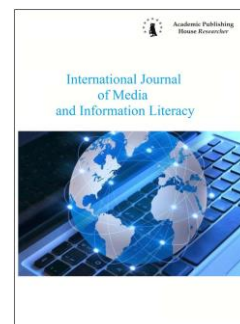


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Media Literacy Research During COVID-19 Pandemic: Social Network Screening

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Abstract

The article presents screening of Facebook and Instagram news pages for the degree of media literacy of modern recipients in the perception and further dissemination of information about COVID-19. We state that in most cases modern recipients do not check the information obtained from media sources (as confirmation, we present the results of an electronic survey). Nowadays most respondents do not pay attention to the information provided and are ready to repost the material on their social media pages. The data obtained confirm this thesis: 45.8 % partially 23.7 % fully do not check the information from media sources, therefore, almost two thirds of respondents trust the facts presented in media. We associate low media literacy with the rapid globalization of modern media, due to which the flow of information is uncontrolled, especially in Internet communication. Another reason for low media literacy is the "skill" of journalists to mislead recipients through bright headlines. It is proved that a bright headline, compositionally organized as an interrogative or exclamatory sentence, has a greater impact than a narrative construction. According to our survey, headlines with lexical manipulative resources are the most popular (44 %), while headlines with phonetic manipulative means are less affected by the recipient. Most of the interviewed recipients are still ready to check the factuality of the information in a media text (we emphasize that we have deliberately selected fake news). Some recipients (22 %) pay attention to fake news because of a bright headline (or trusting a verified media resource) and are ready to repost the news without verification. Due to the resonance of the news related to COVID-19 journalists have used not only objective but also fake news as a tool to influence the recipient. The questionnaire clearly indicates that media literacy of modern recipients is influenced by the political orientation of a media source, as well as the recklessness of recipients to verify the facts and trust any information obtained from official sources and interpreted in media.

Keywords: media literacy, media linguistics, language innovations, functional stylistics, COVID-19.

1. Introduction

Back in 2014, a study was conducted to restore public confidence during a pandemic, which was preceded by non-transparent information flows in media to cover these events: "members of the public are not passive recipients of information, but are engaged in active sensemaking, and trust is an important component of this sense making process" (Bangerter, 2014). This includes forming public opinion about an outbreak of different strains of influenza: H5N1 in 2005–2006, H1N1 in 2009. Media institutions which promptly, responsibly and impartially cover information

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about a pandemic should also be involved in solving these problems, "defined linguistic and communicative dominant characteristics of medical terminology in the mass-media, connected with pragmatic and expressive potential of the word" (Syzonov, 2012: 24).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been actively covered in media since the end of 2019 until today (the volume of coverage falls on the peak of the coronavirus incidence in specific countries). The analysis of the information flow on this topic is partially covered in the scientific aspect – this refers to studies in media linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics (Garfinet et al., 2020; Hernández-García, Giménez-Júlvez, 2020; Sadykov, Ahmetyanova, 2020) as well as works on psychoanalysis and medicine (Toraleset et al., 2020). Most of this research is devoted to the analysis of correct coverage of events related to COVID-19: scientists give advice on soft presentation of information to the mass audience, develop prospects for correct information of recipients in future. The role of social media during a pandemic is the most authoritative, after all "during a health crisis, the public depends on the media to convey accurate and up-to-date information in order to make informed decisions regarding health protective behaviors" (Garfinet et al., 2020: 355-356). Some media even use the coronavirus pandemic to cover the so-called "fake" news about COVID-19 (Sadykov, Ahmetyanova, 2020: 31) which undermine confidence in the institution of information and freedom of the press. On the one hand, media conduct educational and informative activity, on the other hand, one cannot exclude media manipulation. A recipient must comprehend this information flow developing his media literacy as "media literacy, information literacy and digital literacy are the three most prevailing concepts that focus on a critical approach towards media messages" (Koltay, 2011: 211).

Obviously, the key role in media literacy belongs to globalization processes, which help to cover in media political, economic and business issues (Qureshi, 2011). Some scholars believe that this function has moved today to the Internet space, where it is difficult to find objectivity in the information flow due to the virtuality of the objects of communication and the lack of a transparent evidence base (Akimova, Oleksandrenko, 2019). All that can not but affect the coverage of health issues. Today, journalists do not always have a transparent and responsible approach to the analysis of events related to COVID-19. A German linguist D. Perrin (Perrin, 2006) names media genres the structure of which (especially headlines and leads) is most susceptible to manipulation of human consciousness. Therefore, we will find enough false information in such genres (e.g. genres of authorial journalism) and spheres (e.g. advertising, the Internet).

