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## **POLITICAL TOXICITY IN THE CONTRASTIVE PERSPECTIVE**

**(Based on American, British and Ukrainian media discourse)**

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### **Abstract**

This research focuses on the issue of political toxicity in the media discourse of the United States of America, Great Britain and Ukraine. It defines common and distinctive features of semiotization of political toxicity in the media discourse. In political communication, toxicity is understood as a type of interaction between various participants in political discourse, which is characterized by a high degree of aggressive verbal, para- and/or non-verbal behavior and discriminates against the opponent based on race, ethnicity, gender, etc. resulting in such a politician (politicians) being perceived and then defined as toxic. Its purpose is to identify common and different ways and means of semiotization of political toxicity. It is based on methods of associative and identification experiments, computer multimodal analysis, as well as statistical processing of the information received. The study reveals the modes of the toxic effect deployment and the dictums of the politician's toxic image formation in the their collective, associative-individual, symbolic, and media discourse-portrait. Complex analysis of a politician's toxic image in different linguistic cultures takes into account the politicians' behavior as opinion leaders and the coverage of the target audience, to which the effect of their toxic rhetoric extends: one person, a group of people, or the wider community. At the same time, the types of harm resulting from the visualization of the media toxic effect can be aimed at both the psychological states of the addressee and their gender, age, and professional characteristics. The paper determines means of verbal expression of toxicity both by the aggressive-emotional type of the politician and by the socio-cultural features of political struggle in the United States of America, Great Britain, and Ukraine.

**Keywords:** political discourse, media discourse, toxicity, conceptual features, semiotization, verbal, paraverbal, non-verbal behavior.

### **1. Introduction**

Political discourse as a multidimensional phenomenon is a combination of a thesaurus of precedent utterances, models of typical speech actions and genres of communication oriented to serve the sphere of political communication (Slavova, 2018). Political discourse as *an object of this present research* is a type of language related to the sphere of politics and speaking in a certain situational context aimed at implementing a particular pragmatic semantics using verbal or non-verbal means of expressiveness (Shkvorchenko, 2020).

Political discourse is mainly characterized as being mythological, ritualistic, theatrical, and agonistic; it is of ludic and manipulative nature (Apter, 2006; Gnezdilova, 2021; Kovalevska, 2020; Feldman, 2020). From the perspective of semiotics, political discourse is a sign formation that has

two dimensions: real and virtual. In the real dimension, it is a text in a specific situation of political communication, and in the virtual dimension, it is a signifier of the media space focused on the sphere of political communication (Nahorna, 2005). A key concept of real and virtual political discourse is a politician's linguistic personality (Petliuchenko, 2009; Potapenko, 2021), whose generalized portrait is semiotized in media discourse and reflects both typical features of participants in the political process (Serazhym, 2003; Beck, 2021) and their different behavior in relations with political opponents (Zernetskyi & Riabokon, 2012).

In the course of researching into political linguistic personology, scholars began a discussion about the phenomenon of toxicity. Its preliminary results indicate that the sign of "toxic" transferred from its metaphoric meaning to acquire a scientific interpretation in terms of psychology such as "toxic masculinity" (Columba, 2019; Housman, 2015), "toxic environment" (Garbarino, 2005), "toxic employees" (Manno, 2020), "toxic relationships" (Glass, 2005), etc. Gradually, social and political sciences use the term of "toxicity" as a part of various terminological descriptions: "toxic politics" (Liboiron et al, 2018), "toxic political leadership" (Erdal & Budak, 2021), and so on.

**The need for a comparative and typological study** of political toxicity in the media discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine is stipulated by the aggravation of the general socio-political situation in the world, where these countries are key actors in the new geopolitics. This stimulates scholars to develop new communication strategies to ensure effective interaction of all participants in political processes, giving preference to those that will help mitigate and neutralize the toxic effects that occur in varying degrees in their course.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the US journalism even coined the term of "toxic political discourse" to describe the state of public political rhetoric caused by the influence of political TV and radio talk shows, where commentators deliberately provoke participants to emotional confrontations (Fetzer, 2013).

Various aggressive and destructive speech acts create a media image of the enemy and destroy the image of a politician, for example, resentment; in psychology, resentment is a mental state of disappointment, physical or mental pain of a person who has been offended by a word or deed, which can cause interpersonal conflict (Semeniuk & Bilous, 2011; Welch, 2008).

Speech acts and discursive practices (Seriakova, 2009) of public politicians can be harmful since they generate mechanisms of semiosis of political toxicity (Tirrell, 2017), in particular, persuasive ones. These mechanisms discredit the opponent through open verbal appeals and communicative deviations (Dyakiv, Korolyov & Yaremko, 2021), politicians' non-verbal messages, as well as paraverbal ones: prosodic (volume, tempo, pause, melody, timbre, rhythm, phrasal emphasis) and kinetic (hand, head and body movements, facial expressions) means that reproduce the politician's emotional state (Soloshchuk, 2009; Gratton, & Zudenkova 2020).

Political discourse is semiotized in the media discourse (Stashko, 2018), whose main function is to influence the mass audience through semantic and evaluative information transmitted by various methods and means through media channels (Pocheptsov, 2011). It is the environment of media discourse that both opens and coverts political struggle, influences public opinion (Charteris-Black, 2018).

**The purpose** of this article is to determine the structure of the TOXICITY concepts and to identify common and different ways and means of semiotization of political toxicity in the media discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine.

## 2. Method

Conceptualization in a language is realized by units representing time, space, human labor activity, ethical and mental spheres, etc. The article highlights the role of the concept in linguistic activity as a verbal and mental formation that determines certain models of linguistic behavior (Radzievska, 2018). A concept is a complex cognitive linguistic and social construct, a mental formation of a high

degree of abstraction that includes, in addition to subject matter, all communicatively significant information. Therefore, the study of a concept needs the complex of methods.

My methodology is based on the synergistic principle of the integrated application of relevant empirical and experimental methods and techniques of comparative research. It embraces a lexicographic analysis; cross-sectional sampling method; cognitive semantic method; comparative method; methods of discourse analysis; methods of identification experiments; computer tools (software packages for processing speech signal PRAAT 6. 1.16 and Sound Forge 11.0 audio and video signal processing software); statistical methods.

The phenomenon of toxicity is considered, on the one hand, as a complex of basic signs of its cognition related to “the harmful effects of poisons on the human body”, with their subsequent reflection in the minds of representatives of a certain community. On the other hand, it is a result of metaphorical transfer of harmful properties of poisons to harmful actions/words of people with explicit negative assessment of moral and psychological behavior. It is obvious that toxicity is a conceptual dynamic structure with an associative stratum characteristic of representatives of the American, British, and Ukrainian linguistic cultures.

To carry out a comparative analysis to interpret common and distinctive characteristics in the media discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine, it was necessary to choose tertium comparationis, i.e. a toxic utterance, which is a semiotized formation that has verbal, paraverbal, and extralinguistic forms.

