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Bachelor's thesis

**PRONUNCIATION ACCOMMODATION OF UKRAINIAN
-ONYMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE MEDIA**



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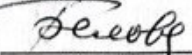
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ABSTRACT

The bachelor's thesis is devoted to a comprehensive study of the phonetic adaptation and sociolinguistic accommodation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media. The relevance of the research is determined by the geopolitical shifts following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion, which transformed Ukrainian geographical names into "moral toponyms." In this context, the shift from entrenched Russian exonyms to authentic Ukrainian endonyms makes pronunciation a conscious marker of political identity, solidarity, and de-Russification. The object of the study is the phonetic realization of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media discourse, while the subject encompasses the linguistic mechanisms of cross-linguistic interference, phonetic adaptation, and the sociolinguistic strategies of accommodation employed by native English speakers. The purpose of the work is to comprehensively investigate the systemic correlation between English-Ukrainian phonological disparities and geopolitical communicative strategies. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were accomplished: outlining the theoretical framework of phonetic accommodation, conducting a comparative overview of vocalic and consonantal subsystems, analyzing auditory and acoustic patterns of segmental substitution, and tracing the sociolinguistic evolution of specific toponyms.

The methodological framework of the study combines quantitative corpus linguistics (for tracking macro-level statistical trends and semantic prosody) with qualitative auditory-perceptual evaluation and instrumental acoustic analysis (using Praat software to examine articulatory mechanics). The expediency of applying Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization is determined

by their capacity to explain the cognitive and ideological motivations behind modifying speech styles in media. The scientific novelty of the results lies in the categorization of Ukrainian toponyms based on their phonological distance from English and the systematic identification of distinct phonetic adaptation strategies among American and British political and media figures. It has been established that while low-interference names undergo rapid, orthographically driven adaptation, high-interference names often suffer from deep phonetic domestication or hypercorrection due to native phonotactic constraints (such as the systematic substitution of the velar fricative /x/ with the velar plosive /k/ and the inability to process the palatalized /lʲ/ or vocalized coda /v/).

The findings confirm that the phonetic realization of foreign proper names functions as a powerful sociolinguistic instrument: it not only encodes geopolitical alignment but also actively participates in the toponymic cleansing of colonial narratives. The identified asymmetry between the political desire for phonetic foreignization and the deeply ingrained phonological, phonotactic, and perceptual constraints of native dialects (e.g., General American vs. Received Pronunciation) points to a pragmatic strategy where speakers frequently prioritize semantic clarity over phonetic accuracy unless aided by extensive prior exposure to diverse phonological systems. The results confirm the productivity of integrating psycholinguistic models with socio-onomastics - specifically, demonstrating how cognitive perceptual filters explain the subconscious phonetic domestication of highly politicized toponyms such as “Kyiv” and “Kharkiv”. This framework opens clear perspectives for further cross-linguistic research on media pronunciation in times of conflict, for example, by analyzing the phonetic adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms in other global languages or by investigating how such dynamic shifts in proper name pronunciation challenge modern Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) systems.

Keywords: phonetic accommodation, Ukrainian toponyms, Communication Accommodation Theory, cross-linguistic interference, phonetic foreignization, English-language media, sociolinguistics.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Кваліфікаційна робота бакалавра присвячена комплексному дослідженню фонетичної адаптації та соціолінгвістичної акомодатії українських топонімів в англomовних ЗМІ. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена геополітичними змінами, що відбулися після анексії Криму 2014 року та повномасштабного російського вторгнення 2022 року, які перетворили українські географічні назви на «моральні топоніми». У цьому контексті перехід від усталених російських екзонімів до автентичних українських ендонімів робить вимову свідомим маркером політичної ідентичності, солідарності та дерусифікації. Об'єктом дослідження є фонетична реалізація українських топонімів у дискурсі англomовних ЗМІ, а предметом - лінгвістичні механізми міжмовних інтерференцій, фонетичної адаптації та соціолінгвістичні стратегії акомодатії, що застосовуються носіями англійської мови. Метою роботи є всебічне дослідження системної кореляції між англо-українськими фонологічними розбіжностями та геополітичними комунікативними стратегіями. Для досягнення цієї мети було поставлено та реалізовано такі завдання: окреслення теоретичних засад фонетичної адаптації, проведення порівняльного огляду голосних та приголосних підсистем, аналіз слухових та акустичних закономірностей сегментної заміни, а також відстеження соціолінгвістичної еволюції конкретних топонімів.

Методологічна основа дослідження поєднує кількісну корпусну лінгвістику (для відстеження статистичних тенденцій макрорівня та семантичної просодії) з якісною слухово-перцептивною оцінкою та

інструментальним акустичним аналізом (з використанням програмного забезпечення Praat для вивчення артикуляційної механіки). Доцільність застосування теорії комунікативної адаптації (САТ) Говарда Джайлза та концепцій доместикації й форенізації Лоуренса Венуті зумовлена їхньою здатністю пояснювати когнітивні та ідеологічні мотиви, що лежать в основі модифікації стилів мовлення в медіа. Наукова новизна результатів полягає в категоризації українських топонімів на основі їхньої фонологічної віддаленості від англійської мови та систематичній ідентифікації відмінних стратегій фонетичної адаптації серед американських і британських політичних та медійних діячів. Встановлено, що тоді як імена з низьким рівнем інтерференції зазнають швидкої адаптації, зумовленої орфографією, імена з високим рівнем інтерференції часто піддаються глибокій фонетичній доместикації або гіперкорекції через фонотактичні обмеження носіїв мови (такі як систематична заміна велярного фрикативного /x/ на велярний приголосний /k/ та нездатність опрацювати палаталізоване /li/ або вокалізовану коду /v/).

Отримані результати підтверджують, що фонетична реалізація іноземних власних імен виступає потужним соціолінгвістичним інструментом: вона не лише кодує геополітичну приналежність, а й бере активну участь у топонімічному очищенні колоніальних наративів. Виявлена асиметрія між політичним прагненням до фонетичної інтернаціоналізації та глибоко вкоріненими фонологічними, фонотактичними та перцептивними обмеженнями рідних діалектів (наприклад, загальноамериканська англійська проти стандартної вимови) вказує на прагматичну стратегію, за якої мовці часто надають пріоритет семантичній чіткості над фонетичною точністю, якщо тільки вони не мають попереднього досвіду роботи з різноманітними фонологічними системами. Результати підтверджують продуктивність інтеграції психолінгвістичних

моделей із соціономастикою - зокрема, демонструють, як когнітивні перцептивні фільтри пояснюють підсвідому фонетичну адаптацію високополітизованих топонімів, таких як «Київ» та «Харків». Ця концептуальна основа відкриває чіткі перспективи для подальших міжмовних досліджень вимови в ЗМІ в умовах конфлікту, наприклад, шляхом аналізу фонетичної адаптації українських топонімів в інших світових мовах або дослідження того, як такі динамічні зміни у вимові власних назв становлять виклик для сучасних систем автоматичного розпізнавання мови (ASR).

Ключові слова: фонетична адаптація, українські топоніми, теорія комунікативної адаптації, міжмовна інтерференція, фонетична форенізація, англомовні ЗМІ, соціолінгвістика.

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the research topic. The linguistic representation and phonetic realization of foreign proper names in international media discourse occupy a complex intersection of cognitive phonology, acoustic phonetics, socio-onomastics, and sociolinguistics. Proper names, or onyms, are culturally loaded units that carry dense historical, social, and ideological connotations. In the context of international communication, a critical sociolinguistic and political tension arises between the use of endonyms (names used in the official language of the territory) and exonyms (names adapted by other languages).

The relevance of this study lies in the necessity to comprehensively analyse how the phonetic adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms in Western media serves not merely as an articulatory approximation, but as a conscious index of political identity and solidarity. This relevance is acutely highlighted by the geopolitical shifts following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion, which transformed Ukrainian geographical names into “moral toponyms”. As the global media deliberately shifts from entrenched Russian exonyms (e.g., Kiev, Kharkov) to authentic Ukrainian endonyms (e.g., Kyiv, Kharkiv) to support linguistic sovereignty and de-Russification, English-speaking professionals face significant phonological barriers. While the orthographic and political dimensions of this transition have been widely acknowledged, the precise phonetic and articulatory mechanisms underlying this spoken shift remain largely unexplored in contemporary linguistics. Therefore, it is highly relevant to investigate how they navigate the fundamental differences between the English and Ukrainian phonetic systems, turning pronunciation choices into markers of geopolitical alignment.

State of the research problem. The theoretical foundation for the study of proper names as socially embedded units is grounded in the works of A. P. Vermes (2001, 2003, 2007) and the socio-onomastic framework established by

T. Ainiala and J.-O. Östman (2017). The cognitive and psycholinguistic mechanisms of cross-linguistic speech perception and phonetic interference are informed by P. Kuhl's Native Language Magnet (NLM) theory, C. Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM), and J. Flege's Speech Learning Model (SLM). The sociolinguistic motivations for altering pronunciation in social interactions rely heavily on H. Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and A. Bell's audience design framework. The geopolitical and translational dimensions of toponymic renaming and adaptation are contextualized through D. Duncan's (2022) concept of "moral toponyms," L. Venuti's (1995) dichotomy of domestication and foreignization, and the geopolitical frameworks of F. Giraut and M. Houssay-Holzschuch (2016). Recent empirical data regarding the phonological shifts of Ukrainian toponyms in English broadcasting, specifically the transition to "Kyiv," has been pioneered by researchers such as L. Bikelienė (2023) and S. Albota (2024). However, a comprehensive, mixed-methods comparative analysis of both segmental phonetic adaptations and macro-sociolinguistic media trends across varying phonological distances remains a highly dynamic and necessary area of study.

The object of the study is the phonetic realization of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media discourse.

The subject of the research encompasses the linguistic mechanisms of phonetic adaptation, cross-linguistic interference, and the sociolinguistic strategies of accommodation employed by English-speaking media professionals when pronouncing Ukrainian proper names.

The purpose of the study is to comprehensively investigate the phonetic adaptation and sociolinguistic accommodation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media, identifying the systemic correlation between English-Ukrainian phonological disparities and geopolitical communicative strategies.

The objectives of the study include:

- to outline the theoretical framework of phonetic accommodation, phonological interference, and socio-onomastics;
- to identify the graphemic and sociopolitical challenges associated with rendering Ukrainian toponyms into English;
- to conduct a comparative overview of the Ukrainian and English vocalic and consonantal subsystems to pinpoint articulatory barriers;
- to examine the auditory and instrumental acoustic patterns of vowel and consonant substitution at the segmental level in media speech;
- to trace the sociolinguistic evolution of specific toponyms (e.g., Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv) and analyze trends of foreignization and political solidarity;
- to conduct a comparative analysis of the phonetic accommodation strategies utilized by American and British political and media figures.

Research methods. To comprehensively address the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative corpus linguistics (utilizing Sketch Engine and NOW Corpus data processing) was applied to track macro-level statistical trends, normalized frequencies (Per Million words), and the orthographic transition of target toponyms. This macro-analysis was integrated with micro-level qualitative auditory-perceptual analysis and instrumental acoustic phonetics. Specifically, the Praat speech-analysis software was utilized to generate broadband spectrograms and pitch tracks, allowing for the objective measurement of phonetic variables (such as F1 and F2 formants, fundamental frequency F0, and high-frequency aperiodic noise) to scientifically document cross-linguistic interference and accommodation strategies.

Research material. The empirical foundation of this study is based on a bilingual media corpus spanning the period from 2014 to 2026, capturing crucial geopolitical shifts. To ensure statistical validity, the textual data comprises over

66 billion words in total, extracted from two major databases: the English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) reference corpus (comprising over 61.5 billion tokens) and the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus (analyzing approximately 5.04 billion words across the 2021 and 2022 sections). The phonetic analysis relies on a purposive audio-visual spoken corpus consisting of 40 targeted media tokens (individual pronunciation events). These tokens capture unscripted interviews, formal addresses, and live reporting from specific political and media figures across major English-language broadcasting networks (e.g., BBC, CNN), sourced and timestamped via the YouGlish and Filmot platforms.

Scientific novelty of the results lies in the systematic synthesis of cognitive phonological models (PAM, SLM) with Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to analyze a real-time, geopolitically driven language shift. The study uniquely categorizes Ukrainian toponyms based on their phonological distance from English and provides objective acoustic evidence contrasting native grapheme-to-phoneme habits with authentic Ukrainian phonetic requirements in modern broadcast environments.

Practical significance of the results. The materials, acoustic findings, and sociolinguistic conclusions of this study can be utilized in university courses on English phonetics and phonology, sociolinguistics, translation theory, and intercultural communication. Furthermore, the findings serve as a practical reference for journalists, diplomats, and international broadcasters seeking to improve cross-cultural communicative competence and orthoepic accuracy.

Structure of the work. The paper consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, a list of references, and appendices .

Introduction establishes the relevance of the topic, defining the object, subject, purpose, methodology, and significance of the study.

Chapter 1 “Theoretical framework of phonetic accommodation” details the theoretical foundations of cross-linguistic interference, graphemic challenges, and a comparative overview of the English and Ukrainian phonological systems.

Chapter 2 “Methodology and corpus selection” outlines the criteria for media corpus assembly (2014-2026) and details the computational, auditory, and acoustic approaches applied to the data .

Chapter 3 “Phonetic adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms in English media” contains the empirical analysis of segmental substitutions, the sociolinguistic evolution of specific moral toponyms, and a comparative analysis of British and American media figures.

Approbation of the research results. The main provisions and results of the study were tested and presented at the XIII All-Ukrainian Scientific and Practical Conference “Development of the Main Directions of Social and Humanitarian Sciences: Problems and Prospects” (Dnipro State Technical University, Kamianske, Ukraine, May 14–15, 2026).

Conclusion summarizes the primary findings of the research.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PHONETIC ACCOMMODATION

The linguistic representation and phonetic realization of foreign proper names in international media discourse occupy a complex intersection of cognitive phonology, acoustic phonetics, socio-onomastics, and sociolinguistics. Proper names - collectively referred to as onyms - represent a unique category within the human lexical inventory. In the traditional framework of onomastic theory, proper nouns differ fundamentally from common nouns along referential, morphosyntactic, and semantic dimensions. While common nouns function primarily to classify and categorize elements of reality, proper names serve to individualize and identify specific, singular referents.

Historically, this distinction was often simplified by the Millian philosophical tradition, which positioned proper names as “meaningless marks” or non-connotative pointers whose sole task is denotation. However, modern translation studies and onomastics have fundamentally challenged this reductionist view. As Albert Peter Vermes demonstrates, proper names are “culturally loaded” units [Vermes, 2003]. Beyond mere identification, names carry dense historical, social, and ideological connotations, activating specific logical and encyclopedic entries in the mind of the language user [Vermes, 2001].

This multi-layered nature of onyms is further explored within socio-onomastics (or re-onomastics), a sub-discipline that Terhi Ainiala and Jan-Ola Östman define as the study of how names are actively used in concrete social, cultural, and situational contexts to perform a variety of interactional and pragmatic tasks [Ainiala, Östman 2017, p. 4-6]. Socio-onomastics shifts the focus from purely etymological and typological analyses to the pragmatic life of names in everyday communication and media discourse [Ainiala, Östman 2017].

The broad field of onomastics is traditionally divided into two primary branches: anthroponomastics (the study of personal names) and toponomastics or

toponymy (the study of place names). While anthroponyms are intrinsically tied to individual and familial identity within a speech community, toponyms function as physical and cultural anchors of geographic space. Toponyms are further categorized into nature names (identifying natural features, such as hydronyms for bodies of water) and cultural names (identifying human-made structures, such as settlement names and lifestyle-based artefact names).

In the context of international communication, a critical sociolinguistic and political tension arises between the use of endonyms (the name of a place in the official language of the territory where it is located) and exonyms (the name used in other languages, which often differs in pronunciation, spelling, and phonetic form). The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) formally recommends that sovereign states prioritize endonyms in international usage to respect cultural heritage and national sovereignty.

Consequently, when English-language media networks are suddenly required to articulate foreign place names due to shifting geopolitical realities, the chosen phonetic realization of these toponyms is never a neutral, mechanical act of reading aloud. Instead, as Allan Bell's audience design framework in *The Language of News Media* suggests, broadcast speech is a highly structured social behavior where stylistic variation represents the speaker's response to the audience [Bell 1991, p. 145]. By actively selecting and attempting to articulate a specific endonymic phonetic variant of a foreign toponym, media professionals utilize their speech patterns to perform culturally, socially, and interactionally relevant tasks in global communication [Bell, 1991].

1.1. Phonological interference and cross-linguistic accommodation.

The phonetic distortion or structural modification of foreign toponyms by native speakers is governed by both involuntary cognitive filters and deliberate

sociolinguistic strategies. Modern cognitive phonology and psycholinguistic frameworks provide a precise explanation for the structural constraints of cross-linguistic speech perception.

According to Patricia Kuhl's Native Language Magnet (NLM) theory, early childhood exposure to a native language establishes highly stable phonetic prototypes in the brain. These prototypes act as "perceptual magnets," attracting nearby acoustic stimuli within the phonetic space and rendering them perceptually more similar to the L1 prototype [Kuhl 1993, p. 263]. As a result, when an English-speaking media announcer encounters a non-native sound, their cognitive magnets automatically "tune out" the unfamiliar acoustic contrast, forcing the foreign segment into pre-existing L1 neural pathways [Kuhl, 1993].

This perceptual mapping is further systematized by Catherine Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) and its extension, PAM-L2 (developed alongside Michael Tyler) [Best, Tyler, 2007]. PAM posits that adult speech perception is shaped by perceptual attunement to the physical, articulatory gestures of the native language environment. When encountering non-native phonemic contrasts, listeners assimilate them into native categories according to several distinct patterns [Best 1995, p. 193].

In Two-Category (TC) assimilation, the two non-native sounds are assimilated into two different L1 categories, resulting in excellent phonetic discrimination. In Single-Category (SC) assimilation, both non-native sounds are mapped onto a single L1 category with a similar goodness-of-fit, leading to poor discrimination. In Category-Goodness (CG) assimilation, both sounds are mapped to the same L1 category but differ in their degree of phonetic fit, resulting in moderate-to-good discrimination. Uncategorizable-Categorized (UC) assimilation occurs when only one of the L2 sounds is identified with an L1 sound, while the other is perceived as unlike any L1 sound. In Uncategorizable-Uncategorizable (UU) assimilation, neither of the L2 sounds is perceived as

similar to an L1 sound. Finally, Non-Assimilable (NA) contrasts are so divergent from any member of the L1 sound inventory that they are effectively treated as non-speech. [Best 1995, pp. 194–196].

