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**Klymenko I. V.,**  
PhD (Candidate of Psychological Sciences),  
Associate Professor (docent) of  
Social Psychology Department,  
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv  
E-mail: ivklimenko251@gmail.com

## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASICS FOR TRAININGS ON RECOGNITION OF DISINFORMATION AND METHODS OF MANIPULATIVE INFLUENCE IN MEDIA NEWS

У статті обґрунтовано теоретико-методологічні основи тренінгів з розпізнавання дезінформації та методів маніпулятивного впливу в новинних сюжетах ЗМІ, описано основні напрямки інформаційно-психологічного впливу, здійснюваного через медіа, представлено перелік знань та навичок, які мають бути сформовані для ефективного протидії такому впливу

**Ключові слова:** дезінформація, маніпулятивний вплив, новини, медіаграмотність.

In the article the theoretical-methodological bases of training on recognition of disinformation and methods of manipulative influence contained in media news is substantiated, main directions of information-psychological influence exercised by the media are described, list of knowledge and skills that should be formed to effectively counteract for this influence is presented.

**Key words:** *disinformation, manipulative influence, news, media literacy.*

**Relevance.** The impact of information front in conditions of hybrid war is difficult to overestimate. With the development of information technologies the struggle for consciousness, attitudes and moods of representatives of the conflicting parties has gained unprecedented scale. Destabilizing of the situation in the enemy country, spreading the fear and panic among the civil population, reducing support to the current government and its discrediting on the domestic and international scene, the discrediting of the military leadership and the undermining of the morale – are the main areas

of informational and psychological impact. The vectors of such impact in conditions of the confrontation in the East of Ukraine are also directed to the inducement of public and political leaders of Ukraine to the self-destructive actions, calling for sabotage of the Ukrainian government's decisions, provoking conflicts inside Ukraine and among its political forces, appealing to the international community to justify the Russian aggression and discrediting of Ukraine [2, p. 61].

The news in the media is a powerful tool of information and psychological influence and it forms the basis for the use of technologies of specific information and disinformation. As noted in the report of The National Institute for Strategic Studies, «information war waged by Russia against Ukraine leads to exponential growth of the propaganda in the information space. The dominance of propaganda (primarily Russian but also Ukrainian as well) and therefore of tendentious and simply false materials and often the inability of people to clearly distinguish them, leads to general fatigue and a desire to «close themselves» in a position «all are lying» and above all – «journalists are lying» [1, c.57]. The development of media literacy among the Ukrainian people and the formation of their skills of recognition the manipulative methods of the media influence is an extremely important issue.

**The purpose of this article** is the theoretical and methodological substantiation of the objectives and content of trainings designed to developing of skills of recognition the basic techniques of manipulative influence and disinformation in the media news.

**Status of problem's research.** Many publications are devoted to study theoretical and practical issues related to information war and information-psychological influence. Among the Ukrainian researchers should be noted H. H. Pocheptsov, O. A. Shtokvysh, V. M. Petryk, V. V. Ostroukhov, M. M. Prysiazhniuk, V. M. Shlapachenko, O. P. Paranich and others. Majority of the researches are focused on the analysis of methods and tools of information and psychological impact. There are many publications about the real content of information confrontation between Russia and Ukraine (for example, such information is in the report of The National Institute for Strategic Studies [1]). However, the researches devoted to analysis of methods of detection of manipulative techniques and disinformation in the media and the development of relevant guidance or training are not enough.

Manipulation is defined in the scientific literature as a method of hidden influence aimed at changing the behavior of an object or its relation to something, attitudes, mental state in the interests of the subject of manipulation. And disinformation is considered in a narrow sense – as a kind

of manipulative influence on the minds of people (society), «implemented by amending the information received by the object of influence to form a misconceptions about certain facts, events and as a result to prompt him to take certain decisions (to commit an action or inaction), favorable to the subject of manipulation» [5, p.79].

Manipulative techniques related to disinformation in the media news are based on the control of information flow (frequency, completeness of information) and on injecting into the information stream the false information that could mislead and induce to certain actions.

