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How the Hatred of the Few Turns into the Enmity of Millions in the Times of Uncertainty and Danger

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Abstract

The project is motivated by the increase of hate speech in different level media. In the times of global disasters people rely on media as an important source of information. Our goal was to highlight that media can change the psyche of people in the times of uncertainty. It is obvious that social anxiety is fueled by fake news, spam and hate speech. Our research was based on analysis of mass media techniques and their influence on the formation of negative stereotypes and prejudices. The analysis results show that in the period of pandemic a new vocabulary appeared and modern media influence the change in society's attitudes from tolerance to intolerance. Influence is increasing on the processes of changing culture and values in the society, therefore it is impossible to ignore its impact on life practices. Media fix this situation but create new stereotypes. Many journalists use hate speech unintentionally but due to the lack of professional skills. The conclusion is that hate speech is the power that spreads, provokes, encourages or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia, or other forms of intolerance-based hatred; it is based on negative attitudes to people. COVID-19 anxiety and fear cannot justify unprofessional use of hate speech, which should not be underestimated or ignored. The study also shows that alongside with uncertainty and fear caused by COVID-19 pandemic hate speech as a social phenomenon adds to tension and stress, and as such should be studied, analyzed and differentiated from sarcastic or ironic statements causing no harm.

Keywords: hate speech, media studies, social networks, communication, COVID-19, media content.

1. Introduction

The life of every person is directly linked with the social processes, focused actions of individuals. Real interaction of a person with the outside environment is carried out through the exchange of information about this world "as a means of behavior regulation and control providing adequate mutual change and adaptation to the conditions of life" (Baksansky, 2008). Both information and communication is playing an increasing role in society within people's lives. An important source about the world around and the dynamic processes occurring in it are both traditional and new mass media, text materials considered as "one of human language existence common forms" (Dobrosklonskaya, 2005). During turmoil and uncertainty periods of time people rely on media as an important resource to get updated on the situation, to spread news and to share opinions. However, the reduced linguistic environment that has firmly entered the speech-behavioral potential of modern media and has become a marker of the "linguistic taste of the era", is "negatively charged" to express an assessment and an extreme degree of linguistic aggression

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(Kostomarov, 2012). Hate speech is not only ethnic minorities and immigrants' discrimination; it helps avoid real problems solution and creates preconditions for aggression and physical violence. Hate speech is destructive not only for individuals, but for society as a whole, for mass media and for the journalism as a profession in particular. In the times of turmoil, whether it is a war or COVID-19 pandemic, hate speech flourishes. When scared, people blame it on more discriminated groups of population, such as immigrants or sexual minorities. Journalists usually "add fuel to the fire" chasing a sensation. The problem is that hate speech has an immense negative potential and can have a detrimental effect on people's way of thinking and their behavior (Allcott, Gentzkow, 2017; Archer, Coyne, 2005; Bakhtin, 1986).

The Internet has been one of the most effective communication tools for several decades and is definitely even more important now when the whole human activity has shifted online. People work, study, relax and get entertained using different platforms and sites. Alongside with the development of this unique resource, hate speech has become widespread on the Internet. As a communication instrument the Internet can be used in diverse ways, anonymity as one of the unique features of this resource provides freedom of speech and impunity.

