

Shaping National Identity in Crisis: Zelenskyy's New Year Addresses During Wartime

Svitlana Goloshchuk  – Natalia Shumeiko 

Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of the New Year addresses delivered during wartime by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It aims to reveal how significant shifts in themes and rhetoric within his political discourse shape the concept of national identity, and how the lexical devices he employs support his stance. The research data were collected from the transcripts of New Year addresses (NYA) delivered by Zelenskyy in December 2022, 2023, and 2024, which are available on the official presidential website. A quantitative analysis using Voyant Tools identified key terms related to Zelenskyy's political approach, while Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examined how these terms reinforce his political narrative. A web-based application for text analysis Voyant Tools was chosen for its strong text visualisation features, which facilitate a comparative analysis of linguistic patterns over time. By employing frequency analysis and collocation mapping, the study uncovers shifts in Zelenskyy's discourse, providing a structured, data-driven approach to understanding his rhetorical evolution. The findings reveal a strategic use of NYA to promote themes of national identity, resistance, the identification of actors and agents of warfare, and references to time. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of comparative analysis in understanding key topics and demonstrates how carefully selected words and powerful imagery contribute to building national unity and strengthening public opinion.

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Introduction

In the context of ongoing armed conflict and global uncertainty, the way leaders communicate with the nation is crucial for keeping a country united and well-governed. Modern political discourse is a form of communication that encompasses various genres and plays a key role in shaping public opinion, policy decisions, and the overall democratic process. It is considered that “the study of political discourse should not be limited to the structural properties of text or talk itself, but also include a systematic account of the context and its relations to discursive structures” (van Dejk, 1997: 15). The President’s New Year address belongs to the ritual genre of political discourse on the criteria of localisation of events (Шейгал 2003, as cited in Шевчук 2013). Delivered at the close of the year, it not only consolidates the nation’s achievements over the past months but also motivates citizens for the challenges ahead. Analysis of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s New Year address is an example of wartime rhetoric with a carefully organised structure, well-chosen language means, and symbolic imagery employed to strengthen national unity and enhance civilian resilience.

A quantitative discourse analysis is carried out (using the Voyant Tools software, v. 2.6.19) together with the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2010) using the transcripts of three New Year addresses delivered by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from 2022 to 2024, and published on the official president's website in the English version. The speeches are analysed based on their language and the narratives used to frame them. With this research, we seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do the key lexical features characterising the NYA delivered by the President in the specified time frame align or diverge?

RQ2: Which topics are most often covered through NYA delivered by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy?

In this paper, we begin by analysing the relevant literature to establish a strong conceptual foundation for the study. We then discuss the data collection procedures and describe the methodology used. This is followed by a detailed analysis of our findings, which concludes with a summary of the results and their implications.

Literature Review

The New Year address delivered by the President at the end of the year has attracted the attention of researchers across various languages. This ceremonial address is often examined as a ritualised form of political discourse (Кондратенко, 2020), rich in symbolic meaning and national sentiment. Scholars have explored its linguistic structure, pragmatic functions, and cultural variations, highlighting its role in shaping collective identity and political narratives.

The study of New Year addresses delivered by the first three presidents of Ukraine (Leonid Kravchuk (1991–1994), Leonid Kuchma (1994–2005), and Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010)) employs the combined approach to its theoretical foundation and analyses them through the scope of political PR, ritual and rational discourses. By exploring the context and ideological framing of historical narratives and future visions, the study offers a deep understanding of the rhetorical strategies employed in these annual addresses (Yakovlev et al 2020).

The analysis of ritual political communication in Kondratenko's paper (2020) focuses on the transformation of New Year speeches by the Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019). The findings of the paper highlight structural, semantic, linguistic and pragmatic features of the New Year greetings. They are correlated with the three-component structure consisting of retrospective, prospective and optative features. Her other paper examines the pre-war New Year speeches (2018–2020) by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, conducting a comparative analysis alongside the New Year addresses by Polish President Andrzej Duda (Кондратенко 2022). The research explores structural and semantic components while identifying communication strategies employed in there. It is argued that the strategies (such as self-presentation, consolidation, gratitude, ritual, evaluation, and discreditation) follow the corresponding speaker's intention and rely on certain linguistic features framed in a structure with predictable components.

Several researchers have analysed President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's political speeches since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, though they do not specifically focus on New Year addresses. V. Yakymchuk and N. Lopatiuk examine his communication strategies and tactics, highlighting the use of a taxonomy of strategies (Якимчук et al 2022). These strategies – including agitation, self-presentation, discreditation, argumentation, and those aimed at shaping the audience's emotional state – are effectively combined with various communication tactics to enhance their impact.

