The Migration Crisis as It Seems:

Speech Manipulation Technology in US Internet Media

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Abstract

The following paper is devoted to the study of speech manipulation technologies in US political media discourse. A number of web-based articles have been taken under consideration for this study. They demonstrate the problem arising from the refugee flow in Europe and create a special "image" of the complicated European situation. It is helpful to see how the situation appears in the Internet media since this type of mass communication is most influential these days. While considering a large amount of media texts, a special speech manipulation technology has been revealed. This phenomenon demonstrates a distinct structure and close interrelations of purposefully selected elements. Going through a number of stages we can find out the technology of speech manipulation – a system of using the aggregate of speech manipulation instruments in order to purposefully guide the reality perception of the mass audience. The external level of the texts enables us to take a penetrating look at the internal intentions. This knowledge will help us not to confuse the migration crisis *as it is* and the migration crisis *as it seems*.

Keywords: speech manipulation technologies, speech manipulation instruments, political media discourse, US Internet media text

The current migration crisis exists not only in real European countries, cities and towns. It is present in the information field as well. It is highlighted by thousands of media and that is the main way most people get the understanding of contemporary migration. Persons from all over the world who live far away from Greece, Germany or the UK are aware

of the migration crisis, but they perceive the situation just in the way it is represented in the media; they are not its direct participants. As it is known, the map is not the thing mapped (A. Korzybski), but media maps are the things that form the public opinion. Modern computerized life supposes a vast area of linguistic attention: Internet texts are diversified and attractive for a researcher. While working on this paper, Internet media of various forms were made use of – electronic magazines, electronic newsletters, news sites of traditional publications. An electronic media text is a logical consequence of the printed media text and possesses a significant manipulative potential. Like any other " stretch of language, either in speech or in writing, that is semantically and pragmatically coherent in its real-world context" (Carter, McCarthy), a web-based text of political media discourse realizes the intention of the communication subject to influence the mass communication object in a specific manner. The discourse in its turn refers to "the whole act of communication involving production and comprehension, not necessarily entirely verbal … The study of discourse, then, can involve matters like context, background information or knowledge shared between a speaker and hearer" (Bloor).

Theoretical Assumptions of Speech Manipulation Realization

The mass orientation of the political media discourse is closely related to the manipulative potential with this type of discourse. We get the prevailing part of our social and political knowledge and opinion about the world from dozens of news messages every day (Dijk). This information then projects on our model situations and further becomes public opinion. Mass media are focused on orchestrating the opinion of the reader (listener, viewer) in a special direction: "In the discursive sense the power is realized in the necessity to make other people admit the situation interpretation favourable for the speaker" (Шейгал 82). Mass media are one of the main sources to distribute the messages influencing the public opinion.

In the process of communication, aims of discourse may be achieved with the help of a whole system of various interconnected manipulative means acting as one purposeful whole, i.e. with the help of a technology. We define a speech manipulation technology as a system of using the aggregate of speech manipulation instruments in order to

purposefully guide the reality perception of the mass audience (Никитина). We define speech manipulation instruments as diverse language means used by the manipulator. The local task of the discourse subject is the most effective achievement of the global aim – the struggle for power. In the process of communication he/she makes a text. A speech manipulation technology is a means that enables a communicant to achieve the required aim in an optimal way. Let us explain this assumption. In order to realize his/her intention the discourse subject may use a non-optimal way of communication, for example, by inflating the text with evaluative words negatively characterizing their opponent. Such actions will break the secrecy principle – one of the main manipulative postulates. Such hypothetic text saturated with negative information in the denotative components of lexical units can hardly be called manipulative since it will not be effective.

Manipulativeness is the fundamental feature of the political media discourse. Manipulativeness comes out as the necessary condition to achieve the intended result of the political media discourse, and it enables the communication to be properly realized. As a matter of fact, speech manipulation is a concealed influence on the mass audience with the help of speech means aimed at guiding the perception of reality. One of the main peculiarities of speech manipulation is its purposefulness. The aim of speech manipulation is to ensure such behavior or perception of the audience which is expected by the manipulator. In other words, it is the guidance of the object's relation towards real notions. Speech manipulation in the political media discourse is a concealed influence. The effectiveness of speech manipulation depends upon whether the audience gets its scheme. From the viewpoint of the communicant, this way of interaction is a professional righteous approach widely spread in the modern society, where getting and distributing information is the way of living. Speech manipulation is often realized in the mass media. Its subject deals with speech means, the systemic use of which generates speech manipulation technologies.

