Meaning-Making in Conflict Narratives: Analysis Interpersonal, Ideational, and Textual Metafunctions in CNN's Russia-Ukraine Reports

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ABSTRACT :
This study is motivated by academic concerns about how global news media grammatically construct public understanding of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, especially when reporting is widely perceived as objective, but rarely examined at the clause level. Using on Systemic Functional Linguistics as developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the research aims to investigate how intepersonal meaning (mood and modality), ideational meaning (transitivity), and textual meaning (theme-rheme) are realized in CNN live news reports on the Russia-Ukraine war. The data consist of 10 CNN news excerpts broadcast between January and February 2023, segmented into 105 clauses and analyzed qualitatively using SFL metafunctional for process types, mood structures, modality expressions, and theme types. The findings show a strong dominance of material processes (61.90%), fully declarative mood (100%) with very limited modality (5.71%), and overwhelmingly topical themes (97.14%), indicating that CNN's war reporting foregrounds concrete actions and official actors, presents information as factual and unproblematic, and organizes messages so that states and institutions remain discursively prominent. These patterns suggest that grammatical choices systematically support an authoritative, action-centered representation of the conflict, with limited space for ambiguity, evaluation, or alternative perspectives grounded in grammatical variation.

Keywords: *Ideational Meaning, Interpersonal Meaning, Textual Meaning, CNN News Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

News media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of geopolitical conflicts, where language doesn't just report events it frames them, assigns blame and influences perceptions of power dynamics. Mass media significantly influences public perception, as demonstrated by the seminal work of (Cohen 1963). Their research indicates that when media outlets emphasize a particular topic, the audience tends to assign greater importance to that subject. This phenomenon, known as agenda-setting, suggest that while media may not indicate what to think, it is highly effective in determining what to think about (McCombs 1972).

Report text, in particular, serve as a valuable and diverse source of information, extending their utility beyond daily news consumption to academic research. They are frequently employed in both social sciences and humanities as primary or supplementary data sources. For instance, linguistic studies often incorporate newspaper corpora for various analyses, while historical research utilizes newspapers to gain insights into past events and their contexts,. The process of locating and analyzing information within these sources can be labor-intensive, though advancements in digital archives and tools are progressively streamlining this endeavor,. Despite challenges such as potential inaccuracies and biases inherent in journalistic reporting, reports

remain crucial for documenting history as it unfolds, offering a rich, varied, and increasingly accessible resource for scholarly inquiry (Krtalic & Hasenay 2012).

Martin and Rose illustrate how the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions instantiate and interact across complete texts and registers, rather than operating in isolation. Through detailed analyses of genres like news reports and narratives, they demonstrate how macro-patterns such as transitivity sequences, mood progressions, modality distributions, theme chains, and cohesion networks work together to construct cohesive meanings. This approach shifts focus from isolated clause-level choices to the systemic interplay of metafunctions that shapes entire discourses (Martin 2007).

There have been many researchers who have discussed systemic functional linguistics in the form of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning analyses across various types of texts. These studies explore how meaning is constructed in diverse contexts, ranging from political speeches and adevrtisements to classroom interactions and literary works. Some notable previous studies include Zhang and Li (2023) the study analyzed Xi Jinping's speech at the 16th G20 Summit. High use of material processes conveyed determination to safeguard state interests and strategic blueprints. Use of personal prnouns and modal verbs established a leadership role and called for global cooperation. And the textual meanings marked themes were used to highlight key political messages and maintain text coherence.

Akromah (2025) analyzed advertisements from the Make Over website. Ideational meaning of product benefits (luxury, durability) were realized through spesific descriptors. Interpersonal meanigs of persuasive language and authoritative tone (references to "professional makeup artist") fostered trust and engaged consumers despite the absence of direct address. Chandio, et.al (2025) examined articles from Dawn newspaper. Ideational linguistic choices framed climate cahnge not just as a scientific issue but as a political narrative of blame and justice. Textual or interpersonal revealed the use of spesific grammatical structures highlighted geopolitical power asymmetries, framing the Global North as responsible actors.

Al Umami (2024) analyzed the use of "I" and "We" in Biden's speeches. Ideational discussed relational processes were the most frequent, used to define Biden's identity in relation to the American people. Interpersonal revealed the strategic use of pronouns aimed to build inclusivity, unity, and leadership credibility with diverse audiences. Syamsurrijal (2024) analyzed slogans from West Nusa Tenggara. Ideational material and relational processes dominated, emphasizing government action and identity. Interpersonal declarative mood was used to state facts and build authority rather than demand action directly. Textual simple thematic structures ensured the slogans were memorable and clear.

Amanah et. al (2025)Explored teacher talk in a non-formal setting. Interpersonal teachers primarily used questioning, instructions, and lecturing. The study found that teacher talk patterns (Mood) significantly shaped student engagement and comprehension, though teachers struggled with consistent English use due to proficiency issues. Puspitasari and Sujatna (2023) Ideational dominated by material processes, typical of narratives focusing on actions. Interpersonal predominantly Indicative-Declarative mood, positioning the author as an information provider. Textual unmarked topical themes were frequnt, keeping the focus on the main characters (farm owners and cows) and maintaining narrative flow.

Sinaga et.al (2023) Focused on Ideational (Experiential) meaning. The study found that the lyrics used spesific processes (material, mental) and partcipants to construct emotional experiences, allowing listeners to connect with the song's narartive of self-improvement and love. Samsi et.al

(2021) Analyzed the Jakarta Post. Interpersonal meaning revealed journalists used positive appraisal resources to persuade the public to accept vaccination. The texts functioned to normalize post-pandemic life, building a relationship of trust and encouragement between the media and the public. Susanti, Nababan, and Wiranto (2024)Analyzed a German guidebook. Ideational simplex clauses and material proccesses dominated, reflecting a straightforward presentation of facts. Textual unmarked topical themes were most common, ensuring clarity and focus on the topic rather than writer's perspective.

