Axiology of Russia's Image in Mass Media Discourse in Coronavirus Pandemic

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Abstract: The current paper addresses the issue of axiological potential of mass media discursive texts generated during the coronavirus outbreak, namely those discussing and debating Russian vaccines. The study draws on discourse analysis and linguoaxiological analysis of media texts, which reveals the main ideological trends of informing the global community about the state of the Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. The authors have determined that the trends revealed as a result of media discourse analysis concern such phenomena as 'political agenda', 'safety issues' and 'compulsion to vaccinate / mistrust of government'. To share these axiologically charged ideas, speakers follow particular verbal practices, i.e., using emotive vocabulary, primarily evaluative word-combinations, axiological notions, metaphors, pejorative vocabulary, discursive markers etc. for manipulating the perception of the covered events. As a result, main constituents for the three key thematic fields are identified, extensively described, and structured through verbal representations of axiological notions. The results illustrate how mass media discourse can be used to investigate axiological notions delivered by the author. Besides, it can provide researchers with an instrument to identify the language means used to create either positive or negative media image.

1.Introduction

Nowadays a generally accepted position on the axiological nature of human consciousness, its orientation towards social values is being shaped. Axiology aims to introduce regulations for the personality formation (Ilyin 2005:203). These regulations ensure the integration of society into the process of encouraging individuals to behave in a socially approved way in life-saving situations. The values of human experience, both natural and cultural, contain those of cognitive, utilitarian, ethical, aesthetic, etc. nature, as well as linguistic ones - those of the language system itself (Raitskaya and Tikhonova 2020). Through language, the

speaker orients themselves in the world of their values and orients other people by exerting a regulatory influence on their states and actions.

In texts, axiological meanings form the basis of social interaction and determine the parameters of discourse development. When a positive or negative assessment is verbalized, especially in publicly available discursive texts, where mass media belong, a kind of polemics of the writing personality is revealed. In this regard, media is seen as a wide study field, since today these are not only human practices that are changing rapidly, but also people themselves – inquisitive personalities who appeal to the media in search of truths.

It is quite obvious that for the last two years of pandemic isolation mass media has gained even more attention being converted from a source of information into a specific tool for cognizing reality. The modern improvement of information and communication technologies has led to a significant increase in the overall body of mass media texts. People's ideas about what is happening in different parts of the planet are largely due to those images and interpretations on the basis of which we can talk about the formation of an informational picture of the world which reflects national and cultural characteristics of the perception and the system of value relations (Pantina 2018:4).

Being employed to generate and deliver messages that prevail over all other types of discourses, mass media texts are seen as necessary for stabilization and self-organization of societies. They reflect a special type of reality which is a product of human information activity and is characterized by axiologically marked symbolic space and time. Media texts are a specific structural and semantic unit isolated in the text continuum of the information field which realizes a socially regulatory function (Benamara et al. 2018; Feezell 2018; González 2018; Heyvaert, Randour, Dodeigne, Perrez, Reuchamps 2020).

With view to rapid shifts in the world socio-political agenda, it is becoming especially important to trace the new ways in which values are represented by modern mass media. Information abundance demands identifying the language means used to create either a positive or negative media image. When it comes to such issues as shaping the image of a country, it is of great importance to determine which linguistic means are more useful in arousing a positive impression among readers so that the country can improve its reputation. Yet, despite the increased attention of different authors towards axiology of mass media, to our best knowledge, not enough focus is put on its particular role during the pandemic outbreak and its contribution to shedding light on Covid-related issues. All this drives the main purpose of the article, which is to analyze the key thematic areas of information presentation and evaluation and discuss the means of verbalizing it based on the sample of media texts debating Russian vaccination.

The objectives of this study, thus, include (1) generating a databank of the text materials retrieved from publicly available authoritative well-quality British and North American press covering the Russian Sputnik V vaccination (2) identifying the linguistic means representing the authors' axiological notions and

analyzing the way they deliver it (3) identifying the key thematic fields the defined values belong to.

2. Literature review

Modern linguistics view the concept of human speech-thinking activity as a way of experiencing/ mastering/ evaluating certain life situations. There are several works which emphasize the importance of values for the society functioning and development (Blumler 2019; Crafa Liu and Brodeur 2019; Duizenberg 2020; Jacobsen and Fuchs 2020). Values are considered as guiding principles of human behavior (Sagiv and Roccas 2017) which contribute to peoples' well-being (Sortheix and Schwartz 2017). Values are also perceived as behavior characteristics which are based on the idea of what the good is, thus allowing an individual to justify their actions (Narvaes 2018).

In modern public opinion, values are reflected primarily in critical and valorizing discourses. In linguistic studies, they are implied through discursive development, that is, discussion aimed at recognizing the axiological system of a modern person rather than a certain set of values inherent in society or a group (which is primarily the subject of sociological research).

The system of values as the most important regulator of human behavior is primarily expressed at the verbal level. Analysis of value judgments makes it possible to identify the grounds for evaluating a particular object of reality or phenomenon or, more globally, study the axiological approach culture takes to explore the world around us. Possible conflicts of values are likely to lead to different consequences of cultural nature. Thus, more stable societies resolve situations of internal value revision whereas in case a "social organism" disintegrates, reassessment of values can be dangerous for cultural framework. For instance, it may definitely lead to the replacement of higher spiritual values with pseudo-values related to economic, political etc. spheres of society.

