

# Linguistic Means of Speech Manipulation in the Discourse of Modern German-Language Media<sup>1</sup>

I. S. Kashenkova

Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University)

**Abstract.** This article touches upon the problem of identifying and analysing speech manipulation in the texts of the German-speaking media. The media determines linguistic and cultural pictures of the world, so the analysis of media language will help to establish trends of influence on the cognitive consciousness of society. In today's geopolitical environment, the basic functions of the media transform, as it uses specific techniques of speech manipulation to achieve informational and emotive effectiveness, allowing for the distortion of the cognitive perception of information by the audience. The material for this study was German-language media texts, selected by means of a total sampling and semantic-syntactic analysis. The relevance of the study lies in its linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The author states that in the conditions of information pollution all the participants of communication should be able to identify speech manipulation in a text, qualify information in terms of its significance or reliability, and to the risks of exposure to manipulative actions. Taking the peculiarities of speech manipulation methods used in the modern German-language media texts into account, the recipient must have sufficient interpretational competence to allow him or her to overcome the barriers that prevent the identification and mental comprehension of the means of speech manipulation in the texts of foreign-language publications. The main purpose of this study is to remove some difficulties in the perception of information in German-language media text by presenting signs of indirect pressure and speech manipulation in them. To this end, the article classifies the basic techniques of speech manipulation in terms of linguistic analysis, and also justifies the expediency of forming interpretative competence in the sphere of epistemic vigilance. We argue that this competence is effective when it comes to levelling the negative impact of the discourse of German-language media on the cognitive consciousness of the audience.

**Keywords:** infodemic, involution, cognitive practices, German-language media, translation, discourse, linguistic means, speech manipulation, epistemological vigilance

---

<sup>1</sup> English translation from the Russian text: Kashenkova I. S. 2023. Linguistic Means of Speech Manipulation in the Discourse of Modern German-Language Media. *Linguistics & Polyglot Studies*. 9(1). P. 8–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24833/2410-2423-2023-1-34-8-21>.

The interactive nature of thought and communication generates a number of specific side effects. These include, in particular, the production of unreliable and/or distorted information – the spread of fake news and disinformation, the planting of conspiracy theories and destructive imperatives, the creation of prank culture and post-truth politics, and other methods of information pollution. The disorientating effect of this kind of communication and the lack of the necessary skills on the part of the consumer to critically interpret it and predict the psychological impact of such an interpretation have led to the emergence and popularization of the concept of “infodemic”. This phenomenon describes the “rapid and uncontrolled dissemination in new media of unfounded and false information about crises, which increases public anxiety” (Borhsenius 2021: 54). This term was introduced into wide use a few years ago by Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Ghebreyesus to describe the unprecedented spread of false information about the COVID-19 pandemic and calling on the world to fight it: “We’re not just fighting a pandemic, we’re fighting an infodemic”.<sup>2</sup> Today, the huge flow of this kind of information product has, as a result of certain events in recent decades related, among other things, to the open confrontation between Russia and the West, reached a critical point. The problematization of this phenomenon thus seems appropriate.

The change in the conceptual meaning of such concepts as “truth” and “fact”, as well as the manifestation in these concepts of the characteristic properties of the category of “relativity” has created the prerequisites for the emergence of a new type of communication in the socio-political and media space – namely, the provision of information through the “post-truth” mechanism, which modern researchers define as a “new mechanism for the formation of public opinion” (Garbuznyak 2019: 185). We used total sampling and semantic-syntactic analysis techniques to analyse more than two hundred texts that appeared in the German media. What we found was that the language is constructed in such a way that it may distort the cognitive perception of the information by the recipient. In the past, the German-language media was noted for its real and impartial analysis of political and economic events at home and abroad. Now, the media, including German-speaking news outlets, try to present information as quickly and sensationally as possible in order to make money out of it, and to make the “big capital” that controls the media holdings happy, which often involves fabricating circumstances in order to manipulate public consciousness and sway the opinions of their audience.

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the methods of speech manipulation and argue for the need to employ certain cognitive practices that remove some difficulties in the perception of information in German-language media texts. The theoretical and practical significance of this study lies in its potential in the context of the

<sup>2</sup> Wir kämpfen gegen eine Infodemie. 2020. *Science.ORF*. 18.02.2020. URL: <https://science.orf.at/stories/3200038/> (accessed 15.11.2023).

infodemic and post-truth politics of the new German-language media to identify the mechanisms of speech manipulation, increase awareness of the cognitive behaviour of recipients, and reduce the negative impact of unreliable and/or distorted information on cognitive consciousness and the formation of public opinion.

### Research Methodology

For this study, we used publications that appeared in the German-language media between 2014 and 2022, specifically in the newspapers and magazines *Der Spiegel*, *Die Welt*, *Tageszeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Focus*, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and on the websites [www.pi-news.net](http://www.pi-news.net), [www.br.de](http://www.br.de), [www.zdf.de](http://www.zdf.de), [www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de), [www.faz.net](http://www.faz.net), [www.welt.de](http://www.welt.de), [www.bild.de](http://www.bild.de), [www.ostsee-zeitung.de](http://www.ostsee-zeitung.de), [www.rnd.de](http://www.rnd.de), among others. These publications were chosen primarily because they are national and the largest or most popular news sources in Germany. It is precisely the influence that these publications have on public consciousness that was of interest to us.

We used in-depth text analysis techniques, which involves a semantic and syntactic analysis of the structural units of speech fragments, to analyse more than two hundred texts that appeared in the German media. Total sampling was employed at the initial stage to identify publications in which information presented was incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete. Next, for all the publications, we identified the main methods of speech organization employed at various levels (lexical, grammatical, etc.) to manipulate public consciousness and opinion. Additionally, we used the semantic-cognitive approach to carry out a linguistic analysis of the mechanisms of speech manipulation in new media. We also attempted to make sense of the reasons why certain barriers exist that prevent us from identifying and critically analysing the methods of speech manipulation used in foreign publications. Further, we formulated and substantiated a thesis about the need to develop sufficient interpretative competencies in the recipient so that they can evaluate information for its reliability (or lack thereof) and predict the psychological risks they may face when encountering material produced for unscrupulous purposes. Finally, we propose certain cognitive practices that facilitate the differentiation of speech manipulations in the German-language media.

### Results and Analysis

We should note first of all that, in the past, German-speaking journalists adhered to the principles of journalistic ethics and professionalism. They never offered their own opinions or assessments of the events they were describing, nor did they speculate about how things might unfold; they merely informed their readers about what was happening. Germany adopted its Ethical Standards for Journalism in the second

half of the last century. It requires journalists to respect the truth, maintain objectivity, provide reliable information to the public and be attentive to issues that may cause excessive excitement and/or panic among readers<sup>3</sup>.

However, the modern geopolitical reality, the cognitive paradigm of the conceptualization of which is to some extent the information policy of post-truth, has led to the transformation of media discourse: it is quicker and easier than ever before to post a news item, a fact that has given journalists less time, or made them less inclined, to fact check what they are writing; and the fact that people spend less time reading newspapers, magazines and news sites means that journalists have greater freedom when it comes to using emotionally expressive language and providing their own opinion on events, and they thus offer subjective takes and deliberately distort words and meanings.

