

Teaching Critical Thinking Against the Background of Basic Linguistic Research on the Lexis of Crisis Communication in Opinion-forming Mass Media

Petra JESENSKÁ

petra.jesenska@umb.sk

<https://www.ff.umb.sk/pjesenska/>

Matej Bel University
SLOVAKIA

FLORENCE: NOVEMBER 2023



FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
UNIVERZITA MATEJA BELA V BANSKEJ BYSTRICI

SK EN RU

Rychle odkazy



UMB

O FAKULTE

KATEDRY

UCHÁDZAČI

ŠTÚDIUM

VEDA A VÝSKUM

MEDZINÁRODNÁ SPOLUPRÁCA

KONTAKT

**Katedra anglistiky a
amerikanistiky**



Contents

1. The Aim of the Paper: the Turn from Teacher-Centred Activities to Learner-Centred Approaches

2. Methods

2.1 Research Aims and Definitions of Terms

2.2 Data collection

2.3 The Guardian

3. Research Description, Explanation and Comparison of Results

4. Discussion and Conclusions

References



1. The aim of the paper

- is to map **the turn from teacher-centred activities to learner-centred approaches** on a concrete example of cooperation between a supervisor and her BA student when working on her final bachelor thesis focused linguistically;
- to **encourage and increase an autonomous approach and self-confidence** of a student;
- to make her see **she can manage herself** – to **face challenges** of various kind (time management, problem-solving, project-based learning, to support her academic reasoning etc.) → this does not mean she is left on her own fate → as her **teacher leads / manage/ facilitate / ... her**



2. Methods how to achieve this

Cooperation betw. supervisor and her English language student based on mutual trust and open mindset towards new ideas when writing final BA thesis on *lexis of crisis communication in quality papers* against the background of basic linguistic research to make student apply critical thinking on the current issue of Russia's invasion to Ukraine:

- finding appropriate literature,
- setting objectives,
- defining basic terms in the linguistic context,
- data collection from preselected newspaper (*The Guardian*),
- Data processing (observation, excerption, filtering, sorting, description, analysis, explanation, comparison, interpretation, taking a stance and expressing an opinion)

2.1 Research Aims and Definitions of Terms

- teacher-learner cooperation: a fact-finding mission in a library and to define terms and contextualize them within a general linguistic topic;
- a must to explain and define terms such as *lexis and lexis crisis communication*;
- *lexis* acc. to Jesenská (2019) is the interrelated system of vocabulary in the form of words, expressions, and syntagmas → in other words: they constitute mutually well-related system of free (lexical and functional) morphemes and lexical units;
- Genčiová (2020) explains *lexis crisis communication* as sharing information on any crisis situation (be it war, pandemic situation, migration waves or climate changes) among authorities, mass media or individual interlocutors;
- for the context of the bachelor thesis, other significant terms had to be defined and explained as well → due to the limits of this paper, we refrain from presenting them in this presentation/study (synonymy, lexical stylistic devices – metaphor, irony, eu/dysphemism, etc., journalistic style, functional language style, etc.);
- the next objective was to find out frequency of ‘war’ lexis and analyse its synonyms and stylistic devices followed with findings word-formation processes which the lexeme ‘war’ undergoes.

2.2 Data Collection

- the collection of relevant data was excerpted from the reliable British daily in the first phase of research;
- *Sketch engine* (the specific research corpus tool for processing the data) was important in the second phase of research;
- all excerpted war-related articles from *the Guardian* had to be inserted into the tool and processed in accordance with criteria that were predetermined.

2.3 The Guardian

the British newspaper *The Guardian* was chosen as a reliable and globally accessible source of data due to the other several significant criteria:

- the British quality daily with a long historical tradition reporting on current issues such as migration crisis, pandemic situation of Covid-19 and/or ongoing Russia's war;
- in aforementioned issues the daily has set up a separate column and/or section for quick accessibility to the readership;
- the rubric *Ukraine invasion* has its firm place among other current headlines and sections;
- it also places a high value on the quality of work, verification of information and credible investigative reporting.

