Проблеми екології та медицини

UDC: 811.111'38'42 DOI https://doi.org/10.31718/mep.2023.27.5-6.03

ORIGINAL RESEARCH / ОРИГІНАЛЬНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL ARTICLE TITLES FOCUSED ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Funding:

The study was conducted as part of the research project of the Department of Foreign Languages with Latin and Medical Terminology "Medical discourse as an object of comprehensive philological analysis: literary studies, linguistics, linguodidactics and intercultural communication", (state registration number 0118U006952).

The paper examines the rhetorical devices used in the metadata of medical research publications focused on the health implications of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The aim of the study is to analyze the stylistic means in article titles, through which the scientists aspire to convey their message to the audience, attract the readers' attention, persuade and stimulate them to take specific actions. We selected 697 research papers from the PubMed database, published since 24 February 2022, using relevant search terms ("Ukraine", "war", "impacts", and "health"), and examined them by applying the methods of stylistic, structural, and contextual analysis. The study detected 17 stylistic techniques (alliteration and assonance, allusion, anaphora, antithesis, ellipsis, idiom, metaphor, oxymoron, parallelism, paronomasia, periphrasis, personification, repetition, rhetorical questions, ecphonesis, and rhyming titles) that are used to highlight the numerous detrimental impacts of the war. The authors emphasize that analyzing the stylistic features of contemporary publications is essential for the advanced study of a foreign language, in particular, for identifying and comprehending the implicit meanings of texts, as well as applying relevant rhetorical devices in professional writing appropriately in order to achieve pragmatic communication goals. The findings of this study have important implications for educators in English for Academic Purposes and early-career academics, aiming to publish their research in international journals, aspiring to enhance visibility and maximize the impact of their articles within the scientific community.

Keywords: the war in Ukraine, medical discourse, research paper, stylistic devices, article titles, author's intention, audience.

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ISSN 2073-4662 (print), ISSN 2519-2302 (on-line)

The Medical and Ecological Problems.2023; 27(5-6):19-25. doi: https://doi.org/10.31718/mep.2023.27.5-6.03

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Relation of the article to planned research projects. Since February 24, 2022, Ukraine has been enduring violence, trauma, destruction and displacement. Russia's full-scale invasion is devastating, with multiple detrimental impacts, both shortterm and long-term. These impacts are being addressed worldwide and virtually every day in digital media, and health issues are among the most burning ones. Experts from various healthcare spheres aspire to draw public attention to these tragic implications, thereby trying to mitigate them [6; 9]. The aim of this research is to analyze rhetorical devices in the titles of research papers focused on the fullscale invasion of Ukraine and its health implications. Analyzing stylistic elements in contemporary article titles reveals authors' intentions and enhances understanding of academic discourse. This is essential for in-depth knowledge of a foreign language, in particular, for identifying and comprehending the implicit meanings of texts, as well as applying relevant rhetorical devices in professional writing appropriately, hence the relevance of the research.

We focus on the article title because this structural element holds substantial pragmatic potential in academic writing. The significance of the article title in scientific discourse has been widely acknowledged and explored by various scholars, as it plays a pivotal role in creating the first impression of a study, and ultimately it can have a significant impact on its visibility and influence. Bavdekar (2016) emphasizes the role of titles in scientific articles in conveying information and capturing readers' interest [4]. Likewise, Tullu (2019) highlights the critical role of the title as the initial impression of a research article. The scholar advocates the importance of crafting titles that are reader-friendly, descriptive, accurate, concise, and interesting while avoiding any misleading information [23]. Rossi and Brand (2020) discuss the influence of journal article titles on citation rates, and underscore the vital role of a wellelaborated title in summarizing research effectively, thus potentially enhancing citation rates [21]. Moreover, Lubowitz (2020) emphasizes the impact of health research article titles on both the influence of the research and its acceptance rates [16]. Hence, an effective title has benefits for both authors and academic journals. It can help authors attract more readers to their work, and at the same time, it can increase a journal's visibility and readership by making the content more discoverable and appealing. Jiang and Hyland (2022) explored the evolution of research article titles across disciplines over six decades, revealing shifts in title length, structure, and content. Notably, they identified an increasing trend in title length, as well as a propensity toward question-based and compound titles [13]. It is necessary to point out that the use of interrogative (question-based) titles, often referred to as the "interrogative gambit" (Ahmad, 2012), is a unique feature of scientific English [2]. A similar tendency was identified in the study by Hallock and Bennett (2021) [8].