Many researchers have already studied how the media covers the Russia-Ukraine war. However, most of them focus on the big political themes or look at just one small part of the language (like analyzing the verbs). This research analyzes how CNN combines the events (Ideational), the connection with the reader (Interpersonal), and the flow of the text (Textual) at once to shape a spesific opinion about the war.

Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), pioneered by Michael Halliday, offers a fresh perspective on grammar that breaks away from the old idea of language as just a collection of rules dictating sentence structures (M. A. Halliday, An Introduction to Functional Grammar 1985). Instead, it treats language as a powerful tool for creating meaning, where grammar serves as the bridge between our thoughts and the actual words we choose. As Halliday and Matthiessen in 1999 put it, systemic grammar belongs to the family of functional grammars it's driven by meaning and feels natural, unlike formal grammars that operate independently of semantics and can seem random. In SFL, every grammatical concept is rooted in meaning, blending semantic depth with lexico-grammatical form (M. A. Halliday 1999).

At its core, SFL focuses on the options grammar provides to speakers and writers, linking their intentions directly to the language's real-world forms. While traditional views separate meaning from structure, SFL examines language across three interconnected layers: semantics, phonology, and lexicogrammar a term that captures how words and grammar work together seamlessly. Rather than seeing grammar as rigid rules, SFL views it as a rich resource, mapping out entire networks of choices rather than isolated pieces. This is why it's called systemic functional. Halliday describes it as a theory of meaning through choices, where languages (or any sign system) form interlocking networks of options one selection opens doors to others, building meaning step by step (M. A. Halliday, An Introduction to Functional Grammar 1985).

In SFL, the clause not the sentence-is the key unit of analysis, blending three types of meaning into one cohesive expression. These are the three metafunctions:

a. Ideational meaning (clause as representation): Captures our experience of the world through transitivity patterns, shaped by the discourse's field.
b. Interpersonal meaning (clause as exchange): Handles social interactions via mood structures, influenced by the discourse's tenor.
c. Textual meaning (clause as message): Organizes information flow through theme structures, relating the clause to its context and mode of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1994:309).

1. The Interpersonal Meaning

Halliday explains that when we use language to communicate, we're not just sharing information, we're also building a relationship between ourselves and others, like the current speaker and the next one in line (M. A. Halliday 1985). This happens through taking turns in

conversation, where each person steps into different roles during the exchange. As Suzanne Eggins elaborates, these core roles are captured by speech functions, the typical mood patterns in clauses, and various types of adjuncts (Eggins 2004). The summarize are as the table below:

Speech function	Typical mood in clause
statement	Declarative mood
question	Interrogative mood
command	Imperative mood
offer	Modulated interrogative mood
answer	Elliptical declarative mood
acknowledgment	Elliptical declarative mood
accept	Minor clause
compliance	Minor clause

2. The Ideational Meaning

The ideational meaning focuses on how we construct our experiences of the world both external events and internal thoughts through grammatical tools. This metafunction is explored via the Transitivity system, which offers choices among six process types, along with their associated participants and circumstances. In essence, a clause serving an ideational role acts as a way to depict patterns of reality, helping people form mental images of what's happening around and within them. These experiences (the "goings-on" or processes) get organized within the language's semantic framework and expressed through clause grammar. The Transitivity system specifically handles classifying process types, the participants involved, and the surrounding circumstances.

material	Process: material; actor; goal/range/beneficiary
mental	Process: mental; senser; phenomenon
verbal	Process: verbal; sayer; receiver; verbiage
behavioral	Process; behavioral; behaver; phenomenon
existensial	Process; existensial; esistent
Relational - identifying	Process: identifying; token; value
circumstance	Extent : duration (temporal); distance (spatial)
	Cause (reason; purpose; behalf
	Location: time (temporal); place (spatial)
	Matter
	Manner
	Role
	Accompaniment

3. The Textual Meaming

Eggins (2004) explains that the Theme system is realized through a structure that divides the clause into two main parts: the Theme, which is the first part of the clause, and the Rheme, which follows. The Theme system consists of three important components: the selection of the Theme itself, whether the Theme is marked or unmarked, and whether the Theme is predicated

or unpredicated. These components are realized by placing a specific type of constituent in the thematic position of the clause. The markedness of the Theme depends on how the Theme element is combined with different elements related to mood and transitivity within the clause. Additionally, Theme predication involves including an extra clausal element to fulfill this function.

single	Topical theme
Multiple-attitudinal	Topical theme; interpersonal theme; interpersonal topical
Multiple- conjunctive	Textual theme; textual- topical
Multiple – attitudinal + conjunctive	Textual theme; interpersonal theme; textual-interpersonal-topical
Unmarked	subject/theme (declarativeWH/theme (WH-interrogative)finite/theme (interrogative)process/theme (imperative)
Marked	Other/ theme
predicated	Theme: it + be +… Rheme : that/who …
Not predicated	

Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics. The qualitative approach is chosen because the research aims to interpret and describe the deeper meaning and ideological stance embedded within lexicogrammatical choices, rather than measuring statistical relationship. The SFL approach is utilized as the analytical tool because it systematically links lexicogrammatical structures at the clause level directly to their sociocultural functions, following the comprehensive framework established by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014).

The total dataset comproses 105 analyzed clauses across the ten excerpts, yielding sufficient granularity for pattern identification while remaining focused and manageable for qualitative analysis. Data collection was operationalized through the following steps:

a. Text selection and segmentation: Each excerpt was segmented into independent clauses uisng Halliday tehory, distinguishing finite and non-finite clauses to capture the fullness of transitivity patterns.
b. Each clauses was annotated for; process type (material, verbal, relational, mental, behavioral) following Halliday and Matthiessesn's theory. Participant roles (actor, goal, sayer, verbiage, carrier, attribute, sensor, phenomenon). Circumstances (location, manner, time, cause, purpose, contingency). Mood structure (subject, finite verb, residue) indicating propositional versus other moods. Theme-rheme boundaries indicating topic progression

This research acknowledges several limitations:

a. The analysis is limited to 10 CNN news excerpts from January-February 2023, which may not represent the entire range of CNN's or other outlet's reporting on the Russia-Ukraine conflict

b. The analysis is confined to English-language texts from a single Western news outlet; comparative analysis with Russian or other non-Western media sources would strengthen conclusions

c. The study provides illustrative and exploratory insights into linguistic patterns rather than generalizable claims across all news organizations.

d. Researcher interpretation of clause boundaries and process categorization, while guided by Halliday theory, involves subjective judgment and potential variation.

