, and the distribution of communicative agency without first having to determine whether the publications refer to different events. The common event therefore functions as a methodological control that makes representational variation more observable.

The protocol developed here is not intended to produce one predetermined correct reading. Alternative classifications remain defensible where they are supported by identifiable evidence, apply the codebook consistently, and remain within explicit inferential limits.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

The study used a case-based comparative design combining qualitative media analysis with the development and analytical piloting of a structured educational protocol. In this study, analytical piloting refers to applying the protocol to a bounded media case in order to examine its internal coherence, operational clarity, and capacity to generate assessable analytical operations. The study does not use a pre-test/post-test design, a control group, or a student-performance dataset and therefore does not claim causal improvement in competence.

The analytical design was constructed around controlled variation. The external event remained constant, while the media representations differed. This allowed the protocol to isolate operations of observation, attribution, differentiation, framing, comparison, interpretation, and inferential control.

3.2. Case Selection and Corpus Construction

The pilot case concerned the Academy Award received by *20 Days in Mariupol* for Best Documentary Feature. The case was selected because it combined a clearly identifiable event with substantial variation in national, professional, wartime, journalistic, mnemonic, and evaluative contextualisation.

The corpus was constructed through purposive criterion-based sampling. The analytical unit was an individual news publication whose primary news event was the Academy Award received by the documentary. Publications were eligible when: (1) the award win constituted the primary news event rather than background for a later reaction, interview, commentary, or controversy; (2) the publication appeared within the immediate post-award news cycle of 10–12 March 2024; (3) the complete or substantially complete publication was retrievable; (4) its editorial or agency provenance could be established; and (5) it constituted an independently identifiable textual unit rather than an unmodified republication of another outlet's agency report.

Interviews, opinion columns, award-ceremony roundups, later political reactions, reports concerning the omission of the award from an international television broadcast, substantially duplicated agency texts, and institutional communications that did not function as news-media publications were excluded. Numerical symmetry between the Ukrainian and international subcorpora was not imposed because analytical comparability and source independence were prioritised over equal sample size.

The final corpus comprised 15 publications: nine Ukrainian news publications and six international English-language publications. Fourteen were coded as external outlets. The Associated Press publication was retained as an analytically useful affiliated case because AP was a co-producer of the documentary; this relationship was coded separately rather than treated as equivalent to external coverage. The composition of the final corpus is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Final purposive corpus used in the pilot analysis.

ID	Outlet	Date	Provenance	Status
U1	Suspilne Kultura	11 Mar 2024	Editorial news report	Included
U2	Detector Media	11 Mar 2024	Arthur Koldomasov	Included
U3	Ukrainska Pravda. Zhyttia	11 Mar 2024	Mariia Kabatsii	Included
U4	Telegraf	11 Mar 2024	Anton Korzh	Included
U5	Slovo i Dilo	11 Mar 2024	News report	Included
U6	hromadske	11 Mar 2024	Yaroslav Herasymenko	Included
U7	RFE/RL, Ukrainian Service	11 Mar 2024	News report	Included
U8	LB.ua	11 Mar 2024	Iryna Lysohor	Included
U9	Forbes Ukraine	11 Mar 2024	Veronika Masenko	Included
I1	The Guardian	10–11 Mar 2024	A. Pulver; C. Shoard; AP contribution	Included
I2	Deutsche Welle	11 Mar 2024	Elizabeth Grenier	Included
I3	The Kyiv Independent	11 Mar 2024	Abbey Fenbert / news desk	Included
I4	KPCW	11 Mar 2024	Parker Malatesta	Included
I5	Current	11 Mar 2024	Julian Wyllie	Included
I6	Associated Press	10–11 Mar 2024	L. Bahr; C. Weber	Included; C0=1

3.3. Unit of Analysis and Coding Framework

The unit of analysis was the individual news publication. Coding considered the headline, lead, body text, sources and quotations, represented actors, evaluative propositions, contextual information, available images and captions, and relations among headline, verbal text, and visual material.

