In media-political discourse, the implementation of certain tactics and techniques of realizing manipulation from the stylistic aspect of the language is important for consideration. Nowadays, there are lots of social media platforms where people can get information from, and in all senses, the same event, specifically political, happens to be illustrated differently by journalists to hold the interest of the reader depending on their intention. Those tactics and techniques can be used to make speech richer, more impressive and powerful in nature. At the same time, those devices are used to manipulate the crowd and gain as many supporters as possible by persuading to follow them and gain more click baits.

In this paper, our object of investigation is the analysis of media articles through the linguo-stylistic method of analysis, via which, we will be able to detect those expressive means and stylistic devices that can be manipulative in the context of the articles.

Key words: manipulation, manipulative techniques and tactics, linguo-stylistic method of analysis, social media, media discourse, political news

The study of how the language of media behaves semantically in a specific context, is essential.

Media discourse has its own concepts of genre and style. It is notable, that if media discourse is analyzed from the standpoint of its genre peculiarities, media concepts are easily recognized particularly when the audience share the content and purposes of the discourse /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 14/.

The concept of genre and style with the relationship between language and media has been studied by different researchers particularly from the point of view of structural features of the text, mood, types of sentences, vocabulary, etc., which makes it easier to the categorize and analyze media texts /Biber & Conrad, 2009; Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020/.

A detailed information concerning the study of the concepts genre and style can be obtained in the book: Register, genre and style by Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad (2009), according to which, conversation, on the largest scale, is the most commonly utilized spoken language, though, a variety of language use daily
appears in different situations such as radio and television programs, commercial talks, classroom activities, political presentations, etc.

The next point to be made, is that written language is also of great importance, as people produce not only oral speeches, but also written ones (notes, assignments, etc.). Notwithstanding the fact, that both spoken and written speeches are meant to transmit information, they have certain linguistic characteristic features, as far as their register, genre, and style are concerned. Alluding to the above-mentioned authors, it is essential to note that from the perspective of register the role of pronouns and verbs is decisive as this bring to the realization of certain communicative purposes in certain situational contexts. From the point of view of the purpose and situational context of a text, genre and register perspectives seem to be similar, whereas, linguistically they are different as they are characterized by the use of typical lexical and grammatical elements. As for the style perspective, it is similar to the register perspective in its linguistic focus and analysis of the core linguistic features. However, the basic difference between style and register perspectives consists in the fact that the use of those linguistic features is not dictated either functionally or situationally /Biber, Conrad, 2009: 1-2/.

It may be useful to reconsider that genre is built on commonly accepted standards; however, these conventions can evolve and change through the time. In the course of time, genres change as society develops. It is obvious that for example, technological advances stimulate the development and conventionalization of text genres, thus contributing to higher-level social patterns of media production and circulation in a given society /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 15/.

Genres are an indispensable part of social systems and reflect the likes and dislikes of the members of the society, and as mentioned in the book “Genres in Discourse”, they function as “Horizons of expectations” for a reader and “models of writing” for authors /Todorov, 1990: 18/. As a result, with the help of the conventionalized character of genres and the “horizons of expectations” media producers create products that are likely to attain wider societal and cultural expectations to be considered as “good”.

Another useful way of exploring media discourse is through the concept of style. Style is a term that can be applied to any two or more items if they are essentially the same but contrasting in some other respects. Linguistic style (style in language) is likewise based on similarities and differences. The same idea can be expressed in different ways, so the mode of expression, i.e., the style, always determines what the ultimate goal of communication is /Gasparian, Matevosian, 2008: 5/. Style commonly refers to a manner of doing something /Coupland, 2007: 1/. The notion of style as a way of speaking includes vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and articulation, as well as the paralinguistic aspect of
communication such as timing and gestures. Early notions of style were quite formalized and mostly concerned with a single dimension: mostly formal vs informal, standard vs non-standard. It has been observed that the relationship between the audiences and mass media producers is not real but imaginary, and this results in the gradual conventionalization of style /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 17/.

Style can have other modes, as it is not only achieved through words, but also in different ways, e.g., language, design features play an essential role in communicating style in audiovisual and multimodal texts. Font, image tone, layout and other design aspects all contribute to style. When several types of stylistic effects function together, they generate not only a sense of overall style, but also, if linked to a clear understanding of the purpose, specific types of expectations in distinct audiences /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 18-19/.

