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Lexical Constructions of Manipulative Texts in Telegram Channels of War Time (on the Example of Coverage of The Crimea Issue)

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The article examines the features of manipulative texts in Telegram channels covering the Crimean issue in wartime conditions. **Method.** Based on the content analysis of 15 Telegram channels, the linguistic markers of manipulative influence, mechanisms for narrative formation, and the role of lexical constructions in creating informational confrontation are analyzed. Key manipulation strategies are identified, including selection of information, implicatures, polarization, dramatization, euphemizing, and dysphemization, which are used by pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian sources to legitimize their own positions and delegitimize the positions of their opponents.

Keywords: manipulative texts, Telegram channels, Crimean issue, linguistic markers, informational confrontation, narratives, lexical constructions

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Лексичні конструкції маніпулятивних текстів у Telegram-каналах воєнного часу (на прикладі висвітлення кримського питання)

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Стаття присвячена аналізу маніпулятивних стратегій у Telegram-каналах із висвітленням кримської теми в контексті інформаційного протистояння в умовах воєнного часу. У *вступі* підкреслюється актуальність дослідження, зумовлена зростанням популярності Telegram як платформи для розповсюдження новинного контенту. Окрему увагу приділено впливові інформаційної війни на формування паралельних реальностей у висвітленні подій в окупованому Криму українськими та російськими ЗМІ. Основна **мета** роботи – дослідити лінгвістичні засоби маніпуляції, які використовуються в проукраїнських і проросійських каналах для легітимізації власних наративів і делегітимізації опонента. **Метод.** Проаналізовано ключові характеристики маніпулятивних текстів, зокрема імпліцитний характер впливу, емоційну насиченість та вибірковість подачі інформації. На основі контент-аналізу 15 каналів виділено типові лексичні маркери: військова лексика, емоційно-оцінна лексика, лексика невідомості. Особливу увагу приділено виявленню стратегій конструювання образу ворога через дегуманізацію, криміналізацію та демонізацію опонента. На основі контент-аналізу 15 телеграм-каналів проаналізовано лінгвістичні маркери маніпулятивного впливу, механізми формування наративів та роль лексичних конструкцій у створенні інформаційного протистояння. Виявлено ключові стратегії маніпуляції, зокрема селективний підбір інформації, імплікатури, поляризацію, драматизацію, евфемізацію та дисфемізацію, які використовуються проукраїнськими та проросійськими джерелами для легітимізації власних позицій та делегітимізації позицій опонента. **Результати** дослідження свідчать, що проукраїнські канали зосереджені на тимчасовості окупації, героїзмі опору та неминучості деокупації, а проросійські – на легітимізації статусу Криму, демонстрації стабільності та дискредитації України. У **висновках** наголошується на ролі мови як потужного інструменту інформаційної війни в сучасному медійному дискурсі військового часу.

Ключові слова: маніпулятивні тексти, телеграм-канали, кримське питання, лінгвістичні маркери, інформаційне протистояння, наративи, лексичні конструкції

The popularity of the Telegram messenger is growing every year, as evidenced, in particular, by the statement of the creator of the application, Pavel Durov, and data from the TelegramAnalytics service. Using the platform not only for personal communication, but also for reading channels and news has become one of the leading communication trends in recent years. Ukrainian and foreign media are actively developing Telegram as a new platform for distributing various content and attracting an audience. The transition to messengers by a significant number of users dictates new trends and rules for the media: strategies for promoting information are being transformed, interactive elements (likes, comments) and opportunities for receiving feedback from subscribers appear.

Telegram channels have become particularly relevant in the context of covering events in Crimea, where a large-scale information confrontation between Ukrainian and Russian media has been unfolding since 2014. After the early occupation of the peninsula in 2014, parallel media spaces were formed: Russian channels promote the narrative of Crimea's integration into the legal and information field of the Russian Federation, while Ukrainian sources view the region as a

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temporarily occupied territory. This dichotomy has led to the active use of manipulative tactics by both sides to shape public opinion and legitimize their own positions.