The codebook contained eleven analytical fields. C0 recorded the outlet’s relationship to the event. C1 identified headline focus. C2 identified the dominant definition of the event. C3 recorded sources and voices. C4 differentiated communicative agency. C5 identified evaluative attribution. C6 coded the dominant frame and C7 the secondary frame. C8 recorded the relationship between visual and verbal framing. C9 identified the function attributed to journalism. C10 required an evidence-supported interpretative claim together with an explicit inferential boundary. The complete coding framework is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding framework used for the case-based protocol.

Code	Analytical question	Operational focus
C0	What is the outlet's relationship to the event?	External / institutionally affiliated
C1	What is foregrounded in the headline?	Award, Ukraine, historical first, war, Mariupol, filmmaker, journalism, truth/memory, other
C2	How is the event primarily defined?	Cinematic, national, wartime, journalistic, truth/memory, other
C3	Who is present as a source or actor?	Filmmaker/team, political actor, institution, journalist, civilian, military actor, editorial narrator, other
C4	What communicative role does each actor perform?	Speaking, quoted, paraphrased, acting, represented but silent, absent

Code	Analytical question	Operational focus
C5	Who owns the evaluation?	Editorial, direct quotation, paraphrased source, institutional, neutral/no explicit evaluation
C6	Which frame organises the publication?	Dominant frame F1–F6
C7	Which additional frame has secondary salience?	Secondary frame F1–F6 / none
C8	What does the visual component do?	Reinforces, extends, contrasts, neutral/illustrative, unavailable
C9	How is journalism represented functionally?	Witnessing, documentation, evidence, truth-telling, memory, professional achievement, information, not salient
C10	Where does the evidence stop?	Supported claim + explicitly excluded inference

3.4. Case-Specific Frame Typology

Table 3. Case-specific frame typology derived from preliminary corpus analysis and applied to the final corpus.

Frame	Operational definition
F1 Historical National Achievement	The award is organised primarily as a historic achievement for Ukraine, Ukrainian cinema, or national international visibility.
F2 Professional/Cinematic Recognition	The award is organised primarily as recognition of documentary filmmaking, directing, cinematography, or professional achievement.
F3 War Testimony	The report foregrounds the siege of Mariupol, Russian invasion, civilian suffering, destruction, and the documentary as testimony to war.
F4 Journalism as Witness	Journalists' presence, eyewitness reporting, documentation, risk, evidence production, or transmission to global audiences organises the report.
F5 Truth and Memory	The report foregrounds preserving truth, resisting forgetting, historical record, or memory.
F6 Unwanted Victory	The award is organised through the tension between prestige and the tragedy that made the film necessary.

3.5. Media Analytical Competence Matrix

The Media Analytical Competence Matrix (MACM) was developed as a study-specific educational rubric rather than a validated psychometric scale. Five dimensions are scored from 0 to 2, producing a maximum descriptive score of 10. The purpose is to make the operations expected in evidence-bounded media analysis explicit and assessable. The assessment descriptors are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Media Analytical Competence Matrix (MACM).

Dimension	0 points	1 point	2 points
Frame Recognition	No or incorrect frame identification	Plausible frame with weak evidence	Accurate frame supported by multiple textual indicators
Source Attribution	Confuses source, actor, or speaker	Identifies major sources but inconsistently differentiates roles	Accurately differentiates speaking, quoted, paraphrased, acting, and represented-but-silent roles

Dimension	0 points	1 point	2 points
Evaluative Differentiation	Treats quoted/paraphrased evaluation as journalistic evaluation	Generally identifies source but with inconsistent differentiation	Systematically attributes evaluative propositions to their communicative source
Multimodal Interpretation	Ignores or misreads visual evidence	Describes visual material without establishing its relation to the verbal frame	Analyses image, caption, headline, and text while respecting evidential status
Inferential Discipline	Makes unsupported claims about intention/effects	Uses some caveats but overextends interpretation	Keeps claims within observable evidence and explicitly states limitations

3.6. Seven-Stage Educational Protocol

The protocol was formalised as seven sequential operations: Observation, Attribution, Differentiation, Framing, Comparison, Interpretation, and Inferential Control.