In the present study we intend to: (a) identify the media that deliberately spread false information about COVID-19 on social networks, b) pay attention to those media that promptly cover the information, but it is not always successfully brought to the potential recipient, (c) investigate the role of recipients in disseminating unverified information, (d) find out which language means are most used to cover truthful information about COVID-19 and which of these tools are successful manipulative remedies in disseminating "fake" news. Thus, our key task is to find out the degree of media literacy of modern recipients who use social networks (especially *Facebook* and *Instagram*) in obtaining, perceiving and further disseminating the information.

2. Materials and methods

For media literacy analysis we used *the method of anonymous questionnaire* using the platform google.com.ua. The total number of respondents is 59 people, which is 100 %. Respondents include Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, British and Arabs. The questionnaire consisted of 15 key questions based on the main purpose of our study - to identify the degree of media literacy of modern recipients. In the questionnaire we also used elements of *the experimental method* to find out the dissemination/non-dissemination of information (primarily false) in media. The analysis of results from an online questionnaire was carried out by a PhD student of the department of stylistics and language communication O. Pliasun (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv).

To check the representativeness of scientific data on medicine, the article includes a professional analysis of an associate professor of the Bogomolets National Medical University V. Shmatko. To analyze the language resource in media texts, we used *the method of semantic and stylistic interpretations*. Comprehensive analysis was carried out by corresponding member of NAS of Ukraine L. Shevchenko and associate professor D. Syzonov (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv).

We partially used *the system search method* (for systematization of sources in media space by communication spheres) and *the method of media monitoring* (Dobrosklonskaya, 2014: 57-58), which allowed to systematize data from information search systems. *The method of cross-sectional research* allowed to explain the local manipulative strategies used in media to cover the news about #COVID-19. It should be noted that the method has already been tested earlier (Zhong et al., 2020: 1746). We have expanded the areas of cross-sectional research by offering for analysis a Facebook network with wide possibilities of reposting media publications with the topic "COVID-19".

Attention is also paid to a hashtag as a special type of communication in social networks (we are talking about #COVID-19 and related hashtags). Therefore, the authors of the article were involved in the methodology of hashtag mapping (Highfield, Leaver, 2014), which was used to find values in social networks (Facebook and Instagram).

3. Discussion

Analyzing the current state of media literacy in the global media space, researchers often shift the emphasis of the flow of news from the print media to the Internet space motivating it by virtual globalization. In this context, we investigate the role of social networks and modern messengers which gain popularity among communicators and recipients (Fletcher et al., 2020; Kligler-Vilenchik, Tenenboim, 2020; Renninger, 2015). In the context of the psycholinguistic impact of the news flow on modern social groups (Manca et al., 2021; Riles, 2019; Spears, 2021), we find quite interesting discussions aimed at seeking factual truth not in the original source, but in the news feed and social media posts. We should also mention here the analysis of global media as a new critical view of the media industry (Kraidy, 2018): social networks as today's global media have actually become leaders in the information world.

The search for the necessary information about COVID-19 also moved into the plane of Internet systems: the recipient will receive the necessary information from the Internet rather than from a specialist. This is what negatively affects the flow of information, which must be true and reliable: "journalists should pay attention for source selection and authentication for their news stories production" (Gans, 2004). Expanding this thesis, we focus on changes in information standards under the influence of new media in modern times - both on television and visual-virtual platforms (Shimpach, 2020). And in new media (including social networks) the standard of truthfulness of information should be in the first place. This is especially true of the top topics that the COVID-19 pandemic has become, after all "at a time of severe political, economic, environmental, security, technological, and identitarian challenges, global media studies can make important contributions to an improved understanding of our current situation" (Kraidy, 2018: 337). Analysis of the relationship "COVID-19 → infodemics" (Cifuentes-Faura, 2020; Zarocostas, 2020) is also offered in modern research, which helps the recipient to place the right emphasis in the search for news about COVID-19 and further avoid errors in interpretation events during the infodemia. In our study, we try to understand whether modern recipients trust social networks in the flow of information about COVID-19, as "most people who see misinformation about COVID-19 may think that what they are reading is true and some of them may cause panic" (Cifuentes-Faura, 2020: 146).

Manipulation through provocative headlines, unverified facts, ambiguous wording and misinformation are just some of the problems that should be the subject of analysis of recipients' media literacy during a pandemic. The impact of the media on the mental health of society (Riles, 2019) should be especially careful in the pandemic period. We have another problem – a way out of the so-called post-pandemic information syndrome, when trust in the media will not be undermined in the coverage of real events, when social networks will come to the fore in expert opinion and authority and the news will not be perceived as "fake" in advance.

Due to the lack of relevant research on media literacy in social networks, as well as the comprehensiveness of social networks, we consider it appropriate to use the "contextualized approach" (Manca et al., 2021) in the study of social media. That is why the flow of news during social changes or political drunkenness should be treated with caution (Kilgo, Harlow, 2019), as every opinion expressed can become key in the further dissemination of news (sometimes even "fake"). At the same time, researchers emphasize the emergence of new words and phraseologisms in times of socio-political, economic change, revolutionary events, pandemics, etc. (Shevchenko, Syzonov, 2019: 8), which becomes the so-called "donation" for language innovation in the languages of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception to the emergence of neology –

from narrow medical terms to lexemes with new semantic nuances. We consider the role of social networks in the popularization of neologisms to be one of the key ones.