The cognitive semantic method helped to reconstruct the structural zones of the TOXICITY concepts in English (two variants) and Ukrainian. In English, the figurative meaning of the attribute “toxic” as a negative psychological quality refers to such conceptual zones as HARM, UNPLEASANTNESS, MALICIOUSNESS, UNHAPPINESS, while in Ukrainian, the figurative meaning of the attribute “poisonous” is associated with the negative quality of phenomena, objects, or words that form two conceptual zones: ШКОДА (HARM) and ЗЛІСТЬ (ANGER, HATRED).

The experimental stage consisted of two associative experiments, which included associative, auditory, and visual identification of political toxicity. American, British, and Ukrainian scholars who were specialists in English and Ukrainian studies and had previous experience in perceptual examinations conducted the experiments.

The first associative experiment aimed at identifying the associative ideas of representatives of American, British, and Ukrainian linguistic cultures about toxicity. In it, a hundred respondents received an unprepared linguistic stimulus in the form of questions (“*What human behavior is toxic from the point of view of Americans/ Ukrainians / the British?*”) and spontaneously answered them in the form of an associative essay. Their answers revealed the conceptual signs of TOXICITY that were classified according to their frequency in the essays into zones (nuclear, medial, and peripheral), and taxonomies (behavioral, speech, voice, gesture, and facial signs), as well as negative, positive, or neutral ones.

In the second experiment, experts marked the places in the transcripts of politicians’ speeches that they considered toxic, specifying the means of toxicity manifestation: in the word/voice/gesture/mimicry. Along with prosodic means, the gestural design of an utterance, in particular, a toxic one was functionally determined. The relationship between gesture and speech proved to be twofold: on the one hand, gestures accompany speech; on the other hand, they perform a communicative function and are communicatively significant (Beattie, 2016).

There are three main classes of gestures:

1) gestures that have an independent lexical meaning and can convey meaning outside the verbal context;

2) gestures that accompany a certain speech or other fragments of communication and, together with language, express the speaker’s thoughts, feelings and intentions (Westen, 2008);

3) gestures that control the communication process, i.e. the moments of establishing, maintaining, and terminating communication (O’Brien, 2018).

It is the second type of gestures that has been chosen as a unit of analysis of the paraverbal design of a toxic complex utterance.

Along with gestures, the toxicity of a politician’s image is enhanced by physiognomic means of the speaker’s face, oculogy, and proxemics, which show criticism and replace its verbal explicates. The latter group refers to conjunctive means of expressing toxicity, when the speaker, instead of words (verbal or written), expresses disdain and contempt for the interlocutor through their behavior.

Computer diagnostics was carried out in the software packages PRAAT 6.1.16 and Sound Forge 11.0. To verify the data obtained, the following statistical calculations were performed: determining the minimum sample length, checking each sample for sufficiency, determining the differences significance (p-level: if the p-value is  $\leq 0.05$ , the differences between the samples are significant), as well as one-way and two-way analysis of variance using MS Excel spreadsheets and the Fisher-Snedeker (F) test to determine the degree of toxicity of political speech and its relationship with words, voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

Based on the results of these procedures, a model of political toxicity in the media discourses of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine is presented, which includes signs of toxicity, modes of deployment of the toxic effect, and mechanisms of perception and formation of the politician’s image (toxic v. positive) in the studied media environments (figure 1):

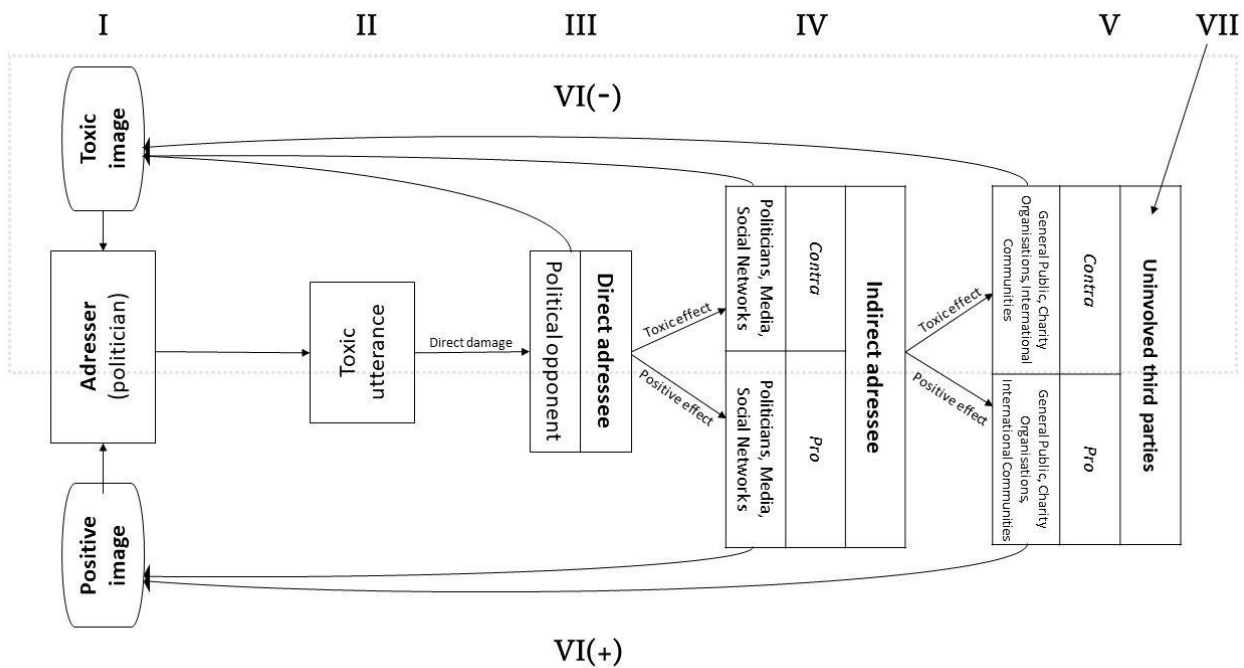


Figure 1. Political toxicity in media discourse

As it is seen in the diagram, a complex toxic utterance is transmitted from the addresser—a politician who is perceived as toxic in the media—to the direct addressee—a political opponent in order to cause moral and ethical damage. The direct addressee (political opponent), who perceives the utterance in their address as discrediting, experiences moral damage (“direct harm”) and defines such an utterance as toxic. At the same time, the toxic effect can also take place in indirect modes and affect counter-addressees: both indirect opponents (politicians/media/social networks) and third parties uninvolved (general public/charity organizations/international communities). Thus, the image of a politician in the media and social networks can be formed in two ways: 1) toxic: if his or her shameful utterances and/or actions cause moral damage to the direct, indirect, or involved addressee (opponent) and are perceived as toxic; 2) positive: if his or her shameful utterances and/or actions demonstrate the leader’s ability to fight with the help of hate speech appeal to the direct, indirect and involved

addressee (proponent) and are perceived as positive. Direct and indirect opponents always perceive such an utterance as toxic, thus, negatively. As for the positive effect, the politician's proponents, his supporters and associates, often perceive the utterances and/or actions of their leader as a confirmation of his or her ability to fight, being courageous and frank, so in a positive way.