In linguistic contexts values are primarily studied by using discourse analysis – the method born in Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, the earliest example of applying it in full is generally accepted to be "Stilstudien" originally written by Spitzer and translated into French by Foucault (Spitzer 1969). Being a distinguished psychoanalyst, Foucault also contributed towards the development of the method and its wide employment in different sciences (Foucault 2022). The reason linguists base their dwellings on discourse analyses lies in the role a language plays as a central focus to understand social practice (Potter 2004).

The great potential discourse studies have in the linguoaxiological prospective is continuously underlined by papers and books aiming to investigate patterns of languages in different settings. Thus, for example, Selznick (1992:60) outlines the possibilities for identifying values through discourses by defining what they are and how they can be enhanced. Gehman, Trevino and Garud (2013) introduce the concept of "value discourse" and highlights its importance in terms of circulating values within and across societies.

This, in turn, can be vividly explained by the capacity of discourse as a contextually generated language for special purposes, which forms a space for "search for truth" by modeling and promoting socially significant meanings including public opinion by means of mass communication. The world of generated meanings is subjectively ordered; it correlates with the moment of selection in the very isolation of significant fragments of the world. That is, it is expedient and can reflect the natural orientation of a person to the desired, proper, necessary (Hassan 2018; Sagiv and Roccas, 2017).

On the one hand, the characteristics of media texts are associated with the analysis of the current state and the functioning of a whole complex of speech means which reflect the latest achievements of linguistics, psychology, semiotics, philosophy, philology, and other disciplines (Jones, Chick and Hafner 2015; Ryabchenko, Katermina, Malysheva 2019). On the other hand, present-day individuals living in a world of intense transformation experience the pressure of opinions which form ideology translated by the mass media. In any case, a proactive individual is most likely to acquire a media personality because of the constant appeal to the media as an instrument in search of truths (Murthy 2018; Rodout 2018).

The controversial impact media discourse has in modern settings provides for the increasing interest it gains in academic circles. Research papers focusing on mass media are popular with society, which, in turn, resulted in one of the most influential and yet most problematic of scientific fields – "media linguistics" focusing on comprehensive study of the media language functioning (Harp 2019; Hassan 2018; Lakoff 2019; Mortensen, Coupland and Thøgersen 2017; Sahmeni and Afifah 2019; Widuna 2018).

In comparison with traditional linguistics (the key concept of which is a verbal text with integrity and coherence), the discourse of mass media unites verbal and extra linguistic constituents into one whole. "The semiotic complexity of communication in the context of media is outlined with the help of the concept of 'multimodality' together with various cultural aspects (Lüger 2017:22-23). Moreover, in modern communication the boundaries of semiotic systems are mutually-penetrating, thus one system may influence the other and visa-versa (Litvishko, Shiryaeva, Tikhonova and Kosycheva 2022).

Focusing on media and ideology, studies by the most influential media text researchers (Abdullah 2014; Benamara, Inkpen, Taboada 2018; Feezell 2018; Lüger 2017) state that mass media purposefully distribute information of ideological and psychological significance to the target audiences, encouraging the participants to take certain actions. The functions of the media text as a socially significant mass media tool include commenting on and interpreting what is happening in society, demonstrating existing norms and relations, forming public opinion, maintaining social relations, etc. Borisova suggests that, in general, this provides a system of social relations at the level of society (Borisova 2016:38). Abdullah (2014) also pays attention to the hidden socio-political issues and agenda in various areas of language as social practice.

Using empirical ethnographic research Schrøder focuses on the textual characteristics of media discourse, the intention of its senders, and the meanings generated by its recipients (Schrøder 2007). Milani and Johnson (2010:4) point out the fact that the meaning-making potential of any language is the "result of particular processes under specific social, political, cultural and economic conditions". The researchers investigate language ideology as a driving engine for the mass media communication. Under these assumptions, studying media discourse practices in terms of linguoaxiological approach can be seen as a powerful tool for exploring the cultural and ideological implications delivered to mass audiences.

It is important to point out that to properly evaluate the axiological aspect of the mass media discourse in question, it is necessary to base our judgment on the socio-cultural background of the Russian society. In other words, a set of social, political, and cultural aspects of the Russian society and the way they affect people's mentality in terms of handling COVID-19 are crucial for a deeper understanding of the matter in question.

The results of the All-Russian survey on the social well-being of citizens in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted by Tula State University and Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, revealed three basic types of fears that prevail among Russians when it comes to this disease: relatives and friends' exposure to coronavirus infection; their own infection along with the lack of necessary medical care; a significant drop in income leading to the worsening of living conditions amid an uncontrollably spreading pandemic. The mentioned fears, in turn, have divided the Russian society into three socio-demographic groups in relation to the pandemic and ways to overcome it: covid-pessimists, who suffered the most from the restrictions of the COVID-19 virus and were not able to adapt to life under the pandemic restrictions; covid-optimists, who showed an impressive level of adaptivity to a set of new circumstances in connection with the spread of the Coronavirus; covid-realists, mainly focused on constructively overcoming the negative consequences of restrictive pandemic measures (Batanina, Brodovskaya, Dombrovskaya and Parma 2021).

