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by Anel Smailova
(Анель Смаилова)

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Media Literacy - Theory and Practical Guidance

Truth is the first casualty in war.

Why is the truth the first victim in war?

A significant percentage of information about high-profile events, in our case, about the confrontation in Ukraine, does not correspond to reality. The main reason for this is its use for the purposes of state propaganda: in this case, news reports are used not to inform people, but to impose on them an opinion that is beneficial to one or another force.

Propaganda is part of war, both in the past and in current times. Why? Because wars need money and people to contribute to the cause. Therefore, propaganda demoralizes the enemy and promotes your country as the hero. This not only promotes patriotism but works to connect the country through a common goal. Additionally, propaganda can lower the enemy's resistance.

Propaganda

Propaganda is the spreading of rumors, false or correct information, or an idea, in order to influence the opinion of society. It may advance an idea or bring into disrepute an opposite idea. In literature, writers use propaganda as a literary technique to manipulate public opinion for or against one idea or another. In history, we can search a plethora of literary works used as propaganda to shape public perceptions, and direct their behavior to get a response. Generally, propaganda is a technique for convincing people, but which is misleading in nature, or promotes a false viewpoint.

Why it works?

- We don't recognize it when we face with it
- It appeals to our emotions rather than our reason

Propaganda takes away our calm mind and encourages us to act with passion not logic.

How to deal with propaganda?

The only way to not be deceived is to become media literate. To be media literate means to be able decode information, critically assess the information, recognise the influence of it on your thoughts, feelings, actions, and provide a proper response to the information. The main tool that helps in being media literate is fact checking technique.

Fact checking tips you can use every time consuming information

How are we to judge if news stories, Internet accounts, photos or video clips are accurate and truthful? Using these tips will help you tell what's real.

1. Think critically about the news. Ask yourself:

- Is it news? Is the story depicted as an event that actually happened? Or is it something else, such as opinion or advertising?
- Is it accurate? Consider the source of the information. Did it appear in a news publication, on a news broadcast or on an Internet site created by a news organization? Beyond that, who provided the information? Is the information factual?
- Is it fair? If the issue being reported is complex, are different sides presented? Does the writer seem to want to persuade you of something? Does the publication, newscast or Internet site seem to have a bias?



2. Recognize that truth emerges in bits and pieces.

3. Learn to rely on diverse news sources.

Use many different media sources: newspapers, newscasts, online services, etc. Become familiar with the approaches of a variety of news people, news outlets and Web sites.

4. Form your opinions over time.

Do not assume that a story you watch, read or download on any one day tells the whole story. Follow stories as they develop.

5. Apply all you've learned – and even more – when evaluating information on the Web.

With a single keystroke or the click of a mouse, anyone with a home computer and Internet access can spread news to millions of people. But of all those people posting all that information, how many have double- and triple-checked the accuracy of their material? How many have biases they want you to believe? How many have picked up the material they are transmitting from other, possibly unreliable, sources? Ask yourself: Can this information be trusted? Does it ring true? Is it in good taste? Am I getting the whole story?

Tips for analyzing news sources:

- Avoid websites that end in “lo” ex: Newslo (Newslo is now found at Politicops.com). These sites take pieces of accurate information and then packaging that information with other false or misleading “facts” (sometimes for the purposes of satire or comedy).
- Watch out for common news websites that end in “.com.co” as they are often fake versions of real news sources (remember: this is also the domain for Colombia!).





- Watch out if known/reputable news sites are not also reporting on the story. Sometimes lack of coverage is the result of corporate media bias and other factors, but there should typically be more than one source reporting on a topic or event.
- Odd domain names generally equal odd and rarely truthful news.
- Lack of author attribution may, but not always, signify that the news story is suspect and requires verification.
- Some news organizations are also letting bloggers post under the banner of particular news brands; however, many of these posts do not go through the same editing process (ex: BuzzFeed Community Posts, Kinja blogs, Forbes blogs).
- Check the “About Us” tab on websites or look up the website on Snopes or Wikipedia for more information about the source.
- Bad web design and use of ALL CAPS can also be a sign that the source you’re looking at should be verified and/or read in conjunction with other sources.
- If the story makes you REALLY ANGRY it’s probably a good idea to keep reading about the topic via other sources to make sure the story you read wasn’t purposefully trying to make you angry (with potentially misleading or false information) in order to generate shares and ad revenue. Thanks to Ed Brayton for this tip!
- If the website you’re reading encourages you to DOX individuals, it’s unlikely to be a legitimate source of news.
- It’s always best to read multiple sources of information to get a variety of viewpoints and media frames. Sources such as The Daily Kos, The Huffington Post, and Fox News vacillate between providing important, legitimate, problematic,

and/or hyperbolic news coverage, requiring readers and viewers to verify and contextualize information with other sources.

Century of Fakes

The 21st century is called a century of information. In our times more than ever in human history the information is a great power. That's why some groups and individuals use the power of information to trick our mind, make us believe in what's most beneficial for one's goals. So what terms should you know to be able to recognize fakes and how to stop them?



Fake

- deliberately distorted news, fact, data, information. There are both text fakes and video, photo, audio fakes etc.

"Fake news"

is the 2017 word of the year according to the Collins Dictionary. He also suggests the following meaning - false information, often sensational, distributed under the guise of news journalism. A wide-ranging discussion about fake news and its implications gained momentum during the 2016 US presidential election.

