

On rhetorical appeals: Emotionalization and politicization of Russia's COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V in American and Russian news discourse

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ABSTRACT

The relations between language and politics in COVID-19 news coverage have become significant issues following the rise of Chinese COVID-19 cases in 2022. This study aims to investigate specific rhetorical appeals and language means used by journalists to manipulate public opinion and propagate certain ideologies in American and Russian online news discourse. The study employed computer-assisted content analysis, rhetorical analysis and van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to identify and describe biased representations of Russia's COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V in 307 Internet news stories. The content analysis revealed frequent mentions of politicians and political institutions in American and Russian coverages of Sputnik V. The findings of rhetorical and discourse analyses show similarities in the use of rhetorical appeals and language means. The study concluded that the coverage of Sputnik V was highly emotionalized and politicized in pro-government and opposition media. Journalists utilized ideologically loaded language and rhetorical appeals to disguise their biased opinions and create a distorted image of Sputnik V in the online news coverage. Implications of the present research findings for developing ESL and EFL courses in general and enhancing students' reading comprehension skills are also discussed.

Keywords: CDA; COVID-19; language and politics; linguistic manipulation; rhetorical appeals; Sputnik V

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 was marked by a great number of global issues (Gupta, 2020; Yurak, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 unveiled the enormous public reliance on digital and social media, which played a critical role in the rapid dissemination of information about the disease (Abuhashesh et al., 2021). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, mass communication has become more vulnerable to emotional manipulation and susceptible to political pressure (Zarocostas, 2020). The pandemic has

increased journalists' responsibility for filtering and transmitting the news about the coronavirus disease (Perreault & Perreault, 2021). The absence of high-quality fact-checking 'filters' to verify online information (Orso et al., 2020) and the abundance of conspiracy theories (Mheidly & Fares, 2020) led to distrust towards the news about COVID-19. Furthermore, the arrival of the COVID-19 has caused serious concerns about safety and efficacy among politicians and journalists. The vaccines were viewed as 'soft-power' instruments rather than

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as a means of disease prevention (Vargina, 2020). Therefore, the relations between language and politics in vaccine coverage became the focus of attention of many scientists.

Several studies in media communication indicated the political slant and vaccine polarization in mainstream online media (Hart et al., 2020; Latkin et al., 2021). Hart et al. (2020) found that American newspaper coverage was highly politicized and polarized. Likewise, Latkin et al. (2021) linked vaccine hesitancy with the reliance on digital media, misinformation on vaccine safety, and politicization of its coverage (Hart et al., 2020). Most media studies addressed the issue of misinformation on COVID-19 and examined its effect to the growth of global anti-Chinese sentiment in newspaper and magazine articles (Ng, 2021).

Most studies in applied linguistics examined the COVID-19-related vocabulary and the influence of the pandemic on languages on a global scale (Foster & Welsh, 2021; Goncharova et al., 2022; Lahlou & Rahim, 2022; Roig-Marín, 2021). Other works investigated ideological and hegemonic practices in globally and locally written English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks (Ulum & Köksal, 2020; Zhang & Song, 2022). Thus, previous studies in applied linguistics have not directly considered manipulative strategies and ideologically loaded language means used in vaccine coverage in detail. Therefore, this study focused on detecting and describing language means and rhetorical appeals utilized by the American and Russian journalists in Sputnik V coverage. The study also aims to contribute to the use of online resources in language learning (Murzo & Chuvileva, 2021). Recognition of manipulative language and rhetorical strategies in online media texts may enhance EFL and ESL learners' proficiency and develop their reading comprehension skills.

This study hypothesized that (1) the American and Russian news coverage of Sputnik V is politicized and emotionalized; (2) emotionalization and politicization of the vaccine coverage occurs mainly by using rhetorical appeals; (3) both American and Russian journalists use similar rhetorical appeals and language means to manipulate public opinion and create a distorted image of Sputnik V in the news coverage. Therefore, this study has two objectives:

- 1) to measure the level of politicization of Sputnik V coverage during the examined period (from 11 August 2020 to 31 December 2021) in the four major American and Russian papers; and
- 2) to detect and describe the rhetorical appeals and language means deployed in inducing biased emotions, opinions, and attitudes towards Sputnik V.

The idea of relations between language and ideology is closely related to the development of

discourse studies. Fairclough (1989) claims that discourse (written, spoken, or visual language) is often used to construct and maintain structures of power in society. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is associated with tackling ideologies and power in discourse. van Dijk (2006) mentions that discourse analysis is focused on power relationships in society expressed by means of language. Furthermore, van Dijk (2015) suggests that most manipulation can be tackled "through social, cognitive and discursive perspectives since it takes place by text and form" (p. 466). He views manipulation as a form of "discursive practice of a manipulator" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 360). Therefore, manipulation is one of the crucial concepts of CDA, which plays a key role in linguistic, rhetorical, and media studies (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Its definition is closely interrelated with the key notions of rhetoric, such as persuasion, coercion, and deception. Noggle (2021) distinguishes manipulation from deception as a form of coercion that uses threats, force, and power to persuade someone to do something they are unwilling to do. This definition contrasts with that of Wood (2014), who argues that deception is one of the forms of manipulation. Thus, previous studies do not fully explain the difference between manipulation, deception, coercion, and persuasion. This study suggests that manipulation is a type of implicit influence that forces the recipient to accept the speaker's viewpoint without any evidence or proof. It does not necessarily suggest coercion or deception but deals with those arguments that cannot be verified. Persuasion uses logic and 'valid' arguments that can be verified and are evidence-based. On the other hand, manipulation uses emotional appeals and 'invalid' arguments which cannot be verified and lack necessary evidence or proof.

