

# PERCEPTION OF WAR THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN LINGUISTIC AND SEMANTIC LIGHT

*Solomiia Albota, PhD, Associate professor at the Applied Linguistics Department, Lviv Polytechnic National University  
solomiia.m.albota@lpnu.ua*

# Social and linguistic representation of russian aggression



The most common notion is linguistic image of the world regarding such sources of incoming information as feelings, intelligence and willingness as well as approaches to their digital language processing tools

Culture may be regarded as the highest level of language representation while text is a point of interaction, intersection of linguistic and cultural levels. In social media news comments are textually the most convenient to study in terms of real talks and conflict resolution strategies mode

**The purpose of the study** – to reveal social and linguistic representation of war implications based on such social community as Reddit considering its comments and applying semantic analysis to them with the emphasis on linguistic markers identifying psychological and linguistic features within the linguistic interpretation and LIWC-22 textual analysis

# LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF WAR IN REDDIT SOCIAL NETWORK PLATFORM

The Reddit social media (<http://www.reddit.com>) – basis for the linguistic analysis – the verbal reveal of war implications is to be highlighted in both Internet discourse (real discussions are held in Megathread rubric [https://www.reddit.com/r/europe/comments/x4zvtv/war\\_in\\_ukraine\\_megathread\\_xlii/](https://www.reddit.com/r/europe/comments/x4zvtv/war_in_ukraine_megathread_xlii/) pointing at variety of comments) and Media discourse (posts with news feed about War in Ukraine Megathread)

We adhere to the social comments in Reddit which we treat as positive and negative ones, even separate cognitive processes are included

Some comments evoke aggravating mode of conflict between users thus making the debate intense, which can be seen in multiple comment replies (Fig. 1)





# LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF WAR IN REDDIT SOCIAL NETWORK PLATFORM

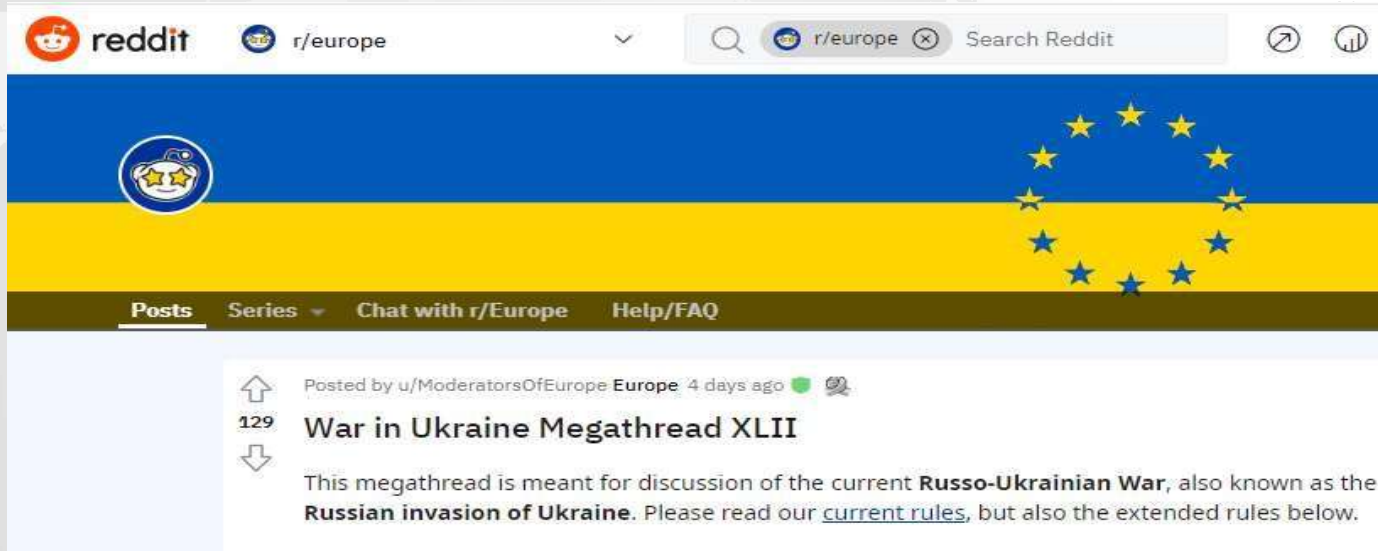
Even if in Reddit social networks we are not aware of people – users – whether they are mostly foreigners or not – but we may trace common social media perception of war and its consequences for the whole world society

