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RISK COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH- AND UKRAINIAN-LANGUAGE EORE MATERIALS: A DISCURSIVE AND MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

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The large-scale contamination of Ukrainian territories with landmines, unexploded ordnance, and other remnants of war has significantly increased the importance of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) as a component of humanitarian mine action. While EORE has been widely studied from technical and operational perspectives, its linguistic and communicative dimensions remain insufficiently explored. This paper examines discursive and multimodal strategies employed in English- and Ukrainian-language EORE materials produced by international and national organizations, governmental institutions, and humanitarian actors. The study draws upon Critical Discourse Analysis, pragmatic analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis to investigate how risk is communicated and how safe behaviour is promoted among affected populations.

The findings indicate that EORE discourse represents a specialized form of institutional risk communication characterized by a strong behavioural orientation. Three major communicative dimensions are identified: danger construction and behavioural regulation, risk minimization and personalization, and inclusion-oriented multimodal communication. The analysis demonstrates that multimodal resources, including colour coding, warning symbols, photographs, and infographics, play a crucial role in enhancing message effectiveness. Particular attention is devoted to the growing emphasis on accessibility and inclusive communication in EORE campaigns.

The study contributes to discourse studies and humanitarian communication research by demonstrating how linguistic and visual resources interact to influence risk perception, support behavioural change, and ensure equitable access to life-saving information.

КОМУНІКАЦІЯ РИЗИКУ В АНГЛОМОВНИХ ТА УКРАЇНОМОВНИХ МАТЕРІАЛАХ ІНФОРМУВАННЯ ПРО РИЗИКИ ВИБУХОНЕБЕЗПЕЧНИХ ПРЕДМЕТІВ: ДИСКУРСИВНИЙ І МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

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Ключові слова: комунікація ризику, інформування про ризики вибухонебезпечних предметів, критичний дискурс-аналіз, мультимодальність, гуманітарна комунікація, поведінкова регуляція, інклюзивна комунікація.

У статті досліджуються дискурсивні та мультимодальні стратегії комунікації ризику в англomовних та українomовних матеріалах інформування про ризики вибухонебезпечних предметів (Explosive Ordnance Risk Education, EORE). Актуальність дослідження зумовлена масштабним забрудненням території України мінами та іншими вибухонебезпечними предметами, що підвищує значення ефективної ризик-комунікації як складової гуманітарного реагування та захисту цивільного населення.

Теоретичну основу дослідження становлять критичний дискурс-аналіз, прагматичний аналіз та мультимодальний аналіз дискурсу. Матеріалом дослідження слугували близько 100 англomовних та українomовних матеріалів, створених міжнародними та вітчизняними організаціями, державними установами, гуманітарними операторами протимінної діяльності та службами цивільного захисту у 2022–2026 роках.

У результаті аналізу виокремлено три основні комунікативні виміри EORE-дискурсу: конструювання небезпеки та регуляцію поведінки, персоналізацію і мінімізацію ризиків, а також інклюзивно орієнтовану мультимодальну комунікацію. Встановлено, що мовні засоби функціонують у тісній взаємодії з візуальними засобами, зокрема кольоровим кодуванням, піктограмами, фотографіями, наративними персонажами та інфографікою. Порівняльний аналіз показав, що англomовні матеріали тяжіють до стандартизованої та пояснювальної моделі комунікації ризику, тоді як українomовні матеріали характеризуються більшою контекстуалізацією, директивністю та орієнтацією на реалії воєнного часу.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що сучасні матеріали EORE виконують не лише інформаційну, а й поведінково-регулятивну, освітню та інклюзивну функції. Отримані результати можуть бути використані для розроблення більш ефективних і доступних стратегій гуманітарної комунікації в умовах збройних конфліктів та післявоєнного відновлення.

Introduction. The ongoing russian invasion of Ukraine has created the most severe explosive ordnance contamination crises in the world (United Nations, 2025). Large areas of residential communities, agricultural land, and public infrastructure remain affected by landmines, unexploded ordnance and other hazards. Thus, protecting civilians requires not only clearance operations but also effective communication strategies capable of reducing risk through behavioural change. Consequently, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) has become an

essential component of humanitarian mine action and public safety efforts (Kristensen, 2021).

According to the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), EORE encompasses activities designed to reduce the risk from explosive ordnance through “raising awareness of women, girls, boys and men in accordance with their different vulnerabilities, roles and needs, and promoting behavioural change” (GICHD, 2020). Unlike purely informational communication, EORE seeks to influence how individuals perceive danger, make decisions, and respond to hazardous situations.

