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SUBJECTIVITY IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN MEDIA: AN INTERPERSONAL
DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Esta tesis informa un análisis comparativo de la realización de la subjetividad en la campaña presidencial del 2018 en Rusia a través del metadiscurso interpersonal. La subjetividad siempre ha sido una característica intrínseca del periodismo y tradicionalmente se ha opuesto al canon de la objetividad, simultáneamente la norma más prominente y controvertida de la práctica periodística (Tuchman, 1980; Carey, 1989; Lichtenberg, 1991; Gans, 2003; Schiller, 2008; Maras, 2013). La mayoría de los investigadores coinciden en la idea de que los periodistas muestran una tendencia hacia una postura más interpretativa, por lo que la subjetividad es una parte esencial del discurso periodístico, tanto intencionalmente como no, y solo difiere en su intensidad, desde formas más sutiles hasta formas abiertas.

El objetivo del presente estudio es descubrir cómo se articula la subjetividad en dos fuentes periodísticas pro-*establishment*, *Russia Today* y *Voice of America*, ambas frecuentemente etiquetadas como fuentes de propaganda. El estudio también tiene como objetivo describir formas alternativas de realización de la interpersonalidad en el discurso periodístico que puedan demostrar su dependencia del contexto y la sensibilidad contextual que deben tenerse en cuenta al intentar ajustar la taxonomía existente en su aplicación a otros géneros aparte del discurso académico. Además, el estudio actual intenta acceder a los datos desde la perspectiva del CDA, que puede dar una idea de cómo se construyen las identidades de los actores políticos. Se hipotetiza que ambas fuentes presentan patrones interpersonales diferentes con la prevalencia y / o ausencia de ciertos marcadores interpersonales que pueden demostrar que el discurso periodístico no puede estar desprovisto del yo del autor, por lo tanto, de la subjetividad. En consecuencia, el canon de objetividad que durante mucho tiempo ha sido visto como piedra angular de la ética profesional debe ser redefinido, sustituido o ajustado para cumplir con los requisitos de la práctica profesional contemporánea.

El estudio se basa en una visión flexible de la interpersonalidad (Lorés-Sanz, Mur-Dueñas & Lafuente, 2010; Suau-Jiménez et al., 2021) frente a una comprensión más estrecha del concepto que inicialmente se aplicó solo al discurso académico. El CDA se emplea como un enfoque adicional para interpretar los datos obtenidos del análisis interpersonal en términos de construcción de identidad.

Los hallazgos muestran que los artículos constituyen diferentes patrones interpersonales según la categoría temática, y que la variación de los marcadores predominantes en cada categoría se explica por diferentes objetivos comunicativos. El análisis de los marcadores muestra que los marcadores actitudinales disfrutaban de una mayor flexibilidad lingüística y contextualidad en comparación con los mitigadores y los de certeza debido a la complejidad de significados y actitudes que pueden transmitir, por lo que se sugirió separar la categoría de marcadores actitudinales en marcadores positivos y negativos, ya que los periodistas tienden tomar partido a la hora de evaluar. Las citas se enfatizan como un medio implícito de fortalecer el potencial interpersonal en el discurso a través de la referencia, ya que intensifican el mensaje transmitido en el cuerpo de los artículos en *Russia Today*, mientras que en *Voice of America* la evaluación negativa se introduce indirectamente a través de citas. Los hallazgos apoyan la afirmación de que las variables deben tenerse en cuenta al aplicar el marco interpersonal a otros géneros de discurso para explorar diferentes realizaciones de la interpersonalidad.

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1. Introduction

Subjectivity has always been an intrinsic feature of journalism and traditionally opposed to the canon of objectivity, simultaneously the most prominent and the most contested norm of journalistic practice (Tuchman, 1980; Carey, 1989; Lichtenberg, 1991; Gans, 2003; Schiller, 2008; Maras, 2013). In spite of the fact that objectivity is a core tenet of the professional model, both scholars and practitioners have been recently challenging its relevance in the 21st century (Cohen-Almagor, 2008; Gaber, 2008; Ward, 2010; Calcutt and Hammond, 2011). Objectivity was meant to ensure consistent means of news gathering and dissemination, but a number of factors impede its implementation. Journalists cannot but take stands on different issues, being unable to relinquish their inherent bias and prejudices. Subsequent studies provided ample support for this argument, showing that journalistic discourse is pervaded by subjective language (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013; Chong, 2017; Alba-Juez, Mackenzie, 2019) that straightforwardly and consistently undermines claims to objectivity (Bruggemann, 2017; Fahy, 2017). Nevertheless, objectivity remains one of the guiding concepts in journalism, although, needs to be adjusted, redefined or substituted for a more feasible canon that would not compromise the quality of journalism.

In a world of affinity-based media, subjectivity is a multi-faceted linguistic phenomenon studied from various perspectives. In this study subjectivity is analyzed through the lens of interpersonal metadiscourse, a framework that describes a number of discursive strategies employed by authors in order to convey an authorial stance and engage with readership to ensure the full impact in accordance with their communicative aims (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland, 2005). In view of a lack of solid research on political media discourse carried out from an interpersonal perspective, an attempt to fine-tune the classification of interpersonal techniques was made in order to cater for more insightful and accurate analysis with due consideration of variables, such as genre, language, discipline, culture and others neglected in the original framework (Suau-Jiménez, 2016). It is argued that this framework, if properly adjusted to the genre of journalistic discourse, may pave the way for future application of the framework to other types of discourses and contribute to the

multidisciplinary study of subjectivity and may be used to prove that the standard of objectivity falls short of the contemporary requirements for responsible journalism.

The study is based on a flexible view of interpersonal (Lorés-Sanz, Mur-Dueñas & Lafuente, 2010; Suau-Jiménez et al., 2021) as opposed to a narrower understanding of the concept that was initially applied only to academic discourse. The objective of the current study is to find out how subjectivity is attained in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* from an interpersonal perspective, hypothesizing that the two sources display different recurrent interpersonal patterns in the articles under analysis with the prevalence and/or absence of certain markers according to journalists' communicative aims. The research also focuses on alternative forms of realization of interpersonal that may prove its context-dependency and context-sensitivity that should be taken into account when attempting to fine-tune the existing classification of markers in application to other genres rather than academic discourse.

As an addition to the study of subjectivity, the current study also makes a contribution to the construction of identities of political actors in the discourse under analysis. Although this was not the main objective of the study, the findings obtained from metadiscourse-based research were interpreted in terms of identity construction from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. By doing so, an avenue for future methodologically combined research is opened up, suggesting that a study based on interpersonal metadiscourse can provide enough evidence from the stance voice (in this study), so that it can be rounded up from a CDA perspective, yielding interesting socio-linguistic conclusions. The data from the corpus was analyzed manually, both quantitatively and qualitatively and backed up by statistical analysis.

The structure of the study is as follows. Section 2 is devoted to the review of literature that embraces concepts that are essential to the study that may facilitate understanding of the concept of subjectivity in journalistic practice, such as the canon of objectivity in journalism and its current standing; advocacy journalism as an emerging form of subjective reporting; the performative power of media and its role in the construction of media reality; an overview of Anglo-American and Russian journalistic culture and political discourse analysis. Besides, Section 2 also elaborates on the application of interpersonal to journalistic discourse and the

Critical Discourse Analytical approach to the study of identities of political actors that is applied to the findings of interpersonal metadiscourse-based research in the current study.

