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PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF REPETITIONS IN BRITISH TABLOIDS

In the contemporary media landscape, tabloids play a significant role in shaping public opinion and the emotional perception of events. A distinctive feature of tabloid discourse is the use of expressive linguistic devices, among which repetition occupies a central place. This article examines the pragmatic functions of repetition in the texts of British tabloids as a specific genre of mass communication aimed at rapid and emotionally charged information consumption. Repetition, as one of the key rhetorical devices, fulfills not only a stylistic but also a communicative-pragmatic function in this context: it draws the reader's attention, helps shape a particular attitude toward the events and characters described, and enhances the emotional impact of the text. The study attempts to systematize types of repetition (lexical, syntactic, and prosodic) and identify their functional features within tabloid journalism. The research material includes articles published over the past five years in British tabloids such as The Sun, Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror, and The Daily Express. The methodology incorporates qualitative content analysis, elements of pragmatic analysis, as well as principles from Relevance Theory and the Politeness Model. The analysis reveals that repetition in tabloid texts serves functions such as enhancing dramatic effect, emotional reinforcement, rhythmic structuring, and contributing to ideological framing and perception manipulation. The article concludes that repetition in tabloids is a deliberate rhetorical tool rather than an incidental linguistic phenomenon, and it plays a crucial role in the structure of media discourse. The findings may be useful in the fields of media linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

Key words: repetition, pragmatics, tabloids, media discourse, ideology, persuasion, emotional appeal.

Statement of the problem. Language in the mass media is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion, reinforcing ideologies, and guiding attention. It serves not only as a medium of information but also as a mechanism of influence [6, p. 1]. The contemporary media environment is increasingly shaped by the use of strategic linguistic choices that affect how readers perceive and engage with information [18 p. 20–25]. In the context of mass media, especially tabloid journalism, language becomes a strategic tool employed to attract, persuade, and retain the attention of broad audiences.

In the modern media ecosystem, tabloid journalism occupies a distinctive niche, characterized by a blend of sensational tone and content, simplified structure and narratives, and emotionally charged language [13, p. 45–47]. British tabloids, as a distinct genre of popular media and influential segment of mass media, employ a range of linguistic tools to attract attention, elicit emotional responses, and simplify information. Among these tools, *repetition* is frequently used rhetorical technique that stands out as a versatile pragmatic device that shapes how messages are received and interpreted [17, p. 14–18]. As one of the key linguistic strategies repetition is intentionally used to attract attention, reinforce

ideologies (key messages), enhance message retention, manipulate readers' emotions (create lasting impressions in their minds), and construct a specific narrative tone [12, p. 82–86]. Repetition is often dismissed as redundancy; however, when analyzed through a pragmatic lens, it reveals a range of communicative purposes: *emphasis, emotional resonance, ideological reinforcement, and reader engagement* [11, p. 55–60]. Unlike broadsheet journalism, which relies on formal, balanced reporting, tabloids use a more dramatic and simplified linguistic style – a style in which repetition plays a central role [5, p. 102–104].

Thus, repetition operates not only as a tool of emphasis but also as a mechanism for persuasion and emotional manipulation. In this context, understanding its pragmatic functions becomes essential to decoding the communicative intent embedded in tabloid discourse [16, p. 120–125]. British tabloids such as The Sun, The Daily Mail, and The Daily Mirror serve as primary sources of entertainment and information for a wide readership. They are characterized by a sensationalism, brevity, colloquial language, bold headlines, and the recurrent use of linguistic markers like repetition in headlines, lead paragraphs, and entire

articles [3, p. 87–91]. Despite being criticized for their populist and often controversial content, these publications play a vital role in shaping public opinion [18, p. 30]. As such, they are worthy subjects of rigorous academic inquiry.

This article explores how repetition functions pragmatically in British tabloids and what communicative effect it produces. It investigates how repeated lexical, syntactic, and stylistic elements affect the interpretation, emotional response, and cognitive processing of tabloid content. The analysis draws upon theoretical frameworks from pragmatics and discourse analysis to understand the purposeful deployment of repetition [6, p. 55–60]. In addition, it addresses how repetition functions not merely as a stylistic feature, but as a purposeful discursive strategy for enhancing meaning and shaping public perception [15, p. 100–105].