### 3. Results

The data of this present correlative analysis of political discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine reveal that in each of the three political discourses, the means of semiotizing toxicity in voice, gestures, and facial expressions have a significant impact on the division of politicians into two classes according to the strong or weak degree of toxicity of their political speech. Toxic utterances such as insult, lie, and destruction are essential for determining the politicians' degree of toxicity in all three linguacultures; but the degree of verbal influence is inferior to that in politicians' voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

The formation of TOXICITY concepts in English and Ukrainian is reflected in the semantic scenarios of verbalizers used in direct and figurative meanings. The conceptual features of TOXICITY as the ability of substances to exert a poisonous effect on the body include origin, purpose, composition, strength of action, impact, type of poison, poison.

The linguacultural archetypes of TOXICITY differ in the following ways:

- origin (poison, unlike venom, can be of natural origin);
- purpose (venom is needed for the sole purpose of poisoning someone; poison can be used for other purposes);
- composition (poison, unlike venom, involves different components);
- action strength (poison is generally associated with the notion of greater force of action on the body);
- the substance type and the way it enters the body (poison is usually a liquid or powder; venom is a drink or powder; poison can be not only drunk or eaten, but also injected in another way, for example, intravenously); venom can be of natural origin or specially created, while poison is always made by humans.

What they have in common is that poison and venom do not necessarily kill: their effects can be limited to some kind of damage to the body.

#### 3.1. The American concept of TOXICITY

The conceptual features of the American TOXICITY concept with a total of 40 units were divided into nuclear (4 units), medial (15 units) and peripheral (19 units) according to the frequency of use in associative essays.

The nuclear zone includes the following features: 1) FEAR; 2) HATE; 3) LIE; 4) SEXISM.

The medial zone includes: 1) aggressive; 2) violating; 3) conspiracy theories; 4) dangerous; 5) demagoguery; 6) discrimination; 7) divisive; 8) gaslighting; 9) homophobia; 10) manipulating; 11) name calling; 12) narcissism; 13) racism; 14) violating; 15) xenophobia.

The peripheral zone includes: 1) blaming; 2) body shaming; 3) clingy; 4) condescending; 5) dirty; 6) extreme liberalism; 7) fake news; 8) generalizations; 9) gossiping; 10) greed; 11) hypocrisy; 12) intimidation; 13) mansplaining; 14) media brainwashing; 15) mocking; 16) provoke; 17) raising (voice); 18) rudeness; 19) rioting.

Behavioral signs of TOXICITY expressed by American politicians are associated with gender discrimination, lying, violation of personal boundaries and narcissism, excessive control and demandingness.

Speech associative markers are related to distorted, provocative, fearful utterances and mockery.

Toxicity in the voice of American politicians covers the tone of voice and sudden changes in volume, as well as gestures that evoke fear, violence, and hatred.

Mimetic features are mainly related to the glance type.

### 3.2. The British concept of TOXICITY

The conceptual features of the British TOXICITY concept, totaling 51 units, are divided into nuclear (3 units), medial (10 units) and peripheral (36 units) according to the frequency of use.

The nuclear zone includes the following features: 1) FEAR; 2) LIE; 3) MANIPULATION.

The medial zone includes: 1) abusing; 2) aggressive; 3) duplicitous; 4) harmful; 5) intrusive; 6) low (voice); 7) paternalistic; 8) pretending; 9) showing off; 10) slowly.

The peripheral zone includes: 1) annoying; 2) anti-semitic; 3) attack; 4) better than others; 5) bullying; 6) cold (look); 7) corrode; 8) criticizing; 9) dangerous; 10) divisive; 11) down (looks); 12) enrage; 13) extremist; 14) sexual harassment; 15) high (voice); 16) humiliating; 17) hunter; 18) ignoring; 19) ill-famous; 20) immodest; 21) incongruous; 22) inflammatory; 23) not apologizing; 24) irresponsible; 25) (too) loud; 26) nagging; 27) offensive; 28) oppressive; 29) pessimistic; 30) protective (gestures); 31) rude; 32) self-centered; 33) sexist; 34) stiff (look); 35) unsupportive; 36) violent.

Behavioral signs of TOXICITY expressed by British politicians are associated with false and humiliating attitudes towards others, but do not contain direct humiliation and insults of the interlocutor. Speech associative signs are related to insulting and pessimistic utterances, with the use of slang.

Associative signs of toxicity in the politicians' voice include slow "parental-teacher" intonation, speech rate, volume, as well as the politician's touching the interlocutor and hand gestures.

Mimetic features that were identified as negative are mainly related to the shape of the lips and grimaces.

### 3.3. The Ukrainian concept of TOXICITY

The conceptual features of the Ukrainian concept TOXICITY with a total of 35 units were divided into nuclear (1 unit), medial (4 units) and peripheral (30 units) according to the frequency of use in associative essays.

The nuclear zone includes one feature НЕГАТИВНИЙ (NEGATIVE).

The medial zone includes: 1) агресивний (aggressive); 2) деструктивний (destructive); 3) нав'язливий (intrusive); 4) зневажливий (dismissive).

Peripheral zone includes: 1) агітатор (agitator); 2) безцеремонний (impolite); 3) відволікаючий (distracting); 4) негативний вплив (negative influence); 5) грубий (rude); 6) демотивуючий (demotivating); 7) егоїстичний (selfish); 8) той, хто звинувачує (accuser); 9) той, хто використовує інших для втілення своїх ідей (using others to implement their ideas); 10) той, хто знецінює (devaluing); 11) той, хто зосереджує увагу на недоліках (focusing on shortcomings); 12) маніпулятивний (manipulative); 13) надмірний (excessive); 14) авторитарний (authoritarian); 15) насильницький (violent); 16) той, хто не думає про інших (someone who does not think about others); 17) неправдивий (untruthful); 18) нетолерантний (intolerant); 19) дискусійний (controversial); 20) оманливий (deceptive); 21) той, хто ображає (insulting); 22) той, хто оцінює (evaluating); 23) той, хто паразитує (parasitic); 24) той, хто вміє переконувати (persuasive); 25) песимістичний (pessimistic); 26) той, хто постійно потребує увагу (constant attention-seeking); 27) зневажливий (dismissive); 28) провокативний (provocative); 29) пропагандист (propagandist); 30) руйнівний (destructive).

Behavioral signs of TOXICITY are associated with implicit humiliation and the use of the interlocutor for one's own purposes.

Speech associative signs are related with disrespectful, rude and false utterances, as well as with lexically reduced phrases.

Associative signs of toxicity in the voice include lowering and raising the voice pitch, as well as excessive gestures and the use of body language by the politician.

Mimetic features are related to the glance and the eyes movement.

