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Ideology as a factor influencing the journalistic message. An analysis based on material from *The Times*, *The Sun* and *Pravda*

Ideology and media

One of the factors, which can have an influence on the media content and language, is ideology. There are several suggestions as how to define this term. One of them was formed by Raymond Williams, who treated ideology as a "relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a »world-view« or a »class outlook«" (1977; cited in Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, p. 183). It means that, it is a set of ideas and opinions, which may present the world from the various points of view. A similar definition was constructed by Samuel Becker, who thought that ideology is responsible for our perception of the world and us. It has the control over our opinions about what is normal and common (1984; cited in Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, p. 183). What is more, it is not monolithically constructed complex of views. Ideology is quite flexible and it tries to adapt according to new circumstances (Lacey, 1998, p. 98). These definitions suggest that it is possible to interpret ideology as a set of ideas and beliefs, which enable us to see and construe the surrounding world.

It is known that ideology does not only allow us to perceive the world but also it constructs our opinions about it. This derives from the structure of the communication and it is based on some kind of foundation which is ideology. Taking that into consideration, it can be assumed that the analysis of media text structure aims to unveil the ideological basis of that text (Lacey, 1998, p. 99). In addition, according to Stuart Hall the ideological power is given to media through their ability to define and present the situation (1989; cited in Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, p. 186). On the other hand, ideology is a "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1984, 1990; cited in Fairclough, 1995, p. 14). It can be interpreted as an act of creating and shaping people's point of

view in order to meet the expectations. It has to be also admitted that ideology can influence the information so that it forms our opinion and outlook on various aspects of life.

Furthermore, the ability of presenting and creating world is used in order to provide the information in a way, which is consistent with the ideological purposes. This means that, the analysis of news stories can show that different views have influence on the information. In addition, the ideologies and opinions of newspapers are thought to be not personal but social, institutional or political (Dijk, 1998, p. 22). It means that the main aim of the ideological influence will be connected with the ideas presented by some socially constructed group, such as political party, institution or organisation.

A slightly different conception of ideology was offered by Teun A. van Dijk. His theory was based on three components: social function, cognitive structure and discursive expression and reproduction. The first one explains reasons of developing and using ideologies by people. The second element tries to describe, what ideologies are and how they control social aspects and the last component answers the question how ideologies are generally articulated and used in the society (Dijk, 1998). It is the composition of three theories, which are focused on various elements but all of them are related to ideologies and their functions.

Teun A. van Dijk introduced the framework to analyse how the ideologies and opinions can be expressed in the texts. These suggestions were adapted and used in this research project. The analysis was made on the basis of articles about Alexander Litvinenko from three newspapers – The Times, The Sun and Pravda. The examples were mainly taken from the first stories about Litvinenko.

News Structures

Lexical items – the words which are chosen to express values and norms, they are used to articulate a value judgement (Dijk, 1998, p. 31).

The Times uses the word 'top defector' in the headline *Kremlin gave order to kill dissident and former spy, claims top defector* (Binyon, 2006, p. 6). The negative opinion carried by this lexical item moderates the first part of the sentence because it does not seem so clear any more. The claim made by 'defector' is questioned according to the reliability

of the source. These two phrases, connected together, changed the whole meaning of the headline.

The similar situation is associated with the word 'condemn' in the headline from The Times, *Model spy went public to condemn his masters for murder* (Halpin, 2006, p. 7). The meaning of it suggests that, it must have been serious crime if he is going to 'condemn' them. The basic term for this title could be 'criticise' but it does not have such a negative connotation as 'condemn'.

What is more, The Sun describes Litvinenko as a 'spy' (Moult and Wheeler, 2006) which is a kind of simplification because he was FSB colonel. The word 'spy' has the strong significance and it is directly connected with espionage. Apart from that, it includes the negative element connected with spying on somebody, which is socially badly received.

On the other hand, Pravda called Ahmad Zakayev a terrorist (Bancroft-Hinchey, 2006) which suggests that he is dangerous person and he is involved in some bombings attacks. Moreover, the occurrences related to Litvinenko's poisoning and huge interest connected with it are named by Pravda as 'anti-Russian hysteria'. It is known that, this means the lack of control on emotions, which suggests exaggerating of Litvineko's case. Russian newspaper tries to diminish the seriousness of the poisoning.

