

Original Paper

The Language of the Ukrainian National Minority as an Element of Media Propaganda

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Abstract

The article deals with the issue of the language of the Ukrainian national minority as a tool in Russian media propaganda. The impact of media manipulation of the Ukrainian language for the formation of the concept of nationality and self-identification among Ukrainian national minorities living in Central Europe has been approximated.

Keywords

media propaganda, national minority, language manipulation, self-identification, Central Europe

1. Introduction

There are many definitions of the word propaganda, it can occur as a political aspect with what is usually associated, media propaganda, and even propaganda regarding national and ethnic identity. Propaganda and its various subjective ways of the storytelling they have accompanied humanity from the beginning. Various versions of narrative and persuasion are elements intended to “volunteer” persuade someone for their version of events, does not necessarily coincide with the ethics and moral assessment, but profitable for their own material, political or ideological benefits. Of course, propaganda appearing in mass media it combines elements of politics, national identity and is usually part of a larger political game.

Definitions

Propaganda was already defined in antiquity, Aristotle was the creator of the first complete theory of conviction. He recommended that the sender submit himself as a warm and kind person. It recommends that the authors of speeches use logical arguments, referring to the history and imagination of the recipient, and the message itself should be constructed in such a way that it corresponds to the previous convictions of the listeners (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2013. p. 49). David Miller defined media

propaganda as information winning hearts and minds (Yahya, Kamalipour, Snow, & Boulder, 2004. p. 7), and this is the shortest and most accurate wording, therefore when once we have mastered the minds of the population, we will have unlimited power, over these people to whom pseudo-scientific arguments do not speak, because it is only about such as that which are mentioned in this case, we will win its hearts through the most primitive play on human feelings and emotions. All these factors are tools in the hands of propagandists—political, ethnic, national, religious and gender aspects, properly formulated and transmitted through various means of communication: television and radio programs, articles in newspapers and websites, also today as comments under articles, in social media, tweets, on Facebook, memes, and other Internet resources, also as hate speech, trolling and fake news which are part of online life.

Ethnic and national minorities are easy morsels for propagandists; deprived of their country, among “strangers”, often discriminated by authorities, society. They are looking for support in populist texts, feel finally noticed, appreciated. Propaganda works best when it exploits pre-existing prejudices (Peters, 2018). These stereotypes are the main activities of propagandists. Ethnic intolerance, as the epilogue of cleverly devised propaganda in the media, resulted in practically general support for the ferocious war in the former Yugoslavia. Many studies and much research about the role of media in ex-Yugoslav conflict indicated that media, while serving the regime, was producing wars and hatred (Mijatović, 2015, p. 5). Unfortunately, even such a tragic after-effect of war did not speak to the creators of the media machine of hatred, who, in a similar vein, are building political capital on the foundation of hateful media propaganda.

Many thinks propaganda is a feature of bad and totalitarian regimes, and it amounts to clever deception. In modern terms, the word “propaganda” also included the meaning of the proposal and influence through the manipulation of symbols and the use of psychological mechanisms of individuals (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2013. p. 17). Manipulation of symbols, colors, associations is the simplest message that goes to all, even a less demanding recipient. Such manipulation may also be called ideological journalism or ideological message in the media, understood as a concept that contains an ideological element or paradigm of world outlook. Ideologies and propaganda in the media can be viewed and defined in many ways: as a stream, a current symbol, a sign perceived as an element of ideological norms (Lylo, 2017, pp. 14-20).

2. Method

The research methodology used in this study was a comparative analysis of media content appearing in Russian, Serbian, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Ukrainian media. Covering various ways of presenting the creation of Ukrainian statehood, a sense of national and linguistic identity among the Ukrainian minority living in the above-mentioned countries.

3. Results

For a long time Ukrainians were under partitions of various empires, deprived of their own state were exposed to attempts of Russification and Polonization. Language, culture, sense of nationality as well as faith were fought and discriminated by the authorities of these empires. Centuries of activities have led to the formation of many myths, lying stereotypes and deliberate attempts to falsify the history. All of the above to this day is used as element of carefully prepared propaganda and disinformation and the spread of fake news. Ukrainians who after the Second World War and the subsequent collapse of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc found themselves within the borders of various neighboring countries are exposed to increased propaganda and disinformation activities. The victims are also the Ukrainian minority in Serbian Vojvodina, which was there as a result of resettlements and labor migrations from the reign of Austro-Hungarian Empire (HVAT, 2016, p. 3).