This key role also applied to news related to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It is noticed that "applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube are great sources of news and information dissemination today, but can sometimes create panic due to the spread of misinformation or false news" (Cifuentes-Faura, 2020: 146). It is during a pandemic that there may be information flows that are difficult to control. In fact, along with the virus, "viral news" is spreading, which harms the modern recipient in the perception of the so-called COVID news. We are convinced that "the traditional media has a key role in providing evidence-based information to the general public, which will then hopefully be picked up on social media" (Zarocostas., 2020: 676). However, in practice, informational truthfulness and factuality are not key in the news flow on social networks (as can be seen from our research *Results*).

4. Results

Verification of factuality in media communication

The problem of factuality in media is especially relevant in the works of researchers in those countries where the degree of trust in media is the lowest. It is obvious that media which seek to convey truthful information will rely on factuality. However, today most countries are subject to dissemination of both true and false information on the Internet (Vosoughi et al., 2018). The news about natural and social disasters were the most untrue: "falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information" (Vosoughi et al., 2018: 1146). Ukrainian news also falls under the influence of "fakes", which negatively affects the information image of the country (Shevchenko 2013).

We note that most respondents today do not pay attention to the information provided and are ready to repost the material on their social media pages.

Our data confirm this thesis: 45.8 % partially 23.7 % fully do not check the information obtained from media sources (Figure 1), which means that almost two thirds of respondents trust the facts presented in media.

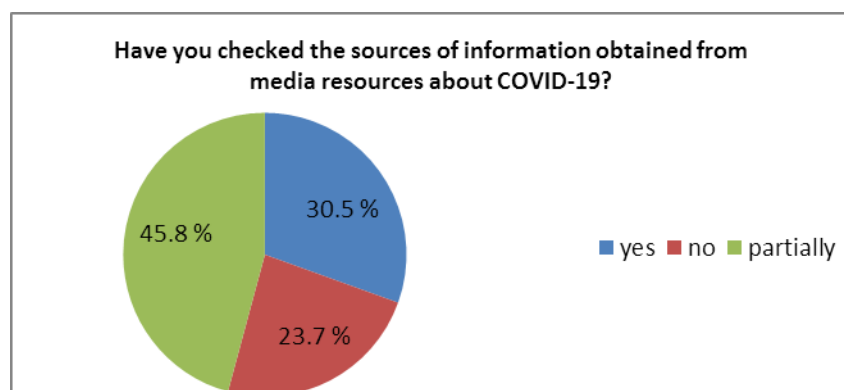


Fig. 1. The degree of verification of factuality in media resources

Factuality as the main characteristics of media should be "necessarily checked for accuracy, comprehensive disclosure of the topic, ... reflection of information reality" (Shevchenko et al., 2014: 177). In addition, the key role in this process belongs to language, by means of which factuality will be achieved: syntactic constructions (e.g. a headline "*Business will suffer during a pandemic*" differs in factuality from the headline "*Will business suffer during a pandemic?*"), lexical means (e.g. *pandemic* and *epidemic* have different semantics, which journalists manipulate when creating media contexts), word-formation tools (e.g. when creating a new word related to COVID-19 (*COVID-positive*, *COVID-dependent*, *COVID-transformation* etc.)). A journalist can manipulate the consciousness of a mass recipient by introducing these language units without checking the facts. Obviously, the recipient is involved in the verification of factuality. "Media correctness is to develop the results of language influences on the recipient, who should correctly and objectively perceive

the material" (Shevchenko et al., 2014: 93), and the recipient should not only copy the information, but also analytically represent it to other communicators. Unfortunately, nowadays journalists skillfully use manipulative means in language to convey not objective but "correct" opinion to the mass recipient. The situation with COVID-19 coverage is still incomplete in today's media stream.

We conducted a survey using the method of experiment to check the degree of respondents' trust in the news. The questionnaire included "fake" headlines, the essence of which is false information about COVID-19, e.g.: "COVID-19 was invented to intimidate the public", "Effective drugs from COVID-19 were invented", "China is making money from the Covid-19 outbreak", "COVID-19 helped to boost our immune system". Each of these news is not confirmed by doctors and others specialists working in media communication (see Fig. 2).