Section 3 deals with general and specific objectives of the study, hypothesis and research questions. The general objective is to find out how subjectivity is articulated in two pro-establishment news vehicles, such as *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* that are frequently labelled as propaganda sources. Specific objectives of the study include revealing recurrent interpersonal patterns in the two sources that explain how subjectivity is being conveyed through interpersonal strategies and the distribution of markers; making an attempt to offer ways to fine-tune the traditional interpersonal taxonomy when applied to the political news genre; describing alternative forms of realization of interpersonality in journalistic discourse; subjecting the results of analyses to an interpretation from the perspective of CDA as far as the construction of identity of political actors is concerned. It is hypothesized that the interpersonal framework that is used to describe and interpret interpersonal patterns found in the corpus, may prove that the discourse under analysis, although pertaining to the genre of a straight news story, is a form of advocacy. A number of research questions presented in this section help to reach the above-mentioned objectives and prove the hypothesis.

Section 4 provides a thorough account of the methodology employed for the research, such as a flexible and context-sensitive version of interpersonality that requires taking into consideration a number of variables, and explains the principles of classification of markers since the current study is not based on the traditional view of metadiscourse. The CDA framework is also presented in this section as the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses are complemented with an interpretation from the perspective of CDA as far as identity construction is concerned. A reference to corpus linguistics, the description of corpus, the principles of its compilation, the choice of sources and the justification of using a small-scale specialized corpus can be found in this section.

Section 5 is fully devoted to the analysis of the two sources divided into two sub-sections according to the source. Every sub-section is divided into quantitative and qualitative analyses according to the topic of the articles in order to ensure a better understanding of realization of interpersonality in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*. The interpretation of the results of

statistical analysis comes after quantitative and qualitative analyses, where different types of markers from the two sources are compared. The findings are also interpreted from the perspective of CDA as far as identity construction of political actors is concerned.

Section 6 deals with the discussion of the findings and conclusions that is divided into sub-sections according to the research questions. Specific interpersonal patterns found in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* that point at various forms of realization of subjectivity are interpreted in terms of different communicative aims, political and journalistic cultures. Alternative forms of interpersonality found in the corpus are described and contribute to a more flexible, context-conscious understanding of interpersonality. Ways to adjust the interpersonal methodology in application to academic discourse, such as the division of attitudinals into positive and negative attitude markers and the importance of quotations are emphasized. A reflection on the limitations of the study and further research are provided at the end of the section.

Full references and all the authors cited throughout the thesis can be found in the Bibliography section.

2. Literature review

The review of the literature incorporates three major topics: political journalism, interpersonality and political discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the context of politics. These sub-sections are introduced in order to embrace a number of complex notions, such as the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity in the press, advocacy, journalistic cultures, performativity that are of utmost importance to the current study in an attempt to give an insight from a multi-faceted perspective. In order to approach these complex notions, interpersonality was chosen as the primary framework with CDA as a complementary one; respective sections elaborate on the application of these frameworks to political media contexts.

2.1. Political journalism

This section is divided into several subsections such as objectivity in political journalism, its current standing and criticism; advocacy journalism as a form of alternative journalistic practice opposed to the traditional one based on objectivity; an overview of Anglo-American and Russian journalistic tradition, their comparison and stark differences that influence the way journalism is practiced in English-speaking countries and in Russia; the performative power of media and its role in the creation of media reality; political discourse analysis and major approaches to it. It is suggested that these notions may facilitate understanding of a complex nature of subjectivity and its forms of realization in journalistic discourse.

2.1.1. Objectivity in political journalism

In view of the complexity of the notion and the absence of a single accepted definition, political journalism can be viewed as a vast branch within journalism. It covers a wide range of output on political events and issues related to political science and presupposes the collection, processing and dissemination of news related to the sphere of politics which are considered to be of public concern. The issues covered by political journalists are key political processes and notions studied in political science such as government and governance, lawmaking, elections, foreign and interior policy, armed conflicts, revolutions, terrorism, acts of corruption and many others (Hix and Whiting, 2012: i-iv).

The notion of the “fourth estate”, attributed to the eighteenth-century philosopher and politician Edmund Burke (1787), embodies the ideal and to some extent the actual position of political journalism. According to Nielsen and Kuhn (2014: 1-2), it is supposed to be an independent institution that pursues specific objectives in the process of mediation between the state and the audience: to provide trustworthy information on current and past events, relying on credible sources; to present a competent and substantiated opinion on a particular politically-related issue interspersed with logical argumentation and clear reasoning; to act as a “watchdog” for the public benefit in order to investigate and disclose issues of concern and claims of political wrongdoings that appear to be against national wellbeing.

Although political journalists engage in criticizing certain news actors or state policies, occasionally mobilizing audience to go into action using media arena as a ground for advocating their political affiliation, political journalism in a democratic society is “never viewed purely as an instrument of the other estates” (Nielsen and Kuhn, 2014: 2). Thus, it is possible to conclude that there is a certain correlation between democratic values respected in the state and the level of political journalistic freedom enjoyed by the media, as “political journalism is regarded as a key part of democratic politics and at the very heart of the journalistic vocation” (Nielsen and Kuhn, 2014: 2)

Nevertheless, the ability of journalists to render facts as neutrally as possible is continuously disputed (Tuchman, 1972; Schudson, 1978; Rosen, 1993; Glasser, 1992, Fallows, 1996). It is arguable if discourse produced by political journalists, whether written or oral, even remotely approaches the ideal. Multiple factors such as the human factor, ambiguity of available information, lack of access to primary sources and the multi-faceted nature of events leave much space for numerous interpretations of reality. In its turn, mass media, being a mediator between political actors and public, process facts so that they generate new media reality and participate in the process of meaning-making (Marshall and Kingsbury, 1996). Broersma (2008) states that journalists turn out to be meaning makers rather than news makers. With the development of mass media, journalists have diverse multimodal tools at their disposal in order to reinforce the impact of their discourse: a deliberate choice of visual (images, video) and audial (music) components together with a thoroughly elaborated discourse can exert a far-reaching

effect on the audience. Van Dijk suggests that “mind control by the media should be particularly effective when media users do not realize the nature of implications of such control” and they “accept news reports as true or journalistic opinions as legitimate or correct” (Van Dijk, 1995: 11).

Initially, political journalists were meant to comply with certain codes and canons of journalism recognized by their counterparts and elaborated in the course of the development of the branch. There are various ethic codes such as *Resolution 1003* adopted by The Council of Europe in 1993 on the Ethics of Journalism, *the Code of Ethics* elaborated by Society of Professional Journalists (1996), *Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists* by International Federation of Journalists, and many others. They state that ethical questions arise mostly in cases where there is genuine puzzlement about what should be done in various types of situations faced by journalists while performing their job duties. As a vast number of journalists are in the habit of intentionally neglecting professional ethics, ethic codes are supposed to be indispensable tools for media in order to ensure proper self-regulation and for public in order to estimate journalists’ professionalism and compliance with widely recognized norms within the journalistic community.

The principle of objectivity is considered to be the core tenet of the gatekeeper model in journalism and formed the basis for ethic codes. It is traditionally viewed as “the cement of good journalism” (Maras, 2013: 1), “the cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalists in liberal democracies” (Lichtenberg, 1991: 216). Objectivity is a key concept in journalism, media and communication studies. Major works on objectivity in journalism are viewed as classics in the spheres of media sociology and journalism studies, such as those by Schudson (1978, 1986, 1995), Tuchman (1980), Carey (1989), Gans (2003) and Schiller (2008) who elaborate on objective and unbiased reporting as a necessary component of media ethics.