The functional nature of information communication implies the existence of unavoidable risks of encountering an unreliable and/or distorted information product, the formal features of which are a violation of the quality and completeness of information. The conscious degradation of the presentation of information may be a result of deliberate verbal manipulation of the consciousness and beliefs of the consumer of information. V. Z. Demyankov talks about “the contagiousness of ideas, sometimes not quite (and very often not at all) correctly understood in other people’s texts [...] use manipulation to try and achieve political or personal goals” (Dem’iankov 2018: 49). At the same time, according to G. A. Kopnina, “knowledge of the mechanisms and techniques of speech manipulation helps you interpret information in a more deliberate manner” and thus become a more active and responsible consumer of information<sup>4</sup>.

Linguists have long searched for an adequate reflection of the dialectic of relationship between language and thought, of how a statement can impact a person’s consciousness<sup>5</sup> (Baranov 1986; Paducheva 2002; Chudinov 2003), Linguistic research dealt with such semantic categories as language (speech) demagoguery, language (speech) aggression, language (speech) violence, and language (speech) manipulation<sup>6</sup> (Bykova 1999). Researchers often regard these phenomena as similar, recognizing them as related forms of linguistic influence. We will also treat these concepts as different variants of speech influence in this paper, studying *speech manipulation* as a special form of speech behaviour. While we accept the justification for the existence of alternative

<sup>3</sup> Ethische Standards Für Den Journalismus [Ethical Standards for Journalism]. URL: [www.presserat.de/pressekodex](http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex) (accessed 30.07.2022).

<sup>4</sup> Kopnina G. A. 2012. Rechevoe manipulirovanie: uchebnoe posobie [Speech Manipulation: A Textbook]. Moscow: Flinta. P. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Leontev A. A. 2004. Psikhologiya vozdeistviia v massovoi kommunikatsii [Psychology of Influence in Mass Communication]. *Iazyk SMI kak ob`ekt mezhdisciplinarnogo issledovaniia: Ucheb. posobie*. Moscow. P. 97–107.

<sup>6</sup> Zav`ialova O.N. 2003. Rechevoe (iazykovoe) manipulirovanie [Speech (Language) Manipulation]. In *Kul`tura russkoi rechi: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'-spravochnik*. Moscow: Flinta. Nauka; Ermakova T. A. 2000. K voprosu o sposobakh manipulirovaniia obshchestvennym soznaniem (Iz nabludenii nad iazykom sovremennoi gazety) [On the Methods of Manipulating Public Consciousness (From Observations on the Language of a Modern Newspaper)]. *Ritoricheskaja kul`tura v sovremennom obshchestve: Tezisy IV Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii po ritorike, 26–28 ianvaria 2000 g.* Moscow. P. 62–63.

terminology, we give preference to this concept, since, like some researchers, we believe that it most accurately defines the phenomenon of hidden linguistic influence, since “it is obvious that language means are manipulated in speech. Manipulation is a speech phenomenon, and we ought to talk about speech manipulations as techniques employed by speakers when speaking”<sup>7</sup> (Nefedova 1997: 8). In this study, we will adhere to the formulation of G. A. Kopnina, who defines speech manipulation as a form of “manipulative influence carried out through the skilful use of certain language resources in order to subtly influence the cognitive and behavioural activity of the addressee/listener/reader” (Kopnina 2012: 24). In mass media discourse, verbal manipulative actions are not typically aggressive in form, because the recipient is not supposed to notice the intended impact of the information (!), and are associated with the use of special methods of speech organization in the text. Using G. A. Kopnina’s definition, we will look consider “methods of selection, location of information or features of its presentation” as speech techniques (Kopnina 2012: 64).

These techniques are employed at various levels (lexical, grammatical, etc.), but special attention is paid to lexical means that contribute to the use of speech manipulation. Such techniques include “labelling” and the use of defamatory suppositions, keywords and political affectives, or “slogans” (Kashenkova 2020: 8): “*Kremelchef Wladimir Putin hat dem Diktator Alexander Lukaschenko das Raketensystem Iskander-M zugesagt*” (“Russian President Vladimir Putin has promised Iskander-M missile systems to Belarusian **dictator** Aleksandr Lukashenko”)<sup>8</sup>; “*Putins makabre Mathematik des Todes*” (“Putin’s **macabre** mathematics of **death**”)<sup>9</sup>; “*Schoßhunde von Putin’ – Kretschman greift die AfD an*” (“Putin’s **henchmen**’ – Winfried Kretschmann attacks representatives of the AfD”)<sup>10</sup>.

Euphemisms are another widely used technique of speech manipulation. These are words or phrases that veil and/or conceal the essence of what is being said. For example, in an attempt to justify the plans to significantly increase the number of NATO troops deployed in Eastern Europe, the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* writes: “*Wir müssen die Verteidigung des Baltikums vorbereiten*” (“We must take it upon ourselves to **defend** the Baltic states”)<sup>11</sup>. Or, expressing contempt for people of their country who are willing to sacrifice the principles of democracy for such “bourgeois benefits” as

<sup>7</sup> Nefedova L. A. 1997. *Leksicheskie sredstva manipulativnogo vozdeistviia v povsednevnom obshchenii (na materiale sovremennogo nemetskogo iazyka): dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata filologicheskikh nauk [Lexical Means of Manipulative Influence in Everyday Communication (Based on Material of the Modern German Language)]*. Moscow.

<sup>8</sup> Kremelchef Wladimir Putin hat dem Diktator Alexander Lukaschenko das Raketensystem Iskander-M zugesagt. 2022. *Spiegel*. 25.06.2022. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/wladimir-putin-ruestet-alexander-lukaschenko-aus-ruessland-will-belarus-atomwaffenfaehige-raketen-liefern-a-255d89d6-7ad8-433a-a820-9d1a29403dda> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>9</sup> Putins makabre Mathematik des Todes. 2022. *RND*. 8.06.2022. URL: <https://www.rnd.de/politik/ukraine-krieg-putins-makabre-mathematik-des-todes-VLVN6VPU5NFSTAHTLO7V4HKYM.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>10</sup> Schoßhunde von Putin’ – Kretschman greift die AfD an. 2022. *Zeit*. 20.07.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/news/2022-07/20/kretschmann-greift-die-afd-an-schoesshunde-von-putin> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>11</sup> Wir müssen die Verteidigung des Baltikums vorbereiten. 2022. *Spiegel*. 02.07.2022. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/backstage/militaerhistoriker-soenke-neitzel-wir-muessen-die-verteidigung-des-baltikums-vorbereiten-a-ed930f05-4843-40c7-a706-71b75ffee485> (accessed 15.11.2023).

hot water, German-language news sites called them “weak-willed people”: “**Warmduscher**, zieht euch warm an!” (“**Weak-willed lovers of hot showers** had better dress warmly!”)<sup>12</sup>. Quasi-antonyms can often be used as euphemisms as well, smoothing out the “ugly” word with its opposite meaning. For example, emphasizing the secretiveness and vapid character of the new German Federal Chancellor, the German-language media write: “*Künftiger Kanzler Olaf Scholz: Der Unauffällige*” (“The **unremarkable** future chancellor Olaf Scholz”<sup>13</sup>). Or, noting the persistently low level of economic development of Germany’s eastern *Länder* 30 years after reunification, new media soften the real state of affairs in the country: “*Wirtschaft im Osten ist gut, aber nicht genug gut*” (“The economy in the East is good, but **not good enough**”)<sup>14</sup>.