The analysis of coincidence of the nuclear features such as FEAR, HATE, LIE, SEXISM (American linguistic culture) and FEAR, LIE, MANIPULATION (British linguistic culture) with the conceptual features such as HARM, UNPLEASANTNESS, MALICIOUSNESS, UNHAPPINESS of the TOXICITY concept in English showed the absence of common features of the associative level with the conceptual-motivational level. The analysis of coincidence of the nuclear feature НЕГАТИВНІСТЬ (NEGATIVITY) with the conceptual features ШКОДА (HARM), ЗЛІСТЬ (ANGER) of the TOXICITY concept in Ukrainian showed the absence of common features of the associative level with the conceptual-motivational level.

The analysis of the cross-linguistic relations (English v. Ukrainian) coincidences in the nuclear zone of TOXICITY concepts showed the absence of common nuclear associative sectors. In the thematic group of linguistic associative signs of TOXICITY, cross-linguistic coincidences are observed: 1) (American) using fake news / (Ukrainian) спотворення інформації для переконання аудиторії, викривлення фактів (distortion of information to convince the audience, distortion of facts); 2) (British) using slang; 3) (Ukrainian) використання сленгу (using slang). The analysis of cross-linguistic (English v. Ukrainian) coincidences in the medial zone of the concept of POLITICAL TOXICITY in the two languages showed the presence of a common near-core associative sector with the features “aggressive/ агресивний” and “intrusive/ нав’язливий”.

The analysis of the cross-linguistic relations (English v. Ukrainian) coincidences in the peripheral zone of the concept POLITICAL TOXICITY in the two languages showed the presence of a common interpretive associative sector on the grounds of: 1) (American/British) rude/ (Ukrainian) грубий, 2) (American) abusing/offending/(British) humiliating; 3) (American) gaslighting; 4) (Ukrainian) маніпулятивний (manipulative); 5) (British) self-centered/(Ukrainian) егоцентричний.

The analysis of the inter-variant coincidences in the nuclear zone of the POLITICAL TOXICITY concept showed the presence of common features of FEAR and LIE in the American and British English in the medial zone: “dangerous”, “duplicitous”, “hypocrisy”, “pretense” (American peripheral), “sexist” (American core) / (British peripheral); in the peripheral zone: “dangerous”, “violent”.

Contrasting associative features of TOXICITY in the perceptions of representatives of American society have a socio-political orientation and are associated with various types of discrimination, whereas in British linguistic culture TOXICITY is connected with certain losses of the image of Great Britain and the Royal Family, while in Ukrainian linguistic culture it associates with negative psychological traumas of the interlocutor’s personality due to the devaluation of dignity and moral and spiritual values.

Discursive toxicity reflects discursive practices of public politicians that can cause harm not only through insults, epithets, or derogatory words, but also without them.

According to the results obtained in the course of the first identification experiment on “Identification of toxicity markers in behavior, words, manner of speaking, gestures and facial expressions for each group of speakers of the American English, British Standard English, and Ukrainian”, the following indicators were obtained:

- 118 signs of toxicity manifestation were recorded in the speech of American politicians, including: 76 paraverbal ones (54 – behavior, 13 – gestures, 9 – facial expressions);
- British politicians have 121 signs: 79 paraverbal (57 – behavior, 13 – gestures, 9 – facial expressions);
- Ukrainian politicians demonstrate 152 signs: 102 paraverbal (81 – behavior, 13 – gestures, 8 – facial expressions).

According to the results obtained in the course of the second identification experiment on “Determining the toxicity degree in the speeches of American, British and Ukrainian politicians and its relationship with paraverbal and extralinguistic signs”, the following indicators were marked:

- in the speeches of American politicians with a total number of 21,901-word forms, 591 fragments with signs of high toxicity were recorded, including 227 at the paraverbal and 21 at the extralinguistic levels;

- in the speeches of British politicians with a total number of 19,116 word forms – 472 fragments with signs of high toxicity, including 175 at the paraverbal and 12 at the extralinguistic levels were pointed out;

- in the speeches of Ukrainian politicians with a total number of 11,200 word forms – 282 fragments with signs of high toxicity, including 128 at the paraverbal and 15 at the extralinguistic levels.

A multivariate analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the degree of toxicity and the means of its manifestation. The measured parameter in the first correlation analysis is the toxicity degree of a political speech, which is graded according to two levels: low (1 point) and high (2 points).

The factor influencing the toxicity degree of the speech is the means of toxicity manifestation, which are classified into four types:

- word/phrase/fragment of speech;
- voice;
- gestures;
- facial expressions.

The toxicity degree of political speech was also chosen as a measured parameter in the second correlation analysis, but the factor influencing the toxicity degree of speech was changed to negative means of its verbalization, which are classified into three groups: offensive, false and destructive (181 items for American politicians, 154 items for British politicians, 284 items for Ukrainian politicians).

To test the dependence level of the toxicity degree of political speech on these factors, the Pearson  $\chi^2$  criterion was used. The analysis showed that the factor “means of toxicity manifestation” significantly affects the random variable “toxicity degree of political speech” ( $\chi^2 = 2.65 < \chi^2_{cr}(0.05) = 7.82$ ). It has been proved that the means of toxicity manifesting in the voice, gestures and facial expressions in the media discourse significantly affect the differentiation of politicians by a strong or weak degree of toxicity of political speech ( $F = 2.42 < F_{cr}(0.05) = 6.59$ ) and is a common factor for determining the toxicity degree semiotization in the general discourse portrait of politicians in the United States, Great Britain and Ukraine. Also, quite significant for determining the toxicity degree of political speech of politicians in all three countries are such negative utterances in politicians’ speeches as insults, lies and destruction, while the degree of their influence is inferior to the means of manifesting toxicity in the voice, gestures and facial expressions of politicians in the three media discourses.

A computer comprehensive analysis of prosodic and kinetic characteristics (temporal, frequency and dynamic parameters; 20 configurations of hand, head and body movements; 11 configurations of facial and eye movements; 6 configurations of gaze) of politicians’ toxic speech in the media discourse of the United States, Great Britain and Ukraine, conducted in the software packages for processing speech signal PRAAT 6. 1.16 and Sound Forge 11.0 audio and video signal processing software, made it possible to identify common and distinctive features of semiotization of political toxicity, taking into account the gender of politicians:

- verbal toxicity is semiotized in the common feature of “demagogic rhetoric” (inter-variant coincidence);

- behavioral toxicity is characterized by the relations of inter-variant and inter-linguistic coincidences in the features of “annoying” and “impolite”;

- voice toxicity is semiotized in the common feature of “aggressive” (inter-variant coincidence);

- gesture toxicity is characterized by the relations of interlingual and intergender coincidences on the grounds of “repetitive” and “few”;



- mimic toxicity is semiotized in common features of “cold” (intra-linguistic, inter-gender coincidences) and “crooked” (intra-linguistic, intra-variant, inter-gender coincidences).