In the area of biomedical research, Graves et al. (2014) examined the use of titles in making argumentative claims. They noted an increase in the frequency of verbs in the titles of experimental research articles over time [7]. Salager-Meyer et al. (2013) performed a diachronic analysis of clinical report titles, spanning a 160-year period. Their research revealed that over time, clinical report titles have become longer, more syntactically complex, semantically richer, and more diverse in terms of title types. Researchers also largely explored the use of punctuation marks in article titles [22]. For instance, the use of colons is largely typical of medical review articles or clinical trials [1; 10; 14]. Hyland and Zou (2022) remark that creating informative and engaging titles is indispensable in the digital age, where online searches heavily rely on articles. Consequently, authors are encouraged to create titles that attract readers, leading to potential readership, citations, and utilization of their research [12]. In this context, Nieuwenhuis (2022) identified an intriguing tendency in academic discourse, particularly the recurring use of the title "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" in 408 research articles. The author suggests that the pressure to publish in academia can lead researchers to opt for creative titles, even drawing from popular song titles to stand out. Risk assessment plays a role as well, with researchers choosing well-known cultural references for wider recognition. Therefore, multiple researchers selected the same title, referring to a popular song [19].

Langdon-Neuner (2007) emphasizes the emergence of attention-attracting devices, such as allusions and clichés, in medical article titles. However, the impact of these devices remains an area that requires further exploration [15]. Therefore, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the stylistic devices in article titles, their evolution, and their role in shaping readers' perceptions and engagement with research [18]. The findings of this study have important implications for educators in English for Academic Purposes and early-career academics, aiming to publish in English. Understanding the characteristics of research titles and the appropriate use of stylistic devices is important for novice writers aspiring to gain visibility in international journals and maximize the impact of their articles within the scientific community.

We analyzed 697 article titles from the *PubMed* database [20]. The articles were selected by adjusting the custom range for publication date (published

from 24 February 2022 until November 2023), using relevant search terms ("Ukraine"; "war"; "impacts"; "health"). The study relied on the methods of stylistic, structural, and contextual analyses. Stylistic devices in article titles were examined using The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms [3] and Writing with Clarity and Style: A Guide to Rhetorical Devices for Contemporary Writers [11]. The scope of health issues in research publications includes, but is not limited to: COVID-19 vaccination of Ukrainian refugees; managing allergic patients from Ukraine; prevention of TB infection spread; management of wounds by explosive weapons; the impact of the war in Ukraine on cancer patients; monitoring and controlling preventable infectious diseases; managing Ukrainian refugees with chronic diseases (e.g., renal diseases, blood disorders, etc.), HIV, AIDS, etc.; challenges for perinatal health; mental health and psychoemotional problems, e.g.: posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression in adults, adolescents, and children. The scholars also focus on the neurobiology of trauma, mental health symptoms and coping strategies, psychosocial support efforts, future thinking and mental well-being, etc.

The study detected the following stylistic techniques, used in the selected article titles: alliteration and assonance, allusion, anaphora, antithesis, ellipsis, idiom, metaphor, oxymoron, parallelism, paronomasia, periphrasis, personification, repetition, rhetorical questions, ecphonesis, and rhyming titles. Table 1 presents the definitions and examples of these stylistic devices, as well as some remarks and additional explanations, where necessary. It also demonstrates our approach to presenting this linguistic material to PhD students in the classroom, thereby ensuring their understanding and appropriate use of rhetorical moves in academic writing. Table 1 also features the names of scholarly journals, where these articles have been published, thus introducing PhD students to modern international peer-reviewed journals and helping them navigate in the PubMed database. In addition, each example is accompanied by the year and month of its publication, and this information facilitates tracing the tendencies in Ukraine and global healthcare, triggers classroom discussion and develops students' critical thinking.