3. Research Description, Explanation and Comparison of Results

- the time framework (observing and excerpting the data from *the Guardian*) → limited to the two weeks with an interval of one year:
- the war-related articles were excerpted:
 - from Feb. 24th to March 2nd, 2022 (1 week)
 - and
 - from Feb. 24th until March 2nd, 2023 (1 week);
- the student's aim was: to map the synonyms of lexeme 'war' and to find out and analyse the collocations incl. the examined lexeme together with metaphors in selected articles and process it by the means of Sketch Engine;
- the amount of data was enormous in both years

Table 1 Quantitative data analysis in *the Guardian*
(data taken from [8] and [3])

The Guardian	No of articles	No of words in total	No of norm pages	Frequency of lexeme 'war'	Other lexemes found in Sketch engine with high frequency functioning as synonyms to 'war'
2022	358	297.061	1.005	884x	Ukraine 2.384x, Russia 2.063x, Putin 1.342x
2023	69	65.910	223	396x	invasion 146x, conflict 80x, attack 59x, aggression 32x
In total	427	362.971	1.228	1.280x	

Table 2 Qualitative data analysis in *the Guardian*
(data taken from [8] and [3])

The Guardian: lexical stylistic devices	Dysphemism	Simile	Synecdoche (metonymy)	Metaphor
2022	'...Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is an unprovoked outrage and a heinous violation of international law...'	'...of Blaming Nato and the EU for Putin's invasion of Ukraine is like blaming a child for a bully attacking him when the kid says he'd like to join his mates as a member of the local football club.'	(totum pro parte) 'This is Putin's war, not Russia's, but how can Russia speak? ' (pars pro toto) ' dipped their hands in the blood of Putin's war '	'Ukraine invasion: How Vladimir Putin built his career on waging war - The Russian president's career is steeped in blood '
2023	'António Guterres, said Russia's invasion one year ago had brought " living hell " to the Ukrainian people through "widespread death, destruction and displacement".'	'Even before Russia's full-scale invasion, I often heard people refer to Ukraine as Europe's backyard .'	'... the Kremlin wheeled out children ...'	'Putin's genocidal war is turning my country into a graveyard '

Table 3 Lexical stylistic devices (quantitative analysis) in *the Guardian*
(data taken from [8] and [3])

The Guardian: lexical stylistic devices	Yr 2022	Yr 2023
Euphemism	249	50
Metaphor	6	2
Dysphemism	4	2
Personification	2	2
Hyperbole	3	0
Synecdoche pars pro toto	3	0
Synecdoche totum pro parte	1	0
Rhetorical Question	1	0
Simile	1	1
Irony	1	0
Total	271	57

Table 4 Word-formation processes of 'war' : derivation and compounding
(data taken from [8] and [3])

The Guardian: WFPs						
2022	'war' 888x	'anti-war' 33x	'post-war' 14x	'pro-war' 2x	'cyber-war' 2x	'pre-war' 1x
2023	'war' 396x	'anti-war' 13x	-	-	-	'pre-war' 4x

Other words including the morpheme 'war' were also found in the corpus in 2022 and in 2023: *warfare*, *warship(s)*, *warplanes*, *warheads*, *warmonger*, *wartime*, *war-torn*, *war-winning*, *war-hit*, *war-era*, and *warrior(s)* [3], [8] → majority of those were coined by means of compounding when putting together two free morphemes (*wartime*, *warheads*, etc.).

In total, for both years, 15 cases of **derivation** and 10 cases of **coumpounding** were found.