Control over the information involves the exclusion of some specific topics from the content field or excessive coverage of the others. Methods of excessive compaction or devastation of event component in news that psychologically impede the adequate perception of information can also be used. «For example, a large amount of information in a «crude» or unstructured form allows to overflow the broadcasting air by an insignificant streams of information what complicates the already hopeless quest of individual to essence it. Similarly, the information is given by small portions, makes it impossible to effectively use it» [4, c.19].

Disinformation is based on some of the most common techniques related to the combination of true and false information. Specially selected true facts (partial concealment, specially aimed selected scenes, heroes, experts, location of events) promote the opportunities to tendentious presentation of facts. «Typically, using this method, manipulator step-by-step pushes the object of influence to the growing tension by the specially crafted information. This stress state of the object supported by continuous «throwing» a new portions of strictly limited and dosed data into the environment of information deficit» [4, c.25]. The reverse side of this technique is a presentation of totally false information, juggling of facts, perjury and so on. However, the method of disinformation with the greatest potential is the mix of true and false information, when some important components of misleading campaign are hidden in the stream of real events and facts.

Increasing of the manipulative influence of the news is realized through the emotional impact (visuals, sound) and semantic and linguistic tricks (appropriate choice of lexicon, expressive means, displacements in a semantic field, etc.). A daily character of presentation of news in media contributes to systematization of the destructive influences. «Implementation of disinformation activities involving media under such conditions opens an opportunities to increase not only the scale and duration of the impact, but its power and depth of the perception because it allows to use new multimedia, and psychological manipulation technique» [5, p. 84].

Personality «information hygiene» in such circumstances is certainly an important part of not only the resistance to enemy information aggression, but also the prevention of negative psychological states (anxiety, depression, etc.).

**Presenting of the main material.** We select some of the most important from our point of view vectors of theoretical and methodological character that contribute to capabilities of recognition disinformation and manipulative techniques in news in the media and can form the basis of the relevant training.

Among the basic knowledge that should be distributed within such training, it is worth mentioning information related to understanding of the specificity of media market in Ukraine. As is noted in the analytical report of The National Institute for Strategic Studies, «since independence of Ukraine mass media practically could not become a classic business, while they are considered by the owners (both the state and private) exclusively as repeaters of the will and desires of the owners, as well as tools to ensure their political and economic interests» [1, p. 51]. Understanding of this trend and awareness about conjuncture of the media market and the interests of the real owners of media therefore allowing to improve the critical perception of news.

According to the law «On amendments to some laws of Ukraine concerning transparency of ownership of media and implementing the principles of the state policy in the field of television and radio broadcasting», March 31, 2016, all broadcasting company in the Ukraine were required to publish on their websites information about their structure of ownership. Moreover, the summary information about the owners of Ukrainian media may be found on certain resources (Institute of Mass Information (IMI), the media NGOs «Detector Media», on the infographic presented by The National News Agency of Ukraine or Ukrinform etc.). Sufficient number of analytical information about the media market, the characteristics of the information space and media business in Ukraine is presented on websites like IMI (<http://imi.org.ua>) or Detector Media (<http://detector.media>). This information allows to navigate in the real division of the media market and understand what influences can be undertaken on the editorial policy of certain media.

Important component of prevention of negative information and psychological influence exercised by the news in media is awareness of the quality criteria of news as a journalistic genre. In professional literature and dictionaries for the definition of «news» is used several meanings:

- something that was previously unknown, some new information;
- message or something new that happened recently;

- publications in the media about current events or actual problems;
- compilation of news in newspapers or special programs on TV and radio.

The core of the news are facts and events. Fact is an independent from the observer state of reality or an explained knowledge, received by a description of certain fragments of reality. The facts have a distinct connotation of completion (sending to the past time) and may concern not only the events but also objects, conditions, scientific postulates. «The facts have a nondescriptive character. They are clean from the secondary characteristics of events and retain only its «essence», the core. The facts always single out from the event any one part of it, some of its features. It turns out that the same event appears in the various facts», – specified in the article by Rudnytska H. V. [3, p. 14]. The characteristics of the facts that we have identified (completeness, the ability to be objectively described and fixed, are multicomponent, have fragmentation in the structure of events (one event – different facts) are extremely significant in terms of the formation of certain skills to recognize disinformation or manipulative influence in the news. First of all, it concerns the methods of checking and comparing of the facts to form an objective and complete understanding of reality.