An experimental check of extra-linguistic means of semiotizing toxicity in the media discourse of the United States, the United Kingdom and Ukraine confirmed the assumption that these means perform an additional function of damaging the image of a politician, but do not have a significant independent impact on the perception of a politician as toxic. These include the following signs: color scheme of posters, clothes, hairstyle, flags, symbols of election campaigning, music, party attributes, election meetings, etc.

Political discourse is semiotized in the media discourse, whose main function is to influence the mass audience through semantic and evaluative information transmitted through media channels using various methods and means. It is in the environment of media discourse that both open and covert political struggle takes place, and technologies of influencing public opinion are demonstrated. In order to reproduce the media image of an opponent and destroy their image, politicians use signs of various semiotic systems, including paraverbal and extralinguistic ones: aggressive and destructive linguotoxic speech acts, communicative deviations, manipulative constructs that cause physical or psycho-emotional harm to the opponent and cause interpersonal conflict.

#### 4. Discussion

The research clarifies the definition of political toxicity as a result of the person’s behavior perception that causes reputational harm or discriminates a politician. It constructs a scientific model of semantic and value-conceptual features in the structure of TOXICITY concepts in the lexicographic sources of the English and Ukrainian languages and the expansion of their semantic structure in European linguistic cultures, as well as the experimental identification of the associative and figurative zone of political toxicity in the mentality of Americans, Britons and Ukrainians. The semantics of toxicity is directly related to the concepts of venom, poison, toxin, i.e. a substance that has the ability to kill a person or other living being if it enters the body and is absorbed by the body. The semantics of toxicity in the figurative sense in English and Ukrainian is expressed through both speech acts and non-speech actions, for example, through a number of common synonyms – to bully, to denigrate, to jeer (Ukrainian знущатися, збиватися, глумитися), which aim to make the object of mockery look ridiculous.

In 2018, the Oxford English Dictionary chose the adjective “toxic” as its Word of the Year, which best describes the mood of the year and has “enduring potential” as a term of cultural significance. Oxford said its data shows a 45 percent increase in searches for toxic on its website in 2018, which began with the toxic chemical poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK, and from Syria, where toxic chemical weapons killed at least 40 people and led to a US missile strike. The phrase “toxic environment” had nothing to do with pollution: people were looking for it because of the unpleasant environment at work. They were also protesting sexual misconduct, unequal pay, and discrimination, or wanted to know about toxic relationships, especially those related to the #MeToo movement against sexual abuse.

The paper explains the relevance for a comparative and typological research of political toxicity in the media discourse of the USA, Great Britain and Ukraine by the general socio-political situation in the world, where these countries are the key subjects of the new geopolitics, and stimulates scientists to develop new communication strategies to ensure the effective interaction of all participants in the political process, and contributes to the mitigation and neutralization of toxic effects.

Toxic behavior is usually characterized by a radical orientation of the politicians and opinion leaders’ views to the right or left; it is the result of attributing projections to a certain group of people and is verbally explained in the media using the attribute “toxic”. Complex analysis of a politician’s toxic image in different linguistic cultures takes into account the politicians’ behavior as opinion leaders and the coverage of the target audience, to which the effect of their toxic rhetoric extends: one

person, a group of people, the wider community. At the same time, the types of harm resulting from the visualization of the media toxic effect can be aimed at both the psychological states of the addressee and their gender, age, and professional characteristics. The paper determines the means of verbal expression of toxicity both by the aggressive-emotional type of the politician-speaker and by the socio-cultural features of political struggle in the United States of America, Great Britain and Ukraine.

#### 4.1. Toxicity in political media discourse in the USA

The public political toxicity of such American politicians as Donald Trump, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Andrew Cuomo is verbalized mainly through their utterances that discriminate against the addressee on the basis of race or gender and are conceptually related to the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements (Shkvorchenko, 2021).

We will consider the prosodic-kinetic parameters of political toxicity of Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi and identify common and individual-specific features of paraverbal support of the means of semiotization of political toxicity in their speeches.

Opinion polls in the United States show that the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, is one of the main toxic factors affecting people's views and the state of political discourse in the country: most say that Trump has changed the tone and nature of political discussion for the worse, and less than half believe that he has changed them for the better (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/18/>).

The image of Donald Trump is defined as a "toxic demagogue" or "toxic populist" who "under the guise of contrived populism, speculates on the rejection of the 'other', follows a plutocratic course, betraying the very people he deceived into voting against themselves".

According to sign language experts, the toxicity of Donald Trump's image is not only related to his policies, but also to his personal qualities and appearance: Donald Trump fails to overcome the threshold of visual tolerance in the viewer precisely because of his complexion, hairstyle and facial expressions (<https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-54843669>).

In his speech on January 06, 2021, Donald Trump, spreading fake allegations of election fraud in 2020, inspired an angry mob to attack the Capitol, relying mainly on toxic content calling for conflict or protest:

- (1) *I'm honest. And ...and... and... I just, again, I want to thank you. It's just a great honor to have this kind of crowd and to be before you and hundreds of thousands of American patriots who are committed to the honesty of our elections and the integrity of our glorious republic. You know, I say, sometimes jokingly, but there's no joke about it: I've been in two elections. I won them both and the second one, I won much bigger than the first. OK. Almost 75 million people voted for our campaign, the most of any incumbent president by far in the history of our country, 12 million more people than four years ago.* (AbcNews, 2021).

The experts rated the fragment as toxic because Trump speaks in a bragging and pathetic manner, and they noted moderate pausal and dynamic emphasis in the segments containing hesitant stops (306 ms/328 ms; I<sub>max</sub> 76.7 dB), accompanied by a synchronous gestural and facial complex with a narrow spread of both hands and a twisted mouth, the shape of which is also perceived as toxic. The stressed syllables are accompanied by a synchronized gestural and mimetic complex with an impulsive repetitive movement of the right hand with an open palm and a high raised upper lip.



Figure 2. Donald Trump at a rally in the District of Columbia, January 06, 2021

In the above excerpt (1), the additional effect of Trump's stance, who is ready to defend American democracy in his own person against the enemy (Biden), is emphasized by extralinguistic means of semiotizing toxicity (figure 2): the color scheme of the red lines on the American national flags outside of Trump and his red tie, which symbolize valor, courage, and diligence.

Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi gave a speech at the Democratic National Convention on August 20, 2020 that was identified in the media as toxic, which was also confirmed by experts in the experimental part of the study:

- (2) *...This month, as America marks the centennial of women...**finally**... women winning the right to vote, we do so with 105 women in the House. Proudly, 90 are Democrats ...<...I've seen first-hand Donald Trump's disrespect for facts, for working families and for women in particular (!), disrespect written into his policies toward our health and our rights, not just his conduct. But we know what he doesn't, that when women succeed, America succeeds...* (AbcNews, 2021).

Nancy Pelosi emphasizes with moderate dynamic emphasis (Imax 65.1 dB) the "*finally*" segment, which is synchronously accompanied by a gestural and facial complex of two hands with fingers wide apart in front of the face and clenched teeth, which respondents compared to a pompous and passionate prayer.



