

*Lukianets H. H.,**Associate Professor,**Head of Department of Foreign Languages for Professional Use**National University of Food Technologies**<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6244-3523>*

RHETORICAL APPEALS IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN ONLINE CHRISTMAS-THEMED GASTRONOMIC DISCOURSE

Summary. The article examines the use of Aristotelian rhetorical appeals – logos, ethos and pathos – in English and Ukrainian online Christmas-themed gastronomic discourse. The aim of the study is to determine how these appeals are constructed in festive media communication and what persuasive effects they produce on readers. The research material includes English-language and Ukrainian-language online commercials, pop-up advertisements, festive food descriptions, promotional texts on retailers' websites, and Christmas-related posts on gastronomic social media blogs. The methodology is based on qualitative semantic, cognitive, rhetorical and multimodal analyses, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how verbal and visual components jointly shape persuasive strategies.

The findings indicate that both linguistic communities frequently employ ethos to enhance cultural credibility, reinforce traditional values and establish trust between content creators and audiences through attitude markers, references to traditions, expert knowledge, cultural authority and engagement markers. Logos is realized through clear structure, rational argumentation, factual accuracy and coherence, guiding readers' decision-making in the context of festive consumption. It is common for many ads to appeal through clear structure, factual information, coherent argumentation and measurable data. Pathos is widely used to evoke emotions associated with Christmas celebrations, appealing to feelings of joy, comfort, nostalgia and anticipation, thus it is reinforced through emotionally colored vocabulary, sensory descriptions and language creating a festive atmosphere. The interaction of these appeals varies depending on the type and purpose of the discourse, revealing shared tendencies across English and Ukrainian media as well as culturally specific features of constructing persuasive Christmas gastronomic content.

Key words: rhetorical appeals, logos, ethos, pathos, English and Ukrainian gastronomic media discourse.

Problem statement. Starting from late November and all the way through December the topic of Christmas celebration takes over the media and is especially widely presented by various food blogs, ads, commercial and social media post in food retail, HoReCa and gastronomic sources, all of which are commonly known as food journalism [1, p. 39] or gastronomic discourse [2, p. 265–270]. The nature of online gastronomic discourse is multimodal, as verbal component aligns with visual and auditory representation, revealing deeper layers of context and creating stronger impact on the audience. From the practical side, the multimodal online gastronomic discourse not only aims to describe festive traditions

and food, but also affects readership's perception and shapes their behavior patterns via different rhetoric modes of persuasion: logos, ethos and pathos.

Previously, scholars have researched how digital rhetoric has changed present-day journalism [3, p. 60–66], as well as how applying diverse rhetorical appeals in social media marketing effects brand image [4, p. 699–718], how people respond to the rhetoric multimodal communication in political field [5, p. 327–352] and many more. However, there is an interest to conduct special comparative research of using rhetorical appeals in English and Ukrainian gastronomic media discourse to show similarities and differences of implementation of rhetoric modes of appeal and their impact on the readers.

This article **aims** to identify how three fundamental Aristotelian appeals – logos, ethos and pathos – are used in English and Ukrainian gastronomic media discourse and which effects they create on readership. The data to be analyzed includes Ukrainian-language and English-language Christmas commercials, pop-up ads, descriptions of holiday snacks, presents, dishes and drinks on websites of different producers. In addition, social media blogs that are dedicated to Christmas celebrations and traditions are analyzed. The research design employs qualitative semantic, cognitive and rhetorical, and multimodal analyses by providing a complete picture of how narrators, creators and brands adapt the role of different rhetorical devices in varying Christmas contexts.

Research results. For Christian community around the world, Christmas has always been a sacred holiday to celebrate birth of Christ as well as a great occasion to get together with families and friends and share a festive meal. In the past, many people observed the Nativity Fast, which preceded the holiday; so, this was the time to abstain from certain foods in order to spiritually cleanse oneself and prepare to God's coming. The contrast in the eating practices prior to and following Christmas was stunning, highlighting the value of the event and causing joy and happiness around in a convivial atmosphere of festive meal [6].

