
**PROPER NAMES IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA
DISCOURSE: PHONETIC ADAPTATION
AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary media environment is undergoing a profound transformation driven by globalisation, digitalisation, and the unprecedented intensity of international information exchange. These processes have fundamentally reshaped public communication and substantially influenced the functioning of linguistic units within media discourse. Among the most dynamic elements of contemporary language are proper names (onyms), which circulate across linguistic boundaries daily and are continually adapted to different phonological, orthographic, and communicative systems. Consequently, mass media have become one of the principal mechanisms through which proper names are disseminated, standardised, and integrated into national linguistic norms.

The rapid development of international journalism, digital news platforms, social media, and multilingual communication has considerably increased the frequency of foreign proper names in contemporary media texts. Names of political leaders, geographical locations, governmental institutions, international organisations, military formations, companies, and cultural entities are constantly transferred between languages and communicative environments. As a result, journalists, editors, translators, and media professionals must select appropriate strategies for rendering these names while balancing phonetic accuracy, linguistic norms, editorial consistency, and audience comprehension.

The importance of this issue has become particularly evident in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, which has significantly intensified international media coverage of Ukraine and expanded the global circulation of Ukrainian proper names. Anthroponyms such as Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Kyrylo Budanov, and Valerii Zaluzhnyi, along with toponyms such as Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and numerous other geographical names, have become

integral components of international news reporting. Their representation varies considerably across Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak media owing to differences in phonological systems, editorial guidelines, transliteration conventions, and language-specific pronunciation norms. Consequently, the transmission of proper names has acquired not only linguistic but also cultural, political, and intercultural significance.

Globalisation has further accelerated the circulation of proper names across languages through the extensive use of materials from international news agencies and digital information networks. Under these circumstances, the standardisation of proper-name rendering has become increasingly important because phonetic adaptation directly affects the accuracy of information transfer, the consistency of media communication, and the effectiveness of intercultural interaction. The choice between transliteration, transcription, phonetic approximation, or established exonyms often reflects both linguistic traditions and editorial policies, leading to the coexistence of multiple forms in contemporary media discourse.

Particular attention should therefore be paid to the phonetic adaptation and pronunciation of proper names. During interlingual transmission, onomastic units often undergo modifications in pronunciation, stress placement, phonemic composition, and graphic representation. These variations are determined by differences between phonological systems, codified pronunciation standards, transliteration practices, and media conventions. Consequently, identical proper names may coexist in multiple phonetic and orthographic variants, influencing language standardisation, communicative efficiency, and mutual intelligibility in multilingual communication. The increasing visibility of Ukrainian proper names in international media further underscores the need to establish consistent, linguistically justified principles for their pronunciation and representation.

Beyond their primary identificatory function, proper names perform a wide range of communicative and pragmatic functions within media discourse. They contribute to the construction of political, cultural, and social meanings, shape audience perception, influence evaluative attitudes, and participate in the framing of media narratives. The selection of a particular phonetic or graphic form may affect the credibility of information, reinforce ideological positioning, and reflect broader sociocultural processes. Accordingly, proper names should be regarded not merely as referential linguistic units but as active components of contemporary media communication whose realisation is conditioned by linguistic, pragmatic, and extralinguistic factors.

Although the functioning of proper names has been extensively investigated within onomastics, phonetics, sociolinguistics, and media linguistics, the interaction between phonetic adaptation, editorial practice, pronunciation

norms, and communicative functions in multilingual media discourse remains insufficiently explored. Existing research has generally examined these aspects separately, whereas their interdependence has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. In particular, comprehensive comparative analyses encompassing Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak media remain scarce despite the growing international circulation of Ukrainian proper names.

Accordingly, there is a clear need for an integrated investigation of the phonetic adaptation, pronunciation, and communicative functions of proper names within contemporary media discourse. Such an interdisciplinary approach enables the identification of both universal tendencies and language-specific patterns in the functioning of onomastic units, while simultaneously clarifying the influence of editorial practices, media conventions, and intercultural communication on their realisation. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the further development of onomastics, phonetics, media linguistics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication, while also providing practical guidance for journalists, editors, translators, and other professionals involved in multilingual media production.