Studies on the relationship between ideology and hegemony have become more prevalent in recent decades (Ulum & Köksal, 2020; Zhang & Song, 2022). The emergence of the post-truth era characterized by the proliferation of lies, misinformation, and propaganda (Moravčíková, 2020, p. 25) has led scholars to adopt a more critical perspective toward media texts. Fowler et al. (2018) first linked the choice of linguistic forms in media texts to the sociopolitical contexts, which has opened prospects for developing CDA and for further research on media texts and manipulation. CDA focuses on the power of relationships in society as expressed by means of language (Fairclough, 1989). van Dijk (2015) developed the sociocognitive approach (SCA) that linked discourse, cognition, and society. SCA focuses on studying cognitive models of language users reproduced in discourse structures. These models are subjective and consist of their personal and

socially shared knowledge. Generalizations of this knowledge may result in prejudices and confirmation bias. Thus, SCA helps understand the relationship between these discourse structures and social structures and helps identify personal mental representations of social members (Gyollai, 2022, p. 540). Therefore, this approach is relevant to study language manipulation in media discourse.

One of the distinctive characteristics of modern media discourse is intensification of emotional arguments, known as ‘emotionalization’ (Alba-Juez & Larina, 2018). As van Dijk (1988b) claims, facts are better described and remembered if they contain strong emotions. Appeals to emotions affect how readers perceive news messages and contribute to the commercial success of media outlets. Incorporating emotional elements into news stories has become one of the most efficient ways to manipulate public opinion without any evidence or proof (Huber & Aichberger, 2020, p. 142). Copi et al. (2018) considered appeals to emotions as ‘false’ arguments or *fallacies* that exploit the emotional weaknesses of the audience and, thus, are often used to manipulate public opinion. Copi et al.’s (2018) classification of rhetorical appeals was based on logical fallacies, including *argumentum ad verecundiam* (appeals to people that may have no expertise in the given area), *argumentum ad numerum* (appeals based on the number of people who hold a particular belief) and *argumentum ad populum* (appeals to popular opinion rather than authority) (Copi et al., 2018, p. 120). This Copi et al.’s (2018) classification serves as a basis for the typology of rhetorical appeals proposed in this study.

METHOD

To measure the level of politicization and examine the language of Sputnik V coverage, the study followed van Dijk’s (2015) sociocognitive approach (SCA) to CDA. In contrast to Fairclough’s (1989) approach to CDA, which views language as a form of social practice and focuses on hidden power relations and ideologies embedded in discourse, the SCA examines mental representations of language reproduced directly or indirectly through discourse structures (van Dijk, 2015, p. 64). Therefore, the SCA aims to explain the underlying cognitive processes that determine discourse structures and their interpretation in particular communicative-situations (Gyollai, 2022, p. 539). The whole process of discourse interpretation is coordinated by the model that language users have of the communicative situation, which is, namely, the context model. According to van Dijk (2015), the models can be personal, featuring particular and personal emotions, opinions, and beliefs of language users, or social, applying general, socially shared knowledge. Using such models, language users may

make false generalizations and, thus, form prejudices (van Dijk, 2015). Therefore, SCA seemed to form a worthy framework and methodology in analyzing the language of Sputnik V coverage from the critical point of view.

This study utilized quantitative techniques, including critical discourse analysis, content, and rhetorical analyses. Some quantitative procedures were also used to complete the interpretation. The research process consisted of several steps as follows.

Firstly, computer-aided quantitative data analysis was employed to identify the number of publications about Sputnik V and their frequency. The data were collected from the online versions of the four major American and Russian newspapers using *Nexis Newsdesk* software. To avoid any sampling bias, the study employed consecutive sampling method. It is the best of the nonprobability sampling methods since it seeks to include all accessible subjects as parts of the samples. The choice of the newspapers was based on the difference of their political leanings at the time of the study: pro-government media (*The Washington Post* and *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*) that supported political views of those parties in power and opposition media (*The Washington Times* and *Novaya Gazeta*) that supported the views of the opposition parties. The research timeline was defined by the official registration of Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine on 11 August 2020 by the Russian Ministry of Health and its clinical trials during the sixteen months after.

Secondly, the study employed word clouds for qualitative data analysis. According to Murzo et al. (2022), semantic Web technologies are widely used for web search and assessment of texts available on the Internet “not only for conducting research but also for teaching and learning in a chosen direction” (p. 238). Thus, *Wordcloud* software package in R for statistical data processing was used to analyze the lexical content of the articles automatically. This tool allows researchers to identify and visualize the top 200 keywords in the collected material. The level of politicization that refers to “mentions of political actors in coverage” (Hart et al., 2020, p. 682) was measured using *Nexis Newsdesk* software. The analytics tool identifies the frequency and the percentage of different mention types of information in the media. Based on these analytics and Copi et al.’s (2018) classification of appeals, the typology of rhetorical appeals in Sputnik V coverage was proposed.