The theoretical foundations of manipulative discourse research were laid by van Dijk (2008), who defined manipulation as a form of discursive influence aimed at controlling the recipients' thoughts and actions through manipulating their mental models.

Critical discourse analysis, developed by van Dijk and other researchers, allows us to identify hidden ideological structures in texts and their role in shaping social relations (Van Dijk, 2008). Researchers pay special attention to the strategies of legitimization and delegitimization, which are actively used in political discourse to justify or refute certain actions and positions.

Modern research on digital media focuses on the specifics of information manipulation in social networks. Marwick and Lewis (2017) analyze the mechanisms of online disinformation, highlighting key tactics used to influence public opinion. The authors emphasize the role of algorithmic amplification and echo chambers in creating a polarized information space. Benkler, Faris, and Roberts (2018) demonstrate in their study of propaganda networks how asymmetric media ecosystems influence public opinion formation. Their analysis shows that conservative media are more likely to spread disinformation and conspiracy theories than liberal sources. Bhatia (2015) examines discursive illusions in public discourse, highlighting mechanisms through which language is used to create false perceptions of reality. The author analyzes the role of metaphors, implicatures, and other linguistic means in constructing convincing but potentially misleading narratives.

At the same time, the scientific literature lacks specialized studies of manipulative strategies in Telegram channels, especially in the context of covering conflict situations. Most of the existing works focus on traditional media or major social networks (Facebook, Twitter), leaving out the specifics of messenger platforms. In addition, the features of linguistic manipulations in the context of the Ukrainian-Russian information confrontation over Crimea remain insufficiently studied.

The features of war media discourse in social media include high polarization of opinions, intensive use of emotional and evaluative vocabulary, active use of strategies of the enemy dehumanization, the formation of stable speech clichés, and the creation of alternative narratives.

The *aim* of this article is to examine the features of manipulative texts in Telegram channels covering Crimean topics. The *objectives* of the study:

1. To identify key linguistic markers of manipulative influence.
2. To analyze the mechanisms of narrative formation in pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian Telegram channels.
3. To determine the role of lexical constructions in creating information confrontation.

Method

The study uses a comprehensive approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods of text data analysis.

Quantitative content analysis was used to systematize and classify lexical units into specific categories. The frequency of key concepts, metaphors, and evaluative constructions in different types of channels was quantified. This method allowed us to identify statistically significant differences in the language strategies of pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian sources.

Critical discourse analysis (according to the methodology of van Dijk) was used to identify ideological meanings and power relations embedded in the studied texts. Special attention was paid to the analysis of legitimization and delegitimization strategies, as well as mechanisms for constructing images of "ours" and "others". Not only explicit statements were analyzed, but also implicit meanings transmitted through presuppositions, implicatures, and other indirect means.



Semantic analysis was aimed at studying the semantic transformations of lexical units in different contexts. The processes of euphemization and dysphemization, metaphorical transfers, as well as semantic shifts of concepts depending on the ideological position of each channel were studied.

Linguistic-stylistic analysis was used to classify linguistic means according to their stylistic coloring, emotional saturation and pragmatic function. Stylistic figures, syntactic constructions, and their impact on the perception of information were analyzed.

The corpus of the study consists of messages from 15 public Telegram channels that actively covered Crimean topics in the period from August 2023 to February 2025. The channels were selected according to the criteria: regular content updates (at least one message per week) and a clear pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian position.

Pro-Ukrainian channels: Suspilne_Crimea, Krymrealii, Truexacrimea.ua, Crimeanwind, Krym_Partizans, ATESH-UA, KrymPlatzdarm.

Pro-Russian channels: RIA_Novosti_Krym, Aksenov82, Razvozhaev, Forpost_Sev, CHp_Krym, CHp_Simferopol, Kerchfm_official, Sevastopol_Online.

Results and Discussion

Based on the content analysis of 15 Telegram channels covering Crimean topics, characteristic differences in the manipulative strategies of pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian sources were identified.

Pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels consistently promote the narrative of the illegitimacy of the Russian presence in Crimea using the concepts: "occupation", "annexation", "seizure". Official structures are labeled as "occupation" or "puppet", which emphasizes their illegitimate nature. An important element of the discourse is the emphasis on the temporary nature of the situation through the regular use of the phrase "temporarily occupied territory".

In parallel, an image of resistance to the current situation is formed. The texts actively use heroic rhetoric to describe the underground movement, whose participants are called "freedom fighters" and "patriots". Special attention is paid to the successes of the Ukrainian armed forces, which are described in positively colored vocabulary: "successful operation", "precise hit". The idea of the inevitable return of control over the peninsula is consistently promoted through the terms "deoccupation" and "liberation".

Pro-Russian channels build a fundamentally different picture of reality. The central place in their rhetoric is represented by the legitimization of the current status of Crimea using official terminology ("subject of the Russian Federation", "unification") and an appeal to the historical past ("primordially Russian land", "historical justice"). The legal validity of the changes is actively emphasized through references to "legislation" and "constitutional order".

Considerable attention is paid to creating the image of a prosperous region. The texts are dominated by messages about the development of infrastructure ("large-scale construction", "modern facilities"), economic growth ("growing tourist flow", "investment attractiveness") and social stability ("social security", "growth in well-being").

An important element of the pro-Russian discourse is the consistent discrediting of the Ukrainian position. The claims of the Ukrainian side are characterized as "baseless", and its actions are described in terms of "hysteria". The narrative of external management of Ukrainian politics is actively promoted through the constructions of "Western curators" and "NATO puppets". The actions of the Ukrainian side are regularly labeled as terrorist with appropriate concepts ("terrorist acts", "sabotage groups").

Let us consider specific examples of manipulative practices in Crimean Telegram channels, which demonstrate various techniques of information influence.



Pro-Ukrainian channels often contain messages based on emotional incitement. A typical example is the headline: "Rusnya is in convulsions! Due to the mass warnings of the orcs about the imminent deoccupation of the peninsula, they have become noticeably agitated" (Truexacrimaeaua, 2025 URL: <https://t.me/truexacrimaeaua/349>). A complex of manipulative techniques is used here: emotionally colored vocabulary ("in convulsions"), derogatory ethnonyms ("Rusnya", "orcs"), creating an atmosphere of imminent threat. At the same time, there is no specific data confirming the reported situation, which is typical for such information posts.

Another example – the message "A powerful partisan movement is operating in the territory of temporarily occupied Crimea, the results of which are becoming subversive for the enemy" (Crimeanwind, 2025, URL: <https://t.me/Crimeanwind/67944>) – demonstrates the use of unsubstantiated generalizations to create the illusion of mass support.

In pro-Russian channels, a telling example is: "Despite provocations from the Khokhly, the beaches in Crimea are crowded" (Krimski, 2025, URL: <https://t.me/krimski/121581>). Here, the typical technique of exaggerating the tourist flow without specific figures and creating an image of successful resistance to external pressure, which is characteristic of Russian discourse, is used.

Another example of manipulative rhetoric is a message published by the ForPost portal, which reads as follows: "Forever in history and national memory will remain: the terrorist attack in Crocus, the missile strike on Uchkuyevka, the attacks on Kursk and other cities, thousands of tons of fuel oil in the Black Sea. It is important that the country did not bow down, and Sevastopol also passed the test with dignity" (Forpost_sev, 2025, URL: https://t.me/forpost_sev/23260). This statement is a typical example of a pro-Russian narrative that combines several manipulative strategies. First, the use of emotionally charged vocabulary ("terrorist attack", "missile strike", "test") and the appeal to collective memory ("forever in history and national memory") are aimed at forming the image of a victim who is subjected to unjust attacks. Secondly, the emphasis on resilience ("the country did not bow down", "passed the test with dignity") glorifies Sevastopol and Russia, legitimizing their position as morally justified. Thirdly, the list of events, such as "the terrorist attack in Crocus" or "the strike on Uchkuyevka", is presented without context, which allows for manipulating the audience's perception, attributing responsibility for these events exclusively to external enemies, in particular Ukraine. This approach corresponds to the strategy of information selection, where individual facts are taken out of context to create a distorted picture of reality.