Cf. in media resources:

(1) *Atlantic alliance and coronavirus: "NATO seeks reasons to exist by meddling in everything"* (Sputnik France, https://youtu.be/osQvLW5Z_Yw, 06/02/2020)

(2) *Eco-fascists want to reduce the population of the Earth. They are ready to kill and hope for help from the coronavirus* (Lenta.ru, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2020/05/17/eco/>, 17/05/2020)

(3) *The fairytale Three Seas Initiative: Donald Trump's Europe bis* (Sputniknews Pl, <https://pl.sputniknews.com/opinie/2020052712477394-bajkowa-inicjatywatrojmorza-europa-bis-donalda-trumpa/>, 27/05/2020)

(4) *Who and why is experimenting in humans?* (Mejdurecie.md, <https://mejdurecie.md/v-mire/kto-i-zachem-stavit-jeksperimenty-na-ljudjah.html>, 26/05/2020)

(5) *Everything is at stake: Soros sees great opportunities after the Covid-19 coronavirus 'endangers our civilization'* (News Front - Spanish, <https://es.news-front.info/2020/05/12/todo-esta-en-juego-soros-ve-grandes-oportunidades-despues-de-que-el-coronavirus-covid-19-ponga-en-peligro-nuestra-civilizacion/>, 12/05/2020)

(6) *Coronavirus is not worse than the flu, but it masked the economic crisis. This is good for politicians* (MC.today, <https://mc.today/blogs/koronavirus-ne-strashnishij-za-grip-ale-nim-zamaskuvali-ekonomichnu-krizu-tse-vidno-politikam/>, 27/07/2020)

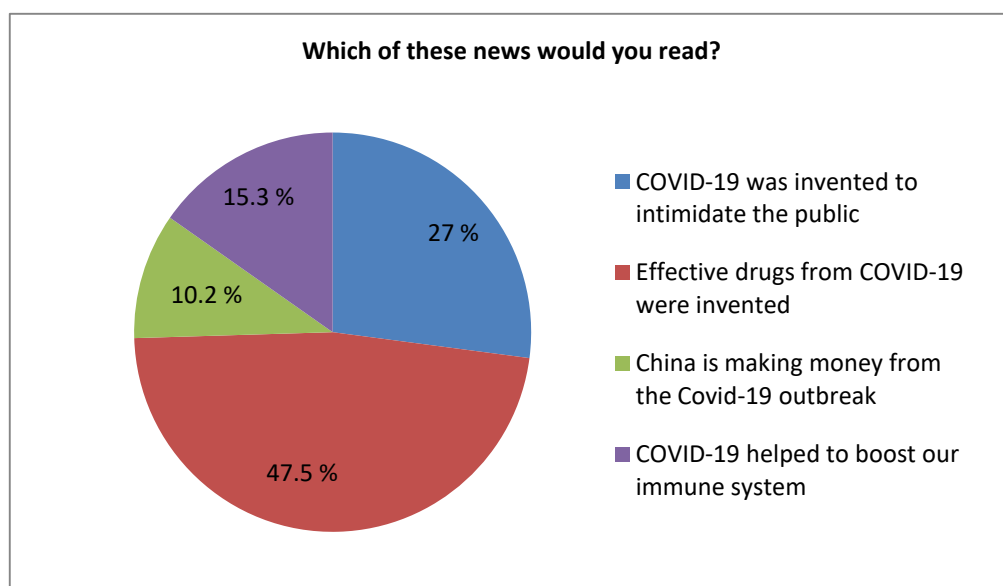


Fig. 2. Checking the perception of "fake" news by recipients

We emphasize that in medicine to confirm any data, medical argumentation is used, which is based on facts: experiment, systematically processed facts, figures, confirmed scientific hypotheses, analogies in the course of the disease in different regions etc. Unfortunately, medical institutions are not always ready to rely on medical facts, which leads to the spread of fake information.

The majority of respondents are ready to read the article without checking its accuracy and factuality, and 25.4 % are ready to repost the material on their page in social networks (see Figure 3). It is noteworthy that almost half of respondents (47.5 %) are ready to read positive "fake" news about the invention of effective drugs from COVID-19. On the one hand, it testifies to positive

attitudes among recipients, on the other hand, it encourages journalists to manipulate the recipients' consciousness by creating "correct" and "positive" news. Often the psychology of the recipient is such that he will repost unverified, but perceived as "correct" news despite the degree of real veracity of the information in it. Factuality thus remains the main source for media objectivity, on the one hand, and the main manipulative tool for journalists, on the other.