The final and most important step of the study included critical discourse and rhetorical analyses as qualitative and interpretive methods. First, to identify the ideologically loaded language means, the study employed CDA. It allowed the researchers to examine the use of language in a social context and detect certain linguistic features, ideological

meanings of verbal expressions, and rhetorical mechanisms in Sputnik V coverage. The fragments of the news discourse related to the discussion of Sputnik V were identified and analyzed, including utterances made by politicians, health experts, pseudo-experts, and journalists. The language and functions of each fragment were examined at discursual, pragmatic, and lexico-grammatical levels. The semantic and pragmatic context analysis were used to identify the specific linguistic features in each fragment as well as the contextual meanings of words that relate to political ideologies. Positive and negative connotations of words and verbal expressions that conveyed biased attitudes towards Sputnik V were analyzed. The sentence structure of the statements was also examined to reveal its contribution to disguising journalists' opinions and

building strong arguments. Then, the study utilized rhetorical analysis. The elements of a rhetorical situation, including text, author, audience, purpose, and setting, were taken into account. The rhetorical analysis enabled the description to describe rhetorical appeals, evaluate their persuasiveness in Sputnik V coverage and their role in shaping public opinion, and the creation of biased images of the vaccine.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The guided search tool in Nexis NewsDesk was used to collect 307 publications about Sputnik V. Table 1 presents the frequency of these publications in the four selected papers between August 2020 and December 2021.

Table 1

Frequency of publications about Sputnik V in the American and Russian newspapers between August 2020 and December 2021 (N=307)

Time	The Washington Post	The Washington Times	Novaya Gazeta	Parlamentskaya Gazeta
<i>August, 2020</i>	6	0	2	0
<i>September, 2020</i>	4	1	1	3
<i>October, 2020</i>	2	1	0	4
<i>November, 2020</i>	4	1	2	1
<i>December, 2020</i>	12	3	6	1
<i>January, 2021</i>	8	6	6	4
<i>February, 2021</i>	18	28	4	4
<i>March, 2021</i>	16	20	5	3
<i>April, 2021</i>	12	12	4	2
<i>May, 2021</i>	7	7	4	0
<i>June, 2021</i>	3	0	9	6
<i>July, 2021</i>	2	0	4	7
<i>August, 2021</i>	4	0	1	2
<i>September, 2021</i>	6	1	3	5
<i>October, 2021</i>	4	2	3	3
<i>November, 2021</i>	4	3	3	3
<i>December, 2021</i>	1	0	1	3
Total	113	85	58	51

Table 1 shows that there was an increase in the amount of the American publications between February and March 2021. The observed increase could be attributed to the following facts: (1) on February 2, 2021, *The Lancet* published a study on Sputnik V, proving its 91.6% efficacy against COVID-19 (Logunov et al., 2021); (2) on March 3, 2021, The European Medicines Agency (EMA) started the review of this vaccine; and (3) on March 23, 2021, the Russian President Vladimir Putin received the first dose of it. The number of Russian publications about Sputnik V fluctuated less sharply, reaching its highest point of 9 articles in *Novaya Gazeta* in June 2021. A possible explanation for this result may be the fact that on June 29, 2021, the

RDIF and the UAE Ministry of Health confirmed the full (100%) effectiveness of Sputnik V against severe COVID-19. Overall, the results indicate that the appearance of Sputnik V vaccine aroused interest of both American and Russian journalists.

The Wordcloud package in R was employed to find out the top 200 most frequent keywords in each of the four selected newspapers. Based on the top 200 keyword list of each newspaper, the study generated the keywords closest to Sputnik V that indicated politicization of the vaccine coverage. Table 2 illustrates their ranking and frequency in each American newspaper.

Table 2

The most frequently used words detected in *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* on Sputnik V between August 2020 and December 2021.

The Washington Post		The Washington Times	
Keywords	Mentions	Keywords	Mentions
1. <i>vaccine</i>	2419	1. <i>vaccine</i>	1147
2. <i>country</i>	484	2. <i>Sputnik</i>	320
3. <i>coronavirus</i>	478	3. <i>dose</i>	285
4. <i>health</i>	383	4. <i>country</i>	229
5. <i>dose</i>	382	7. <i>Russian</i>	217
6. <i>state</i>	372	9. <i>Russia</i>	179
7. <i>Sputnik</i>	366	25. <i>President</i>	113
24. <i>Putin</i>	207	122. <i>Biden</i>	40
42. <i>President</i>	161	181. <i>Kremlin</i>	31
115. <i>Biden</i>	84	182. <i>Matov</i>	31
156. <i>Johnson</i>	69	185. <i>Vladimir</i>	31

According to Table 2, the word ‘vaccine’ appeared 2419 times in *The Washington Post* and 1147 times in *The Washington Times*, respectively. The name of the Russian vaccine, Sputnik, ranked seventh in *The Washington Post* with 366 mentions and second in *The Washington Times* with 320 mentions. The names of the famous politicians (‘Putin’, ‘Biden’, ‘Johnson’, ‘Matov’) and the metonymic name of the Russian government (‘Kremlin’) were also mentioned frequently. Table 2 demonstrates that the surname of Russia’s President Vladimir Putin appeared 207 times in *The Washington Post*. On the other hand, the surname of President Joe Biden appeared only 84 times. This discrepancy could be attributed to the popularity of the Russian President in coverage and the political bias of the American pro-government paper. In addition, the words ‘Russian’ (217 mentions) and ‘Russia’ (179 mentions) appeared more frequently than the surname of the American President ‘Biden’ (40 mentions) in *The Washington Times*. This finding illustrates the prominence of Russia in the coverage. Overall, these findings add support to the

hypothesis about politicization of the vaccine coverage in pro-government and opposition media. They are congruent with a previous study that states the American coverage is highly politicized (Hart et al., 2020).