Another important component of media genre from the news stories to social media posts is how the message of the narratives is transmitted. The notion of narratives and how narratives are often structured in media discourse is important. William Labov and Joshua Waletzky suggest, that although the narratives are different in terms of different event, however, they all have something in common, i.e., a similar structure consisting of abstract-a summary of what story is about, an orientation; explaining the who, what, and where of the story, complicating action – details about what happened in the story to move the plot forward, evaluation – explaining the significance and/or implications of the actions in the story, result or resolution – telling what finally happened at the end of the story, coda – short statement summarizing the story and bringing the reader/listener back into the present situation /Labov, 1972; Labov, Waletzky, 1967/.

This is accepted to be called canonical model of interaction which has been used to study narratives and their structures across the contexts, including media. However, all the media texts cannot be fully studied through the canonical method of interaction, e.g., social media posts, such as Instagram “stories” etc., do not follow canonical structures /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 22/.

Style is also particular to a group or community, which, in its turn, might be associated with a particular lifestyle or particular social practices /Auer, 2007/. In spite of the fact, that styles are important characteristic of identity, it can also be used to stereotype people.

In practice, when we see media products, we experience them as “finished products” that can be read, as well as, analyzed. Media linguists Paola Catenaccio et al. argue that analyzing media discourse exclusively from the perspective of the “final product” can lead to oversimplified interpretations /Catenaccio et al., 2011/.

Media products are not static entities, they are the result of a long series of activities and interactions that engage many individuals. Added to this, it is worth
mentioning, that the news story does not reveal anything “new”, it re-tells us something which has already been told or discursively produced at the moment it occurred in a specific style and with a specific emphasis /Jones, Jaworska, Aslan, 2020: 28/.

Placing emphasis on the style and its role in the process of media production, we can say, that news articles, based on the same event that share identical linguistic meaning can be expressed in a different, co-existent way. The linguo-stylistic method of analysis, acquires significance in the study and analysis of any text variety, news articles included from the point of view of stylistic variation, i.e., phonetic (e.g., often – oft); structural (stylistic – stylistical, clothed – clad, etc.); diachronic (you – thou, your – thy, you are – thou art, etc.); stylistic variation proper (to die – to kick the bucket – to pass away – to decease, etc.) /Gasparian, Matevosian, 2008: 15/.

The application of the method of linguo-stylistic analysis leads to the fulfilment of our main task in this paper, i.e., the analysis of both tropes and figures of speech in the context of news articles, which affect the meaning, create information bias and manipulate. To justify the statements, let us consider some examples:

On May 29, 2022 an article under the following headline was published by Katie Davis in The Sun: “BIG REGRET Russia gives middle finger to drone moments before craft blitzes Putin’s forces” /https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/18722279/russian-soldier-middle-finger-ukrainian-drone//. In the headline, of particular research interest is the subject - predicate correlation (Russia
gives), as we may notice a use of the stylistic devices of *metonymy* and *personifications*. It might have been hard to outline the manipulative intention of the author, or the manipulative potential in the use of the mentioned stylistic devices if on the next day, May 30, we had not come across the updated version of the news report with the following edited headline: “INSTANT REGRET Russian gives middle finger to Ukrainian drone moments before craft blitzes Putin’s forces & blows up tank”.

When reading the article, we notice, that the use of *Russia* in the first, and *Russian* in the second headline (see pictures 1, 2) result in different semantic effects, namely – the metonymic use of the word *Russia* sounds more intriguing, since we conventionally refer to the country, sometimes the Government, or probably the Ministry of Defense. Whereas in the case of *Russian*, the denotative and connotative meanings are almost the same. It seems essential to emphasize, that both the headlines (the primary version and the edited one) lead to one and the same article, where the description of the video attached to the news report (“INSTANT REGRET Russian soldier gives middle finger to Ukrainian drone moments before craft blitzes Putin’s forces & blows up tank”), and the lead (“THIS is the moment a Russian soldier flipped his middle finger at a Ukrainian drone before the craft reduced the troops and tank to a fireball wreckage”) mention the soldier. Obviously, in this case the action of a *Russian soldier* has been used metonymically for people to relate to Russia so that the article sounds more provocative and intense.

In spite of the fact, that media articles must give references and allude to different sources of the events so that they can provide validity through verifiable information, however, in various cases these allusions can mislead the audience and create noise in the process of understanding and interpreting the meaning and, as a result, manipulate the reader. To observe such examples, let us consider the analysis by Tierney Sneed for CNN “Donald Trump’s terrible, horrible, no good, very bad week in court” /https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/19/politics/trump-bad-legal-week/index.html?fclid=IwAR3oZasPoYcKsT6XuxiRSGkLTUxdfO-SWVTIK8S4hgVlijKFHgQZyfT-Ik/. 