Future research should expand the corpus to include more clauses from multiple weeks, include comparative analysis with Russian state media outlets, and employ inter-rater reliability checks to strengthen methodological rigor.

Result

This research analyzes 10 CNN Rusia-Ukraine live news excerpts (January-February 2023), segmented into clauses following Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. Each excerpts was meticulously segmented based on SFL criteria for clause, resulting in a total of 105 clauses across the data set. Each clauses was then coded for an interpersonal, ideational, and textual meanings according to Hallidayan metafunctions.

The data consist of lexicogrammatical units clauses, processes, participants, mood elements, and theme elements extracted from ten selected CNN news excerpts from January 2023 regarding the Russia–Ukraine conflict. The ten excerpts are:

a. Excerpt 1: January 3, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Rhea Mogul, Jack Guy, Ed Upright, Adrienne Vogt, Mike Hayes and Leuinz Vales, CNN Updated 1:18 AM EST, Wed January 4, 2023. The text:

• The Russian Defense Ministry said 89 servicemen were killed in the strike in eastern Ukraine that occurred on New Year's Day, updating an earlier toll.

• Ukraine's military on Tuesday claimed another devastating attack on Russian troops had taken place near Chulakivka, a town in the Kherson region, over the weekend. Moscow did not comment on the claim.

• Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky alleged that Russia is planning a prolonged campaign of attacks with Iranian-made drones to exhaust Ukraine.

• Ukrainian authorities have for the first time charged two high-ranking Russian military commanders with crimes related to attacking Ukrainian civilians

b. Excerpt 2: January 7, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Sophie Tanno, Amarani Orie, Peter Wilkinson, Adrienne Vogt, Matt Meyer and Tori B. Powell, CNN Updated 9:19 PM EST, Sat January 7, 2023. The text:

• Fighting continues after Ukraine dismissed Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for a temporary ceasefire over Orthodox Christmas as a cynical ploy.

• Two were reportedly killed and at least 13 wounded by shelling in Bakhmut on Saturday during the proposed ceasefire.

• The Ukrainian military reported shelling on civilian infrastructure in eastern Ukraine Friday, but provided no exact timing for the attacks.

• Meanwhile, Kyiv's allies announced more help is on the way, including $3 billion in new military aid from the US and dozens of infantry fighting vehicles from Germany.

c. Excerpt 3: January 8, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Sophie Tanno, Maureen Chowdhury, Matt Meyer and Mike Hayes, CNN Updated 12:14 EST, Mon January 9, 2023. The text:

- Fighting continues after a 36-hour Russian-proposed ceasefire — which Ukraine dismissed as a cynical ploy — ended overnight Saturday.
- Two people were killed and at least 13 wounded by shelling in the eastern city of Bakhmut during the proposed ceasefire, according to a Ukrainian official.
- Kyiv and Moscow carried out a prisoner exchange Sunday with a total of 100 soldiers returning to their home countries, according to officials in both nations.
- The UK and the Netherlands announced they will co-host a major international meeting in London on alleged Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

d. Excerpt 4: January 10, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Heather Chen, Sana Noor Haq, Adrienne Vogt, Aditi Sangal and Maureen Chowdhury, CNN Updated 6:23 PM EST, Tue January 10, 2023. The text:
- Russian troops are putting their greatest effort into capturing the eastern town of Soledar, Ukrainian officials say, as the fierce battle for control of the area intensifies. Ukraine's military insists the situation in the town is "under control," despite Moscow "maximizing its attacks."
- The Pentagon confirmed Tuesday that the US will begin training Ukrainian soldiers on the Patriot missile system on US soil as soon as next week. Meanwhile, Russian artillery fire is down nearly 75%, US officials say, in the latest sign of Moscow's struggles.
- NATO and the EU agreed Tuesday to "strengthen" support for Ukraine. It comes after the Kremlin said that the US and NATO are on "an indirect side" of the conflict.
- Russian troops are putting their greatest effort into capturing the eastern town of Soledar, Ukrainian officials say, as the fierce battle for control of the area intensifies. Ukraine's military insists the situation in the town is "under control," despite Moscow "maximizing its attacks."
- The Pentagon confirmed Tuesday that the US will begin training Ukrainian soldiers on the Patriot missile system on US soil as soon as next week. Meanwhile, Russian artillery fire is down nearly 75%, US officials say, in the latest sign of Moscow's struggles.
- NATO and the EU agreed Tuesday to "strengthen" support for Ukraine. It comes after the Kremlin said that the US and NATO are on "an indirect side" of the conflict

e. Excerpt 5: January 14, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Sophie Tanno, Adrienne Vogt, Matt Meyer and Tori B. Powell, CNN Updated 6:08 PM EST, Sat January 14, 2023. The text:
- Air raid alerts sounded across Ukraine on Saturday. Officials said a Russian missile attack on an apartment building in Dnipro killed 12 people, while powerful explosions were heard in Kyiv.
- Strikes also hit critical infrastructure in Lviv and Kharkiv. Damage from the blasts will mean emergency power cuts for many regions, Ukraine's energy minister said.
- Ukrainian authorities say "heavy battles" continue in Soledar after Russia claimed Friday that it is in control of the eastern town.
- Britain said it will send 12 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine as allies increase their support ahead of an anticipated Russian spring offensive.

f. Excerpt 6: January 22, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Sophie Tanno, Issy Ronald, Matt Meyer and Maureen Chowdhury, CNN Updated 1:02 AM EST, Mon January 23, 2023. The text:
- Ukraine says Russian troops are attempting an offensive in the key southern region of Zaporizhzhia, while fighting also persists in eastern territories.
- Former British PM Boris Johnson returned to Kyiv as Ukraine marks National Unity Day. It coincides with a trip by an unofficial US delegation to the eastern city of Izium.

