Thai NATIONAL INTEREST
ISSN 3088-2729

DOI: https://doi.org/10.14456/tni.2026.3

Linguo-Psychological Dimension of Manipulative Strategies in the Modern Media Space

Authors

Olena G. Hudzenko[1], Tetiana V. Borozentseva[2], Anastasia I. Aleksandruk[3], Vira M. Kolomieiets[4], Yuliia M. Moiseiuk[5]

Affiliations

[1]Horlivka Institute of Foreign Languages (Dnipro, Ukraine)

[2]Horlivka Institute of Foreign Languages (Dnipro, Ukraine)

[3]Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University(Lutsk, Ukraine)

[4]Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University(Lutsk, Ukraine)

[5]Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (Lutsk, Ukraine)

Corresponding Author

Olena G. Hudzenko

Email: o.gudzenko@vippo.org.ua

Abstract

This article examines the linguo-psychological mechanisms underlying manipulative strategies in contemporary media space. It argues that media manipulation functions as a systemic process of psychological programming in which linguistic structures, emotional triggers, and cognitive biases interact to shape mass perception. Drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that integrates psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and media discourse analysis, the study identifies key

linguistic tools, including evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, euphemisms, framing, and suggestiveness, as central mechanisms of influence.

The analysis further demonstrates that the effectiveness of manipulation depends on the activation of emotional responses that bypass rational evaluation, particularly in digitally mediated environments. In social networks, these processes are intensified through algorithmic amplification and the integration of visual and verbal elements, forming self-reinforcing "information bubbles." Special attention is given to the role of Information and Psychological Operations (PsyOps) in hybrid contexts, where language is systematically employed to influence perception and reshape cognitive models of reality.

The study proposes a multi-level analytical framework that conceptualizes manipulation as the interaction between linguistic, psychological, and digital processes. It contributes to existing research by systematizing these mechanisms and highlighting their relevance for media literacy and psychological security. The findings suggest that strengthening psycholinguistic awareness and critical thinking is essential for counteracting manipulative influence in contemporary information environments.

Keywords: Media Manipulation; Psycholinguistics; Cognitive Bias; Hybrid Warfare; Media Discourse; Information Security

Received: 02/04/2026

Revised : 07/04/2026

Accepted: 29/04/2026

1. Formulation of the Problem

In the contemporary digital environment, characterized by intensified information flows and the rapid expansion of digital platforms, the media space has evolved into a complex system of psychological influence. Media communication no longer functions merely as a channel of information transmission but increasingly operates as a mechanism for shaping mass consciousness through manipulative strategies.

These strategies are grounded in the interaction between linguistic structures and psychological mechanisms, enabling the transformation of perceptions and cognitive models of reality. However, existing approaches to media analysis often fail to adequately integrate the linguo-psychological dimension necessary to decode such hidden influences.

A key challenge lies in the systemic nature of media manipulation. Rather than relying on isolated techniques, manipulation operates by exploiting cognitive vulnerabilities through carefully structured linguistic messages. Elements such as evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, and suggestiveness activate emotional responses and cognitive biases that bypass rational evaluation, thereby influencing interpretation at a subconscious level. Despite extensive research in linguistics, cognitive psychology, and communication studies, these processes are often examined separately, obscuring their combined effect as mechanisms of psychological programming.

This problem becomes particularly acute in the context of hybrid warfare and socio-political crises, where media space functions as a strategic battlefield. In such environments, specific terminology, symbolic markers, and emotionally intensified narratives are employed to

demoralize opponents, mobilize audiences, and construct polarized representations of reality. These dynamics are closely linked to Information and Psychological Operations (PsyOps), which extend beyond traditional misinformation by systematically shaping perception through coordinated linguistic and emotional cues.

Another critical issue concerns the limited development of psycholinguistic literacy. While general media literacy initiatives exist, they rarely address the complex mechanisms of suggestion embedded in language, including strategies such as the "mask of positivity" and other forms of covert persuasion. This gap is particularly significant in digital environments, where verbal and non-verbal elements interact to reinforce manipulative effects and complicate critical evaluation.

Furthermore, methodological limitations persist in identifying and counteracting manipulative influence. Conventional analytical approaches often fail to capture the transition from objective information to covert psychological pressure, in which recipients internalize imposed interpretations as their own judgments. The absence of an integrated interdisciplinary framework that connects linguistic markers with psychological processes weakens efforts to ensure informational and psychological security.