Its primary objective is behavioural rather than informational: individuals are expected not only to understand risks but also to adopt practices that reduce their exposure to explosive threats and prevent unsafe behaviours (Boyd et al., 2018: 10).

The effectiveness of EORE depends on communication. Risk messages must be understandable to diverse audiences while encouraging safer responses to explosive hazards. IMAS emphasizes that EORE messaging should be tailored to specific target groups, address risk-taking behaviours, and be tested for clarity and relevance in order to achieve behavioural change (GICH, 2020). Thus, language functions as an instrument through which institutions communicate danger, provide and encourage compliance with safety recommendations (National Research Council, 1989).

Research on risk communication has demonstrated that successful communication depends not only on the accuracy of information but also on audience perceptions, sociocultural context, and message design (Glik, 2007; WHO, 2017). Within linguistics, these issues have frequently been explored through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examines how language constructs social realities and regulates behaviour. Fairclough (2010) conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice through which institutions establish authority, shape perceptions, and influence social action. In this sense, “spoken or written utterances are seen as performing speech acts such as promising, asking, asserting, or warning” (Pham, 2024: 174). Studies emphasize that communication not only conveys information about risks but also actively constructs their meaning and shapes socially appropriate responses (Rickard, 2021; Zinn & Müller, 2022). From a disaster-management perspective, communication influences trust, decision-making, and behavioural responses under conditions of uncertainty (Khan et al., 2017). These observations are particularly relevant to EORE materials, which are produced by authoritative institutions and designed to guide behaviour in situations involving potentially fatal risks.

Another important framework for analysing EORE materials is multimodal discourse analysis. Modern public communication relies on the interaction of multiple modes, including text, images, colours, symbols, typography, and layout. Meaning emerges through the combined operation of these resources rather than through language alone (Van Leeuwen, 2015). Recent studies show that visual elements perform important communicative and persuasive functions, shaping audience interpretation, engagement, and comprehension in public information materials (Li et al., 2023;

Agbozo, 2023). Similarly, research on digital discourse demonstrates that communicative effectiveness depends on the strategic integration of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to establish credibility and influence perception (Melnik et al., 2026). EORE materials extensively employ photographs, warning signs, pictograms, logos, and infographics alongside textual instructions in order to communicate risk effectively and encourage safe behaviour.

Recent developments in humanitarian communication have also highlighted the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and diversity. Research and policy frameworks recognize that risk is experienced differently by women, men, girls, boys, older adults, displaced persons, unemployed, and persons with disabilities whose needs, mobility, and exposure to hazards may vary significantly (UNIDIR, 2024; Vovk, 2024: 26). Moreover, persons with disabilities and special educational needs often face barriers in accessing emergency warnings and safety information, increasing their vulnerability during crises (European Disability Forum, 2022). Contemporary EORE programmes therefore seek to ensure equitable access to life-saving information through accessible communication channels and inclusive visual and textual representation.

Despite the growing importance of EORE in Ukraine and other conflict-affected regions, linguistic and multimodal analyses of EORE communication remain scarce. Existing studies primarily focus on operational effectiveness, programme implementation, or behavioural outcomes (Baaser et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2020; Vovk, 2024), while discourse-analytic and multimodal perspectives remain largely underrepresented (Shabila & Saleh, 2025).

This paper addresses this gap by examining EORE materials as a specific form of institutional risk discourse. The study aims to identify and compare the discursive and multimodal strategies employed in English- and Ukrainian-language EORE materials, with attention to behavioural regulation, inclusiveness, and the role of multisensory resources in communicating risk. It argues that EORE materials constitute a specialized communicative genre in which linguistic and visual resources are combined to influence behaviour, strengthen resilience, and reduce exposure to hazards. Understanding these communicative mechanisms may contribute both to discourse studies and to the development of more effective risk education practices.

Materials and Methods. Our study employs a qualitative comparative research design integrating CDA, pragmatic analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis. The combination of these approaches helps

examine both linguistic and visual mechanisms through which EORE materials communicate risk and promote safe behaviour.

The corpus included resources we found on the websites run by GICHD, UNMAS, UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council, the Ukrainian Deminers Association, Prometheus, StopMina, and related humanitarian initiatives. The selected materials include online educational resources and courses, brochures, infographics, websites and social media publications. These formats represent the most common channels through which explosive hazard awareness messages are disseminated to civilian populations. We also made sure to analyse resources produced by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and the National Police, which have played a crucial role in maintaining the resilience of Ukrainian society (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2023:22).