Other well-known methods of speech manipulation through the use of vocabulary are impersonalization and generalization. In these cases, statements are formed without a specific subject (the pronouns “they” or “someone” are used), yet they refer to multiple people or groups, or everyone. For example, Russophobic statements have started to appear with increasing frequency in the German-language media: “*Sie sehen sich als Opfer: die Teilnahmslosigkeit der Russen*” (“**They** see themselves as victims: the indifference of **Russians**”)<sup>15</sup>. Or: “*Schriftsteller bitten: Russen sprechen Sie die Wahrheit aus!*” (“**Writers** plead with **Russians** to tell the truth!”)<sup>16</sup>. According to O. N. Bykova, such “uncertainty performs linguo-demagogic functions and ‘creates’ phantom members of society” (Bykova 1999: 19).

One part of grammar that often acts as a manipulative technique is nominalization – turning verbs into abstract noun. This technique helps give additional weight to the “necessary” information in certain situations, while at the same time depersonalizing it, eliminating the subject – the person or people whose point of view is being represented in the statement: “*Helfershelfer eines Kriegsverbrechers – Kritik an Putin-Nähe der AfD*” (“**Aiding** a War Criminal – **Criticism** of the AfD’s Closeness to Putin”); “*Nord Stream 1: Kein Grund zur Erleichterung*”<sup>17</sup> (“Nord Stream 1: No Reason to Relax” – this is in reference to the launch of the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline – *editor’s note*)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Warmduscher, zieht euch warm an! 2022. *PI-News*. 11.01.2022. URL: <https://www.pi-news.net/2022/01/warmduscher-zieht-euch-warm-an/> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>13</sup> Künftiger Kanzler Olaf Scholz: Der Unauffällige. 2021. *TAZ*. 4.12.2021. URL: <https://taz.de/Kuenftiger-Kanzler-Olaf-Scholz/!5816060/> (accessed 11.11.2023).

<sup>14</sup> Wirtschaft im Osten ist gut, aber nicht genug gut. 2020. *Spiegel*. 16.09.2020. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/deutsche-einheit-wirtschaft-im-osten-ist-laut-jahresbericht-zur-wiedervereinigung-gut-aber-nicht-gut-genug-a-1baa2a05-966d-410e-9ff7-ad822880f62b> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>15</sup> Sie sehen sich als Opfer: die Teilnahmslosigkeit der Russen. 2022. *Faz.net*. 10.07.2022. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/ukraine-krieg-russen-sehen-sich-als-hauptopfer-von-putins-regimes-18157915.html> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>16</sup> Schriftsteller bitten: Russen sprechen Sie die Wahrheit aus! 2022. *BR*. 9.03.2022. URL: <https://www.br.de/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> Helfershelfer eines Kriegsverbrechers – Kritik an Putin-Nähe der AfD. 2022. *Welt*. 2.05.2022. URL: <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article238498879/Helfershelfer-eines-Kriegsverbrechers-Kritik-an-Putin-Naehe-der-AfD.html> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>18</sup> Nord Stream 1: Kein Grund zur Erleichterung. 2022. *Tagesschau*. 21.07.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/>



Another typical example of speech manipulation at the grammatical level is rhetorical questions, which are an example of the discrepancy between the purpose of the statement and its external implementation. For example, fuelling public dissatisfaction with the lack of changes in climate protection legislation that the German government promised to implement years ago, journalists write: “**Halten die G7 ihre Klimazusagen?**” (“Will the G7 **deliver** on its **climate promises**”)<sup>19</sup>; “**Droht eine Grüne Armee Fraktion?**” (“Is there a **threat** of a green **fraction** being formed?”)<sup>20</sup> And, praising the decision of the Bundestag to introduce a subsidized travel card for 9 euros country-wide (which led to chaos, delays and overcrowded trains – *editor’s note*), while also drawing the reader’s attention to the story, the German media wrote: “**9-Euro-Ticket: Ab wann erhältlich? Wo kann ich es kaufen?**” (“When will the **9-Euro travel card** be available? Where can I buy one?”)<sup>21</sup>; “**9-Euro-Ticket: Warum der Rabatt für öffentlichen Nahverkehr dem Klima doch nützt?**” (“**9-Euro travel card**: How is the discount on public commuter transport good for the environment?”)<sup>22</sup>.

Speech manipulation can also be carried out using stylistic devices, the most common of which are metaphors, antithesis, and plays on proper names. By surreptitiously exerting subtle psychological pressure on the recipient, these stylistic devices build a certain picture of the world in his or her mind, offering them, in a veiled manner, a “special” view of the real state of affairs. According to A. P. Chudinov, “metaphor is a powerful means of transforming the political picture of the world that exists in the mind of the addressee, inducing him to certain actions and forming the emotional state necessary for them” (Chudinov 2003: 64). For example, while maintaining a positive attitude in society towards the policy of the new chancellor, whose approval rating has spiraled of late, journalists emphasize his decisiveness, steadfastness and reliability: “**Deutliche Kritik an Steinmeier-Ausladung: Scholz geht in die Offensive – und will erstmal nicht nach Kiew**” (“Clear criticism of Steinmeier’s refusal to make an official visit: Scholz **goes on the offensive**, and currently has no plans to go to Kyiv”)<sup>23</sup>; “**Scholz und seine Panzer-Zurückhaltung**” (“Scholz’s **tank-like restraint**”)<sup>24</sup> (this is in refer-

<sup>19</sup> Halten die G7 ihre Klimazusagen? 2022. *Tagesschau*. 18.07.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/petersberger-dialog-klimakrise-101.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>20</sup> Droht eine Grüne Armee Fraktion? 2022. *Faz.net*. 26.07.2022. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/radikale-klimaschuetzer-entsteht-eine-art-gruene-raf-18197973/polizisten-entfernen-18198526.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>21</sup> 9-Euro-Ticket: Ab wann erhältlich? Wo kann ich es kaufen? 2022. *RND*. 23.05.2022. URL: <https://www.rnd.de/politik/9-euro-ticket-ab-wann-erhaeltlich-wo-kann-ich-es-kaufen-die-wichtigsten-fragen-und-antworten-NA3GKNEIRFEJBAE-RT6l63VFFDQ.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>22</sup> 9-Euro-Ticket: Warum der Rabatt für öffentlichen Nahverkehr dem Klima doch nützt? 2022. *Spiegel*. 19.07.2022. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/auto/9-euro-ticket-warum-der-rabatt-fuer-oeffentlichen-nahverkehr-dem-klima-doch-nuetzt-a-4eb106b7-7b73-4059-a16f-1cea3d246ccd> (accessed 17.11.2023).

<sup>23</sup> Deutliche Kritik an Steinmeier-Ausladung: Scholz geht in die Offensive – und will erstmal nicht nach Kiew. 2022. *Tagesspiegel*. 3.05.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/scholz-geht-in-die-offensive--und-will-erstmal-nicht-nach-kiew-4327555.html> (accessed 17.11.2023).

