THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS
OF THE CURSE AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. The purpose of the article is to clarify the ontological status of cursing in Ukrainian hate speech. There is a ruining etiquette standard, a neglect of many ritualized communicative forms aimed at the opponent's face-saving in a problematic interaction, as well as a landslide violation of speech taboos. This tendency is seen in almost all communication spheres, including public media speech. Hate speech has emerged as the anticipated outcome of the crisis adjustment in the communicative inventory of Ukrainians. Curses are an effective means of hate speech in its institutional and profane forms, rooted in religious communication. The use of curses in various religious traditions has revealed a wide range of communicative intentions, from fear and destruction to protection and higher justice. In the Ukrainian context, household curses gradually lost their invective potential and primarily served as a communicative marker of affective empathy. However, the Russian-Ukrainian war changed this trend. Ukrainian curses demonstrated the effect of "forgetting as the ability to reconstruct" of new forms of both reproduction and sublimation of emotional negativity in wartime.

Keywords: curse; hate speech; Russian-Ukrainian war; media and political technology

Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war has dramatically changed Ukrainians' communicative behavior. Unseen at the previous stages in the development of Ukrainian society, this volcano-like explosion of cursing, foul language, all kinds of profanity in public and private speech has become the consequence of the people's neurotic agitation caused by the military aggression of the neighboring country.

The historical retrospective reveals many causes of strategic tensions between Ukrainians and Russians. However, at the previous stages, various forms of discrimination in interethnic interactions did not bring about communicative behavior of this type, whereas nowadays hate speech, in particular obscene words, are used as humane ways to alleviate inner tension and therefore are not taboo even in public speech. In Ukraine, 'hate speech' was initially studied as a legal term in

the situation when the national Ukrainian law started being integrated into the legal space of the EU countries. Yet, the war has redefined those frames that are relevant, in particular, to the specific spiritual and cultural tradition of Ukrainians. The issue seems to go beyond the study of dynamics inherent in the linguistic culture of a party to the conflict. Attention is focused on cursing as a tool of the political technology of the state to process discrimination. Undoubtedly, we are talking about curses created both at the level of institutions and at the level of ordinary people.

Methodology

The article operates with the categories of Critical Discourse Analysis that draws primarily on the theory developed by Van Dijk. Viewed from this perspective, discourse is profoundly embedded in a social context. Besides, discourse reflects the connection between some constructs (that include hate speech) and speakers' worldview and their objectives. The framework of the sociolinguistic approach presupposes that the use of language units may depend on the speaker's idea of 'the possible', 'the acceptable' and 'the necessary' in an interaction (Van Dijk 2002, 2015). Combining this approach with the Speech Act Theory (Austin 1981) allows to analyse illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of cursing as a component of hate speech; it also facilitates the research into previous and current functions of curses in the context of their pragmatics. This approach shifts the focus of linguistic analysis from the study of units in a language system to the research into communication outcomes.

The objective of the research is to clarify the ontological status of cursing in Ukrainian linguoculture. Achieving the objective requires carrying out the following **tasks**:

1. to overview functional differences of curses in various religious approaches;
2. to analyse the social function of cursing in Ukrainian cultural discourse.

The status of curses in religious communication: cross-cultural overview

Despite the availability of various approaches to curses (e.g., theological, anthropological, psychological, cross-cultural, psycholinguistic perspectives), scientists tend to regard them as "a wish that evil may befall a person or people" (OCD 2016), condemnation of somebody accompanied with an evil wish, prophecy; it is also often verbalised with invective formulae (Zhayvoronok 2006, 486).

"Since these formulaic expressions which are speech acts as well as they involve a reaction, attitude and behavior towards their respondent, realize the act of cursing and are based on a common cultural memory, they reflect how nations perceive the world and how they live, think and behave as well" (Çolak 2021). They carry codes about traditions and moral values of different societies, historical, mythological and religious realities. Different signs and metaphorical expressions are used based on beliefs, traditions, social experience and values, even when the communicative function of the curse is similar (Çolak 2021). At

the same time, researchers usually distinguish between profane and ritual curses. We also follow this approach.