Objectivity in political journalism is a complex multi-faceted concept that is comprised of several interconnected components (Ward, 2010; Wien, 2005; Calcutt and Hammond, 2011; Fahy, 2017). The concept of *truthfulness* presupposes accurate and independent fact-checking; all statements should be based on strong evidence. Journalists are held accountable in case of disclosure of errors made in the submitted publication, and it is mandatory to publish

corrections and clarification. The use of several reliable sources is preferable as it contributes to the overall truthfulness of a news story. The concept of *relevance* shows whether journalists thoroughly address significant issues, without downplaying important details or emphasizing minor ones. The concepts of *impartiality*, *neutrality* and *balance* are frequently used interchangeably and require emotional detachment that allows to separate facts from values, to report news without interpretation, to give equal treatment to different standpoints without displaying any political allegiance.

For most of the 20th century objectivity was a widely recognized canon of ideal reporting as journalistic practice was viewed as a discipline with stringent requirements of thorough fact-checking, seeking balance and using multiple sources rather than a creative piece of writing. With the passage of time the concept came under widespread criticism both by academics and practitioners. Today, according to Calcutt and Hammond (2011), apart from the fact that scholars are continuously challenging the concept, “journalists themselves have internalized the critique and often seem unwilling or unable to offer a robust defence of what was once a defining ethic of the profession” (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011: 98).

There are ample reasons why journalism is criticized for being unable to achieve objectivity. The arguments can be classified into two major categories: 1) objectivity is impossible due to a number of essential reasons that hinder its realization; 2) objectivity is not desirable as it is detrimental to the quality of journalism.

The human factor, or “human fallibility” (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011: 98) is one of the major factors that impedes objective reporting as every journalist has “a gender, an ethnicity, a family, a social background, a personal history, a set of prejudices... that afflict us all” (Gaber, 2014: 8). A human being cannot be fully detached when covering particular events, and when one thinks that a necessary level of detachment is attained, this is the moment when a journalist loses control over the reported matter. For instance, it may lead to a journalistic practice labelled *false balance* which consists in giving both viewpoints more balanced treatment when discussing a controversial issue (Bruggemann, 2017; Fahy, 2017). In this case they can give an equal amount of evidence and arguments for the two opposing viewpoints, omitting some information in order not to seem biased in favour of one of them.

Objectivity turns out not to be feasible neither at an individual level (a particular reporter with his or her own knowledge, background, set of values, preferences and prejudices) nor at a societal one (a society with a particular ideology). Tuchman (1978) and Lichtenberg (1991) argue that each culture is characterized by a specific set of values, “cultures employ different categories and there is no way of deciding which framework better fits the world” (Lichtenberg, 1991: 220), thus, objectivity can never be fully attained.

Another major factor that constrains journalistic objectivity is concerned with the process of news production. Cohen-Almagor (2008) argues that objectivity is not the primary thing taken into account when there is an urge to produce immediate news. Various constraints such as deadlines, available space, newsworthiness and the process of selection of news stories, subsequent stages of text editing and other factors influence the outcome. Finally, discursive choices are made owing to “news production conventions, ethnocentric cultural bias and pre-existing expectations about the world” rather than professional acumen and experience (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011: 100; see also Gans, 1980, Schudson, 1991). Moreover, Tuchman (1972) argued that the professional conventions of doublechecking information, using reliable sources and others are not aimed at ensuring objectivity, but at protecting journalists from the accusations of bias. Objectivity appears to be biased against independent thinking and the idea of accountability, as journalists may shift responsibility to others saying that they reporters, not the creators of news (Glasser, 1992).

Apart from the above-mentioned factors that question the possibility of applying the canon of objectivity in practice, there is a number of arguments against objectivity in journalism per se. According to Ward (2010), traditional news objectivity rests on the conviction that only factual statements are objective. When journalists render facts and numbers extracted from official sources, the target audience absorbs raw news material passively instead of actively analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information (Hallin, 1989; Cunningham, 2003, Calcutt and Hammond, 2011). This is the moment when an attempt to be rigorously professional, objective and neutral generates passivity that can be even dangerous in some cases (Gaber, 2008).

Moreover, the reliance on facts from official sources does not guarantee that journalistic discourse will be independent of any perspective. On the contrary, reproducing the claims of official sources frequently makes the media the mouthpiece for the mainstream political ideology. Hallin (1989) emphasizes the example of the New York Times's reporting of the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964 during the Vietnam War when the military conflict was escalated after a series of fabricated news stories about the attack on US navy by Vietnamese army. American journalists wholly relied on the official government sources while there was "a great deal of information available which contradicted the official account" (Hallin, 1989: 25). This is by no means an isolated case, as Pedelty (1995) suggests that objective journalism is a political perspective that is "most closely associated with political centrism", while alternative perspectives "tend to be marginalized as deviant or extremist" (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011: 105).

Another argument against objectivity is the role of journalists: they are viewed as political actors, not neutral observers that manufacture the news and construct media reality (Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Schlesinger, 1997; Ward, 1998; Broersma, 2008). That is why all the genres of journalistic discourse are interpretations "with at least some degree of conceptualization, selection, theorizing and evaluation" (Ward, 1998: 4).

The actual journalistic practice reveals a tendency towards a more interpretative stance. The idea of objectivity as a canon of ideal reporting has been subjected to unremitting attack both by academics and practitioners since 1960s. Abandoning an erstwhile important guiding concept, many scholars and journalists fail to offer alternative approaches that ensure higher quality reporting, as "rejection of traditional objectivity without a viable alternative ideal would open the door to undisciplined, irresponsible journalism" (Ward, 1998: 5).

One of the possible solutions offered by scholars is to redefine the notion of objectivity so that it meets the requirements of contemporary journalism. Ward (1998) introduces the concept of *pragmatic objectivity*. It is based on the contention that every journalistic discourse is a personal interpretation of events and it only differs in the degree of interpretation, such as in the case of news reports and editorials. Since no discourse is value-free, journalism should be viewed as a continuum, ranging from straight news stories to opinion articles. Pragmatic

objectivity makes journalistic discourse objective if it is written with due regard to three types of standards: *empirical standards*, which include “careful observation, controlled experiments, statistical measurements and prediction” (Ward, 1998: 4); *standards of coherence* that evaluate the coherence between facts and their interpretation; and *standards of rational debate* that are aimed at ensuring “fair consideration of rival views and counter-evidence” (Ward, 1998: 4). Ward (1998) argues that while traditional objectivity strives to reduce discourse to mere facts, pragmatic objectivity offers a more complex approach. Although, it remains unclear whether such an approach is feasible when news engines require speedy production of news stories.

Fahy (2017) is another scholar that makes an attempt to reconfigure the notion of objectivity and substitutes it with *trained judgement*, a practice when journalists use their professional training and knowledge to interpret facts. Objectivity can also be viewed as a transparent method for finding, verifying and communicating facts; the synthesis and curation of multiple viewpoints. Weinberger (2011) redefines objectivity as *transparency*, as the openness of newsroom practice guarantees trustworthy reporting.

Apart from recontextualizing the notion of objectivity, scholars and journalists suggest that the following measures can be taken, such as introducing new forms of inner and outer regulation, technological solutions and greater emphasis on education and media literacy (Sambrook, 2012).

In the absence of a uniformly accepted alternative, objectivity is used as an important guiding concept that may give rise to a more refined canon of professional journalism, while in the absence of it, alternative forms of journalism arise, such as advocacy journalism.