Table 3 presents the ranking and the frequency of the most common keywords which were the closest to Sputnik V and indicated politicization of the vaccine coverage in each Russian paper. Table 3 demonstrates that the word ‘vaccine’ appeared 128 times in *Parlamentskaya Gazeta* and 338 times in *Novaya Gazeta*. ‘Sputnik’ ranked eighth in *Parlamentskaya Gazeta* with 86 mentions and seventh in *Novaya Gazeta* with 161 mentions. The name of the vaccine appeared together with names of Russian political actors (‘Putin’, ‘Matviyenko’, ‘Murashko’), political titles (‘Speaker’), political institutions and unions (‘The Federation Council’, ‘EU’), and the name of the vaccine-producing country (‘Russia’). Thus, the occurrence of these words reveals politicization of the vaccine coverage.

Table 3

The most frequently used words detected in the articles of ‘*Parlamentskaya Gazeta*’ and ‘*Novaya Gazeta*’ about Sputnik V between August 2020 and December 2021.

Parlamentskaya Gazeta		Novaya Gazeta	
Keywords	Mentions	Keywords	Mentions
1. <i>коронавирус</i> (coronavirus)	142	1. <i>вакцины</i> (vaccines)	338
2. <i>Россия</i> (Russia)	135	2. <i>вакцинация</i> (vaccination)	242
3. <i>вакцины</i> (vaccines)	128	4. <i>российская</i> (Russian)	188
4. <i>ковид19</i> (Covid-19)	120	7. <i>Спутник</i> (Sputnik)	161
8. <i>Спутник</i> (Sputnik)	86	10. <i>коронавирус</i> (coronavirus)	148
19. <i>Матвиенко</i> (Matviyenko)	57	17. <i>ковид19</i> (Covid-19)	123
32. <i>Владимир</i> (Vladimir)	45	36. <i>Россия</i> (Russia)	78
34. <i>Совет Федерации</i> (The Federation Council)	45	65. <i>ЕС</i> (EU)	62
83. <i>Спикер</i> (Council’s Speaker)	29	69. <i>США</i> (USA)	61
89. <i>Путин</i> (Putin)	28	104. <i>Пфайзер</i> (Pfizer)	47
114. <i>Мурашко</i> (Murashko)	22	135. <i>Путин</i> (Putin)	41

To analyze the content of the news stories automatically, the study employed *Nexis Newsdesk* software. The tool enabled the study to identify the types of information (mentions) in Sputnik V coverage. They were, among others, politicians and political institutions; medical experts; non-experts or ‘pseudo-experts’; statistics; and emotional

statements that contained emotional attitudes towards the Russian vaccine. The percentage of these media-mentions counted with the help of *Nexis Newsdesk* is presented in Table 4. Table 4 provides detailed information about the types of information detected in the selected papers and the percentage of their mentions.

Table 4

Percentage of mentions of information detected in the news articles about Sputnik V from August 2020 to December 2021 in the American and Russian papers.

Information	The Washington Post	The Washington Times	Novaya Gazeta	Parlamentskaya Gazeta
Politicians	51.32 %	74.11 %	51.72 %	70.58 %
Political institutions	41.59 %	60.00 %	48.27 %	58.82 %
Health experts	38.93 %	41.17 %	56.89 %	72.54 %
Pseudo-experts	36.28 %	37.64 %	53.44 %	13.72 %
Statistics	45.13 %	76.47 %	56.89 %	52.94 %
Emotional statements	37.16 %	48.23 %	58.62 %	47.05 %

Table 4 shows that *The Washington Times* has the highest number of mentions of politicians (74.11%) compared to other newspapers. Mentions of political institutions were most common in both *The Washington Times* (60%) and *Parlamentskaya Gazeta* (58.82%). Health experts were mentioned more frequently in the Russian newspapers. The *Novaya Gazeta* (53.44%) has the highest number of mentions of pseudo-experts. Reliance on statistics was frequent in the articles of *The Washington Times* (76.47%). *Novaya Gazeta* contained the highest number of emotional statements about Sputnik V (58.62%). The findings indicate that the American pro-government media were less politicized than the opposition media. Conversely, the Russian state-run media appeared to be more politicized than the opposition media. Overall, Table 4 supports the hypothesis that emotionalization and politicization of Sputnik V coverage occurred by the rhetorical appeals in the American and Russian online media as follows.

Appeals to Political Power

As shown in Table 4, the news articles about Sputnik V contained frequent appeals to political

actors. The findings are in line with van Dijk’s (1998b, p. 28) idea that journalists often use different rhetorical structures “to enhance the organization, and hence the attention, the storage, and retrieval of textual information by the listener/reader”. According to Copi et al. (2018, p. 120), appeals to authority include citing some ‘authoritative’ person who may have no expertise in the given area. These appeals are treated as arguments taken for granted in favor of an issue and create the so-called ‘halo effect’ (Cherry, 2022). The ‘halo effect’ occurs when journalists quote prominent people in the news to justify a certain opinion. The image of these people projects onto all the people (or issues) around them, evoking emotional responses from the audiences and making them able to accept the journalist’s opinion without any evidence (Teneva, 2021, p. 134). The acceptance of the speaker’s arguments depends on the stereotypes and background knowledge of the audiences: only provided that the speaker is ‘authoritative’ and evokes positive emotions. It is likely to believe his or her opinion. Examples 1-4 show that journalists frequently quoted politicians.

1. *The Iranian government <...> approved Sputnik V in late January and was hoping to jointly manufacture some doses (Taylor, 2021).*
2. *E.U. foreign policy chief Josep Borrell praised the Russian vaccine and expressed the hope that it would be soon available in the bloc (Rohac, 2021).*
- 3.