Implications – opinions, which can be implied from context (Dijk, 1998).

The reader can have the impression that the news story reported by The Times can have serious consequences, especially on relations between Britain and Russia. It is supported by the high number of articles and big picture of worried Putin on the front page.

On the other hand, The Sun focuses mostly on the shocking condition of Litvinenko. It describes in detail the damage of his body. Readers may have also the feeling that this is, first of all, a report of common crime and the political connections are only mentioned.

In comparison to The Times and The Sun, Pravda published article, which suggests that, the whole story about poison plot is exaggerated and *The reaction to the health crisis of ex-FSB Colonel Alexander Litvinenko is a classic case of anti-Russian hysteria* (Bancroft-Hinchey, 2006). The significance of the article is clear. The author challenges the theory that Putin was involved in Litvinenko's poisoning. What is more, he underlines that it is probably the continuation of 'the Cold War myth'. The reader is supposed to realise that, it is not possible that President Putin

could order Litvinenko's murder. The whole article seems to be full of ideological context.

Presuppositions – they are implied because they are presumed to be known or presupposed. They can be strategically used to introduce untrue propositions into text (Dijk, 1998).

It can be noticed that Pravda's article about converting of Litvinenko to Islam was connected with the information that Chechen terrorists placed a message on the website that a Muslim priest conducted all traditional rituals and the statement that Litvinenko wish to inform Chechen Mujahideens that 'he was his brother in arms'. Moreover, there is a caption under Litvinenko's picture – *Litvinenko was a terrorist?* (Sudakov, 2006). These suggestions imply that, the poisoning plot could be intended against Russia, although it was not directly mentioned. What is more, it arouses suspicions towards Alexander Litvinenko that he sacrificed his life to evoke accusations towards President Putin, who is the major enemy for Chechen terrorists.

Descriptions – the events can be described generally or in detail. It depends how the news wants to be presented (Dijk, 1998).

All newspapers described the event in detail. The Times published 85 articles during the whole period of time (20th November 2006 – 20th February 2007). It also dedicated the biggest amount of newspaper's space to this news story. The Sun also presented detailed Alexander Litvinenko's case, although it did not spend so much space as The Times because it published 37 articles. On the other hand, Pravda had only 14 news stories connected with Litvinenko. It can be notice that Russian newspaper did not pay as much attention to this case as the other ones. The Alexander Litvinenko's poisoning was presented but it was limited to few articles during these three months.

Local coherence – it is a composition of the story. It can show if the sentences depend on each other and if they make the coherent unity or do not. It is between propositions of a text or a talk (Dijk, 1998).

The most of stories about Alexander Litvinenko are written in a coherent way in all the newspapers. The quotations are included in the news stories and together they form the logical unity. All the reported details are connected with the main plot and fulfil the picture of this case.

Global coherence and topics – it is the coherence between topics of paragraphs, parts of information (Dijk, 1998).

In this context, global coherence is related to all articles which appeared during analysed period of time. The majority of selected news stories are connected with Alexander Litvinenko and they may create the one united news story. On the other hand, all the stories which appeared after the first day of publication may be called follow-ups. In this case, they are also coherent because all of them consist of the small introduction to the main plot. This can be notice in all the newspapers.

Semantic moves – the sentences' sequences can present positives self-presentation and negative other-presentation. It is usually shown by using so called disclaimers – the first sentence approves some opinion and the second one disagrees with the previous phrase (Dijk, 1998).

The example of such a disclaimer can be found in The Times when Alexander Golts, a political commentator, is quoted "I will not take the risk of accusing the Government [Russian]…but certain groups have quite overtly been eliminating people they disliked through poisoning". It may be treated as the denial of the assurance that he does not want to accuse Russian authorities. The second part of his statement suggests indirectly that there are such groups, probably connected with the Government, who may have been involved in Litvinenko's poisoning because they use these kinds of methods. This statement shows the positive attitude of the speaker who theoretically does not put forward any accusations but in fact he has done that.

Semantic structures

a) **Volume** – the degree of using propositions in the context of one event – it is possible to say either more or less about an event (Dijk, 1998).

