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Syntactic strategies for verbalising communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse

Sintaksinės strategijos komunikacinių ketinimų raiškai
karo laikotarpio politiniame žiniasklaidos diskurse

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Abstract

The article presents a comprehensive study of syntactic strategies for verbalising communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse. The research material consists of Ukrainian, Russian and English-language media texts from the period 2022–2025. Syntactic strategy is conceptualised as an intentionally determined model of sentence organisation that integrates linguistic competence, cognitive attitude, and socio-political context to achieve strategic influence on the audience. The study systematises types of communicative intentions and examines their realisation across different language systems, taking into account typological differences between Slavic (Ukrainian and Russian) and Romance–Germanic (English) linguistic models. Particular attention is paid to a comparative analysis of syntactic mechanisms used to encode communicative intentions in these languages. The analysis reveals that in Slavic languages, communicative intentions are primarily realised through flexible sentence word order and topical segmentation (theme–rheme organisation), which enables dynamic reconfiguration of informational focus via inversion and parcelisation. In contrast, in English, due to a relatively fixed SVO sentence structure, the expression of communicative intentions is predominantly achieved through lexical and grammatical means, including modal verbs, performative constructions, and syntactic parallelism. The results demonstrate that syntax in wartime political media discourse functions not merely as a structural level of language, but as a strategic resource for persuasion, mobilisation, and legitimisation of political action. The proposed framework outlines a four-stage model of syntactic strategy formation, ranging from motivational emergence in a wartime context to final verbal realisation with a predictable illocutionary effect. The findings may be applied in the fields of discourse analysis, media linguistics, translation studies, and strategic communication research.

KEYWORDS: wartime political media discourse, communicative intention, syntactic strategy, sentence word order, verbalisation, discourse analysis.

Introduction

The global community in the 21st century faces numerous military conflicts that cause human suffering and the death of military personnel and civilians (Anselmo et al., 2024). Resolving or preventing these conflicts, as well as their escalation, largely depends on the verbalisation of peace-related communicative intentions by political and military figures, i.e. in the discursive space where the positions of actors in international relations are constructed, transmitted and interpreted through linguistic means (Hasan, 2025; Berezovenko, 2025; Demska, 2024). The conceptual linguostylistic foundations of contemporary theoretical and practical research form a coherent system aimed at studying the means of linguistic expression of the speaker's communicative intention (Halasa, 2024; Demyanchuk, 2024). Syntactic units require special attention in this context, since at the present stage of linguistic development, syntax functions within the communicative paradigm, which encompasses the analysis of speech by both the speaker and the addressee, the message, the context, the specifics of communicative contact and information coding, as well as changes in the semantic and emotional evaluative semantics of linguistic units (Halasa, 2024).

The verbalisation of the speaker's communicative intention is determined by their level of linguistic competence and the parameters of the specific communicative situation (Hasan, 2025). Political narratives articulated by leaders acquire particular significance during periods of military confrontation. Since 2022, the Russian–Ukrainian war has remained an ongoing armed conflict in Eastern Europe and one of the largest-scale military confrontations in the region in the contemporary period (Berezovenko, 2025; Makhortykh et al., 2025). Political and military leaders, analysts, historians, military personnel and civilians, verbalising military events, are active participants in the contemporary discursive process (Putra & Gulo, 2025). In this context, syntactic means play a leading role in the process of verbalising communicative intentions, demonstrating increased relevance compared to other linguistic levels (Rofiq & Sahrebanu, 2025).

The research aim is to describe and systematise the means of verbalising political figures' communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse through sentence word order, and to conceptualise syntactic strategies as sets of linguistic means for achieving communicative goals at the level of communicative intention.

Communicative Syntax and Information Structure

Theoretical Background

A sentence, as the basic syntactic unit of speech, constitutes the primary communicative unit through which the speaker organises, structures, and conveys information.

While the semantic organisation of a sentence determines its propositional content, its communicative organisation establishes the hierarchy of information according to the communicative situation, the interlocutors' background knowledge, and the speaker's communicative intention. Consequently, the communicative structure of a sentence enables the speaker to distribute informational prominence and guide the addressee's interpretation of the utterance (Vykhovanets, 1993; Aribzhanova, 2019, 2020).

Within communicative syntax, a sentence is regarded not merely as a formal grammatical construction but as a communicatively organised whole whose informational structure is realised through the interaction of theme and rheme. Functional sentence perspective explains how information is distributed within an utterance and demonstrates that the communicative structure does not necessarily coincide with grammatical structure: the theme is not always expressed by the grammatical subject, whereas the rheme frequently concentrates around the predicate as the informational centre of the utterance (Aribzhanova, 2020; Vykhovanets, 1993).

Sentence word order constitutes one of the principal mechanisms for expressing communicative structure. It serves not only to organise syntactic relations but also to indicate informational prominence, emphasise semantically significant elements, and realise the speaker's communicative intention. Depending on communicative goals, sentence constituents may be rearranged to strengthen emotional, evaluative, imperative, or persuasive meanings, thereby increasing the pragmatic effectiveness of the utterance (Zagnitko, 2001; Aribzhanova, 2019).

The communicative potential of sentence word order is further reinforced through its interaction with intonation, which specifies semantic focus, strengthens emphasis, and contributes to the pragmatic interpretation of

speech. Together, sentence word order and intonation form an integrated mechanism of communicative organisation capable of expressing subtle semantic and emotional nuances (Vykhovanets, 1993; Zagnitko, 2001). At the discourse level, sentence word order performs an important text-forming function by ensuring cohesion and coherence through the organisation of thematic progression. The sequential transition of information from theme to rheme contributes to the logical development of discourse and facilitates the recipient's interpretation of the message (van Dijk, 1977; Daneš, 1964; Firbas, 1964). Accordingly, sentence word order should be regarded as a multifunctional syntactic mechanism integrating formal-grammatical, communicative, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions of utterance organisation.