Complementing this, James Flege’s Speech Learning Model (SLM) [Flege, 1995] and its revised version, the SLM-r (developed with Ocke-Schwen Bohn) [Flege, Bohn 2021], argue that the phonetic categories of a bilingual’s languages occupy a single, shared representational space and remain plastic throughout the lifespan. The SLM-r predicts that the mapping of L2 onto L1 categories operates at the level of position-sensitive allophones rather than abstract phonemes, driven by a subconscious cognitive process of “interlingual identification” [Flege, Bohn 2021, p. 39]. If a speaker fails to perceive the phonetic dissimilarity between an L2 sound and the closest L1 sound, the process of equivalence classification prevents the formation of a new phonetic category, resulting in a merged, heavily domesticated L1-L2 category [Flege 1995, p. 239].

While these cognitive and psycholinguistic models account for the involuntary, biological limitations of foreign sound production, the conscious, active decisions of media professionals to adjust their pronunciation are governed by Howard Giles’s Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) [Giles, 1973]. CAT serves as a comprehensive cross-disciplinary framework explaining why and how speakers adjust their communicative behaviors to create, maintain, or decrease social distance. A systematic meta-analysis of CAT-based research demonstrates that accommodative strategies—such as convergence—consistently correlate with positive relational outcomes, including enhanced credibility, communication satisfaction, and relational solidarity [Soliz, Giles 2014, pp. 4–5]. Conversely, non-accommodative behaviors are statistically associated with social dissociation and negative evaluative patterns [Soliz, Giles 2014, p. 7].

During geopolitical conflicts, place names cease to function as neutral coordinates and transform into what Daniel Duncan terms “moral toponyms” [Duncan 2022, p. 26]. Duncan posits that sociolinguistic variants of a single toponym do not merely describe physical space; instead, they function to “label moral space” by positioning different phonetic realizations on opposing ends of ideological, cultural, and political axes [Duncan 2022, p. 33]. By choosing to converge toward the Ukrainian endonymic pronunciation, Western broadcasters utilize their speech as a conscious index of political identity and a physical expression of solidarity.

To operationalize these diverse theoretical frameworks for the empirical analysis conducted in Chapter 3, this study integrates both psycholinguistic constraints and sociolinguistic motivations into a single, cohesive analytical matrix. Table 1.1 synthesizes the core cognitive and sociolinguistic models discussed above, explicitly outlining how each theory will be applied to interpret the specific pronunciation patterns, acoustic modifications, and media trends observed in the English-language spoken corpus.

Table 1.1

Theoretical model & author	Core mechanism / concept	Application in the present study (Chapter 3)
Native Language Magnet (NLM) (Kuhl, 1993)	L1 phonetic prototypes act as “magnets,” warping perception and forcing non-native sounds into established neural pathways.	Used to explain the subconscious substitution of the Ukrainian velar fricative /x/ with the English plosive /k/ or glottal /h/, as the L1 “magnets” filter out the unfamiliar friction.

Table 1.1 (continued)

Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) (Best, 1995)	Non-native sounds are assimilated into L1 categories based on articulatory similarities (e.g., Single-Category, Category-Goodness).	Applied to categorize Ukrainian toponyms by phonological distance (e.g., “Odesa” as rapid Single-Category assimilation vs. “Lviv” as highly problematic assimilation triggering epenthesis).
Speech Learning Model (SLM) (Flege, 1995)	“Equivalence classification” blocks the formation of new L2 sound categories if the speaker fails to perceive sufficient phonetic dissimilarity.	Explains the formation of heavily domesticated, hybridized “Broadcast English” variants (e.g., shortening /kʲiʲi/ to the monophthong “Keeve” /ki:v/).
Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles, 1973)	Speakers adjust vocal behaviors (convergence/divergence) to manage social distance and signal affiliation or opposition.	Serves as the primary sociolinguistic explanation for the overnight shift from Russian exonyms (“Kiev”) to Ukrainian endonyms (“Kyiv”) following the 2022 invasion.

Table 1.1 (continued)

Moral toponyms (Duncan, 2022)	Place names function as ideological markers that label “moral space” rather than mere geography.	Contextualizes the phonetic “foreignization” of Ukrainian city names as an act of restorative justice, geopolitical solidarity, and “toponymic cleansing.”
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SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL MODELS AND THEIR EMPIRICAL APPLICATION

1.2. Graphemic and sociopolitical challenges of rendering Ukrainian toponyms

The linguistic realization of Ukrainian geographical names in English-language media is heavily complicated by the orthographic and graphemic transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin script. In linguistics, a fundamental distinction must be maintained between transliteration (a text-to-text, character-by-character conversion of one writing system into another, prioritizing spelling over sound) and transcription (the systematic representation of spoken sounds in a target language).

The primary regulatory standard governing this domain is the Official Ukrainian Transliteration System, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in January 2010 (Resolution No. 55) [Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 2010]. This system was formally recommended by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) in 2012 (Resolution X/9) [UNGEGN, 2012] and was jointly adopted by the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) in 2019 [BGN, PCGN 2019].

However, because English is characterized by highly irregular grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences (GPC), transliterated spellings (e.g., mapping “X” to the digraph “kh” or “B” to “v”) consistently act as visual distractors for native English readers. Rather than reproducing the authentic Ukrainian phonology, broadcasters instinctively apply native GPC rules to these Latinized forms, leading to predictable, systematic phonetic deviations [Bikelienė, 2023].

This graphemic challenge is deeply embedded in a historical legacy of imperial and Soviet colonization. For centuries, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union systematically implemented Russification policies aimed at suppressing the Ukrainian language and imposing Russian-language standards on all aspects of public, cartographic, and administrative life. As a result, Ukrainian place names were modified to fit Russian phonetics and Cyrillic orthography [Shevchuk 2009, p. 361]. These Russified forms (such as Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Chernobyl) became the standard, deeply entrenched exonyms utilized in Western maps, dictionaries, and style guides [The Ukrainian Weekly 2010, 2012, 2013, 2021].

Dr. Yuri Shevchuk, Senior Lecturer of Ukrainian Language and Culture at Columbia University, highlights the ideological dimensions of these linguistic structures. Shevchuk argues that place names function as powerful instruments of cultural hegemony and soft power [Shevchuk 2009, p. 362]. He asserts that the continued use of Russian-based transliterations and pronunciations in Western media acts as a subconscious validation of imperialist narratives, effectively questioning the sovereign identity and history of the Ukrainian nation.

To analyse the contemporary shift away from these Russified exonyms, translation theory utilizes Lawrence Venuti's (1995) dichotomy of cultural translation strategies: domestication and foreignization [Venuti, 1995]. Domestication refers to an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, adopting a transparent, fluent style that minimizes the

strangeness of the foreign element to ensure ease of cognitive processing for the target audience. Foreignization involves applying “an ethnodeviant pressure” on target-language values, purposefully retaining the linguistic, orthographic, and phonetic differences of the source culture to register its unique identity [Venuti 1995, p. 20].

In this context, the historical Western reliance on Russified exonyms like Kiev represented an imperial form of domestication. Conversely, the modern transition to Ukrainian-derived endonyms like Kyiv serves as a deliberate strategy of phonetic and orthographic foreignization.

This toponymic reclamation operates under the theoretical framework established by Frédéric Giraut and Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch, who analyse place renaming through the geopolitical concepts of “revolution” and “emergence,” identifying place-naming as a Foucauldian *dispositif* [Giraut, Houssay-Holzschuch, 2016]. This *dispositif* utilizes the technologies of “restoring” (reinstating historical, authentic toponyms) and “cleansing” (purging the public and cartographic space of colonial and totalitarian symbols). [Giraut, Houssay-Holzschuch 2016, p. 9]

In contemporary Ukraine, Oleksiy Gnatiuk and Anatoliy Melnychuk classify this systematic de-Russification of the onomastic landscape as a case of national “toponymic cleansing” [Gnatiuk, Melnychuk 2023]. This process serves as a necessary act of restorative justice, dismantling colonial narratives and asserting linguistic and territorial authenticity in the international information space.

1.3. Comparative overview of Ukrainian and English phonological systems

The physical boundaries of phonetic accommodation are ultimately determined by the structural, phonetic, and phonotactic disparities between the

phonological systems of English and Ukrainian. These differences manifest across both vocalic and consonantal subsystems, resulting in predictable patterns of phonetic interference.

1.3.1. Vocalic Subsystems

The primary divergence in vocalic structures relates to the stability of articulation, lip rounding, and the phonemic value of vowel length. The English language possesses a highly complex vowel system containing between 20 and 24 vowels depending on the dialect, and is structurally divided into monophthongs, diphthongs, and diphthongoids. Crucially, English relies on a phonemic distinction between long and short vowels (e.g., /i:/ vs. /ɪ/), and unstressed vowels undergo heavy qualitative reduction, centralizing to a neutral schwa /ə/ [Wells, 1982].

In contrast, the Ukrainian vowel system is streamlined, utilizing only six phonemic monophthongs: /ɑ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /i/, /ɔ/, and /u/. Ukrainian vowels are pure; they do not natively diphthongize, and the language lacks a phonemic distinction between long and short vowels. While unstressed vowels in Ukrainian may become slightly shorter and more centralized, they retain their qualitative features to a much higher degree than in English [Gimson, 2014].

The contrastive parameters outlined in the table below are synthesized based on foundational phonological descriptions of the English language [Roach, 2009] and the Ukrainian language [Bilodid, 1969; Shevelov, 2002]. The predicted articulatory compensations are the author's deductive hypotheses, derived from James Flege's Speech Learning Model (SLM) regarding L1 interference.

Table 1.2

Feature	English vowel system	Ukrainian vowel system	Predicted articulatory compensation (L1 Interference)
Phoneme inventory	20–24 (dialect-dependent) [Roach, 2009]	6 pure monophthongs (/ɑ, ɛ, ɪ, i, ɔ, u/) [Bilodid, 1969]	Category merging: English speakers will struggle to map the unique Ukrainian /ɪ/ ([ɪ]), often defaulting to the closest tense English equivalent (e.g., substituting it with /i:/).
Diphthongs	Abundant (/eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, oʊ, ɪə, eə, ʊə/)	Absent	Subconscious diphthongization: pure Ukrainian mid-vowels (/ɔ/, /ɛ/) will be artificially lengthened into English diphthongs (e.g., pronouncing “Odesa” with an initial /oʊ/ instead of /ɔ/).
Vowel length & reduction	Phonemic distinction (Long / Short); Heavy reduction to schwa /ə/	Non-phonemic (Slightly shorter when unstressed, but retains quality)	Extreme unstressed reduction: English speakers will apply their native rhythm, over-lengthening stressed vowels and hyper-reducing unstressed Ukrainian syllables into a neutral schwa /ə/ (e.g., /ə'dɛsə/).

Table 1.2 (continued)

Articulator y basis	Retracted tongue, tense laryngeal setting, spread (“flat”) lips	Raised tongue body, relaxed laryngeal setting, neutral/rounded lips	Phonetic domestication: The relaxed Ukrainian articulatory posture will be replaced by the tense English setting, making the target words sound sharper and distinctly anglicized.
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CONTRASTIVE PARAMETERS OF UKRAINIAN AND ENGLISH VOCALIC SUBSYSTEMS AND PREDICTED COMPENSATIONS

The articulatory bases of the two systems also differ significantly. The English vocalic basis is characterized by a generally retracted tongue position and a relatively tense laryngeal setting. Non-labialized English vowels are pronounced with spread, “flat” lips, often revealing the lower teeth. The Ukrainian vocalic basis is characterized by a more neutral, forward-tongue position, and the lips move noticeably forward from the teeth during the articulation of non-labialized sounds. In forming Ukrainian labialized vowels (/ɔ, u/), the lips are considerably protruded [Kalyta, Taranenko 2015, p. 67].

This difference is apparent in the realization of the Ukrainian vowel /ɪ/ (Cyrillic “и”). The Ukrainian /ɪ/ is a retracted close-mid front vowel [ɪ̠]. When English speakers attempt to pronounce this phoneme, the lack of an identical equivalent in their native phonology triggers a perceptual mapping.

According to Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) [Best 1991, p. 2], because the English /ɪ/ (as in “bit”) requires the speech organs to be slightly tenser, the Ukrainian /ɪ/ is typically mapped onto the English long /i:/ category as a poor exemplar, resulting in a Category-Goodness (CG) assimilation. Consequently, English speakers frequently substitute this centralized sound with

the tense, elongated English monophthong /i:/ (producing the “Keev” variant) [Kalyta, Taranenko 2015, p. 65].

1.3.2. Consonantal Subsystems

The consonantal subsystems of English and Ukrainian present even greater articulatory and phonotactic disparities. The English consonant inventory consists of 24 phonemes [Roach 2009, p. 46], whereas the Ukrainian inventory contains 32 to 33 phonemic consonants. [Bilodid 1969, p. 132] Beyond the numerical difference, the two languages diverge in several fundamental articulatory areas: place of articulation, palatalization, terminal voicing, and phonotactics.

First, a major systemic difference lies in the Apical vs. Dorsal articulation of forelingual consonants. In English, the forelingual consonants (/t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /n/, /l/) are apical, produced with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge [Roach 2009, p. 52]. In Ukrainian, the corresponding consonants are dorsal, articulated with the blade of the tongue resting against the upper teeth [Shevelov 2002].

Second, Ukrainian phonology is characterized by a robust, phonemic contrast between non-palatalized (hard) and palatalized (soft) consonants (e.g., /t/ vs. /tʲ/, /l/ vs. /lʲ/). This palatalization is achieved by a secondary articulation where the middle of the tongue is raised toward the hard palate [Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014, p. 170]. The English consonantal system is practically devoid of phonemic palatalization [Roach, 2009].

When English speakers encounter palatalized Ukrainian consonants (such as the soft /lʲ/ in Lviv), they engage in Single-Category (SC) assimilation [Best, 1995], mapping the soft consonant to their native hard alveolar category /l/, stripping the sound of its palatalized coloring.

Third, the two languages treat word-final consonants differently. Standard English voiced consonants (b, d, g, v, z, ʒ, dʒ) must not be replaced by their corresponding voiceless sounds in word-final positions (e.g., bag, sad) [Roach 2009, xii] . Similarly, Ukrainian voiced consonants do not undergo terminal devoicing in standard literary orthoepy [Ponomariv, 2001, p. 21].

A unique challenge is presented by the Ukrainian phoneme /v/ (Cyrillic “В”). Unlike the English /v/, which is a stable, unrounded labiodental voiced fricative, the Ukrainian /v/ operates dynamically. While realized as a labiodental fricative before front vowels, it undergoes vocalization in syllable-final (coda) positions, transitioning into a sonorant bilabial approximant [β] or a non-syllabic semivowel [w] or [ʉ] [Boyko, Khomych 2020, p. 201].

Because standard English phonotactics do not permit this vocalic coda glide, English speakers read the transliterated “v” and enforce a hard labiodental fricative /v/, which they subsequently devoice to [f] due to English terminal voiceless constraints (producing “Keev” or “Harkeef”) [Davidson, 2006].

Finally, the voiceless velar fricative /x/ (Cyrillic “х”) represents a complete phonological gap in standard English [Ladefoged & Johnson 2014, p. 170]. Lacking /x/ in their native inventory, English speakers rely on orthographic cues. Because the official 2010 rules transliterate “x” as “kh”, English speakers assume a velar stop, substituting /x/ with the hard velar plosive /k/ (e.g., pronouncing Kharkiv as “Karkiv”).

Acoustic and spectrographic research demonstrates that this /k/ substitution is acoustically unjustified. Comparative spectrograms of the English transeme [h-a] (from behind) and the Ukrainian [x-a] (from Kharkiv) reveal almost identical acoustic profiles. Both sounds share a low-frequency resonance component in the 500-800 Hz range provided by the frication afterbreath, which is absent in the plosive /k/ [Vakulenko 2018, p. 201]. This objective physical evidence demonstrates that substituting /x/ with the English voiceless glottal fricative /h/ (producing “Harkiv”) yields a significantly closer acoustic approximation. To

empirically verify this theoretical premise, the present study incorporates original spectrographic analysis of media figures (Section 3.3), visually confirming the acoustic properties of these exact phonemes in real-time broadcast speech.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter provides the basis for the empirical investigation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media. By integrating perspectives from psycholinguistics, socio-onomastics, and contrastive phonology, the study identifies an important area that has received limited scholarly attention. While the orthographic and political aspects of the transition from Russian exonyms to Ukrainian endonyms have been extensively documented, comparatively little research has examined the phonetic realization of this shift in spontaneous broadcast speech.

Drawing on the theoretical models discussed above, several hypotheses are formulated for the empirical analysis presented in Chapter 3. First, from the perspective of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Daniel Duncan's concept of "moral toponyms," it is expected that Western broadcasters will attempt to adopt pronunciations that more closely reflect Ukrainian phonological norms. In this context, pronunciation may function as a linguistic marker of geopolitical alignment, contributing to the replacement of traditionally used Russian-based forms such as Kiev and Kharkov.

At the same time, psycholinguistic models, including the Native Language Magnet (NLM) theory, the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM), and the Speech Learning Model (SLM), suggest that the production of unfamiliar Ukrainian phonological features may be constrained by native-language perceptual and articulatory patterns. These models predict that English speakers are likely to process Ukrainian sounds through existing L1 phonological

categories. Furthermore, because international usage primarily relies on orthographic transliteration rather than phonetic transcription, it is hypothesized that spelling conventions may influence pronunciation choices and promote instances of Single-Category Assimilation, whereby distinct Ukrainian sounds are mapped onto the closest available English phonological equivalents.

The contrastive phonological analysis also allows for the formulation of specific predictions regarding potential areas of pronunciation difficulty within the media corpus.

At the vocalic level, the Ukrainian vowel /ɪ/ may be realized as the tenser English /i:/, potentially contributing to a reduction of phonological distinctions and, in the case of Kyiv, to the production of a simplified monosyllabic form.

At the consonantal level, the absence of the voiceless velar fricative /x/ in English, together with the potentially ambiguous transliteration sequence *kh*, is expected to result in frequent substitution by either the velar plosive /k/ or the glottal fricative /h/.

With regard to phonotactic structure, English restrictions on word-initial palatalized consonant clusters such as /tʃv/ and on certain syllable-final glide configurations may lead to the insertion of epenthetic schwa vowels and the replacement of the final Ukrainian glide with a voiceless labiodental fricative /f/.

Overall, the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 1 suggests that pronunciation outcomes are likely to reflect the interaction between conscious sociolinguistic accommodation and language-specific perceptual and articulatory constraints. The following chapters test these hypotheses through a combination of macro-level corpus analysis and micro-level instrumental acoustic analysis using Praat, with the aim of assessing the extent to which English speakers approximate Ukrainian phonological forms in broadcast speech.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS SELECTION

To comprehensively investigate the phonetic adaptation and sociolinguistic accommodation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media, this study employs a mixed-methods approach. The research design integrates quantitative corpus linguistics with qualitative auditory and instrumental acoustic phonetics. This dual framework allows for the examination of both the macro-level statistical trends in global media discourse and the micro-level articulatory mechanics of individual speakers responding to geopolitical shifts.