It is possible to notice that The Times published a lot of articles presenting the information about Alexander Litvinenko and it also included some stories connected with this case, for example the murders of Anna Politkovskaya (a journalist which criticised Kremlin's policy towards Chechenya) and the poisoning of Victor Yushchenko (Kremlin opponent) during the Ukrainian presidential election (Skidelsky, 2006, p. 21).

On the other hand, Pravda does not describe such a wide spectrum of other murders and poisonings. The newspaper usually focuses on the basic facts connected with Alexander Litvinenko's case.

b) **Importance** – the information can be shown as an important event or not important (Dijk, 1998).

   The information about Alexander Litvinenko was presented by The Times as an important event as the story was placed on the first page several times. The Times dedicated Litvinenko a lot of pages and space. It was shown as a very serious event which can have great influence on the relation between Britain and Russia.

   In comparison to The Times, The Sun and Pravda showed the event as important but they did not draw such far-reaching conclusions. The Sun rather concentrated on the involvement of other people like possible contaminated staff or passengers of British Airways flights to Moscow and possible culprits of crime.

c) **Relevance** – the utilitarian importance of the information for the audience. It can be measured in terms of seriousness or the scope of consequences for recipients (Dijk, 1998).

   The information about Alexander Litvinenko is presented by The Times as a very important event because it is connected with the security of British people and the possible involvement of the foreign intelligence service, who murdered the citizen of the United Kingdom. Moreover, The Times tries to convince readers that this case can have visible consequences on their life.

   On the other hand, Pravda reported Litvinenko's poisoning and it only became an important event when the investigation moved to Russia. The proximity of this case changed and it started to be treated as a domestic news story.

d) **Implicitness/explicitness** – the presence or absence of the information – usually the news and opinion which are good for 'us' and bad for 'them' are explicit and vice versa (Dijk, 1998).

   A good example can be the presence of the information connected with Litvinenko's funeral. It is widely commented by Pravda that ex-FSB colonel converted to Islam before his death, which is connected with the Chechen terrorists. This news is treated as the sensational information which can change the meaning of this story. In contrast, Litvinenko's converting to the Muslim religion is hardly mentioned by The Times. The Sun did not report this at all.

   This difference is probably caused by the fact that it can be the 'useful' information for Pravda because it evokes suspicions towards Litvinenko and dismisses accusations against Russian authorities.

e) **Attribution** – acts can be attributed to actors in various ways. Good acts are usually attributed to 'Ourselves' (or our allies) and bad acts to the others (or their allies). Our bad acts will be de-emphasized and attributed to the circumstances beyond our control and the other bad acts will be emphasized (Dijk, 1998).

The example of such attribution can be notice in articles connected with the investigation in Moscow. The Times reported on 9th December 2006 that the British detectives met a lot of obstacles from Russian General Prosecutor which did not allow them to continue smoothly their work. On the other hand, the Russian request of interviewing people in London by its detectives is called *'irrelevant' demands* and it is justified by the fact that Russia wants to carry out more than 100 interviews and dozens of researches (Halpin and McGrory, 2007).

f) **Perspective** – the events are described from the speaker's point of view, his position, perspective. This perspective can be cultural, social, personal or situational (Dijk, 1998).

The extreme example of such perspective is presented in Pravda, in the article *Litvinenko: The Questions.* The news story is written in a quite elevated tone, which underlines the Russians' sacrifice during two World Wars and makes the connections with anti-Russian propaganda from the Cold War. The accusation of involvement in Litvinenko's case is criticised and negated.

Apart from that, the whole event is placed between two cultures – the West as a unity and Russia, for example, "When the West needed Russia in two World Wars, Russia gave up the blood of 32,350,000 of her sons and daughters or Therefore, for those who know what passes Chechnya, and this is a story hundreds of years old, and a story unknown or ignored by the Western Press [...]". These quotations present a clear division between the west countries and Russia. Furthermore, the article seems to be written in a very personal way, although the author does use the expression like the pronoun 'we'.

Surface structures – meanings and opinions can be emphasized or de-emphasized by their expressions. They may be expressed in the headlines, leads, in topical position in the sentence, through a complex system of rhetorical 'figures of speech' (repetition, parallelism, metaphor, comparison, irony) (Dijk, 1998).