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Analyzing this piece of news item is interesting to consider since the ironic intention of the journalist catches the eye of the reader at first sight. Typically, we notice here an implied allusion to a famous story “Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day” by Judith Viorst /https://www.northiowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ALEXANDER-AND-THE-TERRIBLE.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0S6ByLkX37qUEk0WK3jejSOT0lcjnPrrTuKLsCJCTEOkSVFGVKgI6Wx0/ as well as the famous family comedy and drama based on the story /https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1698641/. It goes without saying that Donald Trump is one of those presidents who are always in the center of criticism and the media because of their political viewpoints. In his public speeches, he can be rude, verbally aggressive, however, he appears to be in the center of manipulation a lot because of the provocative and propagating topics he relates to. As far as the article is concerned, it is based on the investigations and lawsuits involving Donald Trump, where the former president has been sued by lawmakers and police officers, his niece Mary Trump, magazine writer E. Jean Carroll, whose allegations he denies /https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/12/politics/list-investigations-trump/index.html/.

Such a headline, would bring a lot more availability and public reach to the journalist, because comparing Donald Trump’s court week to Alexander’s bad day that begins with gum stuck in his hair, and wonderings if bad things only happen to him, his mom, dad, brother and sister is something that people already knew from the story and the movie by Walt Disney and would be more curious to click and read.

Though, the headline is a quotation from the story, however, it has also acoustic effects on the readers through the alliteration of the voiced consonants “d” and “b” and the sonorants “r”, “l”: Donald Trump’s terrible, horrible, no good, very bad week in court. We can also notice the use of full rhyme, repetition of identical or similar vowel sound and the following consonant sounds in the words “terrible, horrible”, as well as cases of incomplete rhyme in combinations such as no good, very bad.

Consideration of the headline also helps to bring out a climax (gradation) – gradual increase in the semantic significance or emotional tension, and a pun – a figure of speech which involves a play upon words in such word arrangements as terrible – horrible, no good – very bad.

In this connection we may note that in the headline there is an abundant use of stylistic devices and figures of speech which increase the connotativeness of the article context, thus overwhelming the meaning of the transmitted information. Considering the latter, we may assume, that this headline is of manipulative nature.

Another example of allusion can be found in the case of the headline “Draghi: Call of duty for Italy’s “Super Mario” /https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-
We have an interesting title composed by a journalist named Mark Lowen. Here the author alludes to two well-known video games: “Call of Duty” and “Super Mario”. The creative approach of the journalist seems ambiguous since being unaware of the context one may also notice instances of irony or sarcasm. However, the article presents a piece of biographical information about the Prime Minister of Italy, where the journalist’s favorable and biased attitude (the positive-other presentation) can be observed. The news is structured as follows: “A traumatic childhood”, “Strong supporter of the European project”, “Mr. Somewhere Else”, “Draghi as Italy’s “last resort””.

It is striking to observe the transition of the information of how “the boy having a traumatic childhood getting education becomes a strong supporter of the European project and, in spite of the hard times, he manages to keep his very strong sense of humor, never losing his habit of disappearing from meetings to take a call or talk to an official that has made him known as “Mr. Somewhere Else”, and finally, Draghi as Italy’s “last resort”. This is the way the journalist sees Mario Draghi as a hero and wants to emphasize his importance for the Italians, how he can get the country out of the crisis, thus alluding to the game of “Super Mario”, where the character has to save the princess from dragons. Thus, it is considered to be Mr. Draghi’s duty, to bring the country out of the crisis, according to the journalist.

Consideration of the next sentence brings out the journalist’s quote to a UN diplomat – Staffan de Mistura, and a metaphoric use in the context of the article: “The thing about Mario Draghi is that when he ran up the pitch, he would always pass the ball - he was generous like that”. The phrasal verbs run up the pitch and pass the ball are metaphorically used to describe that Mario Draghi functions very well in a team and his great teamwork and collaboration will bring lots of progress to the country.

The article is full of direct quotes: “It requires all relevant political forces to be on board – and Mario Draghi can unite. He is a technocrat but with a good political nous, strong bipartisan support here and excellent contacts with Brussels and all European circles.”; “His special quality is a good combination between speaking and listening”, says the former prime minister”; “Many great leaders speak more than they listen. He has the correct balance.”; “Mario showed technical expertise - but also flair”, recalls Mr. Stournaras”; etc., which stylistically can be considered to be meiosis, a figure of speech which contains an emphasis: often used ironically, and also for a dramatic effect, in the attainment of simplicity. In everyday speech, it is sometimes used in gentle irony, especially when describing something very spectacular or impressive as “rather good”. This is
also realized through the use of colloquialisms such as: “excessive austerity, strong supporter, strong negotiator”.