Deepfake

is one of the artificial intelligence technologies. With the help of deepfake, you can create or modify a video whose events have nothing to do with reality. Deepfake usually is the hardest to identify because it looks very natural.

Media bias

Media bias refers to the media exhibiting unjustified favoritism as they cover the news. It creates inaccurate, unbalanced, unfair views of the world for the media audience.

The fact is, despite the journalistic ideal of "objectivity," every news story is influenced by the attitudes and background of its interviewers, writers, photographers and editors. Not all bias is deliberate. But you can become a more aware news consumer by watching for the following techniques that allow to spot bias:

Bias through selection and omission

An editor can express a bias by choosing to use or not to use a specific news item. Within a given story, some details can be ignored, and others included, to give the audience a different opinion about the events reported. If, during a speech, a few people boo, the reaction can be described as "remarks greeted by jeers" or they can be ignored as "a handful of dissidents."

Bias through omission is difficult to detect. Only by comparing news reports from a wide variety of outlets can the form of bias be observed.

Bias through placement

Readers of papers judge first page stories to be more significant than those in the back. Television and radio newscasts run the most important stories first and leave the less significant for later. Where a story is placed, therefore, influences what a reader or viewer thinks about its importance.

Bias by headline

Many people read only the headlines of a news item. Headlines are the most-read part of a paper. They can summarize as well as present carefully hidden bias and prejudices. They can convey excitement where little exists. They can express approval or condemnation.





Bias by photos, captions and camera angles

Some pictures flatter a person, others make the person look unpleasant. A paper can choose photos to influence opinion about, for example, a candidate for election. On television, the choice of which visual images to display is extremely important. The captions newspapers run below photos are also potential sources of bias.

Bias through use of names and titles

News media often use labels and titles to describe people, places, and events. A person can be called an "ex-con" or be referred to as someone who "served time twenty years ago for a minor offense." Whether a person is described as a "terrorist" or a "freedom fighter" is a clear indication of editorial bias.

Bias through statistics and crowd counts

To make a disaster seem more spectacular (and therefore worthy of reading about), numbers can be inflated. "A hundred injured in air crash" can be the same as "only minor injuries in air crash," reflecting the opinion of the person doing the counting.

Bias by source control

To detect bias, always consider where the news item "comes from." Is the information supplied by a reporter, an eyewitness, police or executives, or government officials? Each may have a particular bias that is introduced into the story. Companies and public relations directors supply news outlets with puff pieces through news releases, photos or videos. Often news outlets depend on pseudo-events (demonstrations, sit-ins, ribbon cuttings, speeches and ceremonies) that take place mainly to gain news coverage.

Word choice and tone

Showing the same kind of bias that appears in headlines, the use of positive or negative words or words with a particular connotation can strongly influence the reader or viewer.

Ways to Spot and Stop Fake News

Take a moment to think before you click and share

1. Consider the source: strange domain names or websites that end in “lo” (ex. Newslo) are signs you should be wary
2. Check the URL: Fake news sites will often use a web address designed to make it look like real site, ending in “com.co”
3. Look for visual clues: Fake news websites may use sloppy or unprofessional design and overuse ALL CAPS.
4. Get a second opinion: If a story makes you very angry, dig deeper, consult other news sources or use debunking sites.

When it is in doubt use fact checking sites listed below:

- EU Factcheck is an online source created by the European Journalism Training Association. On this site you can find different trustworthiness levels of upcoming news. Also if you find the information that is worth checking out you could suggest the factcheck simply applying the form on the website.
- Fact Check from Duke Reporters' Lab. The Reporters' Lab is a center for journalism research in the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. Its core projects focus on fact-checking, but they also do occasional research about trust in the news media and other topics.
- Tineye.com. Most often, visual triggers are used for informational propaganda that evoke vivid emotions. Tineye.com helps not only to determine the original source of the photo, but also to track: how, when and on what Internet resources this photo was changed.



- whois.domaintools.com. By entering this portal, you can get official data about any site. How long does it exist? In which country is it registered? How many times has the domain name changed? All this and other information will allow you to determine the reliability of a website.
- liveuamap.com. This interactive map displays events in the world with a link to the source. You can confirm or deny news from different countries and regions, or choose to be divided by topic.

Read more on Fakes, Propaganda, Media Literacy

- 1. Lies, propaganda and fake news: A challenge for our age**
- 2. Interactive Chart Media Bias**
- 3. How to spot and not to spread fake news**
- 4. Propaganda**
- 5. Fake News**
- 6. Bias News**

Conclusion

The propaganda pushes people to think and view only one 'right' way and take away people's free will to form their own opinion. Propaganda focuses on influence through emotions, human basic instinct, and psychological behavior patterns. It is hard to identify the moment you start to believe in or do the thing you were called for.

Moreover, propaganda usually translates misleading information which brings subjective benefit to its' provider. Be careful about all the information you receive. Analyze, think critically, and develop 'immunity' against any kind of external influence on the way you think as well as the way you act.



Pontes

**МАША В
ПОЛЬЩЕ**
PROJECT

**Stowarzyszenie
Wspierania Rozwoju
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**by Anel Smailova
(Анель Смаилова)**

kontakt@pontes.org.pl

pontes.org.pl