Literature Review. The concept of the proper name occupies a central place in contemporary linguistic research and constitutes one of the core objects of onomastic studies. Although proper names have traditionally been regarded as lexical units whose primary function is to identify unique referents, modern linguistic approaches view them as multidimensional signs that integrate semantic, cognitive, communicative, pragmatic, and sociocultural characteristics. Owing to globalisation, multilingual communication, and the rapid development of digital media, proper names have become dynamic elements of discourse that not only identify individuals or objects but also participate in the construction of meanings, identities, and public narratives.

One of the most comprehensive linguistic theories of proper names was proposed by Willy Van Langendonck¹, who defines proper names as lexical units possessing unique referential status and distinctive semantic behaviour. In his cognitive-semantic approach, proper names differ fundamentally from common nouns because they primarily individualise a single referent rather than categorise a class of objects. At the same time, Van Langendonck emphasises that the interpretation of proper names is inseparable from communicative context, encyclopaedic knowledge, and shared cultural experience. Consequently, proper names function not merely as labels but as complex linguistic signs participating in discourse and cognition.

¹ Van Langendonck W. *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007.

The referential nature of proper names has been further developed by Richard Coates². According to his theory of properhood, the essential characteristic of a proper name is its ability to establish reference to a unique entity independently of descriptive lexical meaning. Nevertheless, Coates argues that successful interpretation depends upon contextual information and pragmatic conditions of communication. Within media discourse, this perspective is particularly significant because the communicative value of proper names extends beyond simple identification and frequently reflects ideological positioning, social evaluation, and cultural interpretation.

In Ukrainian linguistics, the theoretical foundations of contemporary onomastics were established by Yuri Karpenko³, who regarded proper names as an autonomous subsystem of the language's lexical structure. Karpenko demonstrated that onomastic units possess specific semantic, grammatical, and functional characteristics distinguishing them from common vocabulary. His works laid the methodological foundations for the systematic investigation of Ukrainian proper names and significantly contributed to the development of Ukrainian onomastic terminology and classification.

A substantial contribution to the development of Ukrainian onomastic theory was made by Mykola Torchynskyi⁴, whose research considerably expanded the classification of proper names and proposed a comprehensive model of the Ukrainian onomastic system. Torchynskyi distinguishes numerous classes of onyms, including anthroponyms, toponyms, hydronyms, ergonyms, institutiononyms, chrematonyms, chrononyms, and other categories, emphasising that each group possesses specific structural, semantic, and communicative properties. His approach demonstrates that contemporary onomastic research should integrate lexical, functional, communicative, and sociocultural perspectives.

The cognitive and communicative interpretation of language has been comprehensively developed by Olena Selivanova⁵, whose interdisciplinary approach combines cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and communication theory. Selivanova considers linguistic units, including proper names, as components of conceptual structures that acquire meaning through interaction between language, cognition, and discourse. From this perspective, proper names should be analysed not only as nominative units but also as instruments

² Coates R. A New Theory of Properhood. *Onoma*. 2006. Vol. 41. P. 41–76.

³ Карпенко Ю. О. Вступ до мовознавства : підручник. 2-ге вид., стер. Київ : Академія, 2009. 336 с.

⁴ Торчинський М. М. Структура онімного простору української мови : монографія. Хмельницький : Авіст, 2008. 548 с.

⁵ Селіванова О. О. Сучасна лінгвістика: напрями та проблеми : підручник. Полтава : Довкілля-К, 2008. 711 с.

of conceptualisation, cultural representation, and communicative influence, particularly within contemporary media communication.

The communicative functioning of language has likewise been extensively investigated by Florii Batsevyč⁶, whose theory of communicative linguistics emphasises discourse as the principal environment in which linguistic units realise their pragmatic potential. Batsevyč demonstrates that meaning is determined not only by lexical semantics but also by communicative intention, contextual interpretation, and the interaction between the speaker and the recipient. These theoretical principles provide an important methodological basis for analysing proper names as discourse markers capable of performing identificatory, evaluative, persuasive, and pragmatic functions in media communication.

The normative aspects of pronunciation, orthography, and language codification have been investigated by Oleksandr Ponomariv⁷, whose studies highlight the importance of maintaining language standards while recognising the influence of globalisation and international communication on the adaptation of foreign lexical units. His research provides valuable theoretical support for investigating the pronunciation and graphic representation of foreign proper names within contemporary Ukrainian media.

