

Aleksandra Synowiec
PhD., assistant professor, Silesian University of Technology, Gliwice, Poland
Department of Applied Social Sciences
aleksandra.synowiec@gmail.com

USING OF PROPAGANDA AND PERSUASIVE STATEMENTS IN POLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

© Synowiec Aleksandra, 2017

The purpose of presented study is to discuss chosen theories, mechanisms and tools of social impact, understood as a process that allows influencing individuals and groups, in reference to Polish political discourse. The issue of effectiveness of media content on the recipient, defined as achieving results expected by the sender (such as changes in behaviour, attitudes etc.) is still current and worth being analysed.

This paper is both theoretical and empirical. Theoretical background consists of the concept of social impact and origins of forming public opinion. The empirical contribution involves content analysis of set of examples from presidential and parliamentary elections 2015 in Poland. Describing which techniques classified and outlined by American Institute of Propaganda Analysis (1937) has been broadly used in contemporary Polish political discourse and in media content.

Information struggle is a special case of combat: part of a social control process, aimed to destroy opponent (or enemy) by means of information. Contemporary societies are not resistant to propaganda technique – despite the fact of highly developed communication skills and “technology literacy” (in comparison to earlier stages of social development).

Presenting techniques classified and outlined by American Institute of Propaganda Analysis that were broadly used in latest Polish election campaigns a conclusion can be drawn that some appeals remain effective and worth repeating. No matter how educated and aware of language use contemporary societies.

Referring to already classical examples of media impact, the accuracy of propaganda tools was discussed. Analyzing cases mentioned below, a conclusion is drawn, that techniques such as word games, false connections, special appeals, name calling, glittering generalities, work effectively in contemporary persuasive communication.

Key words: social impact, propaganda techniques, persuasive statements.

Олександра Синовец

ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ПРОПАГАНДИ І ПЕРЕКОНЛИВИХ СУДЖЕНЬ У ПОЛЬСЬКОМУ ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ

Метою цього дослідження є обговорення обраних теорій, механізмів і інструментів соціального впливу: процесу, який дозволяє впливати як на окремих людей, так і на соціальні групи, на прикладі польських виборчих кампаній 2015 року. Зберігає свою актуальність питання про ефективність впливу медіа-контенту на одержувача інформації, визначений як досягнення очікуваних результатів відправника (наприклад, зміни в поведінці, зміни у відносинах і т.д.).

Стаття є теоретичним та емпіричним дослідженням. Теоретичні основи складаються з концепції соціального впливу і витоків формування громадської думки. Основним джерелом для цього дослідження є класичний аналіз, який провів Джон Заллер "Природа і походження громадської думки" (1992). Емпіричний внесок містить контент-аналіз декількох прикладів комунікаційних технік, використаних під час президентських і парламентських виборів 2015 року в Польщі. Методи, які описав і класифікував американський Інститут аналізу пропаганди (1937), було широко використані в останніх польських виборчих кампаніях.

Інформаційна боротьба - особливий вид боротьби: частина процесу соціального контролю, спрямований на знищення супротивника (або ворога) за допомогою інформації. Сучасні суспільства не є стійкими до пропагандистської техніки - незважаючи на високий рівень комунікативних навичок і «технологічної грамотності» (у порівнянні з ранніми стадіями суспільного розвитку).

Представляючи методи, класифіковані та описані Американським інститутом аналізу пропаганди, які широко використовувалися в останніх виборчих кампаніях Польщі, можна зробити висновок, що деякі апеляції залишаються ефективними і їх варто повторювати, незалежно від того, наскільки освіченою і усвідомленою мовою користуються сучасні суспільства. Повертаючись до вже класичних прикладів впливу засобів масової інформації, обговорено точність пропагандистських інструментів. Аналізуючи випадки, згадані нижче, робимо висновок, що такі методи, як: гра слів, хибні зв'язки, спеціальні заклики, образи, загальноприйняті звернення ефективно працюють незалежно від того, чи сучасні люди і групи людей поліпшили свої компетенції в комунікації.

Ключові слова: соціальний вплив, техніки пропаганди, переконливі твердження.