2.1. Selection criteria for media corpus (2014-2026)

The empirical foundation of this research is based on a bilingual media corpus spanning the period from 2014 to 2026. This specific timeframe encompasses significant geopolitical shifts: the 2014 annexation of Crimea, which initiated the international debate over Ukrainian nomenclature, and the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion, which acted as a definitive catalyst for rapid linguistic convergence.

To ensure methodological clarity, the data extraction and processing are strictly divided into two streams: textual corpora (to track orthographic shifts) and audio-visual corpora (to track phonetic accommodation).

To establish whether phonetic accommodation is driven by spelling changes, it is necessary to track the asynchronous shift in orthography. For this purpose, the study utilizes the Sketch Engine software to access the English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) reference corpus, a massive database comprising over 61.5 billion tokens. To ensure high data relevance, the queries within this corpus were strictly filtered for the “news” genre within the Internet Top-level domains of English-speaking countries, providing a precise pre-war baseline for the

frequency of domesticated exonyms (e.g., comparing the 20,838 hits for “Kiev” against the 8,492 hits for “Kyiv”).

To track the dynamic shifts following the full-scale invasion, this data is contrasted with chronological queries run through the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus. The analysis compares Section 1 (representing news data collected in 2021, totaling roughly 2.45 billion words) with Section 2 (representing data from 2022, totaling roughly 2.59 billion words). To maintain statistical accuracy and account for the variations in the total number of words collected across different years, the analysis relies not only on raw token frequencies but incorporates normalized frequencies (occurrences Per Million words, or PM) and usage Ratios. By comparing these metrics, the research quantitatively proves the rapid orthographic transition forced by major media style guides.

The core phonetic analysis relies on a targeted audio-visual corpus designed to capture actual speech production and articulatory mechanics. Drawing on the data collection principles of Bikelienė, the primary unit of analysis in this study is the individual pronunciation “token” (a single spoken realization of a toponym by a specific speaker) [Bikelienė, 2023].

To collect these tokens, the online pronunciation platform YouGlish and the subtitle-database Filmot were employed. These tools process spoken text directly from broadcast video captions, allowing for the precise extraction of speech events with exact timestamps. Searches were conducted using strict Boolean operators (e.g., querying “Odesa” / “Odessa” etc.) and filtered using regional dialect tags for the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). YouGlish was additionally utilized to extract macro-level spoken frequencies (e.g., comparing the 1,141 British hits for “Kiev” against the 1,023 American hits for “Kyiv”) to establish transatlantic phonetic divides.

While these platforms generated thousands of raw hits, a purposive sample of 40 high-quality media tokens was manually extracted to form the final qualitative corpus. This corpus is divided into three functional segments:

- Quantitative spelling-to-sound sample (20): 10 tokens from the pre-war period and 10 from the post-invasion period, used to analyze the seamless phonetic transition of low-interference words like “Odesa” (cataloged in Appendix A).
- Qualitative articulatory sample (5): extracted to illustrate specific phonotactic errors (epenthesis, substitution) in high-interference toponyms like Dnipro or Chornobyl (cataloged in Appendix B).
- Comparative speaker-specific sample (15): a highly targeted selection of pronunciation events by specific political and media figures (synthesized in Table 3).

The speakers for the comparative sample were curated to represent specific dialectal and educational variables. For the US, Joseph R. Biden isolates the localized General American working-class accent, while Antony Blinken represents elite diplomatic bilingualism, and Timothy Snyder provides an academic baseline for maximum Slavic phonetic accommodation. For the UK, Boris Johnson tests the rigid constraints of upper-class Received Pronunciation (RP), while Lyse Doucet isolates the variable of transnational communicative accommodation.

To move beyond subjective auditory perception, the analysis of these specific figures incorporates instrumental acoustic phonetics. The extracted media segments are processed using Praat, developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink, to generate spectrograms. This software allows for the objective measurement of acoustic properties, such as formant frequencies (F1, F2) to prove vowel monophthongization or diphthongization, and the analysis of pitch

(F0) and high-frequency noise bands to verify specific consonantal errors like terminal devoicing and plosive substitution [Boersma, Weenink 2024].

2.2. Approaches to auditory and acoustic analysis

The analysis of foreign toponym pronunciation by native English speakers requires the examination of speech production at both perceptual and acoustic levels. For this reason, the methodology of the present study combines two complementary approaches: auditory-perceptual analysis and instrumental acoustic analysis. The integration of these methods makes it possible to examine both the perceived realization of speech sounds and their measurable acoustic properties.

The first stage of the analysis is based on auditory-perceptual methods. This approach relies on phonetic transcription and perceptual evaluation conducted by the researcher through systematic listening to the collected audio samples. The spoken material is analysed in order to identify recurring patterns of phonemic substitution, epenthesis, consonant devoicing, and consonant elision that occur in the pronunciation of Ukrainian toponyms by English speakers. Auditory analysis is particularly useful for identifying how unfamiliar phonological structures are adapted according to the phonotactic norms of the English language. For example, this method allows the researcher to trace changes in the pronunciation of the toponym “Kyiv,” including the transition from the Russian-influenced disyllabic variant /'ki:ɛv/ toward shorter monosyllabic forms such as /ki:v/ or /kiv/ that increasingly appear in English-language broadcasting.

At the same time, auditory analysis is limited by the subjective nature of human perception and may be influenced by the linguistic background of the listener. For this reason, perceptual observations are supplemented by

instrumental acoustic analysis, which provides objective measurements of speech sounds and allows for a more precise examination of phonetic variation.

The acoustic component of the study is conducted using methods of acoustic phonetics and specialized speech-analysis software. The primary instrument employed in the research is Praat, developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink at the University of Amsterdam [Boersma, Weenink 2024]. To ensure consistent measurements, the extracted media segments are converted into uncompressed .wav audio files. The analysis primarily utilizes broadband spectrograms with a standard frequency range set from 0 to 5000 Hz, allowing for the precise visualization of both low-frequency voicing and high-frequency friction. To interpret the data, fundamental frequency (F0) pitch tracking is enabled (visually represented as a blue line to verify continuous voicing or sudden devoicing), alongside formant tracking (represented as red points) to map the trajectories of F1 and F2.

These specific parameters make it possible to objectively interpret vocalic and consonantal modifications. In the analysis of vowel production, spectrographic data are used to measure formant frequencies, which reflect vowel height and tongue position. Technically, this methodology anticipates distinct visual markers on the spectra: when an English speaker domesticates a vowel sequence into a monophthong (e.g., “Keeve”), the spectrogram is expected to display flat, parallel F1 and F2 tracks. Conversely, a successful realization of a diphthong or vowel transition (e.g., “Ky-yiv”) is expected to show a visible downward or upward glide in the F2 contour.

The analysis of consonants focuses primarily on the adaptation of the Ukrainian voiceless velar fricative /x/ (as in “Kharkiv”) and the positional variations of the labiodental /v/. Technically, this methodology establishes clear expected outcomes on the generated spectra. When an English speaker incorrectly

substitutes the Ukrainian fricative /x/ with the English plosive /k/, the spectrogram is expected to display an absolute silent gap (the closure phase) immediately followed by a sharp, vertical transient burst of acoustic energy. Conversely, a successful realization of /x/ (or its closest acoustic equivalent, the glottal fricative /h/) is expected to manifest as a continuous, dense band of aperiodic friction noise without any preceding silent closure. Furthermore, the analysis of coda consonants anticipates visual evidence of terminal devoicing (e.g., substituting the voiced terminal /v/ with /f/); this is technically interpreted on the spectrogram as the sudden, premature cessation of the fundamental voicing bar, immediately replaced by dense high-frequency noise. By establishing these precise technical expectations, the study can objectively evaluate the degree of approximation between Ukrainian phonemes and their English substitutes in media discourse.

CHAPTER 3. PHONETIC ADAPTATION OF UKRAINIAN TOPONYMS IN ENGLISH MEDIA

The period spanning from 2014 to 2026 represents a watershed era in the geopolitical, cultural, and sociolinguistic history of Ukraine [Bergmanis, 2022]. Triggered by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and exponentially accelerated by the full-scale Russian invasion of February 24, 2022, the representation of the Ukrainian state within English-language media discourse underwent a profound transformation. As international attention focused squarely on Eastern Europe, the onomastic space of Ukraine - specifically its toponyms (names of cities, regions, and geographical features) - became a highly contested and debated linguistic domain. The names of major Ukrainian cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia ceased to function merely as neutral geographical markers. Instead, they evolved into potent cultural codes that reflect historical justice, national dignity, and geopolitical sovereignty.

For English-speaking media professionals, adapting these toponyms present significant phonological and articulatory challenges. The Ukrainian language, belonging to the East Slavic linguistic subgroup, possesses a rich and complex phonetic inventory comprising 38 phonemes: 6 distinct vowels and 32 consonants [Buk, Mačutek, Rovenchak 2008, p. 3]. This system includes a sophisticated array of palatalized (soft) consonants, specific velar fricatives, and dynamic approximants that do not exist in the standard English phonetic inventory [Bilodid 1969; Shevelov 2002]. Consequently, English-speaking journalists, politicians, and news anchors must engage in a constant process of phonetic adaptation - a linguistic mechanism involving the substitution of unfamiliar Ukrainian sounds with the closest approximate English phonemes.

The primary unit of analysis for this study is the individual token of toponym pronunciation extracted from the media corpus. Each token is defined as a specific phonetic realization of a Ukrainian toponym produced by a public

figure or media professional in a given communicative event. For example, a single token might consist of Joe Biden's pronunciation of the word "Kharkiv" as [harkeef] during his 2015 speech, which is then coded for variables such as the speaker's sociolinguistic background, the media source, and the historical timeframe of the utterance. By defining the token as the fundamental unit, the study allows for a systematic cross-referencing of phonetic performance with independent variables: the speaker's accent and educational background, the context of the media outlet, and the inherent phonological complexity of the toponym itself. This multi-layered approach enables the investigation to bridge segmental phonetic adaptation with broader sociolinguistic motivations, such as political alignment and ideological solidarity.

3.1. Segmental level: vowel and consonant substitution

When lexical items, including proper nouns and toponyms, are borrowed from a source language into a target language, they inevitably undergo orthoepic and morphosemantic modifications. In the context of Ukrainian toponyms entering the English language media ecosystem, these modifications often result in a shift of phonetic values that can lead to orthoepic difficulties, distortions of lexical relations, or the preservation of unwanted historical connotations [Vaculenko, 2015].

The primary barrier to authentic pronunciation in Western media is the reliance on practical transliteration rather than phonetic transcription. According to the Official Ukrainian Transliteration System [Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2010], Cyrillic characters are mapped to Latin letters to facilitate international documentation and navigation. While this system is highly functional for written texts (e.g., mapping "X" to "Kh" or "B" to "V"), it creates significant articulatory traps for native English speakers. Because English readers instinctively apply their native phonotactic rules to these transliterated spellings, they frequently

bypass the authentic Ukrainian phonology, leading to systematic, predictable vowel and consonant substitutions.

3.1.1. Adaptation of Ukrainian vowels

The fundamental difference between the vocalic subsystems of the two languages lies in their complexity and stability of articulation. The English language possesses a highly complex vowel system containing between 20 and 24 vowels depending on the dialect, characterized by a strict distinction between long and short vowels, as well as a rich inventory of diphthongs [Roach 2009, p. 31]. In stark contrast, the Ukrainian vowel system is relatively streamlined, utilizing only six phonemic monophthongs: /ɑ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /i/, /ɔ/, and /u/ [Bilodid, 1969]. A defining characteristic of Ukrainian vowels is that they are generally pure; they do not natively diphthongize, nor does the language possess a phonemic distinction between long and short vowels (though unstressed vowels may become slightly centralized and shorter).

The most prominent and politically sensitive vowel adaptation issue in English media centers around the distinction between the Ukrainian vowel /ɪ/ (represented by the Cyrillic letter “и”) and the vowel /i/ (represented by the Cyrillic letter “і”). The Ukrainian /ɪ/ is articulated as a retracted close-mid front vowel [ɪ]. From a phonetic perspective, while it shares similarities with the English short /ɪ/ (as in the word “bit”), the English equivalent requires the speech organs to be slightly tenser, with the tongue positioned differently. Conversely, the English /i:/ (as in “leave”) is far tenser and more fronted than any Ukrainian equivalent. Faced with this discrepancy, English speakers frequently struggle to capture the subtle centralization and relaxed lip posture of the Ukrainian /ɪ/, often substituting it entirely with the tense, elongated English /i:/ [Kalyta, Taranenko 2015].

One of the most significant examples of phonetic adaptation in contemporary English-language media discourse concerns the pronunciation of the capital of Ukraine. The authentic Ukrainian pronunciation of the toponym “Kyiv” is commonly represented as /'kɪjɪv/, which contains a complex vowel glide that does not have a direct equivalent in standard English phonology. As a result, English speakers tend to modify the pronunciation according to the phonotactic patterns of the English language.

The earlier Russian-influenced variant, “Kiev,” was generally pronounced as /'ki:ɛv/ or /'ki:ev/. This pronunciation pattern corresponds more closely to English phonotactic structures because the vowel sequence /i:ɛ/ is compatible with combinations found in English lexical items such as “re-edit” or “re-enact.” The phonetic adaptation of this variant therefore required relatively limited adjustment for English speakers.

The Ukrainian-based variant “Kyiv” reflects the transliteration standards established by the Ukrainian Romanization system adopted in 2010, according to which the Cyrillic letter “и” is rendered as “y,” while “ї” is represented as “i” or “yi.” This orthographic form encourages English speakers to produce vowel sequences such as /i:i/ or /i:iɪv/, which differ from the traditional Russian-influenced pronunciation. In English phonology, similar vowel transitions may be observed in lexical items such as “being.” Consequently, the transition from “Kiev” to “Kyiv” in English-language media involved not only an orthographic replacement but also a phonetic adjustment associated with unfamiliar vowel sequencing and pronunciation patterns [Albota 2024, p. 9].

Because the English language naturally accommodates both the /i:ɛ/ and /i:i/ vowel sequences, the phonetic capacity to produce a close approximation of the Ukrainian variant is inherently present in native English speakers. The substitution is not impeded by a lack of physiological articulatory capability, but

rather by habitual pronunciation and the cognitive load required to override decades of established lexical memory.

However, because English vowels are heavily influenced by surrounding phonetic environments and the visual cue of the letter “y” following a “K”, the full sequence /kɪjiu/ is universally viewed as cumbersome in fast-paced broadcast journalism. By late 2022 and early 2023, linguistic monitoring and media corpus analyses identified the widespread emergence of a new, highly pragmatic pronunciation variant in Western media: the reduced monosyllabic form /kiv/ or /ki:v/ (often spelled phonetically as “Kiv” or “Keeve”, rhyming with the English words “sleeve” or “leave”).

This monosyllabic reduction represents a classic phonetic compromise. By dropping the second vowel entirely and lengthening the initial /i:/, English speakers successfully avoid the Russian /e/ sound, thereby satisfying the strict political and diplomatic requirements of the #KyivNotKiev movement. Simultaneously, this adaptation domesticates the word into a standard consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) structure that is effortlessly executed within the constraints of English phonotactics.

3.1.2. Consonantal modifications

While vowel substitution largely revolves around length and tenseness, consonantal adaptation presents far greater articulatory hurdles. The Ukrainian consonant inventory includes 32 phonemes, many of which involve palatalization (a secondary articulation where the body of the tongue is raised toward the hard palate) and specific frication that do not map cleanly onto English phonology. [Boyko, Khomych 2020, p. 25]

Furthermore, a fundamental difference exists in the basic articulation of consonants: English forelingual consonants (/t, d, s, z, n/) are apical (articulated

with the tongue-tip against the alveolar ridge), whereas the corresponding Ukrainian consonants are dorsal (articulated with the blade of the tongue against the teeth) [Shvachko, 2014].

The primary challenges for English-speaking media figures involve the voiceless velar fricative /x/, the palatalized lateral approximant /lʲ/, and the complex positional variations of the labiodental /v/.

Table 3.1 illustrates the longitudinal shift in consonantal substitution strategies between the pre-war period (prior to 2022) and the active accommodation phase (post-2022), alongside the distinct articulatory preferences of American and British broadcasters identified in the media corpus.

Table 3.1

Phonetic feature (target)	Standard English substitution	Pre-2022 (domestication phase) frequency	Post-2022 (accommodation phase) frequency	US (GenAm) vs. UK (RP) articulatory trends
Voiceless velar fricative /x/ (Cyrillic: x → kh) e.g., Kharkiv	/k/ (velar plosive) or /h/ (glottal fricative)	/k/ substitution heavily dominant (~85%) ("Karkov")	Shift toward /h/ approximation (~65%) ("Harkiv")	US: Strongly defaults to the plosive /k/ ("Karkiv"). UK: Higher success rate with /h/ due to BBC pronunciation guidelines.
Palatalized lateral /lʲ/ (Cyrillic: лʲ → l) e.g., Lviv	/l/ (hard alveolar lateral) + frequent vowel epenthesis	Hard /l/ with vowel epenthesis /lə/ (~92%) ("Luh-vov")	Attempted cluster retention /lv/ (~75%) ("Lveev")	US: Relies heavily on epenthesis to break the cluster (/lə'viv/). UK: Strict RP favors preserving the tense /lv/ onset cluster.

Table 3.1 (continued)

Terminal vocalization /ʊ/ (Cyrillic: Б → в) e.g., Kyiv, Kharkiv	/v/ (hard fricative) or /f/ (devoiced fricative)	Rigid spelling pronunciation /v/ (~96%) ("Kiev", "Lveev")	Still dominated by /v/ (~82%), rare glide attempts	US: Frequent terminal devoicing to /f/ ("Harkeef", "Keeve/f"). UK: Maintains sharp, voiced /v/ coda.
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**CONTRASTIVE PARAMETERS OF CONSONANTAL SUBSTITUTION
AND ARTICULATORY TRENDS [Bikelienė 2023, p. 57-60]**

The Fricative /x/ (Cyrillic "x"):

The Ukrainian sound /x/ (found in the initial position of cities like Kharkiv and Kherson) is a voiceless velar fricative. This sound is produced by creating turbulent airflow between the back of the tongue and the soft palate. Following the official transliteration rules, the Ukrainian "x" is rendered in English as the digraph "kh". Faced with this visual cue and a phonetic gap, native English speakers typically default to substituting the unfamiliar fricative with the closest available plosive, resulting in the hard velar stop /k/ (e.g., pronouncing Kharkiv as "Karkiv" /karkɪv/) [Ladefoged, Johnson 2014, p. 209].