Nowadays, following fasting tradition may vary depending on the region, while it is still not rare to see Western Ukrainians observing the fast, many others may give up. Nevertheless, both for those who strictly adhere to Christian traditions and those who have abandoned them, a Christmas meal is a specific thing. It is not just a more substantial meal served on returning from church, but a well-thought-out deliciously-cooked set of dishes shared with the closest people in the atmosphere of magic, brotherhood, joy and hope. In Ukraine, it is usually called Ukr. “Свята Вечеря” (Eng. *Holy Supper*) or Ukr. “Багата кутя” (Eng. *Rich Kutia*) [7], while in

English “Christmas”, “Christmas Eve”, “Xmas” are common denominations of the celebration.

There are two main domains of food-related topics, verbalized in English and Ukrainian gastronomic discourse: dining customs and dishes. Unlike wide-spread descriptions of everyday meals and casual dishes which draw much attention to healthiness, ease of cooking and practicality, the way festive ones are presented in English-language and Ukrainian-language gastronomic discourse may vary slightly. On top of the above-mentioned features, it is common to use vocabulary to convey festive atmosphere and the spirit of magic during festivities. Social media blogs are often more descriptive, so they provide an outline of traditions, customs and house decorations, while ads and commercials illustrate dishes or their key ingredients. Thus, rhetorical modes of appeal will change greatly depending on the source and type of the data provided.

Description of dining customs include table setting, dining etiquette, ethnic beliefs, cultural norms and are widely presented both as new and ancient practices, nominated with vocabulary related to food in English and Ukrainian gastronomic discourse. By its nature, this type of content mostly appeals to *ethos*, making the arguments more credible to the audience [3, p. 62] by using attitude markers, enhancing a sense of credibility and utilizing engagement markers.

To provide a clear example of ethical appeal in Ukrainian-language gastronomic discourse it is vital to analyze how using wheat/rye-ears, hay and straws for Christmas house decoration, associated with sacred values, including harvest, land fertility and satiety, is described in blogposts. There is a long-lasting tradition in Ukrainian rural areas to put straw under the Christmas table and hay under tablecloth [7], placed there to remind people that Jesus was born in a stable. Though popular in Central and Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Croatia, and Lithuania, this tradition is not characteristic of Christmas traditions in the US or the UK. Along with that people in Ukraine place Ukr. *Дідух* (Eng. *Didukh*) in the most honorable corner of the house, where icons are usually located, as a festive amulet in the form of a sheaf of the first harvest, which symbolizes the spirit of ancestors, abundance, harvest, food security, family unity, and well-being. The latter used to be an old pagan rural sacred practice, but is now a cherished reviving tradition in urban environment; thus, multiple internet blogs organize workshops to teach how to make it. On the verbal level appeal to ethics is reinforced by noun adjective collocations which are either explicit (e.g. *солом'яний оберіг* [8]) or implied **attitude makers** (e.g. *незабутній атрибут, багатий врожай* [9], *добрий врожай, подяка богам*). Additionally, the journalists enhance the **sense of credibility** by relating to the ancestors (e.g. *Його виготовляли ще наші пращури, котрі були хліборобами*. [9]) and longevity of this tradition (e.g. *віковічна, з давніх давен* [8]). Often, news articles increase perceived credibility by including citations taken from ethnographic research papers or appeal to renowned scientists in the field (e.g. *Як розповіла співробітниця Центру історії Вінниці Марія Куряча, на Поділлі також поширена традиція виготовлення дідуха, хоча для нашого – і для більшості регіонів України – більш притаманна назва “дід” або просто сніп*. [10]) or giving references to Ukrainian literature texts that described this tradition (e.g. *На покуті стояв дідух – великий сніп із житнього або вівсяного колосся, убраний стрічками й квітами – Михайло Коцюбин-*

ський «Тіні забутих предків»). Finally, the **engagement markers** in articles like these are the step-by-step instructions and tutorials how to do *Дідух* on your own (e.g. *Щоб власноруч виготовити дідуха, знадобляться ...* [11]; *Для тих, хто хоче самостійно створити святковий оберіг, ми публікуємо покрокову інструкцію: ...* [8]). Consequently, choosing the appropriate language authors of the news articles and blogs appeal to *ethos*, convincing their readership in vitality of the tradition.

To compare, in the English-speaking gastronomic discourse there is also a great share of texts connected with house and table decoration for Christmas; however, the focus in these texts is less on ancient pagan traditions, but predominantly on colors and treats used as ornaments. Appeal to *ethics* in this case is done using references to cultural and historical authority, referring to expert knowledge, established-practices and authenticity, and employing engagement markers to guide the readers.