Political Media Discourse as a Communicative Environment

Political discourse represents an institutional form of communication characterised by orientation towards a mass audience, strategic communicative goals, and a high degree of pragmatic conditioning. Within this type of discourse, linguistic choices are determined not only by grammatical norms but also by ideological, persuasive, and legitimising purposes. Consequently, syntactic organisation acquires an increased communicative load, since sentence structure functions as an instrument for highlighting significant meanings, constructing ideological oppositions, legitimising the speaker's position, and influencing the recipient's interpretation of political events (Kondratenko, 2007; van Dijk, 1977).

Political discourse is realised through interaction between political actors and target audiences, where communication performs not only informative but also persuasive, evaluative, mobilising, and legitimising functions. Therefore, political texts should be regarded as dynamic communicative formations whose linguistic organisation depends on the communicative situation, institutional roles of participants, and broader socio-political context. Within this framework, sentence word order and information structure become essential mechanisms for organising the informational perspective of the utterance and directing its interpretation (Kondratenko, 2007; Turko & Marchuk, 2023).

These communicative characteristics become particularly evident in wartime political media discourse, where political communication is intensified by armed conflict and public speeches simultaneously perform informative, evaluative, motivational, and legitimising functions. Under such conditions, variability of sentence word order serves as a means of increasing emotional impact, foregrounding strategically important information, and implementing communicative strategies aimed at shaping public opinion and collective attitudes. Consequently, communicative syntax provides an effective theoretical framework for analysing the interaction between sentence structure, communicative intention, and pragmatic influence in contemporary wartime political media discourse.

Communicative intention constitutes one of the key categories of modern linguistics, pragmatics, and communicative syntax because it determines both the purpose of an utterance and the selection of linguistic means used to achieve the intended communicative effect. Unlike purely semantic approaches, contemporary linguistic theories interpret communicative intention as an integrative phenomenon combining cognitive, pragmatic, and discourse dimensions. It reflects the speaker's communicative purpose and predetermines the organisation of linguistic units at different language levels, including syntax (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976; Bach & Harnish, 1979).

Within communicative syntax, communicative intention is realised through the interaction between grammatical structure and information structure. The choice of sentence pattern, constituent order, syntactic emphasis, and communicative perspective depends on the speaker's intention to inform, persuade, evaluate, encourage action, or express emotional attitudes. Consequently, syntactic organisation should be regarded as an active mechanism for implementing communicative goals rather than merely a formal arrangement of sentence constituents (Batsevyich, 2004; Shabat-Savka, 2014).

Particular importance of communicative intention is observed in political communication, where linguistic choices are determined by strategic communicative objectives. Political actors intentionally employ syntactic means to foreground particular meanings, direct public attention, reinforce ideological positions, and influence the audience's interpretation of political events. Therefore, communicative intention becomes the principal factor determining the selection and organisation of syntactic structures in political media discourse (Kondratenko, 2007; Turko & Marchuk, 2023).

The interaction between communicative intention and syntactic organisation provides the theoretical basis for analysing sentence word order as a communicative instrument in wartime political media discourse. Consequently, the present study considers syntactic structures not merely as grammatical constructions but as means of verbalising communicative intentions under conditions of intensified political communication.

Research Gap. Theoretical studies have considerably advanced the understanding of communicative syntax, information structure, political discourse, and communicative intention. Previous research has demonstrated that sentence organisation performs not only grammatical but also communicative, pragmatic, and cognitive functions, while political discourse represents a strategically organised form of institutional communication aimed at influencing public opinion and shaping ideological positions (Kondratenko, 2007; Batsevyč, 2004; Shabat-Savka, 2014).

At the same time, existing studies mainly examine these phenomena separately. Research on communicative syntax primarily focuses on the structural organisation of utterances, whereas studies of political discourse predominantly investigate lexical, stylistic, rhetorical, or discourse-pragmatic mechanisms of influence. Considerably less attention has been devoted to the systematic analysis of sentence word order as a means of implementing communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse.

Furthermore, despite the growing number of studies devoted to Ukrainian political communication under wartime conditions, the communicative potential of syntactic organisation remains insufficiently investigated. In particular, little attention has been paid to the interaction between sentence word order, communicative intention, and pragmatic influence in English-language media representations of contemporary political speeches.

Accordingly, the present study addresses this research gap by examining sentence word order as a communicatively motivated syntactic mechanism for verbalising communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse. The research integrates approaches from communicative syntax, pragmatics, and discourse analysis to identify the principal syntactic strategies employed in contemporary English-language political communication.

Methods. The study employed a qualitative exploratory research design complemented by descriptive quantitative procedures. The qualitative component was used to identify and interpret syntactic strategies for the realisation of communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse, whereas the quantitative component was applied to determine the relative frequency of the identified communicative intentions and syntactic strategies within the corpus. This combination of methods enabled a comprehensive examination of sentence word order as a communicatively motivated syntactic mechanism functioning at both sentence and discourse levels.

Corpus Compilation and Selection

The research corpus was compiled manually by the authors and consists of 360 political media texts published from February 2022 to December 2025. The material was collected from official governmental communication platforms, recognised international and national news agencies, analytical media outlets, and verified online news portals covering the Russian–Ukrainian war. The corpus includes official statements by political leaders and governmental representatives, news reports, analytical articles, interviews, and expert commentaries.

