

TOOLKIT FOR THE FORMATION OF NARRATIVE STRATEGIES OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR (USING THE 2022–2023 MEDIA LANGUAGE AS AN EXAMPLE)

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Abstract: The article clarifies the scope of the concepts of narratives and subnarratives, comprehensively characterizes the narratives of Russian propaganda updated as of February 24, 2022. On the basis of processed materials of social networks and texts of traditional mass media, the peculiarities of the formation of narrative strategies of the Russian-Ukrainian war are determined. The analytical-synthetic method, methods of comparison and fact-checking served as the basis for the thematic classification of false messages, which are combined into eight blocks: 1) disbelief; 2) demonization of Ukraine and Ukrainians; 3) justification of aggression; 4) split; 5) intimidation; 6) ennoblement of the enemy; 7) shifting blame; 8) scaling of the conflict. Focusing on the priorities of multi-vector research made it possible to identify seven ways of suggestive influence on the recipient with the help of language tools: 1) introduction into a common synonymous series, which contributes to the formation of additional negative connotations of the word; 2) specifying seme, the functional range of which usually correlates with the purpose of language units of the first variety; 3) statements in the form of truisms, thanks to which the information appears as obvious and does not require proof; 4) conceptual metaphors aimed at justifying the war, contempt for Ukrainian national symbols; 5) euphemisms, with the help of which it is possible to either reduce the scale of the committed negative action, or to hide the negative consequences of the actions of opponents; 6) presuppositions leading to shifting the blame for the war onto Western countries and international alliances; 7) dehumanizing and demonizing vocabulary, which takes part in modeling situations that cause hatred and justify aggression.

Keywords: narrative; novelties; Russian aggression; language means; media language.

1 Introduction

In connection with the mega-fast development of information and communication technologies and the efficiency of news transmission, information warfare has become a new type of confrontation. The main purpose of waging a so-called “war without weapons” is, first of all, to demoralize the opponent, gain an emotional advantage over him, legitimize criminal actions, justify victory in the confrontation through discrediting, and influence the change of borders without the use of real weapons. For decades, Ukraine was the main target of the Russian information war. Direct armed aggression against Ukraine, expressed in the annexation of Crimea, the development of the conflict in some territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, was always accompanied by disinformation attacks. In the current conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, we are daily witnesses of powerful media attacks by the enemy with overt propaganda content and manipulation technologies, information and psychological operations (IPSO), which have a destructive effect on the consciousness of Ukrainians. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russian propaganda has produced a large number of narratives designed to have a harmful effect on Ukrainian society, in particular, to split Ukrainian unity, demoralize the actions of the Ukrainian army and state leadership, discredit politics, economy, culture, sow panic, disrupt the work of emergency services, etc. Through the paradigm of false narratives, Russia also exerts influence on its citizens, namely: zombifies their consciousness, directs them to negative actions, cruel revenge, and justifies aggression in Ukraine.

Since 2014, the scientific community has increased attention to the study of Russian propaganda narratives. N. Vashchenko considers narratives as an influential problem in the conditions of Russia's conscientious war against Ukraine [35]. M. Ozhevan analyzes the challenges and risks facing Ukraine in the global war of strategic narratives [20]. The key narratives and methods of Russian propaganda in Ukraine are characterized in detail by

H. Yuskiv, noting the situational nature and flexibility of Russian information activities, the lack of a consistent model for interpreting narratives directed against Ukraine [36]. Propaganda methods in Russian Internet resources are studied by N. Semen [26], B. Ivanytska [9], N. Nikolayenko, Yu. Vasylevich, and O. Komarchuk [19]. O. Zozulya focuses attention on fakes as tools of information warfare [37]. After the full-scale invasion, scientific and journalistic intelligence began to appear, dedicated to the multifaceted study of Russian disinformation. O. Zemlyanska and D. Semenov interpret propaganda as a weapon of modern war. A. Pechersky writes about rashist informational and psychological operations in the conditions of war [21; 22]. Scientists focus attention on typological features, linguistic and stylistic markers of Russian media manipulations [10], as well as methods of fact-checking and media literacy development when consuming negative content [10]. It is significant that researchers study not only the narratives of the period of hybrid (2014–2021) and full-scale (from February 24, 2022 – until now) Russian aggression against Ukraine – attention is also focused on the study of narratives of the pre-war period 2003–2013 [12]. In the scientific discourse, a system of terms has been formed that reflect the role of narratives in the conduct of information warfare that precedes or accompanies an armed conflict, in particular, it refers to such terms as “narrative war”, “war of narratives”, “battle of narratives”, “stabilizing narrative”, “mobilization narrative”, “armed narrative”, “strategic narrative”, etc. The analyzed material undoubtedly shows that Russian disinformation of various types (fakes, manipulation, propaganda, so-called “rumors”) is an important object of research, which has repeatedly been in the field of view of scientists. At the same time, since a full-scale invasion, the enemy does not stop using various narrative strategies, seeking to impose false information in the media sphere and win the information war. Precisely through false narratives, Russia broadcasts informational and psychological operations, using the most diverse methods of influence. In view of this, there is a need to research the toolkit for the formation of narrative strategies of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in particular, the identification of typological features in the media, linguistic style markers, target audience, means of distribution, etc.

2 Materials and Methods

Examples of narratives promoted by Russia in the media space through social networks and traditional mass media from February 24, 2022 served as the research material. The source of the analysis was the texts of such propaganda resources as lenta.ru, gazeta.ru, news.rambler.ru, smotrim.ru, TV channels “DNR”, “Russia-1”, statements of politicians. The scientific analysis involved the advice of media experts, practicing journalists, fact-checkers, as well as recommendations for refuting Russian narratives of such anti-fake projects as “NotaYenota”, (“Brekhunetz” (“Liar”), “Detector Media”, “BezBrekhni”, “Filtr”, “Russian Fake, go to...”, research by the public organization “Information in its pure form”.

The methodology of studying the narrative strategies promoted by Russia in the modern media space along with the armed and information war provided for the step-by-step application of both general scientific and special methods and approaches, which made it possible to achieve the result. At the first stage, a comparative analysis of scientific intelligence and journalistic publications on the selected problem was carried out. The second stage included a direct study of the language of the Russian media in the context of the circulation of propaganda narratives about Ukraine. Analytical-synthetic method, as well as methods of comparison and analogy, a special method of fact-checking made it possible to compare the methodological concepts of the essence of the narrative strategies of rashists, to reveal the peculiarities of their aspects in order to reduce the negative destructive impact on the Ukrainian audience. Seme-component analysis was used to determine the peculiarities of the use of

lexical units for the purpose of manipulative influence, the method of conceptual analysis was used to differentiate conceptual metaphors; the method of contextual analysis was applied for the study of changes in the connotative components of the semantics of a word.