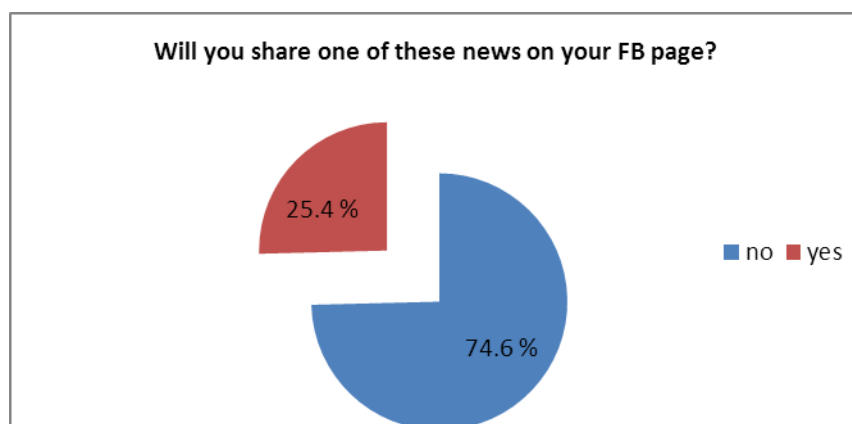


Fig. 3. Number of recipients ready to repost "fake" news

At the same time, most respondents trust only those editions which they constantly read on the Internet. Therefore, they treat them complimentary when covering any news. Thus, among the media sources used by respondents are *the Guardian*, *WHO*, *YouTube podcasts*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *Korrespondent.net*, *Hromadske*, *Suspilne*, *Reuters*, *Kyiv post* etc. In relation to those who are not trusted (*Znaj.ua*, *gazeta.ua*, *HB*, *Apostrophe*, *TSN*, *NewsOne*, *5 channel* etc.) there are sources that are associated with their owners (and, accordingly, political preferences). That is why opinions about publications that are trusted (and at the same time not trusted) by recipients are sometimes debatable. These in our case in clued *1+1*, *112.Ukraine*, *Inter*, *Unian*. Respondents also expressed distrust of abstract impersonal media sources (Russian, American, Chinese). As a result, even official sources of certain countries (Ukraine, Russia, USA, China) fall into the zone of distrust. We can conclude that media literacy of modern Ukrainians often depends on political sympathies rather than on the objectivity of information or factuality. We also emphasize that "media literacy has become a center of gravity for countering fake news" (Bulger, Davison, 2018: 1). This can be observed in Figure 4, which shows the level of trust in media among Ukrainian respondents regarding the information flow about COVID-19.

The result of the information flow which catches up with the recipients (*on the street, among acquaintances, in advertising*) is also interesting. Most of those who were not interested in the news of the COVID-19 pandemic still learned about it from other sources, in which advertising plays a key role (see Figure 5). Therefore, we conclude that media literacy of Ukrainians largely depends on the environment (a recipient is more likely to trust information from an acquaintance as a verified source than a fact in media which must be verified).

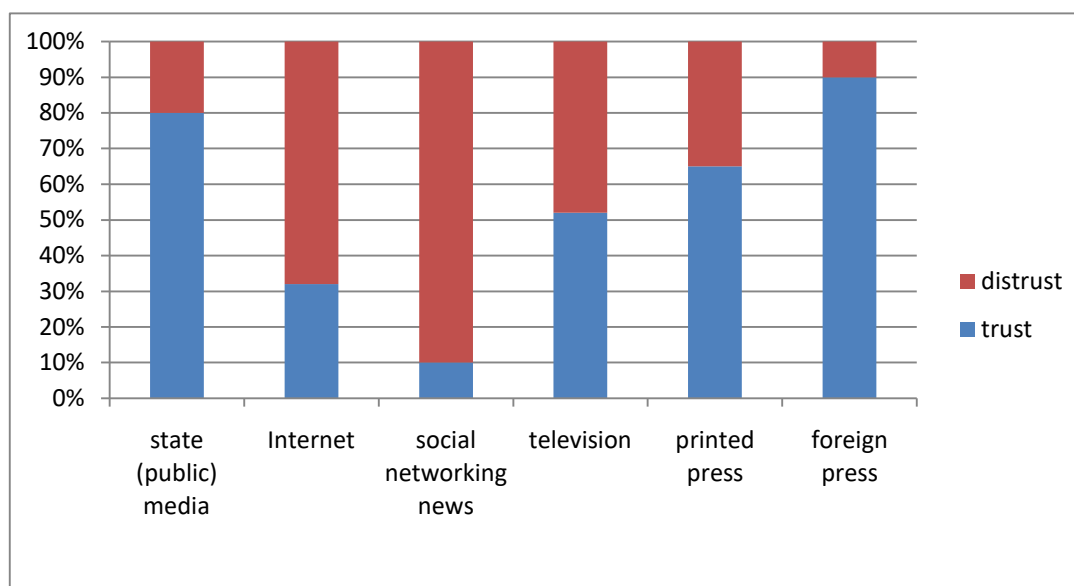


Fig. 4. Degree of trust in media among respondents

There can be two reasons for not checking unknown material from a known source: either there are no trusted media resources, or trust in a known source is higher than trust in a media fact (a psychological factor wins: information that is spread between communicators as a virus may not always be a fact). Realizing this, media can become the first pseudo-source of information that will pass it to a specific recipient, who will pass it on again: either to other communicators verbally, or to friends on the social network through repost.