Table 1 Stylistic features of article titles in PubMed (as of November 2023)

| No. | Stylistic device | Definition | Examples from PubMed |
|-----|------------------|---|---|
| | Alliteration | The initial consonant sound is repeated in two neighboring words to draw attention to the phrase. | "Ukraine: War, <u>bullets</u> , and <u>bombs</u> – millions of children and adolescents are in danger" (<i>Child Abuse Negl.</i> 2022 Mar) " <u>Cancer</u> in <u>conflict</u> : The impact of the war in Ukraine on Moldova" (<i>Eur J Cancer.</i> 2023 Aug) "Inside the Ukraine war: <u>health</u> and <u>humanity</u> " (<i>Postgrad Med J.</i> 2022 Jun) "Russia's war in Ukraine – the devastation of <u>health</u> and <u>human</u> rights" (<i>N Engl J Med.</i> 2022 Jul) "The <u>human</u> toll and <u>humanitarian</u> crisis of the Russia-Ukraine war: the first 162 days" (<i>BMJ Glob Health.</i> 2022 Sep) "The impact of war on the environment and health: implications for <u>readiness</u> , <u>response</u> , and <u>recovery</u> in Ukraine" (<i>Lancet.</i> 2022 Sep) " <u>Fate and future</u> of the medical students in Ukraine: A silently bubbling educational crisis" (<i>Med Educ.</i> 2022 Aug) " <u>Trauma</u> and <u>trust</u> : How war exposure shapes social and institutional trust among refugees" (<i>Front Psychol.</i> 2022 Aug) |
| | Allusion | Indirect reference to a person, event or piece of literature. | "For whom the bell tolls: Attacks on Ukrainian healthcare threatens us all" (Eur J Intern Med. 2023 Jan) The expression "ask not for whom the bell tolls" is a proverbial saying reminding us that we all have a connection with each other. The origin of the expression, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls," comes from the author, John Donne (1572-1631): "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main () any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee". |
| | Anaphora | Successive clauses or sentences start with the same word(s). The same word or phrase is used to begin successive clauses or sentences. Thus, the reader's attention is drawn directly to the message of the sentence. | "100 days of death. 100 days of pain. 100 days of fear. 100 days of war in Ukraine has caused one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since World War II" (UNICEF Report. 2022 Jun) "The psychological consequences of the Ukraine war: What we know, and what we have to learn" (Acta Psychiatr Scand. 2022 Aug) "Sense of danger, sense of country's mastery, and sense of personal mastery as concomitants of psychological distress and subjective well-being in a sample of Poles following Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Prospective analyses" (Appl Psychol Health Well Being. 2023 Aug) |