The use of conspiracy narratives is interesting: "The FSB showed a video of the detention of a Ukrainian agent who was preparing a terrorist attack on the railway in Sevastopol" (CHp_Krym, 2025, URL: https://t.me/chp_crimea/52421). A classic set of manipulative techniques is used here: labeling, deliberate vagueness of formulations, and construction of the enemy image. The goal is to demonize the enemy and delegitimize his actions.

Analysis of lexical markers in the texts of Crimean telegram channels revealed three main groups, each of which performs specific manipulative functions:

- Military vocabulary: is a key tool for forming the image of the conflict. Pro-Ukrainian channels are dominated by the concepts "occupation", "invasion", "seizure", which emphasize the illegitimacy of the enemy's actions. Pro-Russian sources use the vocabulary of defense and security: "ensuring order", "protection of interests", "stabilization of the situation". The nominations of participants are also distinguished by the ideological principle: "occupiers"/"defenders", "aggressors"/"law enforcement forces".

- Emotional and evaluative vocabulary: forms polar images of the parties to the conflict. In pro-Ukrainian channels, the enemy is described through negative characteristics ("occupiers", "invaders"), and their own forces are heroized ("defenders"). Pro-Russian channels use positive self-nominations ("law enforcement forces") and delegitimizing characteristics of the enemy ("Bandera supporters", "nationalists").



- Vocabulary with semantics of uncertainty: used to mask the lack of factual data and create information noise. Modal constructions ("possibly", "probably") and indefinite pronouns ("some", "certain circles") allow the dissemination of unverified information without direct responsibility for its veracity.

Analysis of military operations coverage and the status of the territory in Crimean Telegram channels revealed the systematic use of manipulative strategies. Pro-Ukrainian channels built a narrative of military successes by emphasizing the effectiveness of operations: "Precise strikes on radar installations and anti-aircraft missile complexes significantly weakened the ability of the Russian army to defend important military facilities" (KrymPlatzdarm, 2025, URL: <https://t.me/KrymPlatzdarm/1231>). A characteristic feature is the use of the vocabulary of technological superiority and an emphasis on the vulnerability of the enemy's military infrastructure. When covering enemy losses, hyperbolization and emotional incitement techniques are actively used, which form the image of a demoralized enemy. Pro-Russian channels build an opposite narrative based on a demonstration of effective defense. Typical are reports on successful repelling of attacks: "In Sevastopol, the military has just successfully repelled an attack by the Armed Forces of Ukraine" (Kerchfm_official, 2025, URL: https://t.me/kerchfm_official/15056). Such reports trace a strategy of minimizing information about the consequences of attacks while simultaneously creating an image of reliable protection. When covering relevant actions, the emphasis is on their legitimacy and the fair nature of retaliation, which is supported by specific numerical data on the enemy's losses.

The discourse of occupation/liberation holds a special place in the information confrontation. Pro-Ukrainian rhetoric is aimed at delegitimizing Russian control by creating an image of a repressive regime. In parallel, a narrative of resistance is being formed, creating the illusion of mass support for pro-Ukrainian forces: "Crimean residents are actively joining the "ATESH" movement" (ATESH_UA, 2025, URL: https://t.me/atesh_ua/6196).

Pro-Russian channels, on the contrary, emphasize the effectiveness of the territory's defense and its economic development. Affirmative constructions and quantitative indicators are actively used: "The effectiveness of Crimea's air defense is 95–96%" (CHp_Simferopol, 2025, URL: https://t.me/chp_simferopol/28210). At the same time, the enemy's actions are consistently criminalized using the concepts of a terrorist threat.

A clear contrast of narratives is also observed in the coverage of military infrastructure. Pro-Ukrainian sources emphasize the vulnerability of military facilities and the forced relocation of enemy forces, while pro-Russian channels create the image of an "impregnable fortress" with militaristic vocabulary with an emphasis on the defensive nature of actions.