Critical Discourse Analysis was used to identify recurring communicative strategies and examine how institutions construct danger, authority, responsibility, and behavioural norms. Pragmatic analysis focused on speech acts such as warnings, prohibitions, recommendations, and instructions. Multimodal discourse analysis was applied to investigate the interaction between verbal and non verbal elements, including colour coding, pictograms, photographs, and graphic design. Finally, comparative analysis enabled the identification of similarities and differences between English-language and Ukrainian-language communication practices.

Results and Discussion. The analysis identified three dominant dimensions of EORE communication across English- and Ukrainian-language materials: danger construction and behavioural regulation, risk minimization and personalization, and inclusion-oriented multimodal communication. Although all three dimensions were present throughout the corpus, their linguistic realization varied according to target audience, context, and communication purpose.

An important contextual factor concerns the institutional origin of the analysed materials. Most English-language resources in the corpus were produced by international humanitarian and mine-action organizations and therefore reflect a standardized global risk-communication discourse. Their language tends to be more universal and transferable across different contexts. Ukrainian-language materials, by contrast, are primarily intended for those directly exposed to explosive hazards and therefore exhibiting stronger contextualization, including references to everyday wartime experiences and local peculiarities. Table 1 summarizes the principal characteristics identified in

the analysed EORE materials. While these features represent the most salient patterns observed in the corpus, they do not exhaust the full range of communicative strategies present in the materials.

The construction of danger constitutes the central communicative function of EORE discourse. Across the corpus, explosive hazards are represented as unpredictable and lethal threats requiring behavioural adaptation.

English-language EORE materials produced by international organizations predominantly employ standardized technical terminology, including explosive hazard, unexploded ordnance (UXO), explosive remnants of war (ERW), abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO), contaminated area, and suspicious object. In contrast, Ukrainian-language materials more frequently combine technical terms such as вибухонебезпечний предмет, нерозірваний боєприпас, and замінована територія with everyday vocabulary (небезпека, підозрілий предмет, небезпечна знахідка, заброшка), making risk communication more accessible to non-specialist audiences.

Danger is rarely communicated as abstract information. In both language groups, hazards are embedded within behavioural scenarios that establish relationships between unsafe actions and potential harm. English-language materials employ explanatory formulations such as may explode at any time, can cause severe injury or death, or poses a serious risk to civilians. Ukrainian-language materials similarly emphasize unpredictability and fatal consequences but often employ more emotionally immediate language reflecting urgent realities of ongoing war: *безпека покоління, що підрастає – пріоритетний напрям роботи; навіть звичайні літні забави дітей можуть перетворитися на випробування для їхнього життя та здоров'я.*

The analysis suggests a difference between the two language groups. English-language materials typically follow a communicative sequence consisting of hazard identification – explanation – behavioural instruction. Readers are informed not only what actions should be avoided but also why specific behaviours are dangerous. By contrast, Ukrainian-language materials often employ a more direct hazard identification – instruction, emphasizing immediate behavioural responses. This difference may reflect the higher public awareness of explosive hazards in Ukraine and the urgent need for rapid behavioural guidance.

The comparison suggests that English-language EORE materials tend to emphasize explanation and standardization, whereas Ukrainian-language materials rely more heavily on directive communication, emotional immediacy,