| Antithesis | Antithesis emphasizes the contrast between two ideas. The structure of the phrases / clauses is usually similar in order to draw the reader's / listener's attention directly to the contrast. | "War in Ukraine and dialysis treatment: human suffering and organizational challenges" (Clin Kidney J. 2023 Jan) "Armed conflicts and kidney patients: a consensus statement from the Renal Disaster Relief Task Force of the ERA" (Nephrol Dial Transplant. 2023 Jan) "Cancer and war in Ukraine: How the world can help win this battle" (JACC CardioOncol. 2022 Apr) "Maleficent comrades: War in Ukraine and COVID-19" (Disaster Med Public Health Prep. 2022 Oct) "The war in Ukraine and diabetic foot care: Challenges, recommendations" (Diabetes Metab Syndr. 2022 Oct) "Sleep and armed conflict: Future complications of war in Ukraine" (Rev Neurol (Paris). 2022) |
|-------------|--|--|
| Assonance | The same or similar vowel sounds are repeated in two neighboring words for emphasis. | "War in Ukraine: A tale of <u>unspeakable</u> horror, <u>unprecedented</u> unity and <u>unquenchable</u> thirst for freedom" (<i>Eur J Vasc Endovasc Surg.</i> 2022 May) "From <u>adversity</u> to <u>advancement</u> : leveraging war-tested approaches for the post-conflict reformation of the Ukrainian healthcare landscape" (<i>Postgrad Med J.</i> 2023 Sep) "The impact of war on the environment and health: implications for <u>readiness</u> , <u>response</u> , and <u>recovery</u> in Ukraine" (<i>Lancet.</i> 2022 Sep) |
| Ecphonesis | A figure of speech where intense emotion is conveyed through an abrupt exclamation. | "The war is here!" Anxiety, trauma centrality, and the mediating role of daily stressors in Romanian and Ukrainian civilians" (Psychol Trauma.2023 Aug) "Measles: a new danger for Ukraine's children! The need for an effective and timely vaccination prevention campaign for an insidious disease that comes from afar" (J Prev Med Hyg. 2023 Jun) "Act now! Critical care roles and obligations during an urban war" (Crit Care. 2022 Mar) |
| Ellipsis | The omission from a clause of one or more words that are nevertheless understood in the context of the remaining elements. | " <u>Vulnerable in silence</u> : Paediatric health in the Ukrainian crisis" (Ann Med Surg. 2022 Aug) |
| Idiom | A phrase that possesses a figurative meaning beyond the literal interpretation of its individual words. | "Putting medical boots on the ground: Lessons from the war in Ukraine and applications for future conflict with near-peer adversaries" (<i>J Am Coll Surg</i> . 2023 Aug) The idiom "boots on the ground" means the physical presence of people (e.g., police, soldiers, etc.) in a specific location, working towards a common goal. |
| Metaphor | A comparison between two unrelated things based on their similarity. | "Life and mental health in Limbo of the Ukraine war: How can helpers assist civilians, asylum seekers and refugees affected by the war?" (Front Psychol. 2023 Feb) "Medical students escape war torn Ukraine but face Limbo " (BMJ. 2022 Apr) State of limbo = a situation where someone is caught between two stages and it is unclear what will happen next; a state of imprisonment or confinement "Cancer and war in Ukraine: How the world can help win this battle " (JACC CardioOncol. 2022 Apr) "The battle for mental well-being in Ukraine: mental health crisis and economic aspects of mental health services in wartime" (Int J Ment Health Syst. 2023 Sep) War metaphors in medicine are quite widespread. Several cognitive metaphors underlie these expressions, for example: TREATING ILL-NESS IS FIGHTING A WAR; THE DISEASE IS AN ENEMY, etc. [5; 17] "Russo-Ukrainian war amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Global impact and containment strategy" (Int J Surg. 2022 Jun) Containment was a geopolitical strategic foreign policy pursued by the United States during the Cold War to prevent the spread of communism after the end of World War II. |
| Oxymoron | Contradictory ideas are combined to create a thought-provoking expression. | "The silent war: PTSD in Ukraine: Insights from other war-affected nations for treating intergenerational PTSD" (<i>Int J Surg.</i> 2023 Jul) "War" inherently implies violence and noise, which are the opposite of what "silent" represents. This juxtaposition emphasizes the hidden or less recognized aspects of the war, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). |
| Parallelism | Parallel sentence structure: successive clauses or sentences are similarly structured. | "Men wage war, women and children pay the price" (BMJ. 2022 Mar) "Russia's invasion of Ukraine: an attack on health" (Lancet. 2023 Feb) |