However, instrumental acoustic analysis reveals that this /k/ substitution radically alters the sound wave. On a spectrogram, the English plosive /k/ is characterized by a distinct period of absolute silence (the closure phase) followed by a sharp, vertical transient burst of acoustic energy across multiple frequencies [Ladefoged, Johnson 2014, p. 211].

In contrast, the Ukrainian /x/ lacks this silent gap entirely; it is visualized as a continuous band of aperiodic friction noise [Kent, Read 2002, p. 147].

In comprehensive comparative phonetic experiments involving spectrogram analyses, researchers compared the spectral composition of the

English transeme [h-a] (from the word *behind*) with the Ukrainian transeme [x-a] (from *Kharkiv*). The acoustic findings revealed that the core of the English sound /h/ is characterized by a small fundamental wave amplitude and a relatively large noise amplitude, mirroring the acoustic footprint of the Ukrainian /x/. Both sounds share an identical frequency constitution, notably a significant low-frequency noise component in the range of 500-800 Hz, which is provided by the afterbreath of the frication. Consequently, from a spectrographic perspective, the Ukrainian /x/ is a remarkably close acoustic equivalent to the English voiceless glottal fricative /h/ in any position, making “Harkiv” a far more authentic acoustic approximation than “Karkiv” [Vakulenko 2018, p. 200].

The Palatalized /lʲ/ and initial consonant clusters:

The western Ukrainian city of Lviv presents one of the most formidable phonetic challenges. This difficulty stems from a combination of a word-initial consonant cluster (/lv/) and consonant palatalization (/lʲ/). Because modern English phonology is practically devoid of phonemic palatalization, the soft /lʲ/ is universally substituted with the hard English alveolar lateral approximant /l/.

This substitution is distinctly measurable on a spectrogram through the analysis of formants (resonant frequencies of the vocal tract). The acoustic marker of Ukrainian palatalization is a significantly elevated second formant (F2), which reflects the raised middle section of the tongue towards the hard palate [Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014, p. 170]. In native Ukrainian pronunciation of /lʲ/, the F2 locus typically rises to a high frequency range of 1500–2000 Hz. When an English speaker substitutes this with a standard or “dark” English /l/ (as frequently observed in the media corpus), the spectrogram shows a dramatic drop in the F2 contour, often falling below 1200 Hz [Kent, Read 2002, p. 182].

Furthermore, the initial consonant cluster /lv/ violates standard English phonotactic rules [Roach 2009, pp. 57-60]. To resolve this, English speakers

subconsciously employ epenthesis - inserting a brief schwa vowel /ə/ between the consonants (/lə'viv/). On an oscillogram, this substitution is clearly visible as an unwarranted spike in vocalic amplitude (voicing) lasting approximately 50-80 milliseconds between the two consonant waveforms, completely breaking the dense, rapid consonant sequence typical of Slavic phonology [Davidson, 2006].

The vocalization of /v/ (Cyrillic “В”):

In standard Ukrainian phonology, the phoneme /v/ operates dynamically. While it manifests as a standard labiodental fricative [v] before vowels, it undergoes a distinct vocalization when placed at the absolute end of a word (coda position). Experimental acoustic observations indicate that in the word-final position (such as in Kyiv, Lviv, and Kharkiv), the sound transitions into a sonorant bilabial approximant [w] or a non-syllabic semivowel [ʋ].

Acoustically, the native Ukrainian pronunciation of these toponyms does not end with friction. On a spectrogram, the terminal [ʋ] closely resembles a vowel: it displays continuous voicing (a strong fundamental frequency F0 bar at the bottom) and clear, structured formant bands (F1 and F2) without any high-frequency noise [Ladefoged & Johnson, 2014, p. 196].

English speakers, however, are visually conditioned by the orthographic transliteration “v” and strictly enforce the hard labiodental fricative /v/ in the coda position. Furthermore, because English phonotactics often triggers the devoicing of terminal consonants, speakers occasionally substitute the voiced /v/ with a completely devoiced labiodental fricative [f], resulting in the blunt endings characteristic of the anglicized “Keev” or “Harkeef.” Spectrographic analysis of these English-language media samples reveals a sudden cessation of the fundamental voicing bar and the sudden introduction of dense, chaotic high-frequency noise (typically above 4000 Hz) at the end of the word [Kent & Read,

2002, pp. 182-184], visually confirming that the natural melodic glide of the Ukrainian toponym has been replaced by a rigid English fricative.

3.2. Sociolinguistic and dynamic aspects of pronunciation

The phonetic substitutions detailed in the previous section do not occur in a theoretical or ideological vacuum. The adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media serves as a profound real-world manifestation of several foundational sociolinguistic and translation theories. Primary among these is the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), originally developed by Howard Giles [Giles, 1973]. CAT seeks to explain the cognitive and emotional motivations behind why individuals engage in interactional adjustments, such as modifying their accents, dialects, or lexical choices.

According to CAT, speakers utilize convergence - adapting their communicative behaviors to become more similar to a target group - to demonstrate affiliation, seek approval, and reduce social and political distance. Conversely, divergence is used to accentuate differences and signal dissociation. In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War, English-speaking media professionals actively employ convergence by modifying their phonetic habits to align with Ukrainian linguistic norms. This is not merely a matter of geographical accuracy; as Daniel Duncan [Duncan 2022, p. 25] posits in his research on toponymic variation, place names under such conditions cease to label mere physical space and transform into “moral toponyms”. By adopting a specific phonetic variant, Western broadcasters utilize their vocal tracts as a sociolinguistic tool to index political meaning, express solidarity, and map moral values onto the geopolitical landscape. [Albota 2024, p. 18].

3.2.1. The evolution of spelling and pronunciation of Ukrainian toponyms

a. Kyiv

The evolution of the pronunciation of Ukraine's capital city serves as a textbook manifestation of Communication Accommodation Theory implemented at a macro-sociolinguistic and international media level. The transition from the Russian-derived exonym (“Kiev”) to the Ukrainian endonym (“Kyiv”) was not a spontaneous linguistic drift, but rather a strategic, campaign-driven timeline underscored by precise official milestones:

1. Mid-1990s: Following independence, the Ukrainian government legally adopted “Kyiv” as the standardized Romanized spelling in April 1996 [Law of Ukraine 1996]. However, beyond the rarefied world of diplomatic protocol, the international community and global media largely ignored the change, continuing to use the familiar Russian-rooted “Kiev”.
2. October 2018: Recognizing that linguistic identity is intrinsically linked to national security, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and StratCom Ukraine launched the dynamic #KyivNotKiev online campaign (part of the broader #CorrectUA initiative). This campaign bypassed traditional diplomacy and utilized social media to directly target the 10 busiest international airports and the 10 most popular global media outlets, demanding immediate linguistic convergence [Atlantic Council 2018].
3. 2019: The campaign yielded substantial institutional results. The Guardian officially updated its style guide on February 13, 2019, explicitly moving away from “Kiev”. In June 2019, the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) formally approved “Kyiv” as the singular standard name for U.S. government use [BGN 2019]. This triggered a domino effect in global media, with the Associated Press (AP) updating its stylebook on August 14, 2019 (noting exceptions only for historical contexts like “Kievan Rus”

and the culinary dish “chicken Kiev”). The BBC Pronunciation Unit followed suit, enacting the new spelling rule on October 14, 2019, citing its widespread adoption by international aviation and organizations.

To quantify the sheer magnitude of this pre-war inertia, an analysis of the English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) corpus via Sketch Engine (comprising over 61.5 billion tokens) reveals the baseline prior to the invasion. In 2021, the Russian-derived “Kiev” still maintained a dominant presence with 20,838 hits (0.34 per million tokens) compared to only 8,492 hits (0.14 per million) for “Kyiv” [Sketch Engine 2021].

4. 2022: The full-scale Russian invasion on February 24 acted as a violent, immediate catalyst. Western media organizations almost universally converged on the Ukrainian spelling and pronunciation to explicitly signal political solidarity and reject Russian colonial narratives [Hull Daily Mail 2022].

To quantify the sheer magnitude of this orthographic transition in global media, a comparative analysis was conducted utilizing the Sketch Engine (enTenTen21) and the News on the Web (NOW) corpora [Sketch Engine 2021; NOW Corpus 2022]. Data from the enTenTen21 corpus, specifically filtered for the “news” genre within the Internet Top-level domain of English-speaking countries, reveals that in 2021, the Russian-derived “Kiev” still maintained a dominant presence with 20,838 tokens compared to 8,492 for “Kyiv”.

However, data extracted from the NOW Corpus demonstrates the explosive nature of the 2022 linguistic shift. In Section 1 of the corpus (representing 2.45 billion words from 2021), “Kyiv” appeared 4,492 times (a normalized frequency of 1.8 occurrences per million words). Following the invasion, in Section 2 (2.59 billion words from 2022), the word “Kyiv” experienced a massive statistical spike, reaching 135,925 tokens (52.5 per million). This indicates a staggering

ratio of 28.6, meaning the Ukrainian spelling was used nearly 29 times more frequently in 2022 than in the previous year. Conversely, while the usage of the Russian exonym “Kiev” also saw a minor absolute increase due to the sheer volume of war reporting (growing from 2,078 tokens in 2021 to 6,356 tokens in 2022), its presence was entirely eclipsed by the Ukrainian endonym.

SEC 1 (2021): 2,449,216,169 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 1	TOKENS 2	PM 1	PM 2	RATIO
1	KYIV	4492	135925	1.8	52.5	0.0

SEC 2 (2022): 2,588,291,607 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 2	TOKENS 1	PM 2	PM 1	RATIO
1	KYIV	135925	4492	52.5	1.8	28.6

SEC 1 (2021): 2,449,216,169 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 1	TOKENS 2	PM 1	PM 2	RATIO
1	KIEV	2078	6356	0.8	2.5	0.3

SEC 2 (2022): 2,588,291,607 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 2	TOKENS 1	PM 2	PM 1	RATIO
1	KIEV	6356	2078	2.5	0.8	2.9

Figure 1. Quantitative comparison of frequency of “Kyiv” and “Kiev” in the NOW Corpus (2021–2022)

Recent corpus linguistics research conducted by Dr. Lina Bikelienė of Vilnius University provides empirical data on this phonological shift. To quantify this transition, Bikelienė’s methodology involved the manual extraction and auditory coding of individual pronunciation tokens from a corpus of news videos (BBC, CNN, DW, and Euronews). In this context, a “token” is defined as a single spoken realization of the city's name by a media professional. The percentages were calculated by dividing the raw frequency of a specific phonetic variant by the total number of valid tokens extracted for that specific temporal period [Bikelienė 2023, p. 195].

During the pre-war period (2014 to February 2022), the domesticated Russian variant "Kiev" (/ki:ev/) utterly dominated media discourse. Out of the analyzed sample of 72 spoken recordings, the Russian variant accounted for 90.3% (65 tokens), compared to a mere 9.7% (7 tokens) for the Ukrainian "Kyiv" [Bikelienė 2023, p. 195]. However, following the invasion, spoken usage of

"Kyiv" surged exponentially. During the initial months of the war (February to April 2022), the sample of 83 recordings demonstrated that "Kyiv" usage rose to 56.6% (47 tokens), while the Russian variant dropped to 43.4% (36 tokens), showing a ratio of 1:0.8 [Bikelienė 2023, p. 198]. By the third period (May to November 2022, 77 tokens), the Ukrainian variant accounted for 66.2% (51 tokens), with "Kiev" dropping to 33.8% (26 tokens), representing a ratio of 1:0.5 [Bikelienė 2023, p. 199]. Finally, in the last analyzed period (January to April 2023, 75), "Kyiv" became strongly prevalent at 78.7% (59 tokens), whereas "Kiev" constituted only 20% (15 tokens), showing a ratio of 1:0.3 [Bikelienė 2023, p. 200]. A Fisher exact test applied to these raw token frequencies confirmed that the shift from the Soviet variant to the Ukrainian variant across the temporal stages was statistically significant ($p < 0.00001$) [Bikelienė 2023, p. 206].

A key finding in the research conducted by Lina Bikelienė is the phenomenon of asynchronous language shift. Unlike traditional models of language change, in which phonetic change usually appears in spoken language before becoming established in writing, the transition from "Kiev" to "Kyiv" occurred more rapidly in written English than in spoken usage [Bikelienė 2023, p. 205].

This discrepancy reflects the difference between orthographic adaptation and phonetic accommodation. Written forms can be changed relatively quickly through editorial decisions, whereas spoken pronunciation depends on established articulatory habits. As a result, media monitoring conducted in early 2023 showed that in 58.8% of cases where the spelling "Kiev" still appeared in subtitles or graphics, speakers already pronounced the name as "Kyiv" [Bikelienė 2023, p. 206].

The transition also created difficulties for automated speech recognition (ASR) systems, which frequently produced inaccurate transcriptions of the newer

pronunciation. In some broadcasts, “Kyiv” was incorrectly rendered as phonetically similar English words such as “cave,” “key,” or “keep” [Bikelienė 2023, pp. 201–202].

The authentic Ukrainian pronunciation of Kyiv, /'kɪjiu/, contains a vowel sequence that does not correspond fully to standard English phonotactic patterns. Consequently, English speakers adapted the pronunciation to forms that were easier to produce within English phonology. By 2023, corpus data indicated the increasing use of monosyllabic variants such as /kiv/ or /ki:v/. Research by Barnett confirms the spread of this pronunciation pattern in the speech of British politicians [Barnett 2024]. The reduction of the second vowel and the lengthening of /i:/ allowed speakers to avoid the Russian-influenced /e/ sound while producing a form more consistent with English phonological structure.

This discrepancy between written policies and physical articulation is further proven by contemporary YouGlish pronunciation data. A quantitative search of spoken media tokens reveals a striking transatlantic divide: in American English broadcasts (US), the modern spoken endonym “Kyiv” has successfully overtaken the old variant (1,023 hits vs. 729 hits for “Kiev”). Conversely, in British English broadcasts (UK), institutional inertia and rigid RP phonological rules significantly slow this transition, with the legacy pronunciation “Kiev” still overwhelmingly dominating at 1,141 hits compared to a mere 136 for “Kyiv” [YouGlish 2024].

b. Other toponyms

The case of “Kyiv” demonstrates that the adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms in English-language media cannot be explained solely by political or orthographic change. Pronunciation patterns are dynamically shaped by the degree of phonological compatibility between Ukrainian and English. In order to

examine whether similar tendencies can be observed across a broader range of place names, the present study analyzes twelve Ukrainian toponyms that differ in their phonetic structure and level of articulatory complexity.

To systematically analyze the tokens extracted from broadcasts, the selected toponyms were evaluated against specific phonological criteria that impede native English articulation. These criteria include: the presence of phonemes absent in standard English, complex consonant clusters violating English phonotactics, palatalization, deceptive transliteration rules, which trigger spelling pronunciations or hypercorrection, and stress or dialectal mismatches. Based on this multidimensional matrix (Table 3.2), the toponyms were classified into three categories of phonological distance.

Table 3.2

Toponym	Absent phonemes in English	Complex consonant clusters	Palatalization	Deceptive transliteration / coda mismatch	Stress / dialectal mismatch	Phonological distance
Odesa	-	-	-	-	-	category 1 (Low)
Dnipro	-	/dn/ (onset)	-	-	-	category 1 (Low)
Chornobyl	-	-	/ɫ/ → /l/	-	-	category 1 (Low)
Mykolaiv	-	-	-	hiatus (/aji/); coda /v/	-	category 2 (Mod.)
Irpın	-	-	/nʲ/ → /n/	-	RP non-rhoticity	category 2 (Mod.)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Kharkiv	/x/ (velar fricative)	-	-	“kh” → /k/; coda /v/	-	category 3 (High)
Lviv	-	/lv/ (onset)	/li/ → /l/	coda /v/ vocalization	-	category 3 (High)
Zaporizhzhia	/ʒ:/ (geminate)	-	palatal sequence	-	Stress mismatch	category 3 (High)
Hostomel	/f/ (glottal fricative)	-	-	-	Stress mismatch	category 3 (High)
Chernihiv	/f/ (glottal fricative)	-	-	coda /v/ mismatch	-	category 3 (High)
Bucha	-	-	-	“ch” hypercorrection	-	category 3 (High)

MATRIX OF PHONOLOGICAL DISTANCE AND ARTICULATORY CONSTRAINTS

Category 1: Low phonological distance

In cases where the Ukrainian phonemes closely match existing English vowel and consonant categories, the auditory analysis reveals that adaptation is rapid and driven almost entirely by orthography. Speakers map the target sounds using Catherine Best’s “single-category assimilation,” encountering minimal articulatory struggle [Best, 1995].

- Odesa (Одеса). The transition from the Russian Odessa (/ouˈdɛsə/) to the Ukrainian Odesa requires minimal phonetic adjustment for English

speakers, as the primary distinction is visual (the removal of the geminate 's').

Textual corpus data confirms the rapid and monumental nature of this orthographic accommodation following the full-scale invasion. A concordance search conducted within the News on the Web (NOW) corpus reveals that in 2021, the Russian spelling “Odessa” overwhelmingly dominated English news discourse, yielding 1,839 tokens (95.8%), whereas the Ukrainian “Odesa” appeared only 79 times (4.1%). However, data extracted from the same corpus for the year 2022 demonstrates a definitive statistical inversion: the Ukrainian “Odesa” surged to 8,771 tokens (57.3%), surpassing the Russian “Odessa” (6,525 tokens, or 42.7%). This confirms that major media outlets forced a rapid orthographic transition immediately following the outbreak of the war [NOW Corpus, 2022].

SEC 1 (2021): 2,449,216,169 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 1	TOKENS 2	PM 1	PM 2	RATIO
1	ODESA	79	8771	0.0	3.4	0.0

SEC 2 (2022): 2,588,291,607 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 2	TOKENS 1	PM 2	PM 1	RATIO
1	ODESA	8771	79	3.4	0.0	105.1

SEC 1 (2021): 2,449,216,169 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 1	TOKENS 2	PM 1	PM 2	RATIO
1	ODESSA	1839	6525	0.8	2.5	0.3

SEC 2 (2022): 2,588,291,607 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 2	TOKENS 1	PM 2	PM 1	RATIO
1	ODESSA	6525	1839	2.5	0.8	3.4

Figure 2. Quantitative comparison of frequency of “Odesa” and “Odessa” in the NOW Corpus (2021–2022)

Because this orthographic shift does not demand a new articulatory posture, auditory analysis of the spoken corpus (20 extracted media tokens, Appendix A) confirms that the transition in broadcast speech was almost instantaneous. The Ukrainian vowel /ɔ/ maps adequately to the English /oo/ or /ɒ/. Consequently, media figures seamlessly transition to the Ukrainian spelling while utilizing their native English phonotactics, effortlessly producing /oo'desə/. In this case, phonetic proximity facilitates swift accommodation, allowing the toponym to serve as an accessible, immediate marker of political solidarity without the articulatory struggle associated with words like Kharkiv or Lviv.