These findings have certain implications relevant for our study. Firstly, the presence of a significant part of Russian citizens (22.8%, according to the abovementioned research), who are seriously influenced by the COVID-19 restrictions, clearly indicated the overall pessimism and unsatisfactory social well-being when it comes to this part of the Russian society. This particular social segment proves to be most sensitive to the unconventional rhetoric of opposition forces exploiting the topic of restrictions on the non-spread of the pandemic from the standpoint of infringing on individual rights. Therefore, the existence of covid-pessimists strengthens the threat of the pandemic to turn into a powerful political trigger.

At the same time, the topic of the pandemic has become a powerful stimulus for the RuNet's radicalization, as well as a tool for manipulating the public

consciousness of the Russian society in the digital space, first and foremost through the corresponding mas media discourse concerning the Coronavirus pandemic.

All this falls in line with other similar investigations (Malysheva 2020; Nestik 2020; Popov and Veklenko 2020) stating that the Coronavirus pandemic can be easily characterized as an 'anthropic collapse' and a biopolitical crisis (Popov and Veklenko 2020) that has brought about social contradictions and a growing distrust between the population and the authorities, as well as massive changes in people's socio-psychological states and their socio-political trajectories.

All the previously mentioned aspects clearly indicate that linguoaxiological analysis of the mass media discourse plays a pivotal role in properly pinpointing social sentiments concerning the subject matter of the research, on the one hand, and being able to adequately manipulate those sentiments through axiologically charged discourses.

The analysis made by Tulchinskii (2020:197) revealed that "the semiotic vector of social communication has shifted from the emphasis on the transmission of social normative meanings to the presentation of personal meanings (emotional-evaluative opinions and experiences)".

The authors investigating the formation of Russia's image in British political mass media discourse Posternyak and Boeva-Omelechko (2018) conclude that British public media contribute a lot to the establishment of the mainly negative representation of Russia by using "the corresponding concept and its metaphorical, evaluative and ethnocultural associative layers".

Focusing on the concept of "subjective pattern of disease" in order to assess the public perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pervichko, Mitina, Stepanova, Koniukhovskaia and Dorokhov (2020) revealed that the assessment of the threat from a pandemic plays a mediating role between the fear of an unknown disease and the possibility of its control when speaking about the role of Russia in vaccination measures.

Obviously, the representation of Russia in the English language mass media discourse in a viable multicultural global community varies considerably depending on the policy applied that recognizes conflicts of ideas and interests between diverse national groups.

Thus, the analysis of the up-to-date papers shows that the leading role of mass media in modern public discourse is influenced by the role of the personal representation of the actual information that provokes extreme scientific interest to the field of the pandemic mass media discourse.

3. Materials and methods

As one of the oldest media for spreading information and covering issues for mass readers, newspapers and magazines possess the ability to both shape public opinion and express it in the layout of articles. The text potential is even higher today due to the technical ability of online representation of mass publications. The facilities available to media today determine the speed, format and features of news

circulation. It is due to these reasons that we have chosen the genre of a newspaper article – it is both traditional and innovative, influential and omnipresent.

This research paper presents the results of discourse analysis of articles published in the period between 2020–2021 in the long-established newspapers – The Guardian and The New York Times (20 articles, 75690 words in total) retrieved from www.theguardian.com, www.nytimes.com.These sources were targeted at first of all as statistically they belong to most trusted and authoritative "qualitative press" in the United Kingdom and the USA – two key native speaking countries respectively. Each of the selected texts was to a certain degree related to the Russian key vaccine – Sputnik. In order to study and evaluate language means used to create the assessment of Russia's scientific and technological progress at the level of context description of the Russia's vaccine, we had to employ methods and ideas in the frameworks of two approaches: discourse analysis and linguoaxiological analysis.

Discourse analysis is a specific method of modern scientific research which has been formed based on a variety of theories related to various areas of scientific knowledge: ethnography, social and cultural anthropology, linguistics, etc. The most important concept in most theoretical approaches to this analysis is the social context where language is assigned a role to deliver values, beliefs and assumptions. Discourse analysis theoretical constructs are less speculative and extend our overview about the contents, structural components and functions of the analyzed phenomena. One more distinctive feature of discourse analysis is that it regards socio-political reality not as some static entity, rather as continuously developing construct (Gee 1999; Paltridge 2006). Discourse-analytical theoretical constructions have a lower level of speculativeness and expand our understanding of the essence, structural components and functions of the studied phenomena. Within the framework of the media linguistic approach, the methodology for analyzing media texts, is characterized by a stable system of parameters which allows an extremely accurate description of a particular media text. A central category of media linguistics is media text which is considered to be a discrete unit of mass media discourse (Posternyak 2020).

Furthermore, we have taken into consideration extra-linguistic notions that helped us interpret the language data. Drawing on the political and historical reality of Russian society, we were able to show the connection between the language practice and the reasons behind certain linguistic traditions. As Jones puts it, it is important to be mindful of "the broader global contexts in which technologies and information are produced, circulated, and valued" (Jones et al. 2015).