1. Posted questions, basic theoretical concepts and methodology. The XXth century was called “the century of propaganda” [1, 9]. In fact, in the twentieth century propaganda has been developed to a large-scale mechanism of influence on individuals and societies. The aim of propagandists is to change people’s behaviour and leave them in the belief that achieved effects are the result of free will; in order to control people’s attitudes multiple communication techniques are used [2, 87]. Process, due to which comes to changes in behaviour, attitudes, emotions or motivations is called social impact. Social impact consists of various techniques, as followed: persuasion, propaganda, advertising, media manipulation, education (symbolic violence), unintended media influence. According to Aronson and Pratkanis, this process occurs as a result of real or imagined behaviour and/or opinions expressed by another person or group [1, 10]. The concept of propaganda came into common use only until early XXth century, when it began to identify the persuasive tactics used during World War I, and later by totalitarian regimes [1, 17]. Development of mass-communication enabled access to audiences measured in millions. Press and particularly radio and cinema played a great role in the possibility of “management over souls”. The most comprehensive studies on mass-communication were devoted to propaganda content. Analysing propaganda content Harold Lasswell drew a theory of magic bullet (media content reach a recipient at once and triggers an immediate response), Walter Lippmann developed a theory over public opinion (his concept of stereotypes is in curriculum worldwide and still actual) [2, 91–98].

Disinformation, black propaganda (spreading lies), grey propaganda (information that can be but also can be not false) and other tools used to influence human minds did not vanish with the end of so called Cold War. Creation and reproduction of ideological superstructures is doing well in democratic societies as well. Techniques classified and described by Institute of Propaganda Analysis are broadly used in mass communication nowadays. They just refer do certain historical situation and context, they reflect reality and reveal the structure of processes taking place in societies. Therefore studying tools and mechanism of social impact, made on the ground of sociology and communication theory, can lead to very interesting conclusions how in fact persuasion works.

The aim of this study is to examine chosen tools and examples of propaganda use in Polish political discourse 2015. In other words – the objective of this study is to show how broadly understood media influence human minds and societies Examining case studies as followed, one can notice, that techniques such as word games, false connections, special appeals, name calling, glittering generalities, euphemisms and more [3], work among individuals and groups with improved communication competences and skills.

3. Propaganda and persuasive statements used in Polish political discourse. Information, access to information and use of information these are valuable resources. Preparing, delivering and broadcasting information is not only the matter of social communication field, but also a part of broad process of social engineering, aimed at winning the audience for a particular point of view, attitude, way of behaviour. Information war is a feature characterizing the *Third Wave societies* [7]. According to Toffler, post-industrial societies have noticed and appreciated information as a powerful resource, worth struggling for. One of the fields, where information war can be observed as an object of analysis, is politics. Therefore election campaign can be defined as a kind of lens in which many different techniques and tools of social impact combines. Attention should be paid to set of mechanisms and instruments distinguished by American Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA). In order to educate the public, IPA extracted and exemplified “seven common propaganda devices” [3]:

– **Name calling:** using insulting or abusive language either to a person or a group, (recalling *ad personam*: one of rhetoric arguments collected by Arthur Schopenhauer. *Ad personam* is frequently used, when opponents lack of rational arguments). This strategy is popular especially in political discourse.

– **Glittering generalities:** “glittering generality has two qualities – it is vague and it has positive connotations. Words and phrases such as *common good, reform, courage, democracy, freedom, hope, patriotism, strength*, are terms with which people all over the world have powerful associations and

they may have trouble disagreeing with them. However, these words are highly abstract and ambiguous, and meaningful differences exist regarding what they actually mean or should mean in the real world” [3].

– **Transfer:** “this is a technique of projecting positive or negative qualities (praise or blame) of a person, entity, object, or value (an individual, group, organization, nation, patriotism, etc.) to another in order to make the second more acceptable or to discredit it. It evokes an emotional response, which stimulates the target to identify with recognized authorities. Often highly visual, this technique often utilizes symbols superimposed over other visual images” [3].

– **Testimonial:** consists of a person’s written or spoken statement extolling the virtue of a product [3]. Frequently seen in advertising and politics.

– **Plain folks** – pretending to be an average Smith “a plain folks argument is one in which the speaker presents him or herself as common person, who can understand and empathize with a listener’s concerns. The most important part of this appeal is the speaker’s portrayal of themselves as someone who has had a similar experience to the listener, and knows why they may be sceptical or cautious about accepting the speaker’s point of view” [3].