Table 1

Discursive and multimodal features of selected EORE materials

EORE Material	Target Audience	Danger Construction and Behavioural Regulation	Risk Minimization and Personalization	Inclusion-Oriented Communication and Multimodal Features
Safe Summer Rules Quest (SESU–UNICEF)	Teenagers (11–14). Risk-loving youth. Preferably offline.	Safe/unsafe behaviour scenarios; peer responsibility, critical choices	Character-based identification (Kit Nechipun); emphasis on personal choice	Age-adapted language and activities. Quest format, mascot, illustrations, tests, interactive tasks
EORE Information Portal (UDA)	General public, separate age groups (6-11, 12-18, adults)	Safety rules. Description of explosive hazards and reporting procedures.	Direct appeal to adolescents and their caregivers. Behavioural practical guidance	Publicly accessible information. Website, videos, sign language hotos, instructional graphics, ifographics
GICHD EORE Resources	International audiences. IMAS Professionals. EOD service	Standardized terminology; procedures; hazard recognition; behavioural instructions. Community liason	Minimal. Relies on institutional authority and practitioner expertise. Community-based risk reduction.	References to vulnerable populations and inclusive approaches. Infographics, videos, diagrams, online resources
StopMina Course (Danish Refugee Council)	Years 6-11, 12-17, adults.	Recognition of hazardous objects and locations. Safe behavior algorithms	Everyday risk scenarios; decision-making guidance. Awareness	Accessible online learning environment; audio narration. Interactive modules, videos, quizzes
Prometheus: Training on Explosive Risk Prevention. Prometheus: Recognize Danger	General public. Teachers, parents, community activists, volunteers, managers, prospective EORE trainers	Direct behavioural instructions and hazard identification. Community-oriented safety messaging	Practical examples from wartime contexts. Personal and collective responsibility. Behaviour-oriented learning and adaptation to social roles	Open-access format. Video lectures, tests, illustrations. Community engagement emphasis. Case studies, infographics, interactive tasks. Sign language and subtitle support
Watch Your Step! (East Europe Foundation)	General public, internally displaced persons, residents of affected regions	Behavioural guidance; warning discourse. Hazard recognition and directive safety communication.	Everyday mobility-related risk situations. Contextualized scenarios; safety (personal-family).	Broad accessibility and public outreach. Online course, maps, photographs, warning signs. Role modelling.

and references to everyday wartime realities. These differences reflect the distinct institutional and sociocultural environments in which EORE communication is produced.

Behavioural regulation is achieved primarily through directive speech acts. Imperative constructions constitute one of the most characteristic linguistic features of EORE discourse. Typical English-language examples include Stay away, Do not touch, Leave the area immediately, and Report suspicious objects. Ukrainian-language materials employ equivalent formulations such as НЕ підходь, НЕ чіпай, Відійди на безпечну відстань, Телефонуй 101 або 112, and Повідом відповідні служби (дорослих).

An additional linguistic feature concerns the use of modality. IMAS distinguish between shall, should, and may to indicate different levels of compliance where shall denotes mandatory requirements, should indicates recommended

practices, and may refers to optional courses of action. This standardized use of modality reflects the behavioural orientation of mine-action communication and establishes a linguistic framework subsequently reproduced in training materials, operational guidelines, and educational resources. While public-facing EORE materials rely predominantly on imperatives, institutional documents employ modal constructions to communicate varying degrees of obligation, responsibility, and procedural flexibility.

The prevalence of imperatives and modal expressions demonstrates that EORE discourse extends beyond information transmission and functions as a mechanism of behavioural regulation. The representation of explosive hazards creates the conditions under which behavioural recommendations acquire legitimacy and persuasive force.

The second dimension of EORE communication focuses on transforming awareness into practical

action. Whereas danger construction emphasizes threats, *risk minimization* seeks to provide persons with strategies for reducing exposure to risks.

Across the corpus, behavioural recommendations are often organized as procedural sequences that simplify decision-making. Typical instructions follow a recognizable pattern: identify a suspicious object, avoid contact, move to a safe place, and report the hazard to adults or authorities. We found such sequences in GICHD resources, StopMina courses, Prometheus educational programmes, and Ukrainian humanitarian communication campaigns. The procedural structure reduces uncertainty and converts abstract knowledge into actionable behavioural algorithms.

The findings correspond with contemporary approaches to behavioural change communication, which emphasize practical decision-making and self-efficacy rather than information transfer alone. Instead of merely warning audiences about danger, EORE materials provide specific behavioural patterns.

Personalization enhances communicative effectiveness. English-language resources often employ second-person references such as *you*, *your family*, encouraging recipients to perceive risk as personally relevant. Similar strategies are found in Ukrainian-language materials, where communication often emphasizes the protection of peers, family members, friends, neighbours.

The analysis revealed particularly strong personalization strategies in materials targeting children and adolescents. Educational resources designed for youngsters rely on simplified vocabulary, narratives, interactive activities, and fictional characters. One notable example is the Ukrainian “Safe Summer” campaign, which employs the character Kit Nechipun and interactive quests to communicate mine-risk awareness among adolescents aged 11–14. Rather than framing safety exclusively through fear or prohibition, the campaign presents responsible behaviour as a sign of maturity and courage. The slogan “Сміливість – вміння сказати «Ні» небезпечній поведінці” illustrates a shift from fear-based communication toward positive behavioural framing.