The most significant article which uses a lot of rhetorical questions to emphasize its meaning was published by Pravda *Litvinenko: The Questions.* There are several examples which can show it: "And now we are speaking about the terrorist Zakaev, walking free in London while the parents of Beslan[1] mourn their children?" or "Why has nobody investigated the possibility of Litvinenko having Landry-Guillian-Barre syndrome, which can be induced by a virus or by genetic causes and which creates the same type of symptoms as thallium poisoning?" (Bancroft-Hinchey, 2006).

Conclusion

The main aim of this research project was to analyse ideology as the factor which influences the information on the basis of Alexander Litvinenko's case. The articles were taken from The Times, The Sun and Pravda. It enabled the comparison of two types of British newspapers and the Russian newspaper in presenting news. The research was supposed to show that The Times represented broadsheet press, The Sun was classified as a tabloid and Pravda was an example of a foreign newspaper. It was expected to identify the differences between them which were caused by different types of newspapers and countries. These suggested two various points of view (Russian and British) and the use of very formal language (The Times, Pravda) and rather informal and colloquial (The Sun). The presence of ideology in the text was investigated according to the framework introduced by Teun A. Van Dijk.

The research project analysed the influence of ideology on these articles. This investigation showed that all of these newspapers included ideological elements in their contents. Moreover, it suggested that the various points of view were caused by the fact that Alexander Litvinenko's poisoning was very controversial case and evoked a lot of mutual complications for Britain and Russia. This could result in the intensity of ideological elements in the newspapers. Moreover, the influence of ideology on the information seemed to be visible because all sources used lexical items, implications, various descriptions and semantic structures.

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[1]　There was the siege at Beslan's No 1 school in September 2004. Chechen separatists had stormed the school.

The findings are very interesting because they show how the same story can be presented in various newspapers and how it depends on their types. Recipients are able to notice that the point of view in The Times and The Sun is similar but the way of giving information about the same event is different. It is caused by the fact that these newspapers belong to different types. The first one presents Litvinenko's case in a very formal way and as an important event. The Sun focuses mostly on personal aspect of the poisoning instead of analysing the political relations. On the other hand, it is important to notice that The Times and Pravda differ in presenting this news story according to national solidarity. This case is controversial and involves the Russian authorities which is difficult to be reported. Both newspapers indicate national perspectives although they try to make impression of being objective.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

The number of articles about Alexander Litvinenko which appeared between 20.11.2006 and 20.02.2007 in three newspapers: The Times, The Sun and Pravda

Date	The Times	The Sun	Pravda
1st week	28	4	2
2nd week	18	10	3
3rd week	13	10	6
4th week	5	3	1
5th week	3	2	1
6th week	3	2	0
7th week	0	1	0
8th week	3	2	0
9th week	3	0	0
10th week	0	0	0
11th week	3	2	1
12th week	5	1	0
13th week	1	0	0
14th week	0	0	0
Total	**85**	**37**	**14**

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Ideology as a factor influencing the journalistic message.
An analysis based on material from *The Times*, *The Sun* and *Pravda*

Summary

   This paper analyzes the influence of ideology on the journalistic message on the basis of materials published about Alexander Litvinenko by *The Times*, *The Sun* and *Pravda*. The paper applies the concept presented by Teun A. van Dijk, who identifies the following aspects of message structure: lexical elements, implications, presuppositions, descriptions, cohesion, semantic events, semantic and external structures. The analysis involves the examples taken from the articles about the Litvinenko issue to show how ideologies and opinions can be present in the content of journalistic accounts.

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Ideologia jako czynnik oddziałujący na przekaz dziennikarski.
Analiza na podstawie materiałów z "The Times", "The Sun" oraz "Pravda"

Streszczenie

   Artykuł przedstawia analizę oddziaływania ideologii na przekaz dziennikarski na podstawie materiałów dotyczących sprawy Aleksandra Litwinienki, które ukazały się w pismach "The Times", "The Sun" oraz "Pravda". W pracy wykorzystano koncepcję zaprezentowaną przez Teuna A. van Dijka, który wyróżnia w strukturze przekazu: elementy leksykalne, implikacje, prezupozycje, opisy, spójność, zabieg semantyczny, struktury semantyczne i zewnętrzne.