The analysed material was selected from the following sources: Associated Press, Reuters, BBC News, The Guardian, The New York Times, Politico, Deutsche Welle, Fox News, The Kyiv Independent, Ukrainska Pravda, Ukrinform, Suspilne News, NV, Zaxid.Net, Radio Liberty, RBC-Ukraine, Office of the President of Ukraine, EU Neighbours East, Truth Social, TASS, Interfax, Kommersant, and RIA Novosti. A complete list of analysed media sources is provided in the *Sources* section.

The corpus was formed according to the following criteria:

- publication within the period of the Russian–Ukrainian war (2022–2025);
- relevance to wartime political communication;

- ◆ authorship by political actors, governmental institutions, or recognised media organisations;
- ◆ representation of Ukrainian-, English-, and Russian-language media;
- ◆ availability of complete texts suitable for syntactic analysis;
- ◆ presence of syntactic structures expressing communicative intentions.

These criteria ensured genre diversity, comparability of media materials, and sufficient representation of different communicative situations within wartime political discourse.

Data Analysis

The corpus was analysed manually using principles of communicative syntax, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

The analytical procedure consisted of four successive stages:

- 1 Identification of text fragments containing communicatively significant syntactic constructions;
- 2 Classification of utterances according to their dominant communicative intention (informative, evaluative, persuasive, motivational, etc.);
- 3 Analysis of sentence word order, topic–rheme organisation, and other syntactic means contributing to the realisation of communicative intentions;
- 4 Interpretation of syntactic strategies in relation to the speaker's pragmatic objectives and their potential influence on the audience.

The realisation of communicative intention can be conceptualised as a sequential process: the speaker's communicative goal → selection of a syntactic strategy → expected effect on the audience. Sentence structure, sentence word order, and topical segmentation function as active communicative tools that shape the perception of events, their emotional colouring, and their mobilising potential.

To ensure a systematic analysis of syntactic strategies, the study employs an authorial four-stage analytical model based on discourse-pragmatic and cognitive approaches to communication (Levelt, 1989; van Dijk, 2008). The model served as the analytical framework for examining how communicative intentions are transformed into syntactic patterns in wartime political media discourse. The process may be represented through the following stages:

- Stage 1. Motivational-contextual stage** – a communicative need emerges under wartime conditions (to inform, justify actions, consolidate society, or demoralise the opponent). This need is conditioned by the situational context of communication, including the institutional or personalised status of the speaker, power asymmetry, and the mass or targeted nature of the media channel. It also involves cognitive framing, including the construction of “us vs. them” oppositions, threat models, and anticipated audience responses.
- Stage 2. Intentional stage** – a hierarchy of communicative intentions is established, where a dominant intention (informative, persuasive, manipulative, or mobilising) structures and subordinated auxiliary intentions. The intention determines the pragmatic vector of the utterance, the degree of explicitness, evaluative density, and the scope of implicatures.
- Stage 3. Operational stage (selection of linguistic means)** – syntactic and lexical resources are selected in accordance with the intended communicative goal: sentence types (declarative, imperative, rhetorical), structural complexity, actual sentence segmentation, and sentence word order as a means of information focusing. At this stage, syntax functions not as a neutral structural framework, but as a strategic instrument of influence.
- Stage 4. Effect stage** – a strategically constructed utterance is realised, producing a predictable illocutionary effect: reinforcement of value orientations, legitimisation of political decisions, or stimulation of specific actions. The effectiveness of this stage depends on the degree of correspondence between the speaker's intentional programme and the cognitive models of the addressee.

In our study, syntactic strategy is interpreted as an intentionally determined and pragmatically oriented mode of organising the syntactic structure of an utterance, which ensures the realisation of a specific communicative intention (informative, motivational, emotive, evaluative, manipulative, etc.) within wartime political media discourse. Communicative intention is manifested through the systematic use of such means as sentence word order, topical structure, inversion, parcelisation, rhetorical and quasi-interrogative constructions, which function as instruments of illocutionary influence and as mechanisms for shaping the addressee's interpretative framework.

Descriptive quantitative analysis was subsequently employed to calculate the frequency of identified communicative intentions and syntactic strategies within the corpus. The percentage values presented in the Results section therefore reflect the distribution of communicative intentions across the analysed material rather than statistical significance testing.

Results and Discussion

Qualitative analysis of the corpus identified ten recurrent communicative intentions realised through distinct syntactic patterns in wartime political media discourse (see Table 1).

Table 1 Communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse

Communicative intention	Example
Informative (descriptive and informative meaning)	<i>We're closer than ever to peace</i> (D. Trump, Associated Press): the sentence does not contain any evaluation, does not call for action, and does not attempt to manipulate the emotions of the listeners – it clearly fulfils the function of informing
Interrogative (rhetorical-focusing meaning)	<i>Чого хоче Україна? Миру? Так. Чи будь-якою ціною? Ні</i> [What does Ukraine want? Peace? Yes. At any cost? No] (V. Zelensky, Zaxid.Net): identifying the information request, focusing the audience's attention, since Zelensky does not seek an answer from the listener, but uses a rhetorical question to emphasise Ukraine's value choice. The goal is to show that peace is desirable, but not 'at any price', i.e. to define the limits of acceptable compromise
Imperative (mobilising and imperative meaning)	<i>We must ensure reliable security guarantees</i> (Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainska Pravda): the sentence not only states a fact, but also aims to achieve a specific result through the actions of the audience
Emotive (expressive-emotional meaning)	<i>I was very angry about it</i> (D. Trump, The Week): emotional reaction to the news of the attack (emotional assessment of the situation)
Metacommunicative (reflexive-metacommunicative meaning)	<i>We had a good conversation with Trump and Zelensky to discuss peace talks...</i> (Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainska Pravda): commentary on the diplomatic process itself
Optative (normative-value meaning)	<i>Ukraine has been seeking peace since the very first second of the war...</i> (V. Zelensky, The Kyiv Independent): the utterance expresses a sustained desiderative stance rather than a single momentary wish, foregrounding a long-term orientation toward peace and constructing a value-based evaluative perspective.
Evaluative (estimated and interpretative value)	<i>I inherited a war that should never have happened... Ukraine 'leadership' has expressed zero gratitude for our efforts</i> (D. Trump, Reuters): the utterance conveys a strongly evaluative stance, attributing responsibility and framing the situation through subjective interpretation. It constructs a negative assessment of the Ukrainian leadership by emphasising perceived ingratitude and by presenting the outbreak of war as avoidable, thereby shaping a critical interpretative frame of the events.

