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### Use of Military Vocabulary as a Manipulation Tool During the Pandemic

*Uso del vocabulario militar como herramienta de manipulación durante la pandemia*

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#### ABSTRACT

The article considers military vocabulary as one of the effective language tools with which the manipulation of the readers' consciousness in the media is carried out. We concluded that the use of military vocabulary in a manipulative function is not prohibited, but the internal principles of journalists should tell them whether a military word is really necessary or it is simply a tool of speculation by the feelings of the readers. At the same time, readers, who are aware of the rich manipulative potential of military vocabulary, should strive to resist the manipulations created with its help.

**Keywords:** Manipulation, manipulative role, mass media, military vocabulary, newspaper.

#### RESUMEN

El artículo considera el vocabulario militar como una de las herramientas lingüísticas efectivas con las que se lleva a cabo la manipulación de la conciencia de los lectores en los medios. Llegamos a la conclusión de que el uso del vocabulario militar en una función de manipulación no está prohibido, pero los principios internos de los periodistas deberían decirles si una palabra militar es realmente necesaria o si es simplemente una herramienta de especulación por los sentimientos de los lectores. Al mismo tiempo, los lectores, que son conscientes del rico potencial de manipulación del vocabulario militar, deben esforzarse por resistir las manipulaciones creadas con su ayuda.

**Palabras clave:** Manipulación, medios de comunicación, periódico, rol manipulador, vocabulario militar.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's society manipulation has become a common way of influencing a person and his consciousness by "imposing" certain stereotypes (Marwick & Lewis: 2017, pp.104; Fitzpatrick: 2018, pp.45-62; Jeangène Vilmer: 2018, pp.207). Manipulation of consciousness is a "communicative influence that leads to the actualization of certain motivational states... that encourage the object of influence to conduct desirable (beneficial) for the subject of influence" (Large psychological dictionary: 2009, pp.811). One of the authoritative researchers of mind control S.G. Kara-Murza states that manipulation (in the form in which it has become an integral part of the life of modern society) "a technology that is used according to their official duties and for a small salary by hundreds of thousands of professional workers – regardless of their personal morality, ideology and tastes for art" (Kara-Murza: 2005, pp.832). The scientist was primarily referring to journalists, since mass media is the sphere where the number of verbal and non-verbal manipulative techniques implemented reaches maximums.

Linguistic science distinguishes various mechanisms and means of language use for manipulation in media. Such tools include the use of language games, rhetorical questions, creolized texts (Kateneva: 2010, p.24), euphemisms (Dmitruk: 2014, pp.146-148), borrowed vocabulary (Krylova: 2012, pp.48-56), occasional expressions, as well as the transformation of phraseological units, the use of the pronoun we, etc. Undoubtedly, military vocabulary is an effective means of manipulating the content consumer's mind, although this aspect of it is underestimated. Some researchers have already touched upon this issue. For Example, Y. A. Gornostaeva (Gornostayeva: 2018, pp.54-56), A.V. Kolmogorova and Y. A. Taldykina (Kolmogorova: 2016, Villalobos et al.: 2018; Rincón et al.: 2019; Annia et al.: 2019) noted military terminology as language markers of manipulation. However, in our opinion, this aspect of the military vocabulary use requires more in-depth study, which determines the relevance of this study.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the use of military vocabulary in modern media as a means of manipulative influence on the minds of the audience. The material for the analysis includes articles and publications about COVID-19 coronavirus by leading Internet media: Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>), Military review news agencies (portals) (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>), Rambler (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>), KHVLYN.UA (Available at: <https://www.20khvylyn.com>), and Pravda.ru (Available at: <https://www.pravda.ru>), which also determines the timeliness of this study.

## **METHODS**

During the research conduction, the following general scientific and linguistic methods were used: the observation method, aimed at identifying the terminology of military affairs in media texts; the method of analysis and interpretation, which considered the specifics of manipulative influence on readers through military vocabulary. In the formulation of conclusions and generalizations methods of description and synthesis were used.

