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THE NARRATIVIZATION OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY IN A POSTCOLONIAL DIMENSION

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This research examines the narrativization of Ukrainian identity in Timothy Snyder's historical work "The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999" through the lens of postcolonial criticism and cognitive linguistic analysis. The study addresses the complex positioning of Central and Eastern Europe as an intermediate region with a contradictory identity, particularly focusing on Ukraine's agency and subjectivity within broader European imperial contexts. The research employs frame analysis using S. Zhabotynska's cognitive domains (subject, actional, possessive, identification, and comparative) to analyse how Ukrainian identity is constructed and represented in Snyder's narrative. The methodology incorporates corpus linguistic analysis using BootCat, TagAnt, and AntConc programs to identify linguistic markers and collocational patterns associated with Ukrainian identity discourse. The theoretical framework draws upon postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's concept of colonial discourse persistence beyond imperial dissolution, and applies it to the postcommunist context of Central and Eastern Europe. The study distinguishes between two scholarly approaches to postcommunist societies: ontological claims to postcoloniality, emphasising historical lack of subjectivity, and analysis of colonial forces' balance across different historical moments. Results demonstrate that T. Snyder's work presents Ukraine as a modern nation with distinct agency, challenging colonial narratives that position Ukraine as merely peripheral to metropolitan centres. The frame analysis reveals predominant use of subject and actional domains, with Ukraine conceptualised as an active entity capable of independent action rather than the passive object of imperial manipulation. Corpus analysis identifies key collocations emphasising political agency (activists, state, independence, nationalism) and social stratification (peasants, gentry, elites, patriots). The research reveals T. Snyder's deployment of conceptual metaphors, personification, evaluative vocabulary, and action verbs to construct the Ukrainian identity narrative. These linguistic strategies serve to establish Ukrainian historical subjectivity and counter persistent colonial frames that marginalise Ukrainian agency. The study concludes that frame analysis using cognitive domains effectively reveals Ukrainian identity narrativization patterns in historical discourse. The postcolonial critical perspective successfully demonstrates Ukraine's agency within Central and Eastern European historical contexts, challenging destructive propaganda narratives through rigorous linguistic and conceptual analysis of scholarly historical texts.

Keywords: *Ukrainian identity, narrativization, postcolonial criticism, frame analysis, cognitive domains, Timothy Snyder, Central and Eastern Europe, colonial discourse, agency, corpus linguistics, conceptual metaphors, historical narrative, postcommunist societies.*

Introduction. According to modern scholars (Kołodziejczyk, 2023), Central and Eastern Europe has been an intermediate region with a contradictory identity since the 19th century, inhabited by nations that necessarily associated themselves

with the concept of "Europeanness", but created their idea of peripherality, represented by narratives of belonging to the European project. In this project, the key idea is the awareness of old Europe as a center of democracy, to which everyone

should long for. Another feature of this region is that, without participating in overseas colonization, it was in complex relations with European empires, although these relations were not considered in the discourse of colonialism. Postcolonial criticism has proposed a way to rethink the role of Central and Eastern Europe in a broad historical context, as part of European empires, including the communist period (Kołodziejczyk, 2023). Edward Said, the founder of the postcolonial approach in literature, believed that the impact of imperialism on colonies does not end with the disappearance of imperial power. Imperialism shaped the culture of the colonized, so colonial discourse can continue after the disappearance of the empire itself. Postcolonial theory focuses on the relationship between the metropolis and its colonial subjects, emphasizing the hybridity of the cultures of the colonizers and the colonized (Ryan, 2017). And Central and Eastern Europe is a unique case that can radically change the approach to discussing the origins of modern Europe and its historical heritage. And the first step was the return from the 80s of the twentieth century to the name “Central Europe” instead of “Eastern Europe” (which existed to designate the military-political “Eastern Bloc”), which indicates internal processes in this region aimed at regaining power over its discourse (Kołodziejczyk, 2023).