Facts do not happen, the events happen. The event opposed to facts has the dynamic character, it is always some change that happened in a certain period of time with specific subjects and objects and has certain consequences in the present and in the future. It can be spontaneous and planned, predictable or not. The events and their presentation within the news have a clear structure, which is determined through the Wh-question: the essence (What?), the location (Where?), the time (When?), the reasons (Why?), the members (Who?) [3, p. 15]. The appearance in the news reports of any other information that is not relating to the structure of the event, causes a shift in the direction of interpretation, where possibilities for manipulation are opening. Then the contents of the event can be curved, negated, interpreted in a favorable for storyteller way. News is a genre in which personal positions of the journalist should be minimally marked as well as the emotional component (tendentiously lexicon, artistic and stylistic devices, etc.). Violation of these requirements can also be a sign of attempts of manipulative influence.

The ability to separate the event's components from the interpretation and emotions in the news becomes an important skill.

It is extremely important to involve into the structure of training aimed at building the critical perception of news in media the unit, which contains the information about the content and nature of manipulation and disinformation in the media, as well as the practical exercises aimed at

identification and analysis of specific techniques of manipulation and disinformation within specific examples.

Experts distinguish several dozens of relevant basic techniques; they are described in details in the professional literature. Some informational resources (such as those already mentioned by us Detector Media, analytical report by The National Institute for Strategic Studies, StopFake website,) present not only specific techniques, but also the list of examples of their use in Ukrainian and Russian media.

The most common methods and techniques of disinformation and manipulation encountered in a news media can be divided into several large groups according to the ratio of certain structural components of communication: (sender (who?) – message (what?) – code / context (how?) – channel (how?) – the recipient / feedback (to whom? with what effect?)):

- manipulation at the level of sender's intentions;
- manipulation at the level of the facts;
- manipulation at the level of presenting information;
- filtering in the message transmission channels;
- manipulation at the level of showy intentions.

We can group the two types of methods and techniques of misinformation and manipulation at the level of sender: associated with the sender of information (communicator) and the speaker («actors»).

Manipulation of the first level related to the immediate interests and communicative intentions of the sender (the owners and founders of the media or people interested in specific information policy, groups of influence, editorial boards and councils). Manipulative influence here is based on a various methods of information management to create a favorable information background for the promotion of certain ideas or forces and often takes different forms of censorship. These methods include the selective presentation of information (concealment of some topics or facts, exaggerated attention to the other); the fragmentation of information stream (supply of the crushed masses of information by the unstructured stream making it difficult to perception); methods of noise generation (supply of the deliberately increased the number of news, details which cannot be adequately analyzed); methods of distraction or dispersion of attention.

This group includes the methods of filtering in the communication channels: the intentional limiting the spread of certain information in one channel or the excess quantity in other; blocking information in most of channels («umbrella method»); the intentional information «throw-in» by certain channels; creating of ephemeral channels for the dissemination of a frank disinformation and so on.

Recognition of these manipulations is usually difficult for people without special training or professional habit of systematic analysis of the information field. Therefore, within the public training you should only give them an overview of such manipulations, focusing on the ability to correlate the facts from various information sources, aware of the potential intentions and interests of their owners.

Manipulation on the second level is associated with speakers or «actors» (persons who directly dub the news information): anchorman, journalists, witnesses, experts. They may be related to personal interests of speakers (compliance with certain image, protection of interests of the employer, the values and attitudes) and take the features of tendentious coverage of events. Also, the selection and role of «actors» can be part of the manipulative or disinformation influence (the appearance of anonymous sources that promote the fake news, false witnesses, «actors» performing the role of eyewitness, «ordinary people», tendentiously selected experts, etc.). Within the training it is important to try to form the skills of separation the event component of news from subjective assessments, dubbed by «actors», checking the profiles of experts, journalists and witnesses.

Misinformation and manipulation at the level of the facts is associated with presentation of unverified or false information in the stream of truthful information in the form of:

- plausible news information (leads to uncritical positive perception of disinformation);
- unplausible news information (leads to rejection and negative perception of true information which serves as a disinformation frame).

Frankly false information (so-called fake news) is not difficult to check. Within the training it is quite easy to demonstrate the techniques of checking the facts from primary sources, checking the veracity of photo facts and video. It is also possible to form a basic skill of recognition of the half-truth (the identifying of erroneous tendencies, analogies, disturbed cause-effect and subject-object relation).