In response to these challenges, this study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that conceptualizes manipulative strategies as interconnected linguo-psychological processes. It argues that understanding the interaction between language, cognition, and emotional response is essential for developing effective strategies of critical thinking and resilience in contemporary media environments.

This study makes several contributions to the existing literature. First, it systematizes linguo-psychological mechanisms of media manipulation by integrating linguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic perspectives into a unified analytical framework. Second, it conceptualizes manipulation as a systemic process of psychological programming, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between language structures and cognitive processes. Third, it contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue by linking psycholinguistics with media discourse analysis and information security studies. Finally, it provides practical implications for enhancing media literacy and psychological resilience through the identification of key markers of manipulative influence.

The purpose of this article is to systematize and theoretically examine the linguo-psychological mechanisms underlying manipulative strategies in the modern media space. By synthesizing interdisciplinary research, the study aims to identify how linguistic and psychological factors interact to shape emotional and cognitive responses, and to demonstrate how psycholinguistic literacy can serve as a critical tool for counteracting manipulation and ensuring informational stability.

2. Analysis of Recent Research and Publications

Recent research into manipulative strategies and linguo-psychological influence in the media space reveals an increasing focus on the mechanisms that allow for the hidden transformation of mass consciousness. Ivashchenko and Hryshyn (2024) argue that manipulation in social media is not a random occurrence but a systemic component of communicative strategies involving attention management and the strategic repetition of messages. Their findings emphasize that the digital

environment significantly amplifies the psychological effect of manipulation due to its interactive nature and high speed of information dissemination.

Several studies highlight the importance of linguistic resources as tools for psychological programming. Kyryliuk (2020) demonstrates how linguistic mechanisms of manipulation become critical during information warfare, aimed at altering cognitive models of reality. Similarly, Korol and Voloshchuk (2020) examine the German-language media discourse, noting that the use of euphemisms and specific metaphors serves to either "blur" negative information or hyperbolize events to achieve a desired emotional effect.

The psychological community has also increasingly turned to the idea of suggestiveness and emotional triggers as key factors in manipulative effectiveness. Levko (2020) explores these aspects within Ukrainian religious media discourse, showing how the use of precedent units—such as well-known quotes or sacred symbols—activates collective knowledge and emotional associations, thereby legitimizing manipulative ideas. This is complemented by the work of Kondruk (2019), who identifies the "manipulative strategy of positivity," where a communicator uses excessive politeness and a "mask of benevolence" to bypass the rational filters of the recipient.

Empirical studies suggest that manipulative influence operates through both verbal and non-verbal channels. Pomazan and Ilina (2025) analyze the linguopragmatic symbiosis in social networks, where images and video serve as "psychological anchors" that fix a specific emotion while the text provides a distorted interpretation of facts. In the context of hybrid warfare, Lutsenko et al. (2025) and Telpis (2025) investigate the effects of Information and Psychological Operations

(PsyOps), noting that specific terminology and high emotional intensity are used to create "information bubbles" and demoralize the public.

Ukrainian studies also deepen the understanding of how to counteract these threats through educational frameworks. Krylova-Grek and Korniyaka (2023) emphasize the necessity of implementing a psycholinguistic component into media education to help citizens recognize complex models of suggestion. Furthermore, Hudzenko (2023) and Hudzenko et al.(2024) explores the role of emotional self-regulation and dialogue as natural barriers to strategies of hostility, suggesting that psycholinguistic literacy is essential for maintaining a critical distance from media triggers.

Together, these studies suggest that effective strategies for ensuring psychological security must integrate linguistic expertise, cognitive-pragmatic analysis, and media literacy. The literature supports the development of comprehensive programs that enable individuals to deconstruct manipulative meanings and resist suggestiveness in an increasingly polarized information environment.

3. Analytical Framework of Linguo-Psychological Manipulation

Based on an interdisciplinary synthesis, this study proposes a multi-level analytical framework for understanding manipulative strategies in media discourse. The framework conceptualizes manipulation as a coordinated interaction among three interrelated dimensions: linguistic structures, psychological mechanisms, and digital amplification processes.

At the linguistic level, manipulation operates through strategic lexical and stylistic choices, including evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, euphemisms, and syntactic constructions that shape interpretation. These elements function as carriers of implicit meaning, structuring the semantic field within which information is perceived. Pragmatic strategies such as framing and suggestiveness play a central role in directing attention and constraining alternative interpretations.