The analysis of political discourse presented in the monograph on the war in Ukraine (2024) examines how it has shaped the political development in selected European countries. The findings of the paper explore the political context of each country during the first months of the invasion, and the key rhetorical and ideological features through which the principal actors of the discourse articulate their attitude towards Russian aggression in Ukraine (Goloshchuk et al., 2024; Lőrincz, 2022; Žyško et al., 2022; Віротченко et al., 2022; Парчевська et al., 2024; Якимчук et al., 2022).

The study by Angelina Žyško and Marietta Izdebska has investigated the presence of conceptual metaphors in the political discourse of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, based on his 63 speeches during the first month of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine (Žyško et al., 2022). The authors find that Zelenskyy's rhetoric is straightforward mainly – deliberately plain and direct — likely to convey urgency and clarity during a crisis. However, when metaphors do appear, they originate from familiar concepts like the human body, animals, light and darkness, control, and physical forces.

Other authors have focused their analysis of the New Year address approaching the political context of other countries/languages. A comparative analysis of the communicative and pragmatic features of the New Year address based on the Ukrainian, English, and Chinese languages has been conducted by Virotenko and Avdiienko (Віротченко et al., 2022). Having investigated the style, structure and content of the texts of the New Year speeches of political leaders of the countries, the authors highlight their cross-cultural rhetorical strategies. For the French language, it has been explored the linguistic means of expression in New Year speeches delivered by French-speaking politicians (Парчевська et al., 2024). Other notable studies include those that employ the analysis of verbal and nonverbal components of political addresses by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Goloshchuk et al., 2024), as well as those that utilise corpus analysis for the study of war representation (Kryzhanivska, 2017; Lőrincz, 2022), or approach it through a conceptual metaphor methodology with reference to the role of conceptual metaphor in political discourse (Žyško et al., 2022).

Material and Methods

The ongoing armed conflict adds a critical contextual factor in the linguistic analysis of the presidential New Year addresses. We collected three New Year addresses delivered by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on December

31 of each year from 2022 to 2024. These speeches, presented during the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, reflect a shift in presidential messaging compared to peacetime addresses. As a ritual genre of political discourse, it enables the president to reflect on the past year and set expectations for the year ahead. That is why the New Year greeting contains structural and semantic components typical of ritual texts, which ensures its semantic richness and polyfunctionality (Kondratenko, 2022: 128). Each address lasts approximately 20 minutes and varies in length, ranging from 1615 to 2361 words. They are published on the official website of the President of Ukraine (<https://www.president.gov.ua/>), available in both Ukrainian and English versions. In our paper, for clarity reasons, we will refer to each New Year address using abbreviations such as NYA-2022, NYA-2023, and NYA-2024.

Firstly, a quantitative analysis of each greeting delivered by the President and posted on the official web page is carried out. The analysis is done using the online software Voyant Tools v. 2.6.19 (Sinclair and Rockwell 2020). Voyant Tools has already been used in communication studies that involve the analysis of news content or content published on social media (Baptista et al., 2024), and linguistic analysis of presidential debates (Maierova, 2024). Our reason for applying this software is, besides being free, its functionality features that make linguistic patterns visible through word clouds, frequency graphs, and keyword-in-context analysis. These tools help to identify shifts in dominant themes across Zelenskyy's addresses, allowing the terms to be statistically correlated (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2020). Since our study covers three years, Voyant's comparative functions (like term trend analysis) allow us to observe changes in word usage over time, reinforcing our research objective.

This quantitative analysis is simultaneously complemented by readability assessments, based on criteria such as the total number of sentences, average words per sentence, number and percentage of complex words, and average syllables per word. These metrics were obtained using the WebFX Readability Test (WebFX 1995–2024), which provides standardised measures of textual complexity and linguistic accessibility. It enables us to reveal whether presidential New Year addresses resonate with the Ukrainians and whether they are easily understood and processed by a broad audience — especially in times of national crisis like war. For this study, the written texts are analysed, and the non-verbal component of the accompanying video is not considered.