This topic of hate speech is not new – moreover, it has been researched far and wide to such an extent that it would seem that the entire factual and theoretical resource has already been exhausted. In our previous articles we have studied hate speech in social networks and private E-mail messages (Makarova et al., 2020; Brown, 2017; Kozhevnikova, 2006). However, as practice demonstrates, neither numerous discussions, nor open calls to the media and the journalistic community to distance themselves from the use of hate-saturated lexical tools and to take a more responsible approach to the preparation of materials on interreligious, interethnic and political issues (especially in cases of ongoing conflicts) have led to level the situation. Moreover, the hostile allegories are distinguished by the journalists of both local publications and the masters of written style of well-known domestic and foreign media with a multimillion audience. At the same time, the line between the opinion of a journalist, value judgments of the editorial office and outright hateful blunders is increasingly blurred to such an extent that it is more and more difficult and often unsafe to prove a clear insult to an individual or a group of people based on religious affiliation, ethnicity or political views. Hate speech in mass media today has become a cause for apprehension (Makarova, 2019; Stangor, 2009). In search of even more expressive negatively charged linguistic means, the addressee of message "descends" even lower, and as a result of such searches for the expression of hostile aggression in modern media discourse, obscene vocabulary and vulgarisms are increasingly used. In some cases, these are the so-called veiled forms of invectives and abusive expressions, in other cases – a direct explication of obscene vocabulary. Media researchers define the term "hate speech" as "printed or written texts, as well as headlines, photographs and images that directly or indirectly incite aggression, violence, hatred or hostility." (David-Ferdon, Hertz, 2007).

Journalists sometimes use hate speech inadvertently without implying negative context. Hate speech targets are usually groups of people or individuals who think or act differently, not the same as people in mainstream. The role of the modern media in the dissemination of materials that contribute to the incitement of interethnic and interreligious hatred and provoke the emergence of extremist sentiments and terrorist manifestations is hard to overestimate. Ethnicity is the most common target of hostile rhetoric. Modern media should influence the change in society's attitudes from hatred to intolerance, from intolerance to tolerance, not vice versa. Meanwhile hate speech is gaining popularity during pandemic lockdowns targeting people who think differently. People who are now living under the burden of everyday fear and anxiety are blaming other nations or religious congregations for the situation in the world. Those groups who do not believe in vaccination or even in the COVID-19 pandemic (they think it is a governmental conspiracy across the world) have become another popular hate speech target along with sexual minorities, religious and ethnical groups and immigrants of all kinds (Strossen, 2016).

Hate speech (other names are language of hostility, rhetoric of hatred, prejudicial statement) is defined as linguistic means for expressing a negative attitude to a certain group of population or even encouraging violence against them. Usually these are groups that possess a different system of religious, national, cultural or more specific, subcultural values or sexual orientation. Hate speech as a phenomenon can be considered in the list of other negative attitudes such as hatred, racism, xenophobia, interethnic or religious intolerance, homophobia, hostility as well as sexism. Among kinds of hate speech we can differentiate calls to violence, appeals like "Hit the immigrants!" and

“Kick the gypsies out of the country!” calls for discrimination, creating a negative image of a victim group; inferiority assumption (lack of culture or intellectual abilities), accusations of negative impact within a derogatory or offensive context (Bar-Tal, 1989; Jakubowicz, 2006; Semin, Fiedler, 1988).

We are aware that our research cannot cover all the manifestations of intolerance in Russian media. But even with such a selective approach, we see a significant increase in the number of hate speech in the media compared to last year. Our analysis focuses primarily on assessing general tendencies in the development of hate speech in Russian media, perspectives and the role hate speech plays for the life after COVID-19 pandemic; on aggression and violence it initiates in the society, but not on the assessment of a style of a single publication or author. It should concern hate speech coinage and use in the media, also hate speech relevance to other spheres of life and activities – political, academic, everyday, and educational. Language of hostility is always manipulative meaning that the protection of freedom of speech and hate speech legislation should be balanced restricting public manifestations of xenophobia and hatred, monitoring hate speech in media, understanding its impact on society, not letting it cause physical violence and armed conflicts.

2. Material and methods

Our methodology concerns primarily such categories as plot, vocabulary and "tonality" of the publication text, victims behind verbal violence and reasons for using hate speech, stereotyping and xenophobia that form the fundamental basis of hate speech, also consequences of using hate speech in the media and its impact on the society as a whole and separate social groups in particular. Our study considers hate speech as a part of a holistic ethnic xenophobia process, including "cultural racism" and adjacent to it mechanism of ethnic or religious stereotyping. Materials used for analysis are articles in Russian newspapers, newsletters, (both texts and images), web pages (sites), chat rooms, forums, blogs (for example, *LiveJournal*), etc.