At the psychological level, these linguistic cues activate emotional responses and cognitive biases. Mechanisms such as the halo effect, emotional contagion, and associative priming reduce the recipient's capacity for critical evaluation. In this context, manipulation derives its effectiveness not from informational content alone but from its capacity to exploit pre-existing cognitive vulnerabilities and affective dispositions.

At the digital level, manipulative influence is amplified through algorithmic distribution, interactivity, and the integration of multimodal elements. Social media platforms intensify the reach and persistence of manipulative content by fostering selective exposure and reinforcing "echo chambers." Non-verbal components, including images, videos, and interface design features, function as psychological anchors that precondition emotional responses and stabilize interpretive bias.

The interaction among these three levels generates a self-reinforcing system in which linguistic signals trigger psychological reactions that are subsequently amplified and sustained within digital environments. This framework underscores that manipulation is not a linear phenomenon but a complex, multi-layered process requiring a holistic analytical perspective.

4. Methodological Approach

This study adopts a qualitative, discourse-analytical approach to examine the linguo-psychological mechanisms underlying manipulative strategies in contemporary media space. Rather than relying on quantitative measurement, the research emphasizes interpretive analysis of language structures, communicative patterns, and psychological triggers embedded in media discourse. The methodological framework integrates perspectives from psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and media studies to capture the multidimensional nature of manipulative influence.

The primary unit of analysis is the media text, broadly defined to include journalistic content, social media posts, and hybrid digital formats that combine verbal and non-verbal elements. The analysis focuses on identifying recurrent linguistic markers of manipulation, such as emotionally charged vocabulary, metaphorical constructions, euphemistic substitutions, and pragmatic strategies including framing, suggestiveness, and the use of precedent units. These features are examined in relation to their psychological effects, particularly their capacity to trigger affective responses, activate cognitive biases, and bypass rational evaluation.

In addition to linguistic analysis, the study incorporates a cognitive-pragmatic perspective that explores how meaning is constructed and internalized by the recipient. Particular attention is given to the relationship between emotional arousal and cognitive processing, as elevated emotional states are known to reduce critical reflection and increase susceptibility to manipulative influence. This approach enables the analysis to move beyond surface-level textual features toward a deeper understanding of language as an instrument of psychological programming.

The methodological design also involves the comparative synthesis of existing scholarly literature. By integrating findings across disciplines, the study identifies recurring patterns and systemic characteristics of manipulation that transcend specific contexts. This interdisciplinary approach allows for the development of a unified analytical framework.

It should be noted that this study does not rely on a fixed empirical dataset but instead employs illustrative examples and theoretical generalization to highlight structural mechanisms. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as conceptual insights rather than empirically generalizable conclusions. Future research may extend this framework through corpus-based analysis, experimental design, or case-based investigations of specific media environments.

5. Presenting Main Material

The structural transformation of the contemporary media landscape is analyzed by Hudzenko et al. (2024), who posit that communication channels have shifted from neutral information carriers to sophisticated instruments of psychological programming. Her research suggests that this process constitutes a systemic strategy aimed at the covert modification of social conduct and value systems. The effectiveness of such intervention, as detailed by Hudzenko et al.(2024), relies on the strategic exploitation of cognitive vulnerabilities through meticulously crafted linguistic messages where the intersection of terminology and emotional context dictates the outcome. They emphasize that when emotional arousal bypasses rational scrutiny, the recipient becomes susceptible to deeply embedded cognitive distortions. This phenomenon is further complicated by the fact that modern

media do not just transmit facts but construct a surrogate reality that serves specific ideological interests, effectively narrowing the audience's perceptive field. .

This framework of strategic pressure is further elaborated by Kyryliuk (2020), who investigates how the specific lexicon of information warfare serves as a primary vehicle for reconfiguring an individual's perception of reality. Her findings indicate that in hybrid conflict scenarios, language is weaponized to systematically deconstruct the opponent's consciousness, replacing objective knowledge with "markers of danger." In a complementary study, Korol and Voloshchuk (2020) evaluate the pragmatic functions of metaphors and euphemisms within German-language media, illustrating how these tools either obscure inconvenient truths or amplify specific events to trigger a calculated emotional response. These observations resonate with the conclusions of Nahorna (2023), who highlights that stylistically polarized vocabulary is essential for the artificial fabrication of "hero" and "enemy" archetypes within political narratives, thereby fostering deep social polarization.

