Emphasis in the German and Ukrainian online comments

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I. Problem statement

We consider T.E. Yanko's[8] definition of emphasis to be the best: "The emphasis is connected to the expression of speaker's strong emotions about non-normative life events…»

The emphasis problem was widely investigated in numerous works by N.D. Arutyunova[1], M.A.Goncharova[3], O.A. Kostrova[5] et al. However, there is still no all-embracing definition in different languages, the term definition itself is still open.

The development of internet communication leads to the increase of interest to the "verbal-written" language, namely represented in various little internet genres. It also concerns the peculiarities of emotional expression.

We treat emphasis, in general, as highlighting of a certain element of conversation by means of grammar (for example, indirect word order in the sentence) and intonation. However, we do not treat emphatic constructions as a deviation; they're integrated into the language system.

II. How the emphasis can be expressed

A lot of works dedicated to the problem of emphasis expression in different languages have provided various classifications and sets of means of emphasis expression. Relying on the works of (N.D. Arutyunova[1], T.E. Yanko[8], O.A. Kostrova[5], M.A. Goncharova[3], N.L. Shubina[6]) and based on the objectives of our study, we have tried to make our own "registry" to include means of expression that are relevant for the investigated material.
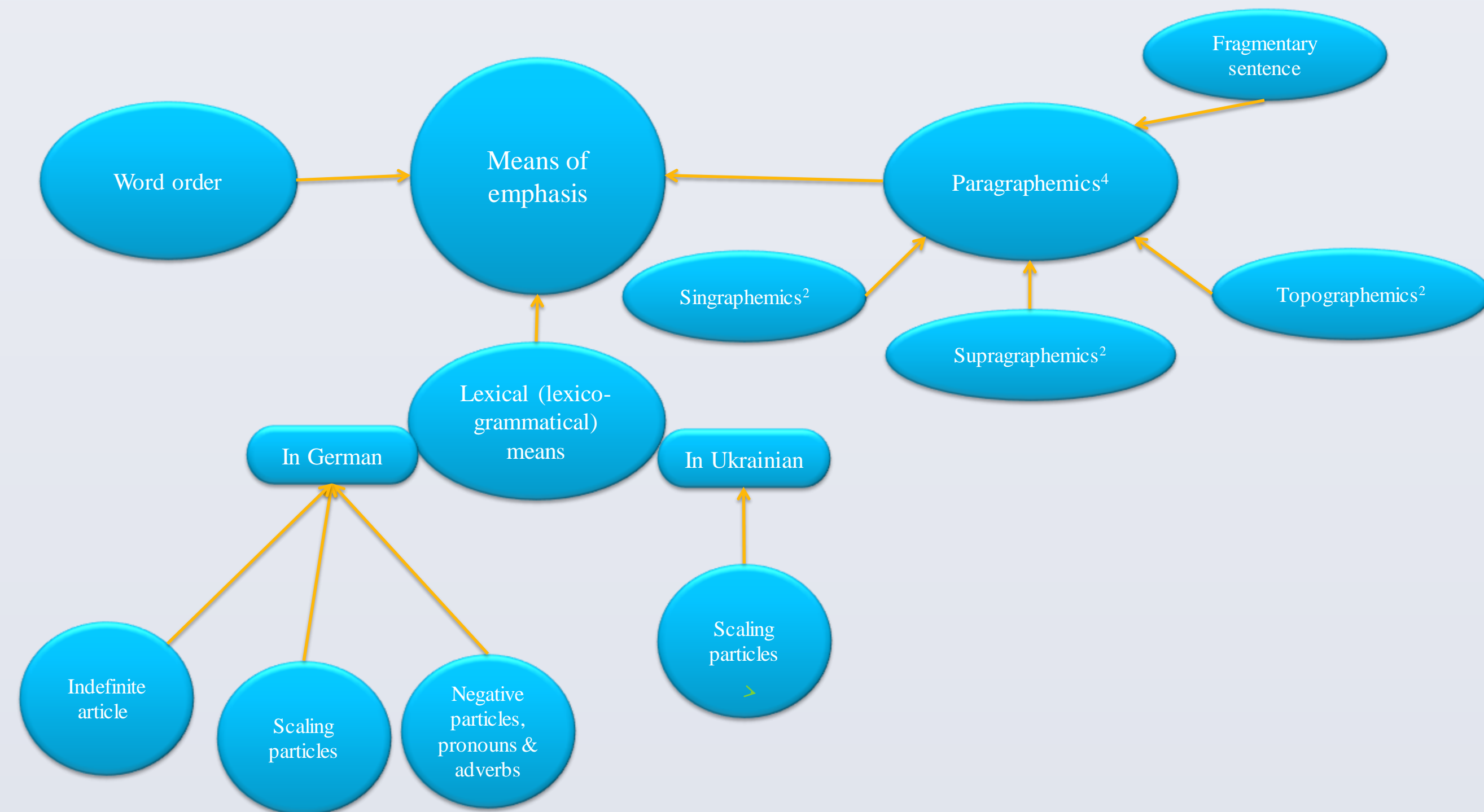
III. Why online-comments?