Observation requires students to record retrievable features before assigning interpretative meaning. Attribution identifies speakers, actors, evaluators, and represented subjects. Differentiation separates factual propositions, quotations, paraphrases, editorial evaluation, contextual information, and multimodal evidence. Framing establishes dominant and secondary organising meanings through salience rather than lexical presence. Comparison identifies variation across representations of the same event. Interpretation integrates these observations into a theoretically meaningful claim. Inferential Control requires an explicit statement of what the available evidence does not establish.

The final stage is operationalised through paired prompts: *The available evidence supports the conclusion that…* and *The available evidence does not establish that…*.

3.7. Analytical Boundaries and Ethical Considerations

The purposive corpus is analytical rather than representative. Findings therefore describe the selected publications and are not population estimates for Ukrainian or international media. Textual analysis cannot establish editorial intention, audience reception, persuasion, psychological effects, or general newsroom policy without additional evidence.

Visual material was treated conservatively. Where the original image or caption associated with the March 2024 publication could not be established with sufficient confidence, visual coding was treated as unavailable or provisional rather than reconstructed from a later webpage state.

The case concerns war, civilian suffering, and traumatic events. In educational use, graphic imagery should not be required where the analytical operation can be completed using non-graphic material. The protocol is intended for analytical training rather than psychological exposure. If applied to student research data in subsequent studies, informed consent, anonymisation, and institutional ethics procedures should be addressed separately.

4. Results

4.1. Frame Hierarchies Across the Selected Corpus

The principal difference between the selected Ukrainian and international publications concerned not the presence or absence of particular meanings but their relative position within the hierarchy of textual salience. Historical National Achievement (F1) constituted the dominant frame in eight of the nine Ukrainian publications (88.9%). Professional/Cinematic Recognition (F2) was dominant in one publication (11.1%). In the international subcorpus, War

Testimony (F3) was dominant in three of six publications (50.0%), and Journalism as Witness (F4) was dominant in the remaining three (50.0%). The distribution of dominant frames is reported in Table 5.

These distributions do not imply that war, journalism, truth, or memory were absent from Ukrainian publications or that national significance was absent from international coverage. Instead, meanings that functioned as dominant frames in one publication frequently appeared as secondary or contextual elements in another. The principal comparative pattern was therefore hierarchical rather than exclusive.

In the Ukrainian subcorpus, references to an historical first, the first Ukrainian Academy Award, or unprecedented recognition for Ukrainian cinema frequently occupied headlines and leads. In the international subcorpus, the award was more often organised through the circumstances documented by the film: the siege of Mariupol, Russian invasion, civilian suffering, journalists' presence inside the city, and the evidential function of documentary work.

The finding demonstrates that frame presence, frame salience, and frame dominance constitute analytically distinct levels of textual prominence rather than interchangeable categories. The presence of a semantic element was insufficient to establish a frame. Frame identification required evidence that the element organised the representation through high-salience positions, recurrence, source structure, contextual information, quotations, or multimodal relations.

Table 5. Distribution of dominant frames in the selected purposive corpus.

Subcorpus	Dominant frame	n	%
Ukrainian (n=9)	F1 Historical National Achievement	8	88.9
Ukrainian (n=9)	F2 Professional/Cinematic Recognition	1	11.1
International (n=6)	F3 War Testimony	3	50.0
International (n=6)	F4 Journalism as Witness	3	50.0

4.2. Secondary Frames and Evaluative Attribution

Secondary-frame analysis demonstrated substantial semantic overlap. Historical National Achievement in the Ukrainian subcorpus frequently co-occurred with Unwanted Victory, Truth and Memory, Journalism as Witness, or War Testimony. The Unwanted Victory frame was especially visible through attributed statements by Mstyslav Chernov expressing the wish that the film had never needed to be made or the willingness to exchange the award for the absence of war.

These statements illustrate why source evaluation must be distinguished from editorial evaluation. A quotation can contribute strongly to framing without becoming the journalist's own evaluative proposition. Analytically, source evaluation acquires textual salience through editorial selection, but this process does not transform the quoted judgement into the journalist's own evaluative position. Evaluation therefore requires attribution before its evidential status can be determined.