It was found that the propaganda tool, which is the manipulation of the national language among national minorities inhabiting Central Europe, has a direct impact on the formation of a sense of national belonging and self-identification among Ukrainian national minorities. It was also noted that manipulation of the Ukrainian language is a tool used by the Russian propaganda, aimed at breaking unity and a sense of national belonging among Ukrainian minorities living in Central Europe.

4. Discussion

History of Russian propaganda in Galicia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The historical propaganda itself, referring to attempts to russification of Ukrainians, is a phenomenon quite commonly described and has been going on for over two centuries. Form of agitation and spreading false information only changes its vectors. Once through direct meetings and rallies of support by distributing the printed press to this day through all forms of online media. Over the years, it has turned into an attempt to rewrite history. The idea goes back to the interwar period, when through religious conversions it was attempted to create a nation of Carpathian Russians, such as the example of the village of Florynka (Augustyniak, 2013), or supporting Ruthenian's autonomy in Transcarpathia in Czechoslovakia, just because the Ruthenians did not identify themselves as Ukrainians (Stec, 2015). The Polish People's Republic also pursued its "policy of polonizing" Ukrainians—Lemkos (Vatra, 1994, pp. 6-7).

Moskvofil'stvo—endowed large financial outlays, found a large group of recipients and supporters (Pidhirskyi Dzvin, 5, 1912, p. 1). Many Ukrainians did not give in to this manipulation, they thought Russophilism was just a figment of propaganda, and also deeply regrets the behavior of the Russophile part which is called brothers they took into their home, and they now say that this is their home (Franchuk, 1912, p. 2). From a pro-Russian newspaper addressed to the inhabitants of the Lesser Poland we learn that the wave of Russophilism comes from Russian communities in the USA (Lemko, 27, 1912, p. 3).

Pro-Russian enthusiasts also argued that the name Ukraine was only a piece of land, not a state formation (Shelukhyn, 1930, p. 3).

All these types of activities are called propaganda, but Russia has perfected the ways of manipulating the sense of national belonging and creating history for its own benefit. Walter Lippmann, the author of the best known definition of propaganda, states that it is the effort to alter the picture to trigger a reaction, to substitute one social pattern for another (Lippmann, 1992, p. 26), which perfectly fits the new historical narrative published in Russian-language media. Nikolay Starikov claims that Ukraine is an artificial creation of the Austro-Hungarian government, established only to divide the Russian nation (Starykov, 2019). We find this statement many times in the Russian press, but also in scientific articles. In one of the journals of sociological sciences, we also find this rhetoric, along with the reference to events in Galicia, where the author divides the Ukrainian nation in Ukrainian “Ukrainofily” invented by the Austrians and “Starorusyny” faithful to their “truelly nationality” (Barinov, 2012). The active struggle against the very nature of Ukraine’s statehood and the manipulation of names is a slogan repeated for many years by Russian propaganda instruments according to the principle: a lie repeated a hundred times becomes true.

Language as a propaganda tool.

Probably no other language arouses such interest of propagandists as Ukrainian. This language survived the official prohibition in Ukrainian SSR (in the interwar period), and also ridicule and negation of its existence. The most famous Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko in his poetry collection *Kobzar* wrote to the Ukrainians: Slavic people someday we will speak in our own way (Shevchenko, 1987, pp. 290-291), and it has happened after the collapse of the USSR, finally the Ukrainian language became national. The Ukrainian language itself, apart falsifying the history of this country, has been the biggest victim of propaganda since the interwar period.

Rusophile movements with the approval of the authorities of the Second Polish Republic created a universal student’s book—based on the Russian alphabet, in the intention of proving that the Ukrainian language is only an Old-Russian dialect (Nash Lemko, 23, 1935. p. 1), which did not appeal to Ukrainians aware of their origin—which more interestingly the majority of the population did not even understand this artificial newspeak. Although Russophiles from the interwar period were deprived of such enormous financial support from the Bolsheviks (Nash Lemko, 9, 1934, p. 5), they felt attachment to the communist system. Language has become one of the most important elements of maintaining Ukrainian culture and nationality. As claims T. Lylo—language and its communicative possibilities of maintaining national identity in people, even in such conditions where the community has no designated common territory is the main identification vector (Lylo, 2010, p. 79). That is why in the *Ukrainskyi Beskyd* newspaper we meet with an appeal to the population for the group development of Ukrainian science and culture (Fylypchak, 1937, p. 1), while in the *Ukrainskyi Beskyd* we read about

the power to cultivate native speech as part of the community and national identity (A. ST, 1929, p. 1). In the pages of this newspaper Hamchykevych states that culture is needed for a nation as a light for a living organism (Hamchykevych, 1920, p. 1), which is why the editorial office of Ukrainskyj Holos published linguistic guides (Ukrainskyi Holos, 35, 1919, p. 1) and lists of words borrowed from Russian and Polish as well as their Ukrainian equivalents as part of the adopted education plan (Chykalknko, 1920). Kalman Segal in his reports from the Galician town described the stubbornness and perseverance of the Ukrainian student Jurek Korba in gaining a higher education (Segal, 2017, pp. 120-121), which proves that the nation was not illiterate as it was presented by Russian propaganda. However, the events of World War II changed the course of history, including speech development, for many years.