To illustrate this point, it is worth noting that in many countries decorating the Christmas table is an important part of creating a festive atmosphere. Both in the UK and the USA red, green, gold and white colors are used for table dressing and décor. They are believed to be not only traditional, but also symbolic colors: green stands for life; red for the blood of Christ, warmth and joy; gold for light, glory and wealth; white for purity and peace. Food-related items used for decorations include those connected with spices, e.g. *“napkins tied with a ribbon and a sprig of rosemary”*, *“bowls filled with cranberries”*, *“citrus fruits such as oranges and cloves”*. The following extract from Bless'er House Blog gives detailed instructions on how to create hand-made food decorations: *I used 5 oranges from my grocery store and turned them into pomanders by piercing whole cloves into different designs in their peels. Pomegranates, cranberries, figs, or pears would work beautifully too* [12]. Lexemes denoting fruits and spice in the forementioned extract appeal to the visual and flavor sensations of the readers and add to the brighter perception of the setting, creating the mindfulness and being fully-engaged effect. The ethical appeal in the gastronomic articles is also reinforced by **referencing cultural and historical sources** (e.g. *The lavish use of gold in cooking dates back at least to medieval Europe, but its appeal is all in the bling, writes Adelaide culinary historian Barbara Santich*. [13]), making the arguments more credible and trustworthy. Additionally, there is much connection with **expert knowledge** and popular **media people's opinions**, such as a popular Instagram blogger Chesney Terry (e.g. *For decoration, consider a winter theme by using white icing to mimic snow, then add candies and edible glitter for a sparkling effect*. [14]). On the verbal level, usage of attitude markers is often realized in the form of opinion adjectives and adverbs, such as *notably, undeniably, characteristically, authentically, historically*. Thus, similarly to Ukrainian-language gastronomic discourse in English-language one, ethical appeal is established by referring to authenticity and authority of public figures or scientists who have researched Christmas traditions; however, in Ukrainian discourse there is huge connection with agrarian cycles, while in English practice the focus is on color symbolism.

Description of dishes or the ingredients to them is widely presented in Christmas promotion materials of Ukrainian-language and English-language gastronomic discourse and make unusual combination of rational and emotional appeal, in other words logos and pathos. **Logical appeals** aim to persuade the audience by providing reliable facts, credible evidences and even data

and statistics. The information in the ads, commercials and retailers' websites is provided in such a way that ensures clarity, coherence, meaningful logical structure [3, p. 64], so that the potential customers would prefer this deal better than the other.

The texts build logical appeal through facts and numbers, for example, Macy's, the USA huge retailer chain not only offers "On-time Christmas Delivery", "Best price guarantee" and "Easy extended returns" for its customers, but also "Get 30 % off macys.com purchases today when you open a Macy's card. Discount in store varies. Save up to \$100" [15], encouraging them to buy more festive goods, ornaments, house decorations and gifts. Logical appeal in these examples is reinforced by adjectives "on-time", "best", "easy", and numeral collocations "get 30 % off", "save up to \$100".

Similarly, on the website of Ukrainian food retailer АТБ there is an ad, promising up to 40 % discount on sweets and gift sets: "Новорічні знижки в АТБ: до -40 % на солодоці та подарункові набори. Тільки з 03.12.2025 по 09.12.2025 в мережі магазинів АТБ стартують великі новорічні знижки. Це чудова можливість вигідно купити новорічні подарунки для дітей і дорослих, підготуватися до свят та наповнити святковий стіл за доступною ціною [16]". This promo strengthens appeal to logos via using the concrete numbers (до -40 %) and measurable data (з 03.12.2025 по 09.12.2025), encouraging the customers to calculate the benefit; additionally, it has clear cause-effect logic or in other words rational argument (If there are large discounts, you can buy gifts and prepare for the holidays at a lower cost) and emphasizes practical benefit ("вигідно купити", "за доступною ціною").

Sometimes in Ukrainian-language gastronomic discourse logical appeal may blend up with pathos, i.e. appeal to emotions. To illustrate this point, here is an example of slogan by Ukrainian Foods and Goods Retailer "Сільпо" which says "Радісні знижки до 50 %" (Eng. *Up to 50 % off — celebrate with joy!*) [17], so, the logical fact about possibility to receive a discount is amplified by the denomination of emotions that customers might experience, namely joy or happiness.