The domain of popular journalism – particularly tabloid publications – has not been the focus of detailed pragmatic scrutiny. This gap is especially relevant today, as tabloid media increasingly shape public narratives and contribute to the construction of social meaning through strategic linguistic choices.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

While repetition as a rhetorical device has been discussed in classical linguistic works [12; 5; 16] its application in tabloid journalism with its fast-paced and ideologically charged context remains underexplored. This study contributes to pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media linguistics by examining the deliberate deployment of repetition in a popular but academically undervalued media genre.

The study of media language has grown considerably over the past two decades, with particular attention paid to stylistic and discourse features of different press genres [13; 3]. The growing dominance of tabloid formats and infotainment culture has placed a spotlight on how language is manipulated in mass media. Scholars such as Richardson [13] and Fairclough [6] have emphasized the need to critically analyze media texts to uncover their ideological underpinnings. Yet, the role of repetition, particularly in popular journalism, remains underexplored despite its frequency and discursive impact.

Tabloids, as a specific genre of popular press, exhibit a high frequency of rhetorical devices, among which repetition plays a key role. In an age of social media virality and information overload, repetition becomes not just a stylistic ornament but also a tool for *anchoring discourse* in the minds

of readers [18]. It enables tabloids to construct narratives quickly, reinforce ideological binaries (e.g., “us vs. them”), and emotionally prime readers for particular interpretations of events.

This study is thus relevant both academically and socially: academically, because it enriches the theoretical understanding of media pragmatics; socially, because it reveals how seemingly simple language patterns can influence public opinion and ideological alignment.

Task statement. This study seeks to uncover the pragmatic dimensions of repetition in British tabloid discourse by pursuing the following objectives:

1. To identify common forms and prevalent repetition patterns (lexical, syntactic, and structural) employed in contemporary British tabloid texts;
2. To investigate the pragmatic functions of these repetitions and their pragmatic effects on readers, including emotional appeal, emphasis, persuasion, and cognitive reinforcement;
3. To contextualize repetition as part of a broader communicative strategy, situating it within frameworks such as Relevance Theory [15] and Politeness Theory [12], in order to analyze how repeated elements influence interpretation and reception;
4. To explore how repetition contributes to the stylistic identity of tabloid journalism, helping establish recognizable editorial voices and engaging patterns that differentiate tabloids from so-called “quality press”.

Through this multi-faceted inquiry, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how repetition shapes both the form and function of popular media language. In doing so, it challenges assumptions that tabloid language is merely superficial or repetitive in a non-strategic sense. Instead, the paper demonstrates that repetition in this genre serves as a deliberate discursive tool with profound implications for meaning-making, reader engagement, and ideological positioning.

Outline of the main material of the study.

Repetition, as a pragmatic phenomenon, functions on multiple levels within British tabloid journalism. It may manifest at the lexical, syntactic, or structural level, and its effects are closely tied to the objectives of tabloids – namely, emotional impact, simplicity of message, and immediacy of engagement. In contrast to broadsheet journalism, which often prioritizes nuance and analytical complexity, tabloid discourse is designed for rapid consumption, requiring efficient linguistic strategies to maximize impact. According to A. Mammadov “the sender of the text uses

repetitions to deliver his/her pragmatic intention to the receiver of text. On the other hand, these devices have very important cognitive potential. Thus, various structural types of repetitions (phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic) are very important linguistic devices since they are key elements during discourse production" [1, p. 2].

Repetition in tabloids can be approached from multiple angles: as a stylistic device, a rhetorical strategy, and a pragmatic function. Each angle offers insight into how repetition shapes both form and meaning within tabloid discourse.

Theoretical Foundations. From a pragmatic point of view, repetition can be categorized into several types, including lexical repetition (e.g., repeating words or phrases), syntactic repetition (e.g., parallel structures), and rhetorical repetition (e.g., anaphora and epiphora). Each type serves a specific communicative purpose depending on the context.

According to Leech's [12, p. 132] Politeness Principle and Sperber and Wilson's [15, p. 252–257] Relevance Theory, repetition draws attention to salient points, signals importance, and facilitates processing by reducing cognitive load. Tannen [16, p. 49–55] emphasized repetition as a structuring device in discourse that reinforces coherence, adds emphasis, and emotionally charges the text.