Discussion and Conclusion:

- the paper describes the cooperation between the supervisor and her English language student based on mutual trust and open mindset towards new ideas when writing final BA thesis on *lexis of crisis communication in quality papers* against the background of basic linguistic research to make student apply critical thinking on the current issue of Russia's invasion to Ukraine.;
- this aim was to achieve by the following steps: finding appropriate literature, setting objectives, defining basic terms in the linguistic context, data collection from preselected newspaper (*The Guardian*), data processing (observation, excerption, filtering, sorting, description, analysis, explanation, comparison, interpretation, taking a stance and expressing an opinion);
- the BA student working on her bachelor thesis made very good use of this opportunity to learn skills she did not know before;
- she was able to set objectives, identify and observe chosen phenomena in selected newspaper, process collected data by means of quantitative and qualitative analysis when applying Sketch engine tool, classify, order, sort out, compare, etc.;
- her problem-solving skills got improved by using creativity, cognition, and academic approach;
- she has to be able manage her time and work;
- and though following her supervisor's advice step by step, it was not always properly understood;
- however, the point is not to write a flawless thesis, but to find her own path during the process of learning when keep on trying;
- her statistics was too simplistic (see tables 1, 3, and 4) because she did not apply the frequency per million words – in that case the data from 2022 would be comparable to the date from 2023
- also her potential to recognize all WFPs and lexical stylistic devices was not adequate enough;
- in this she still had shortcomings;
- however, she worked hard indeed, to face all research challenges herself bravely and conscientiously. She became capable to read native speakers' newspapers on current issues, take a clear stance and form an opinion, come to conclusions, present and defend her thoughts and ideas in the academic English in front of university defense committee composed of her university teachers, and accept attitudes of others. After reading her supervisor's and opponent's reviews, she managed to prepare for her defense as well as possible;
- and she was successful, as the aim is not to be perfect, but to follow academic ethics and keep on effort;
- the decision to shift the focus and responsibility of the work from the teacher to the student was ultimately a good one for both parties involved.

Bachelor thesis

LEXIS CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Bakalárska práca
e62e176-38df-4631-a130-f4d29f28327d

Študijný program: Učiteľstvo akademických predmetov
Študijný odbor: Učiteľstvo anglického jazyka a literatúry a učiteľstvo filozofie a občianskej náuky
Školiace pracovisko: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Vedúci bakalárskej práce: doc. PaedDr. Petra Jesenská, PhD.

Banská Bystrica, 2023

Alena Samsonová

Table of contents

Introduction..... 10

1. THEORETICAL PART..... 11

 1.1 Lexis..... 11

 1.2 Lexical Stylistic Devices..... 15

 1.3 Crisis Communication..... 17

2. PRACTICAL PART..... 20

 2.1 Aim of the Research..... 20

 2.2 Research Methods..... 20

 2.3 Subject Matter..... 21

 2.4 Research Process..... 21

 2.5 *The Guardian* Daily..... 22

 2.5.1 The Year 2022..... 22

 2.5.2 The Year 2023..... 29

 2.6 *Denník N* Daily..... 33

 2.6.1 The Year 2022..... 33

 2.6.2 The Year 2023..... 38

 2.7 Comparison..... 40

 2.8 Discussion..... 44

Conclusion..... 46

Resumé..... 48

Bibliography..... 50

Introduction

The past year has been marked by a destructive war that affected not only the countries primarily involved in it but also the rest of the world. The news of the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces hit the news all around the world early in the morning of February 24th, 2022, and ever since then the world of Ukrainian people has been turned upside down. We decided to focus on this subject matter because we feel it is currently one of the most important topics discussed in all the media platforms, which makes it relevant and provides us with large quantity of different articles to choose from for our analysis.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to observe, excerpt, analyse and compare chosen English and Slovak electronic media articles concerning the war in Ukraine after the Russian invasion in 2022, putting emphasis on the lexeme *war* in different collocations. The prime focus is its synonyms, use of lexical stylistic devices and word formation processes. The analysis is conducted in two time frames, specifically the first week of the war in the year 2022 and a week year after the war has started on two electronic media platforms, namely *The Guardian* and *Denník N*.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter is the theoretical part, further divided into three subchapters in which we provide the theoretical information necessary for our analysis, such as the definition of lexis, lexicology, semantics, stylistics, lexical stylistic devices and the discourse of crisis communication.