Current Ukrainian situation has changed the linguistic investigation of war paradigm in social networks

One of the tasks – to unfold common cultural senses combining them with modern digital communities varying them



# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR



The emphasis is made not only on the phenomenon of war in Ukraine but also on its consequences for the world social community (Fig. 2)

We apply linguistic and semantic analysis in order to introduce semantic fields identifying their tone of statement with linguistic markers of implicitness or explicitness (provided in brackets after examples)

# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

1. **Positive emotions:** *So they just have to wait* (explicitness of hope for negotiation and resolution of war), *sightings of a large amount of (damaged) Russian armor in the Belgorod oblast* (explicitness of gains in war), *The observed tanks move without assistance. Could be a repair base* (explicitness of “no more war promotion”), *pictures of Ukrainian forces with some fairly interesting octocopters. One seems to be packing a large IED, another carries mortar rounds on a carousel, while a third appears to carry two disposable AT4 launchers* (explicitness of Ukrainian army combat operations), *We survived that winter and every winter after* (explicitness of gains in war), *And yet, the predictions are for a winter warmer than the average one* (explicitness of better conditions during war period)..
2. **Positive emotions:** *unless the Russian leadership collapses Ukrainian army gets stronger with each passing month* (explicitness of hope for “ideal” victory in Russian-Ukrainian war); *it seemed unlikely that Ukraine can withstand a full-scale Russian invasion, yet here we are* (explicitness of real physical strength of the nation and implicitness of adamant morale), *Ukraine has adapted now* (implicitness of long-term escalation); *Kyiv is extremely well protected with air defences now too* (explicitness of foreign assistance); *have LOADS of generators everywhere now* (explicitness of foreign assistance); *They're about to have patriot in place to take down ballistic missiles soon too* (explicitness of foreign assistance)...

# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

1. **Negative emotions** :*Its literally wait out west* (implicitness of living on someone else's behalf, explicitness of hope for help, helplessness), *Even the rosy "everything's fine" projection shows three years of recession, the more likely scenario is a decade of stagnation* (explicitness of economic decline), *recent data that shows a net 210k emigration loss in the past half year* (explicitness of instability), *Most likely the majority is highly skilled workers leaving for greener pastures* (explicitness of personnel losses), *8 years later..nothing really changed, no glorious russian industry emerged* (explicitness of unreasonable promises, opponent's propaganda), *after 2014 they tried russia made machines for few years and they just broke evrey other week* (explicitness of insecurity of opponent's equipment, promises in vain), *russian industry don't really use any russian machinery as it really unreliable and considerd low quality, it is just big hollow words but nothing actually going to be changed* (explicitness of unreasonable promises, opponent's propaganda), *unless russia will start her own version of eurovision with Syria,sudan ,iran and then we really all doomed* (implicitness of helplessness), *Sounds like convulsions of desperation* (implicitness of helplessness), *Many of our soldiers died back then* (explicitness of loss, victims)...

## SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

2. **Negative emotions:** *pro-Ukrainian people state that even if Ukraine wins the war militarily, it might be forced via diplomatic means to let go of either Crimea or Donbass, in order for true peace to ensue (explicitness of truce under unfair conditions, implicitness of territory deprivation perspectives); The Russian army keeps declining but only 9 countries stated that they explicitly support return to 1991 borders. And the US is not one of them (explicitness of support without world country №1), Ukrainian power grid and supply is very much decentralized now (explicitness of combat operations); They still lob unguided MLRS rockets at Kherson and Kharkiv though (explicitness of combat operations); Attack on 16.02 had 44 cruise missiles (explicitness of combat operations); Before that on 10.02 they launched over 70 cruise missiles (explicitness of combat operations)...*



# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

- 1. Cognitive processes:** *What's Russia's long-term plan* (negative tone, implicitness of a dead-end, duration of destruction), *Cutting gas means that their economy will collapse even faster* (negative tone, explicitness of irreversible consequences of war, duration of destruction), *They can allow themselves to wage this war* (negative tone, implicitness of chief figures, unfair course of military action), *They have means, they have money* (negative tone, explicitness of opponent upper hand), They know that **western politics change**, and with it – **policies change** (negative tone, implicitness of “where the wind is blowing” principle, unfair new rules), *The south Vietnamese government was never really functional, the state itself was always close to collapse, very different to Ukraine* (positive tone, explicitness of better results and future for Ukraine), *That's some crazy growth after Russia cut off the gas deliveries. Is Russia even needed anymore?* (negative tone, explicitness of opponent’s unnecessary being in the world arena), *Ruskyi Mir is back. Also war is peace* (negative tone, explicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *basically they'll be promoting their culture to their client "states"* (negative tone, implicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *In other words, Putin devised a masterful strategy of preaching to the choir* (negative tone, implicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *regressives and conservatives are actually agents of the Kremlin now!* (negative tone, explicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *Protection of "traditional Russian spiritual and moral values."* *And Familiarizing the international community with Russia's historical and cultural heritage – So serfdom, corruption, and a galaxy sized sense of victimhood* (negative tone, explicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *still need some preparations and a couple of parts for amphibious mode* (negative tone, explicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda), *Judging from the previous Russian fording attempts organising that is beyond current Russian organisational capabilities* (negative tone, implicitness of imposition and opponent’s propaganda).....

# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

2. Cognitive processes: *having only a Russian citizenship can be a death sentence* (implicitness of negative attitude to the enemy belongings); *realistically speaking, how likely is it for Ukraine to formally return all of its territory back under its control?* (explicitness of evaluative attitude of the users), *looks like problematic enough for Russians to worry about* (explicitness of enemy's irresistibility); *any real signs of this to happen?* (explicitness of doubtful combat operations); *seems extremely unlikely* (explicitness of doubtful combat operations); *did the ruzzkis give up on randomly firing rockets into Ukraine cities?* (explicitness of user's military unawareness)

# SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS ON WAR

The results are statistically demonstrated by such a textual analysis toolkit as Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22, <https://www.liwc.app/demo-results/>), (Fig. 3)

Traditional LIWC Dimension	Your Text	Average for Social Media Language
I-words (I, me, my)	0.99	5.44
Positive Tone	1.36	5.93
Negative Tone	2.22	2.34
Social Words	5.92	6.74
Cognitive Processes	12.33	8.86

It is obvious to apprehend the social representation of war implications as negative human experience and world disaster

# TABLE OF FREQUENCY OF LWIC-22 AUTOMATIC TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE REDDIT COMMENTS CONCERNING WAR

Some of the analyzed statements are considered user's recollection of the combat actions back in 2014 which have also been related to the consequences of the war

There are lots of phrases with figurative meaning dwelling on implicitness of the opponent's bad luck or military mishap. In particular, within the semantic field of cognitive processes, there are often rhetorical questions and direct questions which turn live conversations into aggravating dialogues mostly with threatening or rude statements

The more extended the comment section gets, the more "unnecessary" news debate there we can allocate – war implications involve other countries' political system and its discussion. Either within such semantic field as negative emotions or cognitive processes, we may still "feel" the essence of opponent's propaganda and imposition among the Internet users, which is impossible to put up with in independent Ukraine

<b>Social Rubrics</b>	<b>Positive Emotions</b>	<b>Negative Emotions</b>	<b>Cognitive Processes</b>
<b>The Reddit War in Ukraine Megathread</b>	1.36	2.22	12.33
<b>Other Social Media</b>	5.93	2.34	8.86

# Conclusion



Social, psychological, cognitive features within the Reddit textual content, social and linguistic representation of russian aggression and its consequences were identified and interpreted

Deep senses of the social perception of war and its consequences for the world – human willingness to overcome the opponent’s obstacles and live freely in their independent territories

Such approach as linguistic interpretation of comments to the posts was applied based on determined implicit and explicit linguistic markers. All linguistic results were proved statistically by LIWC-22 textual analysis toolkit

The perspective – to compare the psycholinguistic perception of war in the *Reddit* incorporating linguistic research, in particular cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, with other social media.