Results

To approach questions that arise in the realm of using quantitative metrics, we follow the procedure outlined by Eva Maierová to study linguistic features and rhetorical strategies used in a televised debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the 2024 election cycle (Maierová, 2024). In our work, we employ freely available text-mining software (Voyant Tools, voyant-tools.org) and an online readability assessment platform (WebFX Readability Test, webfx.com/tools/readable) to conduct a quantitative analysis of New Year addresses delivered throughout the three years of war. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of New Year addresses statistics (2022-2024)

	NYA-2022	NYA-2023	NYA-2024
number of sentences	269	223	218
tokens	1618	2,326	2,336
types	622	731	756
vocabulary density	0.384	0.314	0.320
average words per sentence	6.9	10.6	11.6
number of complex words	210	306	238
percent of complex words	12,87%	13.02%	9.94%
average syllables per word	1.49	1.48	1.43

The data received suggests that the number of sentences slightly decreases over the years, from 269 in 2022 to 218 in 2024. The total number of tokens increases significantly from 2022 to 2023 (1,618 to 2,326), with a slight growth in 2024. The increase in tokens and average words per sentence suggests a shift towards more elaborate and detailed greetings over the years. It could indicate a desire to convey more thoughts or emotions in each message. The growing number of unique vocabulary types (from 622 in 2022 to 756 in 2024) indicates a richer, more diverse word choice. This change might indicate a move to hold more formal or thoughtful communication in later years. However, vocabulary density, which measures the uniqueness of words used, shows a decrease from 0.384 in 2022 to around 0.314 in 2023, before slightly increasing again in 2024. The sentences become longer over time, moving from an average of 6.9 words in 2022 to

11.6 in 2024. We may debate that while more unique words are used, they are spread across longer messages, resulting in less concentrated diversity. The number of complex words peaks in 2023 (306) but decreases to 238 in 2024. Similarly, the percentage of complex words drops from 13.02% in 2023 to 9.94% in 2024. The peak in the number and percentage of complex words in 2023 might imply a heightened attempt at sophistication in that year's greeting. On the other hand, the decline in complexity in 2024 (fewer complex words and lower average syllables per word) could signal a move towards more accessible language, perhaps aiming to connect with a broader audience.

Overall, the data above demonstrate how the New Year addresses have evolved throughout the studied period. The 2022 greeting was relatively concise and dense, while 2023 saw a shift to more sophisticated language. By 2024, the style appears to balance thoughtful expression with simpler, more relatable wording. The reduction in vocabulary density and complex words, combined with longer sentences, could mean that the tone is becoming more conversational and less formal.

To identify the main narratives in the New Year's address, this study focuses on the key words, as "the word frequency list is a good entry point to the corpus, highlighting collocational patterns that will probably be worth following up with a qualitative analysis of concordance lines" (Mautner 2009: 38). Analysis of the most frequently occurring words in each year addresses with their respective frequencies, reveals the principal themes. Table 2 presents a summary of the top ten most frequent keywords. These data are visually represented in Figures 1, 2 and 3. It should be noted that only content words were extracted from the three separate transcripts, with function words being omitted.

Table 2 shows that the words Ukraine, Ukrainians, year, and people are the most frequent in New Year addresses by Volodymyr Zelenskyy from 2022 to 2024. While their frequency and statistical value vary across the years, each of these words consistently ranks among the top five, except for people, which holds the seventh position in 2023. The lexeme Ukraine regularly holds the top position across all three years, increasing in frequency from 20 to 31 and to 37 each year, and its relative frequency changes from 12,361 to 15,638. It suggests that national identity and solidarity have remained central themes, as in: year of Ukraine, a year of losses for Ukraine, every invincible region of Ukraine, Ukraine did not lose its sons (NYA-2022).

Table 2. Ten most frequently used content words

NYA-2022	Frequency	Statistic	NYA-2023	Frequency	Statistic	NYA-2024	Frequency	Statistic
ukraine	20	12,361	ukraine	31	13,328	ukraine	37	15,638
year	15	9,271	stronger	28	12,038	people	20	8,453
ukrainians	12	7,471	ukrainians	27	11,608	year	19	8,030
world	11	6,799	year	23	9,888	ukrainians	10	4,227
people	8	4,944	ukrainian	13	5,589	strong	10	3,804
new	8	4,944	war	11	4,729	russia	9	3,381
fight	7	4,326	people	9	3,869	peace	9	3,381
region	6	3,708	today	8	3,439	time	8	3,381
main	6	3,708	time	8	3,439	thank	8	3,381
february	6	3,708	new	8	3,439	stand	8	3,381