The most popular topics today due to the COVID-19 pandemic and sanitary regulations and restrictions in the context of which the use of "hate speech" is most often encountered are ethnic and migration issues. In Russia, as a rule, this is the topic of the increasing flow of migrants from Central Asia and former Soviet republics, as well as the problem of financial support and free medical treatment of immigrants. In Europe, there is the same problem of migrants, which has already resulted in a crisis of tolerance. Moreover, on the one hand, there are calls in the EU to stop racial discrimination against migrants, while on the other hand, the European media are ringing the alarm: refugees behave extremely inappropriately, they are trying to impose and to establish their own rules by force, disrespect for the culture, traditions and values of European countries. Moreover, they increase the risk of COVID-19 spread around Europe as they do not obey quarantine restrictions and do not observe sanitary norms.

Modern media, as confirmed by the cross-sectional analysis of article texts (2020–2021), respond rather quickly to events in the world. In a situation of social tension and uncertainty speech practices of journalists get enriched by vocabulary directly related to the facts and events of the day, relevant precisely for "this current ... relatively short period ..." through the emergence of new words and phrases, as well as through updating pre-existing lexical units as a result of their transition from special spheres of rationing into general use (Prokopenko, 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic that broke out in the first months of 2020 contributes to the increasing frequency of alarming vocabulary reflecting the new reality (in addition to COVID-19, corona, coronavirus, the dictionary now includes the concepts of self-isolation, social distance, as well as the abbreviation WFH (work from home), lockdown, epidemic, pandemic, quarantine, state of emergency, etc. Some of them acquire a special emotional expressive coloring. For example: the words "virus" and "quarantine" cause a panic reaction, "lockdown", "self-isolation" and "artificial lung ventilation (ALV)" cause stress and depression. The mechanisms of word creation are activated, but some of the words have come to Russian from English words with no phonetic changes, but got adjusted to the rules of the Russian grammar (Karasik, 2019; 2020).

Very often obscene and rude colloquial expressions are used in headings that manifest both a communicative strategy and the recipient's hostile intentionality. This tonality of the strong position of the text largely influences the perception of the entire discourse; it also programs the recipient's aggression in response. The purpose of an invective intention is akin to an insult and is to lower the social status of an opponent or political force. Of course, the use of rude vernacular, abusive vocabulary is completely unjustified for the journalistic style, but it is not rare in modern

media discourse (Katermina, Lipiridi, 2020; Shteba, 2015). There are three levels of media spreading hate speech (Table 1).

Table 1. Level media classification of hate speech

The first level media of hate speech	The first level media of hate speech is oral communication, simple examples of locutionary acts. But not only oral speech acts as a medium of the first level, serving as a tool for expressing "hate speech". Written antilocution are graffiti on the walls of houses, fences, bridges and shops. Obscene words and profanity are illustrated by graphical elements and images. Communication of this kind rarely goes public; usually it is limited by the family, circle of friends, school, class, etc. Non-verbal communication such as throwing bananas into a football field where African team is playing is also a medium of the first level. The non-verbal media of the first level are often implicit and based on stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, as for example in body language. Facial expressions or involuntary shrugs and shudder can demonstrate prejudice or hostility. This level media are hard to regulate or censor.
The second level media of hate speech	Second level media are technology-generated interactions supporting live communication through space and time. The common features are radically enhanced capabilities for perlocution. They are divided into interpersonal and mass media. Speaking of "hate speech" in the media of the second level, we mean the traditional "pre-Internet" mass media. This media segment is legally regulated. International and national legislation regulating this segment of media protect its audience from hate speech, stereotyping and prejudice. It is also done through local "Ethic codes" of media producers, as well as "internal censorship" of every particular radio or TV station. Therefore messages that carry a blatant 'language hostility' are possible in traditional mass media only outside the mainstream. However, the second level media are by no means free from implicit communication based on prejudice and discrimination.
The third level media of hate speech	Level three media are digital forms of representation and interaction. Digital technology makes it possible to reproduce and "recombine all the media of second and first levels on a single platform: computers, thus, can be understood as meta-media..." (Friesem, 2019) "The central example is personal computer, although its interface like the mobile phone interface probably will change significantly, technologically adapting to human needs and feelings, integrating with both shared objects and social mechanisms" (Jensen, 2008). Providers of digital services have opened access to media to social groups, communities and individuals. "Marginalized in the second-level media social groups now have the opportunity to create their own media (social networks, sites, digital television channels)" (Hobbs et al., 2019). Third level media are difficult to regulate and to restrict as there are no particular rules, no "internal censorship" to detect hate speech or to discriminate hate speech from general profanity. Responses to hate speech, including its prohibition are often justified by the protection of national security, public order and morality (Burnap, Williams, 2015).