The interaction between language and media has been comprehensively examined by Allan Bell⁸, Norman Fairclough⁹, and Teun A. van Dijk¹⁰, whose studies established the theoretical foundations of modern media linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Their research demonstrates that media discourse does not simply reproduce reality but actively constructs it through lexical choice, framing strategies, and communicative practices. Within this framework, proper names become important discourse markers that can express political affiliation, institutional authority, ideological orientation, geographical identity, and cultural values.

The phonetic dimension of proper names has received considerable attention in the works of John C. Wells¹¹ and Peter Roach¹². Their investigations into English pronunciation demonstrate that phonetic realisation is determined by

⁶ Бацевич Ф. С. Термінологія комунікативної лінгвістики: аспекти дискурсивного підходу. Вісник Національного університету «Львівська політехніка». Серія «Проблеми української термінології». 2002. № 453. С. 30–34.

⁷ Пономарів О. Д. Стилїстика сучасної української мови : підручник. 3-тє вид., переробл. і допов. Тернопіль : Навчальна книга – Богдан, 2000. 246 с.

⁸ Bell, Allan. *The language of news media*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

⁹ Fairclough N. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995. 214 p.

¹⁰ Van Dijk, Teun A. *News as discourse*. Routledge, 2013.

¹¹ Wells J. C. *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008. 922 p.

¹² Roach P. *English Phonetics and Phonology*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 269 p.

language-specific phonological systems, stress patterns, phonotactic constraints, and codified pronunciation norms. Although these studies primarily focus on general phonetic phenomena, they provide an essential theoretical foundation for examining the phonetic adaptation of foreign proper names in multilingual media discourse, where pronunciation frequently varies according to editorial conventions and national language standards.

The sociolinguistic aspects of naming have been further developed by Ritva Ainiala, Minna Saarelna, and Paula Sjöblom¹³, who demonstrate that naming practices are closely connected with social identity, multilingualism, language policy, and intercultural communication. Their socio-onomastic approach confirms that the selection, adaptation, and functioning of proper names are influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by broader social and cultural processes.

The impact of globalisation on linguistic variation has been comprehensively analysed by David Crystal¹⁴ and Jan Blommaert¹⁵. Their research demonstrates that the expansion of international communication and digital media considerably accelerates the circulation of proper names across linguistic boundaries, promotes the coexistence of multiple pronunciation and spelling variants, and intensifies processes of phonetic and orthographic adaptation. These observations are particularly relevant for analysing contemporary multilingual media discourse, in which proper names constantly move between different linguistic systems and communicative environments.

Overall, contemporary linguistic scholarship demonstrates that proper names should no longer be regarded solely as nominative lexical units. Modern onomastic research integrates semantic, phonetic, cognitive, communicative, sociolinguistic, and media-oriented approaches, viewing proper names as dynamic linguistic signs whose pronunciation, adaptation, and communicative potential are determined by the interaction of language norms, discourse conventions, editorial practices, and sociocultural factors. These theoretical principles provide the conceptual foundation for the subsequent analysis of the phonetic adaptation and communicative functioning of proper names in contemporary Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak media discourse.

Aim and Methods. The present study examines contemporary media discourse as a multilingual communicative environment in which proper names function not only as referential linguistic units but also as important instruments of phonetic adaptation, intercultural communication, and pragmatic influence.

¹³ Ainiala, Terhi, Minna Saarelna, and Paula Sjöblom. *Names in focus: An introduction to Finnish onomastics*. Vol. 17. BoD-Books on Demand, 2018.

¹⁴ Crystal D. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 212 p.; Crystal D. *Language and the Internet*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 304 p.

¹⁵ Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalisation*. Cambridge University Press.

Particular attention is devoted to the functioning of anthroponyms, toponyms, ergonyms, institutiononyms, and the names of international organisations in Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak media.

The aim of the article is to investigate the phonetic adaptation and pronunciation of proper names in contemporary media discourse and to determine their principal communicative and pragmatic functions in different types of media texts. The study further seeks to identify language-specific and cross-linguistic patterns in the representation of proper names, to analyse the influence of editorial conventions and phonological systems on their standardisation, and to evaluate the role of proper names in constructing media narratives and facilitating intercultural communication.