During the communist period and the prevailing censorship, and the unified socialist worldview program prevailing throughout Central and Eastern Europe—in a Ukrainian-language newspaper addressed to this minority in Poland, we read that they themselves come from the Russian and Belarusian culture, while the language is a mixture of Russian and Old-Slavic language (Shch, 1957, p. 2). Media propaganda is also about spreading trust and ideas of action programs among people, giving them authority, presenting certain facts, forming opinions, arguing or counter-arguing in the political, ideological and ideological struggle (Rajczyk, 2016, p. 24). Viktor Mozgin notes that modern Russian propaganda draws heavily on the achievements of Western precursors. However, it can be seen that he uses many techniques borrowed from the doctrine of Nazi Germany, he also notes that it is part of the large-scale information war waged by Russia against the West (Mozgin, 2017, pp. 109-125). Anatolij Vasserman Russian agitator (he left Ukraine for Russia few years ago), personally in one of the interviews reveals the secrets of the success of propaganda: one of the heard methods consists in bribing all who would be against the integration of Ukraine in Russia, he added, of course, that the Ukrainian language is a dialect of Russian, and repeats the previously mentioned “historical sensation” about the creation of Ukraine by the Austrians in the 19th century (Silayev, 2010). Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk writes that language is something of its own (Tokarczuk, 2019, pp. 199-200), a treasure that you can only have for yourself, as already mentioned earlier, it is an element uniting society, especially in the context of national minorities, thanks to which they can preserve their identity. Propagandists, however, make great use of it and write, for example, that the Ukrainian language was invented by the writer Ivan Kotlarevskiy in 1794, and it is an artificial creation. However, in 1918 in Saint Petersburg, Aleksander Pavlovsky created the “Grammatics of Malorussian Nationalist”, recognizing Ukrainian as a little-Russian dialect (Analiticheskaya Gazeta). An interesting fact is that the publication of this Grammar in Russia and Bukvar in Poland coincided in time, presented the same content and national-political orientation. Ryszard Kapuściński said that the support from populists, warlords, nationalists and party leaders is destructive for the language (Kapuściński, 2007, p. 155).

However, as we learn from the Czech press, the integration of Ukrainian Lemkos with their country is disturbed by, as Jevgenen Župan puts it, by propagandists and saboteurs living in Russia and Transcarpathia (NĚMEC, 2017, p. 12). As we read in the report of *Russian social media influence. Understanding Russian propaganda in eastern Europe*, Russia is also pioneering using automated accounts in social media, troll factories and skillfully uses fake news (Helmus & Bodine-Baron, 2018, p. 40). In Slovakia, where the Ukrainian minority is a large group, speech awareness is an indicator of ethnic orientation (PLYISHKOVA, 2009, pp. 8-11), which is why language has become a tool of media propaganda.

Contemporary propaganda has moved away from information and education in the spirit of the promoted idea, and is aimed at persuading people to a certain point of view and got support and votes (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2013, p. 19). Its important assumption is to manipulate the emotions of the recipients (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2013, p. 49), which is the sense of ethnicity or nationality. The game on the emotions of Ukrainians also takes place in Vojvodina, where Sputnik, a Russian electronic newspaper having editions in more than 20 European countries, also spreads the myth about the Russian pedigree of Ukrainians living in Galicia and the Carpathians, where it comes from the most of the Ukrainian emigration living in former Yugoslavia; similar information concerns the origin of the language, and calls them Russian Ruthenians (Grigor'yev, 2015).

Here, however, propaganda goes a step further and also looks for similarities in the colors of the coats of arms and colors which Ruthenians used as connections to Russia, in the sense of the word—propaganda as an influence by manipulating symbols as psychological mechanisms (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2013, p. 17). Propaganda in the Balkans were already known from the time of World War II, where as part of the spread of false information, the Ukrainian minority took preventive measures in the form of press publications (Stsiborskyi, 1940, pp. 5-7).

Also, it is noteworthy that considered as a satirical request of Andrey Dostlev to the Austrian government to clarify the issue of the creation of Ukrainian language by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Real'naya gazeta, 2018), is received literally by many readers of Russian-language magazines.

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