People have always turned to gods for justice when they felt powerless. Curses have always been in demand. However, **in ancient cultures** the curse was a much more loaded form of speech; they were considered extremely powerful, either in a protective sense ("Begone, go to Hell, you son of the Devil!") or in a socially disruptive sense ("Let your cows give nothing but poison from this day forward!"). As a ritual action, a curse gives an object destructive power or transmits a destructive force that torments a person after such an action (Frankfurter 2005, p. 158). Thus, **in magical beliefs**, the effect of a curse is associated with the ability of words to objectify certain energies. This culture of using curses was supported both institutionally and by ordinary citizens.

The beliefs of the **Semitic peoples**, in particular, stand out compared to other societies for their frequent recourse to these practices in almost every aspect of life. Assyrian kings combined the practices of prayer and curses in all their activities, from construction projects to military campaigns, and from correspondence to treaty texts. (Coşgun 2024, p. 81). With the help of curses, they instilled fear in their people and external enemies, forced them to fulfil various socially significant duties and requirements. (Coşgun 2024, 102).

In Judaism, the attitude to cursing is derived from the Old Testament. While cautions must be exercised in making monolithic claims about how a particular society perceives a given action, in ancient Israel, curses were an effective means of maintaining or challenging one's social environment. They often served as threats designed to control society and channel public opinion, convey the fundamental values of the society, discern guilty parties, discover truth, and punish offenders. Curses also were a means of excluding communities, both outside and inside Israel, who represented a real or perceived threat to the originator of the curse. Alternatively, curses were often employed by the oppressed to seek revenge against the oppressor (Anderson 1998). According to Connerton, the Jewish Curses "have a constituting function; they are performative acts of unequivocal demarcation defining boundaries between insiders and outsiders. (Connerton 1989, p. 58). Thus, as an activity, ritual curses structure collective memory.

Widely known are curse-containing psalms from the Old Testament. According to the Bible, a curse may be uttered both by man and God: "When God pronounces a curse, it is, *a*, a denunciation of sin (Nu. 5:2 1, 23; Dt. 29: 1 9 – 20), *b*, his judgment on sin (Nu. 5:22, 24, 27; Is. 24:6), and *c*, the person who is suffering the consequences of sin by the judgment of God is called a curse (Nu. 5:2 1, 27; Je. 29: 18) (NBD 1996, p. 248). For example, to the Jews, "just as a word was not a mere sound on the lips but an agent sent forth, so the spoken curse was an active agent for hurt. Behind the word stands the soul that created it. Thus, a word which is backed by no spiritual capacity of accomplishment is a mere 'word of the lip' (2 Ki. 1 8:20

Rvmg.), but when the soul is powerful the word is clothed in that power (Ec. 8:4; I Ch. 2 1:4)" (NBD 1996, p. 248).

Researcher of medieval history L. Little pointed out a relation between cursing and blessing. "In many societies they seem to reflect two aspects of a single religious phenomenon: efficacious, often liturgical speech. They invariably derive their authority from the same source: a god, a text, a prophet. Their linguistic mechanics are essentially the same; and those empowered to do the one tend to be the same as those empowered to do the other" (Frankfurter 200, p. 157). This specific feature is observed in the Old Testament where a word of God's blessing and a word of God's wrath are the same word. 'Pulsa de-nura' (lit. 'lashes of fire') is a death curse. According to Kabbalistic beliefs, within a year death befalls the one upon whom this curse is laid (Zohar 2007). Ukrainian media started to inform of Pulsa de-nura cases during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Allegedly, revolutionary Leo Trotsky, dictator Josef Stalin, prime-ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon, and some of the Kennedys fell victim to the curse. It is a tool for establishing higher justice. The mythology of the curse became one of fear-evoking instruments (Kravchuk 2022; Glavcom, 2023, etc).

Christianity that draws on the New Testament proposes a different approach rooted in preaching love. The Lord said, "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6, pp. 27 – 28).

Yet, the legacy of earlier beliefs still persists in Christianity and reemerges in Christian denominations around the world. This feature applies to various segments of the Christian landscape, including very remote ones.

So, L. Nasrallah writes about the curse of early Christians: "The ancient Christians and their non-Christian contemporaries lived in a world of 'magic.' Sometimes, they used curses as ritual objects to seek justice from gods and other beings; sometimes, they argued against them" (Nasrallah 2024). This syncretism of influences is pointed out by T. Waters, a researcher of Irish cursing. He believes the curse had many uses, but was particularly valuable to Ireland's marginalized people, fighting over food, religion, politics, land and family loyalties" (Waters 2020).