4.3. Representational Presence and Communicative Agency

A second major pattern concerned the difference between representational presence and communicative agency. Chernov was the most consistently identifiable personalised voice

across the corpus. Filmmakers and journalists were also represented as active professional subjects who filmed, documented, witnessed, transmitted, or produced evidence.

Civilians could occupy a highly salient thematic or visual position while remaining communicatively mediated through journalists, filmmakers, institutional sources, captions, or editorial narration. Their representational importance therefore did not automatically provide them with an independent speaking position. Representational presence and communicative agency must therefore be treated as analytically distinct dimensions.

This finding does not establish deliberate editorial silencing. It identifies the distribution of communicative roles within the selected texts. Explanations of why particular sources were or were not directly voiced would require additional evidence concerning reporting conditions, source accessibility, editorial decisions, or newsroom policy.

4.4. Multimodal Evidence and Journalism Functions

Visual components could reinforce the dominant verbal frame, extend it by introducing another semantic dimension, contrast with the verbal organisation, or function primarily as illustration. Ceremonial imagery could reinforce an achievement frame, whereas imagery documenting civilian suffering or destruction could extend an award report toward War Testimony or Journalism as Witness.

The international publications were particularly productive for identifying journalism as witnessing and documentation. Journalists were represented not only as transmitters of information but as actors whose presence inside Mariupol made events observable, documentable, and communicable beyond the besieged city. Ukrainian publications also contained these meanings, although they more often occupied secondary positions relative to the historical-national significance of the award.

Because digital pages can change after publication, visual conclusions were restricted to retrievable evidence. The absence of a securely recoverable original visual was treated as a methodological limitation rather than filled through retrospective assumption.

4.5. Inferential Boundaries

The final analytical operation paired each interpretation with an explicit evidential boundary. Textual evidence can support the conclusion that a publication foregrounds the historical significance of the first Ukrainian Academy Award; it cannot establish that editors intended to generate national pride or that audiences interpreted the report in that way. Evidence can establish that war testimony or journalistic witnessing occupies a salient textual position; it cannot demonstrate that editors considered cinematic achievement unimportant.

Similarly, an institutional relationship between AP and the documentary can be established and coded, but affiliation alone does not demonstrate that it caused the observed Journalism as Witness frame. This distinction illustrates the central principle of evidence-bounded interpretation: analytical claims must remain proportionate to the evidence from which they are derived.

4.6. Pedagogical Output of the Pilot Case

The case analysis enabled the analytical process to be decomposed into seven observable operations undertaken in sequence: observation, attribution, differentiation, framing, comparison, interpretation, and inferential control. The analytical pilot demonstrated that comparative media analysis can be operationalised as a structured educational procedure rather than left as an open-ended instruction to ’analyse the text’.

The resulting competence rests on the ability to move systematically from observable evidence, through explicit analytical operations, to an evidence-bounded interpretation. The educational outcome is defined not as agreement with a predetermined interpretation but as the capacity to produce a defensible interpretation whose evidential basis and inferential limits are transparent.

5. Discussion

5.1. From Media Literacy to Evidence-Bounded Analytical Competence

The findings suggest that comparative analysis of multiple representations of one event can serve a pedagogical function extending beyond conventional media literacy tasks. Media literacy remains a necessary foundation, but professional journalism education requires students to make the reasoning behind interpretation visible. They must be able to determine how a conclusion was reached, what evidence supports it, whose communicative position is represented, and where the evidence ceases to justify further inference.

This emphasis aligns with recent work treating news literacy as a professional and metacognitive competency. Johnson (2026) argues that ethical and adaptive journalism depends on reflection, regulation, and critical reasoning. The present model adds a more granular analytical sequence for comparative media-text work. It also complements the cognitive orientation of Editorial Cognitive AI Literacy (Maslova, 2026a) by shifting attention from AI-related epistemic competence to evidence-bounded interpretation of professional media discourse.

The distinctive proposition is that analytical sophistication should be evaluated not only by the interpretative claim produced, but also by the transparency of the evidential path leading to it and by the analyst's ability to delimit what the evidence does not establish.

5.2. Framing Analysis as a Teachable Sequence

The results reinforce a central principle of framing scholarship: salience matters. For pedagogy, however, this principle must be converted into an operation that students can perform and instructors can assess. The distinction between presence, salience, and dominance makes it possible to identify why intuitive frame labelling is insufficient.