2.1.2. Advocacy journalism

Advocacy journalism as a specific form of journalistic practice that often aligns with a particular ideology, intentionally pushes a topical social issue and does not separate facts from values. It is usually viewed as an alternative and opposite to the gatekeeper model that is guided by the standards of objectivity and impartiality. Advocacy journalism is currently viewed as a broad term with ill-defined boundaries that includes such forms of subjective reporting as muckraking, alternative journalism, activist journalism, peace journalism, civic advocacy

journalism, interpretive journalism and many others (Fisher, 2016). Practitioners of this mode of journalism are “assigned the role of active interpreters who speak on behalf of certain groups” (Janowitz, 1975: 619), they are “representatives for specific interests, and are motivated by the desire to redress power imbalances in society” (Waisbord, 2008: 371).

Advocacy journalism evolved as a result of the evolution of newsroom practice in the 20th century that constantly criticized journalistic ideals of impartiality and unbiased reporting. According to Waisbord (2008), advocacy journalism in Anglo-American press was initially allowed only in editorials and opinion articles, although throughout 1960s and 1970s a number of publications with a clear-cut advocacy, mostly concerned with anti-war, feminist, gay and environmental issues, increased drastically.

Various scholars attempted to challenge the standard of objective reporting and reassess the existing practice, whether journalism should be a tool of providing neutral factual information or be mission-driven (Janowitz, 1975; Hanitzsch, 2007; Kempf, 2007; Waisbord, 2008; Salgado and Stromback, 2011; McQuail, 2013). According to Waisbord (2008), advocacy journalism was fiercely criticized by the American press for being undistinguishable from propaganda and political public relations practice and remained marginal in Western countries due to the adoption of objectivity as a normative ideal of professional reporting. Janowitz (1975) claimed that advocacy journalism undermines the professional status of journalism, fusing facts with judgment, while the intrusion of the journalist’s self into discourse creates a climate of a deep-seated distrust of the media. In return, traditional journalists were criticized for the inability to mobilize public opinion on the reported matter and achieve social change. To fend off allegations of low-quality reporting, Charles (2013: 388) states that “to assume advocacy journalism is just about taking side is an over-simplification. Instead advocacy journalism is a pro-active approach that does not just report facts as they are. It seeks ways of improvement, solution and resolution”. Quality advocacy journalism earns credibility by making its stance on issues transparent from the very beginning and does not try to sow confusion and proliferate falsehoods (Careless, 2000).

In view of the ongoing process of mediatization of politics, the line between reporting and political PR is being blurred to a serious extent. Due to this, latest research on objectivity

and advocacy showed that the two concepts are being redefined. Objectivity and advocacy are viewed as a “false dichotomy”, suggesting that these two notions should not be viewed as antonyms and, consequently, juxtaposed (Fisher, 2013: 712). Meanwhile, accurate fact-checking, the use of several reliable sources and accountability should be central to both modes of doing journalism.

According to Fisher (2016), there is a tendency to employ the concept of continuum between objective informing and advocacy, rather than presenting them as oppositional binaries (Cancel et al, 1997, 1999; Harcup, 2005; Fisher, 2016). Harcup (2005) suggests that the continuum encompasses a wide range of journalistic practices that are found in between the two extremes – traditional and alternative modes of journalism. A review of related literature demonstrates that most researchers agree on the idea that advocacy is omnipresent in any journalistic discourse, both intentionally or not, and only differs in its intensity – from more subtle forms of advocacy to overt ones (Fisher, 2013, 2016).

Since the appearance of the notion researchers have been trying to reveal factors that influence the degree of advocacy adopted by journalists (Janowitz, 1975; Donsbach and Patterson, 1996; Cancel et al, 1997; Burns, 2013; Fisher, 2016). Fisher (2016) presented a summary of 41 factors identified in the literature and classified it into several categories. *Macro-factors*, such as political, economic and social environment are among the principal ones, as they “determine whether media organizations operate with autonomy or become the vehicle for partisan political interests” (Fisher, 2016: 722). *Micro-factors*, or *personal factors*, first mentioned by Janowitz (1975), such as the age of reporter, educational background, experience, beliefs and values, political leanings and others influence the choice of news stories to cover.

Organizational factors is another crucial category which includes partisanship of the proprietor of the media platform, their commercial interests, financial resources, editorial orientation and others. As Waisbord (2008: 374) puts it, in countries where media are strongly dependent on the financial aid of the government and individuals, it is “unthinkable that journalism is anything but advocacy journalism”. Apart from apparent factors that lead to overt advocacy, researchers distinguish *journalistic production factors* that may add more subtle elements of advocacy to news discourse, as “much of that selectivity stems from a range of

technical, production constraints and journalistic routines that result in the inclusion, exclusion and emphasis of particular issues and perspectives over others” (Fisher, 2016: 717). Story format, story selection; selection of sources, their availability, diversity and strength; cost of the story; deadline, space, location and staffing constraints are among production factors that strengthen advocacy rather than objectivity. All the above-mentioned factors should be taken into account while analyzing the degree of advocacy present in a news story, as no discourse is devoid of its elements.

Objectivity remains an important guiding concept as well as a controversial issue that comes under frequent criticism, while advocacy journalism is constrained by editorial politics and its role and appropriateness is being frequently questioned both by academics and professional journalists (Mwesige, 2004; Mano, 2005; Waisbord, 2008; Keller, 2013; Schafer, 2013; Taibbi, 2013; Markson, 2014; Post, 2015). Currently there is no consensus on what journalistic norms should be followed, neither objectivity nor advocacy journalism prevail, which is also complicated by different journalistic cultures that dominate in particular countries.

2.1.3. Anglo-American and Russian journalism

According to Esser and Umbricht (2013: 2), “cross-national differences in how journalism has developed can be explained by longstanding historical processes in the formation of news media as social institutions”. Understanding of the profession of journalism is determined by the Anglo-American model, sometimes called the “Liberal or Social Responsibility model” (Siebert et al., 1956) or “Professional model” (Tunstall, 2007), the main focus of which is fact-based, news driven, objective reporting (Williams, 2006: 2). According to Schudson (2011), the Anglo-American model highlights the importance of being objective, detached and impartial while delivering news. Generally, the Anglo-American model of journalism, with all its professional implications, stands out as the only universal and dominant model (Mancini, 2005: 78).

Moreover, Chalaby (1996: 304) argues that “journalism is an Anglo-American invention”, as American and British journalists shaped the contemporary conception of news

and proper journalistic discursive practices, such as reporting and interviewing. The emergence of journalism in Britain and the United States was triggered by a combination of favourable political, economic, cultural and linguistic factors, making it “not only historically but also culturally marked” (Chalaby, 1996: 304). Chalaby (1996: 318) states that the American government has never coerced the press and in England “governmental repression against the press ceased after the mid-1830s”. Moreover, the bipartite parliamentary system and political struggle in both countries were properly codified, that is why “journalists could claim to be ‘neutral’ simply by proclaiming to support neither of the political parties and to be ‘impartial’ by giving an equal amount of attention to both parties” (Chalaby, 1996: 319), without demonstrating political affiliation and providing readers with factual information devoid of polemics on ideas and doctrines, leaving enough space for personal interpretations and conclusions. When newspapers managed to yield substantial profit from sales and advertising, they became independent from the sphere of politics as there was no need to accept bribes and “this financial independence contributed to depoliticizing journalists’ discursive practices and encouraged the development of a journalism of information based on the discursive norms of neutrality and objectivity (Chalaby, 1996: 320).