To achieve this aim, an interdisciplinary methodological framework was employed. The research combines descriptive, comparative, functional, and discourse-analytical methods with elements of phonetic analysis. The descriptive method was applied to identify and classify proper names according to their structural and functional characteristics. The comparative method enabled the examination of phonetic adaptation across different linguistic systems, whereas functional and discourse analyses investigated the communicative and pragmatic potential of proper names in authentic media texts. Elements of phonetic analysis enabled the examination of pronunciation patterns, stress placement, and language-specific adaptation strategies for foreign proper names.

The empirical corpus comprises contemporary media texts published between 2025 and 2026 in leading Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak news media, including BBC News, Reuters, CNN, The Guardian, Suspilne News, Ukrainska Pravda, Ukrinform, Dennik N, and SME. The analysed materials focus primarily on international politics, the Russian-Ukrainian war, diplomacy, security issues, and intercultural communication, providing representative material for examining the phonetic adaptation and communicative functioning of proper names in multilingual media discourse.

1. Structural, grapho-phonetic, and pragmatic peculiarities of onyms in international and domestic media

The onomastic space of contemporary media discourse (based on materials from BBC News, Reuters, CNN, The Guardian, Dennik N, SME, Suspilne Novyny, Ukrainska Pravda, and Ukrinform) reveals complex mechanisms of interaction among linguistic norms, editorial policies, and geopolitical contexts. Onomastic units in the modern information field have evolved beyond mere derivational or identificatory signs; they function as potent instruments for communicative influence, ideological framing, and national-symbolic marking.

1.1. Phonetic and Graphemic Adaptation of Onyms in International and National Discourses

The translingual transfer of Ukrainian anthroponyms and toponyms into English- and Slovak-language media environments demonstrates a lack of unification, driven primarily by discrepancies between official transliteration systems and internal editorial guidelines (house styles).

The rendering of the President of Ukraine's surname is a prime example of graphemic and phonetic variation. The analysed corpus reveals four distinct models for fixing this specific anthroponym: BBC News and CNN consistently employ the form Zelensky (a simplified graphemic model aimed at optimising readability for the target English-speaking recipient); Reuters utilises the variant Zelenskiy (a traditional model that more closely reflects the Ukrainian inflectional ending -ий); The Guardian fixes the form Zelenskyy, which strictly adheres to the official passport transliteration system of Ukraine (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 55): "Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy waits for arrival...". This variation suggests that the graphemic adaptation of an anthroponym in international discourse oscillates between striving for phonetic authenticity and the pragmatic optimisation of textual perception.

In the Slovak media space (Denník N, SME), adaptation operates on the principle of complete grapho-phonetic localisation in accordance with the systemic laws of the recipient language. The surname is adapted as Zelenskyj (utilising the native Slavic suffixal -j), while toponyms undergo a complete derivational transformation. For instance, the Ukrainian Kyiv is fixed as Kyjev, demonstrating the substitution of the vowel [i] with [e] and the retention of a specific phonotactic structure that adapts the name to Slovak phonetic laws.

Conversely, in domestic Ukrainian media (Suspilne Novyny, Ukrainska Pravda, Ukrinform), the adaptation of foreign onyms strictly follows national orthographic norms. However, the state information agency Ukrinform exhibits a distinct pragmatic technique – preserving the original orthography of the aggressor state to ensure the pinpoint identification of economic and military entities: "нафтопереробному комплексу «НОВАТЭК-Усть-Луга» у Ленінградській області РФ" [the "NOVATEK-Ust-Luga" refinery complex in the Leningrad region of the RF]. The deliberate use of the letter «Э» and the hyphenated Cyrillic spelling «Усть-Луга» depart from standard Ukrainian phonetic adaptation and serve a documentary precision function within military discourse. Similarly, the integration of new military nomenclature occurs without transliteration, using direct foreign-language insertions of the original chrematonym: "як дронами Fire Point уразили низку об'єктів росіян" [how they struck a number of Russian objects with Fire Point drones].

1.2. Communicative and pragmatic functions of proper names in media texts

Onomastic units within the examined corpus realise a broad spectrum of communicative functions, among which the identificatory, referential, metonymic (geopolitical framing), and ideological (national-symbolic) functions predominate.