## **RESULTS**

It is commonly known that media publications are always devoted to the most current agenda. And one of these topics over the past months has always been the topic of the new coronavirus pandemic. The headlines of articles about coronavirus, which include military vocabulary, are found in almost all media. For example, "New global weapons: coronavirus hits the West harder than Russia" (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>), "Coronavirus is an ideal weapon in the fight of the world's elites" (15.04.2020) [Ibid]. Both words and phrases are used to denote the phenomena of the military sphere, where the new virus usually

acts as a weapon, and the pandemic is compared to war and military action. For example, "Coronavirus in France: Macron declared a military operation" (26.03.2020) (Available at: <https://www.20khvylyn.com>), "Coronavirus against the nuclear power of the British crown" (9.04.2020) (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>).

Title is the "quintessence" of a newspaper article (Zdrovskaya: 2014, pp.143-144), the most powerful element of the media text, by which the reader's attention is drawn to the problem raised, and to the publication itself. Military word placed in the title becomes especially effective and impactful. The above examples demonstrate that military-related words and expressions has been used in the media coverage to characterize the situation with coronavirus (Tamás: 2014, pp.217-245).

Use of military vocabulary in such headlines creates tension and manipulates the readers' minds, leads to associative meanings and representations associated with the war. The journalist consciously or unconsciously refers to the negative perception of war inherent in the consciousness of any normal person, and uses this perception for their own benefits – to draw attention to the article, to the problem, to "impose" a certain opinion on the reader. Military terms often play the role of a language tool to intimidate the addressee. For example, the article titled "Coronavirus – instead of nuclear war" (15.05.2020) (Available at: <https://www.pravda.ru>) is dedicated to the impact of the pandemic: the decline in output, economic crisis, etc. With what purpose the author of the article on this subject chose so scary title? It is quite obvious that a journalist tries to manipulate the mind of the reader and to ensure that when fear is replaced by curiosity, the reader becomes interested in the material and reads it (Zakirov: 2017).

## **DISCUSSION**

As a result of the study, we found out that military words and collocations can be used both figuratively and literally (Biderkesen et al.: 2019, pp.467-470). The examples above mainly show their use in a figurative sense, when the image of war is used in the context of a conceptual military metaphor. When military words and phrases are used in direct meaning, they refer to the realities of military affairs and military events, and coronavirus is considered as one of the types of modern weapons (Guseinova & Zayni: 2017, pp.75-80).

For example: "Can the insidious coronavirus be a genetic bomb against the Chinese" (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>), "Army will give fight to the coronavirus. How the Russian troops are preparing to repel the infection" (20.03.2020) [ibid], "Proved: the Covid-19 coronavirus was created as a bioweapon" (7.04.2020) (Available at: <https://www.pravda.ru>), "Coronavirus destroys US aircraft carriers" (9.04.2020) [ibid], "Military virologists honestly told about COVID-19" (8.05.2020) [ibid]. However, the use of direct military meaning also has an impact on the reader: it creates an image of a strong biological enemy that is created by the military or that an entire army is fighting (Shabashева & Ignatovich: 2020, pp.13-19).

In this regard, the article published under the title: "Alexander Sobyenin: coronavirus is a "combat virus" of the Third World War" (06.03.2020) is particularly interesting (Available at: <https://www.pravda.ru>). In this article military vocabulary is presented not only in the title, but the entire text is built on associations and images of war. The article explains to readers that "coronavirus is a biological weapon that was used in China" [ibid]. Well-known Russian statesman and politician names the aggressor who, in his opinion, used this weapon: "This is a strategic operation of the United States with the aim of developing new military-industrial centers for the Third World War", and its goal is "to weaken rivals on the world stage by internecine conflict" [ibid]. As it is seen from the examples, the article is full of military terminology. Undoubtedly, it should make a depressing impression on readers who are already alarmed by the events associated with the coronavirus, "infecting" them with another "virus" - suspicion, aggression and a desire to find and blame the enemy.

Among the media headlines, there were also those in which the military vocabulary is not places next to the coronavirus lexeme, but is used instead of it: "Russia has spoken about a new "arms race" with the United States" (14.05.2020) (Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru>). The reader perceives it as news of the military sphere and only by clicking on the hyperlink and starting to read the article, learns the real information: "Russia

does not plan to participate in an "arms race" with the United States to create drugs for a new coronavirus " [ibid].