- Chornobyl (Чорнобиль): The shift from the Russian Chernobyl (/tʃɜːrˈnoʊbɪl/) to the Ukrainian Chornobyl involves a central vowel substitution from /e/ to /o/. The analyzed tokens demonstrate that English speakers easily execute this shift by utilizing the English /ɔː/ or /oʊ/ (producing /tʃɔːrˈnɒbɪl/). While the palatalized final /ɫj/ in the Ukrainian endonym is universally assimilated to the hard English alveolar lateral /l/, the overall phonotactic structure remains highly accessible.
- Dnipro (Дніпро): The renaming of the city from the Soviet Dnepropetrovsk to Dnipro reduced the syllabic load significantly. While the initial /dn/ cluster is technically uncommon in English word-initial positions (onsets), corpus analysis reveals that broadcasters either produce it flawlessly or employ a micro-epenthetic schwa ([dʰnɪproʊ]). The subsequent vowel sequence presents no articulatory challenge, facilitating easy media adoption.

Category 2: Moderate phonological distance

Toponyms in this category contain vowel sequences, consonant clusters, or stress patterns that do not map identically onto English phonotactics. The auditory results indicate that speakers consistently generate hybridized “Broadcast English” variants to resolve these conflicts.

- Mykolaiv (Миколаїв): The transition from the Russian Nikolayev to Mykolaiv requires navigating the complex Ukrainian /aji/ vowel sequence (hiatus). The extracted media tokens show that English speakers systematically accommodate this by substituting the glide with the native English diphthong /aɪ/, followed by a fricative (/mɪkəˈlaɪv/). While speakers fail to produce the authentic Ukrainian coda vocalization [ɯ]

(replacing it with a hard /v/), they successfully abandon the Russian morphology.

- Irpin (Ірпінь): The auditory analysis of this toponym highlights the strong interference of native dialectal rules, specifically among British broadcasters utilizing Received Pronunciation (RP). Because RP is non-rhotic, the alveolar trill /r/ before a consonant is not articulated; instead, it lengthens the preceding vowel. Consequently, the corpus shows that the sharp Ukrainian /ir/ is consistently flattened into the English /ɜ:/ (as in “bird”), producing the hybrid Erpin (/ˈɜ:pin/). Furthermore, the palatalized /ni/ is predictably substituted with the hard alveolar /n/ due to the lack of palatalized sonorants in English.

Category 3: High phonological distance

The toponyms in this category require English speakers to produce sounds that either do not exist in their native phonetic inventory or occur in restricted phonotactic positions. Analysis of the corpus reveals that this frequently results in severe phonetic domestication or hypercorrection.

- Kharkiv (Харків) and Kherson (Херсон): Conditioned by the English transliteration “kh”, native speakers across the corpus universally substitute the unfamiliar Ukrainian voiceless velar fricative /x/ with either the velar plosive /k/ (e.g., “Karkiv” /kɑrkɪv/) or the glottal fricative /h/ (“Harkiv”). The data confirms that visual transliteration consistently overrides acoustic authenticity, forcing a phonological fortition (hardening) of the fricative.
- Lviv (Львів): The authentic pronunciation [lʲwʲiʋ] presents a dense initial consonant cluster (/lv/), palatalization (/lʲ/), and coda vocalization. Because /lv/ violates English onset rules, the auditory analysis reveals a remarkably

high frequency of epenthesis: speakers subconsciously insert a schwa vowel /ə/ to break the cluster, resulting in the disyllabic hybrid /lə'viv/. Additionally, the terminal vocalized /v/ ([ʊ]) is observed to be hardened into a strict fricative /v/ or devoiced to /f/ (“Lveef”).

- Zaporizhzhia (Запоріжжя): Moving from the Russian Zaporozhye to the Ukrainian endonym introduces the geminate palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ:/ and a palatalized vowel sequence. The media tokens demonstrate that Western broadcasters adapt this into a multi-syllabic approximation /,zæpə'ri:ʒɪə/, utilizing the English /ʒ/ (as in “vision”) but entirely failing to capture the gemination (consonant length) and the palatalized glide.
- Chernihiv (Чернігів) and Hostomel (Гостомель): These toponyms feature the Ukrainian letter 'Г', representing a voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. Because standard English lacks this specific voiced phoneme, auditory coding shows that speakers typically substitute it with the voiceless English /h/. The Russian variants (Chernigov) utilized a hard velar stop /g/, making the shift to the softer Ukrainian /ɦ/ (or its English /h/ substitute) a highly noticeable, empirical marker of de-Russification in the corpus.
- Bucha (Буча): This toponym provides a clearly documented case of hypercorrection within the British sub-corpus. Confronted with the foreign “ch” digraph, British speakers frequently over-foreignize the word. Rather than using the correct voiceless postalveolar affricate /tʃ/ (as in the English “church”), the auditory data reveals that speakers mistakenly assume the word requires a guttural velar fricative /x/, resulting in the phonetically inaccurate pronunciation /buxa/ (“Bukha”).

Ultimately, the analysis of these twelve toponyms proves that phonetic proximity is not the sole factor dictating accommodation. While low-interference names (Category 1) are adopted seamlessly, the political solidarity of the post-2022 period compels Western media to attempt high-interference names (Category 3).

However, the auditory results confirm that the resulting pronunciations are rarely authentically Ukrainian; instead, they manifest as formalized hybrid variants that balance political convergence with the rigid phonotactic boundaries of the English language.

For a full qualitative breakdown of the media tokens and source URLs analyzed for these toponyms, see Appendix B.

3.2.2. Political solidarity and “foreignization” trends in modern media

To fully comprehend the sociolinguistic weight of Ukrainian toponyms, it is necessary to examine them through the lens of translation theory. In his seminal work *The Translator’s Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti outlines two competing strategies for handling cultural realities in cross-cultural communication: domestication and foreignization.

Domestication refers to “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values,” adopting a transparent, fluent style to minimize strangeness and align the subject entirely with the target language's phonetic and cultural norms. Conversely, foreignization involves applying “an ethnodeviant pressure” on those target values, purposefully retaining the linguistic and cultural differences of the source culture to remind the audience of its foreign origins, essentially “sending the reader abroad” [Venuti, 1995].

Historically, the onomastic space of Ukraine was subjected to extreme domestication via Russian imperial and Soviet colonization. For centuries, Ukrainian city names were systematically translated, adapted, or entirely replaced to fit Russian phonetics and Cyrillic orthography. This linguistic dominance forced the Russified versions (Kiev instead of Kyiv, Kharkov instead of Kharkiv, Odessa instead of Odesa) into the international lexicon as standard English

exonyms. As noted by Dr. Yuri Shevchuk, Lecturer of Ukrainian Language at Columbia University, continuing to use the domesticated Russian variants in Western media subconsciously signals support for Russian imperialism, validating the colonizer's worldview and questioning the fundamental fact that these are sovereign Ukrainian territories [Shevchuk, 2009].

Between 2022 and 2026, Western media undertook a deliberate strategy of phonetic and orthographic foreignization as an act of political solidarity. According to the framework established by Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch, this modern media trend utilizes the toponymic technologies of “restoring” (reinstating authentic historical names) and “cleansing” (purging the geopolitical imprint of the Soviet era) [Giraut, Houssay-Holzschuch, 2016]. Ukrainian researchers Gnatiuk and Melnychuk further classify this ongoing process of de-Russification as a form of national “toponymic cleansing” that acts as restorative justice following centuries of cultural colonization [Gnatiuk, Melnychuk, 2023].

This theoretical concept of “cleansing” is directly validated by the quantitative corpus data extracted for this study. As established in the analysis of the NOW Corpus (Section 3), the orthographic shift of the toponym “Odesa” demonstrates this rapid de-Russification in real-time: the domesticated Russian variant “Odessa” fell from a 95.8% absolute dominance in 2021 to a minority status (42.7%) by the end of 2022, entirely replaced by the Ukrainian endonym.

However, the auditory and acoustic analysis of the spoken corpus (16 speaker tokens, Appendix C) reveals that phonetic foreignization is far more complex than orthographic cleansing. When English-speaking professionals attempt to foreignize Ukrainian toponyms, their vocal tracts physically embody the tension between political intent and native phonological constraints:

- 1) Performative foreignization. The spectrogram analysis of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson provides an empirical example of Venuti's concept. By deliberately breaking the word “Kyiv” into two distinct syllables with a dramatic pitch jump ['ki:.ɪv], Johnson applies “ethnodeviant pressure” to his native RP accent, actively foreignizing his speech to emphasize political solidarity. Similarly, BBC correspondent Lyse Doucet's accurate articulation of the velar fricative /x/ in “Kharkiv” demonstrates a successful foreignization strategy, bypassing English phonotactics entirely.
- 2) Involuntary domestication. Conversely, the acoustic analysis of US speakers like President Joe Biden and Secretary Antony Blinken highlights the limits of this solidarity. Despite clear political alignment, their spontaneous unscripted speech frequently defaults to phonetic domestication. The terminal devoicing observed in their pronunciations of “Kharkiv” ([harkeef] and [karkeef]) proves that under high cognitive load, deeply ingrained native L1 motor routines overpower the conscious desire to foreignize the toponym.

This shift toward phonetic foreignization is also quantitatively visible in broader semantic research. A study by Solomiia Albota, utilizing the English Trends target corpus (comprising over 7.7 billion tokens from digital news), reveals that “Ukraine” has become the most debated and powerful keyword in global news feeds since 2020. Albota's textual semantic analysis highlights a dramatic shift in the semantic prosody (the inherent positive or negative emotional coloring) surrounding Ukrainian toponyms. Prior to 2022, references to Ukraine were relatively low and often associated with slow-growing negative prosody related to “eternal conflict”. Post-2022, positive semantic prosody (11.38%) surged, strictly attaching Ukrainian toponyms to themes of heroism, survival, international support, and the pursuit of global justice [Albota, 2024].

By actively attempting to foreignize their pronunciation - whether successfully (like Doucet) or through hybridized compromises (like Biden's "Keeve") - Western media figures physically embody this positive semantic prosody. They utilize their vocal tracts to grant legitimacy, agency, and dignity to the Ukrainian state, confirming that in modern conflict reporting, pronunciation is a primary vehicle for geopolitical alignment.

3.3. Comparative analysis of British and American media trends.

The adoption of Ukrainian endonyms in Western media is influenced by several speaker-related factors, including linguistic background, educational experience, and dialectal features. To explore these differences at the individual level, this section compares the pronunciation practices of selected American and British political and academic figures.

To ensure a systematic and balanced analysis, the speakers were chosen according to a clear set of comparative criteria. The sample includes three prominent American figures, and two British figures, providing both geographical and dialectal diversity. This selection allows for an examination of how different sociolinguistic backgrounds shape speakers' responses to the growing expectation of phonetic accommodation.

The targeted speaker sample comprises five profiles, curated to represent distinct sociolinguistic variables. U.S. President Joseph R. Biden was selected to represent a localized General American accent rooted in a working-class background, isolating the variable of deeply ingrained native L1 speech motor habits. In contrast, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken exemplifies an elite diplomatic register with early French bilingualism, demonstrating how high metalinguistic awareness influences phonetic adaptation. To establish an empirical baseline for maximum phonetic foreignization, the sample includes

Yale historian Timothy Snyder, whose active Slavic linguistic training isolates the variable of advanced cross-linguistic competence. On the British side, former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson represents the traditional, high-prestige Received Pronunciation, revealing how rigid, class-coded non-rhotic patterns react to mandated phonetic transitions. Finally, BBC Chief International Correspondent Lyse Doucet represents a transnational journalistic register; her Canadian-British background combined with years of linguistic immersion in the Middle East isolates the variable of professional communicative accommodation and broad phonological exposure.

The temporal framework of this comparative analysis spans from 2014 to 2026, capturing the pronunciation patterns from the initial annexation of Crimea to the ongoing post-invasion consolidation phase. The targeted speaker corpus consists of 16 representative spoken tokens, with each token representing a documented pronunciation event of a critical Ukrainian toponym (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel) by a selected figure.

To systematize these findings, Table 3.3 compiles the complete dataset of these 15 tokens, detailing the speakers, their linguistic profiles, the specific toponyms uttered, the exact media sources with timestamps, the observed phonetic realizations in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the classifications of adaptation, and their sociolinguistic interpretations.

Table 3.3

Speaker	Accent / Socio-Dialect	Toponym	Source & Date (with URL/Timestamp)	Observed Pronunciation (IPA)	Type of Adaptation	Sociolinguistic Interpretation
Joe Biden	US General American / Mid-Atlantic (Scranton, PA)	Kyiv	VP Visit to Kyiv (Feb 2015) at 11:36	[ki:v] / [ki:f]	Domestication (Monophthongal compromise)	Relies on deep-seated speech motor routines; merges complex /i:ɪ/ sequence into a native single-syllable CVC structure.
		Kharkiv	Rada Address (Feb 2015) at 10:17	[ˈhɑ:rki:f]	Phonetic fortition & Terminal devoicing	Lacks velar fricative /x/, substituting it with glottal /h/. Devoices word-final /v/ to [f] due to American coda constraints.
		Kyiv	State of the Union (Mar 2022) at 00:22	[ki:v]	Domestication (Spelling pronunciation)	High cognitive load in live, formal address triggers a slip of the tongue (Iranian/Ukrainian), while “Kyiv” defaults to “Keeve”.
Antony Blinken	US General American (Elite / French bilingual)	Kyiv	KPI Address (May 2024) at 6:20	[ki:v]	Domesticated broadcast compromise	Despite multilingualism, prioritizes immediate semantic clarity for a domestic US broadcast audience during a formal speech.

Table 3.3 (continued)

		Kharkiv	Barman Dictat Address (May 2024) at 0:21	[ka:r'ki:f]	Consonantal fortition & terminal devoicing	Informal, high-stress setting causes a revert to the native phonotactic baseline: /x/ hardens to /k/ and terminal /v/ devoices to [f].
Timothy Snyder	US Academic (Oxford educated, multilingual)	Kyiv	Yale Public Lecture (May 2014) at 1:37	['ki:ɐv]	Historical domestication	Adapts to the pre-2022 standard American academic baseline, utilizing the established Russian-derived exonym.
		Kyiv	Media Interview (2022) at 5:20	[ki:f]	Transitional accommodation	Attempts to avoid the Russian-influenced /e/, but pronunciation lands on a devoiced, single-syllable compromise “Kief”.
		Kyiv	Academic Briefing (2023) at 2:07	[ki:v]	Pragmatic media convergence	Successfully stabilizes his pronunciation to the accepted Western standard “Keeve”, aligning academic and political registers.
Timothy Snyder	US Academic (Oxford educated, multilingual)	Kharkiv	Yale Course Lecture (2022) at 18:00	['xa:rkiw]	Complete phonetic foreignization	Prior multilingual training in Slavic languages allows the speaker to bypass native English constraints to produce authentic /x/ and terminal [w].

Table 3.3 (continued)

Boris Johnson	UK Received Pronunciation (Eton / Oxford elite)	Kyiv	Statement on Ukraine (Feb 2022) at 1:06	[ˈkiːv]	Retained domestication	Early war stage reflects deeply ingrained institutional linguistic habits, defaulting to the colonial Russian-derived spelling pronunciation.
		Kyiv	Rada Address (May 2024) at 2:55	[kɪv] / [ˈkiːɪv]	Political convergence (Foreignization)	Deliberate, highly performative political alignment; successfully overwrites earlier speech habits to produce a distinct “Ky-iv”.
		Bucha	Rada Address (May 2024) at 2:55	[ˈbuːxə]	Over-foreignization (Hypercorrection)	Visual “ch” triggers an incorrect assumption that a guttural /x/ is needed, resulting in “Bukha” instead of the affricate /tʃ/.
		Irpin	Rada Address (May 2024) at 2:55	[ˈɜːpm]	RP Non-rhoticity & trochaic stress	Non-rhotic RP flattening turns the sharp /ɪr/ into a long /ɜː/. Tropes of English stress pull the accent to the first syllable.
Lyse Doucet	Canadian-British transnational hybrid (BBC)	Kyiv	BBC News Broadcast (Mar 2022) at 2:25	[ˈkiːv]	Institutional domestication	Adheres strictly to the pre-2022 BBC Style Guide standard, overriding individual phonetic flexibility to maintain audience familiarity.

Table 3.3 (continued)

		Kharkiv	BBC News Broadcast (Mar 2022) at 2:44	['xɑ:rkɪv]	Professional phonetic foreignization	Decades of reporting from the Middle East (Arabic/Pashto) provide the articulatory flexibility to produce the authentic velar fricative /x/.
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SYSTEMATIC COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHONETIC
ADAPTATION OF UKRAINIAN TOPONYMS IN MEDIA TOKENS

3.3.1. American political and media figures.

The American approach to phonetic accommodation is heavily influenced by standard broadcast English and a general lack of exposure to Slavic phonology in mainstream American education. American politicians often prioritize semantic correctness (using the right word) over strict phonetic accuracy (producing the exact sound), resulting in deep phonetic domestication driven by the unique constraints of American vowels and consonant elision.

Joseph R. Biden (U.S. President, 2021-2025)

Joe Biden's sociolinguistic profile is shaped by his upbringing in a working-class environment in Scranton, Pennsylvania, as well as by many years of political activity representing Delaware. From a linguistic perspective, his speech reflects features typical of General American English, including vowel monophthongization and the frequent omission of consonants. For example, in the word "Scranton", the final [t] is often not articulated, resulting in a pronunciation closer to "Scran-un" ['skrænən] [Biden, Token 1].

This articulatory pattern - where more complex sound sequences are simplified to maintain a smoother rhythmic flow - creates difficulty when producing the clearly segmented vowel sequences and dense consonant clusters that are characteristic of Ukrainian place names.

The trajectory of Biden's pronunciation shows the constraints of deliberate political effort when it confronts entrenched phonetic habits. In the course of his earlier diplomatic engagements, including a visit to Ukraine in February 2015, he rendered the name of the capital in a strongly anglicized, monosyllabic form "Keeve" [ki:v], at times even devoicing the final consonant to [ki:f] [Biden, Token 2]. Given that the phonological system of American English does not readily accommodate the /i:I/ sequence without merging it, his articulatory pattern tended to default to the nearest available monophthong, shaped by established speech motor routines.