Linguoaxiological analysis is a semantic analysis of units of different language levels and categories of discursive nature aimed at identifying normative and evaluative values in the field of human behavior. Its procedure is the extraction of value judgments from the speech continuum which allow us to identify ideas about what is proper, correct, socially and personally desirable for communicants, to reconstruct the presumptions and attitudes that guide a person or a social group. Linguoaxiological analysis contributes to displaying the ways of cognition of

reality, characteristic of any people or community revealing the value preferences of various groups of people, being the expression of the specifics of the cultural code of nations and social strata. It is designed to identify value-significant realities among the cognitive features of the analyzed mass-media texts.

In order to identify values in the mass-media texts we analyzed the context, paying attention to evaluative words, their positive and negative connotations, metaphors employed, modality of the texts, particular patterns.

4. Procedure
The procedure for this research included a number of steps:
1. Determining the sources of the corpus materials and conducting content analysis (drawing on such criteria as the topic of the article, the authors, article genres);
2. Conducting discourse analysis to study relations between language and processes going on in the society which allow the speaker and listener/reader to interact in a successful way;
3. Analyzing the texts for linguoaxiological meanings and recurrent ideas concerning the image of Russia during coronavirus pandemic expressed by the authors of the articles;
4. Interpreting the material of mass-media texts to understand the internal content of the interpreted object through the study of its external manifestations, including language means, such as evaluative word-combinations, axiological notions, metaphors, words with a negative evaluation (connotations) and others.

5. Results and discussion
5.1. Key thematic fields
The presentation of events and their interpretation is based on the cultural traditions of the readers and authors of the messages. These characteristics are largely due to the interpretation of events as an element associated with the interpretation of knowledge about the event. The axiology of the media consists in the dissemination of a system of views on the world in a society represented by a certain set of values.

The study of the Russian image formation during the coronavirus pandemic in the English-language mass media discourse shows that the characteristics of the media discourse language stoke by its evaluative nature are manipulation, brightness of images, symbolism. By analyzing the texts of articles from The Guardian and The New York Times, it is possible to determine the main linguoaxiological directions of informing the global community about scientific and technological progress in Russia, i.e. linguistic and extra-linguistic practices aimed to leverage the perception of the covered events.

In order to achieve the main goal of the research and analyze the key thematic areas of information delivery and means of its evaluation explication we conducted analysis of the texts retrieved from the official sites of Guardian and the New York Times. As a result, we were able to single out three thematic fields: *Political agenda, Safety Issues, Compulsion to Vaccinate*. They rely on such axiological meanings and recurrent ideas as vaccine race, united front, distrust of the

government, undermining faith in vaccination. The main linguistic means serving to understand the internal content of the interpreted objects are emotive vocabulary, metaphors, pejorative vocabulary and discursive markers.

5.2. Political agenda

To begin with, the name of the vaccine (Sputnik V) introduces the source of political confrontation and opposition between Russia and the West. The name itself is associated with the historical context and is explained in British and American press: in 1957 a message about the launch of a Soviet satellite, *Sputnik*, into the orbit appeared in 7 languages. In this context, axiological associations are projected by words *echo – to express the ideas or feelings that someone else has expressed, to evoke – to bring a particular emotion, idea, or memory into your mind [https://www.macmillandictionary.com]*. Russia's representation of the Western response to vaccine development is reinforced by the provision that Russia is once again represented as a strong international actor: *A website in seven languages featured a recording of the beeps broadcast from space in 1957 confirming that the first Soviet Sputnik satellite had reached orbit. Those historical echoes pointedly evoked the idea that Russia was No. 1 again (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/opinion/coronavirus-vaccine-russia-united-states.html?searchResultPosition=15).*

There is a reference to the days of Cold War and arms race – the name of the vaccine can be also seen as a competition for international prestige and scientific and technological progress. This historical context can be traced several times in the analyzed material being one of the main constituents for the thematic field "Political Agenda".

The axiological notion "opposition" is constantly found in the news in which this reference is made: *The vaccine's name evokes the world's first satellite to be launched into orbit, Sputnik, during the cold war space race, which was also seen as a competition for international prestige (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin)*

The emergence of an occasionalism *vaccine race* invented by journalists by analogy with *cold war space race* should be noted – *What is clear is that the vaccine race has become another front in the standoff between Russia and the west (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).*

This axiological notion *vaccine race* at its core contains this political confrontation between Russia and the West. The reference to the time of the launch of the Soviet satellite is the phrasal verb *hark back – go back to something earlier*. The evaluative word-combination *fierce competition* emphasizes the fierce nature of competition between the two superpowers in the mid-20th century. The periphery of this axiological notion is the metonymy *scientific brains* as well as the numeral *first* denoting the former power of the Soviet Union*: It is no accident that Russia has named its vaccine Sputnik V, harking back to the Soviet satellite sent*

into orbit in 1957 amid fierce competition with the US. For Russia, providing the first solution to a pandemic that has affected every corner of the world would be seen as a confirmation that the country's scientific brains are still among the world's best (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).