The writers construct *pathos* by appealing to readers' feelings using emotionally-colored vocabulary. This is exemplified by the Christmas slogan of a popular Ukrainian food retailer METRO which says "METRO на варті святкового настрою. Товари для сервірування та частування" (Eng. *METRO guarding your festive spirit. Items for serving and entertaining*). This slogan evokes positive emotions of joy, warmth of a family Christmas gathering, as well as anticipation of upcoming cheerful celebration. Additionally, it creates a sense of protection and care by addressing to the basic need of safety using phrase "на варті" and builds a comforting, reassuring atmosphere which is currently not only an extremely sensitive topic for Ukrainian society, but also greatly valued and appreciated one.

Likewise, in English-language gastronomic discourse appeal to pathos is a common case. A few ways to build emotional appeal is via using nouns denoting emotions which customers will surely experience when preparing for celebrations, cooking or feasting. For instance, Abel&Cole, the UK organic food supplier encourages its prospective clients to "Unbox joy this Christmas. Celebrate the festive season with a delicious Christmas dinner. From tender, high-welfare roasts to handmade trimmings and organic fruit & veg. We're serving up Christmas food that'll keep you coming back for more" [18]. First and foremost, the supplier promises feeling of joy

explicitly ("*unbox joy*"); secondly, the advert creates a warm festive atmosphere ("*Celebrate the festive season*", "*Christmas dinner*"); and thirdly, the author uses sensory and appetizing language to appeal to people's sense of satiety, comfort and fullness ("*delicious Christmas dinner*", "*tender, high-welfare roasts*", "*handmade trimmings*", "*organic fruit & veg*"). Consequently, this ad has strong persuasive effect on public.

Conclusions and further research. Given the points mentioned above, Christmas related content of Ukrainian-language and English-language gastronomic discourse appeals to three modes of persuasion, namely ethos, logos and pathos in order to render a festive atmosphere, encourage readers to follow traditions, and convince prospective clients to buy more goods. Different appeals are used depending on the topic described either dining customs or dishes, and the source and type of the data provided. Further research may investigate how additional temporal dimensions (chronos and kairos) shape persuasive strategies in online gastronomic discourse, as well as how these temporal appeals function across different cultural contexts and digital platforms.

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Лук'янець Г. Риторичні засоби впливу в англomовному та україномовному онлайн-гастрономічному дискурсі на різдвяну тематику

Анотація. У статті досліджується використання аристотелівських риторичних апеляцій – логосу, етосу й пафосу – в англomовному та україномовному онлайн-гастрономічному дискурсі на різдвяну тематику. Метою дослідження є визначити, як ці риторичні засоби впливу використовуються у святковій медіакомунікації та які ефекти вони справляють на читачів. Матеріалом слугували англomовні та україномовні онлайн-реклами, спливаючі оголошення, описи святкових страв, промотексти на сайтах рітейлерів та різдвяні пости гастрономічних блогів у соціальних мережах. Методологія ґрунтується на якісному семантичному, когнітивному, риторичному та мультимодальному аналізах, що дозволяє всебічно дослідити, як вербальні й візуальні компоненти спільно

формують стратегії переконання.

Результати свідчать, що обидві мовні спільноти активно використовують етос для підсилення культурної довіри, утвердження традиційних цінностей і вибудовування довіри між авторами та аудиторією через маркери ставлення, посилення на традиції, експертні знання, культурний авторитет і маркери залучення. Логос реалізується через чітку структуру, раціональну аргументацію, фактичну точність і когерентність, спрямовуючи вибір читачів у контексті святкового споживання. Багато авторів рекламних матеріалів звертаються до логосу через структурованість, фактичність, логічну узгодженість та вимірювані дані. Пафос широко застосовується для пробудження емоцій, пов'язаних із різдвяними святкуваннями, апелюючи до радості, комфорту, ностальгії й очікування; він посилюється емоційно забарвленою лексикою, сенсорними описами та мовленням, що створює святкову атмосферу. Взаємодія цих риторичних засобів впливу залежить від типу й мети дискурсу, виявляючи спільні тенденції в англomовних і україномовних медіа, а також культурно специфічні особливості формування переконливого різдвяного гастрономічного контенту.

Ключові слова: риторичні засоби впливу, логос, етос, пафос, англomовний і україномовний гастрономічний медіадискурс.

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