Communicative intention	Example
Performative (declarative-prospective meaning)	<i>I will negotiate a peace deal that ends the war in Ukraine immediately if elected</i> (D. Trump, Truth Social): the utterance functions as a commissive speech act, in which the speaker commits himself to a future course of action. It constructs a prospective political promise, thereby creating expectations of concrete action and reinforcing the speaker’s projected capability to resolve the conflict, even in the absence of any formal agreement.
Manipulative (euphemistic-legitimising meaning)	<i>You have taken responsibility to fight for your homeland, for truth and justice... We believe in you and in our victory</i> (V. Putin, Reuters): the utterance constructs a legitimising and euphemistic framing of military action by reinterpreting participation in the war as a moral duty associated with “truth” and “justice”. It functions as a manipulative discourse strategy aimed at strengthening collective identification, consolidating support, and sustaining motivational alignment among the addressees.
Antithetical-contrastive (binary meaning)	<i>...if Kyiv doesn’t want peace... I will end it by force</i> (V. Putin, Reuters): the utterance constructs an antithetical opposition between negotiated settlement and military coercion, framing peace and force as mutually exclusive alternatives.

The corpus analysis demonstrates that each communicative intention is consistently associated with particular syntactic patterns. Across the analysed texts, sentence type, word order, information structure, and the positioning of communicatively salient elements systematically contribute to the realisation of different communicative intentions.

Informative intention is predominantly realised through declarative constructions characterised by a relatively neutral syntactic organisation and direct word order. Such structures contribute to the representation of information as objective and factual, reducing the degree of explicit speaker involvement. For instance, statements such as “*We’re closer than ever to peace*” or reports describing military events focus primarily on transmitting information rather than evaluating it. The informational effect is reinforced by the absence of overt emotional markers and by the linear organisation of the utterance, which facilitates cognitive processing and enhances message credibility.

Interrogative intention in wartime political discourse frequently performs functions that extend beyond information seeking. The rhetorical questions presented in the corpus are used to focus public attention on strategically important issues, guide interpretation, and establish value-based positions. In the example “*Чого хоче Україна? Миру? Так. Чи будь-якою ціною? Ні*” [What does Ukraine want? Peace? Yes. But at any cost? No], the sequence of short interrogative and answer-like constructions creates a dialogic structure and simultaneously shapes the audience’s perception of acceptable and unacceptable political choices. The pragmatic force of such constructions lies not in obtaining information but in directing the addressee towards a predetermined conclusion.

Motivational intention is commonly realised through imperative syntactic constructions and modal constructions expressing obligation, necessity, or urgency. The use of modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, and their Slavic equivalents increases the illocutionary force of the utterance and creates a sense of collective responsibility. In the statement “*We must ensure reliable security guarantees*”, the modal verb *must* functions as the central carrier of pragmatic meaning, transforming the utterance from a simple statement into a call for coordinated action. Such constructions are particularly characteristic of wartime communication, where mobilisation and consolidation of audiences become essential communicative objectives.

In the analysed corpus, emotive intention is primarily realised through expressive syntactic devices, including parcelisation, parenthetical insertions, syntactic fragmentation, and foregrounding. For example, Trump’s statement “*I was very angry about it*” combines a short declarative structure with the intensifying

adverb *very*, which foregrounds the speaker's emotional evaluation while maintaining the canonical English sentence pattern. The emotional effect is reinforced by the concise syntactic structure and the explicit lexical expression of affect rather than by marked word order. Similar patterns occur in Ukrainian discourse, where parcelisation and syntactic fragmentation increase emotional involvement.

Evaluative intention is realised through contrastive and comparative syntactic constructions that establish clear ideological and axiological oppositions. Statements such as “*I inherited a war that should never have happened*” combine evaluation with argumentation, encouraging the audience to interpret events within a specific value framework. In wartime discourse, evaluative constructions frequently participate in the formation of binary oppositions such as “us versus them,” “peace versus aggression,” or “justice versus injustice,” thereby contributing to the ideological organisation of discourse.

Performative intention occupies a special position within the analysed corpus because the utterance itself functions as a form of political action. Constructions containing future-tense forms, declarations of commitment, promises, and institutional decisions possess a high degree of pragmatic saturation. In statements such as “*I will negotiate a peace deal*”, the utterance not only describes a future action but also creates expectations, projects authority, and reinforces the legitimacy of the speaker. Consequently, syntactic simplicity is often accompanied by considerable pragmatic force.

The analysis presented above demonstrates that communicative intentions are not realised independently of syntax. Instead, each dominant communicative intention is associated with a recurrent set of syntactic mechanisms. This relationship provides the basis for identifying broader models of syntactic strategy realisation across the analysed languages. The comparative analysis revealed two principal models of syntactic strategy realisation corresponding to the typological characteristics of the analysed languages. The genealogical type of language (Slavic or Romance-Germanic) determines the mechanisms for highlighting informationally salient components. Taking into account the grammatical and cognitive nature of language (Turko, 2023, p. 9), we distinguish two main models of syntactic strategy realisation.