3. Discussion

Scholars in different spheres of science (linguists, psychologists, political scientists) focus on high level of verbal aggression and hate speech in modern society. Examples of hate speech can be found in everyday conversations, mobile communication, conflicts and rallies, debates in the government, "the sounding speech and written words are characterized by cruelty in assessing the interlocutor's behavior (determining the appropriate evaluative means choice), extreme negative expressiveness, often hostile tone of speech" (Krysin, 2008). Besides, they highlight manipulative nature of verbal violence, as it is intended not only to relieve speaker's or writer's stress, but also make a recipient of the message feel miserable.

In general, the very concept of "hate speech" is rather vague and ambiguous. What is verbal aggression for one person is a value judgment based on one's own experience and knowledge for another. And everyone has the right to his own opinion and freedom of speech. Among linguists, there is also no unequivocal understanding of what hate speech is. After all, "hate speech" is a multifaceted phenomenon, including both a psychological component and a socio-political, social situation in the world (Levitskaya, Mancewicz, 2017). For psychologists, speech aggression is

“a clear and persistent imposition of a certain point of view on the interlocutor, depriving them of the choice and the opportunity to draw own conclusion, to independently analyze the facts” (Walker et al., 2019); communication researchers perceive “hate speech” as “absolutely unreasoned or insufficiently reasoned revealed or hidden verbal impact on the addressee, aimed at personal attitudes changing or defeat in polemics” (Tuzel, Hobbs, 2017); there are also more radical positions, according to which “hate speech” is speech aggression, deliberately aimed “at insulting or causing harm to a person” (Sirotinina, 2015).

Researchers’ interest in tolerance issues is explained by the fact that in any multicultural society ethnic and religious diversity exists; controversial interests, values and points of view lead to conflicts between individuals and whole communities. Social tolerance promotion should be done through the media: covering private life of public people and celebrities, mass consciousness, ideas and stereotypes development, contributing to tolerance and mutual understanding in society.

But despite the actions taken, mass media publications often fulfill a destructive function, inciting intolerance towards sexual minorities, religious and ethnic diversity. As a result of these processes journalists turn to verbal violence or hate speech. Of course, many journalists use hate speech without a definite intent, but due to the lack of professional skills in covering the COVID-19 issues and historically developed stereotypes that ‘strangers’ in community are to blame for any problem. In today’s reality and changes in social life media covering immigration or minority issues, should avoid out-of-date stereotypes and the use of hate speech, which is a result of xenophobic attitudes. The use of hate speech in newspapers and magazines leads to splashing out speech aggressive response both by the author of the printed material and the information consumers who (accepting or rejecting the position of a journalist) create their own stream of aggression in comments or letters to the editor. According to L. Enina (Enina, 2002), speech aggression in a newspaper text can be reduced due to the removal of direct appraisal oppositions, the absence of rough estimates, an analytical approach to issues discussed.

In our research we deal with different definitions of hate speech by different authors. “Hate speech is negativistic statements, definitions, epithets towards ethnicity, race, religious beliefs appealing to conflict and the diversity between national peculiarities or religions and – in its extreme form - promulgating enmity and discord. Language hostility can act as a form of manifestation racism, xenophobia, interethnic hostility and intolerance, homophobia, as well as sexism” (Avtaeva, 2010). Besides, *hate speech* embraces self-expression, fake information, gossip and may be able to provoke hostility, violent nationalism or ethnocentrism, promote racial conflicts or others kinds of loathing based on intolerance, leading to discrimination and segregation, causing ethnic or religious confrontation.