- Germany failed to reach an agreement with Western allies on sending its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, prompting frustration and concern from some Ukrainian officials.
- While Berlin has not committed to sending the tanks from its own supply, Germany's foreign minister said Sunday that it would not block Poland from doing so, if asked.

g. Excerpt 7: January 26, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Tara Subramaniam, Jack Guy, Ed Upright, Aditi Sangal, Adrienne Vogt, Leinz Vales, Maureen Chowdhury and Matt Meyer, CNN Updated 12:37 AM EST, Fri January 27, 2023. The text:
- Russia unleashed a new round of missiles toward Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities Thursday just hours after Germany and the US announced their plans to provide modern tanks to the country.
- Ukraine said Moscow fired more than 50 missiles aimed at energy facilities and at least 11 people have been killed across the country due to the strikes. Emergency power outages were imposed in some regions after the attack.
- The Kremlin warned Thursday that it sees the delivery of modern Western battle tanks to Ukraine as "direct involvement" in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.
- Meanwhile, the US designated Russian mercenary organization Wagner Group a significant transnational criminal organization and imposed sanctions against its network.

h. Excerpt 8: January 27, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Tara Subramaniam, Amy Woodyatt, Hannah Strange, Aditi Sangal, Adrienne Vogt, Leinz Vales, CNN Updated 12:12 PM EST, Sun January 29, 2023. The text:
- Ukraine said Moscow fired 70 missiles — including two hypersonic missiles — aimed at energy facilities Thursday, killing at least 11 people across the country. Ukraine's state energy operator warned Friday the strikes caused "substantial damage" to the power grid.
- A White House national security spokesperson said the tranche of Abrams tanks announced by the US "will take many months" to get on the ground in Ukraine.
- Germany's defense minister told a German newspaper that sending fighter jets to Ukraine is "out of the question."
- A senior European Union official accused Russia of taking its war against Ukraine to a "different stage" by attacking civilians and non-military targets, prompting the plans to supply Kyiv with tanks

i. Excerpt 9: January 30, 2023 Russia-Ukrainer news By Tara Subramaniam, Aditi Sangal, Leinz Vales, Mike Hayes and Elise Hammond, CNN Updated 12:24 AM EST, Tue January 31, 2023. The text:
- US President Joe Biden said he won't send fighter jets to Ukraine as Kyiv makes renewed pleas for Western planes and long-range missile systems.
- The decision by the US and NATO allies to send tanks has made it "pointless" for Moscow to engage in talks with Ukraine, Russia's deputy foreign minister said.
- There is fierce fighting in eastern Ukraine, as Moscow and Kyiv battle for control of the city of Bakhmut and other strategic towns in the Donetsk region.
- The south has also seen heavy fighting, with Ukrainian authorities reporting casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure Monday

j. Excerpt 10: February 28, 2023 Russia-Ukraine news By Tara Subramaniam, Jack Guy, Aditi Sangal, Adrienne Vogt, Mike Hayes, Leinz Vales, Maureen Chowdhury and Tori B. Powell, CNN Updated 7:24 AM EST, Wed March 1, 2023. The text:

- Russian forces are pounding the fiercely contested city of Bakhmut, but it is not surrounded, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday. Several thousand civilians are still believed to be in the eastern city, which is mostly cut off from humanitarian relief.
- Russia accused Ukraine of attempting a drone attack against its civilian infrastructure in the Krasnodar region. CNN could not independently confirm the allegations and Ukraine did not respond.
- Finland has begun construction of barrier fences on its eastern border with Russia.
- The Kremlin said Russia's new territorial "realities" cannot be ignored during any possible talks with Kyiv. Last week, Zelensky said he will not negotiate with Moscow.

Table 1. Data Overview: 10 Excerpts and 105 Clauses

Excerpt Date	Source	Number of Clauses
January 3, 2023	CNN Live News	11
January 7, 2023	CNN Live News	7
January 8, 2023	CNN Live News	12
January 10, 2023	CNN Live News	10
January 14, 2023	CNN Live News	12
January 22, 2023	CNN Live News	10
January 26, 2023	CNN Live News	10
January 27, 2023	CNN Live News	11
January 30, 2023	CNN Live News	10
February 28, 2023	CNN Live News	12
Total		**105**

Following Halliday and Matthiessen's definition, a clause is a grammatical unit that contains a Subject and a Finite Predicator (verb), capable of functioning as an independent message or as part of a complex structure. Complex clauses with reported speech or embedded elements are separated into constituent clauses to reveal the ideational, interpersonal, and textual patterning more fully.

Example 1: Excerpt from January 3, 2023

"The Russian Defense Ministry said 89 servicemen were killed in the strike in eastern Ukraine that occurred on New Year's Day, updating an earlier toll."

Segmented into 4 constituent clauses:

1. [Cl.1-Verbal] The Russian Defense Ministry said this
2. [Cl.2 Material] 89 servicemen were killed in the strike in eastern Ukraine
3. [Cl.3-Material] The strike occurred on New Year's Day
4. [Cl.4-Material] updating an earlier toll.

Clause 1 is separated because it contains the reporting verb "said" and licenses the mebedded material in clauses 2-3. Clause 4 captures the additional action of updating the toll, which is a discrete material process.

Example 2: Excerpt from January 7, 2023

"Ukraine dismissed Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for a temporary ceasefire over Orthodox Christmas as a cynical ploy. Two were reportedly killed by shelling in Bakhmut on Saturday during the proposed ceasefire."

Segmented into 3 constituent clauses:

1. [Cl.1-Material] Ukraine dismissed Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for a temporary ceasefire over Orthodox Christmas as a cynical ploy
2. [Cl.2-Material] Two were reportedly killed
3. [Cl.3-Material] At least 13 were wounded at least 13 wounded by shelling in Bakhmut on Saturday during the proposed ceasefire.