The "manipulative strategy of positivity" is scrutinized by Kondruk (2019), who describes how communicators employ exaggerated benevolence to mask underlying pragmatic intentions. This approach capitalizes on the "halo effect," where the positive affect generated by the source's demeanor is reflexively attributed to the message itself, thereby neutralizing critical filters. Shchetinina et al. (2019) expand on this by demonstrating that such mechanisms effectively transmute the media consumer into a passive object of management by short-circuiting independent analytical processes through the imposition of ready-made semantic schemes.

Additionally, Hudzenko (2023) examine the paradox of professional "polite manipulation," noting that markers of benevolence can serve as a deceptive facade for strategies of social distancing and hostility, making them particularly difficult to challenge within conventional social norms. This subtle form of aggression exploits the recipient's desire for social approval, turning "politeness" into a barrier against critical questioning and rational debate.

Ideological and theological dimensions are addressed by Levko (2020), who illustrates how precedent units—ranging from iconic religious symbols to authoritative quotes—activate collective associations that grant immediate legitimacy to a manipulator's discourse. Her empirical data suggest that such communication is often internalized without skepticism due to its reliance on established spiritual authority, providing "pre-packaged" meanings that recipients adopt as their own. This is supported by Pavliv (2023), who identifies the linguopragmatic aspects of psychological pressure as a universal feature of human speech behavior across diverse discursive fields, including political, religious, and everyday communication.

The digital metamorphosis of these strategies is tracked by Ivashchenko and Hryshyn (2024) and Telpis (2025), who observe that social platforms intensify manipulative efficacy through high interactivity and the formation of "echo chambers". Telpis (2025) specifically highlights the mechanics of Psychological Operations (PsyOps), where digital content is engineered to bypass logical reasoning by inducing immediate, unreflective affective reactions through "shock-content" and rapid repetition. This is bolstered by Pomazan and Ilina (2025), who define a "linguopragmatic symbiosis" where non-verbal elements like video and imagery function as "psychological anchors,"

pre-setting the emotional state before the verbal content is even processed. Moreover, Lutsenko et al.(2025) underscore that during active military confrontations, language serves as a direct instrument for demoralizing populations and inciting systemic social instability by exploiting collective trauma and spreading paralyzing narratives of despair that undermine national resilience.

Finally, the synthesized literature indicates that a sustainable defense against such threats resides in the systematic cultivation of psycholinguistic literacy. Krylova-Grek and Korniyaka (2023) advocate for the integration of psycholinguistic modules into standard media education to assist individuals in decoding complex models of suggestion and recognizing the triggers of emotional contagion. Kuzmenko et al.(2023) reinforce this by demanding a rigorous deconstruction of the linguistic tools utilized in political advertising to expose hidden persuasive tactics that undermine democratic choice. As summarized by Hudzenko (2023) and Hudzenko et al. (2024), a commitment to a "culture of dialogue" and emotional self-regulation forms a natural barrier to the propagation of hostility. They conclude that the ability to engage in empathetic reflection and critical analysis is vital for preserving mental well-being and maintaining social cohesion amidst the informational challenges of the modern age. This psycholinguistic resilience ensures that individuals remain subjects of their own thoughts rather than objects of external control, promoting human flourishing even in unstable information environments.

Table 1

Mechanisms of Linguo-Psychological Manipulation in Media

Mechanism Category	Specific Examples	Scientific Source (Reference)
Linguistic Tools	Euphemisms, metaphors, evaluative vocabulary, emotional lexemes	Korol & Voloshchuk (2020); Nahorna (2023); Kyryliuk (2020)
Pragmatic Strategies	Framing, precedent units, "mask of positivity", suggestiveness	Levko (2020); Kondruk (2019); Pavliv (2023)
Psychological Anchors	Visual elements, emotional contagion, PsyOps, "halo effect"	Pomazan & Ilina (2025); Telpis (2025); Lutsenko et al. (2025)
Security & Literacy	Media education, emotional regulation, deconstruction of advertising	Krylova-Grek & Korniyaka (2023); Hudzenko (2023); Kuzmenko et al. (2023)

Note. Developed by the authors.