– **Card stacking** “is a propaganda technique that seeks to manipulate audience perception of an issue by emphasizing one side and repressing another. Such emphasis may be achieved through media-bias or the use of one sided testimonials, or by simply censoring the voices of critics. The technique is commonly used in persuasive speeches by political candidates to discredit their opponents and to make themselves seem more worthy” [3].

– **Bandwagon:** it is a “phenomenon whereby the rate of uptake of beliefs, ideas, fads and trends increases the more that they have already been adopted by others. In other words, the bandwagon effect is characterized by the probability of individual adoption increasing with respect to the proportion who have already done so. As more people come to believe in something, others *also hop on the bandwagon* regardless of the underlying evidence” [3].

Techniques listed above were used during two political campaigns that took place in 2015 in Poland. These persuasive tools appeared in political ads, political meetings, speeches and debates. Below, the examples of three propaganda technique will be provided. Examples refer to two main political opponents – PIS Party (right-wing “Law and Justice Party”, ruled by Jaroslav Kaczynski) and PO Party (liberal-conservative “Civic Platform”, ruled by Donald Tusk and after his nomination for President of European Council – by his nominee Ewa Kopacz).

3.1. Name calling. Using insulting or abusive language is one of the strategies frequently used in contemporary political discourse in Poland. This kind of persuasive communication was also a part of discourse especially in social media. Name calling it is a type of message that neglects rational argumentation, in turn refers only to emotions, mainly negative ones. The strength of name calling can be seen on many available examples of *hate speech*, where interlocutors throw insults one to another or towards a certain group of people (for example ethnic and religious minorities). Supporters and opponents of candidates and political parties argued by means of vulgar, insulting and aggressive comments. It was also revealed, that election teams hired and paid for offensive comments spread in the Internet [8]. Therefore from this point of view, two last Polish election campaigns were exceptional. This time communication through social media – vertical interactions (from candidates and political parties to public opinion) as well as horizontal interactions (between social media users) – was equally important as traditional election spots and political conventions. Some of the name callings used in the process of communication during election campaign was of formative type. For example opponents of Bronislaw Komorowski frequently called him “Komoruski”, which is a kind of wordplay joining name of the candidate and adjective “ruski” in Polish language standing for “Russian”. In the discourse of opponents Komorowski was perceived as a person involved in Russian interests. Supporters of Civic Platform were labelled as “sickies” by right-wing followers – this term in Polish language is also of a formative kind, as “POpapańczy” means sick people in Polish slang, but by indicating Civic Platform followers by prefix “PO” a message is clear: Civic Platform supporters are mentally ill people. In turn, Civic Platform followers named Law and Justice party supporters by offensive term “PISIory”, which associate abbreviation of party’s name (PIS) with English informal verb “to pee” or “to piss” that is a synonym of “to urinate”. For description of political ideology introduced by Law and Justice, followers of Civic Platform invented a term “kaczyzm” – in meaning very close to “duck doctrine” or “ducktator”, joining surname of its leader with a noun “dictatorship”. In turn Civic Platform and left-wing parties supporters used a rhetorical comparison dividing people into “Europeans” (modern, young and educated people willing for Poland’s development in EU structures) and “traditionalist” (older, reserved, attached to confession and more traditional lifestyles). Thus political discourse split voters into two contrasted groups, integrated around two different, but actually not true, visions of Poland.

3.2. Glittering generalities. Glittering generalities evokes positive emotions connected for example with patriotism, willingness to consent or desire for national glory. So thus they are appropriate instrument for a slogan. The slogan endorsing political campaign of applying for re-election Bronislaw Komorowski was: “Choose consent and safety”, why the main opposition candidate Andrzej Duda appeared under motto: “The future’s name is Poland”. Slogan of Komorowski was built on the assumption that right-wing candidates were unpredictable and choosing one of them could harm Polish image and position painstakingly built over the past years. The main message hidden in this slogan is “protection of *status quo*”. In turn, motto chosen by Duda’s staff was referring to the future, which means establishing new vision of Poland’s development. Duda’s slogan recalled also the concept of motherland Poland. Both slogans and billboard compositions of two main candidates were static and maintained in conventional style. “We are still waiting for a slogan like Obama’s *Yes, we can!*” – one of the journalists of Newsweek Polish Edition commented.