The protocol therefore does not ask students simply to locate words associated with war, nation, truth, or journalism. It requires them to establish how those meanings are positioned and repeated, which sources activate them, how they relate to the lead and headline, and whether visual evidence reinforces or extends them. Framing analysis thus becomes an evidence-tracing exercise.

The finding that the two subcorpora shared meanings but organised them differently also discourages binary interpretation. The relevant difference was not semantic exclusivity but hierarchy. This is pedagogically valuable because it trains comparative reasoning without requiring students to assign outlets to predetermined ideological categories.

5.3. Attribution and Communicative Agency as Epistemic Skills

The distinction between representation and communicative agency adds another layer to source analysis. Listing named actors is insufficient when the analytical question concerns who

is permitted to speak, who is paraphrased, who acts, and who is represented without an independent voice.

Similarly, recognising evaluation is only the first step. Students must establish its communicative ownership. Establishing communicative ownership before determining evidential status reduces the risk of attributing quoted moral or emotional language to the journalist. In professional journalism, where evaluation frequently enters news discourse through attributed speech, this distinction has direct relevance beyond the pilot case.

Attribution is therefore treated not as a mechanical identification task but as an epistemic operation: it determines which actor can legitimately be held responsible for a proposition.

5.4. Inferential Discipline as an Assessable Learning Outcome

The most distinctive component of the protocol is the explicit assessment of inferential discipline. Media analysis necessarily involves inference; the educational objective is not to eliminate it but to regulate its scope.

The paired prompts *The available evidence supports…* and *The available evidence does not establish…* transforms methodological limitation into a learning operation. It is particularly useful because analytical overreach can appear more sophisticated than careful interpretation. Claims about hidden editorial intentions, manipulation, ideology, or audience effects may sound critical while lacking an adequate evidential basis.

The protocol therefore defines evidence-bounded media analytical competence as the capacity to interpret media discourse while keeping the reach of interpretation proportionate to the evidence. This position avoids both purely descriptive analysis and unconstrained interpretation.

5.5. The Seven-Stage Protocol and MACM

The seven-stage sequence makes the internal architecture of media analysis explicit. Observation precedes interpretation; attribution establishes communicative responsibility; differentiation separates evidence types; framing organises salience; comparison introduces controlled variation; interpretation integrates evidence; and inferential control defines the limit of the claim.

MACM translates this architecture into five assessable dimensions. The matrix is not a psychometric scale and the present study does not establish its reliability or validity across cohorts. Its contribution is pedagogical transparency: broad objectives such as ’critical analysis’ are decomposed into observable performance criteria.

This design also allows alternative interpretations. High performance does not require agreement with an instructor’s preferred frame where a student can demonstrate a coherent evidential path and maintain the appropriate inferential boundary.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The protocol can be integrated into journalism, media analysis, news literacy, fact-checking, media ethics, and digital journalism courses. It is particularly suitable for seminar or practical-class formats in which students first code publications individually and then compare classifications in pairs or small groups.

A practical assignment can proceed in three phases. In the preparation phase, students receive the codebook and two or more reports of the same event. In the analytical phase, they complete C1-C10 and provide evidence for each interpretative code. In the reflection phase,

they compare disagreements, revise unsupported claims, and complete the paired inferential-boundary statements.

The protocol can also support assessment. MACM permits instructors to distinguish between a student who reaches a plausible conclusion intuitively and a student who reaches it through transparent evidence-based reasoning. This is particularly useful when generative tools can produce fluent interpretative prose without demonstrating how claims were derived.

The approach is compatible with wartime journalism education because it allows ethically sensitive material to be analysed without requiring graphic exposure. The learning objective is methodological: students learn to trace evidence, voice, evaluation, framing, and inferential limits.

The framework is also transferable in principle to other bounded events, including elections, crises, public-health announcements, environmental disasters, scientific developments, sports controversies, and AI-related news. Such transferability, however, remains a proposition for future validation rather than an empirical result of the present pilot.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. First, the corpus is small and purposively selected. Its function is to provide controlled comparative material for protocol development rather than statistical representation of Ukrainian or international news systems.