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|----------------------|--|--|
| Paronomasia | Also known as a pun, a play of words relying on various interpretations of words that sound or are written alike, creating symbolic associations. | "The <u>spoils of war</u> and the long-term <u>spoiling of health conditions</u> of entire nations" (<i>Atherosclerosis</i> . 2022 Jul) The noun "spoil" stands for a military trophy, i.e., a loot, that an army acquires as a result of a conquest. The verb "to spoil" means to ruin, damage, or negatively affect the quality or condition of something. |
| Periphrasis | A linguistic device in which a writer uses an elaborate and indirect way of expressing an idea rather than employing a direct or straightforward expression. | "Fate and future of the medical students in Ukraine: A silently bubbling educational crisis" (Med Educ. 2022 Aug) The word "silently" implies a quiet effect, while "bubbling" suggests something active and noticeable, whereas "crisis" has connotations of urgency and immediacy. The juxtaposition emphasizes that the educational crisis is not overtly or loudly apparent and may not be widely recognized or acknowledged but is gradually developing and has the potential to escalate into a more evident problem. |
| Personification | Attribution of human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects or abstract concepts to engage the reader and imbue emotions in unexpected ways. | "The war refugees from Ukraine: an HIV epidemic is fleeing as well" (AIDS. 2022 Oct) "Ukrainian science has survived against the odds – now let's rebuild together" (Nature. 2023 Mar) "The fight to keep Ukrainian science alive through a year of war" (Nature. 2023 Feb) "The war next-door" (A pilot study by Romanian scholars) (Front Psychol. 2022 Dec) "The impact of "the war that drags on" in Ukraine for the health of children and adolescents" (Child Abuse Negl. 2022 Jun) "When the guns fall silent Priorities for health in post-war Ukraine" (Eur J Public Health. 2022 Aug) "Immunization in state of siege: the importance of thermostable vaccines for Ukraine and other war-torn countries and territories" (Expert Rev Vaccines. 2022 Jul) "The neurobiology of childhood trauma, from early physical pain onwards: as relevant as ever in today's fractured world" (Review Eur J Psychotraumatol. 2022 Oct) "Children's health caught up in Ukraine conflict" (Lancet. 2022 Mar) "Maleficent comrades: War in Ukraine and COVID-19" (Disaster Med Public Health Prep. 2022 Oct) "Poisoned waters of war: Ukraine's invisible victims" (J Occup Environ Med. 2023 Sep) |
| Repetition | Repeating words or phrases throughout the text to emphasize certain facts or ideas. | "Joint family activities <u>and</u> adolescent health <u>and</u> wellbeing: Further considerations following the war in Ukraine" (<i>J Adolesc Health</i> . 2022 Jul) "Exposure to <u>war</u> , <u>war</u> nightmares, insomnia, and <u>war</u> -related post-traumatic stress disorder: A network analysis among university students during the <u>war</u> in Ukraine" (<i>J Affect Disord</i> . 2023 Sep) |
| Rhetorical questions | Question without a direct answer: The author raises a question, but does not answer it directly as he/she sees the answer as obvious. | "Meaning-centered therapy in Ukraine's war refugees: An attempt to cope with the absurd?" (Front Psychol. Published online 2022 Dec) The impact of "the war that drags on" in Ukraine for the health of children and adolescents: Old problems in a new conflict?" (Child Abuse Negl. 2022 Jun) "Editorial: Whither globalization and health in an era of geopolitical uncertainty?" (Global Health. 2022 Oct) |
| Rhyming titles | The similarity in sound between words or the concluding sounds of words. | "The war next-door" (A pilot study by Romanian scholars) (Front Psychol. 2022 Dec) "Peace, not war in Ukraine or anywhere else, please" (Anaesth Crit Care Pain Med. 2022 Jun) Rhyming enhances the content, jogs our memory and is persuasive. |

The abovementioned rhetorical devices in article titles provide the publications with a vivid stylistic shade and effectively implement the following communicative strategies and pragmatic intentions: denouncing the war in Ukraine and exposing the detrimental impacts of the Russian invasion on the Ukrainian population's health; attracting the readers' attention; stimulating them to download and read the article. The authors aim to alert the readers, to focus their attention on these urgent problems, which are numerous, alarming, and long-term. Indeed, the repetition of initial consonant and vowel sounds in

neighboring words (alliteration and assonance) adds a melodic dimension to the titles, making them more compelling and encouraging readers to explore further. Titles featuring parallelism rely on successive clauses with similar structures and help the reader concentrate on the message, emphasizing the central themes while maintaining a sense of symmetry. Anaphora, repetitions and rhyming elements also capture the reader's attention, making the titles more catchy and appealing. Hence, they enhance content, increase memorability, and persuade readers. Furthermore, the omission of certain words (ellipsis) engages readers' curiosity, prompting them to

read further to uncover the missing information. This stylistic device heightens anticipation and encourages exploration.