The *Slavic model* (illustrated by Ukrainian and Russian) is characterised by a developed inflectional system and relative syntactic flexibility, which allows a high degree of variation in sentence word order (Turko & Marchuk, 2023). This enables communicatively motivated reordering of sentence constituents, particularly the fronting of key elements to enhance pragmatic and mobilising effects. For example: “*Миру Україна прагне з першої секунди цієї війни*” [Ukraine has been striving for peace since the very first second of this war] (V. Zelensky, Ukrinform) – the non-canonical word order foregrounds peace as a central value orientation. Similarly, “*Саме сьогодні вирішується доля безпеки всієї Європи*” [The fate of security across Europe is being decided today] (V. Zelensky, Ukrinform) – the front-positioned adverbial modifier of time *сьогодні* (today), intensified by the particle *саме* (precisely), foregrounds the temporal reference and strengthens the pragmatic emphasis on the immediacy and significance of the event. The communicative effect is achieved not through a temporal adverbial modifier combined with an intensifying particle, but through the syntactic positioning of the temporal adverbial and its emphatic modification.

The *Romance–Germanic model* (illustrated by English) is characterised by a relatively fixed SVO sentence structure, which significantly limits inversion possibilities. As a result, the communicative load is shifted to lexical-grammatical and modal means, as well as syntactic constructions such as parallelism and performativity. For example: “*We must ensure reliable security guarantees*” (Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainska Pravda) – the pragmatic force is realised through the modal verb *must* rather than structural reordering. Similarly, “*I will negotiate a peace deal*” (D. Trump, Truth Social) – the illocutionary effect of commitment is expressed through future tense forms with performative implications.

Syntactic strategy thus emerges as a dynamic cognitive-pragmatic construct. It is not merely a set of formal linguistic devices, but a systemic model of discursive influence. In Slavic languages, syntax serves as a primary tool of information focusing, whereas in Romance–Germanic languages it interacts more closely with modality and performativity, which is particularly significant for strategic communication in wartime (see **Tables 2 and 3**).

Table 2 The interrelation of communicative intentions, syntactic strategies and functions in wartime political media discourse of Slavic languages (based on Ukrainian and Russian languages)

Communicative intention	Syntactic strategy	Communicative function	Example
Informational-communicative	Narrative syntactic structures with variable placement of sentence constituents; direct and marked sentence word order; simple and complex informative constructions; enumeration	Neutral presentation of facts with the possibility of thematic and pragmatic emphasis	<i>Вночі було завдано ракетного удару по території України [A missile strike was launched on Ukrainian territory during the night] (Ukrinform); По энергетическим объектам нанесён удар [Energy facilities have been hit] (RIA Novosti)</i>
Interrogative	Direct and rhetorical interrogative constructions; segmentation; repetition; communicatively motivated inversion	Problematisation of issues and directing the recipient's attention toward significant topics	<i>Чи готові партнери й надалі підтримувати Україну? [Are partners ready to continue supporting Ukraine?] (Suspilne Novyny); Кто за это ответит? [Who will be held accountable for this?] (TASS)</i>
Motivational	Imperative syntactic constructions; modal constructions expressing obligation and necessity; impersonal and infinitive constructions	Mobilisation and stimulation of action	<i>Маємо негайно посилити оборону [We must immediately strengthen our defences] (Radio Liberty); Необходимо срочно принять меры [Urgent action is required] (Interfax)</i>
Emotive	Expressive syntactic constructions; parcelisation; parenthetical insertions; marked sentence word order; emotionally intensified structures	Expression of emotional state, empathy, and psychological tension	<i>Боляче, до глибини душі, бачити ці руйнування [It hurts deeply to see this destruction] (NV); Страшно смотреть на происходящее [It's frightening to watch what's happening] (Kommersant)</i>
Metacommunicative	Parenthetical and explanatory constructions; subordinate clarifying clauses; metatextual markers	Interpretation control and commentary on the communicative process	<i>Як наголосив президент, йдеться саме про безпекові гарантії [As the president emphasised, this specifically concerns security guarantees] (Ukrainska Pravda)</i>
Optative	Desiderative syntactic constructions; conditional forms; generalised personal and impersonal structures	Expression of hope and projection of a desired future	<i>Хотілося б вірити, що мир стане реальністю [I would like to believe that peace will become a reality] (Livi Berek)</i>
Evaluative	Contrastive and comparative syntactic constructions; foregrounding of evaluative components	Formation of ideologically marked judgements	<i>Це не просто війна, а свідоме знищення державності [This is not just a war, but the deliberate destruction of statehood] (NV)</i>
Performative	Declarative constructions; verbs of volition; future-oriented structures with flexible constituent organisation	Legitimation of decisions and implementation of actions through speech	<i>Україна ухвалює рішення про подальше зміцнення оборони [Ukraine decides to further strengthen its defence] (Office of the President of Ukraine)</i>

Undoubtedly, there is a correlation between the communicative goal of the speaker and the choice of syntactic model. Wartime political media discourse is characterised by the dominance of structures that enable actual sentence segmentation, particularly the distinction between theme and rheme. This allows the speaker to manipulate the audience's focus by shifting emphasis to the object of action, the action itself, or its consequences.

The most frequent communicative intentions are informational and motivational. They are realised through declarative sentences, imperatives, and modal constructions of obligation (e.g. *we must, it is necessary*), which is typical of crisis communication in wartime contexts. Emotive and evaluative intentions, in turn, rely on so-called “disrupted” syntactic structures, including parcelisation, inversion, and parenthetical insertions. These devices contribute to the creation of emotional tension and the formation of ideologically marked interpretations of events, for instance through oppositional framing such as “friend/enemy” in comparative constructions.