<i>Prem'er-ministr</i>	<i>Litvy</i>	<i>Ingrida Shimonite</i>	<i>nedavno</i>	<i>nazvala</i>
Prime Minister	of Lithuania	Ingrida Simonyte	recently	called

“Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte recently called

<i>rossijskuyu</i>	<i>vakcinu</i>	<i>gibridnym</i>	<i>oruzhiem</i>	<i>Putina.</i>
the Russian	vaccine	hybrid	weapon	of Putin

the Russian vaccine ‘Putin’s hybrid weapon’” (Epifanova, 2021).

- 4.

<i>Vladimir Putin</i>	<i>zayavil,</i>	<i>chto</i>	<i>ot</i>	<i>koronavirusa</i>
Vladimir Putin	said	that	against	the coronavirus

“Vladimir Putin said that he was vaccinated against the coronavirus

<i>privilsya</i>	<i>vakcinoj</i>	<i>Centra</i>	<i>imeni</i>	<i>Gamalei.</i>
he was vaccinated	with the vaccine	of the Center	named after	Gamaleya.

with the vaccine from the Gamaleya Center.”

<i>Po</i>	<i>ego</i>	<i>slovam,</i>	<i>oba</i>	<i>preparata</i>
According to	his	words,	both	drugs

“According to him, both drugs

<i>horoshie.</i>	<i>‘Tem bolee chto</i>	<i>Vooruzhyonnye sily</i>	<i>privivayutsya</i>	<i>Sputnikom V.</i>
good.	Moreover,	Armed Forces	are vaccinated	with Sputnik V.

are good. ‘Moreover, Armed Forces are vaccinated with Sputnik V’” (Filonenko, 2021).

Examples 1-4 illustrates that journalists referred to politicians’ opinions to encourage or discourage the audience from getting vaccinated with Sputnik V. Politicians expressed their feelings and attitudes towards the vaccine to show that they openly share their feelings. Citations with emotional appeals were embedded into the news stories to enhance the politicians’ positive image in the eyes of the audience and to steer the readers’ minds towards similar feelings and opinions about Sputnik V. The findings reveal that emotional contagion occurred mainly using emotion-laden words which denoted approval and support of the vaccine (*horoshij* - ‘good’, ‘approve’, ‘praise’), or signaled positive expectations from the approval of Sputnik V in EU (‘express the hope’). Words with negative connotations (*gibridnoe oruzhie Putina*, ‘Putin’s hybrid tool’) and gun metaphors (*oruzhie*) were used to induce the feeling of fear of the audiences and discredit the image of the Russian vaccine both nationwide and worldwide. The findings reveal that the verbs denoting positive feelings of hope, trust, approval, and expectation (‘hope’, ‘expect’, ‘approve’, ‘believe’) were more common in the Russian coverage of Sputnik V. The verbs denoting negative feelings of distrust, fear, disapproval, and danger (‘doubt’, ‘fear’, ‘criticize’, ‘warn’) were more frequently used in the American coverage. They provide evidence for the hypothesis about the

emotionalization and politicization of the vaccine coverage.

The results also reveal that journalists often referred to the opinions of politicians vaccinated with Sputnik V to urge the public to follow their example. In example 4, the journalist quoted Russia’s President Vladimir Putin. The image and authority of the Russian President are extended towards the Sputnik V vaccine to make the audience believe that if Putin was vaccinated with Sputnik V, then the vaccine can be counted as credible and effective. The mention of the Russian Armed Forces vaccinated with Sputnik V aimed to enhance the image of the vaccine and manipulate public opinion. According to Table 4, the American and Russian newspapers mentioned political actors more than political institutions. The findings indicate the use of the rhetorical strategy of personification: the names of politicians are utilized allegorically to represent power (Melion & Ramakers, 2016).

Appeals to Health Experts

Table 4 show that the American and Russian journalists referred to the opinions of health experts in Sputnik V coverage which frequently contained emotion-laden words, including intensifying adverbs and superlatives.

5. *Dr. Bela Merkely, the rector of Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest said, adding that he had received a Sputnik V jab. ‘The best vaccine is the one that’s in my arm.’ (Spike, 2021).*

6. *‘It’s somewhat comparable to Russian roulette. I would strongly advise against a national emergency authorization’ (Dixon, 2021b).*

7.

<i>Po</i>	<i>slovam</i>	<i>uchyonogo,</i>	<i>rezul’taty</i>
According to	the words	of the scientist,	the results

“According to the scientist, the results

<i>tret’ej</i>	<i>fazy</i>	<i>vyglyadyat</i>	<i>ochen’</i>	<i>ubeditel’no.</i>
of the third	phase	look	very	convincing.

of the third phase look **very** convincing”.

<i>Publikaciya</i>	<i>razrabotchika</i>	<i>rossijskoj</i>	<i>vakciny</i>
The publication	developer	of the Russian	vaccine

“The publication of the developer of the Russian vaccine

<i>v</i>	<i>prestizhnom</i>	<i>zhurnale</i>	<i>‘The Lancet’</i>	<i>pokazala,</i>
in	the prestigious	magazine	‘The Lancet’	showed

in the prestigious magazine ‘The Lancet’ showed

<i>chto</i>	<i>Sputnik V</i>	<i>effektivno</i>	<i>zashchishchaet</i>	<i>ot</i>	<i>COVID-19.</i>
that	Sputnik V	effectively	protects	against	COVID-19.

that Sputnik V **effectively** protects against COVID-19” (Vyatchanin, 2021).

Examples 5-7 illustrate that both American and Russian journalists quoted health experts to increase the credibility of the provided information and to justify their own opinions. Such quotes often contained emotion-laden words and expressions with positive ('the best vaccine') or negative ('Russian roulette') meanings alongside with intensifying adverbs ('strongly', *effektivno* - 'effectively', *ochen'* - 'very').