Scholars in the field of philology distinguish verbal aggression; they study certain vocabulary and grammar for aggression expression. Hate speech can cause an addressee mental or moral harm, or provokes psychosomatic impact in discourse which is direct use of lexico-grammatical means or other cognitive-speech mechanisms and strategies. According to Y. Karaulov and V. Petrov, discourse is “a complex communicative phenomenon that includes (in addition to the written or printed text) extralinguistic factors (involuntary or intended mimics, culturally accepted gestures, posture etc.) necessary for an addressee to understand the message” (Karaulov, Petrov, 1989).

There is one more unaccounted for factor in this whole story: to date, the factor of the effectiveness of “hate speech” is not taken into account, the power of its impact and influence on the mass audience’s image of the world development is underestimated (Responding..., 2012). In the situation when “harsh words” and offensive attacks become habitual, few people are interested in the emotional impact of speech aggression, which in turn lowers the level of social responsibility of the mass media, reduces the quality of publications and causes damage, no matter how pathetic it sounds, “skillfulness” of the profession of a journalist. Of course, negligent journalists and editorial offices can be hit with the law: in this regard, the “supervisory whip” of the state censorship is the only effective means. But here there is a risk of infringement of the mass media’s right to freedom, persecution of journalists and editorial offices which is the violation of constitutional right to freedom of speech. That is why ethical norms and principles of journalistic activity should come to the fore, when either an individual author or an editorial team begin to at least put into practice internal discussions and collegial decisions on the admissibility of publishing harsh headlines or individual statements that border on outright xenophobia and hatred. It is not difficult to create an image of the enemy – it is even easier to provoke hostility and hatred among people and become the source of a new round of conflicts.

4. Results

As a result of media analysis it was found that a whole complex of meanings is associated with the word coronavirus and its synonyms in the minds of people. It is no coincidence that the peculiarities of the interpretation of the coronavirus pandemic in the material of media texts and neologisms attracted the attention of linguists (Krysin, 2008; McFarlane, 2016; Zakoyan, 2006), sociologists (Closson, Bond, 2019; Coyne et al., 2018; Gabielkov et al., 2016) and lawyers (Enarsson, Lindgren, 2019; Kitaychik, 2004). Let's try to distribute the vocabulary expressing meanings significant for the nominators into thematic groups:

1. The names of the categories of people during the pandemic: covidiot, covid dissident, coronavt, coronik, coronaskeptic, superspreader (a person who refuses to comply with the self-isolation regime and infects everyone around), covidaver (covid + cadaver – “corpse, dead body”, a person who died from coronavirus); covidast (a person using the pandemic for personal enrichment), etc.

2. Names of public sentiments: corona-phobia, corona-panic, corona-psychosis, coronacrisis, corona-apocalypse, coronageddon (comp. Armageddon), digital concentration camp, masquerade, masquerading (panic arising from the fact that there are no medical masks in pharmacies), quarantine shaming (the anger of people around in relation to a person who does not properly observe the conditions of quarantine), etc.

3. The names of the processes and actions associated with the nature of the era of coronavirus: to be in self-isolation; to get sick with a coronavirus infection, to zoom (work or communicate using the Zoom program), to hype (general cleaning during quarantine, ridding the house of trash).

4. Names of conditions and modes: distance learning (study at home), distance working (work at home), remote work or study format.

5. Names of objects and places associated with the disease: fomite transmission (an object that can be a source of infection), covidor (a corridor in a medical facility filled with coronavirus patients due to a lack of wards).

6. The names of new social practices and items that appeared during the pandemic: a balcony concert, quarantines (friendly, as a rule, comic creolized messages during quarantine, compare valentines), quarantini (quarantine + martini, alcoholic drink, which is drunk at online parties and get-togethers, also these events themselves). The content of quarantines (like valentines) helps people in self-isolation to support each other using jokes, poems, and get-well-soon wishes.