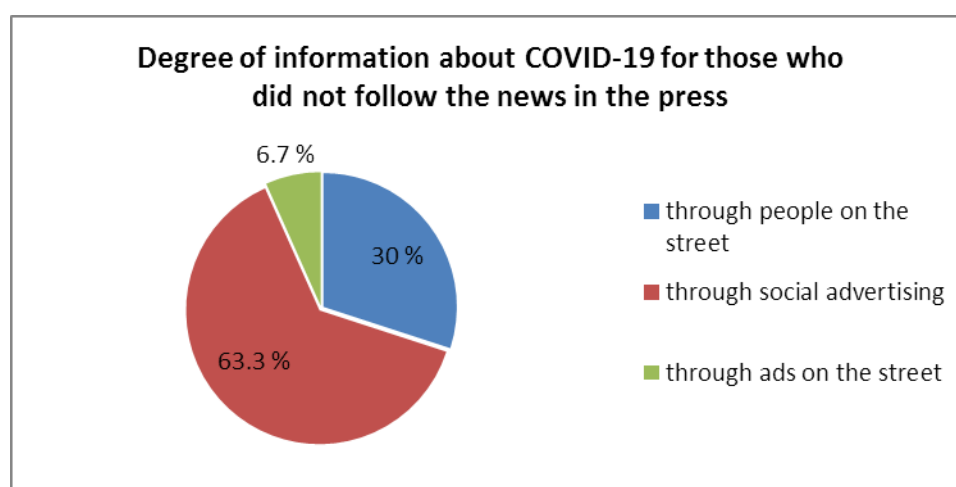


Fig. 5. Degree of information about COVID-19 for those who did not follow the news in the press

Manipulative role of media headlines

It is known that headlines are "a graphically selected part of a media text, ... the main idea and intent of a media text" (Shevchenko et al., 2014: 55). In the context of information competition, a brightly chosen headline helps a media text to be noticed and read by a potential recipient (especially when it comes to Internet communication).

Recently, the attention of scientists is drawn to the problems of language tools to maintain "the originality of publicist text titles and enhance their advertising content" (Abuzalova, 2020: 451), and therefore in the pursuit of ratings and advertising media lose the ethical standards of journalists in text factuality. Especially these standards are absent in Internet communication, control over which is minimal. This is often used by journalists to relay false information through headlines. Thus, in social networks, in order to repost a media material, it is necessary to use:

(a) a *provocative headline* (according to L. Duskaeva, journalists today lose the "aesthetic assessment of the message" (Duskaeva, 2010: 61), which is often realized through an unaesthetic headline, that is rather intriguing, fascinating, shocking, but not factual); (b) a *headline in the form of a rhetorical question* that forms the recipient's interest in reading the material; (c) a *headline with an innovative language unit* (e.g. neolexeme or neophrase). For instance, a headline such as "*To be or not to be a covidiot: how not to succumb to COVID panic*" is much better perceived than a headline "*Panic during a pandemic*"; (d) *analytical headline instead of informative headline* that will encourage the recipient to read the material and repost it; (f) a *headline with an interesting stylistic resource* – figures that will decorate a "dry" headline (see Figure 2 with "fake" headlines, which the respondents are ready to share).

In fact, a headline is "a guide between the reader and the journalist, in which the actualized meaning and idea are embedded" (Duskaeva, 2010: 86). It should be noted that a headline (if considered as an informational whole) is the first setting for the recipient in the perception of the material. Further reading and understanding of a media text actually depends on this setting. The results of our study have shown that the reaction of respondents through reposts on their social pages also depends on a headline. For instance, more than 80 % of respondents are ready to repost positive news headlines (even if they are fake), while negative news headlines are less repostable. It can be concluded that a journalist would rather choose a positive headline which is easier to manipulate the recipients' consciousness.

Language resource as a manipulative tool

The manipulative function of a media headline can be proved with the help of effective language means, i.e. certain dominants of mass communication which are characterized by emotionality and expressiveness and act as certain verbalizers of the essence of a media message.

Language means that function in a media text (e.g. in Facebook and Instagram posts) are a bright manipulative tool which is not always perceived positively by recipients. Therefore, the influence of such language means on the consciousness of the mass recipient is quite high. According to our observations, the most frequent language resources that "help" to convey false (or unverified) information are units of different language levels (primarily lexical and syntactic). Thus, for instance, the most manipulative units are recorded at the lexical (44 %) level. For correct analysis, we took those posts from Facebook and Instagram that were not confirmed by World Health Organization. According to our survey, recipients have been found to repost news with provocative headlines, which in world media linguistics is understood as a key tool of a media text (Perrin 2006). Obviously, our study is representative of Ukraine, as the data presented are processed from Ukrainian Facebook and Instagram pages. See Figure 6 which indicates the rating of the stylistic resource in the headlines of the posts for March-April. We emphasize that in 34 % of cases, the recipients are ready to repost unverified facts on their pages (respectively – every third).