Another source of "discontent" comes from British security officials claiming that Russian hackers have stolen secrets from Western medical institutions. This comment defines one more constituent of the thematic field "Political Agenda". The topic of stolen Western medical secrets is included into the axiological notion "vaccine race" as it shows complex and tense relations between Russia and the West. Nevertheless, Kirill Dmitriev, the person in charge of the sale of the Russian vaccine, denies these accusations stating that they are just an attempt to "blacken" Russia. Pejorative evaluation is achieved at the context level through the use of words the evaluation of which is fixed at the level of strong implication: *to tarnish – if something tarnishes your reputation or image, it makes people have a worse opinion of you than they did before; allegation – a statement that someone has done something wrong or illegal even though this has not been proved* which contain components "worse than", "wrong, illegal even though": *There were also earlier allegations from British security officials that Russian hackers had stolen secrets from medical institutions in the west. Dmitriev dismissed the criticism and allegations as a "concerted effort to tarnish the Russian vaccine for political reasons" (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).* Thus, an axiological field is formed, in which a negative image of Russia is built, which determines the expression of a negative evaluation.

One more constituent of the negative image of Russia in the light of politics is formalized with the help of words *to paint black –to tarnish* and *to undermine – to make something or someone become gradually less effective, confident, or successful*. They also belong to the axiological field "vaccine race": *"The west will unfortunately, for political reasons, continue to paint it black and undermine, and that is just the unfortunate reality of the world," he said (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).* This creates a high degree of pejorative evaluation contextually.

Anti-Russian views are contrasted with Pro-Russian views. This part of the thematic field "Political Agenda" is presented in the words by Kirill Dmitriev believing that part of the Russian mentality is the idea of saving the world. It is this axiology that underlies Russia's desire to be the first country capable of not only producing a vaccine but also distributing it around the world. The combination *Russian mentality* is axiologically marked and contributes to the strengthening of the emotional evaluation of the context: *For Kirill Dmitriev, the man in charge of selling Russia's coronavirus vaccine to the world, there's a simple rationale behind Moscow's accelerated push to be the first country to roll out a coronavirus vaccine for widespread use.*

"It's part of the Russian mentality to save the world," said Dmitriev, head of Russia's RDIF sovereign wealth fund, in an interview with the Guardian (.https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine)

The creation and application of the Russian vaccine can be viewed in British and North American publications not only as an attempt to weaken the global crisis, but also as a symbol of national pride, a statement of leadership.

Metaphors *alleviate a worldwide health crisis* (alleviate – to make something less painful, severe, or serious), *to wound the global economy* (wound – to cause a problem or great unhappiness) enhance the emotional evaluation of the context, and the axiologically charged word *front-runner* (front-runner – the person or thing considered the most likely to win a competition, game, or election) actualizes the semantics of a political conflict:

Russia is one of a number of countries rushing to develop and administer a vaccine. Not only would such a vaccine help alleviate a worldwide health crisis that has killed more than 680,000 people and badly wounded the global economy, it would also become a symbol of national pride. And Russia has used the race as a propaganda tool, even in the absence of published scientific evidence to support its claim as a front-runner
(https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/02/world/europe/russia-trials-vaccine-October.html?searchResultPosition=41)

Russia's plans with the vaccine are related to its sale abroad: it is planned to sign international agreements on the production of 500 million doses and requests for 1 billion doses from 20 countries. The number of supposed vaccines is very large – these are workers in high-risk occupations aged 18 to 60 years without chronic diseases, 5000 people (doctors, teachers, social workers) signed up for vaccinations within the first five hours. In this context, a large amount of statistical information is used as arguments.

Kirill Dmitriev, the head of the country's RDIF sovereign wealth fund, said the vaccine would be marketed abroad under the brand name Sputnik V with international agreements to produce 500m doses and requests for 1bn doses from 20 countries. The country launched a mass vaccination programme earlier this month, first inoculating high-risk workers aged 18-60 without chronic illnesses (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/28/russia-admits-to-world-third-worst-covid-19-death-toll-underreported).

> Over the first five hours, 5,000 people signed up for the jab – teachers, doctors, social workers, those who are today risking their health and lives the most," the mayor, Sergei Sobyanin, wrote on his personal website on Friday   (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/05/coronavirus-moscow-delivers-sputnik-v-vaccine-clinics-russia).

The main constituents of the thematic field "Political Agenda" are presented in Figure 1 "Thematic Field Political Agenda".

Figure 1. "Political Agenda"

5.3. Safety issues

This thematic field shows ambiguous evaluation in the British and North American press from both professionals and ordinary citizens.

Thus, Western scientists are concerned that the Russian vaccine has not been adequately tested and is not safe enough. Pejorative evaluation in these contexts is created through the emotive vocabulary –*to raise concerns, before full safety and efficacy trials had been completed*:

> Scientists have raised concerns about the speed at which Russia has worked, giving the regulatory go-ahead for its vaccines and launching mass vaccinations before full safety and efficacy trials had been completed (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/05/coronavirus-moscow-delivers-sputnik-v-vaccine-clinics-russia)

The vaccination report in Russia has been met with criticism from experts who describe Russian approach as *reckless* and *unethical* claiming that there is a risk of exacerbating rather than helping to contain the pandemic. The use of words with negative connotations *(criticism – comments that show that you think something is wrong or bad; reckless – not thinking about the possible bad effects of your actions; unethical – morally wrong, or against accepted standards of behavior, especially in a particular profession; to exacerbate – to make a problem*

worse) implies the creation of intense negative judgment and conceptual axiological images:

> The announcement that Russia was pushing ahead with large-scale manufacture and mass immunization before so-called "phase 3" testing was greeted with criticism from experts who described the Russian approach as reckless and unethical, saying it risked exacerbating rather than helping manage the pandemic. The WHO said the vaccine should not be produced until it had completed phase 3 trials (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin)

Doubts about the haste of mass vaccination in Russia are expressed by America's Secretary of Health Alex Azar. They are expressed using the word with a negative evaluation *(anxiety – a worried feeling you have because you think something bad might happen)* as well as the parallel construction *the point is*. This construction gives logic to the statement and contributes to the creation of a discourse in which ideas aimed at the need to observe safety and efficiency are discussed and constructed.