The use of epithets, such as “glittering career”, “massive bailouts” also give emotional and stylistic coloring to the article. Such choice of epithets enriches the meaning of the text and makes the sentences more powerful and lively. Due to the metaphorical and figurative language of the text the images become more vivid for the readers. However, in media texts, this can affect the neutrality of the journalist, thus creating information bias and manipulation.

Finally, in the given sentence, which is also a quote “If there is one person who could potentially bridge Italy’s deep political divisions, it is Mario Draghi. “His special quality is a good combination between speaking and listening,” says the former Prime Minister” we can observe parallelism, through which the idea of Mario Draghi having a power tool for public speaking and interaction with audience becomes more convincing.


First of all, it seems essential to emphasize that expressions “Vlad the terrible”, “Vlad”, “Bad Vlad”, “Vlad’s not mad” or “Mad Vlad” are examples of epithet that commonly used to refer to Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia to add to his regular name some other descriptive and special qualities, in this case sound negative and unpleasant. In the first headline mentioned in the paragraph above “Vlad the terrible was hiding in plain sight” we can come across cases of stylistic manipulation. It is interesting to note that the headline is creatively written as we can notice figurative use of language. In particular, the use of the epithet “Vlad the terrible”, the idiomatic expression “in plain sight”, the oxymoron “hiding in plain sight” and what seems ordinary descriptions here, enhance the
emotional significance of the passage and make a much stronger impact on the reader.

It is worth mentioning, that the use of the idiomatic expression “in plain sight” – “in a place that is easily seen” /https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/in%20plain%20sight/ and the verb to hide meaning “remain out of sight” /https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hide/, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, form a combination of contradictory and incongruous words which in its turn, appears as a stylistic device, namely – oxymoron.

In the article, the manipulative strategy of negative other-presentation, suggested by van Dijk (van Dijk, 2006: 373) is also realized. The main essence of this strategy is that the speaker (the journalist in this case) tries to undermine and devalue the oppositional speaker (Vladimir Putin) attempting to reduce the importance of the latter as a political figure in the eyes of the audience. This strategy is realized through the use of a repetition, a syntactic stylistic device, in the given examples where the journalist constantly repeating the pronouns he, his, him, as well as the grammatical pattern all because of one man aims to show that Vladimir Putin bears the whole guilt and responsibility of what is happening at the moment. Here are some examples:

Well, that wasn’t supposed to happen, was it? One minute we’re dealing with the aftermath of a pandemic and worrying about inflation and the next we’re in the middle of a new Cold War and fretting at the edge of a new hot one, while a big European country burns. And all because of one man. Literally all because of one man.

A man most of us obviously got wrong. If I may crudely distil the popular wisdom of recent years concerning Vladimir Putin, it is that he is (or was till last week) a pragmatic kleptocrat with a single over-riding objective: staying in power. This motivation is what had led him to suppress dissent at home, strengthen despotism on his borders and destabilise the western democracies and their alliances”. We have shoe-horned almost everything he has done into this idea of him and his regime. Annexing Crimea? It made him more popular at home. Having his agents wander round Britain with vials of nerve agent? The mafioso’s punishment for breaking the code of omerta.

Regarding another headline that has been mentioned above, “Vlad’s not mad, but still bad and dangerous to now” we can observe another case of allusion to a famous phrase “Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know”. There are certain opinions about the origin of this phrase, one being a historical reference to a well-known
Dracula the Vampire, also known as Vlad III Dracula of Wallachia, who fought ruthlessly against the Ottoman Empire to keep Wallachia safe /http://strangehorizons.com/non-fiction/articles/mad-bad-and-dangerous-to-know-le-vampyre-the-gothic-novel-and-george-gordon-lord-byron/.

Another reference is Lord Byron, who had been called “Bad, Mad, and Dangerous to Know” by Lady Caroline Lamb when they first met. This arose after Lord Byron published one of his most famous works “Childe Harold”, since it made him “the literary and social lion of London at the age of 24” /https://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/01/opinion/l-how-lord-byron-became-mad-bad-and-dangerous-to-know-476989.html#:~:text=The%20statement%20that%20Byron%20was,at%20the%20age%20of%2024//.

Nevertheless, we can see the manipulative intention of the journalist of having such an emotionally colored headline, since this kind of allusions can make the article and its impact on the reader more intense.