<sup>24</sup> Scholz und seine Panzer-Zurückhaltung. 2022. *Spiegel*. 23.09.2022. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/olaf-scholz-und-seine-panzer-zurueckhaltung-der-weiter-so-kanzler-a-ecc3c98a-ba28-445d-9fa7-25f64da795f5> (accessed 10.11.2023).

ence to the German Chancellor's reluctance to send tanks to Ukraine – *editor's note*). Earlier, describing the latest round of televised debates between candidates for the post of Federal Chancellor of Germany, the German media had already created an image of Olaf Scholz as strong and self-assured in the minds of the audience, in contrast to his opponents, the “weak version of Angela Merkel” Armin Laschet and the loquacious Annalena Baerbock, who would often appear on various TV shows: “**Der Scholzomat siegte über das Merkel-Simulacrum und die Talkshow-Löwin**” (“Scholzomat triumphs over Merkel clone and talk show lioness”)<sup>25</sup>.

In media discourse, the technique of ideological opposition in the form of “we-they” is often used as a way to show antithesis – when vocabulary with a positive connotation is used to create a positive image of “us”, and negative words are used to form a negative image of the “enemy”. One example of this can be found in the statement of former Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen that made the rounds in the media when he demanded that the world community rally around Ukraine: “**Ihr Kampf ist unser Kampf: Ex-NATO Generalsekretär will Härte gegen Putin**” (“Their fight is our fight: former NATO General Secretary calls for a hardline response to Russia's actions”)<sup>26</sup>.

Researchers also point out the most frequently used *verbal manipulation tactics* used by the media. From the point of view of linguistic analysis, Y.V. Shcherbatykh refers to these as “concealment” – hiding information from the recipient (*Verschweigen*); “selection” – only showing information to the victorious manipulator (*Selektion*); “distortion” – the substitution of concepts (*Entstellung*); “insinuation” – mean-spirited narratives (*Insinuation*); and “constructing” – inventing information that simply does not exist (*Konstruieren*) (Shcherbatykh 2002: 113–114). Authors of articles often follow that principle that all you have to do for a lie to become the truth is to make it convincing enough. People forget quickly anyway, so one way to control the cognitive perception of information by the audience and shape its opinion is to provide as little background information as possible, or none at all, thus making it difficult for the recipient to navigate a complex issue. One example concerns the critical assessment in the German-language media of the agreement signed by Moscow and Kyiv on the export of grain from Ukraine, urging Kyiv not to trust Moscow's commitment to any agreement it has signed, pointing to supposed violations of the deal by the Russian side: “**Hafen von Odessa mit Raketen beschossen**” (“Port of Odessa shelled with rockets”)<sup>27</sup>; “**Putin führt die Weltgemeinschaft vor**” (“Putin is **mocking** the global community”)<sup>28</sup>; “**Russland räumt Angriff auf den Hafen von Odessa ein**” (“Russia **owns up** to

<sup>25</sup> Der Scholzomat siegte über das Merkel-Simulacrum und die Talkshow-Löwin. 2021. *RT.de*. 13.09.2021. URL: <https://de.rt.com/inland/124021-scholzomat-siegte-ueber-merkel-simulacrum-und-talkshow-loewin/> (accessed 17.11.2023).

<sup>26</sup> Ihr Kampf ist unser Kampf: Ex-NATO Generalsekretär will Härte gegen Putin. 2022. *N-TV.de*. 10.06.2022. URL: <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Ex-NATO-Generalsekretaer-will-Haerte-gegen-Putin-article23389804.html> (accessed 12.11.2023).

<sup>27</sup> Hafen von Odessa mit Raketen beschossen. 2022. *DW*. 24.07.2022. URL: <https://amp.dw.com/de/hafen-von-odessa-mit-raketen-beschossen/av-62579532> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>28</sup> Putin führt die Weltgemeinschaft vor. 2022. *Sueddeutsche*. 24.07.2022. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/putin-ukraine-russland-odessa-getreide-1.5626836> (accessed 12.11.2023).



attack on Port of Odessa”)<sup>29</sup>; “20 Stunden nach GetreideDeal – Putin **Raketenattake auf den Hafen von Odessa**” (“20 hours after the grain deal, Putin orders **rocket strike** on the Port of Odessa”)<sup>30</sup>. Yet not one of these sources mentions the real targets of these strikes – military infrastructure facilities. Nor do they note that these attacks had nothing to do with Russia’s obligations to ensure the export of Ukrainian grain.

We should note here that the existence of numerous kinds of variations of speech manipulations and combinations can complicate their identification and analysis. Examples of these kinds of combinations can be found in German-language articles that attempt to prepare their readers for an energy confrontation with Russia and a gas shortage at home. Numerous articles have been published that drill the deliberately false idea into the minds of readers that Russia is responsible for the energy crisis in Germany, and that something has to be done about the country’s energy dependence on Russian supplies: “**Energiesparen gegen Putin**” (“**Fight Putin by conserving energy**”)<sup>31</sup>; “**Kälter duschen gegen Putin: Wie Haushalte durch die Energiekrise kommen**” (“Fight Putin by taking cold showers: how households will overcome the energy crisis”)<sup>32</sup>; “**Wer Putin schaden will, spart Energie**” (“If you want to **hurt Putin, save energy**”)<sup>33</sup>. Some writers have gone to absurd lengths to try to discredit gas supplies from Russia: “**Sprecher von Nord Stream 2 war bei der Stasi**” (“Nord Stream 2 representative was a Stasi employee”)<sup>34</sup>; “**Erdgas: Warum Nord Stream-2 das Klima schädigt**” (“Natural gas: How Nord Stream 2 is **harming the environment**”)<sup>35</sup>. Equally ridiculous and thoroughly hypocritical is the advice of the German-language media on how to get through the energy crisis: “**Klospülung und Co.: So sparen Sie unkompliziert Wasser im Haushalt**” (“**Flushing and other ways to save: How to conserve water at home**”)<sup>36</sup>; “**Weniger duschen, Energiekosten senken, es genügt, DIESE vier Körperstellen zu waschen. Warum die Haut sich selbst reinigt, wenn man sie lässt**” (“**Shower less often, save on energy, and wash only THESE four body parts. How the skin self-**

<sup>29</sup> Russland räumt Angriff auf den Hafen von Odessa ein. 2022. *Zeit*. 24.07.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2022-07/odessa-angriff-russland-getreide> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>30</sup> 20 Stunden nach GetreideDeal – Putin Raketenattake auf den Hafen von Odessa. 2022. *Bild*. 23.07.2022. URL: <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/ukraine-krieg-putin-raketenattake-auf-den-hafen-von-odessa-am-tag-nach-getreide-80790140.bild.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>31</sup> Energiesparen gegen Putin. 2022. *Zeit*. 13.03.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2022-03/gasversorgung-russland-ukraine-krieg-embargo-energiesparen> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>32</sup> Kälter duschen gegen Putin: Wie Haushalte durch die Energiekrise kommen. 2022. *Berliner-Zeitung*. 24.06.2022. URL: <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/wirtschaft-verantwortung/kaelter-duschen-gegen-putin-wie-haushalte-durch-die-energiekrise-kommen-li.239838> (accessed 12.11.2023).