An analysis of Ukrainian and Russian languages reveals typological similarities in syntactic means, including the use of impersonal constructions to describe military actions (e.g. *was inflicted, a strike was delivered*), which foregrounds the event itself rather than the agent. Another common feature is the frequent use of rhetorical questions to problematise socially significant issues, as well as metacommunicative markers (e.g. *as emphasised...*) that serve to legitimise information and reference authoritative sources.

In Slavic languages (Ukrainian and Russian), non-canonical word order performs not only a grammatical but also a pragmatic and expressive function. The variability of subject, predicate, and secondary constituents enables flexible actual division of the utterance, allowing the speaker to rapidly adjust thematic and rhematic emphasis in accordance with communicative intention. The greatest pragmatic potential of this flexible sentence word order is observed in emotive, evaluative, and motivational utterances, where inversion, parcelisation, and impersonal constructions intensify emotional impact and mobilising force, thereby facilitating the construction of ideologically loaded meanings in military discourse.

In English-language wartime political media discourse, the fixed SVO sentence word order is primarily structural and grammatical in nature, which limits the scope for syntactic reconfiguration. Consequently, communicative intentions are realised mainly through lexical and grammatical means, including modal verbs, aspect-tense forms, and auxiliary constructions (e.g. emphatic inversion), rather than through variation in linear constituent organisation.

In this sense, syntax in military discourse ceases to function as a neutral framework of expression. It becomes an instrument of emphasis (through sentence word order and inversion), of distancing or solidarity (through modal and evaluative markers), and of legitimisation of authority (through performative declarations). The syntax of wartime political media discourse is thus characterised by a combination of informational precision and high expressiveness. Variability in the positioning of subject and predicate, as well as the use of modal constructions, constitutes a key mechanism of influence on the recipient in conditions of armed conflict.

The English-language version of statements made by leading politicians functions as a highly structured communicative system, in which each grammatical construction performs a specific pragmatic function. Several key domains of this interaction can be identified.

Statement and legitimisation of actions. To convey facts (informative function) or announce decisions (performative function), politicians predominantly use the most structurally rigid syntactic model – the SVO (Subject–Verb–Object) pattern. For example, in the statement “*I will negotiate*,” Donald Trump employs the future tense (*will*) not merely as a temporal marker but as a performative speech act that constructs a projected political reality. The utterance acquires a categorical and authoritative tone.

Agenda-setting through interrogative constructions. Interrogative strategies (as in the discourse of Marco Rubio) are frequently rhetorical in nature. Through auxiliary inversion in interrogative constructions (e.g. *Is it realistic...*), the speaker does not necessarily seek information but uses the interrogative form to introduce a problem field, express evaluation, and guide the audience's interpretation. Instead, it introduces doubt

Table 3 The interrelation of communicative intentions, syntactic strategies and functions in English-language of wartime political media discourse

Communicative intention	Syntactic strategy	Communicative function	Example
Informational-communicative	Declarative syntactic structures based on the SVO model; direct linear organisation; simple and complex informative constructions	Linear and unambiguous transmission of factual information	<i>Russia launched a missile attack on Ukraine overnight</i> (BBC News)
Interrogative	Auxiliary inversion in interrogative constructions; direct and rhetorical questions; limited segmentation	Formation of a problem field and direction of interpretation	<i>Is it realistic to continue unlimited support for Ukraine?</i> (M. Rubio, The Kyiv Independent)
Motivational	Imperative constructions; modal constructions with verbs expressing obligation (must, should)	Call for action and construction of collective responsibility	<i>We must ensure reliable security guarantees</i> (U. von der Leyen, EU Neighbours East)
Emotive	Structures with emotionally marked lexical elements; parenthetical insertions and syntactic emphasis within the fixed SVO framework	Expression of emotional reaction and evaluation while maintaining structural clarity	<i>I was very angry about it because it was a terrible attack on innocent people</i> (D. Trump, The Week)
Metacommunicative	Explanatory and subordinate clarifying constructions with stable syntactic organisation	Commentary on the communicative process and interpretation guidance	<i>We had a good conversation with President Zelensky to discuss peace talks</i> (D. Trump, Fox News)
Optative	Hope/seek/would + infinitive constructions; conditional forms with fixed subject position	Verbalisation of the desired future	<i>Ukraine has been seeking peace since the very first second of the war</i> (V. Zelensky, Ukrainska Pravda)
Evaluative	Comparative and contrastive syntactic constructions with linear development of argumentation	Comparative and contrastive syntactic constructions with linear development of argumentation	<i>I inherited a war that should never have happened</i> (D. Trump, Reuters)
Performative	Declarative constructions with future-oriented forms (will + V); explicit subject marking	Legitimation of political position through speech action	<i>I will negotiate a peace deal that ends the war in Ukraine immediately</i> (D. Trump, Reuters)

and directs audience interpretation towards a predetermined evaluative frame, often reinforcing a specific political stance (e.g. conditional support).

Mobilisation and value orientation. Imperative and optative strategies are responsible for ideological and mobilising content. Modal constructions such as *must* (e.g. in the discourse of Ursula von der Leyen) construct a discourse of urgency and obligation. Similarly, verbs of intention or aspiration (*seek*, *hope*) project desired future states. Even when expressing strong emotions or subjective evaluations (e.g. “*I was very*

angry,” “*I inherited a war*”), English-language political discourse preserves a structurally standardised form. Complex sentences and comparative constructions allow speakers to maintain an image of rationality and control even when engaging in emotional or critical positioning.