In turn, the eclecticism of influences that shaped the culture of curses also defines the African spiritual tradition. African religion has no churches or mosques like those of Christianity or Islam. Even if they are Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox Christians or Muslims, as many Africans are, they have formed their feelings about religion in general on the basis of their African roots (Lugira 2009, p. 106). Researchers of African religions give interesting examples of the Africanization of Christian churches. "Indeed, Africans who converted to Christianity adapted Christian beliefs and rituals to their own needs, establishing their own churches enriched with strong African elements. Christianity was deemed insufficient due

to its lack of salvation through magic, protective measures against witchcraft, prophecy methods, and healing practices" (Sahin 2024, p. 25).

In an African frame, the research on curses is usually part of a wide spectrum of "magical" phenomena, including sorcery, voodoo, the occult, black magic, evil spirits, etc. At the same time, this belief in the power of words is founded on the assumption that a curse "is not a mere wish for misfortune on a person or thing but a power that produces tangible results, for in cursing it is believed that a power is released that is effective in determining the destiny of the recipient of the curse" (Donkor 2011, p. 92). P. N. Wachege elaborates on the impartial way a curse may attack its target. It is a fear which is so indispensable among many Africans' life and living that even the Western or Eastern mainstream world religions have not managed to annihilate. It is such an incredible phenomenon whose anxiety and wonder remain (Wachege 2003).

The Quran and the Sunnah write how a faithful person should behave. But in reality, the situation is far from it. Antipathies between communities within Islam are more common than even between Islam itself and other religious beliefs and their followers. In some countries of the world, theological and cultural disagreements between Sunnis and Shiites lead to open violence and bloodshed. The basis of such curses is the different **interpretation of hadiths** (Prophet and his companions' statements). Another interesting example: in Islam, mutual cursing exists as a form of divorce. It can be implemented in critical situations, that is, when married life between husband and wife becomes meaningless (Hamat et al. 2017). As we can see, the researchers emphasize the role of the curse in the restoration of the ideal world order, as it was interpreted by the prophets in ancient times, and later began to be presented by religious authorities and also as its ordinary people imagine.

And finally, a little about the Christians of Eastern Europe. The custom of cursing among Eastern Slavs, including Ukrainians, is attributed primarily to the period of paganism. This also holds for other Slavs whose invective tradition preserves pagan features. This commonality on the functional level is displayed, first of all, in the thematic range of cursing intentions (overcome with anger, speakers either wished their enemies death, illnesses, misfortune or appealed to their conscience, addressed forces of nature or believed in afterlife, etc.). There are similarities in symbolic objectivation of various kinds of danger and enemies. Curses reveal common fears and problems.

Let us consider Ukrainian (Ukrainians are Eastern Slavs) and Bulgarian (Bulgarians are Southern Slavs) curses with the invocation: diseases – "А щоб на вас чума насіла, матері вашій чорт!" (Ukrainski 1993, p.192) – "Чумата да го тръшне" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 113); the merciless condemnation from people – "А, щоб тебе люде не знали!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 190) – "Да види и да пати." (Slavejkov 120); a punishment from the forces of nature – "Щоб тебе буря вивернула!" (Ukrainski 1993, 190) – "Да ги запали огън небесний!" (Slavejkov 1889, 112);

a punishment from the earth – "Щоб тебе сира земля пожерла!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 194) – "Да го не приеме земята!" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 112); the poverty and the hunger – "Нужда б тя побила!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 190) – "Да живъш от тикви до кратуни" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 115), etc.

Semantic affinity is found in Polish texts (Poles belong to the group of Western Slavs). Here are several examples of curses – wishes of illness as a kind of trial – in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian: "Щоб тебе різачка (хвороба) попорізала!" (Let the disease torment; Ukrainski 1993, p. 192) – "O choroba!"; "Choroba ciężka!"; "A cóż, do choroby!"; "Idź do choroby!" – (Go to illness!); "Choroba (kogoś) wie!" – "Дявол го знае!" (Devil knows him!); "Niech cię choroba weźmie / ciśnie!" – "Да те вземат дяволите!"; "Choroba przyniosła!"; "Choroba nadała!" – these are curses connected to an unexpected and unpleasant event. Meanwhile, the options mentioned above appear at the level of axiological connotations, cf.: "Idź do cholery!"; "Idź do kata!"; "Idź do diabła!"; "Idź do licha!"; "Idź do pioruna!" (Stancheva 2012, pp. 699 – 700).