As far as cultural factors are concerned, Chalaby (1996) emphasizes that the American and British press functioned independently from the literary sphere and compared the situation with the French press, where traditionally well-known writers were also involved in journalism, such as Emile Zola (journalist), Albert Camus (subeditor), Antoine de Saint-Exupery (reporter), George Simenon (correspondent for criminal affairs) and others. The journalistic discourse was heavily influenced by norms and traditions inherited from the French literature but simultaneously was considered to be much inferior to refined literary genres, while neither in America nor in England writers did not have access to the press and their practices were out of place (Chalaby, 1996: 314-315).

Likewise, the English language has had its impact on the journalistic culture, as Palmer (1995) argues that it is the best “media language” because it is abundant in monosyllabic words and its vocabulary allows to save much space.

Although the Anglo-American journalism has become an exemplary model to follow and was taken into consideration in many European countries, “the extent to which it actually took hold depended heavily on the peculiarities of the social, political and media structures of the respective news systems” (Esser and Umbricht, 2013: 3). Nevertheless, journalists around the world acknowledge the Anglo-American model, yet the extent to which their discourses follow the standard remains unclear (Mancini, 2000: 270). Esser (2013: 3) suggests that American and British journalists occasionally fail to comply with the journalistic tradition and in fact they “divert from the pure model”.

The way of doing journalism in other countries is usually studied through the frame of the state, as “the style, form and role of journalism are shaped by the society, politics and culture” within which the profession is practiced (Williams, 2006: 46). According to Chalaby (1996), Mancini (2000) and Williams (2006), European journalism is currently challenging the old journalistic practices in the wake of imposition of Anglo-American values, but scholars doubt whether fundamental changes in journalistic practices are implemented successfully.

Russian journalistic culture does not exactly fit into the Anglo-American paradigm due to a number of culturally and historically based reasons. The Soviet understanding of journalism presupposed that the all-intrusive state makes use of journalism as a tool of power to shape the public consciousness. According to Pasti (2005), Soviet journalists acted as state propagandists and collaborated with the Communist party, constantly reproducing the official ideological discourse. Unlike the Western model, Russian journalism has a strong literary tradition: famous Russian writers were also journalists or publicists. The dominance of literary tradition is visible in the definitions found in Soviet dictionaries: “a journalist is a professional literary worker in journalism”, while journalism is “the literary and publicist activity in magazines, newspapers, radio and television” (Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language, 1985: 489); “the public activity of gathering, treatment and periodical spreading of the actual social information through press, radio, television, cinema and others; one of the forms of conducting mass propaganda” (Soviet Encyclopedia, 1983: 441).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a formidable challenge to the journalism in Russia, when mass media was freed from state control and ideological censorship, which was

promising for the development of new standards, purging journalism of ideological constraints and media landscape at large (Pasti, Chernysh and Svitich, 2012). According to Zassoursky (2004), journalism in Russia in 1991-1995 almost became “the fourth estate” and journalists successfully functioned as gatekeepers and watchdogs. However, as Nordenstreng (2010, 2012) and Zassoursky (2014) argue, at the turn of the millennium, when Putin settled down in the Kremlin, relative political freedom and independence enjoyed by Russian media and journalists have gradually diminished in the wake of increasing centralization of power and state regulation. Government authorities purchase journalistic services in order to ensure positive coverage that resulted in a shift towards pro-state journalism in collaboration with market forces (Pasti, Chernysh and Svitich, 2012: 267). The fact that the majority of Russian media is controlled by the government or entities subordinate to the government that adversely affects the quality of journalism in Russia is emphasized by various scholars (Furman, 2010; Pasti, Chernysh and Svitich, 2012; Nordenstreng and Pasti, 2012; Zassoursky, 2014). The full-fledged media outlets that give extensive coverage of events nation- and worldwide are state-funded bureaus: federal TV channels, Sputnik, Russia Today, Rossiyskaya gazeta (Litvinenko et. al, 2015: 51).

Though post-Soviet journalists ceased to be civil servants, their political subordination seems to remain unchanged (Pasti, Chernysh and Svitich, 2012: 267). The Russian media and journalistic models are defined as “semi-authoritarian” (Toepfl, 2014: 69) or neo-Soviet (Oates, 2007), which implies that journalists are viewed as tools of “guided democracy” or “simulation democracy” in which “democratic institutions and rules of law play a role of a fake veneer, camouflage to hide the authoritarian system” (Furman, 2010: 11). Although, according to Pomerantsev (2015: 5), “today’s Russian regime also differs from the Soviet system in that it does not attempt to quash unfavorable information by completely eliminating the source, preferring instead to reshape the narrative”. Moreover, the Russian Federation is ranked #149 out in 180 countries in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index.

According to Johansson and Nygren (2014), there are three basic mechanisms of state influence on Russian media: 1) direct state control (state-owned media outlets); 2) indirect control of state-owned companies; 3) indirect control through pressure on regime-friendly

media tycoons. Apart from exerting control over state-funded media companies, the government amends and introduces legislation acts, curtailing media freedom and increasing censorship, and imposes financial constraints on independent commercial media and foreign media. Crackdown on independent media started in 2011-2012, after a series of manifestations against electoral fraud and corruption that received extensive coverage while state channels and newspapers made no mention of the events (Lehtisaari, 2015).

Today the Russian journalistic culture is a hybrid of Soviet propaganda style that is realized through tightly controlled media loyal to the authorities (Lehtisaari, 2015) and adherents of Anglo-American standards that work for relatively free media outlets and also publish materials on online communication platforms. For instance, the study conducted by Johansson and Nygren (2014) showed that 72% of journalists use social media, such as Facebook, LiveJournal, Twitter and others for professional work in order to get access to a broader public.

To conclude, the main constraint that impedes Russian journalism from performing proper journalistic practice is the existence of the strong Soviet legacy and co-existence of different journalistic cultures within the country and its media system. The governmental control exercised on the sphere of journalism, growing censorship and propaganda are detrimental to the quality of news delivered to the audience. Adherence to the Anglo-American journalistic tradition becomes problematic because of the political factor, as governments who have close ties with mass media, are able to shape the way reality is perceived.

2.1.4. Performative power of newspaper media

Media reality is frequently studied from the perspective of constructivism. It is questioned whether reality is a discovery or an invention; whether media reflect reality (exactly or distortedly) or they construct it in the first place; if the world is projection or a design; whether journalists represent something or they have always been constructs; if reality is depicted or built up (Weber, 2002).

The concept of performativity, or a performative utterance, opposed to a purely constative utterance was introduced by language philosopher J.L. Austin (1962). He objects to

the verifiability of statements in most cases and argues that overwhelming majority of utterances are performative, even those who appear to merely describe a state of affairs, since these utterances do the act of informing. Though initially applied to the theory of speech acts, the concept of performativity and performative power was subject to extensive discussion and application by numerous scholars across disciplines, who also admit that performative speech acts should be classified within the dichotomy “successful/unsuccessful” rather than “true/false”.

Bourdieu (1991) applied the argument in relation to the analysis of social situations. He states that in order to be successful a performative act needs to be a part of a legitimate context and performed by a legitimated person. According to Rao (2010: 74), “this power is mediated through the existence of a socially shared and generally ‘accepted’ knowledge of positions and their powers”. This can be directly applied to the sphere of newsmaking. The press is a social institution that is concerned with the process of distribution of information. The outstanding right to access sources of information and to mediate it to the public legitimize journalists’ discourse so that media-generated images of the world assimilate into the outlook of lay public on certain issues. Broersma concludes that “the authority of a news item is established through the way it is represented in language, the reputation of a journalist, the medium the item is published or presented in and the profession as a whole” (Broersma, 2010: 19).