The article analyzes the toolkit for the formation of narrative strategies of the Russian-Ukrainian war based on the material of the language of the media of 2022–2023, in particular, the typological features of Russia's narrative propaganda are investigated; linguistic markers of false messages are characterized; the eight most common blocks of narratives on the theme of ideas are singled out and described; attention is focused on linguistic means of suggestive influence and actualization of concepts; the target audience and the purpose of directing negative media content were investigated.

3 Results and Discussion

Thematic classification of narratives

In the traditional sense, a narrative is considered as “narration (as a product and as a process, object and act, structure and structuring) of one or more real or fictitious events, which are reported by one, two, or more narrators to one, two, or more narrated” [33, p. 73]. That is, from the traditional point of view, texts that report on something that does not really exist cannot be narratives. However, the transition of the concept of narratives into the political plane somewhat expanded its semantics. In particular, in the “Political Encyclopedia”, the narrative is interpreted as “an explanation of events in the form of short assessments from the point of view of common sense, which often have the appearance of simplification”. As an example, the following political narratives are given: “Russia is an older brother”, “America is a strict father” [15, p. 476]. In the proposed work, we consider the term *narrative* to denote clear, concise theses that highlight the ideological content and predict the impact on society for the purpose of forming public opinion. A narrative can be implemented in subnarratives. For example, the purpose of the narrative “*Russia is not at war with Ukraine, but with NATO*” is the formation of public opinion that NATO is the culprit of the war. This interpretation helps Russia to: a) scale the conflict; b) blame someone for aggression; c) preserve in the worldview of the recipient the opinion that ordinary Ukrainians are not affected by the actions of the Russian army. This narrative can be implemented in several narratives: “*NATO troops are fighting on the territory of Ukraine*”, “*Transferring weapons to Ukraine is NATO's participation in the war*”.

It is known that narrative war is the oldest type of war. Media researchers understand narratives as a mixture of facts and fiction, knowledge and manipulation, that is, it is not just disinformation or fake news, narrative is a much more complex concept. Today, narratives as a so-called type of “weapon” are able to change the picture of the world. After all, this set of statements becomes a toolkit for understanding and comprehending the situation, exerts an influence on individual and mass consciousness. It is clear that, managing the information space, the state manages the mass consciousness of its citizens with the help of narratives. This is precisely what Russia is doing in relation to its society and Belarus, where the arrival of the Russian media system has clear results in favor of the “Russian world”. In the new manifestation, Russian narratives are aimed at establishing their own narrative and devaluing the opponent's narrative through simplistic and unambiguous theses, often supported by a powerful emotional component. The full-scale invasion led to the emergence of new Russian narratives directed against Ukraine, although they often stem from previous metanarratives, because the mass consciousness of the recipients understands the appeal to them, as they have long been recorded in the public memory. In this regard, A. Maan claims that “narratives give meaning to what before was a set of events that were sometimes connected and sometimes not. They bring events together in a proper manner and for certain purposes” [17].

In the process of analyzing the texts of the Russian mass media and social networks, we singled out the most common Russian narratives, grouping them by topic into eight blocks: 1) despair; 2) demonization of Ukraine and Ukrainians; 3) justification of aggression; 4) split; 5) intimidation; 6) ennoblement of the enemy; 7) shifting blame; 8) scaling of the conflict.

1. Narratives of despair. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the enemy has been trying to fight not only on the battlefield, but also looking for various means of psychological pressure on Ukrainians to undermine their fighting spirit, instill pessimism, despair and hopelessness. In messages aimed at creating panic, propagandists in the first weeks of the war often encouraged Ukrainians to leave the country.

The specified thematic block is represented by the narratives “*Ukraine will fall in three days*”, “*Ukraine will fall apart*”, “*Ukraine is gone*”, “*Ukraine is living its last days*”. With lightning speed, on the first day of the full-scale invasion, February 24, 2022, the Russian media published disinformation reports that the occupying forces had approached the Ukrainian capital, implemented a complete blockade, some claimed that Russian troops had already entered the city. This was evidenced by false messages actively distributed by Russian users in social networks with the context: “*Russian military entered Kyiv*”, Russian. “*The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation reported that our troops blocked Kyiv from the west*”, “*The shocking success of the Russian army. Battles are going near Kyiv*”, etc.

Also, Russian propagandists spread false information about the “capture” of Kharkiv, Mariupol, and Zhytomyr in a few hours, as evidenced by publications such as “*A tactical landing force of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation landed near Zhytomyr*”. In fact, the “second army of the world” was never able to completely surround Kyiv. The Russian invaders, who tried to break into the capital from three sides, suffered significant losses. As one saw, a little more than a month later, they fled from the Kyiv region, leaving the equipment and bodies of their comrades behind.

The narrative about the so-called “three days” was activated after the phrase of the self-proclaimed Belarusian president Oleksandr Lukashenko, who issued a statement that “the war with Ukraine will last a maximum of 2-3 days”. According to Russian fake sources, in a matter of hours on February 24, the occupying army allegedly “entered” Kharkiv, “crushed” its defenders and completely “captured” this city, as indicated by false reports with the context: “*There were footage confirming the battles for Kharkiv - we took the city into a circle, the Armed Forces of Ukraine is trying to unblock the city*”. At that time, indeed, the regional center was heavily shelled. Attempts to enter Kharkiv were made by the occupiers only on February 26, but the Russian armored vehicles that broke into the city were completely burned.

Motives of despair and panic are given rise by narratives related to weapons and the protection of Ukrainian borders (“*The air defense system of Ukraine has been destroyed*”), as evidenced by reports in the Russian media: “*Currently, the Armed Forces of Ukraine are in a critical situation. The best thing the president of Ukraine can do now is to leave the country*” (smotrim.ru, February 18, 2023). Propagandists also deceptively assured through information channels that they “completely destroyed the aviation of Ukraine”, “destroyed military bases”, “destroyed the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine”.

By manipulating the media, the Russians enjoyed the pseudo-power of the Russian army. The public began to abound with reports about the complete defeat of the Ukrainian army, about how the defenders of Ukraine, in a fear, are fleeing from the “second army of the world”. With particular pleasure, the Russians consumed the lie about the destruction of all Bayraktar UAVs. In order to add truth to false reports, the Russian mass media began to spread publications that hid the real situation about the war in Ukraine, for example: “*The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation called the statement of the Chief of the*

Armed Forces Zalužny "about the loss of Russian aircraft and armored vehicles" a "complete lie".

"The West does not provide enough weapons", "The West is running out of weapons" – Kremlin propaganda repeatedly tries to promote these narratives not only through its own media, but also through foreign ones. Russian mass media with renewed vigor constantly misinform about the possible termination of military aid to Ukraine. The impetus for this was the statement of the former adviser to the US Defense Minister Douglas McGregor in an interview with the YouTube channel Judge Napolitano, who stated that the West allegedly does not have enough time to manufacture weapons for Ukraine. Propagandists picked up this statement and brought it to the readership from a certain point of view they needed, distorting the true information and resorting to manipulation.