Table 3. Co-occurring words in the analysed texts

	Words	Co-occurrence (2022)	Co-occurrence (2023)	Co-occurrence (2024)
1	Ukraine	world (7) year (6), new (2), media (2)	Ukrainians (5), overcomes (5), new (5)	stands (5) glory (4) year (3) today (3)
2	Ukrainians	Ukrainians (6), year (4), surprise (2), inspire (2), February (2), applauded (2)	stronger (15), year (6), Ukraine (5)	year (2), thousands (2)
3	year	year (9), Ukraine (6), Ukrainians (4), return (3)	Ukrainians (8), Ukraine (5), year (4), independence (4)	year (4), people (4), happy (4)
4	people	return (2)	Ukraine (2), stories (2), people (2)	year (4), Ukrainians (2), Ukraine (2), today (2), they're (2), thank (2), say (2), people (2)

A close reading of the analysed concordance lines for each keyword is conducted to identify the frames to which each keyword contributed in its use. Our findings show that there is a prevalence around the following themes: national identity, actors/agents, renewal, resistance, and time. Table 4 shows the most frequently used frames of each keyword:

Table 4. Keywords organised by theme

	Theme	Keywords
1	National identity	Ukraine, Ukrainians, Ukrainian
2	Actors/agents	Ukrainians, people, world, region, Russia
3	Resistance	fight, stronger, war, strong, stand new, peace, thank
4	Time	year, today, February, time

National identity. The dominant lexical field within the analysed texts refers to the emphasis of the country's national identity. This thematic focus is developed through lexemes that explicitly denote state affiliation (e.g., Ukraine, Ukrainians, Ukrainian). The collocates of the node Ukraine reflect

positive discourse prosody (e.g., new, year, world, media, overcomes, Ukrainians, today, stands, glory), each highlighting the thematic aspects of national representation. The accompanying collocate network graphs below (Figures 4-6) depict the semantic associations surrounding the node Ukraine, visualising its high-frequency collocates that co-occur across the dataset. In these visualisations, keywords are indicated in blue, while collocates are represented in orange:

Figure 4. A network graph for the node Ukraine in NYA-22



Figure 5. A network graph for the node Ukraine in NYA-23



Figure 6. A network graph for the node Ukraine in NYA-24



The strongest collocations for Ukraine in NYG-22 are: world (7), year (6), new (2), media (2). Among these, world most strongly co-occurs with Ukraine in meaning, constructing a semantic link that implies global recognition and the nation’s evolving geopolitical significance. Typical patterns include Ukraine changed the world, the world discovered Ukraine, the world heard Ukraine, the world felt Ukraine, the world saw Ukraine. The

verbs – changed, discovered, heard, felt, saw – are not only action-oriented but semantically rich, and each of them presents Ukraine as both subject and object of global attention, reinforcing its status as a symbol of resilience and national unity.

A year after (2023), the strongest collocations for Ukraine are Ukrainians (5), overcomes (5), new (5), year (5). As a node Ukraine is put into the construction of a simple sentence conveying rhythm and emphasis by its repetition: Ukraine is alive. Ukraine lives. Ukraine fights. Ukraine advances, Ukraine overcomes the path. Ukraine gains. Ukraine works. Ukraine exists. When appearing with the noun Ukrainians, we may find the following examples: And the answer is Ukraine. Because Ukrainians are stronger together. Fellow Ukrainians! This year, Ukraine has overcome 6,000 air alerts; Happy New Year, Ukrainians! Happy New Year, Ukraine! The emphasis on intensifying national strength and solidarity is achieved through the repetition of simple sentence constructions and the rhetorical identification of people with the country.

Moreover, in 2024, Ukraine most frequently collocates with the words stands (5) glory (4) year (3) today (3). When paired with stands, the corpus turns striking examples such as: Behind me stands Mother Ukraine, Ukraine that stands firmly on its feet, America will also stand with Ukraine, Ukraine is standing and will stand, Behind all of us stands Mother Ukraine. These phrases represent Ukraine as both a personal protector and a shared foundation, highlighting strength, unity, and forward motion. When collocated with glory, we find the widespread Ukrainian solitude showing pride and solidarity: Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes.

Resistance. The analysis of keyword distribution shows that one of the main themes represented in our dataset relates to the defence of national sovereignty. The New Year addresses examined across the studied period are rich in nouns (fight, war, peace), adjectives (stronger, strong, new), and verbs (stand, thank), all of which contribute to the rhetorical construction of resilience and solidarity. The analysis of lexical means between years reveals some notable discrepancies in their usage. Interestingly, lemma strong is not found in NYA-2022; however, its comparative form stronger emerges in 2023, as illustrated in the following examples: I am stronger than fear, Ukrainians are stronger together, this love is stronger than the occupation. By contrast, the 2024 address marks a lexical shift back to the base form strong, framed in future-oriented affirmations: you will stand strong, your spirit and courage will stand strong, it will overcome its path to peace, to a strong Ukraine. This transition appears to signal an evolution from comparative resistance to showing strength as something already gained. The lan-

guage reflects that resilience is no longer just a goal – it’s something Ukraine has achieved.