Each clauses contains a distinct material process (dismissed, were reportedly killed, were wounded), even though all occur in the same timeframe and location. Segmentation highlights the parallel structure of casualty reporting.

Example 3: Excerpt from January 26, 2023

"Russia unleashed a new round of missiles toward Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities Thursday just hours after Germany and the US announced their plans to provide modern tanks to the country."

Segmented into 2 constituent clauses:

1. [Cl.1-Material] Russia unleashed a new round of missiles toward Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities Thursday
2. [Cl.2-Verbal] Germany and the US announced their plans to provide modern tanks to the country

Altough connected by temporal deixis "just hours after", each clause represents a distinct material or verbal process. The temporal conjunction is preserved in the Rheme to show narrative coherence, but the two processes are segmented to allow independent transitivity analyis.

Example 4: Excerpt from January 22, 2023

"Germany failed to reach an agreement with Western allies on sending its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, prompting frustration and concern from some Ukrainian officials".

Segmented into 3 constituent clauses:

1. [Cl.1-Material] Germany failed to reach an agreement with Western allies on sending its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine
2. [Cl.2-Material] prompting frustration
3. [Cl.3-Material] concern from some Ukrainian officials

Clause 1 is the primary action (Germany's failure). Clauses 2 and 3 capture the two distinct consequences (frustation and concern) which are separate material processes with distinct Affectors and Goals, warranting separate clausal segmentation.

Example 5: Excerpt from January 26, 2023

"Ukraine said Moscow fired more than 50 missiles aimed at energy facilities and at least 11 people have been killed across the country due to the strikes. Meanwhile, the US designated Russian mercenary organization Wagner Group a significant transnational criminal organization and imposed sanctions against its network".

Segemented into 4 constituent clauses:

1. [Cl.1-Verbal] Ukraine said
2. [Cl.2-Material] Moscow fired more than 50 missiles aimed at energy facilities
3. [Cl.3-Material] at least 11 people have been killed across the country due to the strikes
4. [Cl.4-Verbal] The US designated the Wagner Group a significant transnational criminal organization.

Clause 1 (verbal) separates the reporting agent from the content being reported. Clauses 2-3 are two distinct material processes (firing missiles and casualties). Clause 4 introduces a related but separate action by a different actor (US).

1. Interpersonal Meaning: Mood and Modality Analysis

Each clause was coded for its mood: declarative or (statements), interrogative (questions), imperative (commands), and for presence of explicit modality.

Table 4. Mood Elements

Element	Frequency	Percentage	Description
Mood (Subject + Finite)	105	100%	Every clauses has clear Subject (nominal group)+ Finite (temporal/polarity/modal)
Residue	105	100%	All clauses contain Predicator/Complement/Circumstance

Example Excerpt 10 January, 2023

Russian troops are putting their greatest effort into capturing the eastern town of Soledar, Ukrainian officials say, as the fierce battle for control of the area intensifies.

Russian troops	Are putting		Their greatest effort	into capturing the eastern town of Soledar	Ukrainian officials	Say		as	The fierce battle	for	Control
S	F	P	O	Adj	S	F	P	Conjuction	S		
Mood	Residue										
Theme	Rheme				Theme	Rheme			Theme		
Actor	Material process		Scope	Circ: Purpose	Sayer	Verbal Process		Circ: time			

of	The area	Intensifies	
		F	P
Residue			
		Rheme	

Indicative: declarative proposition

Ukraine's military insists the situation in the town is "under control," despite Moscow maximizing its attacks

Ukraine's military	insists		the situation in the town	Is	Under control	Despite	Moscow maximizing its attacks
S	F	P	S	F	P	Conjunction	adjucnt
Mood		Residue					
Theme	Rheme		Theme	Rheme			
Sayer	verbal		Verbiage				

Indicative: declarative proposition

The Pentagon confirmed Tuesday that the US will begin training Ukrainian soldiers on the Patriot missile system on US soil as soon as next week.

The Pentagon	confirmed		Tuesday	that	the US	Will	Begin	Training Ukrainian soldiers	on
S	F	P	Adj	Conj.	S	F	P	O	Adj
Mood		Residue							
Theme	Rheme				Theme	Rheme			
Sayer	Verbal		Circ: time	Verbiage					

The patriot missile system On US soil as soon as next week
Adj
Residue
Rheme

Indicative: declarative proposition

Meanwhile, Russian artillery fire is down nearly 75%, US officials say, in the latest sign of Moscow's struggles

Meanhwhile	Russian artillery fire	is	down	Nearly	75%	US officials	Say		in the latest sign of Moscow's struggles
Conj.	S	F	P	Conj	P	S	F	P	Adj.
Residue	Mood	Residue							
Rheme	Theme	Rheme				Theme	Rheme		
	Carrier	Rel.attr	Attribute			Sayer	verbal		Circ: time

Indicative: declarative proposition

Table 5. Mood Types

Element	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative)	105	100%
Interrogative	0	0%
Imperative	0	0%
Total	**105**	**100%**

Table 6. Modality Expressions

Element	Frequency	Percentage	Examples Excerpt
Modal verbs (may, could, cannot, won't, would)	6	5.71%%	"CNN could not confirm", "Biden won't send", "cannot be ignored", "would not block"
No modality	99	94.29%	"Russia unleashed missiles", "Ukraine said"
Total	**105**	**100%**	

Table 7. Mood Structure Breakdown by Excerpt

Process Type	Total Clauses	Subject+Finite	Residue	Modality Instances	Example
Jan 3, 2023	1	11	11	0	"Moscow did not comment"
Jan 7, 2023	7	7	7	0	"Ukraine dismissed"
Jan 8, 2023	12	12	12	0	"Kyiv and Moscow carried out"
Jan 10, 2023	10	10	10	0	"The Pentagon confirmed"
Jan 14, 2023	12	12	12	0	"British said"
Jan 22, 2023	10	10	10	1	"Germany would not block"
Jan 26, 2023	10	10	10	2	"CNN could not confirm"
Jan 27, 2023	11	11	11	1	"Bidem won't send"
Jan 30, 2023	10	10	10	1	"Biden won't send"
Feb 28,2023	12	12	12	1	"Realities cannot be ignored"
Total	**105**	**105**			