Thus, the reviewed studies collectively illustrate that media manipulation is not a series of isolated linguistic tricks but a multifaceted, systemic, and context-dependent psycholinguistic process. It involves the strategic integration of verbal, pragmatic, and non-verbal resources that enable manipulators to bypass rational filters and reshape mass consciousness. Whether in the face of hybrid warfare, political discourse, or digital communication, manipulative influence emerges not simply from the content of messages but from the dynamic interaction between specifically structured language, emotional triggers, and cognitive biases. This holistic understanding is crucial

for designing effective media education frameworks and psychological security strategies that aim not only to protect the public from disinformation but to foster critical thinking and cognitive autonomy amid information instability.

6. Discussion

To illustrate the practical application of the proposed framework, this section examines contemporary examples from digital media environments. In periods of political tension and hybrid conflict, social media platforms serve as key channels for disseminating emotionally intensified narratives aimed at shaping public perception. These narratives frequently rely on polarized vocabulary, simplified dichotomies such as "friend" versus "enemy," and repetitive visual imagery to generate strong affective responses.

From the perspective of the analytical framework, such strategies operate simultaneously across linguistic, psychological, and digital levels. At the linguistic level, the use of evaluative lexemes and metaphorical constructions constrains interpretation by framing events within predetermined semantic boundaries. At the psychological level, these linguistic cues activate emotional responses and cognitive biases, thereby reducing the capacity for critical reflection. At the digital level, algorithmic distribution systems amplify these effects by prioritizing highly engaging content, ensuring rapid circulation and repeated exposure.

The integration of verbal and visual elements further strengthens manipulative influence. Visual components, including symbolic imagery and emotionally charged representations, function as psychological anchors that precondition interpretation before textual content is

cognitively processed. This multimodal interaction reinforces a specific narrative and stabilizes interpretive bias within the audience.

Moreover, the repetitive dissemination of such narratives contributes to the formation of "information bubbles," in which individuals are predominantly exposed to content that aligns with their existing beliefs. This selective exposure intensifies cognitive bias and reduces the likelihood of encountering alternative perspectives. As a result, manipulation becomes embedded not only in individual messages but in the broader informational environment, creating a self-reinforcing system of influence.

These observations confirm that manipulative influence cannot be understood as a set of isolated linguistic techniques. Rather, it emerges from the dynamic interaction between language, psychological processes, and digital infrastructures. This systemic perspective highlights the necessity of addressing manipulation at multiple levels simultaneously.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of developing strategies that enhance informational resilience. Such strategies include strengthening psycholinguistic literacy, promoting critical evaluation of media content, and increasing awareness of algorithmic mediation. By equipping individuals with the ability to recognize linguistic triggers and emotional manipulation, it becomes possible to mitigate the impact of covert influence and support more autonomous cognitive processing in digital environments.

7. Conclusions

The contemporary exploration of manipulative strategies and linguo-psychological mechanisms within the media space confirms that the hidden transformation of mass consciousness is not merely a result of individual linguistic tricks. Instead, media manipulation functions as a systemic, high-tech process driven by the synergy of language structures, emotional triggers, and cognitive predispositions.

First, it is evident that manipulation should be perceived not as a static message but as a dynamic psychological programming process. Studies by Hudzenko (2023), Hudzenko et al. (2024), and Shchetinina et al. (2019) demonstrate that the effectiveness of media influence is closely linked to the exploitation of vulnerable zones in the human psyche, where specifically organized speech components bypass rational scrutiny to impose ready-made cognitive models.

Second, both empirical and theoretical analysis emphasize the critical role of linguistic "masks" and symbolic resources in establishing communicative authority. The research on the "manipulative strategy of positivity" (Kondruk, 2019) and the psycholinguistic dimension of religious discourse (Levko, 2020) highlight that benevolent markers and precedent units—such as iconic quotes or spiritual symbols—can neutralize critical thinking by activating affective attachment and collective associations.

Third, manipulative influence must be understood as a multi-level phenomenon that integrates verbal and non-verbal components. Investigations by Pomazan and Ilina (2025) and Telpis (2025) indicate that social networks amplify these effects through a "linguopragmatic

symbiosis," where visual "anchors" and rapid-fire Psychological Operations (PsyOps) create information bubbles. This supports a shift from simple content analysis to a more holistic deconstruction of digital communicative strategies.