David Moore was one of the first in 2001 to voice the advisability of applying postcolonial optics to the post-Soviet space, introducing the concept of postcommunism into the terminology of postcolonial criticism. However, back in 1997, Professor Marko Pavlyshyn, in the collection “Canon and Iconostasis: Literary Critical Articles”, wrote about painful issues for Ukraine: the binary opposition Russia – Ukraine, the synonyms of which are empire – nation, colonizer – colony, metropolis – periphery; populism – modernism, art for politics – art for art; opposition derived from the two previous ones: complete culture – incomplete culture” (Pavlyshyn, 1997), and four years earlier in 1993 he published an English-language article “Ukrainian Literature and the Eroticism of Postcolonialism”. In 2000, Eva Thompson published a fundamental work “Troubadours of Empire” on the colonial nature of Russian literature, which has now become commonplace.

There are two points of view regarding the scientific assessment of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe: the first one uses postcolonial categories mainly to assert the postcolonial status of postcommunist societies. This type is dominated by ontological claims to postcoloniality and em-

phasizes the long-standing lack of subjectivity (in our research, subjectivity is represented by the domain of agency) of postcommunist societies. This society is not only enslaved by the Soviet Union, and before that by Tsarist Russia, the Habsburg Empire, and Imperial Germany, but is also under the hegemonic influence of the West, which puts it in a situation of dependence. Thus, the English professor Natasha Kovacevic believes that the manifestation of the so-called “Eastern European Orientalism” is manifested in the long-standing attempts of Western Europe to present itself as a developed and civilized part of the continent, in contrast to the politically unstable, agrarian, and outdated East (Kovačević, 2008). The second point of view recognizes the undeniable coloniality of the forces that have moored the societies of Central and Eastern Europe, and questions the balance of forces in the cultural, social and political spheres at different historical moments and in the present, rather than postcoloniality as a characteristic of society (Kołodziejczyk, 2023). This approach is confronted with the problem of narrativization of Ukraine since 1991, with particular aggravation since 2014 and subsequently in 2022. The colonial legacy provokes the creation of persistent negative frames in the narrative about Ukraine. The consequences of colonialism are manifested in the fact that Ukraine is still considered part of the discourse metropolis, and therefore ignores its agency, thereby spreading artificial narratives. In this context, Timothy Snyder’s work states the subjectivity of Ukraine, grounded on the history of nation-building.

Discussion. Timothy Snyder is an American scholar, expert in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, writer, professor at Yale University, and member of the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society in the USA, so his works undoubtedly contain a new, unbiased, and objective perspective for the Ukrainian narratives. At the same time, the importance of his research works, lectures for students and educators in Western countries lies in the fact that he helps to build an authentic image of Ukraine on the international scientific stage without the interference of outdated and frankly false ideas that were formed as a result of centuries of statelessness and being under the colonial influence of several empires. In his study “The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999” (Yale University Press, 2003), the author presents historical events and figures that shaped national consciousness and influenced the development of the country, and narrates the identity of Ukraine with various socio-cultural markers.

Thus, in Timothy Snyder's works (Snyder, T. 2003), the frame "UKRAINE" is represented as:

- a modern nation, which constitutes one-fourth of the early modern national idea on the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth;
- a state named after the nation;
- a country the size of France, with fifty million inhabitants and a tangled history of national suffering in the 20th century.

The concept of identity is one of the central ones in modern humanities. Thus, social psychologist Henri Tajfel defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept that results from his awareness of belonging to a certain social group" (Tajfel, 1978). There is an opinion that social or collective identity arises when "self-definition focuses on a common self-assessment, which may be, in particular, a belief, a symbol, a psychological or physical trait, etc" (Simon, 2004). Since the definition of identity is a term for a set of characteristics that are not stable, fixed features of group or individual representations, and can be subject to manipulation or even distortion, the study of identity is a complex process and must take into account various frames of thought. Thanks to the scientific explorations of M. Minsky, C. Fillmore, M. Post, F. Uneger, framing in the process of building narratives was defined. A. Lieblich, R. Tuval-Mashiach, and T. Silber define narratives as stories that "are usually built around a core of facts or life events, but allow for a wide periphery for freedom of individuality and creativity in selecting, supplementing, emphasizing, and interpreting these memorable facts" (Lieblich, 1998). Olivia M. Bullock, Hillary K. Schulman, and Richard Husky argue that information presented in narrative form is easier to perceive, since it has a plot structure and characters. This makes narrative a powerful tool, for example, in political discourse. The concept of narrative for political psychology is important for the legitimization of collective beliefs, emotions, and actions (Bullock, 2021). Generalizing the concept of framing in linguistics, Olena Kolyadenko defines:

1) a frame as a system of choosing linguistic means, related to the prototype of the scene (C. Fillmore);

2) frame – a cognitive model that represents knowledge and assessments related to specific, frequently recurring situations (F. Ungerer, H.-J. Schmidt);

3) frame as a unit of knowledge organized around a concept, containing information about what is essential, typical, and possible for this concept within a certain culture (T. A. Van Dijk, R. Beaugrand, W. Dressler) (Koliadenko, 2013).

In our research, we use framing as the representation of certain cognitive knowledge in a modeling of information. In the process of verbalizing experience, people rely on already known and established cognitive structures. A frame is essentially a data structure that represents a stereotypical situation, helping us interpret and respond to new experiences based on prior knowledge. The presence of schematic representations that are common to all members of a certain community affects the development of the created discourse (Djachuk, 2021).

Ukrainian scientist Svitlana Zhabotynska proposed to use the so-called basic frames, which have the highest level of information generalization, as a tool for modeling information verbalized by linguistic activity. They consist of propositional schemes, the arrangement of which helps in organizing mental information. Combining these schemes allows you to create conceptual networks, which in turn modulate conceptual spaces. In cognitive linguistics, large conceptual spaces are called domains. According to Zhabotynska, there are five such domains: subject, actional, possessive, identification, and comparative (Zhabotynska, 2019).

In Timothy Snyder's book, these domains can be illustrated as follows:

Subject domain

"UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT – "QUALITY" (slots hold information relevant to a particular domain)": *Left-bank Ukraine; Right-bank Ukraine; Western Ukraine; Modern Ukraine; Independent Ukraine; Eastern Ukraine; Early modern Ukraine; Ancient Ukrainian lands; Ethnically Ukrainian territory; Ukraine was acceptable; Ukraine was split.*

"UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT – "QUANTITY": *Twenty Ukrainian villages; Three million Ukrainian speakers; Two Ukrainian states; Two leaders of the Ukrainian national movement.*

"UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "THERE": *Ukraine in the Commonwealth; Ukraine in the Soviet Union; Ukraine in Russia.*

"UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "THEN": *Today's Ukraine*

Action domain

"UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "DOING": *Ukraine acted; Ukraine appeared to have; Ukraine became the target; Ukraine differed from Poland; Ukraine enjoyed good relations as states; Ukraine gained independence; Ukraine hesitated to give nuclear weapons; Ukraine proposed a pact.*

UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "ACT ON": *Ukraine failed the Commonwealth;*

Possessive frame

UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "OWNER": *Petliura's Ukraine*

Comparative domain

UKRAINE IS AN ENTITY that represents SLOT "IS /AS IF/ CORRELATES TO": *Ukraine is a country as big as France*

According to the cognitive framing, we see how narrativization about Ukraine is represented in human minds. The domains of objectivity and actionality were most frequently used in Timothy Snyder's book.

In the article "Narrative Approaches to Narrative", M. L. Ryan defines narrative as "the use of signs-language, images, perhaps music, and their various combinations – that evoke in the recipient's mind a certain type of representation known as a 'narrative'" (Ryan, 2017). In Snyder's text, the narrative is verbalized by vocabulary denoting a *geographical area* (lands, country, borderland), *political processes*, and *actual figures* who embodied the national project (Ukrainian cause, movement), as well as *a sovereign geopolitical entity* that restored independence in 1991. The lexeme "Ukraine" is the main verbalizer of this frame and its core, and a way of nomination, and such words as *state*, *nationalists*, *idea*, *independence*, *nation*, *society*, *question*, and *statehood* are peripheral components.