Pro-Ukrainian channels actively use the terms "occupiers", "collaborators" and "traitors" to delegitimize the Russian presence and its supporters. Pro-Russian sources resort to the nominations "ukronazis", "terrorists" and "saboteurs" to discredit the Ukrainian side and its actions.

The creation of emotional tension is achieved through the systematic events' dramatization. The texts of both sides regularly contain descriptions of the situation as "catastrophic" or "critical". Such linguistic techniques are aimed at creating a state of anxiety and uncertainty in the audience.

Particular attention is paid to the formation of the image of the enemy through a complex of interrelated techniques:

- Dehumanization of the enemy: implemented with inanimate nouns or collective concepts that deprive the opponent of individual human traits.
- Criminalization of the enemy's image: occurs through the systematic attribution of criminal intentions and actions to him. For example, in pro-Russian channels, Ukrainian forces are called "terrorists" or "saboteurs".
- Demonizing the enemy: creation of an image of absolute evil that is not subject to rational understanding and is not subject to negotiations. For example, in pro-Ukrainian channels, Russian forces are described as "occupiers" who commit "atrocities".



The use of these manipulative mechanisms is aimed at forming a stable emotional attitude towards events and participants in the conflict in the target audience, which contributes to the consolidation of desired ideological attitudes and behavioral patterns.

The analysis revealed persistent strategies of information manipulation, implemented through various linguistic mechanisms.

Selection of information is one of the key techniques. For example, pro-Russian channels, reporting on the increase of tourist flows "by one and a half times", deliberately avoid comparison with the indicators of the pre-war period, creating a distorted picture of the region's tourist attractiveness.

Reformatting the meanings is often used by pro-Ukrainian channels: routine messages about technical work in the water supply system are interpreted as signs of a systemic crisis and "recognition of problems by the occupation authorities". Such distortion of the context forms a false perception of events in the audience.

Implicatures - indirect ways of transmitting information through premises, indirect speech acts, hints and allusions – allow you to broadcast the necessary meanings, avoiding direct statements.

Substantive strategies include:

- Generalization: extrapolating individual cases to the general situation.
- Polarization: creating a clear distinction between "ours" and "others".
- Dramatization: increase of emotional tension when presenting information.

Semantic transformations are implemented through:

- Euphemization: mitigation of negative aspects of one's own actions (for example, "special military operation").
- Dysphemization: strengthening of negative characteristics of the enemy (for example, "Ukrnazis").
- Metaphorization: creation of figurative parallels to increase influence.

Opposing narratives are clearly traced in the opposing channels. Pro-Russian sources build a narrative of legitimacy through legal terminology and appeal to historical facts. Pro-Ukrainian channels form a narrative of resistance, using the vocabulary of protest, military metaphors and emotional-evaluative constructions.

In the coverage of the humanitarian aspects of the situation in Crimea, there is a divergence of narratives typical for the informational confrontation.

Pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels focus on human rights violations in the region. Their content regularly sheds light on the persecution of local activists, restrictions on civil liberties, and pressure on ethnic minorities. Considerable attention is paid to the socio-economic problems of the peninsula: reports of water supply disruptions, difficulties with the supply of goods, and rising prices create the region's picture in a state of crisis. Particular emphasis is placed upon the negative impact of militarization in the daily life of the population.

In contrast, pro-Russian channels build a narrative of social stability. Their agenda is saturated with reports on implementing social programs, developing infrastructure, and growing living standards. Any problems are reportedly caused by external intervention: the actions of the Ukrainian side are consistently presented as attempts to create an artificial humanitarian crisis. The use of formulations that emphasize the intentional nature of such actions against the civilian population is characteristic.

Both sides use humanitarian issues to strengthen their own political positions. Pro-Ukrainian sources, through coverage of problems, seek to emphasize the illegitimacy of the current situation, while pro-Russian channels use the topic of social well-being as evidence of just and steady history development.



Analysis of language tools used in Crimean telegram channels during the period of military confrontation revealed a significant transformation of the lexical composition and methods of describing reality.