Taking into account the fact that the first country to declare the coronavirus epidemic was China, and Wuhan became the most famous of the cities, the corresponding names were also reflected in the media texts: “All roads lead to Wuhan”; “There was no concern – the woman bought a bat (in the Wuhan market)”; “Fear the Chinese who bring the gifts!” Of all the neologisms that entered general use during the period under review, the names coronavirus and covid are distinguished by the greatest derivational activity. First, most of derivatives were used in colloquial speech, in addition to the word coronavirus, an abbreviated version of the word – corona (the crown) appeared and served the stem for the creation of a number of other derivatives with derogatory connotation: corona – a patient with a new coronavirus infection; coronaut (like astronaut) – a medical worker in special protective outfit; coronary artery – new corona – viral infection; coronials – children born during the coronavirus pandemic (by analogy with millennials), etc. Using the stem covid, not only adjective like covid hospital, covid infection, covid patient, etc., but some other words were derived: a covidary – a hospital for COVID-19 patients, a covid-dissident – a person who denies the existence of a given viral disease (comp. HIV dissident); a covidnik – 1) infected with COVID-19; 2) a paramedic who goes on a call to patients with COVID-19; all of them with derogatory connotation and widely used in the media.

The set of lexical units associated with the COVID-19 organizes and structures the world in the minds of people during the pandemic era, creating a special semiosphere. It reflects the content of knowledge gained by native speakers from various sources: from personal experience of cognitive, labour, intellectual activity, from media materials, their own reflections on this situation (Vilmantè, 2017). The synonymous series formed as part of this aggregate highlight the most important fragments of knowledge for people: 1) about the disease itself – COVID-19, covid, coronavirus infection, coronavirus, corona; 2) new conditions of work or study – remote, distance, in self-isolation, in quarantine; 3) disinfectants – antiseptic, sanitizer; 4) people who deny the existence of coronavirus – covid dissident, corona dissident, coronavirus dissident, covidiot (in one

of the meanings). It seems that active derivation of neologisms in the pandemic era is caused by the poor awareness of people, including doctors and scientists, about the coronavirus, its background, its high rate of spread, fear of the disease and information about its rapid mutation.

Analyzing media texts we paid attention to the functioning of a large number of words with negative connotations, acting as "the result of a language game, through which the negativity of the concept is explicated, encoded and reproduced in their semantics" (Anderson et al., 2003). Designations such as masquerade (unwillingness to use protective masks to protect oneself from the virus), coronavirus boom (oversaturation of the information space with messages about coronavirus), digital concentration camp (electronic passes mode) explicate the negative attitude of the addressees to the named objects and make the correspondence concepts that are not environmentally friendly. The abundance of conflicting information about COVID-19 became the basis for the emergence of the word *infodemic* (information epidemic). In the language of journalists, this is how they began to denote an information virus, that is, the flow of unverified messages about the coronavirus in the media, blogs, chats and social networks.

Since, in the sphere of media discourse, the use of rough, open forms of aggression is not encouraged, the most acceptable form of speech violence characteristic is the means of "labeling". The so-called "label" is one of the most widespread media assessments that use the neologisms mentioned above. The main thing in creating a label is a symbol, some authors argue that the label is the creation of an image of the enemy. Label-assessment is firmly entrenched and realizes distrust for the people labeled. Journalists usually have an arsenal of labels, so you can easily find out which one to use to describe: market people, extremists, democrats, separatists, KGB agents, communists, gypsies, Arabs, immigrants etc. Utterances based on the antithesis of "friends and foes" can be used as indicators of "strangeness", which are a technique of marking the enemy - reflecting the basic semantic opposition of speech - which is accompanied by transparent evaluative implications: "our people are good", "all the other are bad" (Stockdale et al., 2019; Glazman, 2009).