The genre of an internet-comment is of particular interest: on the one hand, it is highly emotional, on the other, it combines features of both spoken and written speech.

Comment[7] (from *lat*. commentarius) – a verbal or written remark often related to an added piece of information, or an observation, or statement; review in the press about some political event. In the media discourse comment explains, discusses, reviews important events.

The concept of internet-comment appears to be even more quick and emotional. This is a message typically created to express a thought / emotion about an article or media material (videos, pictures, etc.). Sometimes, these messages are not directly related to the material, nevertheless being able to influence onto discussion.

IV. The material peculiarities

The average message:
In Ukrainian: 27 words
In German: 62 words.

The total amount of our comments corpora is: Ukrainian – 1011 (27361 words), German – 313 (19420 words). All the comments we investigated were written on articles about the EU-Association Agreement appeared on 21st of November 2013 in Ukrainian (Pravda.com.ua, tvi.ua, firtka.if.ua etc.) and German online-media (spiegel.de, welt.de, zeit.de, handelsblatt.de).

Taking into account the peculiarities of the Ukrainian bilingual linguistic situation, we found it possible — and most objective — to analyze all the items found in the material. Thus, the examined Ukrainian comments were the mixture of Ukrainian, Russian and Surzhik constructions. German, except of some hybrid German-English comments, laid mostly written version of the colloquial language.
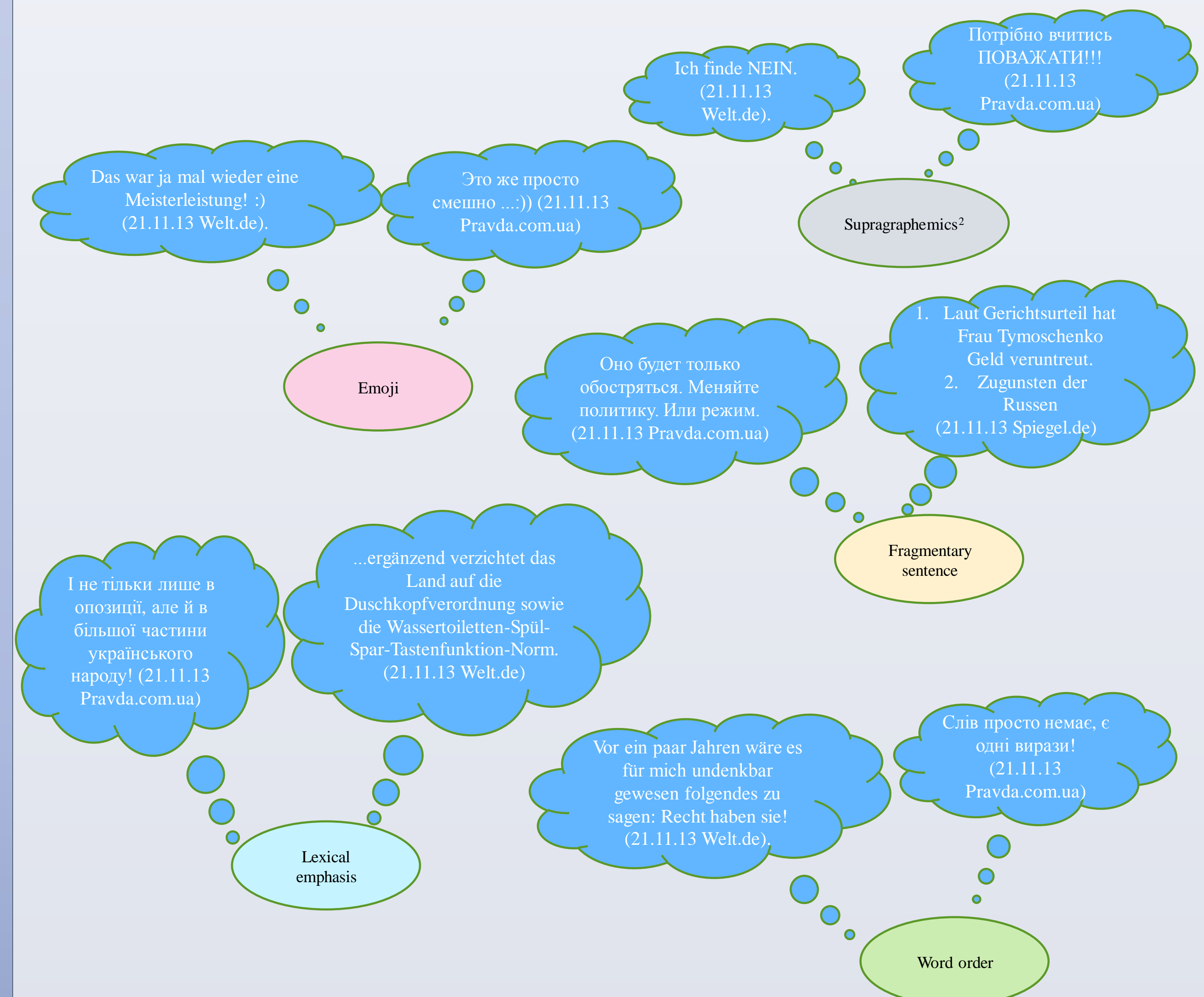
V. The subject studied (what was counted)