Modal verbs were also used to articulate beliefs and perceptions towards Sputnik V and, thus, to manipulate public opinion. These findings are in accordance with Derakhshani et al. (2014), that modal verbs enable orators "to convey and impose their ideologies to the audience" (p. 1228). The most constantly used modals in Sputnik V coverage were 'will' and 'cannot', that indicate the speaker's judgments of probabilities or prohibition of being vaccinated with the Russian vaccine.

Example 7 shows that the journalists deployed quotes containing metaphors to attract readers' attention. Metaphors are considered "a tool to present an unknown object by means of the familiar or intuitively comprehensible one" (Sishchuk et al., 2019, p. 556). According to Kövecses (2018), they create new realities that form public perception of

things (p. 127). In metaphorization, a 'metaphorical projection' means that "the structure of knowledge from the source domain is mapped to the target domain" (Kostyushkina & Kozlova, 2019, p. 145). Interpretation of metaphors requires consideration of the context in which they are used (Pushmina & Carter, 2021). In example 7, a health expert compares Sputnik V, which is without Phase III trials, to a potentially lethal and dangerous game 'Russian roulette', which involves the use of a gun. The feelings of fear and danger associated with the game are extended to the Russian vaccine. Based on the context, the emotional metaphor is used to discourage readers from vaccinating with Sputnik V since it will trigger the same negative feelings as the famous Russian roulette game. The findings support the hypothesis about the emotionalization of Sputnik V coverage.

Appeals to Pseudo-Experts

According to Table 4, both American and Russian coverage of Sputnik V contained appeals to non-experts, or 'pseudo-experts', the *argumentum ad verecundiam* (Copi et al., 2018). These appeals represent the opinions of people who lack special competence and expertise in health issues.

8. *Kiselyov compared it to one of the Soviet Union's most famous exports. 'Sputnik V is like a Kalashnikov, simple and reliable' (Dixon, 2020b).*

9. *He described the vaccine, even still experimental, as helping lift his mood <...>. 'I feel much calmer' (Dixon, 2020b).*

10.

<i>Trener,</i>	<i>sdelavshij</i>	<i>privivku</i>	<i>ot</i>	<i>koronavirusa</i>
The coach,	who got	the vaccination	against	the coronavirus

"The coach, who was vaccinated against the coronavirus

<i>pered</i>	<i>ob'ektivami</i>	<i>telekamer,</i>	<i>soobshchil,</i>	<i>chto</i>
in front of	the lens	of the TV cameras,	said	that

in front of the TV cameras, said that

<i>ego</i>	<i>antitela</i>	<i>nynche</i>	<i><sehr</i>	<i>gut>.</i>
his	antibodies	now	very	good.

his antibodies are 'sehr gut' now) (Uspenskij, 2021).

Examples 8-10 show that celebrity endorsements were used to make the audience believing journalists' opinions. The quotes denote positive feelings about being vaccinated with Sputnik V ('feel much calmer', 'sehr gut', 'simple and reliable', 'helping lift his mood') and metaphors ('a Kalashnikov'). In example 8, Sputnik V is compared to a Kalashnikov rifle, one of the Soviet Union's most famous and reliable products. Positive connotations about the rifle are extended towards the vaccine and create its positive image in the news coverage.

The pseudo-experts' opinions were embedded into the news stories to evoke similar feelings and to force the readers to accept journalists' opinions. They are in accordance with Froehlich (2019) that false cognitive authorities "have credibility and expertise, but on critical examination fail in these

qualities and strive to impose a partisan agenda irrespective of truth, evidence, logic or facts" (p. 115). The opinions of pseudo-experts were often accompanied by mentions of political institutions. Example 11 shows that the ideological meanings are conveyed through words denoting distrust of the Russian government, such as 'lie'.

11. *'I don't trust it,' said mechanical engineering student Lia Shulman, 21, 'because they always lie. If the government tells you to do something, you should do the opposite.' (Dixon, 2020a).*

The findings show that appeals to the so-called 'implicit experts' or *argumentum ad populum* were also common. These appeals include references to popular opinion rather than specified authority

(Copi et al., 2018, p. 120). Examples 12-14 illustrate that journalists deployed common and proper nouns

in a singular or plural form with a generic meaning such as ‘experts’, ‘scientists’, etc.

12. *The aggressive strategy from a country eager to declare a victory amid one of the worst outbreaks in the world has been criticized by outside scientists who worry that shots could be harmful or give people a false sense of security about their immunity (Khurshudyan & Johnson, 2020).*
13. *Some experts say that approach may explain why the Russian vaccine seems to have produced a better immune response than the AstraZeneca vaccine (Hawkins, 2021).*

14.

<i>Prichina</i>	<i>etogo</i>	<i>katastroficheskogo</i>	<i>provala</i>	<i>byla</i>
The reason	for this	catastrophic	failure	was

“The reason for this catastrophic failure was

<i>ta,</i>	<i>kotoruyu</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>predskazyvali</i>	<i>eksperty:</i>
the one	that	and	predicted	the experts

the one that the experts predicted:

<i>slozhnosti</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>masshtabirovaniem.</i>
difficulties	with	scaling

difficulties with scaling” (Latynina, 2020).

The findings suggest that the opinions of ‘implicit’ authorities were used to hiddenly support journalists’ views on Sputnik V. Both American and Russian journalists replaced referential nouns by nouns without determiners to free themselves from the responsibility of judgments on the vaccine and to create an illusion of ‘objective’ opinions. The indefinite pronouns (see example 13: ‘Some experts say...’) were used to hide the source of biased opinions in the news discourse. Journalists deployed emotion-laden words that express criticism (‘criticize’, ‘hesitations’) or have negative connotations (*katastroficheskij proval* - ‘catastrophic failure’) to augment the emotional effect, to induce negative feelings, and to discredit the image of the Russian vaccine.