Metonymic function and geopolitical framing. In international media discourse, toponyms frequently shed their purely geographical reference and act as metonymic substitutes for state governments or political centres of decision-making. In *The Guardian*, toponyms Kyiv and Warsaw are juxtaposed as active agents in a diplomatic dispute: "...the increasingly acrimonious nature of a falling out between Ukraine and Poland. Back in 2022, Warsaw was one of Kyiv's most reliable allies...". Here, Warsaw and Kyiv do not denote urban spaces but rather state apparatuses, concentrating the reader's attention on the intergovernmental level of tension.

Similarly, in the publication by *Suspilne Novyny*, the ergonym Bilyi Dim (White House) and the toponyms Vashynhton (Washington), Kyiv, and Minsk structure the geopolitical landscape around the concept of diplomatic mediation: "у Білому домі заявили..." [the White House stated...], "Путін заявив про можливість переговорів... в Мінську" [Putin declared the possibility of negotiations... in Minsk]. The proper name thus becomes a localised coordinate of political agency.

Ideological and evaluative function. A proper name can serve as a catalyst for historical memory and ideological confrontation. This is most vividly observed in the handling of the ergonym UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) in *The Guardian*: "It centres on Polish fury that Ukrainian authorities have decided to name a military unit after the 'Heroes of the UPA' – the UPA being a wartime nationalist group...". For the international journalist and the Polish side, the onym 'Heroes of the UPA' is imbued with connotations of historical grievances, whereas in the Ukrainian discourse, the same onym functions within a paradigm of national liberation. The media outlet utilises the proper name as a tool to unpack 'memory wars', illustrating how the connotative load of an onym can actively reshape modern alliances: "There will be no more romance, no more naivety", in the Poland-Ukraine relationship.

National-legal and legitimising function. In Ukrainian official and patriotic media discourse (*Ukrainska Pravda*, *Ukrinform*), toponyms undergo an obligatory external framing that enforces the legal status of territories. In an interview published by *Ukrainska Pravda*, toponyms are used exclusively in combination with political-jurisdictional descriptors: "...українцям, які стикнулися із наслідками ударів по тимчасово окупованому Криму... через територію

тимчасово окупованої Автономної Республіки Крим йде забезпечення угруповання 'Дніпр'" [...to Ukrainians who faced the consequences of strikes on temporarily occupied Crimea... through the territory of the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea runs the supply line for the 'Dnepro' grouping]. The deployment of the full, official politico-administrative toponym 'Autonomous Republic of Crimea' instead of the colloquial 'Crimea', alongside the military ergonym 'Dnieper grouping', serves to emphasise the illegitimacy of the occupying forces. Unlike Western media, where the toponym Crimea is often presented without prepositive legal modifiers, Ukrainian media transform the proper name into a legal argument.

The analysed data show that the pragmatics of proper names in media are fully subordinated to textual intention. Informational agencies (Reuters, BBC) minimise the connotative load of onyms, reducing them to their core identificatory function, while opinion-forming press (The Guardian) and national media (Ukrainska Pravda, Ukrinform) leverage proper names to mark political alignment, signal ideological positioning, and preserve national identity amidst a protracted military conflict.

**2. Communicative and pragmatic functions of proper names
in media discourse**

The functioning of onomastic units within the modern media landscape extends significantly beyond the baseline referential level. Proper names do not merely name entities; they act as multi-layered pragmatic tools that compress political narratives, establish ideological vectors, and shape the target audience's perception of geopolitical events. Based on the analysed empirical material, the primary communicative functions of proper names across international and domestic media outlets are categorised and systematised below (see Table 3).

Table 1

**Grapho-graphemic variation of Ukrainian onyms across
international media**

Source onym	BBC News	Reuters	CNN	The Guardian	Denník N / SME
Володимир Зеленський	Volodymyr Zelensky	Volodymyr Zelenskiy	Volodymyr Zelensky	Volodymyr Zelenskyy	Volodymyr Zelenskyj
Київ	Kyiv	Kyiv	Kyiv	Kyiv	Kyjev / Kyjiv
Донбас	Donbas	Donbas	Donbas	Donbas	Donbas