Further it was calculated the ratio of the detected emphatic means to the total number of words and also to the total number of comments.

T.E.Yanko[8] writes: "In the expression plane emphasis is described as change of the tone movement to the opposite direction, which is anterior to the basic tone movement". This was our main intonation criterion used to find and determine emphasis.

If we omit or replace any mean of emphasis (for example, change indefinite article for definite, or change the word order in a sentence) and that leads to the change of emphatic intonation pattern – then we have an emphasis.

VI. Results

Means of emphasis (what was counted)	Ukrainian Total: 27361 words 1011 comments			German Total: 19420 words 313 comments		
	Abs.	Rel.(% to total number of words)	Rel.(% to total number of comments)	Abs.	Rel.(% to total number of words)	Rel.(% to total number of comments)
1. Paragraphemics	954	-	-	42	-	-
1.1. Uppercase and bold type (supragraphemics) (words)	731	2,67	-	28	0,14	-
1.2. Emoji („words-symbols")	204	0,75	-	9	0,05	-
1.A. Fragmentary sentence (cases)	19	-	1,88	5	-	1,60
2. Lexical emphasis (words)	55	0,20	-	42	0,22	-
3. Word order (sentences)	34	-	3,36	21	-	6,71

We found the paragraphemics to be the most common mean of emphasis in Ukrainian comments (Ukrainian and Russian language) - 954 cases in 1011 comments. Supragraphemics (731 cases) and emoji (204 cases) are the two most widely used means of emphasis found in Ukrainian comments.

In German, by contrast, not the different font variations (28 cases) or emoji (9 cases), but the lexical particles (42 cases) and word order (21 cases) appear to be the most utilized means of emphasis. Lexical means of emphasis (55 cases) in Ukrainian also had a very close relative rate (0,2%) to that in German (0,22%). The word order in Ukrainian (34 cases), however, proved to be two times less than that in German comments (3,36 % to 6,71%)

It was noted that:

In German comments the uppercase is chiefly used to emphasize the negation (*nein*, *nicht*). By contrast, in Ukrainian the whole sentences written in the uppercase can be seen.

The fragmentary sentence proved to be quite a rare mean of emphasis in both languages, having quite the same percentage in German (1,6 %) and in Ukrainian material (1,88 %).

The results described may be seen as an evidence of the fact that the authors of the Ukrainian comments express their opinion in a more emotional way than those of the German ones.

The possible reasons might be as follows:
1. Different importance level of the topic discussed
2. Almost total absence of any censorship in Ukrainian comments (namely on the newspaper's website).

Differences in the means of emphasis used may be also referred to the differences of the two languages' structures.

It is also possible that the domination of the paragraphemics in Ukrainian comments can be induced by affection for expressing emotional attitude through the intonation.

VII. Selected reference notes

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