The tendency toward animalization of illness presented in curses as a living thing with aggressive behaviour and habits is found in Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Polish curses. Compare these curses with the meaning of "death by disease": "Вбий тя трясця!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 192) – "Да та поразата порази" – "Niech cię choroba weźmie" (Stancheva 2012, 699 – 700). Death curses exhibit a similarity of death semiotics. The idea of mortality in Slavic curses is expressed through connotations with the devil: "Щоб тебе Чорний бог убив!" (Ukrainski 1993, 193) – "Да го земат дяволить." (Slavejkov 1889, p. 112); eternal suffering: "О, щоб твою кість викидало з того світа!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 195) – "Да го не приеме земята" (Slavejkov 1889, 112); blindness: "Баньки їм бодай посліпило!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 192) – "Да даде Господ да не осъмне." (Славейков 1889, р. 113); a deadly disease: "Аби дристав дальше як видиш!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 155) – "Да даде Господ о плет да се държиш, кръв да сереш" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 114); a disappearance: "Амінь тобі буде!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 190) – "Да даде Господ на прах и пепел да станеш" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 114) etc.

Supreme justice was disposed when a curse was laid like a heavy burden on other family members. For example, "Мордовав би чорт твою маму!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 194); "Бодай його корінь звівся!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 194); "Щоб ти і в старцях щастя не мав!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 191) – "Да ти опустеят къщите" (Slavejkov 2003, p. 251); "Да не доживъш до старост" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 125); "Да ти посадят на гробът цвътье." (Slavejkov 1889, p. 134), etc. Fear of curses helped to maintain a certain value system in many generations and to create the ground for interactions between peoples.

However, while comparing specific features of Ukrainian and Bulgarian invectives, it is worth emphasising the social function of self-curse, which also stands for the idea of supreme justice.

Researchers argue for a relation between the ancient oath and cursing in chronicles as well as in business and folklore texts. One of the main elements in the curses above is gods' assistance or their punishment in case the oath is broken. The gods punished oath-breakers by making their weapons (shields, swords, arrows, etc.) fail. Moreover, the weapons were supposed to hit their owners. The essence of an oath, just like the essence of a "self-curse" (Ukr. *самозакляття:* a ritual of giving an oath that presupposes punishment if the oath is broken), is to punish its breaker. This practice applied to "warriors". It was the object upon which the oath was given that was bound to punish the offender. It was his weapon. In general, Ukrainians were not afraid to wish themselves death as a punishment for something: "А щоб мене до вечора на лаві положили" ('So that they put me dead on the bench by the evening'; Ukrainski 1993, p. 312). Experts believe that it was the Byzantine tradition of christening of Rus that influenced the self-curse practice.

Ukrainian oaths were formed and existed in a broad context of intercultural contacts of the Pontic region. There, Slavic customs intertwined with Byzantine, Scandinavian, Iranian, Turkic and other influences, forming a specific local (basically proto-Ukrainian) and then Ukrainian tradition per se as one of its Indo-European variants (Balushok 2020). A. M. Sumtsov argues that an oath upon a sword is found both in Ukrainian Kozak epics and in Bulgarian songs: "що первна сабя махнула, тебя се, сынко, пръсекла" (Sumtsov 1896, pp. 10 – 11). We also found the following curses: "Да ма гръмне от небето, ано..." (Slavejkov 1889, p. 120); "Да ма изгори гръм Божий ако..." (Slavejkov 120); "Да ме растресне мунята"; "Да ме растресне шипо". (Slavejkov 121). The specificity of oaths upon swords is discussed in Bulgarian studies (Trifonova 2007, pp. 50 – 51). This was a peculiar practice of pacification in conflicts or arguments that channeled aggression. Besides, codifying the language of theology reveals that the lexeme *to curse* "demonstrates Bulgarians' awareness of false oaths" (Trifonova 2007, p. 56).