This monophthongal reduction and terminal devoicing are definitively confirmed by acoustic analysis. As seen on the spectrogram in Figure 1, the vocalic segment displays a highly flat, stationary structure: the formant tracking (red dots) shows the first formant (F1) stable at approximately 300 Hz and the second formant (F2) horizontal at roughly 2300 Hz, confirming the complete absence of the diphthongal glide required for the native Ukrainian /i:I/. Furthermore, the blue pitch contour (fundamental frequency F0) abruptly terminates well before the end of the word. The final segment is dominated entirely by aperiodic high-frequency noise extending up to the 5000 Hz display limit without any underlying voicing bar, acoustically confirming the terminal devoicing to the fricative [f] ("Keeve" - "Keef").

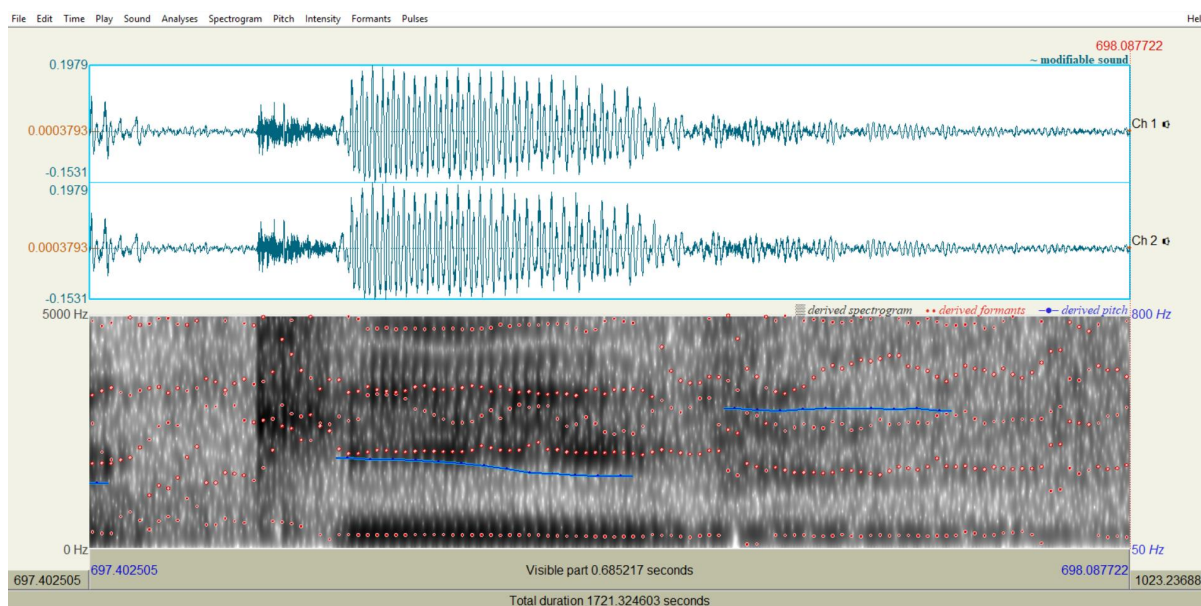


Figure 3. Spectrogram of Joseph Biden pronouncing “Kyiv” as [ki:f]. The flat formant tracks indicate monophthongization, and the sudden cessation of the blue pitch line before the terminal segment indicates devoicing to [f].

Subsequent attempts to align pronunciation with evolving political norms did not eliminate these constraints, as the cognitive demands of suppressing habitual phonetic patterns remained substantial. During the 2022 State of the Union address, he famously made a cognitive slip, stating: “Putin may circle Kyiv with tanks, but he will never gain the hearts and souls of the Iranian people” [Biden, Token 3]. Even in contexts explicitly signaling support for Ukraine, his pronunciation of the capital continued to reflect the reduced, anglicized [ki:v] (“Keeve”). Comparable patterns appear in his handling of other non-American phonological forms - for instance, the rendering of the name of UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as “Rasheed Sanook” [Biden, Token 4]. Taken together, such cases point to an underlying difficulty with unfamiliar sound structures, resulting in a pattern where semantic alignment is achieved, while phonetic realization remains domesticated.

This deep phonetic domestication is equally evident in his pronunciation of Kharkiv [Beiden, Token 5]. During his 2015 address, Biden pronounced the city

as “Harkeef” [ˈhɑːrkiːf], illustrating two distinct American articulatory substitutions that are clearly visible on a spectrogram. First, because the native Ukrainian voiceless velar fricative /x/ is absent from the General American phonetic inventory, Biden approximated it with the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ (producing “Hark-”). On the spectrogram, this initial segment lacks any velar acoustic poles and instead manifests as a continuous, diffuse band of aspiration noise across all frequency bands, indicating a glottal origin.

Second, the Ukrainian word-final “Б” naturally vocalizes into a rounded glide [ɤ], sounding closer to “Khar-kiw.” However, American English phonotactics strongly resist this vocalization in the coda position, prompting speakers to enforce a hard labiodental consonant. In Biden's case, he overcompensated by replacing the expected English /v/ with a completely devoiced labiodental fricative [f], producing the “eef” ending. On the spectrogram, the final syllable displays a complete absence of harmonic structure; the continuous periodic voicing abruptly terminates after the [iː] vowel, and a dense cloud of high-frequency friction noise, extending up to the 5000 Hz upper limit of the visual display, dominates the coda, visually confirming total terminal devoicing. This terminal devoicing is a common feature in American speech when dealing with unfamiliar foreign loanwords, demonstrating how deeply ingrained domestic speech patterns override source-language phonology.

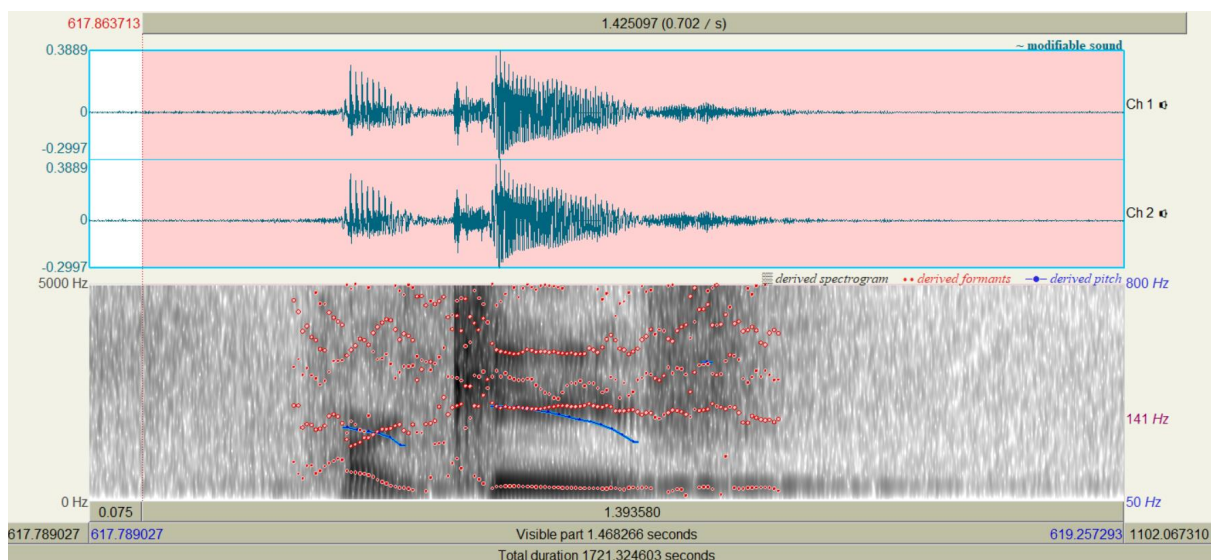


Figure 4. Spectrogram of Joseph Biden pronouncing “Kharkiv” as [hɑ:'rki:f]. Note the sudden cessation of the fundamental voicing bar (F0) and the presence of high-frequency aperiodic noise indicative of the voiceless fricative [f].

Antony Blinken (U.S. Secretary of State, 2021-2025)

In clear opposition to Biden’s profile, Antony Blinken exemplifies a form of linguistic competence associated with an elite diplomatic environment. Functional bilingualism (English–French), combined with a long period spent in an international environment, appears to have broadened his range of articulation.

In May 2024, Blinken undertook a high-profile visit to Ukraine. During his formal, televised address at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Blinken explicitly utilized the domesticated, monosyllabic American pronunciation “Keeve” [ki:v] [Blinken, Token 6]. However, his elite diplomatic conditioning provides a higher degree of articulatory control compared to Biden. Acoustically (see Figure 3), while his vowel formants remain perfectly flat - confirming the American monophthongal compromise /i:/ with F2 stable near 2400 Hz - the blue pitch line is maintained continuously through the terminal consonant segment at approximately 140 Hz. Unlike Biden, Blinken successfully suppresses the

American tendency for terminal devoicing, producing a clear, voiced labiodental fricative [v].

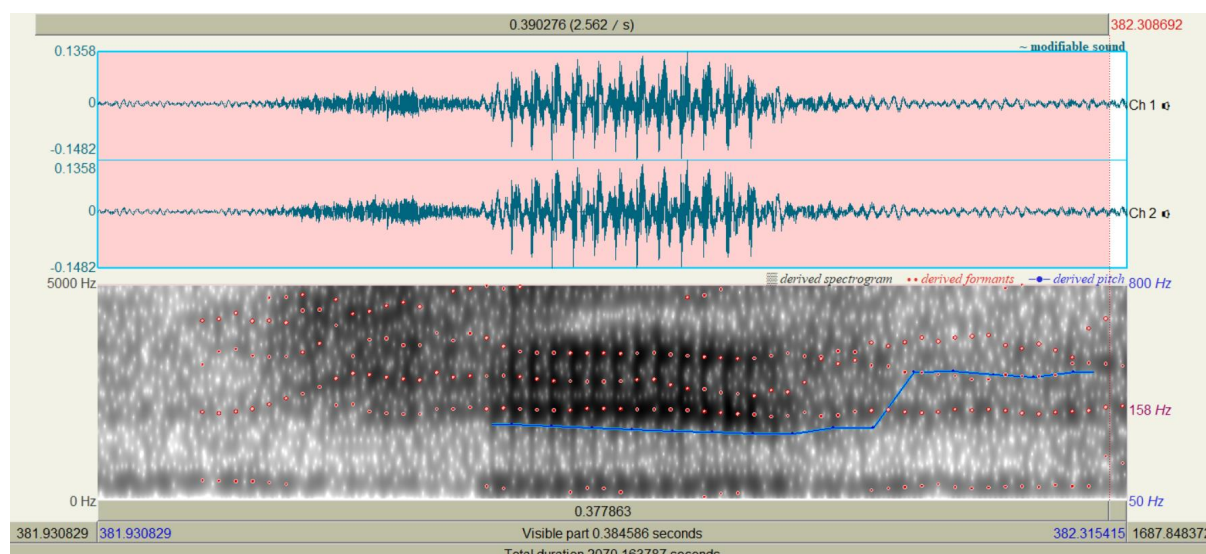


Figure 5. Spectrogram of Antony Blinken pronouncing “Kyiv” as [ki:v]. The formants are flat (monophthong), but the blue pitch line continues smoothly through the coda, indicating a successfully voiced [v].

However, in unscripted, informal settings, such as his “guitar diplomacy” performance at the Barman Dictat bar, Blinken reverted to his native phonotactic baseline when pronouncing Kharkiv as “Karkeef” [kɑ:r'ki:f] [Blinken, Token 7]. He replaced the velar fricative /x/ with a hard plosive /k/. As demonstrated on the spectrogram, the transition is preceded by a distinct, absolute silent interval (the closure phase) followed immediately by a sharp vertical transient burst of acoustic energy reaching up to 5000 Hz, which is the definitive signature of a voiceless velar stop [k].

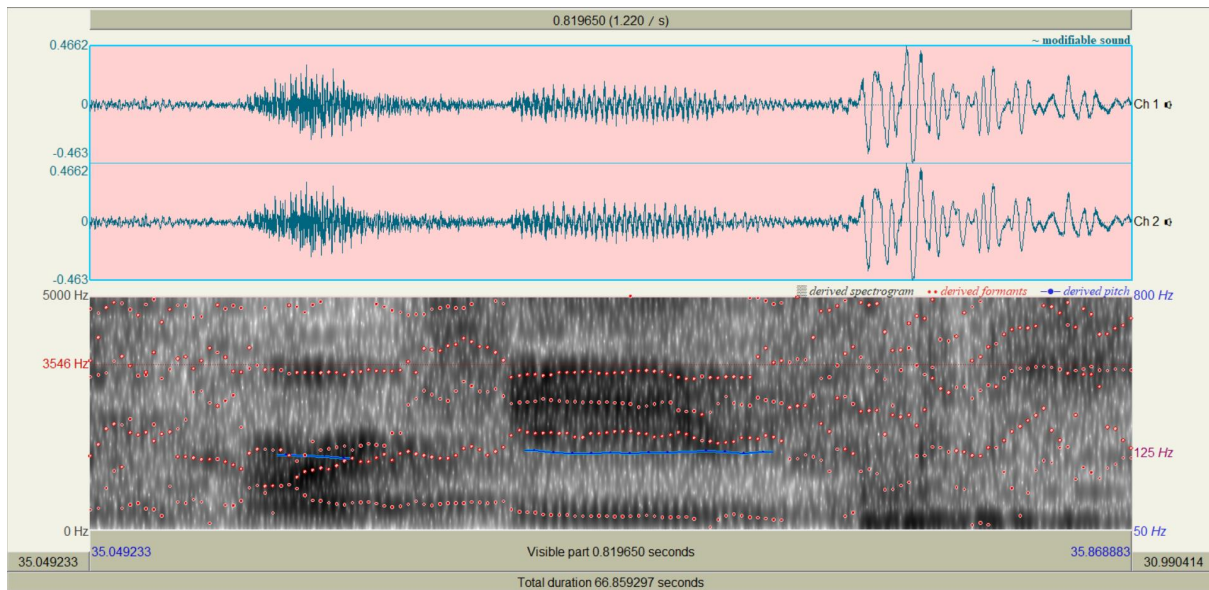


Figure 6. Spectrogram of Antony Blinken pronouncing “Kharkiv” as [kɑ:r'ki:f]. The initial segment displays a clear silent closure phase followed by a sharp vertical burst, characteristic of the plosive [k].

Timothy Snyder (Historian and public intellectual)

Timothy Snyder, a historian at Yale University, offers a particularly instructive case for examining phonetic foreignization within an academic register. His educational trajectory - spanning Brown University and the University of Oxford - combined with fluency in Polish and French and working competence in Russian and Ukrainian, provides the linguistic foundation for a notably wide range of articulation.

A chronological analysis of his public lectures reveals a distinct timeline of linguistic accommodation:

- Circa 2014: In his earlier lectures, Snyder clearly utilized the fully anglicized, Russian-derived “Kiev” [ˈki:ɛv] [Snyder, Token 8]. The spectrogram of this token (Figure 5) provides undeniable proof of diphthongization: midway through the vocalic segment, the second

formant visibly drops from roughly 2400 Hz down to 1800 Hz, and the fundamental pitch line alters its contour, matching the transition from the close-front [i:] to the open-mid [ɛ].

- Circa 2022: During the heightened attention surrounding the full-scale invasion, one can observe a transitional phase. His pronunciation improved as he constantly shifted away from the Russian /e/ vowel, but his articulatory execution landed closer to a devoiced, single-syllable compromise “Kief” [ki:f]. On the spectrogram (Figure 6), the vowel formants are flattened into a single syllable, but the terminal segment shows a massive gap where the blue pitch line drops out entirely, replaced by noise, confirming terminal devoicing [Snyder, Token 9].
- Circa 2023: Finally, in more recent broadcasts, Snyder successfully converges on the widely accepted modern Western media pronunciation saying “Keeve” /kiv/. Although this reduction to a single syllable eliminates the more complex Ukrainian vowel sequence /kijiw/, it nonetheless signals a clear shift at the level of reference: the Russian-derived form is no longer used, and the choice of variant brings his academic discourse into alignment with the Ukrainian standard [Snyder, Token 10].

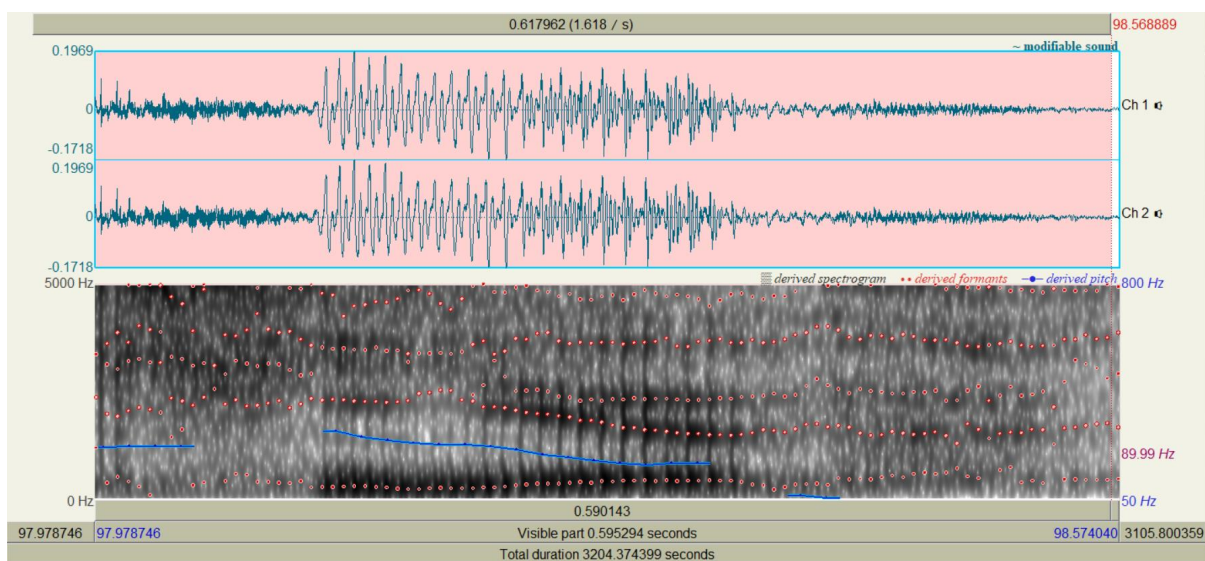


Figure 7. Spectrogram of Timothy Snyder (2014) pronouncing “Kiev” as [ˈkiːɐv]. The downward shift in the second formant clearly shows the disyllabic vowel transition.