<sup>33</sup> Wer Putin schaden will, spart Energie. 2022. *Tagesschau*. 5.03.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/>

<sup>34</sup> Sprecher von Nord Stream 2 war bei der Stasi. 2022. *Ostsee-Zeitung*. 18.06.2022. URL: <https://www.ostsee-zeitung.de/mecklenburg-vorpommern/sprecher-von-nord-stream-2-war-bei-der-stasi-das-sagt-steffen-ebert-65GUMPR72RH DU-POERFZ7RRAP34.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>35</sup> Erdgas: Warum Nord Stream-2 das Klima schädigt. 2021. *Sueddeutsche*. 01.06.2021. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/meinung/nord-stream-2-ostseepipeline-klimaschutz-treibhaus-erdgas-russland-1.5309208> (accessed 12.11.2023).

<sup>36</sup> Klospülung und Co.: So sparen Sie unkompliziert Wasser im Haushalt. 2022. *RND*. 01.05.2022. URL: <https://www.rnd.de/geld-und-finanzen/wasser-sparen-das-kann-jeder-im-haushalt-ganz-einfach-umsetzen-QMCCET4KABE67MIIM7FFK3BU-VI.html> (accessed 10.11.2023).

cleanses when given the chance”)<sup>37</sup>; “Griechenland lädt ein: So schön kann **die Winterflucht** sein” (“Greece beckons: Escaping the winter can be wonderful”)<sup>38</sup>. These are clear distortions of facts and insinuations – knowing the real state of affairs, the authors of these articles deliberately create a false picture of the situation in the mind of the recipient.

Another example of a simple combination of various methods of speech manipulation, specifically, the selection and construction of information, can be found in the attempts to convince readers of Russia’s long-term international isolation. The use of photo-shopped images and doctored videos, along with hypocritical interpretations, is also common, as the examples of the 2014 G20 meeting in Brisbane, the 2017 meeting in Hamburg, and the 2022 meeting in Bali demonstrate. For example, in its coverage of the Brisbane meeting, a photo appeared in the German press of the Russian president sitting alone at a gala reception, with the following captions: “*Beim Barbecue am Mittag, wie symbolisch: **Putin einsam und verlassen***” (“A noon barbecue, Putin sits **alone and abandoned**. How symbolic”)<sup>39</sup>; „*Zu beobachten des Mittags beim gemeinsamen Barbecue: der einsame Putin*“ (“At a joint noon barbecue: Putin sits alone”)<sup>40</sup>; “Ein Bild, das Bände spricht: Putin allein zu Tisch!” (“A picture is worth a thousand words: Putin sits alone at the table!”)<sup>41</sup>. But, in reality, despite what the German-language media would have you believe, the Russian President was not sitting alone at the table, as the former President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff, as well as other heads of state, were sat next to him. But the photo was edited in such a way that they were not visible, and it thus looked like Putin was “isolated”. Coverage of the 2017 summit again involved the use of well-established methods of manipulating public consciousness: “*Putin und der große Bluff*” (“Putin’s big bluff”)<sup>42</sup>; “*Russland: Etwas läuft hier schief*” (“Russia: **Something’s not right** here”)<sup>43</sup>; “*Das sei 2014 in Australien mit Wladimir Putin schon einmal schief gegangen: Der musste dann auch seine Grillwurst **allein** am Tisch essen*” (“Putin had a **rough time** of it in Australia in 2014 and then had to eat his grilled sausage

<sup>37</sup>Weniger duschen, Energiekosten senken, es genügt, diese vier Körperstellen zu waschen. Warum die Haut sich selbst reinigt, wenn man sie lässt. 2022. *Bild*. 16.04.2022. URL: [https://www.bild.de/bild-plus/ratgeber/2021/ratgeber/dermatologin-erklart-es-genuegt-diese-vier-koerperstellen-zu-waschen-77430626.bild.html?t\\_ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](https://www.bild.de/bild-plus/ratgeber/2021/ratgeber/dermatologin-erklart-es-genuegt-diese-vier-koerperstellen-zu-waschen-77430626.bild.html?t_ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F) (accessed 14.11.2023).

<sup>38</sup> Griechenland lädt ein: So schön kann die Winterflucht sein. 2022. *Spiegel*. 14.06.2022. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/reise/europa/griechenland-laedt-deutsche-ein-so-schoen-kann-die-winterflucht-sein-a-bf645ae0-d368-496d-a934-25d09f3091f3> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>39</sup> Beim Barbecue am Mittag, wie symbolisch: Putin einsam und verlassen. 2014. *Tagesschau*. 17.11.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/>

<sup>40</sup> Zu beobachten des Mittags beim gemeinsamen Barbecue: der einsame Putin. 2014. *Tagesschau*. 16.11.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/tagesthemen>

<sup>41</sup> Ein Bild, das Bände spricht: Putin allein zu Tisch! 2014. WDR. 16.11.2014. URL: <https://www1.wdr.de/index.html>

<sup>42</sup> Putin und der große Bluff. 2017. *Zeit*. 06.06.2017. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-07/g20-wladimir-putin-russland-donald-trump-hamburg-macht> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>43</sup> Russland: Etwas läuft hier schief. 2018. *Zeit*. 28.01.2018. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2018/05/russland-deutschland-beziehung-krim-annexion-russlandpolitik> (accessed 10.01.2023).

alone”)<sup>44</sup>. The 2022 summit, more photos, and fresh attempts by the German press to portray the representatives of the Russian delegation as “international pariahs”: “G20 auf Bali: Lawrow und *der Rest der Welt*” (“The Bali G20 meeting: Lavrov and **the rest of the world**”)<sup>45</sup>; “G20-Treffen: Baerbock **setzt auf Isolierung Russlands**” (“G20 Meeting: Foreign Minister Baerbock **seeks to isolate Russia**”)<sup>46</sup>; “Lawrow verlässt G20-Treffen: Baerbock sieht **19:1 gegen Russland**” (“Lavrov leaves G20 Summit: **19 to 1**”)<sup>47</sup>. These statements by the German media are absolute fiction, since they have been refuted by countless other sources, in particular the statement of the Russian Ambassador in Indonesia Lyudmila Vorobyova and the photographs posted by her that confirm the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov held a number of “productive meetings with colleagues from other countries”<sup>48</sup>.

Coming back to the ability of recipients to differentiate verbal manipulative actions, we should note the existence of other *barriers* that impede the natural process of perception and the proper evaluation and interpretation of the incoming information flow. In addition to the truly massive amount of external information, we, as consumers of information, may feel a lack of objective knowledge and interpretative skills that would give us a deep understanding of incoming information and thus allow us to make out own value judgements about its reliability. But at the same time, the recipient may not even be aware that such cognitive activity is needed, since trusting experts to deliver knowledge is cognitively less taxing than having to critically evaluate knowledge oneself. For example, the people of Germany found themselves in a situation where several German-language publications deliberately tried to undermine public confidence in mass vaccination against COVID-19 by citing various pseudo-expert assessments of the ineffectiveness of the jab and referring to imaginary evidence of the allegedly high mortality rate among the vaccinated population: “*Massenimpfungen gegen COVID-19: Belgischer Impfexperte warnt vor “katastrophalen Auswirkungen*”

<sup>44</sup> Das sei 2014 in Australien mit Wladimir Putin schon einmal schief gegangen: Der musste dann auch seine Grillwurst allein am Tisch essen. 2017. *Tagesschau*. 01.07.2017. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/>

<sup>45</sup> G20 auf Bali: Lawrow und der Rest der Welt. 2022. *Sueddeutsche*. 07.07.2022. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/g20-gipfel-bali-aussenminister-lawrow-1.5616079?reduced=true> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>46</sup> G20-Treffen: Baerbock setzt auf Isolierung Russlands. 2022. *Berliner Zeitung*. 07.07.2022. URL: <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik-gesellschaft/g20-treffen-baerbock-setzt-auf-isolierung-russlands-li.244247> (accessed 17.11.2023).