Underlining anxiety over the Russian testing regime, the US health and human services secretary, Alex Azar, said during a visit to Taiwan: "The point is not to be first with a vaccine. The point is to have a vaccine that is safe and effective for the American people and the people of the world." He said he expected a US vaccine by December (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin

Hesitations about the correct actions of the Russian authorities are also represented by the expert opinions of leading scientists. Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College, uses the word with a negative connotation *(insurmountable – (especially of a problem or a difficulty) so great that it cannot be dealt with successfully)* to speak of a possible aggravation of the situation in immeasurable proportions. He also states that the creation of a vaccine in this case is *a common cause* (*We are all in this together*), and not a proof of someone's superiority, which at the axiological level is expressed by using the first person plural pronoun *we*, indicating community as well as the adverb *together (together - with cooperation and interchange)* which contains elements of cooperation and interaction.

In a statement to the science media centre, Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College, said: "The collateral damage from release of any vaccine that was less than safe and effective would exacerbate our current problems insurmountably. I hope these criteria have been followed. We are all in this together."
(https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin)

Altmann's doubts also lie in criticism of the lack of "transparency" of the Russian vaccine, the inability to track its progress. This constituent adds more concerns about the necessity of mass vaccination. It is in this axiologically marked

word (*transparency – an honest way of doing things that allows other people to know exactly what you are doing*) that possible negative consequences are indicated.

The tragedy of the situation is emphasized by the Present Perfect Tense in combination with inherent-evaluative words–*there have been so many debacles in the handling of this pandemic* (debacle – something that fails completely in an embarrassing way). He warns that the vaccine should not be a blunder –*a careless or embarrassing mistake*. The pronoun *another* implicitly indicates the possibility of another large number of victims of the Covid which cannot leave the reader indifferent.

Altmann was also critical of the lack of transparency around the Russian vaccine.

> "I have spent a long time trying to track all the candidate vaccines through the evidence that's been published and preprints," he said. "What has been noticeably unusual is that there's been almost no information, and none that's been peer reviewed, on this Russian vaccine apart from on the clinical test website. There have been so many debacles in the handling of this pandemic. This is not another occasion to blunder in. If this is a vaccine to save humanity, you want to line up the candidate's side by side because the devil is in the detail. Some may last six months; some six years." (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin)

Another authoritative opinion is expressed by Francois Balloux, professor of computational systems biology at the University College of London. He describes what is happening in Russia as "a reckless and foolish decision". He believes it is unethical to vaccinate with an incorrectly tested vaccine adding that any problem with the campaign is disastrous. As for the reasons, he puts forward the negative effect on health as well as the rejection of vaccines by the general population. The emotional speech of a professional is characterized by angry and pejorative evaluations, which underlines the concern of Western scholars.

> Francois Balloux, professor of computational systems biology at University College London, described it as "a reckless and foolish decision".
> Mass vaccination with an improperly tested vaccine is unethical. Any problem with the Russian vaccination campaign would be disastrous, both through its negative effects on health, but also because it would further set back the acceptance of vaccines in the population. (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin).

Similar reasons are put forward by the WHO experts – a negative impact on health, a false sense of security, undermining trust in vaccinations. Doubts about the correctness of Russia's decision-making are also expressed by the axiological notion "undermining faith in vaccination" – this notion will be present in a modified form in other contexts denoting "mistrust of the government on the part of Russian citizens". Thus, the axiological chain of "undermining faith in vaccination" and

"distrust of government by citizens" creates an axiological dominant of what is happening.

Criticism by Western scientists of Russia's actions is a means of discursive unification and the creation of an axiological representation of a "united front". A pejorative evaluation of Russian actions related to vaccination represents Russia's position as inconsistent and damaging but also creates a false sense of security which is the closest synonym to the word *safety* being the dominant of the thematic field.

> The World Health Organization has said all vaccine candidates should go through full stages of testing before being rolled out. Experts have said vaccines that are not properly tested can cause harm in many ways, from a negative impact on health to creating a false sense of security or undermining trust in vaccinations (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin).