There is also a narrative circulating in the media that "a Korean script is being prepared in Ukraine". On February 7, 2023, the deputy head of the Russian Security Council, Dmytro Medvedev, said that Ukraine was apparently considering the possibility of ending the war by dividing the territories, becoming "South Korea" and hoping to liberate the occupied part of the country. Such leaks are spread with the aim of reaction of Western partners, hoping that they will pick up on this scenario of the end of the war in Ukraine. The analyzed narrative was broadcast as part of the Russian information and psychological operation (IPSO) about the alleged deliberate division of the territory of Ukraine. In response, Oleksiy Danilov, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, stated that there will be no Korean scenario in Ukraine, which the Russian invaders want to impose, failing to capture the entire state.

The narrative "Russian troops destroyed the HIMARS" appeared with the aim of creating panic among the Ukrainian society about Russia's supposed victory. Although in fact, similar fake messages that represent this narrative emerge every time in a new way in the spaces of the information field. After the catastrophic losses of the Russian Armed Forces in Makiivka, the Russian Ministry of Defense addressed to outright lie, announcing the destruction of five Ukrainian HIMARS MLRS. At the same time, the total number of such missile systems, which the Russians "destroyed" in words, already doubles their real number, which is in service with the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In propaganda messages with outright lies, the Russians appear as superheroes, because every time they supposedly "liquidate" Ukrainian HIMARS, although we see that this disinformation is repeated several times. According to Russian mass media, the first HIMARS were "destroyed" by the invaders on the territory of Ukraine on July 6 (two at once). Then they "stroke" two such systems, in particular, on August 1, October 1 and 29, November 20, December 8 and 26. In addition, there were many days when the rashists claimed to "destroy" one HIMARS at a time. And on January 3–4, after the shameful disaster in Makiivka, the invaders resorted to blatant lies and hyperbolization of their war capabilities, announcing that they had allegedly eliminated as many as five HIMARS systems – one that hit Makiivka, and four more in Druzhkivka. This false information was broadcast by the government news agency "RIA Novosti" with an appeal to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

Despite the efforts of the Russian narratives of the analyzed thematic block to sow panic and despair among Ukrainians, we see that even after a year of war, they failed to do so, because Ukrainian society has become ready for various types of false narratives by Russians, has learned to critically perceive information and differentiate between manipulative content and enemy fakes and propaganda. Ukraine courageously fights back both on the real front and on the informational front, continuing to win back the temporarily occupied territories.

2. *Narratives of demonization of Ukraine and Ukrainians.* To justify its actions in Ukraine, Russian propaganda resorts to the process of demonizing the enemy. For this purpose, narratives were created about the allegedly criminal behavior of Ukrainians

and the Ukrainian authorities in relation to the Russian-speaking population.

The narrative "Fascism/Nazism (neo-Nazism) in Ukraine" was updated during the 2004 presidential election campaign, when Russian political technologists who worked for the pro-Russian candidate V. Yanukovich positioned the pro-Ukrainian candidate V. Yushchenko as a fascist and a Nazi, and accordingly, everything Ukrainian – as fascist and Nazi [12, p. 278–271]. Russian propaganda uses the terms *Nazism* and *fascism* as absolute synonyms. In addition, these terms-lexemes are used in the Russian propaganda discourse as verbalizers of the concepts *Ukrainian*, *Ukrainian military*. This narrative was also used in 2014 during the annexation of Crimea and the capture of part of Donbas, and since February 24, 2022, the mention of Ukrainian Nazis in the Russian media has increased from 50 uses per day to more than 2,000.

Analysis of the media discourse (traditional mass media and social networks) gives reason to determine that this narrative is realized in several sub-narratives.

The sub-narratives "Fascists seized power in Ukraine", "Ukrainian people are held hostage by the Nazis", "Neo-Nazism is raising its head in Ukraine" allow Russia to create the illusion that the population of Ukraine should be freed from the Nazi/fascist government. For example: "Ukrainians are not our enemies. Ukrainians are a nation occupied by fascists. Temporarily. We are already working on it" (M. Simonyan, "Russia 1", January 26, 2023); "People should have been allowed to speak in their own language, in their own way, but the nationalist government set up a blockade" (O. Skabeeva, "Russia-1, March 10, 2022).

Subnarratives "Ukrainian Army is Nazis", "Azov Regiment are Nazis" should be also noted. Russian propaganda especially often resorts to labeling the Ukrainian military as Nazis/fascists, in particular, the Azov Regiment, which resisted Russian troops in Mariupol. For example: "Neo-Nazis continue to detain civilians, forcing them to become living targets. The humanitarian corridor has been operating for 1.5 hours. Only 5 people managed to get out of Mariupol. The rest are hostages" (O. Skabeeva, "Russia-1", March 5, 2022). In this context, the term "neo-Nazis" is used as an absolute synonym for the term *fascists*. The analyzed narrative strategy is formed by the sub-narrative "The President of Ukraine is a fascist/Nazi", which is expressed in the following propaganda contexts: "I believe that Zelensky is a terrorist, a rural Satanist, a fascist" (Kadyrov, February 12, 2023); Russian "The USA can no longer turn a blind eye to Zelensky's fascism" (vesti.ru, February 16, 2023).

The narrative "Ukraine has biological weapons" is used to create a negative image of Ukraine in the international arena. The sub-narrative "Ukraine uses dangerously infected mosquitoes, birds, bats against the Russian army" was voiced by the Russian representative at the UN on October 28, 2022. Such a statement caused the emergence of the language meme "fighting mosquitoes" in the Ukrainian network discourse. No less widespread in the information field is the sub-narrative "Ukraine uses prohibited weapons", in particular, it is presented in the daily reports of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation: "The Armed Forces of Ukraine began the mass use of ammunition filled with phosphorus" (gazeta.ru, February 27, 2022).

Even before the full-scale invasion, the sub-narrative "the USA has placed biolaboratories in Ukraine" was periodically disseminated through various communication channels. In 2021, petition No. 22/118694-ep was registered on the website of the President of Ukraine under the name "US biolaboratories in Ukraine are FACTORIES OF DEATH, CLOSE THEM IMMEDIATELY". At the beginning of the full-scale aggression, this topic was brought up to date, which was reproduced in the texts of the Russian media: "The Ministry of Defense of Russia has repeatedly drawn attention to the military biological programs implemented by the Pentagon... In particular, network

including more than 30 biological laboratories has been formed on the territory of Ukraine" (gazeta.ru, March 07, 2022).

