

THE MASS MEDIA MANIPULATION AND THE DISCOURSE OF UNMASKING ITS MOTIVES AND METHODS

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Abstract: *in modern society, person is subjected to simultaneous exposure from the print media, radio and television, which implies various kinds of manipulation flows. Formation of a critical attitude to the mass media is one of the main positions that characterize media literacy. There are a huge number of manipulative techniques, which are regularly used in mass media. This article reveals the main techniques used in the journalistic and media texts. It analyzes two aspects of mass media's manipulative discourse – a manipulative method and an unmasking, exposing one.*

Keywords: *discourse, mass media, manipulation, unmasking, media linguistics.*

ОСНОВНЫЕ ПРИЕМЫ ДИСКУРС-МАНИПУЛЯЦИЙ В СМИ И РАЗОБЛАЧЕНИЕ ИХ МОТИВОВ И МЕТОДОВ Дунаевская Ю.О. (Украина)

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Аннотация: *в современном обществе человек подвергается одновременному воздействию со стороны печатных СМИ, радио и телевидения, что подразумевает различные виды манипуляции. Формирование критического отношения к средствам массовой информации является одним из главных факторов, характеризующих медиаграмотность. Существует огромное количество манипулятивных методов, которые регулярно используются в средствах массовой информации. В этой статье раскрываются основные методы, используемые в публицистике и медиа-текстах. В ней анализируются два аспекта манипулятивного дискурса СМИ - манипулятивный метод и разоблачение.*

Ключевые слова: *дискурс, масс-медиа, манипуляция, разоблачение, медиа-лингвистика.*

*All of us who professionally use the mass media
are the shapers of society.*

We can vulgarize that society. We can brutalize it.

Or we can help lift it onto a higher level.

William Bernbach, American advertising creative director

The mass media is universally acknowledged to be an aggregate tool, or machine, that efficiently and effectively manipulates the public opinion and an individual news consumer. But in the media there is also a counter-force at work which exposes this manipulation, makes its hidden springs known to the public. The quotation chosen for the epigraph aptly combines these two opposing sides of the media – honest journalism which is beneficial for the society and distorting, falsifying, manipulative journales. The public expects from the journalism unbiased reports on the central issues of daily life, holding power to account and maintaining a narrative of the institutions that affect everyone.

In this paper, we would like to make a point of there being a large share of the media which exposes the mass media manipulation techniques thus making it possible to tell a truth from a lie, a fraud from a trusted fact. What cannot fail to draw a mass media researcher's attention is an impressive number of publications, including influential works, devoted to a thorough analysis of the various manipulation techniques employed by the mass media.

The scholars in sociolinguistics, media linguistics, psychology and some other interdisciplinary sciences have to be duly credited with exploring effects and techniques ensuring the mass media's desired impact on the reader, viewer, listener. To the notable media manipulation theorists belong Edward Bernays, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Ryan Holiday, Michael Moore and other prominent scholars. The numerous research findings provide extensive lists of the linguistic and extra-linguistic means of the mass media manipulation. Some of these are *name calling, glittering generality, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, band wagon* (in O. Dmitruk's classification), and a host of other methods and techniques. Out of these, a "*band*

wagon” is particularly illustrative for its obvious metaphorical transference. This manipulative technology exploits people’s conscious or subconscious wish to join what is popular, to believe in what is guaranteed to win, or is declared to be a true and confirmed fact. The source domain of this metaphor is a wagon with a musical band on it which drove ahead of a traveling circus to announce its arrival in a settlement. Later, the phrase was picked up for election campaigns when “*candidates would ride a bandwagon through town, and people would show support for the candidate by climbing aboard the wagon. The phrase has come to refer to joining a cause because of its popularity.*” [1].

A recurrent motif of practically all publications on the mass media impact on the public and an individual is succinctly worded in the following quotation, “*When we turn on the news, open a paper or watch our favourite current affairs show, we might expect to be informed, not manipulated. What many may not consider or realise, however, is just how biased and sensationalist these forms of media can be, and how much they can influence our world view.*” [4]. For all the truth of this statement, it somehow disregards such an influential branch of the media as a reporter’s, or journalist’s, investigation.

The English-written press and other media favor featuring sensational, exciting topics to ensure their consumers’ interest. Innocent as some topics may seem, they and their coverage turn out to be part of a scheme, or a strategy, to pursue other aims besides those of entertainment and natural curiosity.

In this paper, we shall examine the two popular issues which got a wide coverage in the American media while illustrating the two ‘camps’ in the media – a manipulative one and an unmasking, exposing one.

The first issue concerns creating a negative image of the aliens as hostile intruders from the outer space. “*Over many decades, there has been a proliferation of media portraying ETs [extra-terrestrials] as threatening invaders, despite evidence suggesting they are peaceful and want to help humanity. This tactic of using constant reminders, hints, images, and insinuations to implant subconscious ideas about planned societal change is called predictive programming.*” [3].

What attracted an attention of the mass media experts was the fact of the two US Presidents joining the discussion of this issue in the media. In 1987 at the UN General Assembly President Reagan voiced his vision on what was likely to unite the mankind torn by conflicts. He said, “*Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat*” and then added that he occasionally thought, “*how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world*”. Reagan’s vision of aliens as a potential threat was reinforced two decades later by President Clinton who took part in a television debate on the topic of UFOs and extraterrestrial visitation. As it turns out, these efforts to portray extraterrestrials as hostile intruders are made in the interest of “*those who benefit from long-term planetary war, strife, and weapons-spending.*” [3].

The second issue deals with a comparatively recent debate, mostly in the USA, on the climate change. While the scientists are practically unanimous in the climate being significantly changed over the last half a century because of industrial pollution and other factors, there are opposing views on the given issue which expose the climate change doctrine as a hoax. These views came to be known as “*climate change denial*”. This “denial” campaign rejecting the climate change phenomenon was exposed as a mass media project engaging in “*tactics including cherry picking data purported to support their specific viewpoints, and attacking the integrity of climate scientists.*” [2].

In this quotation, “*cherry picking*” is a term having to do with media manipulation. It denotes a purposeful, biased selection of the desired facts while ignoring or distorting the contradictory facts. In 2011, a book under the title *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand* was published to expose the “denial” campaign. “*The book traces financial support for climate change denial to the fossil fuel industry, asserting these companies have attempted to influence public opinion on the matter. Washington and Cook write that politicians have a tendency to use weasel words as part of a propaganda tactic through use of spin, as a way to deflect public interest away from climate change and remain passive on the issue.*” [2]. Here we have two more media manipulation terms, and *spin*. The first means ambiguous or quibbling speech, unsubstantiated or meaningless statements, the second one stands for a method and procedure of presenting news or information in a way that creates a particular desired impression.

Concluding our short overview of the two opposing forces at work in the mass media, we come to an opinion that publication of the books exposing the manipulation techniques of the media as well as public debate over the said and plenty of other issues testifies to the fact that the mass media afford both unbiased and biased coverage of events for the public and an individual consumer of information. Thus for an attentive recipient of the media it is possible to get and form a true picture of current happenings and those of the past.

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