Under new circumstances, after converting to Christianity, medieval people started ascribing the retributive function to the central Christian symbol, the cross, as well as Christian saints and even the Lord: "Щоб тобі дубовий хрест!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 194); "Щоб не діждав ні Петра, ні Павла, ні дрібних святків!" (Ukrainski 1993, p. 194); "Да го убие честний кръст" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 112); "Да та убие Господ" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 132); "Да го убие Господ и св. Богородица" (Slavejkov 1889, p. 112).

As Christianity got ever more established in Slavic territories, this practice gradually became one of the past, and oaths and curses grew ritually distinct. Oaths given on the cross and curses in the name of God or the cross were regarded as isomorphic to rituals on weapons (Franchuk 1988, p. 155).

The Slavic curses demonstrate that their power in early Christian times arose not only from folk beliefs, struggle for survival, competition for resources but also from human psychological needs. It thrived on the drive for security and collective survival

rules. According to Freud, hostility between (social, racial, etc.) groups is inborn and geared up by self-affirmation, unconscious denial of differences (Frojd 2021, pp. 53 – 54). Within this framework, cursing as a communicative universal turns into a tool of affective ambivalent relations.

It is well-known that the Christian Church does not acknowledge the power of curses. Meanwhile, believers in the sermon about love can delegate a retributive action to God. Christian Church proclaims anathema (Greek: *ἀνάθεμα* – 'excommunication'). At the same time, in theological sources, the reconstruction of the nominative field of the concept was mainly represented by verbalizers of the core zone, namely mortal sin, heresy, impenitence, etc. Instead, in the religious media, the emphasis shifted to the peripheral zone. First of all, the so-called "political anathemas" and their manipulative effect were criticized.

Meanwhile, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill blessed the head of the Russian Guard for the destruction of Ukrainians, declared a "holy war" (Glavkom 2024). Condemning the aggression, part of the dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UPC MP), which was formally subordinated to the Russian Church, stopped commemorating Patriarch Kirill at all services. In response to the call for the unification of Orthodox churches in the OCU from 2022 to 2024 1,200 parishes changed their canonical affiliation from the UOC MP to the OCU (in 2022 – 496, in 2023 – 471, in 2024 – 232 religious communities) (RISU 2025). On May 11, 2024, the Synod of Bishops of the OCU in Kyiv announced the excommunication of V. Putin from the Church with the following words: "May the righteous judgment of God be fulfilled soon over whom it is possible to say in the words of the Gospel, that his "father is the devil" (Jn. 8: 44) (OCU 2024; Flot2017 2024).

Pope Francis's appeal for reconciliation remained unanswered.

In February, 2024, the Institute of Leadership, Management and Coaching made public the following data: "Within the two years of the war, the number of atheists in Ukraine has doubled..." (RISU 2025).

Social function of curses in Ukrainian frame

In his classic article, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown defines social function as the part a particular activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity of that society (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). That is, we will consider the specificity of curses, which corresponds to their ability to be tools for solving certain problematic issues of social life. According to the speech act theory (J. Austin), curse words are performatives, or words equivalent to actions. Performatives do not describe the state of affairs (in the broad sense of the word), but objectify actions, which change it. We understand the social function of curses as their communicative ability to promote the socialization of Ukrainians.

After the introduction of Christianity, formulae of curses were viewed as magical and their ritual performance was tabooed, yet it was impossible to get rid of

them completely. In the context of dual belief, the use of curses in folk communicative culture changed: Church's ban objectified the ambivalent effect of cursing in a peculiar way by emphasizing its destructive impact. On the one hand, curses did not disappear but started to be used along the line "cursing is not a fight" ("Лайка – не бійка" – Ukrainski 1993, p. 195). The tension of everyday use was eased with the help of a peculiar 'cursing' humour: "May you be kissed by dogs and may I be kissed by girls!" (News & Blog 2022); "To make your nose disappear"; "May you dream of a wild goat!" or "May you become sour!" (Zajvoronok 2006, p. 486). The most common Ukrainian curses are of scatological nature: May you step into shit! (Stavytska 2008, p. 130) or "Drink up broth made of shit!" (Stavytska 2008, p. 26). Also, cursing obscene idioms may focus on tabooed body parts, primarily buttocks: "May your butt split open along the seam" is used as a curse to express extreme annoyance, dissatisfaction with an action (Stavytska 2008, p. 177); "Pumpkin for mom, and melon for dad!" – it means "Go away!" (Stavytska 2008, p. 176)