To conceptualize knowledge on the lasting effects of colonialism on societies, cultures, and identities, we explored the role of the figurative component in marginalizing national voices and histories. We studied the role of conceptual metaphors in reinforcing stereotypes in narrativization. Alongside the development of cognitive linguistics, the study of metaphor as a complex cognitive phenomenon has gained popularity. Conceptual metaphors play a figurative component in the narrative of Ukrainian identity. Metaphor is a product of human activity and is used to conceptualize knowledge. The idea of conceptual metaphors as the basis of rational thinking and the detailed study of the processes underlying them was first explored in detail by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their work "Metaphors We Live By" in 1980 (Lakoff, 1980). Since metaphors are used to understand the world around us, metaphorization can serve as a tool on a par with framing to present knowledge to readers in a culturally understandable form. For example, Timothy Snyder uses the following metaphors in his text:

- *Ukrainian lands played a particular role;*
- *The Ukrainian state-building project is the keystone;*
- *The Kyiv state was riven by ideological disputes among its leaders;*

– *The Ukrainian idea bore a family resemblance to the contemporary aspirations;*

– *Ukrainians sought to break the looking glass, melt the fragments, and shape something new.*

Also, the following tropes are productive for creating a narrative in Snyder's text:

1. Personification of historical subjects:

In Ukraine, the national movement was strong enough to contemplate independence, but weak enough to see that it needed allies.

Poland and Ukraine acted "as sovereign states".

The collaboration of Ukrainian elites with German authorities, arguably rational from the perspective of those who wished to found a Ukrainian state and build a Ukrainian nation.

2. Action verbs/dynamics:

The Home Army and the UPA fought along a front of their own that stretched for hundreds of miles.

These new Ukrainian partisans attacked a German garrison and took its arms for themselves.

After Khmelnytsky allied with Muscovy at Pereiaslav, his Cossacks helped Muscovy make war on the Commonwealth.

3. Evaluative (axiological) vocabulary:

Vyhovskyi lacked the authority to bind the masses of free Cossacks who would not have been ennobled under his proposal, and the charisma to persuade them in time.

"Poles" and "Ukrainians" were doomed to be enemies.

Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, leader of the Cossack uprising, comes down in history as a Ukrainian hero.

4. Metaphorical structures:

Ukrainian idea's crystallization at the end of the nineteenth century.

These harder edges of the Ukrainian idea came from a new generation of secular activists.

The Ukrainian state-building project is the keystone of European Security in the twenty-first century.

An important stage of the study of linguistic markers of Ukrainian identity in the original text was the creation of a corpus using the "BootCat" program. According to the classification of Orisa Demska-Kulchytska, the newly created corpus can be characterized as: full-text (it contains the full text); research (used to form a new concept); synchronous; static; specialized (genre-specific corpus built based on historical research).

The corpus was syntactically marked up using the "TagAnt" program. The research was conducted in the corpus manager "AntConc".

In order to determine which words were most often used in combination with words that explicitly indicate belonging to the Ukrainian context,

a search and selection of words that were used next to the words Ukrainian and Ukraine was conducted.

So, the most frequent collocations with the lexeme Ukrainian according to the results are: activists – 30; state – 22; partisans – 19; nationalists – 16; idea – 14; independence – 18; nation – 12; nationalism – 12; peasants – 12; culture – 11; society – 11; history – 10; war – 10; elites – 10; lands – 10; speakers – 9; civilians – 8; people – 8; politics – 8; language – 7; movement – 7; policy – 7; nobles – 6; relations – 6; border – 5; cause – 5; nationality – 5; parliament – 5; problem – 5; question – 5; men – 5; police – 5; states – 5; villages – 5; conflict – 4; gentry – 4; life – 4; population – 4; statehood – 4; territory – 4; citizens – 4; patriots – 4.

The most frequent collocations with the lexeme Ukraine: western – 23; modern – 8; independent – 7; bank – 7; history – 7; Eastern – 5; policy – 5; reconciliation – 4; Rus – 3.

So, the program generated a phrase that is a verbalization of Ukrainian identity markers. Given that Snyder's text is an exploration of the birth of modern Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine, the predominance of words that characterize the political state is quite obvious and justified. Snyder characterizes Ukrainians as *peasants*, *partisans*, *elites*, *nationalists*, *patriots*, and *gentry*. This indicates that the historian recognized the existence

of the Ukrainian nobility as a separate phenomenon, not something that belonged to the empires of which Ukraine was a part. The peasantry and gentry had their agency, and the author shows that the majority of the population on the territory of Ukraine was Ukrainian-speaking. The words "war", "problem", "question", and "conflict" mean that Ukraine is viewed as part of a borderland where turbulent geopolitical processes are taking place.