It stands to reason, that the broad applicability of repetition, as a rhetorical device and persuasive technique used in the language is widely used by politicians to divert their audience’s attention to what is being repeated, for this will lead the audience to trust and belief. Being aware of the fact that rational arguments may not always impact the audience, politicians generally use stylistic methods and emotionally charged phrases, expressions that can influence the crowd’s behavior. As a rule, when the same thing is repeated over and over, people tend to believe it.

Analogous with political discourse, in the media, manipulation is employed through the repetition of important words or themes in order to affect the public’s mind to gain trust and belief. To verify the statement, let us consider the following example:

"Italy’s most talked about politician since World War II, Berlusconi was once described as a “disease that can only be cured through vaccination” by the country’s best known postwar journalist, the late Indro Montanelli. The vaccine, Montanelli argued on the eve of the 2001 general election, involved “a healthy injection of Berlusconi in the prime minister’s seat, Berlusconi in the president’s seat, Berlusconi in the pope’s seat or wherever else he may want. Only after that will we be immune” /https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220112-a-tragic-joke-master-trickster-silvio-berlusconi-eyes-italy-s-top-job?fbclid=IwAR3hEbGk-m3cUpPDjKby0mdq70PATPgmhgv3wCrHZIRl3HNMLb-3vmfGq8g/.

In the adduced passage, we notice another example of allusion. Giving reference to Montanelli, a well-known journalist who had formerly described Berlusconi as a “disease that can only be cured through vaccination ...” the
author’s intention is to highlight the Montanelli’s comparison of “Berlusconi and disease”. Added to this, we can also detect another stylistic device, metonymy: “Berlusconi is a disease”.

In the given example, words are repeated at the beginning of each successive sentence, which as a figure of speech can also be anaphora, via which the journalist’s intention is to try to appeal to the emotions of the audience making them believe that all Mr. Berlusconi wants is the power, political status, and he will never give up unless he reaches and accomplishes his wish.

Of special interest is the headline of the article “‘A tragic joke’: Master trickster Silvio Berlusconi eyes Italy’s top job” where we can notice metaphoric expressions such as “tragic joke” and “Italy’s top job”, that is the Prime Minister’s job, but still, this can be uncertain and leave the interpretation to the reader. To sum up, we can say, that the whole passage contains instances of irony, as the choice of the words and expressions, seems deliberately contradictory to produce an ironic effect and transfer different emotions.

Thus, observing different examples of media articles, we notice, that they are not just written to tell a story or inform, but also have other communicative purposes such as to shock, amaze, inspire, educate, persuade, or sometimes manipulate. When we study the cases of manipulation, putting central emphasis on the stylistic aspect of the language, we should also consider the role of the journalists (manipulators) and their intention. On the basis of the analysis of the chosen examples, which are media news reports based on different political events or results of the latter, we can come to the assumption that they are texts comprised of figurative meanings and metaphorical language. Each of the article, being written for a specific purpose, has stylistically colored words and expressive means that intensify the probability of language manipulation and information bias. As a result of the outlined figures of speech and tropes in the illustrated examples, such as metaphor, metonymy, simile, repetition, anaphora, oxymoron, allusion, quotation, epithet, idiomatic expression, etc. we can come to the conclusion that their influence can reduce the neutrality of the journalist, make bias, mislead, change the contextual meaning gaining other connotations, and manipulate. This is borne out by the fact, that manipulative language affects on how verifiable and trustworthy the news article can be, and create an information chaos.

NOTES

* In general terms, a register is a variety associated with a particular situation of use, including particular communicative purposes. The description of register covers three major components: the situational context, linguistic features, and the functional relationships between the first two components /Biber, Conrad, 2009/. 
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DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS


R. АРУТЮНЯН – Специфика языкового стиля в медиа-политическом дискурсе. – В медиа-политическом дискурсе важным для рассмотрения является применение определенных стилистических тактик и техник осуществления манипуляций. В наше время существует множество социальных сетей, откуда люди могут черпать информацию, и во всех смыслах одно и то же событие, в частности, политическое, в зависимости от намерений журналистов, может быть по-разному ими представлено, чтобы удержать интерес читателя. Эти тактики и техники могут быть использованы для того, чтобы сделать речь более богатой, впечатляющей и мощной по своей природе. В то же время эти приемы используются для манипулирования толпой и привлечения как можно большего числа сторонников.

В данной работе объектом исследования является анализ ряда статей с помощью лингвостилистического метода анализа, благодаря которому выявляются те выразительные средства и стилистические приемы, которые могут быть манипулятивными в контексте статей.
Ключевые слова: манипуляция, манипулятивные техники и тактики, лингвостилистический метод анализа, социальные медиа, медиа дискурс, политические новости

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