Table 8. Mood Structure Analysis (Clauses)

Clauses	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Modality	Residue (Complement/Circumstance)
"The Russian Defense Ministry said this"	The Russian Defense Ministry	said	said	-	this
Moscow did not comment	Moscow	did	comment	did not (negative polarity)	on the claim
"CNN could not confirm independently the allegations"	CNN	could	confirm	could (ability)	independently the allegations
"Bakhmut is under control"	Bakhmut	is	-	-	under control (Attibute)

Declarative mood is overwhelmingly dominant (100%), with every clause expressing statements- presenting information as factual and conveying an authoritative, unambigous tone. Modality expressions are rare (only 6 out of 105, or 5.71%) with verbs formms like "could not, cannot, won't, and would not" occasionally expressing ability, impossibility, or refusal. The rarity of modality reinforces the impression of objectivity and certainty, just the fact reporting constraits displays of doubt, possibility, or obligation.

Every clause follows the canonical Subject+Finite structure (100%), enabling polarity interrogation if needed "Did Moscow comment?". This grammatical realization supports declarative mood realization. All clauses contain meaningful Residue (Predicator+Complement/Circumstance), ensuring each clause carries complete ideational content. All 6 modality instances occur in attribution clauses or CNN verification statements: "CNN caution: (could not confirm) 2x", "Official refusals: (won't send) 2x", "Logical necessity: (cannot be ignored) 1x", "Conditional policy: (would not block) 1x". The near total absence of modality 94.29% creates an epistemically certain voice. Facts are presented without hedging, probability, or obligation-pure assertion.

2. Ideational Meaning: Transitivity Analysis

Clauses were coded for process types: material, verbal, relational, mental, and behavioral (although behavioral processes did not occur in this news sample).

Table 2. Transitivity Types across 105 clauses

Process Type	Frequency	Percentage
Material Process	65	61.90%
Verbal Process	28	26.67%
Relational Process	8	7.62%
Mental Process	4	3.81%
Behavioral Process	0	0%
Total	**105**	**100.00%**

Table 3. Ideational Meaning by Excerpt

Process Type	Material	Verbal	Relational	Mental	Total
Jan 3, 2023	7	3	1	0	11
Jan 7, 2023	4	3	0	0	7
Jan 8, 2023	8	4	0	0	12
Jan 10, 2023	4	4	2	0	10
Jan 14, 2023	8	4	0	0	12
Jan 22, 2023	7	2	1	0	10
Jan 26, 2023	6	2	0	2	10
Jan 27, 2023	5	5	0	1	11
Jan 30, 2023	7	3	0	0	10
Feb 28, 2023	5	4	2	1	12
Total					**105**

Material processes dominate across all excerpts (average 61.90%) representing nearly two-thirds of all processes. This emphasizes actions, events, and tangible occurences such as attacks "Russian unleashed missiles", movement "Ukraine's military returned", casualties "89 servicemen were killed", and damage "emergency power outages were imposed" at the center of war journalism.

Verbal processes account for 26.67% focusing on official statements, claims, reports, and attributions voiced by Ukrainian, Russian, and Western actors. Example include "Ukraine said..", "The Kremlin warned..", "Germany 's foreign minister told a newspaper..", "Ukrainian authorities reported.." This underlined a strong proffesional orientation toward reporting, attribution, and the legitimization of information through official sources.

Realtional processes are rare (3.81%) usually registering perceptions, beliefs, or knowledge reported by authorities or journalists. For the example "Several thousand civilians are believed to be in the eastern city", "Zelensky alleged that Russia is planning attacks".

Behavioral processes are completely absent, fitting the objective, event or reporting oriented style of live war news.

3. Textual Meaning (Theme-Rheme Analysis)
Each clause was separated into a Theme (point of departure, what the clause is about), and Rheme (the rest of the message, what is being said about the Theme). Themes were then classified as Topical (primary actors, institutions, or phenomena), Textual (conjunctions/structural markers like "Meanwhile)", or Interpersonal (attitudinal or evaluative items).

Table 9. Summary Theme Types

Theme Type	Frequency	Percentage
Topical	102	97.14%
Textual	3	2.86%
Interpersonal	0	0%
Total	**105**	**100%**

Excerpt 22 January, 2023

Ukraine	Says Russian troops are attempting an offensive in the key southern region of Zaporizhzhia
Theme	Rheme

While fighting	Also persists in eastern territories
Theme	Rheme

Former British PM Boris Johnson	Returned to Kyiv
Theme	Rheme

As Ukraine	Marks National Unity day
Theme	Rheme

It	coincides with a trip by an unofficial US delegation to the eastern city of Izium
Theme	Rheme

Germany	failed to reach an agreement with Western allies on sending its Leopard 2 tanks to
Theme	Rheme

Ukraine	Prompting frustration and concern from some Ukrainian officials
Theme	Rheme

Berlin	Has not committed to sending the tanks from its own supply
Theme	Rheme

Germany's foreign minister	Said on Sunday that it would not block Poland from doing so, if asked
Theme	Rheme

Excerpt 7 January, 2023

Fighting	continues
Theme	Rheme

Ukraine	dismissed Putin's call for a temporary ceasefires as a cynical ploy
Theme	Rheme

Two	were reportedly killed by shelling in Bakhmut on Saturday
Theme	Rheme

At least 13	were wounded by shelling in Bakhmut on Saturday
Theme	Rheme

The Ukrainian military	reported shelling on civilian infrastructure in eastern Ukraine Friday
Theme	Rheme

Ukrainian military	provided no excat timing for the attacks
Theme	Rheme

Meanwhile, Kyiv's allies	announced more help is on the way, including 3 billion in aid
Theme	Rheme