All language changes associated with COVID-19 appear in order to see the real picture of language system evolution, the changes in its composition, the axiological dominants that form modern linguistic communication as well as trace the "life" of a linguistic unit in relative time.

See "fake" news in the media:

(7) *More than 1,500 military personnel of the 59 APU brigade in the Donbass are infected with coronavirus* (News Front, <https://news-front.info/2020/05/04/bolee-1-500-voennosluzhashhih-59-brigady-vsua-na-donbasse-inficzirovany-koronavirusom/>, 04/05/2020).

(8) *Opinion: I still think COVID-19 is being overhyped* (Public Opinion, <https://www.publicopiniononline.com/story/opinion/2020/03/19/coronavirus-still-think-covid-19-being-overhyped-dwight-weidman/2874667001/>, 19/03/2020).

(9) *UK refuses 5G, Huawei will no longer be able to carry out infrastructure works* (Qartuliazri Reportiori, <http://qartuliazri.reportiori.ge/inside.php?menuid=8&id=54128,25/04/2020>).

(10) *"The virus no longer exists": a doctor made a shocking statement about the coronavirus in Italy* (Site News, <http://www.sitenews.biz.ua/virusu-bilshe-ne-Isnuye-likar-zrobyvshouyuchu-zayavu-pro-koronavirus-v-italiyi/>, 15/10/2020).

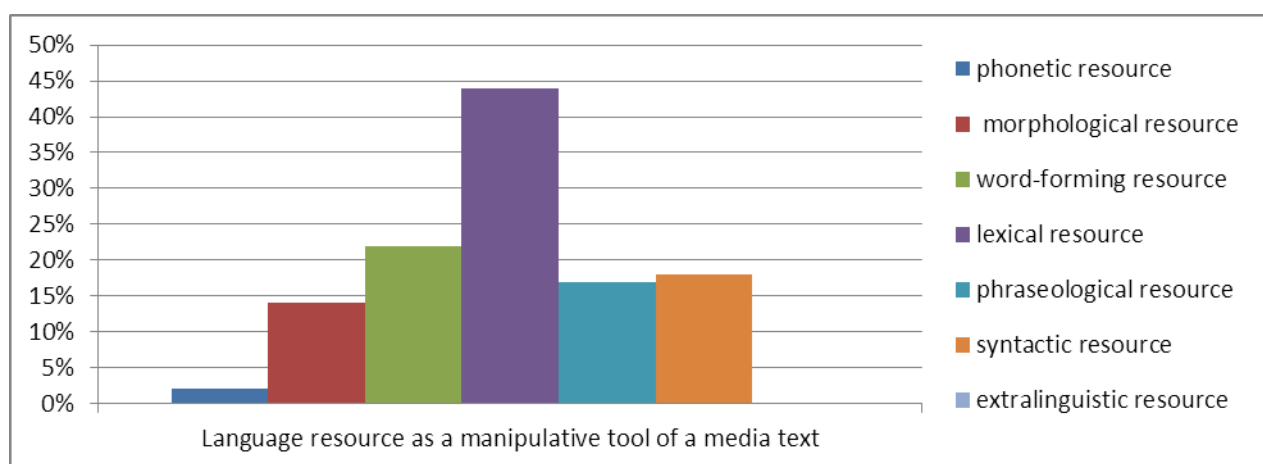


Fig. 6. Using a language resource as a manipulative tool in the news

It should be noted that neology is an important tool in manipulating the consciousness of the recipient. Nowadays neology is rapidly invading the language system and just like "virus" can invade the media space. Social networks have the function of blocking a participant for providing inaccurate information. But what if this information is new and difficult to verify by source?

At the beginning of the pandemic, according to our observations, almost no language innovations were detected in the media, which is motivated by the popularity of the barbarism COVID-19 and its counterpart coronavirus in the Ukrainian-speaking realities. At the same time, from the metaphorical nomination for the similarity of the virus to the crown, graphically designed in quotation marks ("*coronavirus*"), journalists moved to the commonly used word without quotation marks (*coronavirus*).

Such dynamics can be explained by the resonance of the language unit for conversational communication, just as it once was with the nominations "*trampism*" – *trampism* (in American realities), "*Maidan*" – *Maidan* (in Ukrainian realities), "*newcomer*" – *newcomer* (in Russian realities) etc. All these nominations are firmly entrenched in the media realms not only of certain countries in whose language the units were distributed, but also became interesting for world communications.

Another situation is with the new words for COVID-19, which appeared and function as internationalisms. It often turns out that these words affect the mass consciousness and can be the subject of analysis from the standpoint of media literacy.

Therefore, the path of the new word (and meaning) is represented schematically: *COVID-19* → "*coronavirus*" → *coronavirus* → *death virus* → *n + 1* (infinity of words and expansion of meanings). That is why in the mass consciousness the coronavirus nomination is used more widely and rapidly than COVID-19 (Figure 7). Therefore, the frequency of derived words from "crown-" will also be higher.