Experts even put forward the opinion that any vaccine may be only partially effective due to insufficient knowledge of genetic susceptibility. This context, as it were, summarizes all the fears and precautions expressed by specialists and leads to the conclusion about the caution of using the vaccine. In this context, the use of terminological vocabulary, which allows us to speak of its relative neutrality and objectivity, is worth mentioning: *vaccine, effective genetic, virus: Experts have been suggesting that any vaccines may be only partially effective, and may not give equal protection to all, given how little is known about genetic and other susceptibilities to the virus (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin)*

Along with the negative assessment of foreign experts, voices believing that the necessary level of immunity is possible can be heard – the opinion of Ian Jones, a professor of virology at the University of Reading. This positive evaluation is based on the use of the modal verb *will,* which provides a high degree of probability as well as the metacommunicative construction *it's likely* which simulates a possible situation: *"The risks associated with this class of vaccine are not great, and I think it's likely they will provide a level of immunity that's useful," said Ian Jones, a professor of virology at the University of Reading. (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).*

Vaccine development has evolved into a global race for political supremacy. The enumeration of the names of political leaders – the presidents of the USA, Russia and China – is an emotional marker of the axiological field "vaccine race". Comparison of this race with a proxy war actualizes the semantics of the conflict between Russia and other actors in the current international situation. Moreover, the actions of the United States – Operation Warp Speed, on the one hand, and billions of Chinese yuan spent on vaccine development, on the other, raise concerns

that Russia is playing a foul game: *Russia is trying to snatch a victory by cutting corners*.

Axiologically marked words *to snatch – to quickly steal something from someone; to cut corners – do something the cheapest or easiest way* have a negative connotation associated with distrust from the US and China.

> The major powers are locked in a global race for a vaccine that President Trump, Mr. Putin and China's president, Xi Jinping, are treating as a proxy war for their personal leadership and competing national systems. The United States, with an effort called Operation Warp Speed, and China have poured billions into the pursuit, and health officials worry that Russia is trying to snatch a victory by cutting corners (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/world/europe/russia-coronavirus-vaccine-approval.html?searchResultPosition=35).

The politicization of this axiological notion is also felt in Russia: so, according to one of the officials, it is better not to talk about it, otherwise problems may arise at official meetings. In this case, anxiety is expressed through the modal structure *it was better not* as well as words with negative evaluations: *uneasy – lacking a sense of security or affording no ease or reassurance, risk – the possibility that something unpleasant or dangerous might happen*. The introductory word *still* serves as a discursive marker which contains a negative axiological load. This contrasts with the seemingly positive state of affairs in Russia.

> Thus, such constituents as rejection by general population, supposed negative effect, undermined faith in vaccinations, skepticism among population constitute a part of the thematic field "Safety Issues". Still, some feel uneasy about the speed of the rollout. One official said the issue had become "so politicised" it was better not to talk about it or raise potential risks in official meetings (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).

Another discursive axiological marker *however* testifies to the existence of criticism and skepticism about the safety of the vaccine among Russian population. A Moscow teacher, who did not want to give his name, uses pejorative vocabulary *(underfunded – not have enough money to run properly, to run down – cease to operate because of the exhaustion of motive power, badly – in a serious or severe way)* thus creating the axiological notion "distrust of the government citizens". In this context the words of the respondent explaining this notion are given: *I don't trust the government. There's no way I'm taking the vaccine," said one Moscow teacher, who declined to be named (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin).*

The content and structure of the thematic field "Safety Issues" are presented in Figure 2 "Thematic Field "Safety Issues".
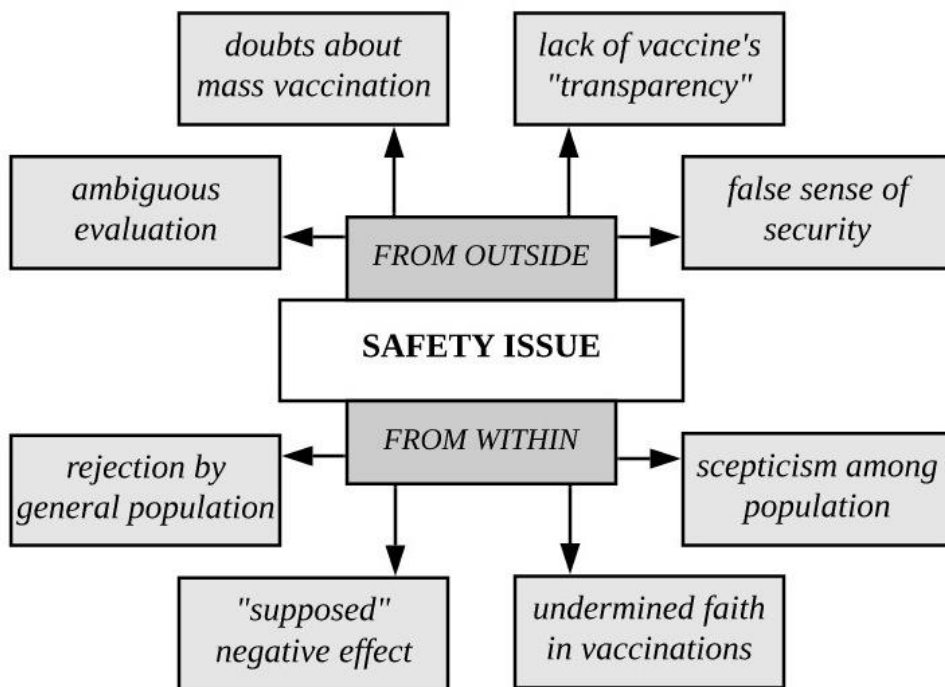
Figure 2. "Safety Issues"

5.4. Compulsion to vaccinate / mistrust of government.
As the previous two semantic fields, this one contains two parts, in this case they coincide with the second model: views from inside and views from outside. The axiological notion "distrust of the government" can also be found in this quote: *I don't trust the government. There's no way I'm taking the vaccine.*