Excerpt 14 January, 2023

Air raid alerts	sounded across Ukraine on Saturday
Theme	Rheme

A Russian missile attack	killed 12 people
Theme	Rheme

Powerful explosions	were heard in Kyiv
Theme	Rheme

strikes	also hit critical infrastructure in Lyiv and Kharkiv
Theme	Rheme

Damage from the blasts	will mean emergency power cuts for many regions
Theme	Rheme

Ukrainian's minister	said this
Theme	Rheme

Ukrainian authorities	say heavy battles continue in Soledar
Theme	Rheme

Heavy battles	continue in Soledar
Theme	Rheme

Russia	claimed on Friday that it is in control of the eastern town
Theme	Rheme

Britain	said it will send 12 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine
Theme	Rheme

Allies	will increase their support ahead of an anticipated Russian offensive
Theme	Rheme

Excerpt 30 January, 2023

US President Joe Biden	said he won't send fighter jets to Ukraine
Theme	Rheme

He	won't send fighter jets to Ukraine

Theme	Rheme

Kyiv	makes renewed pleas for Western planes and missile systems
Theme	Rheme

The decision by the US and NATO	has made it pointless for Moscow to engage in talks
Theme	Rheme

Russia's deputy foreign minister	said this
Theme	Rheme

there	is fierce fighting in eastern Ukraine
Theme	Rheme

Moscow	battle for control of the city of Bakhmut
Theme	Rheme

And Kyiv	strategic towns in Donetsk
Theme	Rheme

He	won't send fighter jets to Ukraine
Theme	Rheme

The south	has also seen heavy fighting
Theme	Rheme

Ukrainian authorities	reported casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure
Theme	Rheme

Table 10. Theme-Rheme Examples by Excerpt 3 January, 2023

Clause	Theme	Theme Type	Rheme
1	The Russian Defense Ministry	Topical	said 89 servicemen
2	89 servicemen	Topical	were killed in the strike in eastern Ukraine
3	The strike	Topical	occurred on New Year's Day
4	They	Topical	upadated an earlier toll
5	Ukraine's military	Topical	claimed another devastating attack on Russian troops
6	Another devastating	Topical	had taken place near Chulakivka
7	Chulakivka	Topical	a town in the Kherson region
8	The attack	Topical	over the weekend
9	Moscow	Topical	did not comment on the claim
10	Ukrainian President Zelensky	Topical	alleged that Russia

Clause	Theme	Theme Type	Rheme
11	Russia	Topical	is planing a prolonged campaign of campaign of attacks with Iranian-made drones to exhaust Ukraine

Table 11. Theme-Rheme Examples by Excerpt 14 January, 2023

Clause	Theme	Theme Type	Rheme
1	Air raid alerts	Topical	sounded across Ukraine on Saturday
2	A Russian missile attack	Topical	killed 12 people
3	Powerful explosions	Topical	were heard in Kyiv
4	Strikes	Topical	also hit critical infrastructure in Lviv
5	Strikes	Topical	hit criticl infrastructure in Kharkiv
6	Damage from the blasts	Topical	will mean emergency power cuts for many regions
7	Ukraine's energy minister	Topical	said the strikes caused substantial damage
8	Ukrainian authorities	Topical	say heavy battles continue in Soledar
9	Heavy battles	Topical	continue in Soledar
10	Russia	Topical	claimed on Friday it is in control of the eastern town
11	Britain	Topical	said it will send 12 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine
12	Allies	Topical	increase their support ahead of a Russian offensive

Table 12. Summary Theme Types by Excerpt

Process Type	Topical	Textual	Interpersonal	Total
Jan 3, 2023	11	0	0	11
Jan 7, 2023	7	0	0	7
Jan 8, 2023	12	0	0	12
Jan 10, 2023	9	1	0	10
Jan 14, 2023	12	12	12	0
Jan 22, 2023	10	0	0	10
Jan 26, 2023	10	0	0	10
Jan 27, 2023	11	0	0	11
Jan 30, 2023	10	0	0	10
Feb 28, 2023	10	2	12	12

Topical Themes dominate (97.14%) with the clear majority of clauses foregrounding major actors (Ukraine, Russia, officials, military institutions, NATO allies) or core war phenomena (attacks, battles, negotiations, casualties). Example of Topical Theme include:

a. State/institutional actors: "The Russian Defense Ministry", "Ukraine's military", "The Kremlin", "Britain", "The Pentagon"
b. Military personnel: "Russian troops", "Ukrainian soldiers", "Moscow and Kyiv"
c. War events and phenomena: "Air raid alerts", "Powerful explosions", "Emergency power outages", "The fierce battle"
d. Damage consequences: "damage from the blasts", "Heavy fighting"

This strategic placement shapes the reader's focus and narrative priorities, ensuring that geopolitical actors and tangible war events are perceived as the initiators and recipients of action.

Textual Theme are rare (2.86%), appearing only 3 times across 105 clauses. Example:

a. "Meanwhile, Russian artillery fire is down nearly 75%" (January 10, 2023)
b. "However, Ukraine's energy minister said" (February 28, 2023)
c. "At the same time, Western allies announced" (February 28, 2023)

These markers guide shifts in narrative focus and add coherence by signaling transitions from one topic or time frame to another, but they remain amrginal to the overall thematic structure.

Interpersonal Themes are wholly absent, which is expected in hard news: overt evaluation, attitudinal framing, or the speaker's stance are minimized for the sake of perceived neutrality and objectivity. The news voice seldom begins clauses with "Unfortunately", "Sadly", or "Thankfully" such evaluations would breach proffesional norms.

Discussion

1. Interpersonal Meaning

The total dominance of declarative mood (100%) illustrates journalistic norms in hard news to inform, not to question or command. The nearly universal absence of modal verns (94.29% un-modalized) supports as an epistemically strong stance, the voice of the text is mitigated and authoritative, with facts "simply reported" and little hedging, speculation, or judgment.