The militarization of vocabulary has become one of the key processes in the media space. Military terminology is actively penetrating civilian discourse: economic difficulties are described as a "front", social processes are characterized through the concepts of "mobilization" and "defense". As a result, new stable expressions are formed that reflect the militarization of public consciousness.

The euphemization of military actions is manifested in creating a specific vocabulary to describe conflict situations. Pro-Russian channels consistently use wording that reduces negative connotations: "special military operation", "appropriate measures", "preventive actions". Besides, it is noteworthy that pro-Russian channels emphasize the supposedly defensive nature of military actions against Ukraine: "liberation operation", "forced measures", "actions to protect sovereignty".

These linguistic transformations not only reflect changes in public consciousness, but also actively shape a certain perception of events, creating stable patterns of interpreting reality in the context of information confrontation.

Conclusions

The study revealed a complex system of manipulative strategies and tactics used in Crimean Telegram channels by the opposing parties. Analysis of linguistic markers showed that information confrontation is implemented through stable linguistic patterns and narrative constructions that form diametrically opposed pictures of reality.

The key feature of manipulative texts is their nature of multi-level influence: from direct lexical means (emotional and evaluative vocabulary, militarization of discourse) to complex semantic transformations (implicatures, presuppositions, metaphorization). Both sides use similar mechanisms of manipulation, which differ mainly in ideological orientation and specific lexical content.

A special role in the formation of manipulative influence is played by the selection of information and its interpretation through the lense of stable ideological constructs. Pro-Ukrainian channels consistently develop the narrative of the temporality and illegitimacy of Russian control, while pro-Russian sources focus on creating an image of stability and prosperity in the region.

The study demonstrates that Telegram as a media platform is becoming not only a channel for disseminating information, but rather an active tool for shaping public opinion through a system of manipulative linguistic means. The identified linguistic markers and functional mechanisms can be used to further study the features of information confrontation in social media and develop methods to counter manipulative practices.

Limitations of the study

The conducted study has a few limitations that must be considered when interpreting its results. The analysis covered only 15 public Telegram channels with a clearly expressed pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian position, while channels with a neutral, ambivalent or less polarized position, as well as private channels or groups with limited access, were not included in the sample, which could limit the completeness of the coverage representation.

The study was conducted using the content collected between August 2023 and February 2025, which corresponds to the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war, so the manipulative strategies used at other stages of the conflict could have had different characteristics. Despite the use of objective methods, such as content analysis and critical discourse analysis, the interpretation of manipulative strategies partly depended on the research perspective, which could affect the classification of statements as manipulative.



The study was limited to analyzing Ukrainian- and Russian-language channels, without considering channels in other languages, in particular Crimean Tatar or English, which could limit the understanding of the full range of manipulative strategies, especially those aimed at international or local Crimean Tatar audiences.

The analysis was based exclusively on text messages, while multimedia content such as images, videos or audio was not taken into account, although it could contain additional manipulative means. Moreover, the audience's reactions, in particular comments, likes or reposts, were not analyzed, which could provide information on the perception and effectiveness of manipulative strategies.

The results obtained have important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical point of view, the study extends the application of critical discourse analysis to messenger platforms, demonstrating how linguistic means adapt to their specifics. In particular, the use of implicatures and metaphors in Telegram allowed us to circumvent direct accusations, which is especially relevant in the context of information wars. In practice, the identified manipulative strategies can be used to develop tools for monitoring and countering disinformation in messengers, which is gaining increasing importance given the growing popularity of Telegram as a news source.

However, a number of limitations described in the relevant section indicate the need for further research. Analysis of multimedia content, Crimean Tatar or English-language channels, as well as audience reactions could deepen our understanding of manipulative practices. Therefore, future research could focus on comparing manipulative strategies in Telegram with other platforms to determine how the specifics of messengers affects the effectiveness of information influence.

Declaration on Generative Artificial Intelligence and Technologies Using Artificial Intelligence in the Writing Process.

The author did not use artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this article. The author of the article bears full responsibility for the correct use and citation of sources.

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Appendix

Study materials (Telegram channels)

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