Speech manipulation technologies agree with all principles of speech manipulation. The implicit character of speech manipulation and effectivity demands prevent technologies under consideration from being explicit. The information on the surface level can differ from that on the deep level. The communicative task that can be solved with the help of

speech manipulation technologies is the optimization of the process of information transmission in the political media discourse.

The usage of speech manipulation instruments can indicate speech manipulation technologies in the political media discourse. These instruments form a special system. A system is "a group of devices or artificial objects or an organization forming a network especially for distributing something or serving a common purpose" (*Meriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). A system acts as a whole facing any outer conditions and performs a unified function. Together with the nucleus of the speech manipulation technology, the entirety of speech manipulation instruments act within the discourse to obtain its aim. They can be revealed in political mass discourse texts. Nevertheless, the subject of the discourse manipulates the conceptual text information thus solving his/her task and achieving his/her aim. The implicit message of a text may be rendered so as to determine "us" and "them," to evaluate the matter of communication, to ridicule or ennoble it, to tell the genuine truth to the reader, etc.

In this essay we consider the realization of the speech manipulation technology "good/bad" in different electronic media. Choosing articles connected with one and the same topic, it is convenient to demonstrate the functional peculiarities of the named linguistic phenomenon. While working with the text material, it is necessary to follow a certain procedure of analysis. During the first stage, the content conceptual information is to be found out (Galperin). Thus the content conceptual information of a part of the texts of the named thematic range may be interpreted as "Migration restrictive measures in Europe are bad." It is necessary to note that the content conceptual information gives opportunity for various interpretations and even demands diverse explanations. During the second stage, the nucleus of the content conceptual information is revealed – that part which is invariant for a large amount of texts. Considering texts of the chosen topic we can discover the following invariant – the opposition "good/bad," that is the nucleus of the studied speech manipulation technology.

During the third stage of work, it is necessary to find systematically important technology instruments and to reveal their role in making the technological system. The whole text of an Internet media article serves to realize the content conceptual information, but some speech manipulation instruments are obligatory and relevant to solve the task and achieve the

aim of the discourse. Forming a system of interrelated means, these instruments are used in every text that realizes a certain speech manipulation technology.

The speech manipulation technology "good/bad" is used to achieve the local aim – to represent the matter of description as good or bad. The nucleus of the content conceptual information is the axiological opposition. It is surrounded by systematically important instruments, such as evaluative lexis, secondary nomination, commentaries, words with ideological connotation, words with expressive connotation, opposition and/or contrast (figure 1). Other speech manipulation instruments are also present in political media discourse texts demonstrating the named technology, but they are not obligatory. Nevertheless, they make a significant contribution to achieving the aim of communication (Никитина).

Fig.1. Speech manipulation technology "good/bad".
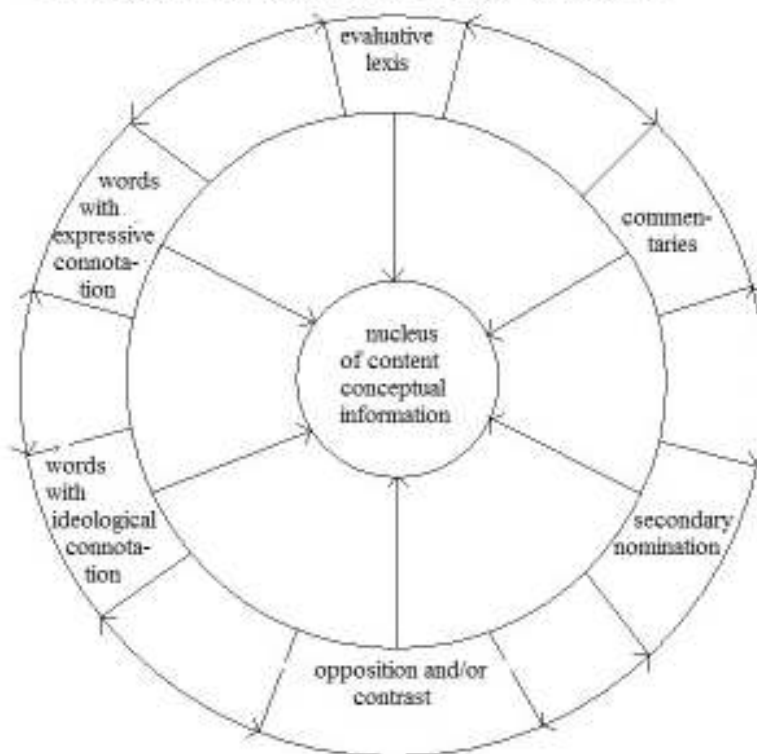
Practical Demonstrations of Speech Manipulation Technology Realization

The following part of the essay contains examples that demonstrate the peculiarities of the speech manipulation technology named "good/bad". Some words in the examples are italicized in the essay in order to emphasize the fragments that are further analyzed and that are relevant to the technology under consideration. Studying the fragments, we often turn to dictionary definitions of lexical units since they give us precious information about the discourse specificity. All definitions of lexical units in this essay are taken from *Meriam-Webster Online Dictionary* unless otherwise stated.