1. **Lexical Repetition and Emphasis.** One of the most conspicuous forms of repetition in tabloids is lexical repetition – the reuse of words or phrases within close textual proximity to emphasize salience.

Tabloids use repetition to underscore dramatic events or controversial issues. For example: "It was chaos. Chaos in the streets. Chaos in the hearts of citizens". (The Daily Mirror, 2022).

This triple repetition of "chaos" amplifies emotional impact, emphasizes severity, and makes the event memorable.

In the context of relevance theory, such repetition enhances cognitive effects by reinforcing the importance of the repeated item [15, p. 255]. When tabloids repeat emotionally charged adjectives like "huge", "tragic", or "outrageous", the redundancy is not merely stylistic but performs an inferential function: it signals to the reader that the information is worth processing.

1.1. **Lexical Repetition in Headlines.** Lexical repetitions have been studied in different studies. Halliday and Hasan consider lexical repetitions as one of the types of lexical cohesion in their seminal work titled "Cohesion in English" [8, p. 274]. Later other researchers in the field have developed

this approach. In one of the recent studies, Abdullayev et. al write that "within text linguistics and discourse analysis, researchers usually analyze the role of lexical repetition as a powerful tool to build cohesion and coherence in text and discourse". [1, p. 3]. Lexical repetitions can also be used as the powerful tools to produce a strong emotional effect on the audience. It is typical for tabloid newspapers such as The Sun, The Daily Mail. In the headlines of tabloids, emotionally charged words are frequently repeated in order to grab and fixate attention, simplify interpretation and to maximize reader engagement: "Shame, shame, shame on the MPs who betrayed Britain". (The Sun, 2023).

In this example, lexical repetition of "shame" underscores moral condemnation and rely on triadic repetition to dramatize an event. It creates a cumulative emotional effect that aligns the reader with the newspaper's perspective. The use of repetition in such contexts makes key judgments inescapably prominent, directing readers' emotional responses. In addition, this form of repetition serves an emphatic function, creating a rhythmic and emotionally charged message that draws attention.

In another example: "Chaos. Chaos. Chaos". (The Sun, 12 March 2022).

This triplet repetition creates semantic saturation, reinforcing the idea of uncontrollable disorder. The rhetorical impact is immediate, emotional, and memorable. According to Tannen [17, p. 25–28], such repetitions serve to dramatize the narrative and trigger emotional resonance.

Another case: "Shame on you, shame on your lies, shame on your legacy!" (Daily Mirror, 22 July 2023).

Here the anaphoric structure intensifies moral condemnation and provides rhythmic balance, drawing from spoken language's persuasive force. In other examples: "Boris Blunder! Blunder After Blunder!" (The Mirror, 2022) or "Lockdown, Lockdown, Lockdown!" (The Sun, 2021) the repetitions visually and aurally draw attention, increase salience, and guide reader interpretation even before the article is read.

2. **Syntactic Repetition and Rhythm.** Syntactic repetition, repeating sentence structures or grammatical patterns, contributes to the tabloid's distinctive narrative rhythm.

Phrases like "He lied. He cheated. He stole." (Daily Mirror, 2022) showcase a staccato syntactic pattern that dramatizes moral judgment. This stylistic technique simplifies moral narratives and promotes easy alignment with the newspaper's framing.

Syntactic repetition also facilitates accessibility. Short, parallel structures cater to readers with limited time or cognitive resources, aligning with the tabloid's mission to provide information that is quick to decode yet emotionally engaging [5, p. 84].

Syntactic structures like *parallelism* are frequently used to organize arguments and signal alignment or contrast: "He lied to the public, he lied to Parliament, he lied to himself". (Daily Mail, 30 October 2021).

Here, repetition shapes *an ideological narrative* of political betrayal, appealing to readers' ethical values. This echoes Van Dijk's [18, p. 47–49] assertion that media repetition can create cognitive frames that structure public discourse.

2.1. Creating Rhythm and Coherence. Repetition creates a rhythm that improves readability and engagement. Cadence is crucial in tabloid language, where rhythm and parallelism are used to create dramatic effect: "He lied to the public. He lied to Parliament. He lied to himself". (The Daily Mail, 2020).