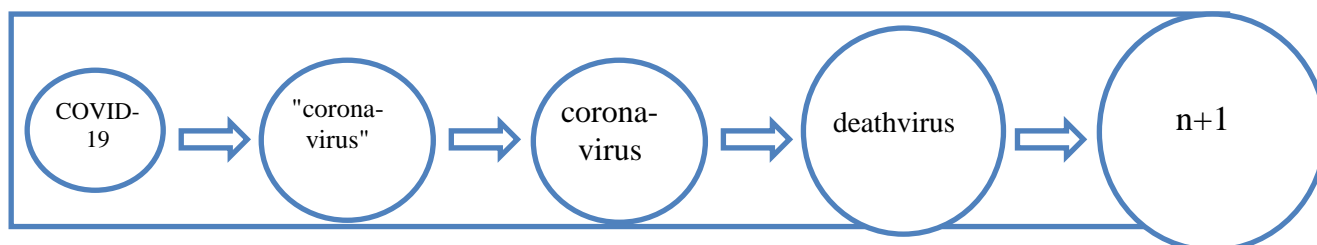


Fig. 7. Stylistic gradation of the appearance of a new semantic nuance associated with COVID-19

New words also appear in the lexicon of Europeans (we have even noticed a certain universalization in this matter regarding the English language as an international donor of new words). Thus, in the e-dictionary of slang *Urban dictionary*, the first and most popular among recipients media neologisms such as *covidiot* (a person who stores goods during quarantine) or *coronabrain* (coronavirus brain) appear in mid-March (Figure 8); British scientists have even

invented a special definition that denotes a special language during the COVID-19 pandemic - *coronaspeak*.

These language innovations were picked up in the Ukrainian media in April. This tendency is a natural process for the language and is associated with "the dynamics of the Ukrainian word in mass communication, ... maximum objectification of the real picture of the life of the Ukrainian language in media communication" (Shevchenko, Syzonov 2019: 5).



Fig. 8. Slang frequency of new units associated with COVID-19

Source: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/>

We see the impact of new words related to COVID-19 on the formation of the image of modern Ukraine (Pliasun, 2019). Today's media image of Ukraine is quite contradictory due to the infamous COVID-19, which has different effects on Ukrainian economy, medicine, education, science, tourism etc. And if in some areas we are trying to find a way out of the problem situation, reformatting the educational process in the direction of digitalization and developing domestic tourism, in other areas - especially economic, medical, social etc. - we face many serious challenges.

Obviously, in these conditions, the priority of a journalist should be timely, truthful and impartial informing the recipient about current events, focus on axiological and ethical principles, information hygiene and respect for recipients. After all, the perception of the image text by 50 % depends on the author's intention, modality, etc., that is why professional analysis of the meanings laid down by the journalist, image-forming markers and ideologues is one of many topical issues for researchers in linguistic imageology.

It is in social networks that we notice a certain trend in the flow of news, which makes social networks leaders of public opinion and an authoritative source (Holmgreen 2020), which is not always positive for the recipient who does not check the source of information by reposting fake news.

5. Conclusion

We conclude that in most cases modern recipients do not check the information obtained from media sources (as confirmation, we present the results of an electronic survey). Medical issues especially fall into the zone of weak verification (according to our data, the recipient trusts the authorities and any information that is expressed officially). On the one hand, society is most concerned about health problems, on the other hand, journalists manipulate on the topic of health (Syzonov, 2012: 9). We associate low media literacy with the rapid globalization of modern media (Claire, 2019), due to which the flow of information is uncontrolled, especially in Internet communication. Another reason for low media literacy is the "skill" of journalists to mislead recipients through bright headlines. It is proved that a bright headline, compositionally organized as an interrogative or exclamatory sentence, has a greater impact than a narrative construction.

According to our survey, headlines with lexical manipulative resources are the most popular (44 %), while headlines with phonetic manipulative means are less affected by the recipient. Most of the interviewed recipients are still ready to check the factuality of the information in a media text (we emphasize that we have deliberately selected fake news). Some recipients (22 %) pay attention to fake news because of a bright headline (or trusting a verified media resource) and are ready to repost the news without verification. Due to the resonance of the news related to COVID-19 journalists have used not only objective but also fake news as a tool to influence the recipient. As evidenced by our survey, even because of the possible decline in the popularity of the news or media sources about the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists "artificially" resort to the inclusion in the text of the topic "COVID-19", to which recipients actively respond. We state that the presented factual news in different media sources can be perceived by the recipients with the

opposite semantics. The reason is in the reflection on media due to their politicization (any information, even official, can be perceived primarily through sources that are trusted / distrusted). Consequently, media literacy of modern recipients depends on political orientation of a media source, as well as a recipient's refusal to verify the facts and trust any information obtained from official sources and interpreted in media.

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