Furthermore, significant divergences are observed in the usage of the lexemes war and peace across the analysed texts. In the 2022 address, neither term appears among the ten most frequently used words. However, in 2023, the lexeme war is found, while peace only emerges in 2024. An examination of the 2023 New Year’s address reveals that war is employed without any distinct reference to the idea of peace. The term appears in contexts such as another year of war, war for our land, a full-scale war, despite the war, stronger than this war, wars do not end by themselves, etc. These usages identify a narrative centred on the acknowledgement and identification of war rather than its resolution or opposition.

This thematic and lexical pattern is evidenced in Figure 7:

Figure 7. A sample of the context of the lexeme war in NYA-2023 (adapted from voyant-tools.org)

Left	Term	Right
for independence. Another year of	war	. War for our land. For
independence. Another year of war.	war	for our land. For our
beginning of a full-scale	war	. We did not know then
who educate children despite the	war	. Online, in person or by
Ukrainians are stronger than this	war	. February 24 convinced us of
convinced us of this. The	war	taught us a lot. It
to us, changed us. The	war	, unfortunately, separated families, took
the enemy. Stronger than this	war	. Because that’s the kind of
reforms and changes during the	war	. And as a result, a
were considered banal before the	war	, but during the war they
the war, but during the	war	they are priceless. I wish

In 2024, the introduction of the lexeme peace reflects forward-thinking and future goals which appear. This term is found in contexts such as capable of achieving a just peace, arguments for a just peace, in the first minutes of peace, and the new American President is willing and capable of achieving peace and ending Putin’s aggression. The recurrence of peace (9) parallels that of Russia (9), indicating equal statistical relevance. The similar frequency of Russia and peace suggests that the President links them closely as opposing concepts. The word combination just peace changes how peace is understood – from passive hope to an effort focused on justice, through the act of compelling Russia into a just peace.

The most salient collocates for peace include Ukraine (2) and capable (2): Ukraine that is capable of achieving a just peace. In contrast, Russia co-

occurs predominantly with war (2), Ukraine (2), and today (2), exemplified in expressions such as victory over all the evil that Russia has brought us, bringing the war back home to Russia, and if Russia shakes your hand today, do everything to stop Russia and end the war. This is documented in Figure 8:

Figure 8. A sample of the context of the lexeme peace in NYA-2024 (adapted from voyant-tools.org)

Left	Term	Right
capable of achieving a just	peace	– having a shield and a
the arguments for a just	peace	. It is achieved only by
in the first minutes of	peace	. I remember my conversation with
willing and capable of achieving	peace	and ending Putin's aggression. He
compelling Russia into a just	peace	. That means not forgetting, and
is why a truly just	peace	cannot be based on the
will overcome its path to	peace	, to a strong Ukraine. And
of Ukraine. We know that	peace	will not be given to
she deserves to live in	peace	. I wish this to all

Actors/Agents. Among the topmost lexical patterns is a group of lexemes that indicate the actors and agents of the current war conflict. The most significant among them are Ukrainians, people, world, and Russia. Having analysed the co-occurrence patterns, we tabulate the data below (Table 5):

Table 5. Actors/Agents representation throughout three years

	NYA-22	NYA-23	NYA-24
<i>Ukrainians</i>	Ukrainians (6), year (2), surprise (2), inspire (2)	stronger (15), year (6), Ukraine (5) provides (3) sows (2)	year (2), thousands (2)
<i>People</i>	return (2)	Ukraine (2), stories (2), people (2)	year (4), Ukrainians (2), Ukraine (2), today (2), they're (2), thank (2), say (2), people (2)

<i>World</i>	Ukraine (7), world (2), European (2), Europe (2), discovered (2), defends (2), changed (2)	-----	-----
<i>Russia</i>	-----	-----	war (2), Ukraine (2), today (2)

The lexemes Ukrainians and people remain central throughout the discourse over the three years, clearly functioning as agents and actors in Zelenskyy's narrative. The co-occurrence patterns of Ukrainians with year (2), surprise (2), and inspire (2) in NYA-22 suggest a purposeful lexical framing of national identity through time, emotion, and inspiration. But the next year the number of collocates is much higher, and we may find its co-occurrence with stronger (15), year (6), Ukraine (5), provides (3), sows (2). These patterns suggest that the idea of Ukrainians as active participants in both resistance and recovery has strengthened over time.