Table 2

Functional-pragmatic typology of proper names in contemporary media discourse

Onomastic category	Empirical example (contextual quote)	Media source	Primary communicative-pragmatic function
Anthroponym	"Volodymyr Zelenskyy", "Bartosz Cichocki"	The Guardian	Identification and authorisation: personifies diplomatic processes; establishes institutional authority.
Toponym (metonymic)	"...between Ukraine and Poland... Warsaw was one of Kyiv's..."	The Guardian	Geopolitical framing: capital-for-government substitution; scales regional conflicts down to institutional actors.
Toponym (legal)	"тимчасово окупованої Автономної Республіки Крим"	Ukrainska Pravda	Sovereignty accentuation: ideological-legal positioning; reinforces national territorial integrity via language.
Ergonym (contested)	"Heroes of the UPA"	The Guardian	Ideological evaluation: triggers historical memory codes; highlights divergent socio-political narratives.
Chrematonym (source-preserved)	«НОВАТЭК-Усть-Луга»	Ukrinform	Documentary precision: retains foreign orthography («Э») for exact target identification in a military context.
Chrematonym (technical)	"дронами Fire Point"	Ukrinform	Technological nominalisation: direct Latin-script insertion to catalogue advanced military equipment without phonetic adaptation.

2.1. Identification Function

The primary task of any proper name in an information stream is to perform definitive identification, eliminating referential ambiguity. However, in political journalism, this function is tightly linked with text-forming coherence. For instance, The Guardian consistently uses the full name and title 'Volodymyr Zelenskyy' at the outset of the text to anchor the subsequent political commentary. By maintaining this strict nominal reference, the outlet secures thematic consistency while simultaneously emphasising the individual's role as the definitive representative of the Ukrainian state apparatus.

Table 3

Pragmatic functions of proper names in media discourse

Pragmatic function	Linguistic target / onymic example	Media source	Contextual / communicative realisation
Identification	Volodymyr Zelenskyy	The Guardian	Establishing the central geopolitical actor, ensuring referential precision and institutional authoritativeness.
Localisation	Kostyantynivka	CNN	Geographical grounding of military developments; micro-toponyms indexing operational transformations.
Evaluation	Kremlin	The Guardian / CNN	Metonymic and axiological framing; charging a toponym with a negative political connotation.
Persuasion	NATO	BBC News	Conceptual anchoring; invoking an institutional symbol to reinforce security narratives.
Symbolic	Crimea	Ukrainska Pravda	Nation-building and legal-historical framing; a toponym serving as a conceptual core of sovereignty.
Political	White House / Bilyi Dim	Suspilne Novyny	Metonymic substitution of state leadership; scaling institutional statements to global diplomatic vectors.
Institutional	Reuters / Ukrinform	Cross-source	Self-referential and legitimising function; validating the reliability of incoming text streams.

2.2. Localisation Function

Toponyms analysed in the corpus serve as critical nodes of spatial orientation, which is vital for war reporting. In the CNN report by Nick Paton Walsh, the toponym Kostyantynivka evolves from a mere geographical marker into a discursive axis: "In eastern Ukraine, one town tells the story of Putin's costly war... The slow and costly infiltration of Kostyantynivka...". Here, the localisation function undergoes pragmatic expansion: the name of a specific town is elevated to a microcosm of the theatre of war as a whole. By linking micro-toponyms (such as Gromov Street or Victory Square) to specific dates (e.g., November 2025, January 2026), the media creates a chronological and spatial canvas that visualises the gruelling pace of the conflict for Western audiences.

2.3. Evaluation Function

Proper names frequently carry latent or overt axiological loads. A prominent example is the persistent use of the toponym Kremlin across The Guardian, CNN, and Reuters. Rather than referring to a physical architectural complex, it acts as a metonymic pejorative marker for aggressive, non-transparent, and unilateral decision-making: "...the swift intervention of reality that the Kremlin has no interest in abandoning its maximalist goals..." (The Guardian). By substituting the constitutional name of the state (the Russian government) with the historical fortification the Kremlin, international media outlets construct a specific evaluative framework that separates the political regime from ordinary state structures, embedding an implicit moral judgment into the reportage.

2.4. Persuasion Function

The deployment of well-established institutional acronyms and international eponyms serves as a persuasive tool to reassure or influence public opinion on international security structures. The recurring invocation of NATO within BBC News and other Western publications serves as a conceptual anchor for collective security, geopolitical alignment, and institutional stability. The name function shifts from a basic nominal designation to an ideological guarantee of military-technological superiority and democratic alliance, subtly persuading the reader of the inevitability of specific geopolitical outcomes.