While much of the literature focuses on the mechanisms of influence, it is equally important to consider the collective impact of information warfare. During hybrid conflicts, as noted by Lutsenko et al. (2025) and Kyryliuk (2020), the weaponization of language aims to demoralize entire populations and disrupt social cohesion through demoralizing narratives and specific "markers of danger". This dimension becomes especially salient in high-stress environments where the speed of content distribution can trigger mass panic.

Fourth, findings from Krylova-Grek and Korniyaka (2023) and Hudzenko (2023) suggest that targeted education in psycholinguistic literacy—particularly when integrated into media education systems—can strengthen both personal and societal resilience against suggestion. Training in semantic deconstruction, emotional self-regulation, and source verification is especially effective in preparing individuals for the pressures of a polarized media environment.

To synthesize these findings into a practical framework, the following table outlines the systemic strategies for enhancing information and psychological security:

Table 2

Practical Recommendations for Counteracting Media Manipulation

Direction of Counteraction	Specific Measures and Tools	Scientific Source (Reference)
Media Education	Implementation of psycholinguistic modules to decode suggestion models and recognize linguistic triggers.	Krylova-Grek & Korniyaka (2023)
Cognitive Defense	Development of critical thinking skills to analyze political advertising and deconstruct persuasive tactics.	Kuzmenko et al. (2023)
Psychological Regulation	Cultivation of emotional self-regulation and empathetic dialogue as barriers to hostility and polarization.	Hudzenko (2023)
Linguistic Analysis	Monitoring of "weaponized" lexicon, euphemisms, and metaphors used in hybrid warfare and propaganda.	Kyryliuk (2020); Korol & Voloshchuk (2020)

Direction of Counteraction	Specific Measures and Tools	Scientific Source (Reference)
Digital Verification	Recognition of visual "anchors" and PsyOps patterns in social media to avoid "echo chambers".	Pomazan & Ilina (2025); Telpis (2025)

Note. Developed by the authors.

Although the concepts of manipulation and linguo-psychological influence are thoroughly discussed, the research would benefit from a more precise operationalization of these constructs for practical defense strategies. To enhance the practical relevance of this framework, it is important to define measurable indicators of "manipulative intensity" in media texts. These could include variables such as the density of emotional-evaluative lexemes (Nahorna, 2023), the frequency of suggestiveness in metaphors (Korol & Voloshchuk, 2020), or the pragmatic impact of political advertising (Kuzmenko et al., 2023).

Finally, the methodological challenges in identifying hidden influence point to the need for a unified interdisciplinary approach. As shown by the synthesized research, future practice must prioritize the development of a "culture of dialogue" (Hudzenko, 2023) to neutralize the strategies of hostility. Without a comprehensive framework that connects linguistic markers with psychological reactions, society remains vulnerable to the sophisticated technologies of cognitive control.

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Author Bios

Olena G. Hudzenko is a Candidate of Philosophical Sciences and Associate Professor of Psychology whose research focuses on the psychology of personality, psycholinguistics, and philosophical anthropology. Her work examines the mechanisms of manipulative influences and the complexities of human nature, integrating her extensive background in social sciences and practical psychology.

Tetiana V. Borozentseva is a PhD in Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor, and Head of the Psychology Department whose research focuses on motivation theory, corporate culture formation, and invariant modeling in psychocorrectional work. Her work examines the intersection of social psychology and business, with particular emphasis on personnel management technologies, conflict mediation, and psychological practices in family and developmental counseling.

Anastasiia I. Aleksandruk is an undergraduate student whose academic path integrates philology and behavioral sciences, specifically focusing on secondary education in German and English languages and foreign literature. Her studies examine the intersection of linguistic instruction and practical psychology, with an emphasis on developing multifaceted educational approaches for modern learning environments.

Vira M. Kolomieiets is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Applied Linguistics whose research focuses on sociolinguistics, gender linguistics, and translation studies. Her work examines the methodology of foreign language teaching and the practical application of translation theories,

with particular emphasis on professional language training within academic and corporate environments.

Yuliia M. Moiseiuk is a senior teacher whose research focuses on semiotics, psycholinguistics, art therapy, and linguistic culturology. Her work examines the representation of socionics in character speech and the function of heraldic vocabulary in English fiction, with particular emphasis on polyglot techniques in language instruction.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

This study does not report new empirical data. The analysis is based on existing literature and publicly available sources cited in the text.

Use of Generative AI

The authors did not use generative AI in the preparation of this manuscript.