In order to discredit Ukrainian state and Ukrainian military leaders, the narrative "Ukraine mocks its population and Russian captives" is actively circulating in the Russian mass media. The sub-narratives "Ukraine committed genocide against the population of Donbass for 8 years", "Ukraine bombed Donbas", "Ukraine kills Russian people in Donbass" in the Russian information and propaganda discourse present Ukraine as an aggressor. The analyzed narrative was used by Vladimir Putin in his address on the start of hostilities in Ukraine, mentioning the alleged "people who for eight years have been subjected to bullying and genocide by the Kyiv regime" (V. Putin, February 24, 2022). Russian news reports also broadcast the sub-narratives "Ukrainian military kills civilians", "Ukrainian soldiers torture locals", "Army forces mock the families of Russian prisoners", "Army forces mock prisoners", "Army commanders mock their soldiers", "Ukrainian Nazis beat veterans".

Perhaps the most common narrative as an attempt to downplay the aggression of the invaders is "Ukraine oppresses / humiliates Russian speakers". It is used in order to justify an attack on an independent state, since Russian-speakers were allegedly oppressed in Ukraine before the war. This thesis has been used by Russian media since 2014, that, they say, those who speak Russian were restricted in their rights in the east, and they need protection. In their propaganda, the rashists refer to the law "On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as a state language", which was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada in April 2019. The law stipulates that the state language in Ukraine is only Ukrainian, but Russian is not prohibited at the individual level. In Russia, this law was called the one that prohibits the Russian language, while in reality its main task is to eradicate the remnants of the discriminatory approach to the Ukrainian language, which is an echo of the era of the Russian Empire and the USSR. The sub-narratives "Ukraine bans the Russian language" and the like, which were common even before the war, acquired a new scale and an enhanced content tone with the full-scale invasion.

3. *Narratives justifying aggression.* Since the beginning of the hybrid aggression in 2014, Russia has been using media resources to convince the world community that its behavior regarding the annexation of Crimea is justified. In particular, it is about the widespread propagandist narrative "The people of Crimea decided to be with Russia". In 2022, propaganda narratives aimed to convince society of the feasibility of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The narrative "The threat of NATO" is implemented in several sub-narratives "If Russia had not attacked, then NATO bases would be on the border", "NATO promised not to expand to the East and did not hold back its words". Two days before the full-scale offensive, V. Putin announced that he would recognize the quasi-republics of the DPR and LPR because Ukraine was not fulfilling the Minsk agreements. In this regard, the propaganda media actively picked up and began to broadcast the narrative, beneficial for the Kremlin - "The war started because Ukraine did not fulfill the Minsk agreements" - in order to blame the opponent and justify the war in Ukraine. The previous campaign to demonize Ukraine gave grounds for interpreting the military invasion as the need to destroy Nazism, which explains the emergence of the false narrative "Ukraine needs to be denazified". V. Putin called denazification one of the reasons for the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Today, the Russian Federation constantly puts forward this demand in the negotiation process. It is clear that all accusations of the Russian authorities about the need to carry out the so-called "denazification" in Ukraine are absurd. Through this narrative, Russia baselessly accuses the Ukrainian authorities of fictional "oppression" of Russian-speakers, the entry of the far-right into the authorities, the "ideology of Ukrainian Nazism", etc. This is evidenced by the headlines of the Russian media: "Lavrov told what denazification in Ukraine means" ("TAAS", March 18, 2022); "Medinsky explained why the de-Nazification of Ukraine is important for everyone"

("Ria.Novosti", March 18, 2022). In the context of this, it is worth noting that a number of scientists from around the world who study the history of genocide, Nazism, and the Second World War signed a statement that the Russian authorities misuse the term "genocide" as well as the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust, equates the Ukrainian state with the Nazi regime in order to justify the war it is waging with Ukraine. "There was no other way out in Russia" is one of the justifying narratives used by the highest officials of the Russian Federation in their speeches, 'proving' that events took place in Ukraine to which Russia had to necessarily react: "Obviously, we didn't have other choice... And there is no doubt that the goals will be achieved" (V. Putin, gazeta.ru, February 12, 2022). With a propagandist accent, the narrative "Mariupol has been cleaned" appears in the Russian mass media. The city of Mariupol is one of those that Russia subjected to heavy bombing, as a result of which most of the buildings were destroyed. A pro-Russian official made a statement in which she called such a situation a purge: "Mariupol has been cleaned. It was desecrated with beauties, tinsel, parks. And now, through the terrible, through the horrible, it was cleansed" (TV channel "DPR", July 12, 2022).

4. *Narratives of the split* (narratives of the East-West confrontation of Ukraine). In the conditions of war, Russia often use statements that incite conflict between residents of the west and east of Ukraine. In particular, there is a well-known narrative that namely the residents of the east and south of Ukraine are to blame for Russia attacking them, because they speak Russian and, therefore, have pro-Russian sentiments. This thesis, in various guises, has been repeatedly thrown into the information space, because it is very beneficial to the Russian mass media, as it shifts the responsibility for the invading aggression of the occupiers to those Ukrainians who speak Russian. Among the false subnarratives that contribute to the division of the population of Ukraine are those that express the opposition between Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking residents. They also got into the Ukrainian communication space, in particular the Tiktok network: "My house was bombed, and when I tell the people of Lviv about it, their only reaction is: "Why not in Ukrainian?"; "In Lviv, they did not give food to a child because his mother spoke Russian", "Volunteers from Lviv do not give food to Russian speakers", "A woman in Donbas refused to feed a wounded Ukrainian soldier until he paid UAH 500". We understand that it was not actually the use of the Russian language in the Ukrainian-speaking space that caused the Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine, but geographical logistics contributed to this, because temporarily occupied or captured settlements are located mainly on the border territory.

On the Internet, in wartime, the narrative that while Southern and Eastern Ukraine is being destroyed by the invaders, the West is living a peaceful and calm life is repeatedly circulated. First of all, this thesis is broadcast in Facebook groups and Viber communities in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. In modern realities, we observe the falsity of this statement. There is no need to be categorical about "peaceful" life in the West, because it is impossible in the conditions of war. Western Ukrainian critical infrastructure also suffers from aviation strikes. Ukrainian men and women from this territory are also going to the front, ready to give their lives to protect their native people from Russian aggression. And the narrative that "the West of Ukraine is profiting from the internal immigrants", expressed in a wide variety of sub-narratives ("Lvivians raised the prices of apartments to profit from the victims", etc.) tries to discredit those Ukrainians who live in Western Ukraine in order to cause conflicts with the temporary displaced persons. One of the tools for the functioning of narratives is a fake, which, through fake content, broadcasts the enemy's thesis to society. The Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defense Council has repeatedly refuted fakes about "ungrateful immigrants from the East of Ukraine" who, according to provocative user reports, allegedly behave in the West "like at a resort". In order to divide Ukrainians, such information was actively disseminated in social networks. Then it turned out that the employees of the Center called all

sanatoriums and resorts of Western Ukraine to find out the real picture. The owners of the hotels reported that the displaced people behave modestly, enter the territorial defense, and actively conduct volunteer activities.