Figure 3. Nancy Pelosi at the Democratic National Convention, August 20, 2020

The gestural and facial complex, according to the respondents, expresses her negative attitude towards Donald Trump more than what she says about him (“facial expressions are more toxic than her words”), her speech was determined to be highly toxic precisely because of the paraverbal accompaniment: high tonal and dynamic accent (Fmax 489 Hz/Imax 85.9 dB) and a gestural and facial complex with a strong grin, which gives the impression of overlaid pathos and actor’s drama.

#### 4.2. Toxicity in political media discourse in the UK

The verbal toxicity in the public agendas of such British politicians as Nigel Farage, John Bercow, Theresa May, David Cameron, Jeremy Corbyn, and Priti Patel is mainly determined by the topics of migration and Euroscepticism (Brexit), English nationalism (Scotxit, NI-xit), as well as the refusal of the British Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle to perform royal duties (Megxit) and the emergence of a new discourse of racism in the British public (<https://www.newstatesman.com/uncategorized/2018/08/how-britain-political-conversation-turned-toxic>).

We will consider the prosodic-kinetic parameters of political toxicity of Nigel Farage and Priti Patel and identify common and individual-specific features of paraverbal support of the means of semiotization of political toxicity in their speeches.

The British politician Nigel Farage is defined in the media as “the most dangerous man in Britain”, and his scandalous behavior has contributed significantly to the toxicity of public discourse in Europe and the UK (Nigel Farage is not “controversial” – he is toxic. Why do we keep giving him airtime?). European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytautas Andriukaitis criticizes Nigel Farage for spreading “toxic untruths” and “lies”, for example, that after Brexit, the money previously contributed by the UK to the EU budget will be invested in healthcare (<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/>):

- (3) ...**NO MORE** financial contributions, **NO MORE** European court of justice, **NO MORE** common fisheries policy...**NO MORE** being talked down to, **NO MORE BEING BULLIED** ... we love Europe, we just hate the European Union... (BBC NEWS, 2020).

The experts identified the anaphora “NO MORE” as highly toxic, accompanied by a strong tonal and dynamic emphasis (Fmax 479 Hz/Imax 85.3 dB) and a gestural and facial complex of sharp movements of widely spread arms with a wide-open mouth and a wrinkled forehead, which are perceived as aggressive and destructive. Nigel Farage’s propensity for devastating destruction is a decisive factor in his public and media toxicity as a source of media scandals (“Farage loves devastating discussions”).



Figure 4. Nigel Farage in EU Parliament, 2020

The defeat of the EU policy reaches its peak when Nigel Farage proceeds to a direct explicit insult of the European Parliament's representative for Brexit, Guy Verhofstadt, present at the meeting in the form of a gradation, which is intensified by combining it with the anaphora "NO MORE". In this fragment, the anaphora "NO MORE" is accompanied by an increase in tonal (Fmax 490 Hz) and dynamic (Imax 88.9 dB) maxima, which are synchronized with increased kinetic activity, which is reflected in the gestural and facial complex of sharp movements of the left hand, bending of the whole body with wide-open eyes.

The verbal markers of Nigel Farage's toxicity in the above passage are the explication of condemnation of the European Union's policy through the use of the anaphoric repetition "we don't need", the expression of hatred for the European Union in the form of the antithesis "we love Europe, we just hate the European Union" and the direct insult of the European Parliament's representative for Brexit, Guy Verhofstadt, present at the meeting in the form of gradation, which is enhanced by combining it with the anaphora "no more". Nigel Farage accompanies the anaphoric repetition with sharp movements of his arms, nods of the head and bends of the whole body, as well as waving the British flag with other MPs. Thus, the toxic Brexit content was launched into the information space through the trigger "we hate the European Union", resulting in a negative assessment of European politics in general and insulting individual politicians.

The British media has been reporting on Home Secretary Priti Patel's inhumanity towards migrants, which hides the real damage to the country from her government: poisonous xenophobia is the real enemy, not migrants on a boat at sea (<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/priti-patels-toxic-xenophobia-real-enemy>).

On June 8, 2020, Priti Patel made an utterance in the House of Commons about the Black Lives Matter protests in Britain. After protesters in Bristol tore down a statue of the slave trader Edward Colston and threw it into the harbor, Patel, warning that she would "not be lectured" by opposition MPs on racism, made a strong utterance:

- (4) ... So, the police need to know that they have a Prime Minister, a Home Secretary and a Government who stand with them and will give them the tools, powers and resources they need to keep us safe – and they do. Police funding has had its **BIGGEST** uplift in a decade, increasing by more than £1 billion, powers and resources they need to keep us safe – and they do. Police funding has had its **BIGGEST** uplift in a decade, increasing by more than £1 billion, and we are recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers to keep our streets and our country safe ... I could not be clearer: I want to see the **VIOLENT** minority responsible **ARRESTED** and brought to **JUSTICE** ... (<https://youtu.be/ohXxmD78ZCo>).

The respondents identified excerpt (4) as toxic, as Priti Patel reports on her achievements in funding the British police in a haughty and proud manner (she speaks haughty and proud). At the same time, the phrase “*her BIGGEST uplift in a decade*” is accompanied by moderate dynamic emphasis (Imax 76.4 dB) on the *BIGGEST* segment, which is synchronized with a gestural and facial complex with body turns and tilts, along with a twisted mouth and a forcefully raised left eyebrow, which are perceived as self-praise and pride. Fragments are identified as highly toxic because Priti Patel pronounces them with a self-confident and arrogant look. The segments “*VIOLENT*”, “*ARRESTED*” and “*JUSTICE*” are accentuated by strong dynamic emphases (Imax 86.7 dB, Imax 88.1 dB), which are synchronized with a gestural and facial complex with head turns and compressed lips and raised eyebrows, which are perceived as a condescending, arrogant look or a very suspicious, look from under the forehead.



Figure 5. Priti Patel in the House of Commons, 2020

Priti Patel’s judgmental remarks, as well as her aggressive tone and gaze, had a toxic effect on Florence Eshalomi, a black Labour MP, who immediately responded by asking whether she (Patel) “actually understands the anger and frustration felt by so many people” in the UK. (<https://youtu.be/ohXxmD78ZCo>).

### 4.3. Toxicity in political media discourse in Ukraine

The toxic image of such Ukrainian politicians as Petro Poroshenko, Oleh Liashko, Iryna Farion, Oleksiy Honcharenko, Iryna Vereshchuk, Ilya Kiva, and Geo Leros is determined in the media in connection with such content as Ukraine’s independence, language issue, corruption, relations with the United States, and others, which are mostly populist in nature.

We will consider the prosodic-kinetic parameters of political toxicity of Oleh Liashko and Iryna Farion identify common and individual-specific features of paraverbal support of the means of semiotization of political toxicity in their speeches.