Even curses with the intention of mortality have lost their invective nature. The curses "May God punish you!" (Stavytska 2008, 191) or "May devil play on your coffin!" (Halytsko, 2006, p. 193) can be used as normal grumpy phrases. A curse may acquire opposite meanings in real-life communication if used in situations of surprise, friendly support, even excitement. It is the communicative context that determines the invective potential of curses. L. Stavytska defines this feature of Ukrainian cursing as "situational creativity". The curses function as psychological protection and emotional harmonization of human interaction because Ukrainians are never tired of picking at each other (News & Blog 2022).

As for the use of swear words, the Ukrainian invective expression "Гробом крити" ('to cover with a coffin') (Stavytska 2008, p. 143), i.e., 'swearing', contains the lexeme *coffin*, associated with the end of life, that introduces the semantic connotation of the extreme. Also, the idea of using swear words is expressed with the idiom "Лаяти в батька, в матір" ('Scold by father, by mother', in a Moscow style, obscenely) (Stavytska 2008, 227). Here swear words are replaced with euphemisms. It is relevant to point out in the context of this research that the folk tradition objectified 'foreignness' of obscene vocabulary and specified its ethnic relation. According to S. Formanova, besides Russian origin, Ukrainian swear words originate from German, Polish and Hungarian (Formanova 2010).

Prohibitions of cursing, in turn, strengthened the assumption that cursing is a sin that destroys the one who curses. This belief is still valid today. Infertility, death of children, unhappy marriages, serious diseases, poverty, untimely death and other tragic family events tend to be viewed in folk culture as results of terrible curses. Knowledge of these curses became a part of folk morale. Interestingly, comparative research into cursing in other European cultures reveals similarities in this type of curses (Krymova-Tsvetkova 2010; Engelking 2010; Slipetska 2013; Ager 2024, etc.).

Meanwhile, the military confrontation revived curses filled with verbal aggression. Responding to the social demand for supreme justice in relation to the aggressor country, many popular publications have started to promote cursing content: "Destructive power of an ancient curse. Folk culture"; "May you be tortured by shitting and illness! How our ancestors used to curse"; "What happens when one curses or uses swear words"; "Should one be afraid of curses and how should one react to them: clarification from OCU"; "OCU explains how to react to curses"; "How to curse enemies correctly – a thousand-year-long experience"; "Curses empower Putin", etc. This egalitarian strategy becomes successful because Ukrainian society unanimously interprets the war as a predatory invasion.

Headlines are used as click bait because they promise the scoop, shock perception and appeal to secret knowledge, mysticism, mental taboos; they play on fear, wrath, need for self-defence, they break stereotypes and suggest provocative judgments, etc. The examples show that the impact of the titles is based on numerous devices of latent interactivity that draws on the principle "the one who asks is the one who answers". This approach functions as a perception-managing tool because it manipulates with the audience's uncritical thinking.

On the level of content, instead of facts, readers are provided with an emotional commentary that is based on belief and does not only lack verification but encourages uncritical perception. Perlocution of this media action, in its turn, strengthens the tendency to affective communication with dominant verbal aggression. Within the framework of the analytical approach, media appeal to the powerful suggestive means of cursing may help to diagnose the critical state of a sick society that reacts only to "strong" medicines.

Media experts draw attention to the stylistically unjustified use of lexemes that denote various aspects of fear, aggressive processuality and contain connotations of obscenity, impoliteness, cynicism, etc. in titles of texts that belong to different genres, in particular in weather forecasts, news reports and so on. In fact, these are verbalised effects of 'infecting' with negativity.

The intensity of using cursing on social media has forced owners of these platforms to introduce bans in order to curb hate speech. In particular, such measures have been taken by Meta (Meta 2022). However, attempts to control affective mass communication have strengthened compensatory trends. In particular, this explains the overwhelming popularity of the post stamp "Русскій воєнний корабль, іди…" ('Russian warship, go f…') (Istoriya 2022) that was a response to the invasion into Ukraine in the morning of February 24, 2022. On February 24, a Russian warship approached Ukraine's Snake Island where there were Ukrainian border guards. The Russians urged the garrison twice: *I am a Russian warship. I suggest laying down your arms and surrendering so as to avoid bloodshed and unjustified deaths. Otherwise, you'll be hit with a bomb-assault strike.* One of the Ukrainian border guards answered: *Русский военный корабль, иди нахуй!* ('Russian warship, go fuck yourself!').