3.3. Transfer. This technique involves transfer of authority and prestige from one object to another for which we want to win people’s favour [9, 14–15]. At most, symbols important for particular community are used to associate objects, ideas or people with positive connotations. National symbols such as flag, emblem, anthem or religious symbols such as cross are used instrumentally to win people’s support. These signs evoke positive emotions and that is why they work efficiently in persuasive and propaganda messages. Flapping flags during the political conventions, flags and national symbols used in election commercials these are typical examples of transfer technique. Transfer is a kind of false connection – on the basis of false premises we make judgments about reality. Second transfer tactic is establishing honorary committees, engaging famous intellectuals, actors, sportsmen and other celebrities in favour of a candidate or political party. Transfer as a propaganda device is effective due to positive attitudes it moves from common symbols or people endowed with respect to ideas and other objects.

3.4. Testimonial. Testimonial is very similar to transfer. What actually differs both techniques can be defined as directness. Testimonial consists of a person’s written or spoken statement extolling the virtue of a product [3]. If a famous person directly recommends a candidate or political party – it is called testimonial. Citations of significant and recognized people make political statements reliable. Since 2010 (catastrophe of president’s aircraft in Smolensk) mainly actors are involved in providing testimonials to the main political actors – Civic Platform and Law and Justice Party. A well-known person wears a halo of fame and popularity above his or her head. Halo – as in the case of saints – attracts people and make them think: *if such a person supports candidate “X”, I also will!* During last election campaigns many of Polish celebrities gave public statement of support to candidates in presidential elections and/or to political parties. At the finish of presidential campaign even several chief editors of newspapers and magazines (for example “Newsweek – Polish Edition”) gave direct support to particular political option in editorials. Strong emotions were seen both in right-wing and left-wing press.

3.5. Plain folks. Plain folks can be described as a special appeal using the idea of ordinariness to justify an activity or an object as proper and adequate. In practice, politicians or candidates want to present themselves as average citizens in order to be seen more reliable and trustworthy. Plain folks device encourage politicians to act in more casual way – to show their ordinary, plain side, in y different context than official one people got used to. During Polish election campaigns 2015 this strategy was also adopted in a few cases. In the race to the post of president Andrzej Duda was travelling around Poland in his “DudaBus”. The idea was very simple, but effective: being closer to people’s problems. Duda didn’t focus on the electorate of Warsaw and other big cities, but obtained people’s favour by visiting small towns and outermost regions. Not without significance remained the fact that the bus of future’s president was a product of Polish factory which became insolvent in 2013. In fact “DudaBus” occurred to be a very good public relations move, providing with message: “It is time for Poland, Polish factories and Polish products”. In turn, during parliamentary election campaign, Civic Platform introduced a slogan and idea for Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz to travel around Poland by railway: “Kolej na Ewę”. This slogan has an ambiguous meaning, as “kolej” in Polish language means either “turn, in turn” or “railway”. Thus “Kolej na Ewę” can be decoded as “It is Ewa’s turn”. Travelling by train in order to obtain people’s favour, was assumed on a possibility of direct contact and interactions with Polish citizens. At the same time, the candidate for Prime Minister on behalf of Law and Justice exactly repeated Duda’s manoeuvre with the bus. According to analysts, knowledge of problems of local communities, direct communication and showing interest for those leaving far from the capital city were the key features of electoral victory. Dynamic campaign in American style and being close to the people’s problems resulted in the award of voters trust.

3.6. Card stacking. Card stacking means such selection of facts and fakes, logical and illogical arguments to create positive or negative impression about an object, situation, person or group of people. With card stacking we can usually deal in political programmes and debates, where politicians have a possibility to present and defend a vision they consider true one. The aim of card stacking is to appeal to the

emotional sphere of the recipient and to evoke the appropriate response, for example objection towards a candidate or a political party. In practice – candidates talk only in superlatives about themselves while totally discrediting opponents. During both campaigns Law and Justice was using “Poland in ruins” metaphor to describe Poland eight years under the Civic Platform government. During campaign tour across Poland Law and Justice was taking advantage for example of shabby wall, demolished hangar or closed factory as a scenery for briefings, in order to illustrate thesis of “Poland in ruins” [10]. Civic Platform was talking about the danger that can be caused by seizure of power by Law and Justice. Liberal-conservative wing was playing the card called “unpredictability” towards opponents. Another card used by Civic Platform was “We have done everything possible, we will do more”.