The two Russian state newspapers *The Komsomol Truth (TVNZ)* and *The Moskow's Komsomolets* are the leaders in hate speech (37 % of the total number of articles containing hate speech and 34 % of articles containing obscene vocabulary, prejudicing, stereotyping and labeling people).

The Russian newspaper *The News Time* got famous for its "hate speech" quotes:

"When migrants come to the country, they are not the best ... many of them are criminals, many are rapists ... our country has become a dumping ground for human junk...". Journalists from another Russian newspaper *At a Glance* labeled this quote "a classic manifestation of hate speech". Comparing with the previous year significant changes have taken place in the distribution of hate speech. Stereotyping and labeling people as well as "mentioning some groups of people in a derogatory context" have retained leading position since 2020.

The example is a word of new mintage – *covidiot*, relating to Covid-19 virus this word has two meanings: the first describes someone who ignores the dangers for health and warnings regarding safety. E.g. *This covidiot is hugging everyone she sees.*

Another meaning is a person who hoards goods such as food or sanitary goods, toilet paper, antiseptic, means of hygienic protection. E.g. *"Have you seen that covidiot with 100 rolls of toilet paper in his shopping basket?"*

The next example is taken from a private interview given to a German newspaper: *"I'd rather not be labeled as some crazy conspiracy theorist. I just don't want the vaccine! They think the vaccine makes them immortal. But they could still get infected, despite the vaccine," says Susanne indignantly. Richard and Susanne refrain from calling the German media 'Lügenpresse' or fake (lying) press – they just say they don't trust the media's coronavirus coverage. Susanne points to how experts and agencies were at first against mixing and matching vaccines. "Covidiot's are people who have naively taken the jab," says Susanne"* (Freund, 2021).

This also applies to abuses in speech and primarily in the printed messages, which have become so common that it is not always possible to distinguish an unsuccessful joke, a verbal attack, an evil irony from real "hate speech". In times of danger and uncertainty such phenomena as bullying and hate speech always bloom. Senses of fear and loneliness, uncertainty about tomorrow cause bitter feelings in usually benevolent people who try to find the guilty ones and to blame them for all the troubles (Makarova et al., 2021).

Before pandemic COVID-19 hate speech was aimed at inciting hostility, hatred to a person or group of people judging by skin color and origin, religious beliefs, so hate speech predominantly had a racist and xenophobic character. During pandemic young people as a social group have become hate speech main source and accordingly its main target and victim. Young people cover walls with xenophobic graffiti, create hate speech sites and blogs in the Internet and send out full of threats letters to ethnic or sexual minority groups. In the police reports most often foreign students, young homosexuals or just young people of "atypical" appearance were mentioned as victims of hate attacks. Hate speech and cyber bullying are not dangerous as they are, but unfortunately they call to some violent action which is a federal crime.

Hate speech today is addressed to groups of people who use manipulative in nature and extremely effective techniques such as *information gap, convincing, building rapport etc.* in every act of communication. Psychological nature of manipulation is aimed at encouraging victim's desires far from their actual needs, at shaping intentions and attitudes needed by a manipulator instead their own goals and wishes. Manipulative techniques such as information distortion, fake news, frauds, and lies are widely used in hate speech publications inducing emotional pressure on victims.

Untrustworthy publishers promoting racist and xenophobic ideas offer a striking example of a media message of this kind in G. Sapozhnikova's article "Will the Russians honor the Koran and use chopsticks?", published in Russian newspaper *The Komsomolsk Truth* (2020, № 8, 10 July). This article is about ethnocultural and religious conflicts between migrants (from China and Syria) and the indigenous population. The conflicts arouse mostly in connection with COVID-19 pandemic. The text of the article has manipulative techniques in abundance intended to have an impact on readers' unconsciousness, both verbal (hate speech) and nonverbal (calls for immediate violent actions, photos and figures). Media contributors often deliberately emphasize the ethnic nature of crime (Caucasian, Syrian, Chechen or gypsy (Roma) mafia, etc.) directed against the indigenous population. The target group of Roma is often mentioned in topics as the example of sexuality and the concept of "theft", reflecting a negative stereotype towards this target group, issues related to the Roma minority population living in Russia (de Lenne et al., 2020).