(1) "Nations along Europe's refugee route are taking the boldest steps yet to clamp down on migrant flows, *trapping* thousands of *asylum seekers* and potentially blocking countless *war-weary families* from finding *sanctuary* in the West" (Faiola).

(2) "The situation *isn't good* for us; there are *no proper* bathrooms or medical care. It's very cold," said Teimoorshah Yousefi, 40, one of 600 Afghans *stranded* at a northern Macedonian border crossing this week. He, along with his wife and two sons, ages 10 and 13, were being refused entry by Serbia. The family, he said, was getting *frantic* (Faiola).

(3) "But crisis-weary countries from Austria to Macedonia are now moving *to bar the doors*" (Faiola).

(4) "On Thursday, for instance, a busload of *terrified* migrants was surrounded by *an angry German mob* chanting "Go home" in the eastern city of Clausnitz" (Faiola).

(5) "Yet tens of thousands of men, women and children *fleeing violence and poverty* in their homelands continue *to risk their lives* this winter to make the relatively short and *dangerous* journey from the Turkish coast to nearby Greek islands, *seeking a better future* in Europe" (Greece migrants winter crossing).

The first four examples are taken from the same article, the author of which seeks to gain readers' empathy to migrants which came to Europe. Most often they are called "refugees" – "someone who has been forced to leave their country, especially during a war, or for political or

religious reasons," i.e. people who had to leave their own country because of very serious reasons. We can compare this lexical unit with "migrant" – "someone who goes to live in another area or country, especially in order to find work", i.e. a person who seeks some financial welfare in another country. It is important to do the right choice of nomination when an event is covered in the mass media. Nomination refers to the result of naming the fragments of reality and forming appropriate notions. Usually derivatives and secondary nominations enlarge the nominative repertoire of a language (Лингвистический энц. словарь). In the texts under consideration there are also used such lexical units as "asylum seeker" (someone who leaves their own country because they are in danger, especially for political reasons, and who asks the government of another country to allow them to live there), "war-weary families" (weary – very tired or bored, especially because you have been doing something for a long time), "people finding the sanctuary" (sanctuary - the protection that is provided by a *safe* place). Expressive (very, force), ideological (political and religious reasons) and evaluative connotations are actively made use of in the articles.

A certain image of a refugee is being created with the help of different kinds of connotations, the method of the semantic field generating, some other instruments. A refugee is depicted as a person who was forced to leave his motherhood in order to find a safe and secure place for himself and his family. Thus, in example 5, the verb "to flee" is being used (to run away often from danger or evil; to hurry toward a place of security). It is stressed which dangers refugees face in their own country: violence (the use of physical force to harm someone, to damage property, etc.) and poverty (the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions). That is why they are ready to take actions that can lead to bad results (to risk – to do something that could result in something bad or unpleasant) or lead to some dangerous consequences (dangerous – involving possible injury, harm, or death). All these lexical units are saturated with negative evaluative, emotive, expressive and ideological connotations: "The connotations of a language expression are semantic effects that arise from encyclopedic knowledge about its denotation (or referent) and also from

experiences, beliefs, and prejudices about the contexts in which the expression is typically used" (Leech). The role of connotations is to give the subjective colouring to the denotation. The goal which migrants are reaching is signified as "a better life." The adjective in the comparative degree represents a proper evaluative word (better – higher in quality; more attractive, appealing, effective, useful, etc.); being used with the indefinite article it intensifies the hope for a successful, safe, advantageous life (a future – the chance of future success).

On the contrary, the same situation is looked upon by representatives of European countries in quite a different way. They restrict the migrant flow, and the refugees' actions are placed in the illegal field: "to clamp down" (to take firm action to stop a particular type of crime), "to bar" (to put a bar or a set of bars in front of a door, window, etc., so that people cannot go in or out of it). These people are "blocked" (to be placed in front of something, such as a road or path so that people or things cannot pass through), "stranded" (to live in a strange or an unfavorable place especially without funds or means to depart) and "trapped" (to be in a bad situation from which you cannot escape). They are worried and afraid ("frantic" – feeling or showing a lot of fear and worry). All the considered lexical units abound in different colours of meaning. This fact is not surprising – lexical means is the largest group of speech manipulation instruments with a great manipulative potential.