Appeals to Statistics

Information is one of the most valuable resources in the modern world (Matrokhina et al., 2021, p. 7). However, fact-checking on the online-media information has become a challenging task for both journalists and newsreaders. The study reveals that appeals to computational statistics and scientific data or *argumentum ad numerum* (Copi et al., 2018, p. 120) were widespread in the American and Russian newspapers. It indicates a noticeable shift from narrativization to visualization of the news discourse (Dorofeev et al., 2021, p. 32; Dorofeev & Tomaščíková, 2021, p. 295). Therefore, journalists referred to statistics not only to provide scientific evidence but also to manipulate the audience.

15. *In Argentina, where Sputnik V is being rolled out, only 39 % trust the Russian vaccine, according to polling firm Poliarquia (Dixon, 2021a).*

16.

<i>Radost',</i>	<i>gordost'</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>doverie</i>	<i>eta</i>
Joy,	pride	and	trust	this

“This news caused joy, pride and trust

<i>novost'</i>	<i>vyzvala</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>40% naseleniya,</i>	<i>a</i>
news	caused	in	40% of the population	and

in 40% of the population,

<i>bezrazlichie,</i>	<i>nedoverie,</i>	<i>somnenie</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>strah</i>
indifference,	distrust,	doubt	and	fear

and indifference, distrust, doubt and fear

<i>u</i>	<i>56%.</i>
in	56%.

in 56%” (Levinson, 2021).

In examples 15 and 16, both American and Russian journalists employed scientific data alongside by mentioning discrete emotions (joy, pride, trust, indifference, fear, doubt). Such ‘emotional’ features were used to attract the public to the journalists’ opinions on the vaccine and to build strong arguments in favor of their opinions. Examples 17 and 18, on the other hand, illustrate that these appeals were often supplemented with mentions of politicians.

17. *Brazil’s health regulator cited safety concerns while rejecting several states’ requests to import almost 30 million doses of Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine (Biller, 2021).*

18. *Jayasumana said he was hopeful that Sri Lanka would receive the total of 13 million doses of the Sputnik V from Russia in the future (The Associated Press, 2021a).*

Based on examples 17 and 18, the statements containing large amount (‘30 million doses’, ‘13 million doses’) and emotional words (‘safety concerns’, ‘hopeful’) were used to enhance the persuasiveness of the information. They conveyed ideological meanings: either the journalist’s trust (18) or distrust (17) of the Russian vaccine. To hide the specific amount of data or the source of information, journalists used collective nouns such as ‘a dozen’, ‘a hundred’ and quantifiers (‘many’).

19. *Dozens of countries have approved the use of Sputnik V, and many signed deals with the*

Russian Direct Investment Fund that bankrolled the vaccine to get shipments of the shot (The Associated Press, 2021b).

20. Many remained suspicious. Even most Russians said they would not take the shot (Ghitis, 2021).

21.

Nikto	ne znaet,	skol'ko	v	Rossii
No one	do not know	how many	in	Russia

“No one knows how many doses of the vaccine

sejchas	vakciny.
now	vaccine

there are in Russia now.”

Yasno	tol'ko,	cto	s	gul'kin
Clear	only	that	with	Gulkin's

“It is only clear that they are with Gulkin's

nos.
nose.

nose.” (Latynina, 2020)

Examples 19-21 demonstrate that journalists did not include references to the specific amount of the vaccine supplies and employed affective vocabulary ('approve', 'suspicious'). In example 21, the journalist used the idiom 'with Gulkin's nose', meaning 'very little' to increase the emotionality of the provided statistics and support her negative viewpoint about the Russian vaccine.

Self-Presentation

Both American and Russian journalists used 'self-presentation' or appeals to journalists' personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. They strongly influence the audience. The appeals were used to create a distorted image of an issue in the news (Balahkonskaya & Bykov, 2018, p. 500).

22.

Ya	privilsya.
I	have been vaccinated.

“I have been vaccinated

Utrom	stalo	ploho
in the morning	felt	bad

and felt bad in the morning” (Zhilin, 2020).

23. Putin can have his vaccine. I'll be waiting for the vetted one. My memory of this essential truth was jarred by the news that Russia has announced the development of an effective COVID-19 vaccine. Putin is like any other former KGB empire-monger <...>. We won't have long to wait and see what a mass vaccination looks like. I do wonder what the former Mrs. Putin makes of all this (Parker, 2020)

In example 22, the Russian journalist talks about a negative experience of being vaccinated with Sputnik V. Appeals to emotions are used to engage the readers emotionally and make them

believe the biased opinion. In example 23, the American journalist openly expresses distrust, irony, and skepticism towards Sputnik V. The colloquial language ('vetted' and 'jarred') makes the news story clearer to the readers; and creates an emotional bond with them and makes them agree with the journalist's point of view. The use of emphatic 'do' together aimed to emphasize the journalist's biased attitude towards both Putin and Sputnik V. The journalist mentioned Russia's President 'a former KGB empire-monger' to evoke negative associations with the famous intelligence of the Soviet Union (KGB) in the eyes of the readers. Interpretation of the news story presupposes the readers' knowledge about KGB. This is congruent with van Dijk's (1998b) explanation of the cognitive mechanisms involved in the macrounderstanding of news text (p. 41).