As a result of manipulation, readers believe in certain ethnic groups' criminal intentions, in new stereotypes created and strengthened by assumption made in the article contributing to development of prejudice and bias. Similarly, media report on problems of mass influx of foreign-speaking migrants with different cultural traditions and religious beliefs into regions with traditionally mono-ethnic population causing dangers of COVID-19 spreading because of low sanitary standards and infectious nature of disease awareness. One of the manipulative methods is a biased compilation, fake facts in information delivery and fraud arguments justifying the writer's position. This manipulation technique is widely used in articles on ethnocultural and religious conflicts to justify writer's xenophobic assumptions and biased conclusions. To make such media material reliable, distorted statistical data, fake witnesses' statements, misrepresented historical facts, etc. are often used.

Following the Italian Parliament protest against vaccine passports, Russian media call these "Passport of Shame" and fight against other draconian measures caused by the massive crowds holding anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine passport signs and slogans, protesting against governmental decisions comparing them to ones of fascist dictatorships and calling the vaccine program "genocide".

The analysis of media texts content (Makarova et al., 2020) helped discover lexical material expressing discriminatory or derogatory relation to the object of the statement in addition to already existing classification of violent behaviour (Table 2).

This study allowed us to identify the most common types of language hostility:

- calls for discrimination ("Chinese are guilty in spreading COVID-19", etc.),
- calls to violence in all forms ("Gypsies should be banned out of Russia", etc),
- propaganda of violence and discrimination in historic perspective (for example, "Meskhetian and Kurd Turks, a sub-ethnic groups, who were assumed to spy in favor of fascist Germany, discriminated and deported to Kazakhstan in 1944"),

Table 2. Classification of violent behavior (verbal-nonverbal)

	Name	Example
1.	Physical, active, direct	Hurt, hit or injure a person.
2.	Physical, active, indirect	Encourage another person to injure the enemy. Use verbal violence or fake information to persuading someone to attack a victim.
3.	Physical, passive, direct	Physically prevent a person from accomplishing a mission by locking the door or somehow blocking the way.
4.	Physical, passive, indirect	Reject to meet the requirements.
5.	Verbal, active, direct	Use verbal insult against another person face-to-face.
6.	Verbal, active, indirect	Verbally abuse another person in virtual space or in media. Spread fakes, rumors, and gossip in social networks.
7.	Verbal, passive, direct	Limit communication with another person, contacts with this person.
8.	Verbal, passive, indirect	Refuse to provide information to defend a person who is criticized in virtual space or in media, to advocate.

- assumption of inferiority (lack of culture and lack of professionalism) (for example, “Roma are illiterate, rude, ignorant sneaky scammers. They are involved in prostitution, drugs and arms trade”),

- referring to xenophobic assumptions without explanations or commentary,
- showing fixed boundaries between the interviewee’s position and the one of the journalist,
- discriminatory point of view explicit propaganda without the opportunity for discussion or editorial comment,
- unfounded ironic statements, discriminating images and other visual means.

5. Conclusion

In the conclusion we should state that in the situation of uncertainty and fear people are looking for external enemies; hate speech in mass media is a proof of it. Although hate speech is a communicative phenomenon that would not hurt anyone physically, it still harms and cripples people mentally and emotionally. Also it increases anxiety and social tension contributing to call for action and provoking xenophobia and hatred. This is the reason why hate speech is being studied, classified and categorized. In order to prevent hostility and hatred that hate speech may provoke, it is absolutely obligatory for people to recognize hate speech in the information flow and to be aware of the harm it might bring in locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. Learning more about hate speech helps avoid verbal aggression in media and prevent physical hostility and conflicts it usually provokes. Neglected, hate speech might turn into xenophobic and tolerant statements and appeals thus causing trouble and turmoil especially in the situations like COVID-19 pandemic.

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