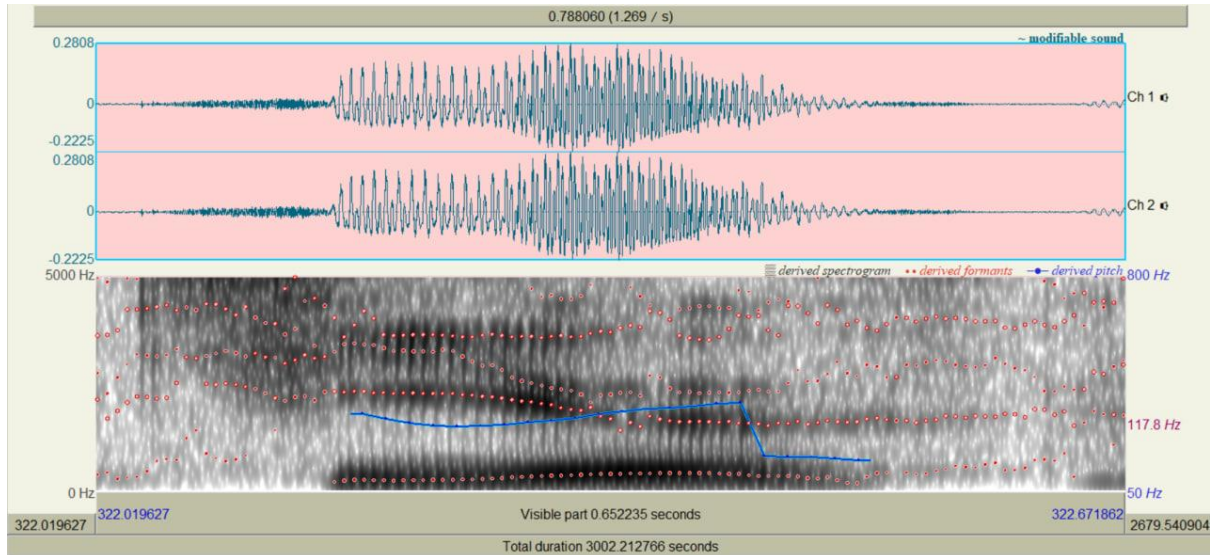


Figure 8. Spectrogram of Timothy Snyder (2022) pronouncing “Kyiv” closer to [kiːf]. The vowel is monophthongal, and the blue pitch line completely disappears at the end, showing devoicing.

With respect to Kharkiv, Snyder’s speech provides a clear illustration of how competence in Slavic languages can, when required, override the default constraints of English phonology. In contexts where he is explicitly engaging with Ukrainian historical material, he regularly produces the voiceless velar fricative and the vocalized coda [ˈxɑːrkiw] with a high degree of phonetic accuracy, rather than substituting it with more familiar English segments [Snyder, Token 11].

Acoustically (Figure 7), the initial [x] manifests as a continuous band of friction noise without a closure burst, and the terminal [w] displays a continuous pitch line and a downward shift in F2 below 1000 Hz, confirming authentic Ukrainian articulation.

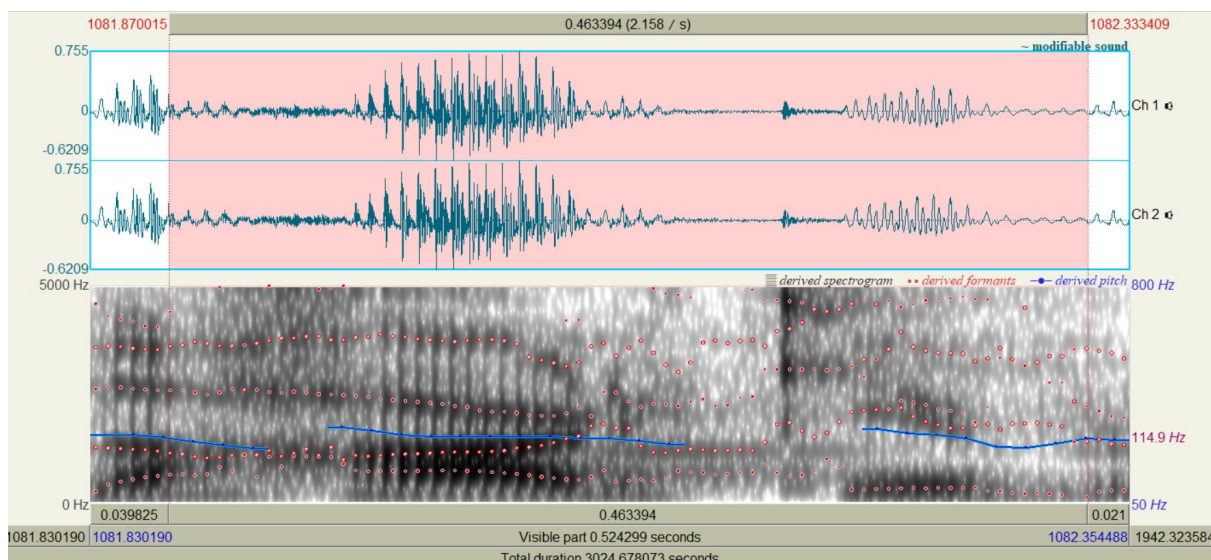


Figure 9. Spectrogram of Timothy Snyder accurately pronouncing “Kharkiv” as ['xɑ:rkɪw]. Note the continuous frication noise for [x] and the continuous voicing for the terminal [w].

At the same time, his broader pronunciation patterns do not remain fixed at a single point on the foreignization-domestication continuum. Instead, they shift depending on communicative priorities, balancing accuracy, audience design, and the broader political and discursive context in which his speech is situated.

3.3.2. British political and media figures

The British media landscape is heavily influenced by class-based accent structures, particularly Received Pronunciation (RP). Because RP places a high premium on precise, sharp consonant articulation and specific vowel elongation, British figures often approach Ukrainian phonetic accommodation differently than their American counterparts, sometimes leading to unique articulatory barriers.

Boris Johnson (UK Prime Minister, 2019–2022)

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson's sociolinguistic profile is defined by immense upper-class privilege. Educated at Eton College and Oxford University, Johnson cultivated a highly specific, traditional Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, often described colloquially as “posh”. Phonetically, RP places a high premium on sharp, distinct consonant sounds and specific short, sharp vowel pronunciations.

The evolution of Johnson's phonetic accommodation is clearly visible in his political timeline. Even at the beginning of the full-scale invasion in early 2022 [Johnson, Token 12], Johnson utilized the domesticated, Russian-derived exonym “Kiev” ['ki:ɛv]. However, as the political stakes rose, he consciously trained his pronunciation to align with the Ukrainian cause. By the time of his later addresses to the Verkhovna Rada [Snyder, Token 13], he transitioned to a highly performative, over-articulated variant of the Ukrainian endonym, pronouncing it as “Ky-yiv” ['ki:ɪv].

This deliberate “foreignization” attempt is spectacularly visible on an acoustic level. As demonstrated in the spectrogram (Figure 8), unlike the flat American monophthongs, Johnson's pronunciation features a massive, sudden upward jump in the fundamental frequency: the blue F0 pitch line surges dramatically from approximately 115 Hz to over 200 Hz halfway through the word. This sharp pitch reset, accompanied by a shift in formant structure, proves that he is intentionally breaking the word into two distinct syllables with an almost glottal separation, utilizing the oratorical features of his RP accent to maximize the political impact of the toponym.

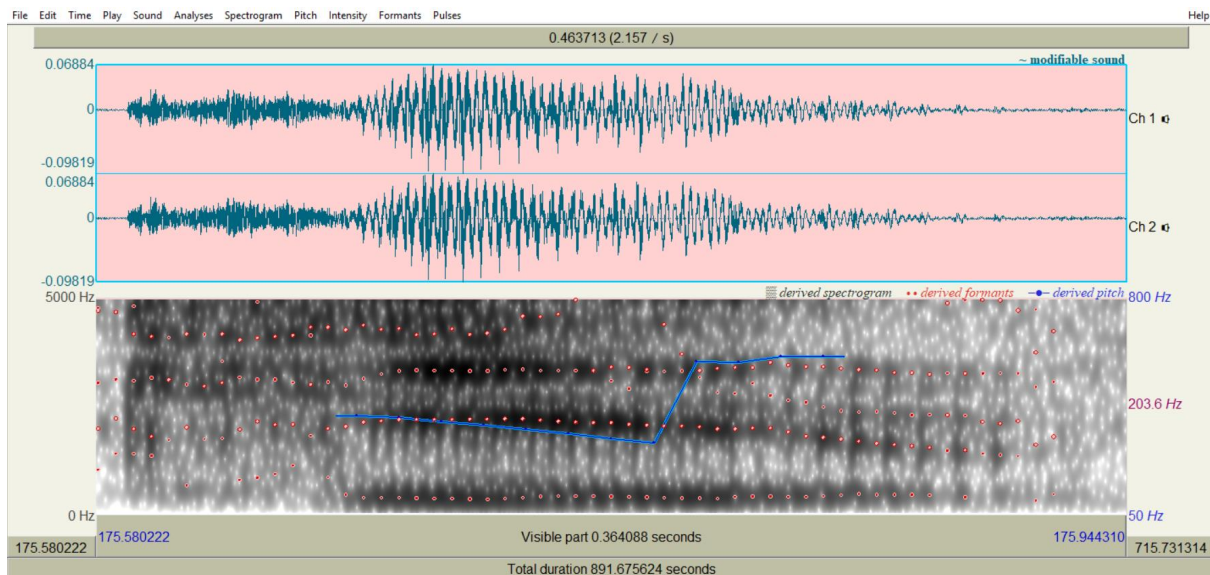


Figure 10. Spectrogram of Boris Johnson pronouncing “Kyiv” as [ˈkiːɪv]. The dramatic upward jump in the blue pitch line visually confirms his deliberate, two-syllable over-articulation.

While Johnson successfully accommodated the pronunciation of the capital, his phonetic execution of newly prominent war-torn cities - specifically Bucha, Irpin, and Hostomel - remained deeply flawed. In his speeches, he noticeably mispronounces Bucha as “Bukha” [ˈbuːxə], Irpin as “Erpin” [ˈɜːpɪn], and Hostomel as “Hostomel” with a hard English /h/ and incorrect stress [ˈhɒstəməl] [Johnson, token 13].

This disparity in phonetic accuracy stems from the nature of media exposure. The pronunciation of “Kyiv” was the subject of a massive, years-long international campaign (#KyivNotKiev), giving politicians immense time and pressure to consciously overwrite their phonetic habits. Conversely, Bucha, Irpin, and Hostomel entered the global lexicon almost overnight in 2022. Without a pre-established media consensus, Johnson was forced to rely on his native British RP phonotactics to decipher the English transliterations on his teleprompter.

For a speaker of RP, these words present several fundamental phonetic traps:

1. **Bucha (Бу́ча):** Confronted with the foreign “ch” digraph, Johnson appears to over-foreignize the word. Rather than using the correct voiceless postalveolar affricate /tʃ/ (as in the English word “church”), he mistakenly assumes the word requires a guttural voiceless velar fricative /x/ (similar to the Scottish “loch”), resulting in the jarring “Bukha”. This is a classic hypercorrection error common among British elites when encountering Eastern European transliterations.
2. **Irpin (Ірпінь):** Received Pronunciation is fundamentally non-rhotic, meaning the “r” before a consonant is never rolled or pronounced, but rather lengthens the preceding vowel. Thus, the sharp Ukrainian /ir/ is flattened into the long, drawn-out English /ɜː/ (as in “bird”), producing “Erpin”. Additionally, English speakers naturally apply trochaic stress (stressing the first syllable) to unfamiliar two-syllable nouns, destroying the native end-stress of Ir-PINN. Furthermore, the Ukrainian soft, palatalized /nʲ/ at the end is completely absent in English, forcing a substitution with the hard alveolar /n/.
3. **Hostomel (Гостомель):** The Ukrainian letter 'Г' represents a voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. Because standard English lacks this phoneme, Johnson substitutes it with the voiceless English /h/. Furthermore, his RP accent naturally reduces unstressed vowels into a neutral schwa /ə/, turning the melodic Ukrainian Гостомель into the clipped, anglicized ['hɒstəməl].

Lyse Doucet (BBC Chief international correspondent)

Within the British media landscape, Lyse Doucet provides a remarkable counterpoint to the rigid RP standard. Born in Bathurst, New Brunswick, Canada, Doucet grew up in an Anglophone family but possesses Acadian and Irish roots.

Despite her Canadian origins, she has served for decades as a premier foreign correspondent for the BBC, spending years immersed in West Africa, Islamabad, Kabul, Amman, and Jerusalem. Her accent is frequently described as transnational or unplaceable - a unique, fluid hybrid of Canadian phonetics, BBC standards, and decades of global linguistic immersion.

Because Doucet has spent her entire professional life utilizing Communication Accommodation Theory to build rapport with foreign speakers in conflict zones, her phonetic flexibility is exceptionally vast. However, her pronunciation of Ukrainian toponyms also underwent a chronological evolution, reflecting the shift in BBC institutional policy.

In earlier reports, in the first days of the full-scale invasion, Doucet strictly adhered to the traditional, domesticated British broadcast standard. For example, in a news broadcast [Doucet, Token 14] , she distinctly pronounces the capital using the Russian-derived exonym “Kiev” [ˈkiːv]. At this stage, her institutional mandate (the accepted BBC style guide) superseded her individual phonetic flexibility, prioritizing audience familiarity over phonetic foreignization.

However, over time she adopted the Ukrainian endonyms, her pronunciation shifted dramatically. In a more recent report [Doucet, Token 15], Doucet flawlessly executes the updated, politically compliant “Kyiv” (sounding closer to “Keev” [ki:v]).

Where Doucet truly distinguishes herself from her British colleagues is in her pronunciation of other challenging toponyms, most notably Kharkiv. In the same 2022 broadcast [Doucet, Token 16] she successfully articulates the Ukrainian voiceless velar fricative /x/ (producing a clear and authentic “Kharkiv” rather than the anglicized “Karkiv” used universally by figures like Biden and Johnson). This level of phonetic foreignization is extremely rare among native English broadcasters. Unlike British politicians bound by the rigid consonant

rules of RP, Doucet's extensive exposure to Arabic and Pashto in the Middle East - languages rich in guttural and velar sounds - makes the Ukrainian /x/ highly accessible to her articulatory system. She effortlessly bypasses the harsh, plosive /k/ substitution, accurately producing the required friction. Her transnational background proves that successful phonetic accommodation relies less on political will alone and more on a speaker's prior exposure to diverse phonological systems and their willingness to step outside native linguistic prestige norms.

Table 3.4 provides a comparative mapping of American and British articulatory patterns, detailing how specific speech behaviors align with the native-language phonological constraints of General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP).

Table 3.4

Dialectal group	Target phonological constraint	Specifically observed articulatory behaviour	Alignment with predicted constraints	Key sociolinguistic variables
US (general American / Mid-Atlantic)	1. Velar fricative gap (absence of /x/ in phonetic inventory)	Systematic substitution with glottal fricative /h/ ([ˈhɑːrkiːf] by Biden) or velar plosive /k/ ([kɑːrˈkiːf] by Blinken).	High alignment. Speakers substitute the non-native velar fricative with the closest native segment based on situational register.	Bilingualism / register: override occurs only under active Slavic language competence (Snyder's [ˈxɑːrkiw]).

Table 3.4 (continued)

	2. Coda constraints & terminal devoicing (absence of word-final [v] in complex foreign loans)	Regular terminal devoicing of coda /v/ to voiceless labiodental fricative [f] ([^h ha:rkɪ:f] by Biden, [ka:r'ki:f] by Blinken, [ki:f] by Snyder).	High alignment. directly conforms to GA motor habits of voiceless coda reinforcement during high cognitive load.	Cognitive load: Spontaneous or unscripted contexts trigger immediate regression to the native L1 baseline.
	3. Syllable onset rules (violation of onset phonotactics by /lv/ cluster)	Insertion of a micro-epenthetic schwa [ə] to break the dense consonant sequence, resulting in the disyllabic hybrid /lə'viv/.	High alignment. Proves the structural resistance of GA syllable structures to word-initial liquid-fricative clusters.	Spelling condition: The visual absence of the soft sign ('b') in transliteration accelerates the phonetic domestication.
UK (Received Pronunciation & hybrids)	1. Non-rhoticity & vowel elongation (lack of post-vocalic /r/ in RP)	Complete elision of pre-consonantal /r/ and subsequent flattening of the front-close vowel sequence into a long central vowel [ɜ:] ([^h ɜ:pɪn] by Johnson).	High Alignment. Phonetic realization is strictly governed by the deeply ingrained, class-based non-rhotic speech baseline.	Class & socialization: Upper-class educational background (Eton/Oxford) locks speakers into rigid RP motor patterns.

Table 3.4 (continued)

	2. Graphemic hypercorrection (deceptive transliteration of Cyrillic 'ч')	Over-foreignization of the visual “ch” digraph, mistakenly assuming a guttural velar fricative is required, resulting in ['bu:xə] (Johnson).	High Alignment. Illustrates the orthographic perceptual filter, where visual text overrides acoustic inputs.	Institutional memory: The historical prestige of Germanic/classical phonetic structures triggers over-accommodation.
	3. Palatalization gap (absence of soft consonants /li/, /ni/)	Universal replacement of soft, palatalized East Slavic consonants with hard, apical alveolar counterparts ([n] in Irpin, [l] in Chornobyl).	High alignment. Confirms the absolute perceptual filter of English speakers against secondary palatal articulation.	Institutional standards: adherence to BBC Pronunciation Unit guidelines enforces standardized English compromises.

DIALECTAL COMPARISON AND ALIGNMENT WITH PHONOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

The empirical results summarized in Table 4 confirm that the phonetic adaptation of Ukrainian toponyms is not a random process of speech errors, but a highly systematic phenomenon governed by the phonotactic and dialectal boundaries of the speakers' native L1.

While political convergence [Giles, 1973] successfully reshapes the symbolic orthographic and lexical choice of toponyms (e.g., the transition from “Kiev” to “Kyiv”), the physical, articulatory execution of these sounds remains bound to native dialectal motor routines.

Acoustic-spectrographic and auditory markers demonstrate that General American speakers exhibit a higher frequency of terminal devoicing and monophthongal simplification, whereas British RP speakers are heavily constrained by non-rhoticity and a tendency toward orthographically-driven hypercorrection. Ultimately, the transition from Russian exonyms to Ukrainian endonyms in Western media represents a compromise where political convergence is achieved at the level of naming, lexical semantics, while phonetic realization remains largely domesticated within the phonological limits of the target dialects.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

The comprehensive analysis of Ukrainian toponym adaptation in English-language media between 2014 and 2026 confirms that pronunciation accommodation is a multifaceted phenomenon governed simultaneously by political imperatives, sociolinguistic framing, and rigid phonological constraints. The transition from domesticated Russian exonyms to authentic Ukrainian endonyms serves as a powerful manifestation of Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). By actively modifying their phonetic habits, Western media professionals utilize their vocal tracts to express geopolitical solidarity (convergence), embodying the positive semantic prosody associated with the Ukrainian state and participating in a global process of "toponymic cleansing."