5. *Narratives of intimidation.* During the year of the war in Ukraine, the narrative “*There will be an offensive from Belarus*” is circulating in the domestic media space. Informational rumors about the preparation of an offensive from Belarus unfold each time with new force and a greater emotional effect, to which everyone is already accustomed and does not perceive such reports as real. The so-called horror rumors about a possible attack from the northern neighbor have been spreading on the Internet since the first days of the war, each time with a new date of the Belarusian invasion, cf.: “*On August 24, Russia will shell Ukraine*”, “*Belarus will attack on February 16*”, “*Tomorrow at 4 am there will be a massive attack from Belarus, the DRG will break through*”, “*February 24 there will be a massive attack from Belarus*”, and the like). This narrative covers several goals at the same time: first, to sow panic among the Ukrainian population, in particular, residents of the border area; secondly, to disorient the Ukrainian defense forces, to transfer them from other directions to the Belarusian border; thirdly, to ensure that Belarus entered the war on the side of Russia.

Among the narratives of intimidating the Ukrainian population and creating a possible panic, propagandists resort to the following ones: “*Russia is preparing a large air raid*”, “*Russia will create a humanitarian disaster in Ukraine*”, “*Ukraine will freeze*”, “*There will be a second attack on Kyiv*”.

6. *Narratives of ennobling the aggressor.* Narratives of this category also have justifying semantics, but at the same time they are designed to form a noble image of Russia through the actualized concepts of *PROTECTION, LIBERATION, CARE*. Through of the formed narratives “*Russia does not start wars, it ends them*”, “*Russia conducts a special operation, not a war*”, “*Russia only strikes military targets*”, “*Russia does not affect the civilian population*”, “*We protect*” the Kremlin tries to justify the criminal actions of the occupiers in Ukraine and shift the blame to Kyiv or the Ukrainian authorities. This position of the Russian leadership is also covered by propaganda publications: “*The decision on special operations was difficult for Putin. But there was no choice. Because people in Donbass are not stray dogs, and Russia could no longer watch them being destroyed by Ukrainian Nazis*” (O. Skabeeva, “*Russia-1*”, March 11, 2022); “*During the special operation, we strictly observe the norms of humanitarian law. Strikes are carried out with high-precision weapons against the objects of the military infrastructure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine... At the same time, everything is being done to avoid casualties among civilians*” (Shoigu, August 24, 2022).

7. *Blame shifting narratives.* Over the years, Russia has fabricated a set of false blame-shifting narratives that its propaganda system has persistently pushed into the global information environment. The Russian-Ukrainian war was no exception, because through a set of disinformation narratives, Russia, which is guilty of shelling and destruction of critical infrastructure in Ukraine, refocuses the blame for the lack of light on the central and local authorities, as evidenced by the sub-narratives “*Why is electric power supply turned off in some regions, and in others not*”, “*Oblenergo makes money: it turns off some, others – not*”, “*The government sells electricity abroad while Ukrainians sit without electricity*”, “*The mayor's shops have light, but people sit in the dark*”.

Russia, trying to transfer its guilt for waging war to the USA and NATO countries, formulates a narrative about the insufficient armed support of NATO, represented through the paradigm of sub-narratives: “*The war will continue as long as Biden is in power, because he does not provide enough weapons*”, “*Stoltenberg constantly says, that NATO will not enter the war, and therefore provoke Putin to attack*”, “*The US and NATO specifically shouted that Putin would attack, so Putin attacked*”.

After the armed aggression in the Ukrainian city of Bucha, in order to avoid responsibility, Russia launched the narrative “*Bucha is a stage*”, as evidenced by the fake news published in the propaganda media: “*Lies: the massacre in Buche - a theatrical production*” (delfi.lt.ru, April 13, 2022); “*Rudkovskaya called the accusations against Russia for the murder of civilians in Bucha fake: “Check the info!”*” (sport24.ru, April 04, 2022); “*For three days, the Armed Forces of Ukraine prepared the staging of the mass murder in Bucha*” (ura.news, April 04, 2022).

8. *Narratives of escalation of the conflict.* While since 2014, Russia reduced the scale of the conflict, localizing it in Kyiv, now the emphasis in coverage of the war in Ukraine has changed significantly. The thesis of “*protecting Donbas*” and “*denazification*” of Ukraine has taken a back seat, because the main construction has become the confrontation with the “*collective West*”, which allegedly intends to destroy Russia. This made it possible to develop the thesis structure about the need no longer for “*operations in Ukraine, but for the protection of the Motherland*”, which we read in the narratives: “*Russia is not at war with Ukraine, but with NATO*”, “*NATO troops are fighting on the territory of Ukraine*”, “*The transfer of weapons is NATO's participation in the conflict*”. This propagandistic thesis is very beneficial to the occupiers: this is how they explain their tangible defeat in the war, because they are supposedly fight against the strong states of the EU and the USA. Also, the scaling of the image of the enemy allows Russia to explain the constant mobilization measures in the country: more resources are needed to confront a stronger enemy.

Language means of suggestive influence and actualization of concepts

The formation of narratives of Russian propaganda is marked by great attention to the use of linguistic means and actualization of concepts. The analysis of the selected narrative material made it possible to identify seven ways of suggestive influence on the recipient with the help of language tools: 1) introduction into a common synonymy series, 2) citing semes, 3) statements in the form of truisms, 4) conceptual metaphors, 5) euphemisms, 6) presuppositions, 7) dehumanizing and demonizing vocabulary. Let us consider in more detail the features of each.

1. Introduction to a common synonymous series. In the scientific literature, such a method of manipulative influence is distinguished as “*anchor positioning through introduction into a synonymous series*” [29, p. 80]. The specified technology of manipulation consists in the fact that a particular lexeme is introduced into the micro-context as one of the equivalent components of a synonymous series. For example, it is common to use the words and phrases *Ukrainians, the Ukrainian army, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine* as components of a synonymous series with the core lexeme *fascists* or *Nazis*. As it was already mentioned, the Russian propaganda discourse mistakenly uses the terms *fascism* and *Nazism* as absolute synonyms. The lexemes *terrorists, extremists* as synonyms for the word *Ukrainians* are endowed with the same functional range.

2. Pointing of the seme. This technique consists in introducing a contextual seme, which is not present in the system meaning of the word. In particular, F. Bacevich notes that “*the influence of the speech microcontext causes certain shifts in the semantic-pragmatic structure of lexical units, affecting the denotative and connotative (subjective) components*” [2, p. 87]. This method is especially common in the informational and propaganda discourse, as it makes it possible to realize the corresponding positive or negative connotations within the limits of a particular concept. For example, Russian narratives such as “*Ukrainian soldiers kill/torture civilians*”, “*Armed Forces of Ukraine kill children*”, etc. give the notions *Ukrainian soldiers* and the *Armed Forces of Ukraine* the term “*murderers*”, “*executioners*”. The same function is performed by constructions with the compounds “*Ukraine oppresses*”, “*Ukraine commits genocide*”, “*Ukraine humiliates*”. In these cases, there is a reference to the concept of *UKRAINE* with a negative connotation.