His speech in the Rada on January 17, 2017, when he called MPs “*урядові дауни*” (government downs) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1HOeD6v87M>), had a strong toxic effect in the media:

- (5) *Ніяких вибачень! Хай вони вибачаються перед мільйонами українців, яким немає за що годувати своїх дітей... я ще раз повторюю: ті, хто позбавляє українців робот, ті, хто перетворив Україну на сировинний придаток це урядові дауни, це слабоумні люди, які працюють проти України і є ворогами України.*  
*No apologies! Let them apologize to the millions of Ukrainians who have nothing to feed their children with... I repeat once again: those who deprive Ukrainians of jobs, those who have turned Ukraine into a raw material appendage are **government downs**, these are **weak-minded people** who work against Ukraine and are **enemies of Ukraine**. (translation is mine – N.S.)*

The experts identified a populist and at the same time “pogromic” (devastating) manner of speech as highly toxic, accompanied by a strong tonal and dynamic emphasis (Fmax 458 Hz/Imax 88.9 dB) and a synchronized gestural and mimetic complex of impulsive repeated movements of the left hand with the index finger and curved mouth, which are perceived as aggressive. Oleh Liashko accompanies the toxic utterances “*weak-minded people*” and “*enemies of Ukraine*” with sharp, impulsive hand movements, while his tone and facial expressions are aggressive (RadaTVChannel, 2017):



Figure 6. Oleh Liashko in the Rada, January 17, 2017

From the above example, we can conclude that toxicity can destroy not only the image of corrupt officials, whom Oleh Liashko directly criticizes in a humiliating and insulting manner, but also have harmful consequences indirectly for third parties, as evidenced by the open letter from the president of the All-Ukrainian Charitable Organization “Down Syndrome”. Thus, the toxic content “corruption” through the trigger “*government downs*” led to damage to the image of government officials and indirectly insulted parents of sick children and the charitable organization.

Ukrainian politician Iryna Farion, who makes a significant contribution to the “toxic language schizophrenia in Ukraine”, is a well-known phenomenon in the public space of Ukraine, whose emergence is due to the lack of democratic mechanisms for solving the language problem and the inability to conduct civilized public discussions on Ukrainian identity. According to Professor Yuriy Shevchuk, Iryna Farion, on the one hand, “enjoys popularity among a certain number of patriotic Ukrainians because she voices, albeit in an extremist way, things that concern many in Ukraine; on the other hand, she perfectly matches the caricatured image of a ‘Ukrainian nationalist’

filled with hatred for everyone and everything except bacon and embroidery” ([https://zaxid.net/dvomovnist\\_yak\\_hvoroba](https://zaxid.net/dvomovnist_yak_hvoroba)).

In the popular TV talk show “Velykyi Lviv Says” (Gvlua) on May 21, 2021, Iryna Farion discusses the topic of Ukrainian identity and the historical independence of the Ukrainian people from Russia in a very pathetic manner:

- (6) *Перше, 31 вересня 2020 року три фракції Слуги народу, Європейська солідарність і Голос проголосували за продаж України... вони для мене не існують як окремі суб'єкти, а тільки як спілка ...спілка бізнесуків на політиці...це є факт отже що с цим фактом робити...чому після Майдану народ проголосував проти Майдану...*(Gvlua, 2021).

*First, on September 31, 2020, three factions of the Servant of the People, European Solidarity and Voice voted to sell Ukraine... they do not exist for me as separate entities, but only as a union... a union of **business bitches** in politics... this is a fact, **so what** to do with this fact... why after the Maidan the people voted **against the Maidan** ... (translation is mine – N.S.)*

Iryna Farion, according to my respondents, behaves like a teacher who scolds high school students and lists their faults and shortcomings. This is accompanied by a strong dynamic emphasis (Imax 89.1 dB) on the initial segment “FIRST” and a gestural and mimic complex of repeated synchronized head nods, movements of the bent left hand with a hand in the form of a half-closed fist, which moves like a metronome and synchronizes with each word, with the fingers gradually opening when listing fractions, as well as stuck out lips.



Figure 7. Iryna Farion on Gvlua TV, May 20, 2021

Iryna Farion switches to direct images and accentuates the segments with both a strong dynamic emphasis (Imax 89.5 dB) and a gestural and mimic complex of denying movements of the left hand at face level with a curved mouth, wide open eyes and tense muscles of the whole face, which create an aggressive and angry look.

Iryna Farion’s pretentious speech has a toxic effect, which is created by utterances that divide the Ukrainian people into friends and foes, as well as a tense and aggressive tone that almost turns into a shout. The kinesic portrait of Iryna Farion is formed by various gestures of the hands (a negative repeated gesture of the left hand, as if it were a chopping off; open hands with fingers widely spaced; two hands pointing to the heart area), head (sharp nods, affirmative hesitations), body (active shrugging of the shoulders, bending of the whole body) and facial expressions (curved mouth, widened eyes), which reinforce her aggressive attitude towards the addressees not present in the TV studio.



The computer analysis made it possible to identify similarities and differences in the paraverbal (prosodic and gestural-mimetic) expression of toxicity in political communication in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine.

## 5. Conclusions

Political toxicity is a cognitive-discursive and semiotic phenomenon of media discourse, characterized by motivational and pragmatic attitudes of political communication participants, rhetorical traditions and communicative PR technologies of political competition, which leads to political confrontation.

The cognitive and media-discursive nature of the phenomenon of toxicity, as well as its mental essence, is reflected in the semantic scenarios of the verbalizers of the TOXICITY concepts, which form their conceptual and value-image strata and reflect the worldviews of national linguistic communities.

The associative stratum of concepts contains contrasting ideas about toxicity, which

- have a socio-political orientation for representatives of American society;
- are associated with transformations of the image of Great Britain and the Royal Family for representatives of British linguistic culture;
- are connected with reputational losses of interlocutors due to humiliation and devaluation of moral, spiritual and other traditions for representatives of Ukrainian linguistic culture.

Verbal, paraverbal and extralinguistic ways and means of semiotizing political toxicity in media discourse depend on the participants' political views, as well as on their configuration in political speeches, which together form a semiotized formation – a toxic utterance.

The construction of political toxicity in the media discourse is mostly based on index signs, the semiotic content of which lies in the strategy of their causal representation – the disclosure of the inner essence through the result, consequence, details.

Based on the results of the reconstruction of the TOXICITY concepts in three linguistic cultures, which means the restoration of both archetypes (pre-linguistic forms) and structures of consciousness, as well as whole fragments of world pictures, the chronology of the expansion of their semantic structure in European linguistic cultures was revealed. The reconstruction of the motivational basis of the TOXICITY concept and the chronology of its conceptualization in European and American linguistic cultures proved that during the period from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, its metaphorical expansion from the direct meaning of “medical and chemical toxicity” to the figurative meaning of “psychological toxicity” has taken place. In the literal sense, medical and chemical toxicity destroys a person's physical constituents and causes physical harm, while in the metaphorical sense, psychological toxicity destroys a person's moral constituents and causes moral and psychological harm. The metaphorical meaning transfer of “toxic poison” to “toxic human expression/behavior” is based on the following features: 1) the type of poison/toxin (word, behavior), 2) the effect of the poison/toxin, 3) the consequences of the poison/toxin.