The second chapter is the analytical part, divided into eight subchapters in which we provide the thesis aims, methods, the subject matter, the process in which the analysis was conducted and its results. After that we compare the results of both time frames as well as both media platforms and begin the discussion.

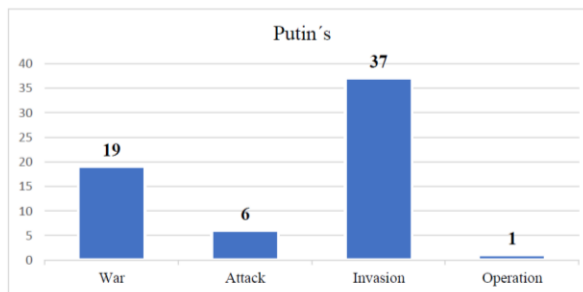
out the terms that were not semantically closely related. The results can be seen in the *Figure 1* below.



Figure 1 - *The Guardian* 2022 – Thesaurus: war (Sketch Engine)

The total amount of occurrences the term *war* has been mentioned as a noun during the first week in *The Guardian*'s articles is 884. Out of 67 results which thesaurus provided as its synonyms, only 13 were related in meaning. Those are (arranged from the most to least frequent): *Ukraine* with 2 384 results, *Russia* with 2 063 results, *Putin* with 1 342 results, *invasion*, *attack*, *conflict*, *crisis*, *aggression*, *operation*, *strike*, *assault*, *fighting*, *offensive*. If we were talking about different kind of war, results such as *Ukraine*,

In contexts, where a possessor – in this case *Putin*, was used with the synonyms, we found the number of contexts as seen in the *Graph 1* below.



Graph 1 - *The Guardian* 2022 – Word Sketch Difference: Putin's (own research)

The contexts from the graph above provided examples of one dysphemism, one simile, one personification, two metaphors, one rhetorical question, and two uses of metonymy

Word	Frequency ? ↓
1 war	888 ***
2 anti-war	33 ***
3 postwar	13 ***
4 pro-war	2 ***
5 cyberwar	2 ***
6 war-war	1 ***
7 pre-war	1 ***
8 post-war	1 ***

Figure 2 - *The Guardian* 2022 – Wordlist: ending in -war (Sketch Engine)

References

- [1] CRYSTAL, D. 2010. *English as a Global Language. Second Edition*.
- [2] HARAKCHIYSKA, T. (ed.) 2018. *Learner-Centred Teaching Manual – a training pack for university teaching staff*. Brno: Masaryk University, 240 pp. ISBN 978-80-210-9058-3 (online: pdf).
- [3] SAMSONOVÁ, A. 2023. *Lexis Crisis Communication*. Banská Bystrica: 2023, 51pp. [Bachelor Thesis].
- [4] HOMOLOVÁ, E. – ŠTULAJTEROVÁ, A. 2022. Development and implementation of soft skills in English lessons during online teaching. In: *Innovation in language learning : conference proceedings, 15. international conference: hybrid edition*.
- [5] HOMOLOVÁ, E. 2021. Učiteľské roly v kontexte jazykovej edukácie dospelých učiacich sa. In: *Teória a prax prípravy budúcich translatológov a učiteľov anglického jazyka 3.: zborník recenzovaných príspevkov z Medzinárodnej online konferencie konanej v dňoch 8.-9. septembra 2021* (ed. Anna Slatinská)/ *Theory and Practice of the Preparation of Future Translation and English Language Teachers 3: Proceedings of the International Online Conference held on 8-9. september 2021*.
- [6] JESENSKÁ, P. 2019. *English Vocabulary Stratification*.
- [7] GENČIOVÁ, A. 2020. *Krízová komunikačná sféra a sociopragmatické determinanty mediálne stvárňovaného komunikátu*.
- [8] *Guardian, (The)*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/international> (01/05/2023).

The study was supported by financial support from the Slovak grant *Lexicogenetic Potential of Media Political Discourse on the Crisis VEGA 1/0748/21*.



Thank you for your attention