At the same time, in sentences such as “*The Russian army protects Russian-speakers in the East of Ukraine*”, “*Special operation for the protection of the population of Donbas*” thanks to the micro-context, some *defenses*, ‘*protector*’ are introduced into the general semantics of the terms *Russian army*, *Russian military*. Such constructions distort information, form a false impression of the recipient about the described events, facts, and phenomena.

3. Expression in the form of truisms. The term “truism” in scientific literature is understood as “an overgeneralization, a well-known, established truth” [5]. As a synonym for the term “truism”, the lexeme *generalist* is also used - a superficial generalization repeated by everyone. That is, it is about the use of phrases that model information as an indisputable fact. In particular, well-known and true facts can be added to the message, which helps to cause a positive reaction of the recipient, to make him agree. And therefore, there is a probability that the information presented after the truism or embedded in it will also be perceived by the recipient as true. *Truisms (generalists)* also include stable constructions that seem to give information credibility (conditional), make it unquestionable: *it is clear that ...; no one will argue that...; it has long been known that...* etc., as well as expressions in the form of affirmative sentences.

In the analyzed narratives, such constructions in the form of truisms include the structure “*we had no other way out*” regarding Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, as well as affirmative sentences such as “*This regime has long ago become alien and hostile to all residents of Ukraine*”; “*The Security Council of the Russian Federation declared that Ukraine was for the West a pretext for the destabilization of Russia*” (gazeta.ru). The compounds “*long ago became alien*”, “*declared that...*” provide information in the form of a fact that is supposedly obvious and does not require proof.

4. Conceptual metaphors. The theory of conceptual (cognitive) metaphor was proposed by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson in the work “*Metaphors We Live By*” [34]. In the scientific literature, a conceptual metaphor is understood as “a stable, fixed in the linguistic and cultural tradition of the ethnic group, and therefore in the thinking of people, the use of a linguistic sign of one concept to denote another, which involves understanding the essence of the signified by analogy with the signifier” [11, p. 138]. For many years, the Russian information and propaganda discourse both uses fixed metaphors and imposes a metaphorical meaning on certain concepts, forming a clear association of certain images in the recipient. For example, the presentation of NATO as a threat to Russia in the narrative messages of the last decade can be considered as such an imposition.

A number of conceptual metaphors are used in the studied narratives – both permanent ones and those formed by the Russian propaganda discourse.

A. Metaphors representing the concept of WAR.

WAR as a GAME. In particular, this metaphor is actualized in accusatory narratives in which the blame for the war is transferred to the USA (its government), Europe, the West, and NATO, which allegedly provoke Russia.

WAR as an AGREEMENT. This metaphor is actualized in narratives such as “*Koncha-Zaspa will not be bombed, the Verkhovna Rada will not be bombed. And ordinary people are being bombed*”. With the help of such a metaphor, the imposition of the idea that the leadership of both warring countries allegedly agreed on war, and all the destruction and deaths are in vain and only peaceful people suffer from them, is realized. The actualization of such a metaphor is intended to create in the recipient a sense of the futility of resistance.

The dual metaphor of *WAR as PURIFICATION – PEACE as DEFURATION* is presented in particular in the previously described narrative “*Mariupol was purified after destruction...*”,

in which peaceful life in Ukraine is marked as defilement, while war and destruction are defined as leading to purification.

Examples of romanticizing war through metaphors were actively used in Russian propaganda discourse even before the full-scale invasion. In particular, in 2021, Russian Governor N. Komarova used the metaphors of *WAR as LOVE*, *WAR as a FRIEND*, *WAR as the FUTURE* in her speech: “*War is love. War is a friend. War is the future laid in the peace*” (N. Komarova, muksun.fm, May 09, 2021).

The range of metaphors is also used in narratives intended to divide Ukrainian society and the government. These are traditional secondary nominations, presenting war and human misery as a way for certain officials to enrich themselves. In particular, the conceptual metaphor of *WAR as a WAY TO MAKE MONEY* is actively used to blacken the reputation of the Ukrainian authorities and the higher military command. It was used in widespread fake narratives about alleged enrichment of the Ukrainian authorities and the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the war.

A number of metaphors were also used to divide social groups. In particular, the actualization of the metaphor of *SOMEONE ELSE’S GRIEF as PROFIT* is aimed at accusing Ukrainians who live in territories relatively far from hostilities, that they are allegedly profiting from the plight of forced migrants by inflating housing rental prices.

B. Metaphors representing the concept UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE.

UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE as DIVISION. The action of propaganda texts is aimed in particular at ensuring that the reflexes for the concept *UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE* are concepts with negative semantics. Traditionally, for decades in Russian and pro-Russian propaganda discourses, the formation of the image of the Ukrainian language as one that divides society was common. During the period of the full-scale invasion aimed at compromising Ukrainian-speaking people, the conceptual metaphors of *UKRAINIAN-SPEAKING as INDIFFERENCE*, *UKRAINIAN-SPEAKING as AGGRESSIVENESS* were formed. Such metaphors are clearly visible in the previously described narratives, such as “*People suffered from the war, but they are forced to speak Ukrainian*”.

C. Metaphors representative of NATO/WEST/EUROPE/USA concepts

All the mentioned concepts in the Russian information and propaganda discourse are presented as a whole and have the same set of connotative terms. In particular, the following metaphors were formed: *NATO/WEST/EUROPE/USA as a THREAT*, *NATO/WEST/EUROPE/USA as AGGRESSORS*. This is one of the most common types of metaphor in Russian information discourse. Many propaganda narratives are based on the perceived threat to Russia from these countries or organizations.

D. Metaphors representative of the dual concept ATTACK-DEFENSE.

ATTACK as DEFENSE, *ATTACK as LIBERATION*, *ATTACK as ENDING WAR*, *DESTRUCTION as RESCUE* - these metaphors are used within the narratives of justification of aggression and ennoblement of the aggressor. The metaphor of *DEFENSE (of own country) as NAZISM* is fixed within demonizing narratives in which the actions of Ukraine / the Ukrainian authorities to defend their country are presented as a manifestation of Nazism.