We also found publications where titles are based on implicit information: military terms are not used, but they are implied (Palekha et al.: 2018, pp.437-440). For example: "COVID-19: the global world is coming to an end" (14.03.2020) (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>). In the readers' minds, "the end of the world" is war. Formally, the military vocabulary is not used in this case, but it is implied, since the author uses neutral words to state "military meaning", which has an even stronger effect on the recipient than the explicitly expressed information in other titles (Shakhovski: 2008, p.208).

The use of military vocabulary in media texts in situations related to epidemics is not a new manipulative technique for Russian journalists. In a four-year-old publication, we see the title: "Hordes of military viruses prepared for the attack" (16.03.2016) (Available at: <https://www.msk.kp.ru>). In this heading, the journalist uses several lexical units related to military topics at once. The richness of military vocabulary gives the title credibility, makes the reader listen to the author of the text and accept his point of view about the biological threat hanging over the world. Especially interesting here is the use of the obsolete word horde in relation to a subject such as a virus. As a result, the image of the virus acquires features of a national threat, as "hordes of the enemy", attacking civilians and threatening their lives. We see similar functioning of the military vocabulary in other cases: the virus is positioned as a subject, an active figure waging war against people: "The coronavirus attacked people under 65" (19.05.2020) (Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru>), "how exactly does the coronavirus kill" (11.03.2020) (Available at: <https://www.pravda.ru>), etc. Consequently, readers have an image of the enemy in a new confrontation, similar to the military one.

## **CONCLUSION**

Increased use of military vocabulary in the media is associated with its connotative and emotional potential. "Language is the main channel of a person socialization, his inclusion in the cultural and historical experience of each nation and humanity as a whole" (Palekha et al.: 2016, pp.324-327). The negative attitude of the average person to war allows journalists to use military vocabulary to manipulate people's minds, cause them negative feelings (fear, anxiety, excitement) in relation to a particular phenomenon described in the media, including the coronavirus. These attitudes are especially common in Russia, which during the twentieth century took part in several serious military conflicts, experienced the "cold war", and now, at the beginning of the XXI century, is in a state of hidden or explicit confrontation with a number of foreign countries.

Functioning both in a direct and figurative sense, military words become a real verbal "weapon" in the hands of a journalist. The use of this weapon is not prohibited, restrictions in its use are possible only in ethical terms. Journalists should understand that by using a military word, they negatively affect the minds of readers. The desire to increase the rating of the publication contributes to the transformation of the psychology of readers, which in a stress-filled society during the period of self-isolation violates all ethical and moral norms.

It should be noted that actualization of military terminology has become a popular means of speech manipulation for modern journalists, especially during serious social problems. Often an unnecessarily active reference to the vocabulary of military affairs is a sign of insufficient professionalism of the author of the publication. In order to effectively influence the reader, the journalist uses the most accessible means, without search for an equally effective, but less psychologically destructive language element.

It is important to understand for a modern media audience that military vocabulary in media publications is often an element that allows journalists to speculate on the citizens' feelings. Understanding this will allow readers to resist manipulation and not perceive military vocabulary as a sign of danger. The ability to avoid the destructive manipulative influence of the media is very important for today's reader.

Finally, the following quotation should be considered: "Through manipulation of consciousness, some people influence the behavior of others" (Kara-Murza: 2005, pp.832). Military vocabulary is the strongest tool

of manipulation. It is known that any word is associated with the consciousness of the people (Safin et al.: 2016, pp.332-335), and military words have a special effect on the recipient. They cause him to have alarming associations, prompt him to activate attention, focus on the material in which this vocabulary is used, and, most importantly, perceive this material in a certain way – in accordance with the goals of the author of the text. In our opinion, the goal of journalists who use military language in articles about the new coronavirus is the desire to cause ordinary citizens a sense of anxiety, concern for their lives, as well as to force them to accept the right point of view and even take certain actions. With the help of military vocabulary in articles about coronavirus, a sense of danger, fear of the epidemic and its consequences is fixed in the minds of citizens.

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