Group of manipulative techniques related to the way of news presentation in media includes the various techniques of verbal and nonverbal influence, particularly, psycho-semantic technology, using of emotionally colored vocabulary, audio and video, verbal cliches, stereotyped labels, classifiers, etc. There are many examples of using such methods on the already mentioned websites (StopFake, «Detector Media»). With their help it is possible to form appropriate skills of recognition of manipulations.

Such examples of news can also clearly illustrate the various psychological effects arising as a result of manipulative influence and realization of the certain communicative intentions of the sender (first of all there

are emotions and attitudes that reduce the criticality of perception or may become an impetus for change the target audience's behaviors). Analysis of similar news during the training can be accompanied by emotional reflection (discussion of the emotion caused by some news: maybe it had led to fear, anger, sentimentality or other emotions; how strong were these emotions; what caused such an emotional experience and why).

As an example of such training we can present the training «Beware – news!» which was approved in 2014 within the International Scientific Conference «Psy-Factor» (Kyiv). Later it was performed within various scientific activities (in particular at the II International Scientific and Practical Conference «Military Psychology in measurements of war and peace: problems, experience and prospects») and was introduced as a content unit of discipline «Psychological Technology of Public Relations» for students of specialization «Social Psychology». Training is designed for three academic hours and aimed at the formation of basic skills of recognizing the disinformation and manipulative techniques in the news in media.

It contains a brief theoretical unit, designed to fit a recommendations mentioned above (information about the structure and conjuncture of Ukrainian media market, the role of news and features of news genre in journalism, information about the impact of disinformation and manipulative techniques news in the media). There is also a practical unit aimed at getting the skills necessary to create the ability to recognize the manipulative techniques in the news and critically evaluate stream of news information (skills of separation the event component of news from interpretative and emotional, validation and comparison of the facts, checking the original sources, profiles of speakers, the photo facts and video, skills of the emotional reflection, etc).

**Conclusions.** The disinformation and manipulation of information are part of information-psychological influence, which became an essential part of the hybrid war. The news in media can be a powerful channel for distribution disinformation and implementation of informational and psychological impact. The destructive effects of such exposure are an obvious problem in Ukrainian society. Increasing the level of media literacy of the population and the formation of individual skills (including the ability to recognizing the disinformation or manipulation in the media) – is a demanded direction of activity of the militaries, social psychologists, educators and can be done by spreading of relevant publications, educational materials, public training. Such activities should be based on elementary knowledge of the situation on the media market, the characteristics of high-quality news, knowledge about content and techniques of disinfor-



mation and manipulation, the rules of verification of the primary sources of information and facts and techniques of emotional reflection.

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## Abstract

**Klymenko I. V.,**  
PhD (Candidate of Psychological Sciences)

### **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASICS FOR TRAININGS ON RECOGNITION OF DISINFORMATION AND METHODS OF MANIPULATIVE INFLUENCE IN MEDIA NEWS**

The disinformation and manipulation of information became an essential part of the hybrid war. The news in media can be a powerful channel for distribution of disinformation and implementation of informational and psychological impact. Disinformation in the news is based on injecting into the information stream the false information that could mislead and induce to certain actions. Increasing of the manipulative influence of news is realized through the emotional impact and semantic and linguistic tricks. A daily character of news contributes to systematization of the destructive influences.

Increasing the level of media literacy of the population and the formation of the ability to recognize disinformation or manipulation in the media can be done with the help of relevant public training. We select some of the important vectors of theoretical and methodological character which can form the basis of such training.

Among the basic knowledge that should be distributed is information related to understanding of the specificity of media market in Ukraine and the interests of the real owners of media. Important component is awareness of the quality criteria of news as a journalistic genre. It is important to involve into the structure of training the information about the content and nature of manipulation and disinformation as well as the practical exercises aimed at identification and analysis of such techniques.

As a result, the training should form the skills necessary to create the ability to recognize the manipulative techniques in the news and critically evaluate the stream of information (skills of separation of the event component of news from interpretative and emotional, validation and comparison of the facts, checking the original sources, profiles of speakers, the photo facts and video, skills of the emotional reflection, etc).

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