Journalism aims to impose and legitimize valid representations of the social world by the choice of form and stylistic devices (Broersma, 2008). Forms and conventions are typically formed by the historical context, ideology and specific canons of journalistic practices of the country where discourse is produced. Processed, media-colored and media-dominated information presented in the form of a performative act in the mass media can be successful only if certain culture-specific conventions are followed.

Thus, mediated information is always a construct of meanings about political and social issues (Kaid et al., 1991). Kaid et al. write that reality is composed by three layers of meanings. The first layer is an objective reality, composed of events as they actually are. The second layer is a subjective reality, i.e. the way certain events are perceived by the public. The third layer is a constructed reality that is the product of descriptions offered by the media, such as, for instance,

the concept of *fake news* (Barclay, 2018; Alba-Juez, Mackenzie, 2019). Broersma suggests that “we should not approach journalism as a descriptive discourse but on the contrary as a performative discourse designed to persuade readers that what it describes is real” (Broersma, 2010: 21), as “journalism does not derive its performative power from its contents (the facts), but merely from its forms and style” (Broersma, 2010: 20).

2.1.5. Political discourse analysis

The term *political discourse* encompasses a wide range of subject matter and its ambiguous nature is continuously discussed by discourse analysts (Van Dijk, 1997; Wilson, 2001; Wodak and De Cillia, 2006; Chilton, 2008; Fairclough, 2012; Dunmire, 2012; Filardo-Llamas and Boyd, 2017), as, according to Fairclough (2012: 17), “this research area has not so far developed a clear distinction between political discourse and other sorts of discourse, or an agenda, a set of objectives, theoretical categories, and methods of analysis which would clearly distinguish political discourse analysis from other areas of discourse analysis and enable principled, systematic evaluation”.

If the political sphere is described through the use of key CDA terms as power, inequality, domination, control and others, many analysts arrive at the conclusion that practically any discourse may be considered political as it bears an imprint of the aforementioned notions and the way they are manifested in everyday life (Shapiro, 1981; Seidel, 1985; Fairclough, 1992a, 1995; Giddens, 1991; Bourdieu, 1991, Chilton and Schaffner, 1997). Nevertheless, this view is not shared by the majority of discourse analysts. Wilson (2001) warns that this perspective leads to the overgeneralization of the concept *political discourse*.

Various scholars tried to demarcate political and non-political discourse. There are no doubts that parliamentary debates or speeches made by politicians on hot political issues are examples of purely political discourse, that is to say, text and talk produced in “political institutions, governments, political media ... in political environments” (Wilson, 2001: 398), or, “politicians talk politically ... if they and their talk are contextualized in such communicative events such as cabinet meetings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews with the media, bureaucratic practices, protest demonstrations and so on”

(Van Dijk, 1997: 14). In this case Fairclough (2012: 18) attaches importance to the institutional context, as “outside political contexts, the discourse of politicians or any other ‘political actors’ is not ‘political’”. Duranti and Goodwin (1992), Van Dijk (2006) also elaborate on the importance of proper contextualization of discourse. Political discourse structures are equally significant as political contexts, as they define the choice of lexis, rhetoric devices, syntactic structure and discourse composition, “the overall format or schema of political discourse” (Van Dijk, 2006: 733).

Nevertheless, one may formulate a question whether discourse produced, for instance, by citizens outside political institutions can also be viewed as an example of political discourse. Piontek (2011) worked out a classification of politically related discourse based on actors, or authors of discourse, and separated it into three overlapping fields: public discourse, discourse of politics and political discourse. *Public discourse* is defined as “all texts and messages available publicly” (Piontek, 2011: 275), “communicated issues of public culture that affect individuals and groups in a given civilization” (Biakolo, 2013: 1). This type of discourse is produced by those who engage in discussion of a political issue at hand. *The discourse of politics* is a type of written or spoken text generated by politicians, people who campaign for or hold a political office in the government; those who are actively involved in political matters of a state. The third type of mass media discourse is *political discourse* that is viewed as “a discourse of symbolic elites about political issues which is strongly connected with the media” (Piontek, 2011: 276). Symbolic elites stand for “journalists, publicists, writers, scientists, clergymen, intellectuals, experts, businessmen” and others who are considered knowledgeable about the subject matter under discussion and authoritative in order to produce a political discourse which is able to mold public opinion. This kind of discourse transforms member of symbolic elites from discourse producers into opinion makers. This is exactly the type of discourse the current research is focused on, if we consider journalists as a part of societal elite who are empowered to create political discourse for further distribution within the mass media, with particular instances of discourse of politics when giving reference to politicians engaged in a certain political matter.

Nevertheless, Van Dijk (1997) contends that the distinction whether discourse is political or not should not solely rest on the criterion of official political actors (politicians), as they are not the only active social group that participates in the political process. Van Dijk suggests that both political actors and recipients, such as the public, should be viewed as political discourse producers.

Reisigl and Wodak (2009) state that it is feasible to draw the line between the political and non-political if a piece of discourse in question can be classified into the following categories (genres) of political discourse according to their function: lawmaking procedure, formation of public attitudes, party-internal formation of attitudes, inter-party formation, organization of international relations, political advertising, political executive, administration and political control.

Chilton (2008) argues that apart from mentioning political actors, whether producers or recipients, or adherence to political organizations, systems, group, functions and other categories, one component is missing, which is persuasion, or persuasive effect: “persuasive rhetoric, the use of implied meaning, the use of euphemisms, the exclusion of references to undesirable realities, the use of language to rouse political emotions, and the like” (Chilton, 2008: 226). Thus, his classification is based on two criteria: political participants and possible political effect. Although, the latter is not shared by Van Dijk (1997), as discourse with possible political effects may be overlap with the domain of public discourse which in its turn leads to overgeneralization of the term that should be avoided.

Van Dijk (1997) made an attempt to offer a broader characterization of the domain of political discourse based on its specific properties, such as: societal domain, political systems, political values, political ideologies, political institutions, political organizations, political groups, political actors, political relations, political processes, political actions, political discourse, political cognition. Any discourse that is political can be characterized according to the above-mentioned properties. Van Dijk (1997) exemplifies the case of a parliamentary debate that can be characterized as follows: 1) societal domain: politics; 2) political system: democracy; 3) political institution: parliament; 4) political values and ideologies: democracy, group and party ideologies; 5) political organizations: parties, lobbyists; 6) political actors: members of

parliament, cabinet ministers; 7) political relations: legislative power; 8) political process: legislation; 9) political action: political decision-making; 10) political cognitions: attitudes about relevant issues. Outside the official politics the contextual criterion should be taken into account in order to label such discourse as political. This characterization is shared by various scholars including, from a CDA perspective, authors such as Fairclough (2012).

The body of research known as political discourse analysis is reliant on inter- and multidisciplinary approaches. This claim suggests that PDA draws its data from a combination of various disciplines, such as history, political science, sociology, psychology, communication and media studies that can ensure profound contextualization of political text and talk under analysis (Van Dijk, 1997; Lauerbach and Fetzer, 2007; Fairclough, 2012; Dunmire, 2012). This claim also proves that issues touched upon in political discourse analysis deserve fuller treatment from various perspectives, as “discourse analysis cannot operate solely within a linguistic and discursive framework and must draw upon methods, frameworks, and contents of other disciplines to adequately analyze its object of study” (Dunmire, 2012: 735).