The phrase became a meme that underscores Ukrainians' unity and consolidation in the time of martial law. The phrase is often shortened: "Русский корабль, иди нахуй!" ('Russian ship, go fuck yourself!'). Coverage of the events with the English translation "Russian warship, go fuck yourself" found its way onto the pages of *Reuters, The Guardian, Politico, The Daily Mail*, etc. In response to the complaint about the plate "Рускій солдат, иди на х*й" featured in a 5 Channel news programme on March 1, 2022, the Commission on Journalistic Ethics took into account the extraordinary nature of the event and found no violation of ethical standards. The Commission referred to the recommendation of the BBC's Editorial Values and Standards (BBC).   In short, the quote was found adequate in those circumstances and its remediation was considered relevant to the social demand.

As can be seen, the invective "Go away!" in different communicative conditions constantly changes the form of the imperative, but retains its meaning. In the conditions of war, it had the following form: a generalized appeal (a Russian soldier) + an instructive order combined with an insult (go to…).

In conclusion, it should be noted that this expression has become a popular Ukrainian curse. Meanwhile, information space is quickly filled with various products of sublimated verbal aggression. In particular, the multimodal principle of media representation of cursing is actualised in visual products that advertise curses as useful ("Ukrainian school of Curse magic…"of Pavlo Kruk), in music content deprived of any political correctness towards the enemy (Hate Speech rock band or the song "Enemy" by Angy Kreyda, in kinesthetic perceptions (a wide range of hash marks saying "Нехуй шастати, койот" – 'Keep the fuck away from here, coyote', "Нехуй шастать – наш оберіг і прокляття для ворога" – 'Keep the fuck away from here is our amulet and a curse'), etc.

Analysing invective curses as a language unit, it is necessary to underline that restraining it is impossible if the 'talking without taboo' trend is supported by opinion leaders and public figures. It is also problematic to control it during a continuous fierce war when sensitivity to the emotional aspect in social integration or disintegration is much higher. Ukraine's experience demonstrates that the recommendations important in peace situations are controversial in wartime (Krasteva 2022, pp. 67 – 69). The issue of democracy limitations in wartime requires research.

Similarly, Ukrainian experience reveals dangerous consequences of catching-on emotional aggression that leads to mass suggestibility, which may be used by any, even foreign experienced manipulators. Constructive effects may, on the contrary, result only from people's joining in empathetic emotions.

Conclusions
Studying cross-cultural experience of cursing practices has uncovered a range of social functions where dominant ones are protective, identifying, regulatory and magic.

Ukrainian cursing demonstrates the impact into dimensions of individual, collective and cultural memory. Curses regain their invective power in a wide range of reflections on the Russian aggression but primarily in hate speech. Breaking language taboos is found in many spheres and is about to become the communicative norm. The precedential nature of these processes displays a social demand for changes in the role status with the aggressor state, the intention of political self-affirmation as the people's will, a drive for a change of political, cultural, economic, etc. hierarchies typical of previous historical periods.

For Ukrainians as "crisis people" (Stavitska 2008), curses have become communicative means of "survival via destruction". From this perspective, hate speech, like cursing, performs first of all the cathartic function. At the same time, a renewal of the imperative paradigm is founded on the abandonment of the practice of metaphorizing evil within the incomplete "pagan gestalt". Instead, matyuks (Ukrainian: *матюки* – 'curses', 'swearing') are used with the function of offending. However, in Ukrainian culture, matyuks is traditionally regarded as a feature belonging to the linguistic culture of the aggressor country. This group of words is aggressively penetrated into various segments of linguistic communication and is, in fact, legitimized. Ukrainian experience demonstrates that the regulatory use of the hate speech potential and the curse intention, in particular, stimulate the search for new forms to sublimate emotional negativity in wartime. In pursuit of divergent ways of resistance, Ukrainians display the deviant communicative behaviour that stem from their heart-centred culture.

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