Conclusions. The method of frame analysis using domains proved to be productive for the study of the Ukrainian identity narrativization in Timothy Snyder's historical context: the framing domains of objectivity and accentuation are the most represented. The perspective of postcolonial criticism allowed us to talk about the agency of Ukraine both in the history of Central and Eastern Europe and the narrative about it. The study of the linguistic and speech representation of the narrative showed the author's appeal to the potential of conceptual metaphors, personification, evaluative vocabulary, and action verbs. The use of the AntConc corpus program highlighted the issue of the use of precedent names and the most frequent vocabulary used together with the words Ukraine and Ukrainian. Therefore, the study of narrative technologies, in particular in scientific texts, is relevant and justified in the minds of those who need to confront the destructive propaganda narrative.

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НАРАЦІЯ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ УКРАЇНИ У ПОСТКОЛОНІАЛЬНОМУ ВИМІРІ

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Дослідження аналізує нарративність української ідентичності в історичній праці Тімоті Снайдера «Реконструкція націй: Польща, Україна, Литва, Білорусь, 1569–1999» крізь призму постколоніальної критики та когнітивного лінгвістичного аналізу. Дослідження розглядає складне позиціонування Центральної та Східної Європи як проміжного регіону з суперечливою ідентичністю, зосереджуючись, зокрема, на ролі та суб'єктності України в ширшому європейському імперському контексті. Дослідження використовує фреймовий аналіз із

застосуванням когнітивних доменів С. Жаботинської (суб'єктний, дієвий, володільний, ідентифікаційний та порівняльний) для аналізу того, як українська ідентичність конструюється та представлена в наративі Тімоті Снайдера. Методологія включає корпусний лінгвістичний аналіз із використанням програм BootCat, TagAnt та AntConc для ідентифікації лінгвістичних маркерів та колокаційних патернів, пов'язаних із дискурсом української ідентичності. Теоретична основа спирається на постколоніальну теорію, зокрема на концепцію Едварда Саїда про збереження колоніального дискурсу після розпаду імперії, і застосовує її до посткомуністичного контексту Центральної та Східної Європи. Дослідження розрізняє два наукові підходи до посткомуністичних суспільств: онтологічні твердження про постколоніальність, що підкреслюють історичну відсутність суб'єктивності, та аналіз балансу колоніальних сил у різні історичні моменти. Результати показують, що робота Тімоті Снайдера представляє Україну як сучасну націю з чіткою суб'єктивністю, кидаючи виклик колоніальним наративам, які позиціонують Україну як периферійну до метрополійних центрів. Аналіз фреймів виявляє переважне використання суб'єктних та діяльних доменів, де Україна концептуалізується як активна сутність, здатна до самостійних дій, а не як пасивний об'єкт імперських маніпуляцій. Аналіз корпусу виявляє ключові словосполучення, що підкреслюють політичну суб'єктивність (активісти, держава, незалежність, націоналізм) та соціальну стратифікацію (селяни, дворянство, еліти, патріоти). Дослідження виявляє використання Т. Снайдером концептуальних метафор, персоніфікації, оціночного словника та дієслів дії для побудови наративу української ідентичності. Ці лінгвістичні стратегії слугують для встановлення української історичної суб'єктивності та протидії стійким колоніальним рамкам, що маргіналізують українську суб'єктивність. Дослідження доходить висновку, що аналіз рамок з використанням когнітивних доменів ефективно виявляє патерни наративізації української ідентичності в історичному дискурсі. Постколоніальна критична перспектива успішно демонструє суб'єктивність України в історичному контексті Центральної та Східної Європи, кидаючи виклик деструктивним пропагандистським наративам через ретельний лінгвістичний та концептуальний аналіз наукових історичних текстів.

Ключові слова: українська ідентичність, наративізація, постколоніальна критика, аналіз фреймів, когнітивні домени, Тімоті Снайдер, Центральна та Східна Європа, колоніальний дискурс, суб'єктивність, корпусна лінгвістика, концептуальні метафори, історичний наратив, посткомуністичні суспільства.