<sup>47</sup> Lawrow verlässt G20-Treffen: Baerbock sieht 19:1 gegen Russland. 2022. *Faz.net*. 08.07.2022. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/g-20-gipfel-auf-bali-lawrow-verlaesst-treffen-vor-baerbock-rede-18158686.html#:~:text=Lawrow%20verl%C3%A4sst%20G%2D20%2DTreffen,sieht%2019%3A1%20gegen%20Russland&text=Beim%20Treffen%20der%20G20%20in,auf%20Dauer%20nicht%20sichern%20k%C3%B6nnen>. (accessed 17.11.2023).

<sup>48</sup> Posol Vorob'ova: vo vremia vstrechi G20 na Bali vznikla ochered' na peregovory s Lavrovym [Ambassador Vorobyov: There Was a Line for Talks with Lavrov During the G20 meeting in Bali]. 2022. *RIA Novosti*. 19.07.2022. URL: <https://ria.ru/20220719/peregovory-1803355797.html> (accessed 26.07.2022).

(“Mass vaccination against COVID-19: Belgian **expert warns** of “catastrophic consequences”)<sup>49</sup>; “Corona-Impfung: 7 von 10 Ärzten gegen Impfpflicht” (“**Seven out of ten** doctors are against mandatory vaccination against the coronavirus”)<sup>50</sup>.

Additionally, attempts to identify speech manipulation in the media and instantly qualify information as unreliable and/or inaccurate may be hindered by a combination of important nuances in the communication process itself, such as an insufficient amount of verbal/non-verbal information in the media text, the distortion and loss of important information through the respective communication channels (video and radio communications, the internet, etc.), the psychological fear of being deceived what this may entail, and other unfavourable conditions for the provision and perception of information.

For example, S. V. Evteev believes the maximal allowable length of headlines in the German-language media poses a significant translation difficulty, as it does not allow any kind of “comment or necessary background information” to be included (Evteev 2021: 115). Following the rules of how to write headlines, we notice that they typically contain the main idea of the text only, leaving much unsaid (understatement), which thus entices the recipient to read the material. This cannot but affect the completeness of the picture formed in the mind of the recipient, a fact that is of course exploited by unscrupulous journalists: “*Leuchtendes Beispiel?*” (“**A brilliant example?**”)<sup>51</sup> (on government calls to save energy and whether they are a good example of this kind of saving); “*Schuld sind die anderen*” (“Others are to blame”)<sup>52</sup> (on attempts by the Bavarian State Government to divert attention from the failures of its energy policy); “*Die Taliban im Kreml*” (“**The Taliban in the Kremlin**”)<sup>53</sup> (on the current political situation in Russia).

Another technique that is often used to create this sense of understatement is the inclusion of a hidden subtext in articles, specifically prepositions and postpositions, vague and fragmented information, half-hints and additional meanings: “*Milch-Mythos: Das irre Geschäft der Molkereien*” (“The milk myth: The Crazy Dairy Business”)<sup>54</sup>; “*Es gibt keine Corona-Leugner, nur arrogante Minister!*” (“There are no Covid dissidents, **only arrogant ministers!**”)<sup>55</sup>. Certain difficulties in the perception and interpretation of information can be caused by invectives placed in the text, hidden or open

<sup>49</sup> Massenimpfungen gegen COVID-19: Belgischer Impfexperte warnt vor “katastrophalen Auswirkungen”. 2021. *RT.de*. 23.03.2021. URL: <https://de.rt.com/gesellschaft/114547-massenimpfungen-gegen-covid-19-belgischer-impfexperte-warnt-vor-katastrophalen-auswirkungen/> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>50</sup> Corona-Impfung: 7 von 10 Ärzten gegen Impfpflicht. 2020. *Epochtimes*. 24.11.2020. URL: <https://www.epochtimes.de/gesundheit/medizin/corona-impfung-7-von-10-aerzten-gegen-impfpflicht-a3387223.html> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>51</sup> Leuchtendes Beispiel? 2022. *Tagesschau*. 29.07.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/>

<sup>52</sup> Schuld sind die anderen. 2022. *Zeit*. 29.07.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/index>

<sup>53</sup> Die Taliban im Kreml. 2022. *Faz.net*. 01.08.2022. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/kulturszene-in-russland-stellt-sich-gegen-den-ukraine-krieg-18211897.html> (accessed 10.01.2023).

<sup>54</sup> Milch-Mythos: Das irre Geschäft der Molkereien. 2021. *Focus.de*. 16.09.2021. URL: <https://www.focus.de/>

<sup>55</sup> Es gibt keine Corona-Leugner, nur arrogante Minister! 2022. *Reitschuster*. 11.06.2022. URL: <https://reitschuster.de/post/es-gibt-keine-corona-leugner-nur-arrogante-minister/> (accessed 15.11.2023).

mockery, caustic statements about political figures, and unexpected puns: “*Olaf Scholz: Alles aushalten!*” (“Olaf Scholz: **We all have to suffer him!**”)<sup>56</sup>; “*Annalena Baerbock: ‘Wiedervereinigung Europas’ auf den Schultern ihres Wehrmacht-Großvaters?*” (“Annalena Baerbock: ‘Reunification of Europe’ on the shoulders of her grandfather, **who served in the Wehrmacht**”)<sup>57</sup>. So-called discursive time pressure and information overload can also be used: “*Russlands Informationskrieg: Trolle, Fakes und Propaganda*” (“Russia’s information war: trolls, fakes and propaganda”)<sup>58</sup>; “*Energiekrise: Eine Folge der grünen Energiewende?*” (“**The energy crisis: A consequence of the transition to ‘green’ energy?**”)<sup>59</sup>. Receiving information in an unsystematized, allegorical or fragmented form, the recipient’s brain cannot connect everything to make up one whole, nor can it evaluate or analyse the information, much less grasp the sociopolitical or economic problem as such. Another barrier to differentiating various verbal manipulation techniques and evaluating information for its reliability and/or accuracy is deliberately giving the information the appearance of urgency, priority or immediacy or sensationalizing it in some way. Presenting the message in this way escalates tension and gives the recipient the false impression of its paramount importance and special value: “*Bloomberg: Deutschland hat drei Monate Zeit, um eine Gasmangel-Katastrophe im Winter abzuwenden*” (“Bloomberg: Germany has **three months** to avert catastrophe due to **winter gas shortage**”)<sup>60</sup>; “*Warum Joe Biden schon wieder Corona hat*” (“Why Joe Biden has COVID again”)<sup>61</sup>.

Noteworthy is the fact that many consumers of information cannot resist the so-called magic of the media text. People tend to trust information they read or hear in the media. Manipulative writers are able to skilfully exploit this psychological feature of human consciousness, thus creating a high degree of trust in the audience in the information they are presenting, deftly managing their fears and anxieties in connection with events taking place in the country and around the world.