This sequence structures the information persuasively and adds rhetorical force, often resembling spoken discourse or political speech.

3. Repetition in Reported Speech to Build Credibility. Tabloids often repeat phrases from interviews or public statements to lend *authenticity* to their coverage: "We are not safe, we are not safe, we are not safe!" said one terrified mother. (Daily Mirror, 5 May 2022).

Repetition within the quotation serves dual purposes: portraying raw emotion and enhancing the credibility of fear as a social reality. As Jaworski and Coupland [10, p. 91–93] argue, repetition in reported speech emphasizes speaker stance and foregrounds affective meaning.

4. Structural Repetition and Framing. Repetition on the macro-structural level, such as reiterating key phrases across an article or using repeated headlines and sub-headlines, contributes to framing. For example, the phrase "partygate" appeared repeatedly across multiple issues of The Daily Mail and The Sun during the UK political scandal of 2021–2022. By recycling this single term, tabloids created a semantic shorthand that encapsulated multiple accusations and emotions, reinforcing a specific interpretation of events.

This kind of framing repetition aligns with media discourse strategies of anchoring [6, p. 14–15], where readers are guided toward specific interpretations through reiterative cues. The effect is both cognitive – making it easier for

readers to follow the storyline, and ideological – promoting a consistent evaluative stance.

5. Intertextual (Echoic) Repetition. Another pragmatic layer of repetition involves echoic or intertextual repetition, where tabloids borrow and repeat phrases from other media, popular culture, or political discourse. Headlines such as "Make Britain Great Again" (The Sun, 2020) intentionally echo Donald Trump's slogan, thereby importing connotative meanings and ideological positions into the local context.

Such repetition invites readers to make inferential connections beyond the immediate text, enhancing relevance by tying local stories to global narratives. This use of intertextuality also contributes to the persuasive strength of tabloids by embedding their messages in widely recognized and emotionally resonant frames.

6. Psychological Impact and Reader Conditioning. Repeated exposure to specific lexical items, headlines, or rhetorical structures can have a conditioning effect on readers. According to Tannen [16], repetition plays a role in conversational involvement – a principle that extends to written texts by simulating dialogue with the reader. Repetition creates familiarity, which in turn fosters trust, reduces resistance, and promotes acceptance of the message.

For instance, repeated use of descriptors like "illegal migrant" in The Daily Express contributes to a discourse that normalizes particular framings of immigration. Over time, such repetition may shape reader attitudes and public discourse through sheer frequency of exposure.

6.1. Repetition and Reader Engagement. Repetition also serves to establish rhythm and predictability, which are cognitively appealing. Phrases like "*More cuts. More pain. More blame.*" (from *Mirror*, 2023) create a rhetorical triad that is easy to process and remember. This aligns with Relevance Theory [14], where communicative efficiency is key: repeated structures help readers access intended meanings with minimal cognitive effort.

6.2. Repetition and Reader Manipulation. The cumulative effect of repetition in tabloids contributes to cognitive priming. Repetition lowers processing difficulty, increases perceived truth (illusory truth effect), and manipulates emotional response [19, p. 9]. This confirms the assertion by Cap [4] that repetition is central to legitimizing dominant political positions through discourse.

7. Branding and Editorial Identity. Repetition also contributes to the branding of a tabloid.

Each paper develops recognizable linguistic habits, for instance, preferred headlines, stock phrases, or recurring syntactic patterns that establish a distinct editorial identity. Phrases like “you couldn’t make it up!” or “beyond belief!” are staples of tabloids like *The Sun* and *The Daily Star*, forming part of a house style that readers come to expect.

This kind of stylized repetition aids brand recognition and fosters a sense of familiarity and loyalty among readers. From a pragmatic perspective, it is part of the contract between the publication and its audience – a signal of consistent communicative behavior and values.

7.1. Branding and Stylistic Identity. Repetitive lexical patterns contribute to a tabloid’s recognizable style. The recurrent use of phrases like “shock horror,” “royal scandal,” or “secret affair” not only signals sensationalism but also creates a shared linguistic code between readers and the publication. Readers become familiar with such formulations, which fosters loyalty and recognition.