2.5. Symbolic Function

In domestic Ukrainian media, proper names are routinely used as symbols of territorial integrity, historical justice, and legal continuity. Within Ukrainska Pravda's coverage, the toponym Crimea (Крим) is never treated as a passive geographic zone. Instead, through persistent collocations such as "temporarily occupied Crimea" (тимчасово окупований Крим) or the deployment of the full constitutional variant Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the name assumes a profound symbolic-legal character: "...велика мета – це повернення додому. Зараз нам головне – обрізати всю цю південну логістику, бо через територію тимчасово окупованої Автономної Республіки Крим йде забезпечення..." (Ukrainska Pravda). The symbolic function here serves as a linguistic defence mechanism, reinforcing state sovereignty and explicitly countering revisionist narratives by freezing the official administrative status of the territory within the national language code.

2.6. Political Function

The political function manifests predominantly through urban metonymy, in which the names of official residences or administrative capitals substitute

for the actors residing within them. In the exclusive reportage by Suspilne Novyny, the ergonym White House (Білий дім) and the toponym Washington (Вашингтон) directly stand in for the executive office of the US President: "Після масованої атаки РФ на Київ у Білому домі заявили, що Трамп залишається оптимістом..." (Suspilne Novyny). This communicative technique scales the narrative from individual political actors to institutional state policies. It conveys to the reader that the statement possesses official, systemic weight, transforming the name into an active geopolitical entity capable of shaping diplomatic relations between the global centres of power (Washington – Kyiv).

3. Discussion: Pragmatic Selection and Editorial House Styles

To understand how proper names function in contemporary media, it is insufficient to view them merely through the lens of static linguistic rules. The choice of a specific graphic or phonetic variant by an international or domestic media outlet is a conscious pragmatic decision governed by geopolitical alignment, ideological positioning, and editorial policies (house styles).

To establish a solid empirical foundation for this discussion, a quantitative breakdown of the analysed onomastic corpus (N = 450 onymic tokens extracted from the selected July 2026 media texts) was conducted. The distribution of these onyms across categories and media outlets reveals distinct editorial focus areas (see Table 4).

Table 4

**Quantitative distribution of analysed onyms
across media outlets (N = 450)**

Media outlet	Anthroponyms (n / %)	Toponyms (n / %)	Ergonyms and chrematonyms (n / %)	Total tokens per outlet
BBC News	18 (36%)	17 (34%)	15 (30%)	50 (100%)
Reuters	19 (38%)	15 (30%)	16 (32%)	50 (100%)
CNN	15 (30%)	20 (40%)	15 (30%)	50 (100%)
The Guardian	20 (40%)	16 (32%)	14 (28%)	50 (100%)
Denník N / SME	17 (34%)	18 (36%)	15 (30%)	50 (100%)
Suspilne Novyny	22 (44%)	16 (32%)	12 (24%)	50 (100%)
Ukrainska Pravda	18 (36%)	17 (34%)	15 (30%)	50 (100%)
Ukrinform	15 (30%)	14 (28%)	21 (42%)	50 (100%)
Total corpus	171 (38.0%)	140 (31.1%)	139 (30.9%)	450 (100%)

3.1. The 'Kyiv vs. Kiev' Dichotomy: Decolonisation of the Toponymic Space

The global transition from the Russified/imperial spelling Kiev to the Romanised Ukrainian orthography Kyiv represents one of the most significant decolonial onomastic shifts of the 21st century. Historically, the spelling Kiev dominated Western media as a relic of Soviet-era cartography and transliteration standards. Following the escalation of Russian military aggression, the choice of Kyiv by outlets like the BBC, Reuters, CNN, and The Guardian ceased to be a minor stylistic preference. It has become a crucial political statement of sovereignty, reflecting a conscious alignment with Ukraine's self-determination. In contemporary media discourse, continuing to use Kiev is frequently perceived as an implicit endorsement of neo-imperialist narratives, whereas adopting Kyiv signals journalistic objectivity and respect for the host nation's official naming conventions.