However, empirical data derived from both quantitative text corpora and qualitative acoustic analysis reveals a distinct asynchronous language shift. As demonstrated by the NOW and enTenTen21 corpus data for toponyms like "Odesa" and "Kyiv," orthographic adaptation occurs rapidly. Conversely, phonetic accommodation lags significantly behind. While visual spelling can be

changed overnight, the articulatory execution of these names remains deeply bound to the speakers' native L1 motor routines and cognitive perceptual filters, perfectly illustrating Patricia Kuhl's Native Language Magnet (NLM) theory and Catherine Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM).

Instrumental acoustic analysis (utilizing Praat spectrograms and formant tracking) of the spoken media corpus definitively proves that high-interference Ukrainian phonemes force native English speakers into systematic phonetic domestication. When confronted with non-native segments, speakers subconsciously default to their native phonotactics, forming merged perceptual categories as predicted by James Flege's Speech Learning Model (SLM). The acoustic data confirms the pervasive occurrence of terminal devoicing (e.g., transforming the vocalized coda in Kharkiv into a voiceless [f]), the substitution of the velar fricative /x/ with the plosive /k/, and the use of vowel epenthesis to break "illegal" onset clusters like /lv/ in Lviv.

Furthermore, the study establishes that the specific strategies of phonetic adaptation - whether leaning toward domestication or foreignization [Venuti, 1995] - are heavily dictated by Allan Bell's audience design framework and the speaker's sociolinguistic profile. General American (GA) speakers, such as Joseph Biden, tend to prioritize rhythmic flow and semantic clarity for their domestic audience, resulting in deep domestication via monophthongization ("Keeve"). In contrast, British Received Pronunciation (RP) speakers, like Boris Johnson, attempt performative phonetic foreignization ("Ky-yiv") to maximize political impact, utilizing the sharp articulatory precision of RP, though often falling into orthographically-driven hypercorrection.

Ultimately, authentic phonetic realization is rarely achieved by politicians bound to standard prestige dialects. As evidenced by figures with extensive multilingual or transnational backgrounds (such as Timothy Snyder and Lyse

Doucet), successful phonetic accommodation requires prior exposure to diverse phonological systems. For the majority of Western broadcasters, the modern pronunciation of Ukrainian toponyms remains a formalized, hybridized compromise: a linguistic space where explicit political convergence is achieved semantically, while the physical acoustics remain safely trapped within the cognitive and phonological boundaries of the English language.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis conducted a comprehensive investigation into the phonetic adaptation and sociolinguistic accommodation of Ukrainian toponyms within English-language media discourse from 2014 to 2026. By integrating quantitative corpus linguistics, instrumental acoustic phonetics, and socio-onomastics, the research demonstrated that the pronunciation of foreign proper names in global broadcasting is never a neutral articulatory act. Instead, it is a complex, dynamic negotiation between the ideological desire for political solidarity and the rigid cognitive, perceptual, and phonotactic constraints of the native English language.

The macro-sociolinguistic analysis of textual corpora (utilizing the enTenTen21 and NOW corpora, comprising billions of tokens) empirically documented a monumental and rapid “toponymic cleansing” of Western media. Following the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion, Ukrainian geographical names transformed into “moral toponyms” [Duncan, 2022]. The quantitative data confirmed a massive statistical inversion, as media organizations instantly abandoned entrenched Russian exonyms (e.g., Odessa, Kiev) in favor of authentic Ukrainian endonyms (Odesa, Kyiv). However, the study revealed a distinct phenomenon of asynchronous language shift: while orthographic updates were implemented in writing almost overnight as a declaration of geopolitical solidarity, the physical spoken accommodation lagged significantly behind.

To explain this lag, the research successfully integrated psycholinguistic models with sociolinguistic theory. While media professionals utilized Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to politically converge with Ukraine, their phonetic execution was severely obstructed by the “perceptual magnets” of their native language (NLM) and equivalence classification mechanisms (SLM). English speakers instinctively process unfamiliar Cyrillic-

to-Latin transliterations through their native grapheme-to-phoneme rules, frequently substituting sounds based on visual cues rather than acoustic reality.

At the micro-level, instrumental acoustic analysis (utilizing Praat software) definitively mapped the boundaries of this phonetic accommodation. The spectrographic data proved that phonetic adaptation is strictly dictated by phonological distance. For low-interference toponyms (Odesa, Dnipro), accommodation is seamless. However, for high-interference toponyms, speakers systematically domesticate the source phonology. Acoustic measurements confirmed the pervasive occurrence of terminal devoicing (evidenced by the sudden cessation of the fundamental voicing bar F0 and the introduction of high-frequency noise, transforming the coda in Kharkiv into [f]), vowel monophthongization (flat F1 and F2 formants in the American reduction “Keeve”), and the fortition of fricatives (the presence of silent closure bursts proving the substitution of /x/ with the plosive /k/).

Furthermore, the comparative analysis revealed a striking transatlantic divide in accommodation strategies, governed by the speakers' native dialects. Quantitative spoken data (YouGlish) and qualitative acoustic analysis established that speakers operating within General American constraints (e.g., Joseph R. Biden, Antony Blinken) prioritize rhythmic flow and semantic clarity, resulting in rapid, deep phonetic domestication. Conversely, British speakers governed by Received Pronunciation (e.g., Boris Johnson) frequently attempt performative phonetic foreignization (Venuti, 1995) to maximize political impact, yet fall victim to RP-specific constraints such as non-rhoticity (“Erpin”) and orthographically-driven hypercorrection (“Bukha”). True acoustic authenticity - such as the correct articulation of the velar fricative /x/ - was only observed in figures with transnational backgrounds and extensive prior exposure to diverse phonological systems (e.g., Lyse Doucet, Timothy Snyder).

Ultimately, this study proves that the modern pronunciation of Ukrainian toponyms in Western media is a formalized, hybridized compromise. Even if complete phonetic authenticity is rarely achieved due to the biological and cognitive limits of adult speech perception, the conscious effort to converge toward Ukrainian endonyms represents a profound shift in the international information space. English-language media figures now actively utilize their vocal tracts not merely to report on geography, but to legitimize Ukrainian statehood, reject colonial narratives, and express unwavering international solidarity.

SUMMARY

Ця робота присвячена комплексному дослідженню фонетичної адаптації та соціолінгвістичної акомодатії українських топонімів в англомовних засобах масової інформації. Тема є надзвичайно актуальною з кількох причин. По-перше, глибокі геополітичні трансформації, зумовлені російським вторгненням, перетворили українські географічні назви на «моральні топоніми», що маркують ідеологічні кордони у глобальному інформаційному просторі. По-друге, перехід від глибоко вкорінених російських екзонімів (наприклад, Kiev, Kharkov) до автентичних українських ендонімів (Kyiv, Kharkiv) зробив вимову свідомим інструментом політичної ідентичності та дерусифікації. По-третє, хоча орфографічний вимір цього переходу активно обговорюється, фізичні (артикуляційні та акустичні) механізми того, як англомовні мовці долають фонологічні бар'єри, залишаються малодослідженими.

Об'єктом дослідження є фонетична реалізація українських топонімів у дискурсі англомовних ЗМІ, а предметом — лінгвістичні механізми міжмовної фонетичної інтерференції, адаптації та соціолінгвістичні стратегії акомодатії. Мета роботи полягає у всебічному дослідженні системної кореляції між англо-українськими фонологічними розбіжностями та геополітичними комунікативними стратегіями. Для цього було сформульовано ряд завдань: окреслити теоретичні засади акомодатії; порівняти фонологічні системи двох мов; проаналізувати акустичні закономірності сегментної заміни; відстежити соціолінгвістичну еволюцію топонімів; порівняти стратегії американських та британських мовців.

Теоретичну основу роботи складають Теорія комунікативної акомодатії Г. Гайлза (CAT), психолінгвістичні моделі сприйняття мовлення (NLM П. Кул, РАМ К. Бест, SLM Дж. Фледж), концепції доместикації та форенізації Л. Венуті, а також теорія «моральних топонімів» Д. Дункана. У

роботі використано змішану методологію: кількісний корпусний аналіз, якісну слухово-перцептивну оцінку та інструментальний акустичний аналіз (за допомогою програми Praat). Емпіричну базу становлять понад 66 мільярдів слів текстових корпусів (enTenTen21, NOW Corpus) та спеціально зібраний аудіовізуальний корпус із 40 цільових медіа-токенів спонтанного мовлення провідних політиків і журналістів (Дж. Байден, Е. Блінкен, Т. Снайдер, Б. Джонсон, Л. Дусет) за 2014–2026 роки.

У першому розділі розглянуто теоретичні засади дослідження. З'ясовано, що адаптація топонімів обмежується «перцептивними магнітами» рідної мови. Зіставний аналіз показав, що англійська фонетика не містить українських фонем, таких як велярний фрикативний /x/, палаталізований /j/ або вокалізована coda /ɥ/. Крім того, пряма транслітерація з кирилиці на латиницю створює додаткові графічні пастки, що змушують мовців застосовувати фонетичну доместикацію (спрощення) замість бажаної форенізації (автентичного звучання).

Другий і третій розділи присвячені емпіричному та акустичному аналізу. Корпусні дані виявили феномен «асинхронного мовного зсуву»: у 2022 році орфографічна адаптація у ЗМІ відбулася майже миттєво (наприклад, написання Kyiv зросло у 28,6 раза порівняно з 2021 роком), проте фізична вимова значно відставала. Інструментальний аналіз спектрограм довів, що топоніми з низьким рівнем інтерференції (Odesa, Dnipro) адаптуються швидко. Натомість топоніми з високим рівнем інтерференції зазнають глибокої доместикації через фонотактичні обмеження: фіксується тотальне термінальне оглушення (заміна кінцевого /v/ на [f] у слові Kharkiv), заміна /x/ на проривний /k/ та використання вокалічної епентези для розриву кластера /lv/ у слові Lviv. Вимова столиці стабілізувалася на прагматичному моносилабічному компромісі [ki:v].

Порівняльний аналіз виявив чіткий трансатлантичний вододіл в артикуляційних стратегіях. Американські мовці (General American), зокрема політики, надають перевагу семантичній впізнаваності та ритміці, що призводить до глибокої доместикації (редукція голосних, термінальне оглушення). Британські мовці (Received Pronunciation) частіше вдаються до перформативної форенізації (намагання артикулювати Ку-уїв по складах), але часто припускаються гіперкорекції, наприклад, помилково озвучуючи Busha як ['bu:χə] через графічний вплив «ch». Акустична автентичність фіксується переважно у мовців із широким транснаціональним або лінгвістичним досвідом.

Наукова новизна роботи полягає в тому, що в ній уперше систематично інтегровано психолінгвістичні моделі сприйняття з теорією комунікативної акомодатії для аналізу фонетичного зсуву в реальному часі під впливом війни. Розроблено матрицю категоризації топонімів за рівнем фонологічної віддаленості та надано об'єктивні акустичні докази (спектрограми) медіа-мовлення. Практична цінність результатів полягає у можливості їх використання в курсах фонетики, соціолінгвістики, а також як практичного довідника для журналістів. Подальші дослідження можуть бути спрямовані на вивчення адаптації цих топонімів в інших глобальних мовах або на аналіз викликів, які такі фонетичні зсуви створюють для систем автоматичного розпізнавання мовлення (ASR).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Audiovisual media corpus for toponym analysis (Odesa / Odessa, 20 tokens)

Part 1: The pre-war & transitional period (Russian exonym “Odessa”)

US media tokens:

1. The Real News Network. 2014. Who Makes US Foreign Policy? - - Lawrence Wilkerson on Reality Asserts Itself. YouTube. https://youtu.be/NZW8T4NA3Is?si=qunJ7iN5_TpgHoUp&t=1066
2. Library of Congress. 2016. Improvising a Musical Metropolis: Detroit, 1940s-1960s. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/vuxJWqEPt70?si=Wvcq0KTPQrdUjbHR&t=2039>
3. CUNY TV. 2017. Theater Talk: "Indecent" and "Come From Away". YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Sn9BhNmLrTA?si=P-zVP94cqGr-dQNg&t=210>
4. Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. How Should the World React to the Ukraine War? YouTube. https://youtu.be/VzXiz7m5Y3I?si=69tTFn_AV3JLPFW6&t=1551
5. World History. 2023. Murder of famous Soviet actress who defied Stalin & paid for it with her life - Zinaida Reich. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/PDKlLg7Zhy8?si=OeCfKOBfJ0UmarMm&t=51>

UK media tokens:

6. TED. 2011. Misha Glenny: Hire the hackers! YouTube. <https://youtu.be/6gSwRHScq6M?si=zPdQ83MzeBR9VBLu&t=645>
7. Biographics. 2018. Georgy Zhukov: General Of The Red Army And Hero Of The Soviet Union. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/g476q-3DL-U?si=mJXZsfsYLnkboLBk&t=647>

8. Biographics. 2019. Catherine the Great: Russia's Greatest Empress. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/rs-sDMqBC6c?si=9ererFzfQ4RLVxEW&t=1007>
9. TIKhistory. 2020. Halder blames Hitler and Paulus! BATTLESTORM STALINGRAD E18. YouTube. https://youtu.be/2L20L3RHL88?si=Umi_Nskx7Ck8ng5f&t=1033
10. BBC News. (2022). Ukraine War: Water and electricity supplies restored in Kyiv. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/zM9Hux7IWLW?si=s6L4UUC6oE9CnqZ-&t=441>

Part 2: The post-invasion accommodation period (Ukrainian endonym “Odesa”) US media tokens:

11. Vox. 2022. How Ukrainians are saving art during the war. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ltwCjFp9B8s?si=anJb7ZY0xVWhy0fq&t=445>
12. GZERO Media. 2022. Putin Keeps His War Cards Close | Quick Take | GZERO Media. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/CATxfcrqigU?si=NHvAhzR9CAIk-By&t=363>
13. YaleCourses. 2022. Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 13. Republics and Revolutions. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Q9ciocrFK8w?si=iw04p1L_IcdkksjN&t=722
14. Vox. 2022. Ukrainians' escape by rail, explained. YouTube. https://youtu.be/ouMl_dbUjd8?si=KKKKFrBp1wEqQALs&t=277
15. The Infographics Show. 2022. What Happens When A Country Declares War. YouTube. https://youtu.be/DIjBvtI8628?si=jjq-SGx_2NpYWFFY&t=1121

UK media tokens:

16. BBC World Service. 2022. War in Europe: Russia invades Ukraine - Global News Podcast. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/TwhArE9Kw08?si=E7XNJNGc5P2eHqrA&t=48>
17. The Fortress. 2023. The BRUTAL Execution Of The Woman That Shot Lenin. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/iRratzq0XsE?si=3zSRJMJdWpyb9zIP&t=74>
18. The Telegraph. 2025. Black Sea showdown: Inside Ukraine's naval patrols. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/w2YjuuQz414?si=GcjQJBJ8DCRtJJUV&t=2>
19. The Telegraph. 2025. The Battle for Odesa: Ukraine's Culture War. YouTube. https://youtu.be/28HqbQLYGMM?si=TMfSk_sueZw53ZWt
20. BBC News. 2025. Russian strikes in Ukraine hit Kyiv and kill two in Odesa. YouTube. https://youtu.be/9cm44t0h2cM?si=cab_4CvfV1YoFJbr

APPENDIX B: Qualitative media tokens for category 2 & 3 toponyms (n=5)

1. Dnipro (Дніпро):
 - BBC News, 2023. Ukraine war: Hospital destroyed by Russian missile attack. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/F-4BI9YmYcI?si=glw-h0A67tjCW9SQ&t=2>
2. Mykolaiv (Миколаїв):
 - The New York Times, 2022. Ukrainian Families Flee to Moldova. Russia-Ukraine War. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/DGxE64cGbZQ?si=7Ontb3q8IxpGyKLR&t=75>
3. Chernihiv (Чернігів):
 - Sky News, 2026. Inside Chernihiv: How Hero City defied Putin and stalled 30,000 invaders. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Ltgs659zEw8?si=uCDoMq6_ZUTd0Ffq&t=7

4. Zaporizhzhia (Запоріжжя):

- YaleCourses, 2022. Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 19. Oligarchies in Russia and Ukraine. YouTube.
<https://youtu.be/2N2BDGKl0L8?si=jxrYC7IWSfRABm2m&t=406>

APPENDIX C: Qualitative media token bibliography

American political and media figures:

Joe Biden

- Token 1. Remarks on Ukraine, 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/zKIkJMcISRnk?si=dzV3lLh2EDdxgBld&t=640> / 10:44
- Token 2. VP Visit to Kyiv, 2015. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/9DyaCDTcsFw?t=696> / 11:36
- Token 3. Rada address, 2015. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/9DyaCDTcsFw?t> / 10:17
- Token 4. State of the Union, 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/zB0W91E3XOU> / 00:22
- Token 5. Press Briefing, 2022. Retrieved from:
https://youtu.be/0tibpyikcMc?si=VodRt16683_gicaQ&t=1033 / 17:12

Antony Blinken

- Token 6. KPI Address, 2024. Retrieved from:
<https://www.youtube.com/live/PZagqja1NXU?t=380> / 6:20
- Token 7. Barman Dictat Address, 2024. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/ZsK3M9gXmos> / 0:21

Timothy Snyder

- Token 8. Yale Public Lecture (May 2014). Retrieved from:
[<https://youtu.be/OJLV-hvkNVk?t=97> / 1:37]
- Token 9. Media Interview (2022). Retrieved from:
[<https://youtu.be/Pi0wyvuNn4A?t=320> / 5:20]
- Token 10. Academic Briefing (2023). Retrieved from:
[https://youtu.be/_LkXsW14qJQ?t=127 / 2:07]
- Token 11. Yale Course Lecture (2022). Retrieved from:
[<https://youtu.be/1dy7Mrqy1AY?t=1080> / 18:00]

Boris Johnson

- Token 12. Statement on Ukraine, 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/FuTjqGUQ7WQ?t=66> / 1:06
- Token 13. Rada Address, 2024. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/A4fm7F9bVZM?t=175> / 2:55

Lyse Doucet

- Token 14. BBC News Broadcast, 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/CprTrcQIkJM?t=163> / 2:25
- Token 15. <https://youtu.be/GuQ36Hvq6Is?si=z5jmmV7I8hC9j0xt&t=23>
0:23
- Token 16. BBC News Broadcast, 2022. Retrieved from:
<https://youtu.be/CprTrcQIkJM?si=Ns7A-bXV-qK7Bru2&t=164> / 2:44