8. Repetition and Emotional Resonance. Emotional engagement is central to the appeal of tabloids. Repetition plays a crucial role in heightening affective intensity: “He lied. He lied to her. He lied to us all”. (*Daily Mail*, 2022).

This incremental repetition builds dramatic tension and moral outrage. It resonates with a readership predisposed to valuing authenticity and transparency. The patterned repetition creates rhythmic emphasis and evokes emotional alignment.

Emotionally loaded words are repeated to evoke fear, sympathy, or excitement:

“A tragedy, a true tragedy that could have been avoided...” (*The Sun*, 2021).

Such structures aim to elicit empathy and trigger emotional involvement, essential components of tabloid storytelling.

8.1. Emotional Intensification and Sensationalism. Repetition is frequently deployed to amplify emotional impact. In *Daily Mail* headlines such as “*Terror, terror, terror in the streets*” (2021), repetition dramatizes the event, creating a sense of chaos and urgency. This use corresponds to the expressive function of language [9], where the repetition reflects and evokes emotional states.

Such constructions are also part of sensationalist rhetoric, which is a hallmark of tabloid discourse. They exploit the affective dimension of language to draw reader attention in a competitive media environment.

9. Persuasion and Ideological Framing. Repetition in tabloids also functions to shape

ideological stances. In political reporting, repeated phrases can subtly impose interpretations:

“Weak leadership, weak policies, weak future”. (*The Sun*, 2023).

By repeating “weak,” the newspaper imposes a value judgment and frames a negative view of the subject, often reinforcing editorial bias. Repetitive phrasing becomes a method of indoctrination through constant exposure to emotionally charged descriptors.

9.1. Repetition as a Tool of Persuasion. One of the most prominent pragmatic functions of repetition in tabloids is reinforcement of key messages. Repetition ensures that emotionally or ideologically charged terms are embedded in the reader’s memory. For instance, in an article from *The Sun* (2022), the phrase “*Boris betrayed Britain*” was repeated five times within a 500-word text. This serves not only to emphasize a narrative but also to construct a simplified moral dichotomy.

Such uses align with Austin’s [2] performative theory, where repetition strengthens the perlocutionary effect on readers – pushing them toward judgment and emotional response.

9.2. Repetition as a Tool of Ideological Framing. Another pragmatic function is ideological naturalization. Repetition can also function persuasively by framing individuals or events in ideologically loaded terms. Consider the repeated labeling of migrants as “invaders” in several headlines: “The migrant invasion: Invasion on the coast, invasion in our towns”. (*Daily Express*, 2021).

Such repetition reinforces particular worldviews and simplifies complex sociopolitical issues into digestible, emotionally charged slogans. According to Sperber and Wilson’s [15] Relevance Theory, this type of repetition increases cognitive salience and reduces processing effort, making the preferred interpretation more accessible.

Repetition contributes to the creation of “common sense” assumptions. For example, repeated phrases such as “*illegal migrants*”, “*broken Britain*”, or “*woke agenda*” (frequent in *Daily Express* and *The Sun*) create a semantic framing that aligns with a specific ideological stance [18].

Through frequent and strategic repetition, such language contributes to the discursive reproduction of ideology – framing complex social issues in simplistic, emotionally resonant terms.

10. Stylistic Identity and Tabloid Branding. Repetition also contributes to a publication’s stylistic signature. Phrases like “We ask, you decide” or “It’s a disgrace!” recur across issues of

the same newspaper, creating familiarity and trust among readers. Over time, these repeated elements become part of the tabloid's identity, aligning with Goffman's [7] notion of frame analysis, where linguistic routines shape readers' interpretive frames.

11. Reinforcement through Visual-Textual Design. Repetition is not only verbal but also visual. Tabloids frequently pair textual repetition with visual repetition – bold fonts, red headlines, coloured subheadings and repeated imagery/phrases across sidebars and infoboxes extend the pragmatic power of repetition. These visual repetitions enhance processing fluency and direct the reader's eye to “key” information. These multimodal repetitions serve as framing devices that anchor the reader's focus. For instance, the repeated use of certain color-coded words (e.g., “crisis” in red) enhances urgency and emotional salience. These strategies are not merely decorative but play a vital role in pragmatic meaning-making.