The identification of the journalist's and audiences' feelings occurred in the 'unification' strategy ('we-groups'). Derakhshani et al. (2021) previously reveals unification strategy as a prominent technique used by politicians and rhetoricians in political and media texts (p. 1229). Fowler et al. (2018) also claims that the inclusive pronoun 'we' establishes a 'personalized' linkage between orators and the audience and 'mystifies the responsibility' of orators (p. 221). In examples 24 and 25, the pronouns were used to move the readers to the opinion that Russian and Chinese vaccines are not reliable and lack scientific evidence of efficiency. The finding indicates anti-Russian and anti-Chinese sentiment in the news coverage and emphasizes journalists' prejudices against non-Western COVID-19 vaccines.

24. The Russians and the Chinese are touting their vaccines. Should we trust them? But how do we know the data provided are legitimate? (Ghitis, 2021).

25.

Chto		imenno	soobshchaet	nam	pervaya
What		exactly	tells	us	the first

“What exactly does the world's first

v	mire	rossijskaya	vakcina	ot
In	the world	Russian	vaccine	against

Russian coronavirus vaccine

koronavirusa	Sputnik V?
coronavirus	Sputnik V?

Sputnik V tell us?

Chto	my	poluchim	cherez	in'ekciyu?
What	we	will get	through	injection

What will we get through the injection?” (Mostovshchikov, 2020).

The interactive communication between the orator and the audience was clearly carried out in parallelism and rhetorical questions. In example 24,

parallelism show the ideas in the parts of sentences as equally important. Repetitions (*Chto...? Chto...?*) make the speech more memorable; and help journalists build strong arguments (Derakhshani et al., 2021, p. 1231). Journalists use repetitions and parallel structures to attract attention to the points, thereby convincing the readers of their viewpoint. Example 25 uses rhetorical questions to establish a rapport and to free the journalist from the responsibility of making a judgment about the vaccine. The pronoun ‘you’ creates the emotional atmosphere of a ‘friendly conversation’ with the audience. Lulu and Alkaff (2019) assumes the solidarity of the views of the journalist and the audience (p. 16).

26. *What do you do when Vladimir Putin offers you Russia’s new coronavirus vaccine, for free?* (The Associated Press, 2020).

27.

<i>Putin</i>	<i>sdelal</i>	<i>privivku</i>	<i>ot</i>	<i>COVID-19</i>
Putin	got	vaccinated	against	COVID-19

“Putin got vaccinated against COVID-19,

<i>a</i>	<i>vy?</i>
and	you?

and you?” (Melnik, 2021).

The findings also indicate a wide use of impersonal structures in the American and Russian online media discourse. This is in line with Derakhshani et al. (2021) that the exclusion of the subject is intended to make discourse objectified and more equivocal (p. 1229). Examples 21 and 28 uses impersonal sentences to hide journalists’ opinions and to manipulate the readers emotionally.

28. *<...> it’s still unclear if the vaccine can prevent the spread of the disease* (Cheng & Litvinova, 2021).

To summarize, the findings of the present study indicate similarities in the use of rhetorical appeals. They are appeals to political power, health experts, pseudo-experts, statistics, and self-presentation. Ideologically, they loaded language means that consist of affective vocabulary, colloquial language, superlatives, metaphors, idioms, modal verbs, and inclusive pronouns. The results are in accordance with van Dijk (2015) that journalists use language in media discourse as a powerful tool to manage public opinion (van Dijk, 2015). Combined with social factors, language can become a powerful instrument for power abuse. It poses a serious threat to independent journalistic and democratic principles.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to prove that Sputnik V coverage is politicized and emotionalized in both American and Russian pro-government and opposition media. Therefore, the ideologically loaded language means and rhetorical appeals of both American and Russian journalists on the Sputnik V coverage were analyzed. The results of the study confirm politicization and emotionalization of Sputnik V coverage. The computer-assisted content analysis reveal that politicization of the vaccine coverage occurred through frequent mentions of politicians’ opinions. The image of politicians was often transferred not only to the vaccine, but also to the whole country. It creates a biased image of both the vaccine and the producing country. The discourse analysis show that the coverage of Sputnik V vaccine was emotionalized and contained a similar spectrum of explicit and implicit expressive means. Emotional elements were embedded even in the opinions of health experts. It was intended to manipulate public opinion. The language of the vaccine coverage conveyed ideologically loaded meanings. The rhetorical analysis has suggested that journalists used rhetorical appeals to disguise their own opinions and to create biased representations of Sputnik V. They sought to influence the newsreaders. The representations depended on the political leaning of the paper and journalists’ intentions: either to enhance or discredit the image of the Russian vaccine.

Nevertheless, the study reveals notable differences in the American and Russian coverage of Sputnik V. The American coverage used language with more negative attitudes towards Sputnik V. On the other hand, the language of Russian journalists carried more positive attitudes. The findings indicate the political bias of American and Russian media. The results could also be attributed to the growing political confrontation between Russia and the USA and polarization of Western and Non-Western COVID-19 vaccines. Overall, the study also highlights the significance of van Dijk’s (1998a) approach to the study of discourse to that reveals “the sources of power and manipulation” (p. 221).

The study is expected to add practical implications for applied linguistics since most students are unaware that all media texts contain implicit assumptions and hidden ideologies. The knowledge of rhetorical appeals and ideologically loaded language means can help ESL and EFL students to develop their reading comprehension and media literacy skills. These skills are essential for tackling online misinformation, uncovering hidden ideologies, and understanding the implicit parts of any media text. In future, the study opens perspectives for further studies on the issues of language manipulation and politicization of vaccine coverage within a wide range of fields.

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