5. Euphemisms. The term *euphemism* denotes “a purely linguistic variety of metonymy: a word, an expression, a phraseological unit that replaces prohibited (tabooed) or undesirable for certain reasons” concepts; without changing the content, it replaces the linguistic form of the statement, weakens the emotional coloring, softens its unpleasant meaning [8, p. 166]. One of the functions of euphemism is political and

ideological [22]. In the Russian information and propaganda discourse, the use of euphemisms is a common practice applied in order to reduce the negative reaction of recipients to certain political, social, and other processes. In particular, in recent years, the following lexemes and compounds with a veiling function have been recorded: “*negative economic rates*” (Russian: «отрицательные темпы экономики»), “*development with negative dynamics*” (Russian: «развитие с негативной динамикой») – instead of “economic decline”; “*inundation*” (Russian: «подтопление») – instead of “flood” (regardless of scale); “*smoke*” (Russian: «задымление») – instead of “fire”; “*plaster collapse*” (Russian: «обвал штукатурки») – instead of “destruction”; “*hard landing*” (Russian: «жесткая посадка») – instead of “air crash with victims”; “*clap*” (Russian: «хлопок») – instead of “explosion”; it is indicative that the word “*clap*” is used even in constructions where it is illogical in meaning, for example “*clap of gas*”, not “gas explosion”: “*Two people died ... after the entrance of a multi-story building collapsed as a result of a gas clap in Magnitogorsk*” (iz.ru, December 31, 2018).

In the discourse of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation in 2022, we also record cases of euphemization with the aim of softening the perception of certain information, reducing its scope, etc. A clear example of euphemistic usage is the use of the term “*special operation (special military operation)*” instead of “*war against Ukraine*”, “*military aggression against Ukraine*”, “*invasion in Ukraine*”. Such a replacement is implied in Russia even at the legislative level: in March 2022, a law was adopted according to which “it is forbidden to use the word “war” instead of the officially approved term “special military operation” (Russian: “специальная военная операция”) [14, p. 47]. The term “special operation” in world practice means “unconventional military actions carried out by specially selected, trained, equipped units, known as special purpose forces or special operations forces. Each special operation is an attempt to solve specific problems as economically as possible. Most often, these units oppose such forms as terrorism, guerilla warfare, insurgency” [28]. At the international level, the presence of uprisings, guerilla warfare, terrorist activities, etc. in Ukraine was not determined at the time of the start of the full-scale Russian aggression on February 24, 2022. Therefore, it can be considered that the use of the term *special operation* performs a political and ideological function, replaces the word “war”, which is taboo in the Russian information field, that is, significantly reduces the scale of the event, softens its perception and hides the fact of a full-scale invasion and armed aggression. In this case, the concepts of WAR, AGGRESSION are replaced by the concept of SPECIAL OPERATION.

As it was mentioned above, also the use of the word “*clap*” instead of “*explosion*” was actualized in 2022. We observe such a replacement in Russian news reports about explosions on the territory of Russia or occupied Crimea as a result of missile attacks or attacks by unmanned aerial vehicles. The use of this ‘technique’ is based on the fact that attacks and explosions can negatively affect the effectiveness of the narrative created by Russia about the reliable security of the territories it considers its own. Therefore, there is a manipulation of the terms *explosion - clap*. Replacing the EXPLOSION concept with the CLAP concept significantly reduces the scale of the event, mitigates or eliminates the negative impact on the recipient.

In addition to the word “clap”, Russian synonymous constructions such as “*loud sounds*”, “*strong thunder*”, “*flashes in the sky*” are used. For example: “*The light went out in Belgorod and the water was turned off after a flash in the sky*” (lentafeed.com, January 11, 2023); “*Loud sounds are associated with the work of the Russian Aerospace Forces*” (iz.ru, May 06, 2022); “*Residents of the Belgorod Region heard a “clap” in the sky on the night of Thursday, April 28, at approximately 00:50*” (iz.ru, April 28, 2022).

The following examples of euphemistic substitution have been recorded: “*To go to military training*” - instead of “*participate in aggression against Ukraine*”. The euphemism is related to the claim of the Russian military, who were captured at the

beginning of the full-scale invasion, about their alleged ignorance of the real purpose of crossing the border to carry out military aggression, because they were allegedly informed about participation in military training.

The appearance of the euphemism “*Gesture of good will*”, “*step of good will*”, used instead of “defeat”, “retreat”, is connected with the fact that Russian troops lost battles for Kyiv and the region, and therefore had to withdraw their troops from these territories. In order to mitigate reputational losses, the Russian authorities positioned this fact as a gesture of good will: “*Peskov called the withdrawal of forces from the Kyiv region a gesture of good will*” (iz.ru, April 06, 2022).

Semantically close to this euphemism are the constructions “*completion of the first stage of the special operation*” (Russian: “завершение первого этапа спецоперации”) and “*cardinal reduction of military activity*” (Russian: “кардинальное сокращение военной активности”). For example: “*The Ministry of Defense of Russia announced the completion of the first stage of the special operation in Ukraine*” (kommersant.ru, March 25, 2022); “*...a decision has been made to radically ... reduce military activity in the Kyiv and Chernihiv areas*” (tass.ru, March 29, 2022). These euphemisms are designed to informationally reduce the negative resonance after Russia's withdrawal of its troops from three regions of Ukraine.

A similar function is performed by the use of the euphemisms “*regrouping of troops*”, “*operation of drawdown and organized transfer*”, “*a series of distraction and demonstration measures with the determination of real actions of troops*” - instead of “retreat”. They were used to inform recipients in a veiled manner about the retreat of Russian troops in Kharkiv direction in September 2022: “*...a decision was made to regroup the Russian troops located in the Balaklea and Izyum districts*” (tass.ru, September 10, 2022); “*... an operation was carried out to drawdown and organize the transfer of the Izyum-Balakley group of troops to the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic*” (interfax.ru, September 10, 2022).

“*Detonation of ammunition*” – instead of “*missile attack*”. The appearance of the euphemism is connected with the sinking of the Russian cruiser Moskva. According to the mass media, this happened as a result of a Ukrainian missile strike [32]. However, the Russian side stated that the death of the flagship was due to the detonation of ammunition on board: Russian. “*The cruiser Moskva, the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, received serious damage as a result of the detonation of ammunition*” (kommersant.ru, April 14, 2022). It is significant that later this euphemism was repeatedly used to explain other cases of explosions both on the territory of the Russian Federation and in the Ukrainian regions occupied by it.

The expressions “*bungling*”, “*violation of safety technology*”, “*violation of fire safety requirements*”, which are semantically correlated with the compound “missile attack”, are related to explosions on the territory of the occupied Crimea in August 2022: “*On the spot, they believe that these are not missile strikes, but sabotage. Or even it's just bungling*” (M. Simonyan, lenta.ru, August 09, 2022); “*Only a violation of fire safety requirements is considered as the main cause of the explosion of several munitions at the Saki airfield*” (tass.ru, August 09, 2022).