However, some public sector workers expressed skepticism over the vaccine's safety and pointed out that Russia's healthcare system was badly underfunded and run down: *"I don't trust the government. There's no way I'm taking the vaccine," said one Moscow teacher, who declined to be named (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/russia-approves-coronavirus-vaccine-despite-testing-safety-concerns-vladimir-putin*). One of the officials of the Moscow government speaks about the compulsion to vaccinate. This constraint is expressed by the modal verb *have to – used to say that something is required or necessary: we had to sign up online for the trial, I had to make up an excuse.*

Moreover, the newsletter reported that another person had complained about being forced (*a man was complaining he had been forced to attend*): *to force – to make someone do something that they do not want to do, for example by using or threatening to use violence.* These modal markers represent the semantics of force and pressure:

Participants in the trial will have to upload health data into an app for a six-month period. Officials say the trial is oversubscribed, but there are signs that not everyone is participating voluntarily. One employee of a Moscow government department described pressure at work to sign up. "It was made clear that we had to sign up online for the trial. When they called to tell me to come for an appointment, I had to make up an excuse as to why I couldn't," said the employee. A journalist for the Russian outlet Meduza, who volunteered for the vaccine, reported that when she arrived at the vaccination point a man was complaining he had been forced to attend (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/30/a-save-the-world-mentality-russia-places-huge-bet-on-covid-vaccine).

The axiological notion "distrust of government" can also be considered as opposed to the notion "grass roots" being the main constituent of the thematic field "Compulsion to Vaccinate" (*grass roots – the common people at a local level [as distinguished from the centers of political activity]*). The decision to vaccinate came easy for the professor of economics as he monitored the reactions of social media users (*scores of Russians have shared their experience with it on social media*). Thus, the features of the axiological notion "mistrust in government" are constructed.

MOSCOW — Aleksei Zakharov, a Moscow economics professor, got the Russian coronavirus vaccine injected into his upper arm over the weekend.

"Getting the shot was an easy decision', he said — 'not because the Russian government said it was safe, but because scores of Russians have shared their experience with it on social media. I trust the grass roots collection of information far more, of course, than what the state says, at least before the testing results are available and published in a medical journal," Mr. Zakharov, 44, said in a telephone interview Monday, already clear of a mild fever — a side-effect of the vaccine. "There's no safe, no-risk option here. Either you get the vaccine or you risk getting sick." (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/07/world/europe/russia-coronavirus-vaccine.html?searchResultPosition=9).
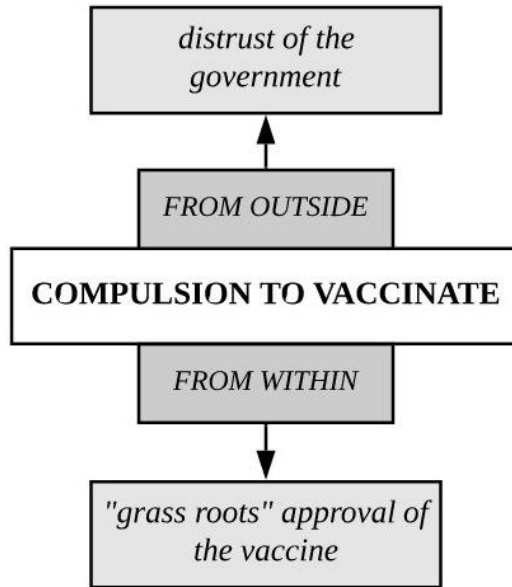
Figure 3. "Compulsion to Vaccinate"

Thus, the whole set of axiological notions related to Russia during the Covid outbreak in English-language mass media discourse may be presented in the following way – see Figure 4 "Representation of Russia's Image in English-language Mass Media Discourse during Covid 19":

Figure 4. Representation of Russia's Image in English-language mass media during Covid 19

6. Conclusion

In the given paper, the English-language mass media discourse covering the attitude of foreign authors to the Russia's Sputnik vaccine has been analyzed. As a result, it can be stated that evaluation lexical and syntactic means are used to create the assessment of Russia's scientific and technological progress at the level of context description of the Russia's vaccine. The language means used to represent evaluation are characterized by figurativeness, expressiveness and emotionality. The authors expose the evaluation in contexts aimed at describing the Russia's vaccine 'Sputnik V', its axiology and types of experts', scientists' and ordinary people's assessments. Thus, the analysis of the contexts, which make up the empirical material of the research, demonstrates the strategic use of axiological linguistic means, the functional complexity of which leads a reader to the understanding of an ambiguous situation formed during the coronavirus pandemic in the world and people's attempts to use the vaccine to achieve political goals. The analysis of the English-language media discourse makes it possible to study not only the language material, but the conceptual representation of Russian reality as well.

The implications of the research are mostly practical as on the level of materials and methods we were able to illustrate how mass media discourse can be used to investigate axiological notions delivered by the author. Besides, it can provide researchers with a tool to identify the language means used to create either positive or negative media image, which can be of practical use. The results obtained through the research conducted once again prove that a language plays a crucial role in the axiological world picture as it allows us to identify and interpret the evaluative meanings and assumptions.

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