12. Repetition and Tabloid Narrativity. Tabloid stories often function as mini-narratives, and repetition aids coherence by reintroducing key characters and plot points. In extended stories, repeated references to a central figure or motif help maintain thematic consistency: “Meghan hits back... Meghan silenced... Meghan's revenge” (The Sun, 2022).

These headlines construct a serial narrative arc that mimics the suspense and familiarity of a soap opera. Repetition ensures continuity, which is essential for reader retention in serialized storytelling.

13. Pragmatic Constraints and Audience Expectations. The pragmatic success of repetition relies on readers' cultural competence. Familiarity with repeated idioms, slogans, or names allows readers to infer unstated implications. Tabloids exploit this by embedding repetitions that depend on intertextual references or presuppositions: “Partygate again? Really?” (Daily Mirror, 2022).

The repeated reference to “Partygate” relies on a shared background. The rhetorical question signals cynicism, and the repetition reinforces the narrative of political irresponsibility.

14. Comparative Functions of Repetition. When compared with broadsheet newspapers, tabloid repetitions are more overt, emotionally loaded, and designed for immediate impact. Broadsheets may use repetition sparingly for stylistic variation, whereas tabloids use it to maintain ideological coherence and reader engagement. This suggests that repetition is not a random stylistic device but a deliberate pragmatic tool tailored to audience type and media format.

Conclusion. This study has illustrated that repetition in British tabloids is not merely a superficial stylistic feature but a deeply embedded pragmatic strategy. It serves multiple interrelated functions: reinforcing emphasis, enhancing emotional impact, shaping ideological perspectives, sustaining narrative coherence, and contributing to stylistic branding. Through these functions, repetition plays a central role in how tabloids communicate with their audiences, influence public sentiment, and maintain their cultural relevance.

By applying theories from pragmatics and discourse analysis, this research has shown that repetition is a vital element of tabloid discourse that deserves closer scholarly attention. While often dismissed as populist or sensationalist, tabloids employ complex linguistic strategies that reveal much about contemporary media language and public communication.

Future research could benefit from a cross-linguistic or multimodal analysis, considering how repetition operates in tabloids across different cultures or how it interacts with visual and auditory elements in digital formats. Additionally, corpus-based studies might provide quantitative support for the frequency and patterns identified in this qualitative investigation.

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Сулейманова Айтен. ПРАГМАТИЧНІ ФУНКЦІЇ ПОВТОРІВ У БРИТАНСЬКИХ ТАБЛОЇДАХ

*У сучасному медіа середовищі таблоїди відіграють значну роль у формуванні громадської думки та емоційного сприйняття подій. Їхньою відмінністю є використання виразних мовних засобів, серед яких повтор займає центральне місце. У статті розглядаються прагматичні функції повторів у текстах британських таблоїдів як особливого жанру масової комунікації, орієнтованого на швидке та емоційне сприйняття інформації. Повтор, як із ключових риторичних прийомів, виконує у цьому контексті як стилістичну, а й комунікативно-прагматичну функцію: він акцентує увагу читача, сприяє формуванню певного ставлення до описуваних подій і персонажам, і навіть посилює вплив тексту на емоційному рівні. У дослідженні зроблено спробу систематизувати типи повторів (лексичні, синтаксичні, інтонаційні) та виявити їх функціональні особливості в рамках таблоїдної журналістики. Як матеріал проаналізовано статті, опубліковані в таких британських виданнях, як *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror* та *The Daily Express* за останні п'ять років. Методи, що використовуються, включають якісний контент-аналіз, елементи прагматичного аналізу, а також принципи Релевантної теорії та моделі зв'язності. У ході аналізу встановлено, що повтори у текстах таблоїдів виконують функції посилення драматичного ефекту, емоційної підзарядки, ритмічної організації тексту, а також сприяють формуванню ідеологічних установок та маніпулюванню сприйняттям. Зроблено висновок про те, що повторення у таблоїдах є цілеспрямованим інструментом, а не випадковим мовним явищем, і відіграє ключову роль у структурі медіа дискурсу. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними в рамках вивчення медіалінгвістики, прагматики та аналізу дискурсу.*

Ключові слова: ідеологія, медіа дискурс, повтори, прагматика, таблоїди, переконання, емоційна експресія.