Second, the two subcorpora are numerically unequal. This was a deliberate consequence of criterion-based sampling and the exclusion of syndicated duplicates, genre-incompatible texts, later reactions, and institutional communications. Percentages are therefore descriptive within each subcorpus and should not be used for population inference.

Third, the case-specific frame typology was derived for this corpus. F1-F6 should not be treated as a universal frame inventory. Application to another event requires renewed frame identification and may produce different categories.

Fourth, some digital visual components cannot be reconstructed with certainty in their original March 2024 form. Visual analysis was therefore conservative and should not be treated as exhaustive.

Fifth, the present study pilots the protocol analytically rather than evaluating learning gains in a student cohort. No claims are made that the protocol improves competence, and MACM has not been psychometrically validated. Future research should apply the protocol with journalism students using transparent sampling, ethics procedures, multiple coders, and, where appropriate, pre/post or comparative designs.

Further research should examine inter-rater agreement for both frame coding and MACM assessment, the types of analytical error most frequently produced by students, the transfer of inferential discipline to unfamiliar cases, and the relationship between evidence-bounded reasoning and professional journalistic decision-making. Cross-linguistic and multimodal applications would also test the portability of the framework.

8. Conclusions

This study developed and analytically piloted a case-based protocol for operationalising evidence-bounded media analytical competence in journalism education. A comparative corpus of 15 news publications concerning the Academy Award received by *20 Days in Mariupol* provided controlled variation through which framing, source attribution, evaluative differentiation, communicative agency, multimodal evidence, and inferential limits could be made observable.

The media analysis demonstrated three distinctions of particular pedagogical importance. First, semantic presence did not equal frame dominance: meanings shared across publications occupied different positions in their hierarchies of salience. Second, representational presence did not equal communicative agency: actors could be highly visible while remaining mediated rather than independently voiced. Third, evaluative content did not equal editorial evaluation: the communicative source of evaluation had to be established before interpretative responsibility could be assigned.

These distinctions were formalised in a seven-stage protocol: Observation, Attribution, Differentiation, Framing, Comparison, Interpretation, and Inferential Control. The accompanying Media Analytical Competence Matrix operationalises five assessable dimensions: Frame Recognition, Source Attribution, Evaluative Differentiation, Multimodal Interpretation, and Inferential Discipline.

The principal contribution of the framework lies in pedagogically integrating established analytical practices around evidential control. It treats analytical competence not as the capacity to generate the broadest possible interpretation, but as the capacity to produce a theoretically meaningful interpretation whose evidential basis is transparent and whose inferential limits are explicitly recognised.

The model therefore reframes methodological restraint as a positive learning outcome. In an information environment increasingly characterised by rapid interpretation, multimodal content, platform mediation, and automated text generation, the ability to know both what evidence supports and what it does not establish is a core competence for future media professionals.

Disclosure

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Appendix A. Analytical Coding Summary

ID	C0	Dominant frame	Secondary frame	Evaluation	Journalism function
U1	0	F1	F5	Direct quotation + limited editorial	Truth/memory
U2	0	F2	F4	Quoted/neutral	Professional achievement
U3	0	F1	F6	Direct quotation	Truth-telling
U4	0	F1	F6	Direct quotation	Professional achievement
U5	0	F1	F4	Direct quotation	Documentation
U6	0	F1	F6	Direct quotation	Truth/memory
U7	0	F1	F6	Direct quotation	Truth-telling
U8	0	F1	F3	Quoted/neutral	Documentation
U9	0	F1	F5	Direct quotation	Truth/memory
I1	0	F3	F4	Quoted + editorial contextualisation	Witnessing/documentation
I2	0	F4	F3	Quoted/neutral	Witnessing/documentation
I3	0	F3	F6	Direct quotation	Documentation

ID	C0	Dominant frame	Secondary frame	Evaluation	Journalism function
I4	0	F3	F4	Quoted/neutral	Witnessing/documentation
I5	0	F4	F2	Quoted/institutional	Professional achievement/documentation
I6	1	F4	F3	Quoted/institutional	Witnessing/documentation/professional achievement