This tendency is also evident in contemporary international EORE practice. Recent campaigns increasingly avoid excessive reliance on fear appeals and instead focus on informed decision-making, resilience, and community safety. Consequently, risk communication becomes not only a mechanism of warning but also a process of empowering individuals to act safely and confidently in hazardous environments.

The corpus additionally demonstrates audience adaptation. Separate communication products

are developed for children, adolescents, teachers, emergency workers, police officers, and residents of frontline communities. Such adaptation reflects broader understandings of inclusion as a context-sensitive process that responds to the social, cultural, and educational realities (Sydoriv & Sydoriv, 2025).

The third major dimension concerns inclusion and multimodality. Contemporary EORE programmes recognize that explosive hazards affect population groups differently and that effective communication requires adaptation to diverse audiences varying in age, educational background, gender, mobility, and location.

Children’s materials provide a good example of audience adaptation. Compared with resources intended for adults, they employ shorter sentences, simplified vocabulary and grammar, colourful illustrations, storytelling, interactive exercises, and game-based learning elements. Educational content focuses on recognition, avoidance, and reporting behaviours rather than technical explanations of explosive devices. Such adaptations increase accessibility while maintaining behavioural effectiveness.

The analysis demonstrates growing attention to gender-responsive communication. Contemporary English-language and Ukrainian-language EORE materials increasingly depict women, men, girls, and boys as active participants in risk reduction efforts. Visual representations generally avoid stereotypical assumptions concerning vulnerability or responsibility and reflect international guidance emphasizing gender and diversity considerations in mine action.

Accessibility is another important component of contemporary EORE communication. Many materials employ simplified language, sign language support, subtitling, visual redundancy, high-contrast design, pictogram-based communication, and multimodal presentation of key information. These features support audiences with different cognitive and sensory abilities while also facilitating communication in multilingual contexts.

The multimodal analysis indicates that visual resources perform communicative functions that extend beyond illustration. Colour coding represents one of the most consistent semiotic systems across the corpus. Red is systematically associated with danger, prohibition, and urgency, yellow functions as a marker of heightened awareness, whereas green means safety and desired behaviour. These visual conventions enable rapid recognition of risk before textual information is processed.

Pictograms constitute another important communicative resource. Warning triangles, skulls with crossbones and explosive hazard symbols, prohibition signs, arrows, sounds, and sequential

visual instructions communicate information across linguistic and educational boundaries. Their effectiveness is evident in communication aimed at children as well as individuals with learning disabilities and limited literacy.

Photographs and realistic visual representations strengthen message effectiveness. Images depicting typical mines, unexploded ordnance, booby traps, improvised explosive devices, contaminated landscapes, and safe behavioural practices provide concrete visual references that support hazard recognition in real-world environments. Similarly, infographics transform behavioural procedures into accessible visual sequences, reducing cognitive demands and improving comprehension and memory retention.

Awareness-raising activities that incorporate edutainment formats contribute to safer behavioural choices. UNICEF research (2024) found that adolescents who received mine-risk information through cartoons and activity books demonstrated the highest levels of safe behaviour, with 59% classified as low-risk and only 9% as high-risk. These findings support the view that multimodal EORE communication enhances attention, comprehension, behavioural response, and compliance with safety recommendations. Consequently, contemporary EORE materials function not merely as informational texts but as integrated communicative systems designed to influence perception, guide action, and strengthen individual and community resilience.

Conclusions. The study examined discursive and multimodal strategies employed in English- and Ukrainian-language Explosive Ordnance Risk Education materials. The findings demonstrate that EORE represents a specialized form of institutional risk communication aimed at promoting safe behaviour and reducing exposure to explosive hazards.

Three major communicative dimensions were identified: the construction of danger and behavioural regulation, the personalization and minimization of risk, and inclusive multimodal communication. These strategies operate together to increase risk awareness, support behavioural change, and improve access to safety information. The analysis shows that audiovisual resources play a crucial role in EORE communication. Future studies may explore audience responses to EORE materials and examine the effectiveness of digital and social-media-based risk education campaigns.

The comparison revealed that English-language materials generally employ more standardized and explanatory forms of risk communication, whereas Ukrainian-language materials demonstrate stronger contextualization and greater reliance on direct

behavioural guidance shaped by wartime realities.

Future research may expand the corpus of EORE materials, incorporate audience reception studies, and examine the effectiveness of digital communication formats, including social media campaigns, interactive learning platforms, and mobile applications used in humanitarian mine action.

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