Unfortunately, speech manipulation is common in the German-language media, and it is often done through the post-truth mechanism. “We think that as long as we control the media language landscape and the news agenda, as we have done for a long time, we automatically control the truth [...] For many publications, the boundaries

<sup>56</sup> Olaf Scholz: Alles aushalten! 2018. *Zeit*. 20.05.2018. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2018/21/olaf-scholz-spd-grosse-koalition-bundesfinanzminister> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>57</sup> Annalena Baerbock: ‘Wiedervereinigung Europas’ auf den Schultern ihres Wehrmacht-Großvaters? 2021. *RT.de*. 25.05.2021. URL: <https://de.rt.com/meinung/117986-baerbock-auf-schultern-ihrer-wehrmacht-gro%C3%9Fvaters/> (accessed 09.11.2023).

<sup>58</sup> Russlands Informationskrieg: Trolle, Fakes und Propaganda. 2022. *Sueddeutsche*. 30.03.2022. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/>

<sup>59</sup> Energiekrise: Eine Folge der grünen Energiewende. 2021. *Agrarheute*. 22.10.2021. URL: <https://www.agrarheute.com/management/finanzen/energiekrise-folge-gruenen-energievende-fakten-586637> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>60</sup> Bloomberg: Deutschland hat drei Monate Zeit, um eine Gasmangel-Katastrophe im Winter abzuwenden. 2022. *Newsfront*. 01.08.2022. URL: [www.de.news-front.info](http://www.de.news-front.info)

<sup>61</sup> Warum Joe Biden schon wieder Corona hat. 2022. *ZDF*. 31.07.2022. URL: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/corona-joe-biden-positiv-paxlovid-rebound-100.html> (accessed 11.11.2023).



of society are the boundaries of their own newspapers”, writes German sociologist and publicist Stefan Schulz (Schulz 2016: 103). One pertinent example of the manipulative formation of public opinion, or, more precisely, the one-sided reporting of facts, is the depiction of certain events related to Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine: for all leading German media, Russia is the “embodiment of evil”: “*Ukraine-Krieg: Feindbild Russland*” (“Russia: The Image of the Enemy”)<sup>62</sup>; “*Feindbild Russland: Strack-Zimmermann fordert eine Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr*” (“**Russia is the enemy**: Strack-Zimmermann calls for reorganization of Bundeswehr”)<sup>63</sup>. The reason for this approach is that the drawn-out geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the collective West has resulted in German journalists being “bound by the political mainstream” and forced to express a “united, Western, anti-Russian stance” (Andreev 2020: 17).

Of course, many German journalists are aware of what is happening. For instance, in an interview with a Russian publication, Wolfgang Bittner noted that “hysteria had increased in Germany” as a result of the escalation in tensions between Russia and the West that started in 2014, and that “a huge disinformation campaign is being carried out. Many people are hysterical, but they have no idea what is really going on”<sup>64</sup>. The so-called fourth power in Germany is part of the transatlantic propaganda machine and functions as a means of pressure from outside to keep Germany in line with the European Union and NATO. The headlines of German media text are full of insinuations, distortions and manipulations of facts on this subject: “*Putsch in Moskau hat begonnen: Ukraine erwartet Wendepunkt im August – Krieg bis Jahresende vorbei*” (“**The coup in Moscow** has begun: Ukraine expects the **tides to turn** in August – the war will be over by the end of the year”)<sup>65</sup>; “*Russische Propaganda: Kampf gegen die Lüge*” (“**Russian propaganda: Countering the lies**”)<sup>66</sup>; “*Warum sagt eigentlich niemand in Deutschland, dass die Ukraine gewinnen muss?*” (“**Why is no one in Germany saying that Ukraine needs to win the war?**”)<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> Ukraine-Krieg: Feindbild Russland. 2022. *Nd-Aktuell*. 01.04.2022. URL: <https://www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1162673.ukraine-krieg-feindbild-russland.html> (accessed 15.11.2023).

<sup>63</sup> Feindbild Russland: Strack-Zimmermann fordert eine Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr. 2022. *Berliner Zeitung*. 31.05.2022. URL: <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/marie-agnes-strack-zimmermann-bundeswehr-auf-feindbild-russland-fussend-umbauen-li.231698> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>64</sup> Nemetskii zhurnalist zaiavil o zamalchivanii faktov po Ukraine v SMI FRG [German Journalist Lifts Lid on Suppression of Facts about Ukraine in the German Media]. 2022. *Ren.tv*. 9.03.2022. URL: <http://ren.tv/news/v-mire/948922-nemetskii-zhurnalist-zaiavil-o-zamalchivanii-faktov-poukraine-v-smi-frg> (accessed 8.04.2022).

<sup>65</sup> Putsch in Moskau hat begonnen: Ukraine erwartet Wendepunkt im August – Krieg bis Jahresende vorbei. 2022. *NTV*. 14.05.2022. URL: <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Ukraine-erwartet-Wendepunkt-im-August-Krieg-bis-Jahresende-vorbei-article23331269.html> (accessed 14.11.2023).

<sup>66</sup> Russische Propaganda: Kampf gegen die Lüge. 2022. *Tagesschau*. 16.08.2022. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/wdr/russland-propaganda-bundesregierung-101.html> (accessed 11.11.2023).

<sup>67</sup> Warum sagt eigentlich niemand in Deutschland, dass die Ukraine gewinnen muss. 2022. *Focus*. 29.04.2022. URL: [https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/warum-sagt-eigentlich-niemand-dass-die-ukraine-gewinnen-muss\\_id\\_91365051.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/warum-sagt-eigentlich-niemand-dass-die-ukraine-gewinnen-muss_id_91365051.html) (accessed 15.11.2023).

Based on all this, we can say that, today, in a world of information pollution and the abundance of inaccurate and/or distorted information, the ability to identify verbal manipulative actions in the media, properly evaluate the reliability and/or accuracy of the information consumed, and reduce the negative impact of inaccurate and/or distorted information on one's consciousness is particularly valuable. The only way to develop this ability is through certain cognitive practices (recognition, critical reflection, linguistic analysis, contemplation) that serve as the foundation of so-called cognitive hygiene (to use the term coined by V. Z. Demnyankov). These practices are essential, as they neutralize the negative impact, as well as the direct or indirect pressure, of unreliable and/or false information on the formation of the recipient's judgements. The use of cognitive practices as heuristic methods for differentiating an information product and predicting the risks of encountering dishonest communication tactics, above all the dissemination of false information, makes it virtually impossible to distort the cognitive perception of information and helps the consumer of information develop psychological resistance to "cognitive infection" through media texts. After all, falsely representing information as "harmless" makes the recipient less vigilant and can lead to other delayed negative consequences. The interpretive competencies of the recipient in terms of identifying and comprehending manipulative speech actions, as well as in terms of counteracting attempts to imperceptibly correct the consumer's worldview, ultimately affect the information and language culture and information security of society.