Political reality is not static and undergoes constant changes through dynamic interaction of political actors, which is why the analysis of political discourse in the media should ideally be “an interdisciplinary enterprise” (Lauerbach and Fetzer, 2007: 3). Apart from that, discourse analysts should demonstrate cultural awareness, that is why the analysis of political discourse should also be cross-cultural. It is explained by the fact that some discursive practices are shared across languages and other semiotic systems, but there are also culturally specific practices that, if not decoded properly, may lead to misinterpretation. Moreover, some genres of political communication “are socio-culturally conventionalized, sometimes even ritualized patterns for dealing with recurrent social problems, they provide standardized forms of interpretation and genre-specific ways of inferring implicit meaning” (Lauerbach, Fetzer, 2007: 11). Albeit Welsch (1999) argues that cross-cultural analysis has to be carried out with due regard to the fast pace of the globalization that is demonstrated through blurred boundaries between cultures. Thus, political and journalistic cultures within a country can be simultaneously influenced by a number of contrasting models.

Apart from being able to carry out discursive analysis in conjunction with a number of approaches and frameworks from relevant fields of knowledge, political discourse analysis should be able to make a contribution to political science, “to answer genuine and relevant political questions and deal with issues that are discussed in political science” (Van Dijk, 1997: 12), as the ultimate aim of the enterprise is to change existing erroneous practices through the change of discursive practices.

According to Filardo-Llamas and Boyd (2017), all research that has been carried out throughout history in relation to political discourse can be divided into *political discourse studies* and *political discourse analysis*. The former originates in classical rhetoric, “the civic art of public speaking”, an art of persuasion (Kennedy, 1999: 14) that arose in Athenian democracy after a series of political changes that required active participation of male citizens in political matters. Major sources that are of utmost importance for political discourse studies are the writings of Cicero, Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian and others. Greek and Latin authors viewed persuasiveness as an intrinsic feature of manipulative techniques, either physical action (such as resorting to force) or an apt use of signs that now are called verbal and non-verbal communication (Kennedy, 1999: 15).

Classical rhetoric was transmitted through centuries, and scholars trace the influence it exerted on political rhetoric studied in political science. According to Kennedy (1999), the writings of classical rhetoricians continued to be studied in application to the theory of discourse. The emergence of a range of new linguistic, cultural, social, political and other theories in the course of the 20th century lead to the a more detailed exploration of classical rhetorical texts and, subsequently, a more profound understanding of their contents and influence. Evidence for the importance of political rhetoric within political science is borne out by a vast number of studies carried out (e.g. Billig, 1991; 1995a, Bitzer, 1981, Campbell and Jamieson, 1990; Clinton, 1988; Dotan and Dumm, 1993; Geis, 1987; Hirschman, 1991; Kiewe, 1994; McGee, 1985; Tetlock, 1993; Windt and Ingold, 1987). The last decades of the 20th century saw the revival of interest in rhetoric due to the linguistic turn in political science, when scholars turned their attention to language and the way it is conceived within political science (e.g. Bell, 1975; Dallmayr, 1984; Edelman, 1964, 1971, 1977, 1988; Geis, 1987; Shapiro, 1981, 1984, 1988).

The acknowledgement made by political scientists that complex political phenomena should be also studied through a linguistic lens testifies to the importance of using multi- and interdisciplinary approaches as far as political discourse is concerned, the idea that is being promoted by discourse analysts.

Political discourse analysis, in its turn, is now closely related to the adoption of a critical perspective, that is the analytical approach of CDA that stipulates the dialectical relationships between language and social practices and recognizes the fact that language performs the pivotal role in struggles over power, domination and authority. Fairclough (1985) and Van Dijk (1990) are the first representatives of the above-mentioned framework who exposed deep fault lines in the existing models of discourse analysis and gave preferential treatment of political and social issues, such as military action and the issue of immigration, racism, sexism and others that have a major impact on the society.

Fairclough (1985, 1992) sets out to prove that the role of purely descriptive discourse analysis should be downplayed while the adoption of a critical perspective may be “an effective practice of intervention” (Fairclough, 1985: 739). According to Fairclough (1985), there is a number of naturalized discourses that result from deep-seated traditions of suppressing and breaching the rights of certain communities. This is the result of the interconnection between discourse (microstructures) and social practice (macrostructures). Critical Discourse Analysis is aimed at disclosing the existing verbal patterns that influence social structures in order to denaturalize such discourses and, consequently, the practices. Van Dijk holds the same view and speaks about “analytical resistance” (Van Dijk, 1990: 2), which is the solution to the problem offered by discourse analysts: disclosure of dominant discourses that reproduce and legitimate inequality and formulation of effective counter-discourses.

Discourse analysts who take interest in political discourse argue for a proper analytical framework to be applied that would yield reliable research results. According to Filardo-Llamas and Boyd (2017), currently there are four major approaches to the analysis of political discourse: Van Dijk’s (1993, 1997) Sociocognitive approach, Chilton’s (2004) Cognitive approach, Wodak et al.’s (1989, 2009; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009) Discourse-Historical approach and Fairclough’s (1989, 2010) Dialectical-Relational approach based on the argumentation theory. Subsequent

sections elaborate on the application of interpersonality and CDA to political media discourse that is of interest for the current study.

2.2. Interpersonality and political discourse

Interpersonal metadiscourse is a widely researched area in academic writing across an array of academic genres and disciplines. Most approaches to understanding metadiscourse limit its application solely to English academic discourse, as they take into consideration the specificities of this particular genre and language and describe the way metadiscourse is shaped in academic settings.

As the idea of author's presence in a piece of writing and the interaction between author and audience is essential to many types of discourse, researchers tried to apply the interpersonal metadiscursive framework beyond academic writing. Political and media discourse are characteristic of salient authorial presence and intentional interaction with potential audience. Nevertheless, studies on the way interpersonal metadiscourse is displayed in the above-mentioned genres are sporadic and are based on different interpretations of what metadiscourse is. Political speeches and presidential debates are among those that received preferential treatment (Ilie, 2003; Mai, 2016; Sclafani, 2017; Albalat-Mascarell, Carrió-Pastor, 2019). The majority of studies focus on interpersonal strategies in oral communication, while written political media discourse tends to be neglected. A number of studies of interpersonality in media discourse were also carried out (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Egereva, 2016, Sainz-Grandes, 2019)

A major impediment to a wider application of the framework to other types of discourses is a limited number of variables that are taken into account. A more nuanced approach is required that would take into consideration every variable that may influence the way interpersonality is envisaged in a piece of writing. A dearth of studies on interpersonality in political media discourse and the importance of the interplay of variables guided the choice of the subject in the current study.

2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the context of politics

This section elaborates on the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to political media genres, such as newspaper discourse and identity construction of political actors in journalistic practice. It is suggested that CDA may give an additional insight into the study of subjectivity that is of utmost importance for the current research. CDA is an openly subjective and to some degree partial approach to the analysis of linguistic material that is used to critically explore topical social issues in order to foster awareness and, consequently, changes, reconsidering existing discursive practices that maintain the current state of affairs.

2.3.1. CDA in newspaper discourse

The language of news media has been within the scope of interests of linguists and discourse analysts since 1970s. According to Wodak and Busch (2004), news discourse has been the most prominent research focus in discourse analysis. Bell (2006) states that the underlying reasons for such interest in newspaper discourse are 1) the accessibility of language data; 2) the importance of news media as “language-producing institutions” (Bell, 2006: 615); 3) interest in distinctive linguistic properties and the way media use language means; 4) the importance of media institutions and discourses they produce in molding culture, politics, social and economic life. However, due to the fact that linguists’ attention was primarily confined to structural properties of news, the first systematic approaches that took into consideration various factors that influence the process of news production did not appear until the 1980s (Van Dijk, 2008: 194).