The subject of communication evaluates the situation both in the direct explicit way (quotations "not good," "no proper") and implicitly by hiding tips in the connotative component of lexical units: "to charge" (to say publicly that you think someone has done something wrong), "to scramble" (to move somewhere in a hurried awkward way), "to condemn" (to say very strongly that you do not approve of something or someone, especially because you think it is morally wrong). Thoroughly creating an image of intimidated migrants ("terrified" – very frightened), the authors of the articles represent Europeans in a quite unusual way: "an angry … mob" ("anger" – a strong feeling of being upset or annoyed because of something wrong or bad, the feeling that makes someone want to hurt other people, to shout, etc., "mob" – a large group or crowd of people who are angry or violent or difficult to control). The definitions of only two

words in this phrase are filled and overfilled with various connotations.

The following examples are taken from web-based articles devoted to the migration crisis in Europe as well. They serve the same aim – to demonstrate the peculiarities of the speech manipulation technology "good/bad" but they demonstrate other ways to realize the speech manipulation technology.

(6) "But border checks are *bad* for European business, *experts say*. They would even stunt economic growth through a *vicious cycle* that starts with higher labor costs … And thanks to an increasingly interconnected world, says Thiess Petersen, a senior economic expert at the Bertelsmann Foundation, the U.S. economy won't escape *unscathed*" (Peleschuk).

(7) As Europe's migrant crisis spiraled toward yet another humanitarian catastrophe, a European Union leader issued *a stark warning* Thursday to millions in search of economic opportunity: Stay away. … He *beseeched* people desperate for a better life *to please help Europe* by staying away (McAuley, Adam).

(8) In a news conference Thursday, Hollande took several minutes to arrive at the subject of Calais. Despite *the tear gas* French police have used against migrants this week – and *beatings* that have been recorded on social media – it is *imperative*, he said, that the migrants who remain "*be welcomed with dignity*" (Kanter, Chan).

(9) "The *harsh* measures have caused an international *outcry* but also *genuine surprise*: why has Denmark – *supposedly a brand name* when it comes to *human rights and development* – adopted such *austere* policies? Why is Denmark *suddenly leading a race to the bottom* in Europe when it comes to *deterring* refugees?" (Gammeltoft – Hansen, Malmvig).

The presence of evaluative lexis as a systemically important instrument of the speech manipulation technology "good/bad" is quite logical. Lexical units with evaluative meaning either in denotation or connotation perfectly meet the demand to designate "good" and "bad" notions or their properties. The evaluation in the denotation was demonstrated in examples 6 ("bad") and 2 ("not good", "no proper"). It is noteworthy that the negative evaluation comes not from the authors of the articles but from some third persons. As usual they remain unnamed ("experts say"). Going back to example 2, it is interesting to note a

parallel construction with negation – this method doubles the negative evaluation of the situation. Nevertheless, using evaluation in the connotative component is more preferable, since secrecy is one of the requirements of effective manipulation: "a vicious circle" (a repeating situation or condition in which one problem causes another problem that makes the first problem worse) (example 7).

Another way to intentionally evaluate the matter of communicating is the use of commentaries. These speech manipulation instruments suggest the perception of the text and its parts. Commentaries are defined as "something that shows or makes a statement about the true state or condition of something"; "an expression of opinion" (*Webster*). Commentaries diminish the chances of the object of communication to make his/her conclusions. Telling his/her own view on the situation, the discourse subject may emphasize some key moments, express evaluation, stress the importance of an event, etc. Moreover, when the subject comments on the words of a speaker or his interlocutor, he/she can guide the perception of the speech, explain the sense of an utterance, etc. Quoting D. Tusk's words, the author of the article in the *New York Times* does not give readers an opportunity to interpret the message themselves (McAuley, Adam). "Stark warning" (stark – unpleasantly clear and impossible to avoid) in a couple of lines turns into the ironic "beseech" (to beseech – to eagerly and anxiously ask someone for something), intensified with the phrase "to please help."