The associative and figurative zone of constructing political toxicity in the minds of Americans, British and Ukrainians was experimentally identified and its place in the structure of the TOXICITY was concepts is determined.

The conducted component analysis of the conceptual zone verbalizers of the studied concepts showed that in English the figurative meaning of the attribute “toxic” as a person's negative psychological quality refers to such features of conceptual zones as HARM, UNPLEASANTNESS, MALICIOUSNESS, UNHAPPINESS, in Ukrainian the figurative meaning of the attribute “отруйний/poisonous” is associated with the negative quality of phenomena, objects, words and covers two conceptual zones: ШКОДА (HARM) and ЗЛІСТЬ (ANGER). The structure organization of the TOXICITY concepts is different: the American and British concepts contain a conceptual zone in the core, while the Ukrainian concept contains a value-figurative zone.

The paraverbal semiotization forms of political toxicity in the American, British and Ukrainian media discourse are identified, namely prosodic and gestural and mimetic forms, which include

aggressive, humiliating, patronizing tone of speech, gestures that violate the personal boundaries of the interlocutor (impulsive repetitive hand movements, touching, pointing the index finger at the opponent, clenched fists, etc.), overly active facial expressions (wide open mouth, raised eyebrows, dilated eyes, etc.).

In American media political discourse, toxic areas containing insults to political opponents are defined by high indicators of the dynamic (IΔ 20 dB) and tonal (FΔ 115 Hz) ranges, moderate rate of speech (210 syllables/second) and pausal saturation (K 1.2), strong dynamic emphases with synchronized gestural and facial complexes of hand, mouth and eye movements.

In British media political discourse, insult is defined by high indicators of the dynamic (IΔ 15 dB) and tonal (FΔ 95 Hz) ranges, fast pronunciation rate (215 syllables/second), strong dynamic emphasis on the main stressed syllable, which is synchronized with sharp hand movements, body tilts, and wide eyes. In the Ukrainian media political discourse, insult is defined by high dynamic range (IΔ 50 dB), accelerated rate of speech (260 syllables/second) with low pause saturation (K 1.02), strong dynamic emphasis on the main stressed syllables, which are synchronized with exaggerated grimaces, dilated eyes, aggressive posture and gaze of the speaker.

In American media political discourse, toxic discourse fragments containing lies or fakes are defined by low values of the tonal (FΔ 134 Hz) and dynamic (IΔ 15 dB) ranges, slow rate of speech (160 syllables/second), paused saturation (K 1.15) with moderate dynamic emphases, accompanied by repetitive and impulsive head nods, body tilts, and eyebrow raises. In the British media political discourse, lying is defined by high indicators of the dynamic (IΔ 15 dB) and tonal (FΔ 95 Hz) ranges, fast pronunciation rate (215 syllables/second), strong dynamic emphasis on the main stressed syllable, which is synchronized with sharp hand movements, body tilts, and wide eyes. In the Ukrainian media political discourse, lying is characterized by high values of the tonal (FΔ 215 Hz) and dynamic (IΔ 25 dB) ranges, fast speech rate (220 syllables/second), low pause saturation (K 1.01) with strong dynamic emphases on the main stressed syllables, which are synchronized with gestural and facial complexes of movements of widely spread arms, body tilt and staring eyes.

The extra-linguistic forms of semiotization of the toxicity of political communication include the color scheme of posters, clothes, hairstyles, flags, symbols of the election campaign, music, etc., which only complement the toxic effect of a politician's actions/utterances, but do not have a significant independent impact on the perception of a politician as toxic.

This research identified common and variable information agendas of political toxicity in the media discourses of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. ELECTORAL STRUGGLE turned out to be a common information agenda; in it opponents always consider each other toxic. On the contrary, RACISM, SEXISM, XENOPHOBIA (USA), EUROSCEPTICISM, PARTYGATE (UK), КОРУПЦІЯ (CORRUPTION), ВІЙНА (WAR), ЗРАДА (TRAITORY) (Ukraine) are contrasting agendas of political toxicity in the three political discourses.

The article clarified the definition of political toxicity as a result of the person's behavior perception that causes reputational harm or discriminates a politician. It constructs a scientific model of semantic and value-conceptual features in the structure of TOXICITY concepts in the lexicographic sources of the English and Ukrainian languages and the expansion of their semantic structure in European linguistic cultures, as well as the experimental identification of the associative and figurative zone of political toxicity in the minds of Americans, Britons, and Ukrainians.

The methodology suggested in this paper may be relevant for further comparative and typological research of political toxicity in media discourses of various countries that are the key subjects of geopolitics. It may also stimulate a deeper insight into communicative strategies of political discourse to ensure an effective interaction of its actors and contribute to the mitigation of toxic effects.

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**ПОЛІТИЧНА ТОКСИЧНІСТЬ  
У КОНТРАСТИВНІЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВІ  
(на матеріалі американського, британського  
та українського медіа-дискурсу)**

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### Анотація

Дослідження присвячене проблемі політичної токсичності в медійному дискурсі Сполучених Штатів Америки, Великої Британії і України; визначенню спільних та відмінних рис семіотизації політичної токсичності в медійному дискурсі. Спостережуваний міждисциплінарний характер феномену токсичності дає підстави зробити припущення про його когнітивну природу і ментальну сутність із набором концептуальних ознак, які відображають картину світу національної лінгвокультури. У політичній комунікації під токсичністю розуміють тип взаємодії різних учасників політичного дискурсу, який характеризується високим ступенем агресивної вербальної, пара- та/або невербальної поведінки та дискримінує опонента за расовою, етнічною, гендерною ознаками тощо, внаслідок чого такий політик (політики) сприймається, а потім визначається в медіа як токсичний. Мета дослідження – виявити спільні та відмінні способи й засоби семіотизації політичної токсичності. Дослідження ґрунтується на методах асоціативного та ідентифікаційного експериментів, комп'ютерного мультимодального аналізу, а також статистичної обробки отриманих даних. У дослідженні виявлено модули розгортання токсичного ефекту та закономірності формування токсичного іміджу політика в колективному, асоціативно-індивідуальному, символічному та медійному дискурсі-портреті. Комплексний аналіз токсичного іміджу політика в різних

лінгвокультурах враховує поведінку політиків як лідерів громадської думки та охоплення цільової аудиторії, на яку поширюється дія його токсичної риторики – на одну особу, групу осіб чи широку громадськість. При цьому види шкоди від візуалізації медіатоксичного ефекту можуть бути спрямовані як на психологічні стани адресата, так і на його гендерні, вікові та професійні характеристики. У статті визначено засоби вербального вираження токсичності, зумовлені як агресивно-емоційним типом політика, так і соціокультурними особливостями політичної боротьби у Сполучених Штатах Америки, Великій Британії та Україні.

**Ключові слова:** політичний дискурс, медійний дискурс, токсичність, концептуальні ознаки, семіотизація, вербальна, пара- та/або невербальна поведінка.