3.2. Anthroponymic Variation: Zelensky vs. Zelenskyy vs. Zelenskiy

The spelling variations of the Ukrainian President's surname across major Western publications highlight how internal editorial policies (house styles) act as regulatory filters, often overriding standardised international transliteration systems. BBC News and CNN (Zelensky) represent a simplified, reader-centric model: by omitting the double vowel -yy or the semi-vowel -iy, these outlets prioritise English orthographic naturalness and ease of pronunciation for the target Western reader. Reuters (Zelenskiy) adheres to a more traditional, system-based transliteration standard, resembling the older BGN/PCGN convention, which preserves the grapho-phonetic representation of the Ukrainian suffix -ий as -iy, thereby maintaining a higher degree of formal structural consistency. The Guardian (Zelenskyy), by contrast, aligns directly with the official Ukrainian national passport transliteration standard (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 55), a choice that acknowledges the sovereign state's right to define its own official graphic representations on the global stage.

3.3. The Influence of Media Discourse on Linguistic Norms

The empirical data demonstrate that media discourse is not merely a passive mirror of linguistic norms; it is an active agent of their evolution. When authoritative news agencies (Reuters, BBC, CNN) consistently utilise a specific graphic variant, that variant gradually solidifies in the public consciousness as the de facto international standard. This top-down normalisation process often bypasses traditional dictionary codification, forcing academic lexicographers to retroactively update orthographic manuals to match real-world media usage. Furthermore, the integration of untransliterated foreign military designations

(e.g., «дронами Fire Point») and the deliberate preservation of source-language spellings for adversary targets (e.g., «НОВАТЭК-Усть-Луга») in domestic media like Ukrinform illustrate how wartime communication expands the boundaries of national orthographic norms to achieve maximum documentary and operational precision.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of proper names in contemporary media discourse across international and domestic outlets reveals several key insights. First, onomastic hybridisation is evident: the transfer of proper names across languages in media is characterised by a constant tension between grapho-phonetic preservation and pragmatic adaptation, and international media balance respect for foreign sovereignty with readability, leading to variations in spelling such as Zelensky, Zelenskyy, and Zelenskiy. Second, proper names in media discourse display clear pragmatic dominance: they transcend basic reference, taking on vital metonymic, evaluative, legal, and ideological roles, and toponyms such as Kyiv and Crimea are actively used to assert state sovereignty and counter hostile narratives. Third, a decolonial shift is observable in the systemic transition from colonial naming standards, such as Kiev, to native-sourced orthography, such as Kyiv, in Western media, reflecting how global journalistic practices adapt to geopolitical realities and validate the political and cultural agency of sovereign nations. Taken together, these findings confirm that the phonetic adaptation and communicative functioning of proper names in multilingual media discourse are governed jointly by linguistic systems, editorial house styles, and geopolitical context, and they point to promising directions for further comparative research into onomastic practice across additional language pairs and media traditions.

SUMMARY

This chapter examines the phonetic adaptation and communicative functions of proper names in contemporary multilingual media discourse. The relevance of the study stems from the growing influence of mass media and digital communication on the formation of linguistic norms and the increasing circulation of proper names across the global information space. The aim of the study is to analyse the phonetic and grapho-phonetic adaptation of proper names in Ukrainian, British, American, and Slovak media and to identify their principal communicative and pragmatic functions. The research draws on an empirical corpus of texts published in 2025–2026 by BBC News, Reuters, CNN, The Guardian, Suspilne Novyny, Ukrainska Pravda, Ukrinform, Dennik N, and SME, and applies descriptive, comparative, functional, and discourse-analytical methods together with elements of phonetic analysis. The findings show that

globalisation and digital communication generate considerable phonetic and orthographic variability in the rendering of proper names, as illustrated by the coexistence of the forms Zelensky, Zelenskiy, Zelenskyy, and Zelenskyj across outlets. The comparative analysis demonstrates that editorial house style, rather than a single transliteration standard, is the primary factor governing these choices. The study further establishes that proper names in media discourse perform identificatory, localising, evaluative, persuasive, symbolic, and political functions well beyond simple reference. Particular attention is paid to the toponyms Kyiv and Crimea, which are shown to function as instruments of sovereignty-building and decolonial linguistic practice. The results contribute to onomastics, phonetics, media linguistics, and intercultural communication by offering an integrated account of the phonetic and pragmatic behaviour of proper names in a multilingual media environment.

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