Contrast and opposition are speech manipulation instruments that constitute the technology "good/bad" and help the communicator to achieve his/her local aim. Opposition acts on the lexical level: lexical units with polar meaning are used in the framework of one sentence or passage. Such method helps to emphasize some properties in contrast to others. Contrast functions on the textual level which opposes some contrary notions and facilitates their properties. This term is "used in linguistics for a difference between units, especially one which serves to distinguish meanings in a language" (Crystal). Example 8 demonstrates the confrontation between words and the reality. Despite the fact that the migrants are greeted ("welcome" – to greet someone in a warm and friendly manner), they are met in an unfriendly manner ("tear gas,"

"beating"). In this fragment lexical units with positive and negative connotations are opposed as well. Lexis with the expressive component of meaning enables the task to be solved, i.e. to transfer the necessary information in an optimal way. The same example contains the lexical unit "imperative" (extremely important and needing to be done or dealt with immediately); it contains the expressive component, which increases the sarcastic degree in this context. Expressive lexis is noticed in other examples, such as "increasingly," "stunt," "beseech".

Example 9 demonstrates abundant speech manipulation instruments that contribute to achieving the discourse aim. There can be seen both systemically important means and supplementary ones – those making communication more effective. Parallel constructions and interrogative questions add dynamism and expressiveness to the message. There are amoeba words as well - they are so characteristic of political media discourse: "human rights," "development." Amoeba words are "transparent" words, which are not connected with the real life. They may be used in practically any context as far as they are not connected with some real notions (Кара-Мурза 72). A characteristic feature of amoeba words is their broad semantics in the political media discourse context. They denote abstract notions with no concrete meaning. The ideological connotation can also be found in the lexical unit "human right" (one of the basic rights which many societies think every person should have to be treated in a fair equal way without cruelty, for example by their government).

In example 9, positive secondary nomination is made use of – "a brand name" (one having a well-known and usually highly regarded or marketable name); however, the adverb "supposedly" (used when saying what many people say or believe is true, especially when you disagree with them) changes the evaluation mark on the opposite. The phrase "leading a race to the bottom" adds dark colours (disapproving the situation in which companies and countries try to compete with each other by cutting wages and living standards for workers, and the production of goods is moved to the place where the wages are lowest and the workers have the fewest rights (Financial and Business Terms Dict.)). The definition demonstrates the negative attitude of the text author to the

situation. Here we can also observe a metaphoric transfer of the discourse matter in the economic field due to lexis with professional colourings ("marketable name," "cutting wages," "living standards," "production of goods," etc.). In this example some other speech manipulation instruments function; however every influencing agent cannot be considered in isolation but only as a part of a whole. Their interaction is the obligatory condition and prerequisite of manipulative technologies functioning in the political media discourse.

We hereby sum up that all systemically important speech manipulation instruments enable the discourse aim to be achieved: the matter of communication may be evaluated in a certain way in accordance with the message placed in the nucleus of the speech manipulation technology. The technological approach to speech manipulation studies helps us to find out the role each element of a system plays, to discover its contribution in achieving the aim and to answer the question – why this very instrument has been chosen. Modern linguistics methods (textual analysis, observation on textual material, definitive variant analysis) help us to look "behind" the text of political media discourse. A great deal of information in the text is not expressed explicitly, but is left implicit. The analysis of non-uttered things sometimes discloses more than the analysis of uttered ones (Dijk).

To conclude, we can state that the study of speech manipulation technologies functioning in Internet media texts devoted to the migration crisis in Europe allows us to make some interesting findings. It proved that the surface level of the text is strictly structured in order to realize the intention of the text in an optimal way and in accordance with the principles of speech manipulation. A political media discourse text possessing manipulative potential demonstrates a technologically grounded structure: its nucleus and systemically important elements that are centripetally connected with the core. The nucleus of the technology under consideration includes the opposition "good/bad." All elements of the system functioning as a whole contribute to achieving the discourse aim. The local aim of the studied texts is to negatively evaluate the matter of communication. But this is just an opinion thoroughly translated via a large variety of web-based texts. It means that they present a point of view

on the migration problem which is not equal to the problem itself. Political media texts are a subjective, purposefully intended and properly structured rendering of the reality, and they should not be treated as objective reports of the crisis. A technological view on the migration crisis media presentations offers the challenge to look beyond the printed words and see the intention of the communicant. This knowledge will help researchers and readers critically interpret Internet news, to look for various points of view on a problem and to maintain information safety.

The technological approach to speech manipulation studies gives opportunity both to analyze political media discourse texts and to optimize them. It enriches our conception of the language regulative function. The understanding of the current migration crisis in terms of speech manipulation technologies warns us from hasty conclusions, reactions and decisions and enables us to look behind the media presentations.

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