As shown in **Table 3**, English political syntax is predominantly linear and structurally rigid, which contributes to the maintenance of institutional authority and perceived control over events. The choice of sentence type (interrogative, imperative, or declarative) directly corresponds to the intended communicative function – informing, persuading, or mobilising action. English is therefore characterised by explicit and unambiguous information encoding, particularly in informative and performative constructions, where explicit subject marking and fixed sentence word order enhance institutional legitimacy.

Thus, sentence word order emerges as a system-forming factor in the realisation of communicative intentions: in Slavic languages it functions as a tool of pragmatic flexibility and expressive modulation, whereas in English it ensures structural stability and interpretative clarity.

The identified differences confirm that syntactic strategies in wartime political media discourse are language-specific and are directly determined by typological properties of languages. This should be taken into account in contrastive linguistics, translation studies, and discourse analysis.

The analysed material demonstrates that communicative intentions are realised through systematic correlations between pragmatic goals and syntactic organisation rather than through isolated grammatical devices. Informative and performative intentions are predominantly associated with declarative sentence structures, whereas motivational intention relies on imperative constructions and modal expressions of obligation. Interrogative intention is typically realised through rhetorical questions that guide interpretation rather than request information. Emotive and evaluative intentions exhibit the strongest interaction between syntax and lexical semantics: in Slavic discourse they are reinforced by inversion, parcelisation, and flexible word order, whereas in English they are mainly realised through structurally stable declarative patterns combined with lexical and modal markers. These findings confirm that syntactic organisation functions as a strategic mechanism for shaping interpretation, emotional engagement, and persuasive impact in wartime political media discourse.

Based on a corpus of 360 texts, three dominant types of communicative intention were identified, collectively accounting for 88% of the analysed material and constituting the core distributional pattern of wartime political media discourse. Informational-communicative intention (45%) represents the dominant strategy, reflecting the need to present military developments, political decisions, and public events as socially significant information. Motivational intention (25%) performs the mobilisation function of wartime discourse and is primarily realised through imperative constructions and modal structures expressing necessity and collective responsibility. Evaluative intention (18%) contributes to the construction of ideological and value-based oppositions through contrastive and comparative syntactic patterns. The distribution of the most frequent communicative intentions is presented (see **Fig. 1**).

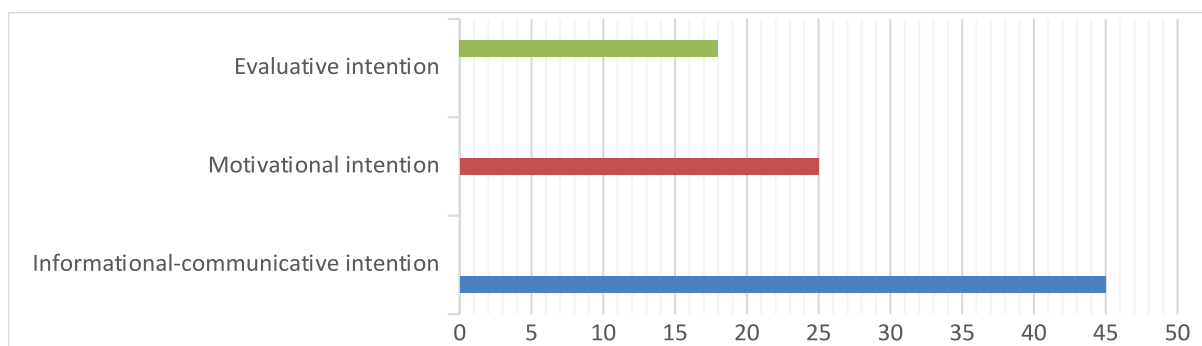


Fig. 1 Distribution of the most frequent communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse (2022–2025)

A comparative analysis of syntactic strategies in Slavic (Ukrainian and Russian) and English-language wartime political media discourse demonstrates that both language groups realise communicative intentions through systematically organised syntactic structures; however, they differ significantly in the choice of mechanisms and their functional distribution.

In Slavic media discourse, informational-communicative intention is primarily expressed through complex narrative sentences with flexible word order, including both direct and inverted structures, as well as listing and rephrasing. These devices enable the highlighting of key factual information and the construction of a logically coherent informational sequence. Interrogative intention is realised through rhetorical questions, segmentation, repetition, and inversion, which not only attract attention to problematic issues but also establish cognitive contrast and value-based positioning of the addressee. Imperative intention typically combines imperative forms, modal verbs of obligation, impersonal constructions, and infinitives, often within a framework of collective involvement and mobilisation. Emotive intention is strengthened through parcelisation, inversion, parenthetical insertions, and complex syntactic constructions, which enhance expressiveness and stimulate emotional engagement. In English-language discourse, by contrast, these intentions are predominantly realised through structurally rigid declarative patterns, with pragmatic emphasis achieved via modality, lexical selection, and fixed SVO word order.

Metacommunicative intention is realised through insertions and explanatory subordinate clauses that comment on the communicative process itself and contribute to the legitimisation of the speaker's position. Optative and evaluative intentions are encoded through conditional forms, generalised structures, and comparative or contrastive constructions, thereby shaping projections of the desired future and reinforcing value orientations. Performative intention combines declarative structures with elements of direct address, emphasising the speaker's capacity to influence actions through speech.

In English-language wartime political media discourse, syntactic strategies are generally more linear, explicit, and informationally structured. Informational-communicative intention is realised through simple and complex declarative sentences with fixed SVO sentence word order and enumerations, reinforcing objectivity and clarity. Interrogative intention is mainly expressed through rhetorical and direct questions, inversion, and segmentation; however, it less frequently functions as a means of moral or emotional polarisation. Imperative intention combines imperative forms, modal verbs of obligation, and infinitival constructions, often functioning as direct calls to action or serving to legitimise political decisions.