Where limited modality appears (6 instances, 5.71%), it is strategically deployed:

a. CNN caution: "CNN could not independently confirm the allegations" (modal: epistemic hedging on unverified claims)
b. Official refusal: "Biden won't send fighter jets to Ukraine" (modal: negation of future action)
c. Kremlin assertion: "Russia's new territorial realities cannot be ignored" (modal: logical necessity/impossibility)
d. Conditional German stance: "Germany's foreign minister said it would not block Poland from doing so" (modal: hypothetical future)

This demonstrates that modality is reserved for moments of professional caution or direct attribution of official statements, rather than for the narrator's own hedging or doubt. The overall effect is one of journalistic confidence: events are reported as facts, not possibilities.

This support Halliday's insight that interpersonal meaning in news construct the author reader relationship primarily through assertion and objectivity. The news stance privileges neutrality, with little space for writer attitude or reader orientation

2. Ideational Meaning: The Primacy of Material Processes

The strongly material process orientation (61.9%) demonstrates how CNN's live war desk privileges news of action: attacks, casualties, preparations, destructions, and logistical changes are consistently foregounded. This confirms Halliday and Matthiessen's assertion that "material processes are typically the newsmaker's processes".

Example from the corpus illustrates this pattern: "Russian unleashed a new round of missiles toward Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities" (material: directed action). "89 servicemen were killed in

the strike in eastern Ukraine" (material: state change via action). "Ukraine's military claimed another devastating attack" (verbal: reporting of actions). "Emergency power outages were imposed in some regions" (material: consequence of prior action).

Verbal proccesses come next (26.67%) legitimizing information via the attributed statements of authorities or actors ("Ukraine said…", "The Kremlin warned…", "Ukraine's military claimed…"), thereby reinforcing reliability and news value. This bifurcation material actions told through verbal attribution is a hallmark of professional news: show what happened, then show who said it.

Relational and mental processes have supporting roles, helping to define, evaluate, or interpret circumstances or actors but rarely shaping the newsworthiness or dynamism of events: Relational: "Chulakivka is a town in the Kherson region" (identification). Mental: "Several thousand civilians are believed to be in the eastern city" (perception/belief).

3. Textual Meaning: Topical Themes and Narrative Focus
Topical themes dominance (97.1%) affirms that news clauses typically launch with actors or institutions central to the conflict, ensuring participants (states, leaders, armies) and core vents are discursively foregrounded.
Actors consistently appearing as Themes:
   a. Geopolitical entities: Russia, Ukraine, Germany, the US, Britain, NATO allies, the Kremlin, Poland
   b. Military institutions: Ukrainian military, Russian forces, The Pentagon, German defense ministry
   c. Individuals: Biden, Zelensky, Putin, Boris Johnson
   d. War phenomena: Air raid alerts, explosions, attacks, battles, power outages, casualties
Examples of thematic foregrounding:
   a. "Russian troops are putting their greatest effort into capturing Soledar" → Russian agency is the point of departure
   b. "Ukraine's military claimed another devastating attack" → Ukrainian agency and claim-making are thematized
   c. "The Kremlin warned Thursday that it sees the delivery of Western tanks as direct involvement" → Kremlin perception is the starting point
   d. "Meanwhile, Russian artillery fire is down nearly 75%" → Military metric (implying Ukrainian success or Russian constraint) is thematized
Textual themes appear only to organize or shift narrative ("Meanwhile)", marking boundaries and transitions, but never intrude on the primacy of topical agency. As Halliday and Matthiessen note, thematic structure both orients the reader to the message and encodes the news value hierarchy, and these pattern make clear who or what is to be "seen first" in the recounting of tragedy or contest.

4. Ideological Implications
Applying Halliday and Matthiessen's SFL framework to this live news corpus demonstrates how grammar shapes the encoding of war not only which events are salient (actions, attacks, mental states, attitudes), but also whose voices are visible, what kinds of meanings are legitimized and how narrative perspectives is managed.
Key patterns of ideological interest:

a. Agency and actancy: Material processes place Russian, Ukrainian, and Western actors in prominent positions as Actors. However, Ukrainian officials and NATO sources appear more frequently as Sayers in verbal processes (reporting, claiming, warning), lending them narrative authority. Russian statements, when they do appear, are often framed as claims or allegations ("Russia accused…", "The Kremlin said…"), which subtly distances CNN from their assertions.

b. Certainty versus attribution: While Ukrainian and Western actions are reported with material verbs (simple facticity "Ukraine's military returned", "The US designated Wagner Group"), Russian actions are occasionally mediated through verbal or hedged clauses ("Russia alleged…", "Moscow did not comment"). This creates a rhetorical asymmetry in how credibility is managed.

c. Topical foregrounding: Western and Ukrainian actors (US, Germany, Britain, Ukraine, Zelensky, NATO) occupy Theme position in clauses reporting coordination, support, or moral judgment. Russian actors appear thematically in clauses about attacks, claims, or military movements. This creates a subtle narrative hierarchy: the West coordinates and judges; Russia attacks and claims.

d. Absence of evaluative language: The total lack of Interpersonal Themes and the high rate of unmodalized declaratives mean that CNN's reporting operates under a veneer of objectivity no explicit authorial judgment even as the lexicogrammatical system encodes implicit positioning through the choice of which actors and actions to foreground.

Conclusion

Based on the analyze the researcher conclude the patterns reveal that:

a. War coverage foregrounds action, agency, and official authority (61.9% material processes, 26.67% verbal processes, 97.14% topical themes).

b. Certainty and distance are built through declarative, low modality mood choices (100% declarative, 94.29% unmodalized).

c. Narrative is shaped by focusing attention on actors and outcomes, not on interpretation or evaluation (97.14% Topical Themes, 0% Interpersonal Themes).

These choices steered by professional news values and SFL's lexicogrammatical systems-mirror the "factual" ideology of Western reporting giving promacy to observable action, restricting subjective stance, and orienting the reader towards state and institutional actors. Russian agency appears frequently but is grammatically positioned in commentary or background slots and claims are often accompanied by attribution)"said", "alleged", "warned") subtly marking them as reported rather than factual.

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