“*Humanitarian missile strike*”, “*missiles of good*” instead of “terrorism” – this is how the Russian political scientist S. Markov called missile attacks on critical infrastructure objects of Ukraine: “*A large-scale humanitarian missile attack has now begun on Ukraine. Apparently, aimed to the energy system... We can say that now there are 100 Russian missiles in the sky with almost humanitarian purposes. That's what it should be called. Humanitarian strike. Missiles of goodness*” (Markov's Logic Telegram channel, December 5, 2022). The specified euphemistic units are a simultaneous allusion of Russian propaganda to the international term “*humanitarian intervention*”, used with the meaning “the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the

fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied" [8, p. 18]. In particular, NATO's actions regarding intervention in the war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are defined as humanitarian intervention [27, p. 13]. In the information field, the term "humanitarian bombing" is used to indicate the fact of the bombing of objects on the territory of Serbia. Namely these events are actively used by Russian propaganda to justify its aggression against Ukraine.

6. Presuppositions as a means of manipulation. Presuppositions are understood as information that cognitively precedes the statement [3, p. 6]. In pragmalinguistics, presupposition (lat. *prae* – in front, before, and *suppositio* – assumption) is considered as "an assumption or calculation that part of the information offered is obvious and/or well known to the addressee" [23, p. 90]. In the manipulative propaganda discourse, we record the "embedding" of certain information as a presupposition (that is, as obvious) in the headline text. The reader receives it on the basis of a manipulatively constructed statement.

In the following sentences, the presuppositional content involves shifting the blame for military actions to the Ukrainian government or Western countries. For example: "The Security Council called on the USA and Germany to stop the ticking of the nuclear clock" (iz.ru, January 25, 2023); "Medvedev called the cessation of US arms supplies to Kyiv a condition for the end of the conflict" (iz.ru, February 22, 2023); "Ex-EU deputy called to stop Zelensky before he starts the Third World War" (gazeta.ru, February 25, 2022); "He [Lavrov] called on the Kyiv authorities to stop the fire immediately" (lenta.ru, September 30, 2022); "Blinken opposed the ceasefire in Ukraine" (iz.ru, February 24, 2023). In the submitted headlines, the actant-subjects (the Security Council, Medvedev, MEP, etc.) allegedly play the role of revealing the truth about the causes of the war: they appeal to the actant-object with a request to influence the course of the war or its termination. In this way, the recipient should get the false impression that namely these actants-objects are to blame for the war.

Cases of such manipulation using a combination of two informative messages in a sentence, the second of which is a key one, are common. For example, in the title "In Germany, they pointed out the 'inconvenient truth' for Ukraine losing support in the West" (iz.ru, February 27, 2023) at first glance, it seems that the main message is that Germany pointed out an inconvenient truth to Ukraine. However, "embedding" in the message the meaning "losing support" emphasizes Ukraine's alleged loss of support in the military confrontation with the aggressor. Due to the combination of two messages, the second one is perceived subconsciously and is less susceptible to analysis and criticism.

We record similar semantic processes in the title "Biden can become a man from the Titanic due to the unwillingness of peace in Ukraine" (gazeta.ru, March 01, 2023), where the second message carries information that the US president allegedly does not want peace in Ukraine, and therefore, subconsciously the recipient may mistakenly perceive the USA as guilty of military actions on the territory of Ukraine.

7. Dehumanizing and demonizing vocabulary. Dehumanization in the course of military conflicts consists in the fact that each side works to deprive the enemy of its human appearance in the information field. Usually, dehumanization is manifested in actions aimed at publicly denying a person's belonging to the human race and attributing to him the characteristics of animals, things, fairy-tale characters, etc. [7, p. 252; 8, p. 3]. Linguistic works also use the term "dehumanized vocabulary" [18, p. 94]. In our research, we use the term "dehumanizing vocabulary" to denote words and constructions that contribute to the information erasure or complete deprivation of the denotation of human features.

Within the framework of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation, Russian propaganda uses noun tokens with offensive connotations to refer to Ukrainians, for example: *hochols*, *bio-waste*, *ukrops*, *ukropithecines*. The phytomorphism "ukrops" (Russ. "укропы") became actively distributed in 2014 since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We will casually comment on the derivational features of the lexeme with the zoomorphic semantics "ukropithecines". This contaminated nomination is formed according to the scheme "Ukrainians + pithecines", where the word "pithecines" comes from the Greeks. πίθηκος – "monkey".

The lexeme "cannibals" is also used by Russian journalists to refer to Ukrainians: "Ukrainian Nazis have finally turned into **cannibals**" (ruinform.com, May 05, 2022), has demonizing semantics. Demonization is a form of dehumanization, however, however, it consists in the fact that the enemy is positioned as a large-scale evil that must be destroyed immediately.

In addition to nouns, dehumanizing semantics is conveyed with the help of other linguistic means, in particular, the depiction of Ukrainians as cannibals "with bloody mouths": "Every day, seeing what is happening in Donetsk, it is impossible not to worry. Thank you for tearing our people out of the **bloody mouth** of these cannibals, albeit with pain, with blood" (Russian journalist M. Simonyan in an address to V. Putin, December 20, 2022). The dehumanizing effect was also achieved by using the verb "to cleanse" (Russian: *зачистить*): "Ideally, it is necessary to liberate Ukraine, to **cleanse** it of Nazis, of pro-Nazi people and ideologies" (Press Secretary of the Russian President D. Peskov, February 24, 2022).

Therefore, the study of Russian propaganda narratives testifies to a wide selection of language tools in order to exert a suggestive influence on the recipient.

4 Conclusion

The analysis of the studied material provides grounds for classifying false messages in view of their thematic range, which serves as a basis for the selection of eight blocks: 1) despair; 2) demonization of Ukraine and Ukrainians; 3) justification of aggression; 4) split; 5) intimidation; 6) ennoblement of the enemy; 7) shifting blame; 8) scaling of the conflict. In addition, it seems appropriate to distinguish seven ways of using linguistic means of suggestive influence for the construction of Russian propaganda narratives: 1) introduction into a common synonymous series, 2) citing semes, 3) statements in the form of truisms, 4) conceptual metaphors, 5) euphemisms, 6) presuppositions, 7) dehumanizing and demonizing vocabulary. The introduction into the synonymous series and citing of seme make it possible to form additional negative connotations to the systemic meaning of the word. With the help of the actualization of conceptual metaphors, a metaphorical meaning is imposed on certain concepts, which affects the formation of corresponding images. The conceptual metaphors actualized in the researched narratives are aimed at justifying the war, disparaging Ukrainian national symbols and blaming Western countries and international alliances for the war. A peculiarity of the Russian military information discourse is the use of euphemisms, with the help of which, on the cognitive level of the recipients, it is possible to either reduce the scale of the committed negative action, or to hide the negative consequences of the actions of opponents. Suggestive tools such as constructing narratives in the form of truisms, as well as embedding the necessary information as presuppositions into the message, are effective in constructing propaganda narratives. In this way, the recipient perceives the information as obvious and undeniable. Demonizing and dehumanizing vocabulary contribute to the formation of narratives that cause hatred and justify aggression.

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