Emotive intention in English discourse is expressed through parenthetical constructions and limited syntactic deviation, while maintaining overall structural simplicity and clarity. Metacommunicative, optative, and evaluative intentions are predominantly realised through subordinate clauses, conditional structures, and comparative constructions, which ensure interpretative transparency and cognitive orientation. Performative intention is conveyed through declarative and prognostic statements, where syntactic simplicity is combined with high pragmatic force, enhancing the legitimising effect of political speech.

Thus, Slavic wartime media discourse demonstrates a stronger orientation toward emotional and axiological structuring, producing cognitive and moral contrast, whereas English-language discourse prioritises informational clarity, structural stability, and pragmatic legitimisation. These differences reflect broader typological and discourse-cultural distinctions in communication models.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that communicative intentions in wartime political media discourse are systematically realised through language-specific syntactic strategies rather than isolated grammatical devices. The analysis identified ten recurrent communicative intentions realised through stable sets of syntactic patterns and confirmed that syntax functions as a strategic resource of political communication. Sentence structure, information structure, modality, inversion, parcelisation, and, where typologically available, flexible sentence word order jointly contribute to information framing, audience mobilisation, evaluative positioning, and the legitimisation of political actions.

The comparative analysis revealed two principal models of syntactic strategy realisation reflecting the typological characteristics of the analysed languages. Slavic languages (Ukrainian and Russian) employ greater syntactic flexibility, information restructuring, and inversion to enhance pragmatic and expressive effects, whereas English primarily relies on structurally stable sentence patterns combined with modal and performative constructions. Although both language groups pursue comparable communicative goals, they achieve them through different syntactic mechanisms determined by language-specific structural constraints and discourse conventions.

The principal contribution of the study lies in integrating communicative syntax, discourse pragmatics, and contrastive linguistics into a unified analytical framework for the investigation of wartime political media discourse. The proposed four-stage analytical model explains how communicative intentions are transformed into syntactic realisations, while the developed typology of communicative intentions provides a systematic basis for analysing strategic political communication under conditions of armed conflict.

The findings extend current understanding of the relationship between syntax and communicative intention and provide a comparative framework applicable to communicative syntax, discourse analysis, contrastive linguistics, media linguistics, translation studies, and political communication research. The proposed analytical approach may also support further investigations of strategic communication across multilingual, cross-cultural, and multimodal conflict-related discourse.

Future research should expand the multilingual corpus, include additional genres of political communication and digital media platforms, and examine the interaction between syntactic strategies and multimodal resources in contemporary wartime communication.

Overall, the findings confirm that syntactic organisation constitutes a strategic linguistic resource through which political actors construct informational, persuasive, and ideological influence in wartime media discourse, while the specific mechanisms of this influence are determined by the typological properties of the language.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Declaration on the Use of AI

No generative AI tools were used in the preparation of this article.

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Santrauka

Olha Turko, Nataliia Zakordonets.

Sintaksinės strategijos komunikacinių ketinimų raiškai karo laikotarpio politiniame žiniasklaidos diskurse

Straipsnyje pateikiamas išsamus tyrimas apie sintaksines strategijas, skirtas komunikaciniams ketinimams išreikšti karo laikotarpio politiniame žiniasklaidos diskurse. Tyrimo medžiagą sudaro 2022–2025 m. laikotarpio ukrainiečių, rusų ir anglų kalbų žiniasklaidos tekstai. Sintaksinė strategija apibrėžiama kaip sąmoningai suformuotas sakinio organizavimo modelis, integruojantis kalbinę kompetenciją, kognityvinį požiūrį ir sociopolitinį kontekstą, siekiant daryti strateginę įtaką auditorijai. Tyrime sistemškai klasifikuojami komunikacinių ketinimų tipai ir nagrinėjama jų realizacija skirtingose kalbos sistemose, atsižvelgiant į tipologinius skirtumus tarp slavų (ukrainiečių ir rusų) bei romanų–germanų (anglų) kalbos modelių. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama lyginamajai šių kalbų sintaksinių mechanizmų, naudojamų komunikaciniams ketinimams užkoduoti, analizei. Nustatyta, kad slavų kalbose komunikaciniai ketinimai pirmiausia realizuojami per lanksčią sakinio žodžių tvarką ir teminę segmentaciją (temos–remos organizaciją), o tai leidžia dinamiškai pertvarkyti informacinį dėmesio centrą naudojant inversiją ir suskaidymą. Priešingai, anglų kalboje dėl palyginti fiksuotos SVO sakinio struktūros, komunikaciniai ketinimai išreiškiami daugiausia leksinėmis ir gramatinėmis priemonėmis, įskaitant modalinius veiksmažodžius, performatyvines konstrukcijas ir sintaksinį paralelizmą. Rezultatai rodo, kad sintaksė karo laikotarpio politiniame žiniasklaidos diskurse veikia ne tik kaip kalbos struktūrinis lygmuo, bet ir kaip strateginis išteklis, skirtas politinių veiksmų įtikinimui, mobilizavimui ir legitimavimui. Siūloma sistema apibrėžia keturių etapų sintaksinės strategijos formavimo modelį, apimančią viską nuo motyvacijos atsiradimo karo laikotarpio kontekste iki galutinės verbalinės realizacijos su nuspėjamu ilokuciniu poveikiu. Tyrimo rezultatai gali būti pritaikyti diskurso analizės, žiniasklaidos lingvistikos, vertimo studijų ir strateginės komunikacijos tyrimų srityse.

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