Discourse between Civic Platform and Law and Justice was black and white only. Both forces were stacking cards to prove and justify opponent’s blame for all the failures and wrong decisions. The strategy of Law and Justice was based on accusing Civic Platform for of obscurantism and abandonment of decisions, while Civic Platform seized all recognized successes on own account.

3.7. Bandwagon. Bandwagon is a ploy of forcing the usually false thesis that all members of a given community (for example the whole of society) accept a political program, so each voter has to agree with them [3]. Bandwagon effect is directed to the social groups, to the crowd, to the groups of certain age or profession. In general – messages are addressed and delivered in a similar way to snowball effect: the more people from a group support the idea, the faster it disseminates among the group. Two ideas introduced in parliamentary elections caused such an effect: 1) 500 zlotys for second and subsequent child, 2) restore the retirement age to pre-reform status. Showing support to ideas mentioned above in surveys could make an impression of general acceptance for a certain political program. The proposed ideas were so attractive that it was hard to disagree with them.

4. Conclusions. It should be noted in conclusion, that there are more propaganda tools than seven mentioned and briefly characterized above. The choice of particular propaganda techniques depend on possibilities, technical capabilities and target groups to whom propagandists address messages. Classification made by Institute of Propaganda Analysis was criticized and considered too simple – propaganda messages are often sophisticated and use more than one technique of influence on the recipient [11]. But still typology worked out by IPA is a good basis for analyzing persuasive statements in contemporary communication although IPA didn’t take into account differences among different target groups. In presented paper I wanted to give an insight into general strategies of political communication – as one can see not strongly referring to different target groups. Examples discussed in this analysis show that techniques described by IPA scientists are still applied in political discourse to win the audience.

Information struggle is a special case of combat: part of a social control process, aimed to destroy opponent (or enemy) by means of information. Contemporary societies are not resistant to propaganda technique – despite the fact of highly developed communication skills and “technology literacy” (in comparison to earlier stages of social development). The most important issue is still described in Aristotle thought: how to find a key to someone’s soul? What appeal should be used: emotional or rational? Presenting techniques classified and outlined by American Institute of Propaganda Analysis that were broadly used in latest Polish election campaigns a conclusion can be drawn that some appeals remain effective and worth repeating. No matter how educated and aware of language use contemporary societies are.

1. Pratkanis A., Aronson E., *Wiek propagandy. Uzywanie i naduzywanie perswazji na co dzien*, Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe WN, Warszawa 2004. 2. Baran S.J., Davis D.K., *Teorie komunikowania masowego*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego, Kraków 2007. 3. Institute of Propaganda Analysis, source; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_for_Propaganda_Analysis. 4. Nieć M., *Komunikowanie polityczne w nowoczesnym państwie*, Wolters Kluwer business, Warszawa 2013. 5. Zaller J., *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, University of California, Los Angeles, first published 1992 (reprinted 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003). 6. Marks K., *Kapital. Krytyka ekonomii politycznej, tom 1*, Warszawa 1951. 7. Toffler, A., *The Third Wave*, Random House Value Publishing, 1980. 8. Kto hejtem wojuje, od hejtu ginie, “Polityka” 14.08.2015, access: <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1629547,1,ile-hejtu-w-internecie-kogo-internauci-nie-lubia.read>. 9. Szulczewski M., *Propaganda polityczna. Zarys problematyki teoretycznej*, Warszawa 1972. 10. Radio TOK FM: Makowski o Beacie Szydło: Jej kampania manipuluje obrazami i faktami, access: <http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,130517,18477360,makowski-o-beacie-szydlo-jej-kampania-manipuluje-obrazami.html>. 11. Podstawowe narzędzia propagandowe i ich praktyczne zastosowania, access: <http://www.id.uw.edu.pl/zasoby/profile/47/Anatomia%20propagandy/6-7.%20Podstawowe%20narzedzia%20propagandowe%20i%20ich%20zastosowania.pdf>.