According to linguists today, these interpretive competencies are formed against the background of so-called *epistemic vigilance*, which is a combination of various cognitive practices and is defined as a "regulatory algorithm that filters information that comes in the process of verbal communication" (Klepikova 2011: 390). The existence of this algorithm and the practicability of developing interpretive competencies in the field of epistemic vigilance are supported by the stable relationship between language as a way of interpreting reality and thinking as a form of cognitive consciousness of society. The use of certain linguistic means in the discourse of modern media, in particular linguistic means of speech manipulation, affects the evaluative perception and understanding of reality, and thus reformats the way the recipient thinks. In practice, this correlation of language as the most important carrier of information, consciousness as the central link of cognitive and perceptual human activity, and the mechanism of speech manipulation as a lever of influence on consciousness is manifested in the specific features of the human to increase concentration and focus attention on what is "represented again and again because repetition is what makes things stick in the human memory and what can turn a simple statement into truth" (Elsen 2008: 450).

It is typically these false truths – the alien reality "appropriated" by consciousness and skilfully presented by the authors and/or initiators of publications – that form the recipient's linguistic and cultural picture of the world. This is why, in relation to foreign-language discourse, and German-language media in particular, it is necessary

to study linguistic phenomena in the interconnection between (media) communication and cognition. Like any system, communication is based on the objective laws of communicative balance, according to which the media space must have a mechanism for decoding unreliable and/or distorted information and for protecting the psyche from it, as a reverse process of encoding, encrypting hidden meanings or intentionally hiding and distorting information. And from the point of view of the semantic-cognitive approach, critical abilities are required in order to evaluate the reliability of information, expose verbal manipulative actions in media texts, and consciously resist and predict the risks of encountering the manipulative influence of the media, hence the protective mechanism of epistemic vigilance.

### Conclusions and Discussion

Obviously, the correlation between language, information and the cultural picture of the world we have described above, is a prerequisite for the successful use of various means of speech manipulation in modern media texts. The deliberate attempts of authors, in particular journalists working for German-language publications, to influence public consciousness and shape public opinion in a way that benefits the media holdings or commercial and industrial groups that control their activities are based on various psychological, linguistic and pragmatic features of communication that impede the natural processes of perception, mental comprehension and critical interpretation of incoming information.

From the point of view of the mental activity approach, interpretive competencies based on cognitive practices as a mechanism for counteracting verbal manipulative actions are a necessary component of human cognitive activity. Poorly formed interpretive competencies in epistemic vigilance mean that the recipient is ill-equipped to see through the tricks used to prevent them from identifying and critically analysing means of speech manipulation, and may also lead to violations in the presentation of their own linguistic and cultural picture of the world and the traditional system of social values. Epistemic vigilance is an effective means of cognitive hygiene in the context of the modern conditions of the development of information technologies and methods of information pollution, helping to increase the information security of the state.

Certain issues related to the types of media discourse, as well as the dynamics, patterns and genre specifics of the use of certain methods of speech manipulation by various German-language media remained outside the scope of this study. Our goal was not to highlight individual methods of media text manipulation at the level of morphology and punctuation. These issues may very well be the subject of a further study of the manipulative capabilities of language.

**About the Author:**

**Irina S. Kashenkova** – Ph.D. (Pedagogy) is Associate Professor in the Department of German Languages at MGIMO University (Moscow, Russia). Her research and professional interests include German language teaching methods, intercultural communication, political discourse, and socio-political translation. E-mail: ikashenkova@yandex.ru

**Conflicts of interest.**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

**References:**

- Andreev N. I. 2020. Nemetskie rechevye manipulatsii v tekstakh o Rossii [German Speech Manipulation in Texts about Russia]. *Filologicheskie nauki v MGIMO*. 3(23). P. 16–24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24833/2410-2423.2020.3-23-16-24> (In Russian).
- Baranov A. N. 1986. Iazykovye mekhanizmy variativnoi interpretatsii deistvitel'nosti kak sredstvo vozdeistviia na soznanie [Linguistic Mechanisms of Variative Interpretation of Reality as a Means of Influencing Consciousness]. In Baranov A. N., Parshin P. B (eds.). *Rol' iazyka v sredstvakh massovoi informatsii*. Moscow: INION. P. 100–143. (In Russian).
- Borhsenius A. V. 2021. Infodemiia: poniatie, sotsial'nye i politicheskie posledstviia, metody bor'by [Infodemic: Concept, Social and Political Consequences, Methods of Struggle]. *Vestnik Rossiiskogo universiteta družby narodov. Seriya: Gosudarstvennoe i munitsipal'noe upravlenie*. 8(1). P. 52–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313.2021.8-1-52-58> (In Russian).
- Bykova O. N. 1999. Rechevaia (iazykovaia, verbal'naia) agressiia [Speech (Linguistic, Verbal) Aggression]. *Teoreticheskie i prikladnye aspekty rechevogo obshcheniia: Vestnik Rossiiskoj ritoricheskoi assotsiatsii*. 1(8). P. 96–99. (In Russian).
- Chudinov A. P. 2003. *Metaforicheskaiia mozaika v sovremennoi politicheskoi kommunikatsii* [Metaphorical Mosaic in Modern Political Communication]. Yekaterinburg. (In Russian).
- Dem'iankov V. Z. 2018. Iazykovye sredstva kognitivnoi manipulatsii v gumanitarnykh naukakh [Linguistic Means of Cognitive Manipulation in the Humanities]. *Kognitivnye issledovaniia iazyka*. 33. P. 48–52. (In Russian).
- Elsen H. 2008. Manipulation aus sprachlicher Sicht – ein Überblick. [Manipulation from a Linguistic Point of View: An Overview]. *Wirkendes Wort: deutsche Sprache und Literatur in Forschung und Lehre*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag. P. 447–466.
- Evtsev S. V. 2021. Iazykovye osobennosti zagolovkov nemetskikh gazet i ikh uchet pri perevode [Language Features of German Newspaper Headlines and Their Consideration in Translation]. *Vestnik Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya: Lingvistika i mezhkul'turnaia kommunikatsiia*. 4. P. 112–118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17308/lic.2021.473818> (In Russian).
- Garbuznyak A. Y. 2019. Fenomen postpravdy: deval'vatsiia fakta v mediynom disкурse [The Phenomenon of Post-Truth: The Devaluation of Fact in Media Discourse]. *Znanie. Ponimanie. Umenie*. 1. P. 184–192. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17805/zpu.2019.1.14> (In Russian).
- Kashenkova I. S. 2020. Spetsifika sovremennoi politicheskoi kommunikatsii v Germanii: bor'ba za leksiku [The Specifics of Modern Political Communication in Germany: The Struggle for Vocabulary]. In Kashenkova I. S., Kashenkov R. Y. (eds.). *Filologicheskie nauki v MGIMO*. 1(21). P. 5–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24833/2410-2423-2020-1-21-5-11> (In Russian).
- Klepikova T. A. 2011. Kategorizatsiia interaktsional'nosti v iazyke: epistemicheskaiia bditel'nost [Categorization of interactionality in language: Epistemic vigilance]. *Kognitivnye issledovaniia iazyka*. 9. P. 386–393. (In Russian).
- Paducheva E. V. 2002. *Vyskazyvanie i ego sootnesennost' s deistvitel'nost'iu* [Speech and its Correlation with Reality]. Moscow: Editorial URSS. (In Russian).

Schulz S. 2016. *Redaktionsschluss*. [Editorial deadline] München: Carl Hanser Verlag.

Shcherbatykh Y. V. 2002. *Iskusstvo obmana. Populiarnaia entsiklopediia*. [*The Art of Deception. Popular Encyclopedia*]. Moscow: Izd-vo EKSMO-Press. (In Russian).