Metaphors convey complex concepts through familiar images. Their function is to make abstract phenomena more tangible, thereby enhancing the reader's connection to the content. Likewise, personification animates abstract concepts, making the war's impact on public health more emotionally resonant. By doing so, the authors seek to create awareness and mobilize action to address these critical health challenges. Idioms and periphrasis are effective in article titles as they add a layer of figurative language and cultural resonance, thereby capturing readers' attention and creating a memorable impact. The function of allusions, such as "For whom the bell tolls," is to evoke shared cultural or literary knowledge, fostering a sense of connection among readers and reinforcing the idea that we are all interlinked. Meanwhile, antithesis and oxymoron create a sharp contrast between two ideas, thus drawing the reader's focus to the striking opposition between these elements. The function of puns in article titles is to create a play on words that engages the reader's attention and provides a subtle hint at the article's content. In doing so, the authors emphasize the critical nature of health issues, which are dramatically exacerbated during the war.

Ecphonesis serves to highlight the urgency and emotional impact of the subjects discussed. The exclamations draw the readers' attention to the gravity of the situation, such as the immediate presence of war or the urgent need for vaccination to prevent a dangerous disease. Finally, rhetorical questions serve to provoke thought, emphasize or argue the author's perspective. These questions are asked without expecting direct answers, making them tools for engaging readers and reinforcing particular viewpoints. It is also necessary to observe that some titles in Table 1 incorporate multiple stylistic devices simultaneously to create a maximum impactful effect, e.g., alliteration and assonance, antithesis and metaphor, personification and rhymes, etc. This deliberate engagement strategy showcases the authors' objective to maximize the dissemination of vital information regarding health concerns.

Thus, the researched material demonstrates the authors' multiple and diverse techniques to draw the audience's attention to the detrimental health implications of the war in Ukraine. The examined rhetorical devices serve a dual purpose: they enhance the stylistic appeal of the publications while also aligning with specific communicative and pragmatic intentions, such as encouraging potential readers to explore the content in search of answers and deeper insights. The abovementioned health issues require

coordinated actions of experts, integrated and multidisciplinary programs; discussion, and streamlining both at national and international levels. These actions are not limited to the measures within the health care systems, but also should engage social, educational, occupational, and community service measures, which are also important factors in promoting health and well-being. Therefore, the stylistic devices in article titles effectively capture the attention of a wider audience, eventually reaching out for a collaborative approach, international cooperation, and intersectoral support to amend the detrimental impacts inflicted by the war.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest

Ethical approval:

This study did not require ethical approval

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УДК: 811.111'38'42 DOI https://doi.org/10.31718/mep.2023.27.5-6.03

СТИЛІСТИЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ЗАГОЛОВКІВ МЕДИЧНИХ НАУКОВИХ СТАТЕЙ, ПРИСВЯЧЕНИХ ВІЙНІ В УКРАЇНІ

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У статті досліджено стилістичні особливості метаданих англомовних публікацій, присвячених наслідкам повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну. Мета дослідження – виявити стилістичні засоби в заголовках медичних статей, за допомогою яких науковці прагнуть донести своє повідомлення до аудиторії, звернути увагу читача, переконати й спонукати адресата до конкретних дій. Авторами проаналізовано 697 заголовків наукових статей, опублікованих з 24 лютого 2022 року в базі даних PubMed (використовуючи пошукові терміни "Ukraine", "war", "impacts", "health"), за допомогою методів стилістичного, структурного і контекстного аналізу. Дослідження виявило 17 стилістичних прийомів (алітерація та асонанс, алюзія, анафора, антитеза, еліпсис, фразеологізм, метафора, оксиморон, паралелізм, парономазія, перифраз, персоніфікація, повтор, риторичні запитання, екфонезис та римовані заголовки), які використовуються для привернення уваги широкої аудиторії до численних негативних наслідків війни в Україні для здоров'я населення. Автори наголошують, що аналіз стилістичних особливостей сучасних англомовних публікацій є важливим елементом поглибленого вивчення іноземної мови, оскільки ці навички сприяють виявленню імпліцитних смислів іншомовного тексту, а також належному застосуванню відповідних стилістичних засобів у професійному мовленні для досягнення прагматичних цілей комунікації. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для викладачів англійської мови наукового спілкування, а також для молодих учених, які планують публікувати наукові розвідки в міжнародних журналах, прагнуть підвищити видимість і цитування своїх статей у науковій спільноті.

Ключові слова: війна в Україні, медичний дискурс, наукова публікація, стилістичні засоби, заголовки статей, авторська інтенція, реципієнт.

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