Interestingly, the word people is developed consistently throughout the studied period. In 2022, it collocates only with return, as referenced in Let this year be the year of return. The return of our people. By contrast, in 2023, we find a broader semantic range associated with people, which collocates with Ukraine (2), stories (2), and people (2). Additionally, the 2023 data reveals a much richer picture represented by tokens such as year (4), Ukrainians (2), Ukraine (2), today (2), they're (2), thank (2), say (2), and people (2).

Despite the world and Russia emerging as top-ranking keywords in NYA-22 and NYA-24, respectively, our analysis reveals that considerably less narrative attention is allocated to them compared to lexemes such as Ukrainians and people. World exhibits a relatively rich range of collocations in 2022, but it is absent from the discourse in the subsequent years. In contrast, Russia emerges only in 2024, with its co-occurring lexemes such as war (2), Ukraine (2), today (2) which implies its discursive construction as the aggressor within the narrative. From our above observations, we may sum up with the two arguments. The first one suggests that there is a shift in Zelenskyy's rhetoric, which increasingly places domestic actors (Ukrainians, people) over external ones (world, Russia). And the second one highlights that there is a different transformation in his discourse: from an initial emphasis on seeking global support and recognition through references

to the world, to a later, more pointed depiction of Russia as the explicit aggressor initiating the conflict.

Conclusion

The analysis of New Year addresses delivered by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from 2022 to 2024 in times of full-scale invasion allowed us to reveal a strategic evolution in wartime rhetoric—where lexical choices not only reflect national resilience but actively construct it. By employing quantitative and qualitative analysis, the study uncovers shifts in Zelenskyy’s discourse, providing a structured, data-driven approach to understanding his rhetorical evolution.

The application of Voyant Tools and the WebFX Readability Test provided statistical data that revealed detailed year-by-year distinctions across the studied period. In 2022, the number of sentences reached its peak, though with a lower diversity of unique sentence types. On the other hand, 2024 featured fewer sentences but a richer lexical variety. The percentage of complex words declined, indicating a shift toward a more conversational and less formal tone. At the same time, the increase in tokens and average sentence length suggests a gradual move toward more elaborate and detailed New Year greetings over the years.

To identify the main narratives in the New Year’s addresses, we conducted a frequency analysis of the most commonly occurring lexemes, which revealed the principal thematic patterns. The words Ukraine, Ukrainians, year, and people consistently ranked among the top five from 2022 to 2024, despite variations in their statistical prominence across the years. These high-frequency terms were then subjected to collocation analysis, which deepened our understanding of thematic representation within the discourse. The examination of co-occurring words in the NYA corpus highlighted a pronounced national stance in the President’s rhetoric, marked by a strategic use of language to reinforce national solidarity. A close reading of the concordance lines for each keyword helped to identify the main themes they express. The study found four key themes that appeared regularly: national identity, actors and agents, resistance, and time. These themes show how the speeches use language to build meaning and keep the message clear and connected throughout the New Year addresses.

Applying the steps mentioned above, we also uncovered evolving themes in the President’s rhetoric that are not immediately evident. The presence of tokens such fight (NYA-22), war (NYA-23), and peace among the

top ten frequency words may reflect shifts in public mood or strategic messaging. The evolution from stronger (NYA-22) to strong (NYA-23) and stand (NYA-24) may imply a performative resilience – Ukraine is not just surviving, but asserting itself. The token Russia is found only in NYA-24, and explicitly shows an identification with the external threat that brings destruction.

Through corpus-informed and discourse analysis, we see how language becomes a tool for shaping identity, mobilizing unity, and sustaining hope. Our further research will explore how metaphors add an additional layer of meaning that resonates deeply with the nation.

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Contact:

Mgr. Svitlana Goloshchuk, PhD.

Department of English Language and Intercultural Communication
Faculty of Applied Languages

Bratislava University of Economics and Business

Email Address: svitlana.goloshchuk@euba.sk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9621-9688>

Mgr. Natalia Shumeiko, PhD.

Department of English Language and Intercultural Communication
Faculty of Applied Languages

Bratislava University of Economics and Business

Email Address: natalia.shumeiko@euba.sk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7859-7519>