The current research is going to be focused on the analysis of newspapers from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical discourse analysts, as the name suggests, take a critical stance on the issues and the way they are covered in the press in order to disclose insidious linguistic practices that naturalize, maintain and reinforce social inequities.

According to Kelsey (2017), three stages of the development of CDA approaches to the analysis of news discourse can be distinguished: 1) critical linguistics; 2) Critical Discourse Analysis; 3) multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

The first stage is represented by the predecessor of CDA, critical linguistics, which laid the basics for questioning the social and ideological role of language in the news (Fowler et al, 1979, 1991; Trew, 1979; Kress, 1983; Bell, 1991; Hodge and Kress, 1993). Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew authored a seminal book *Language and Control* (1979) where they expressed the idea that sociolinguists had to engage into the criticism of the linguistic practices used as mechanisms of exercising power and promoting inequality in order to trigger social change towards a more balanced society. Conventional sociolinguistics came under harsh criticism as it performed purely descriptive duties that could only contribute to the maintenance of social imbalance instead of galvanizing society into action. Critical linguistics had ties with Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, that is to say, the aforementioned authors made use of tools applied in systemic functional linguistics to show how different linguistic choices influence ideologies and power relations in the society.

The second developmental stage is Critical Discourse Analysis itself (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b, 1991) that is often considered to be the outgrowth of critical linguistics, although, Wodak and Busch (2004) argue that the roots of the umbrella term CDA lie in a number of interdisciplines such as classical rhetoric, semiotics, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and pragmatics and the term itself unites various methodologies of the analysis of news from a critical perspective.

The adherents of CDA framework repeatedly highlighted the fact that very scarce attention was historically paid to discourse in social sciences. Following the established practice of neglecting the importance of discourse, researchers could seldom grasp the systemic causes of important social issues, such as existing distribution of power, issues of racism, xenophobia, minorities, gender, identity issues and others. CDA scholars emphasize the dialectical relationship between discourse and social practice, calling it “governing theoretical assumption of the paradigm” (Phelan, 2017: 289).

The most extensive research on the analysis of news discourse was carried out by Van Dijk (1988a, 1988b, 1991, 1998). The framework suggested by Van Dijk in *News as Discourse* (1988b) is an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of news discourse based on three constitutive components: societal structures, cognitive structures (mental models) and

discursive expression. Societal structures are indirectly dependent on their discursive expression through cognitive structures (certain mental models that influence our perception and understanding of discourse) while ideology acts as a mediator between cognitive structures and discourse. As a consequence, discourse contains ideological elements on various linguistic levels, such as semantics (the choice of vocabulary, connotations and so on) and syntax (syntactic structures, or “news schemata”). All the components should be taken into consideration in order to yield conclusive results. His seminal work was accompanied by *News Analysis* (1988a), a panoply of case studies in different languages that showed substantial differences in news discourse structure.

Van Dijk takes particular interest in the issue of the public reproduction of racist beliefs and attitudes by news media, such as negative representations of ethnic minorities that exacerbate existing disparities as media are capable of manufacturing and legitimating cognitive models concerning particular layers of society (1989, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002 and further). His methodology is based on a number of theories, such as the argumentation theory, semantic theory and theories of ideology.

Like Van Dijk, Fairclough developed a threefold approach to media discourse. It draws on Halliday’s functional framework and social theories. According to Fairclough (1995), the three dimensions he highlighted are pivotal to media discourse analysis. The first one is textual analysis that focuses on purely linguistic properties of discourse both on micro- (such as vocabulary, syntax, cohesive devices) and macro levels (text structure). The second dimension is discourse practices. At this level one should go deep in the processes of discourse production, interpretation and distribution. Different orders of discourse (discourses in different social domains) deserve fuller treatment as they can provide useful insights in this respect. The third dimension is the analysis of social practices across cultures, societies, institutions with due consideration of the notions of power and ideology and the way they are implemented in existing social practices.

The above-mentioned interplay between linguistics and other branches of knowledge suggests that the studies of news discourse should go beyond purely linguistic analysis. Various scholars within CDA opt for cross-disciplinary analysis making use of developments in the

humanities and social sciences, as a number of preliminary matters should be considered before sound judgement about a piece of discourse can be made. For instance, Verschueren (1985) stated that one cannot understand a text in isolation from its production arguing that it is important to develop an awareness of how the process of journalistic practice is organized. According to Van Dijk (1988), apart from having a direct link to social practice, news discourse is shaped by the institutional and macrosociological contexts of news media and its production, that is to say, critical discourse analysts need an input from journalism studies that enables to understand the cultural context and the mechanisms of news production.

In relation to this, Bell made a significant contribution to the study of news in his seminal work *The Language of News Media* (1991) where he draws on firsthand experience as a journalist and an editor and sheds light on the news production process. Bell accentuates the idea that news discourse should be viewed as a product of “multiple hands” (Bell, 2006: 616), as when a news story is written by a journalist, it has to pass through different stages of editing before it is finally published. The narrative changes as it undergoes a series of adjustments due to a number of factors (such as structure, order, viewpoint, values and so on) that may vary in each context. Apart from the processes that produce news discourse, Bell elaborates on the notion of the news story and the role of the media audience in shaping news discourse. Besides, he offers a framework for analyzing the discursive structure of news stories.

Richardson’s *Analysing Newspapers* (2007) is another important contribution made to the analysis of news discourse within the field of journalism studies. Richardson carries on exploring other levels of news production, following Fairclough’s model, according to which newspaper discourse should be approached from a threefold perspective: society (social practice), journalism (discursive practice of “text production, distribution and consumption” (Fairclough, 1995b: 74) and language. Social practices, according to Richardson, are “the social phenomena existing prior to, and hence shaping, impinging upon and accessible to journalistic practice” (Richardson, 2004: 5). Richardson assumes that there is always a good reason for a news story to be the way it is, consequently, relations between the news media and such systems as “markets, ownership, advertising, government, the law and religious beliefs” (Richardson, 2007: 222) should be taken into consideration as they play a constitutive role in news discourse.

Existing journalistic practice, in its turn, is an adaptive response to editorial, managerial and professional requirements and constraints that cannot be avoided. Moreover, a number trends observed by various scholars, such as marketization, democratization, commercialization and digitalization of news discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Machin and Niblock, 2007, Richardson, 2007) should be viewed as one of the immediate factors that influence the way a news story is shaped.

Another major contribution made by journalism studies to the analysis of newspaper discourse from a critical perspective is the notion of *news values* frequently employed by various scholars (Van Dijk, 1997; Bell, 1991; Richardson, 2007; Cotter, 2010; Baker et al., 2013, Bednarek and Caple, 2012b; 2013; 2017). The notion of news values can give linguists a useful insight into the process of news selection.

News values are defined as “the criteria employed by journalists to measure and therefore to judge the ‘newsworthiness’ of events” (Richardson, 2007: 91). An event should possess a number of characteristics so that it can be covered in a news story. Both within media and journalism studies and discourse analysis news values are predominantly perceived as something that exists “externally to the final news story text” (Bednarek and Caple, 2013: 9), qualities of text that exist independently of journalists (Bell, 1991) and drives the news selection process. Although, Van Dijk (1988) argues that external (economic and political) factors, such political affiliation, the cost of production and others are one of the driving forces that constitute news values that should not be underestimated when analyzing the social context of news production and, consequently, news values. Bednarek and Caple (2013, 2017) take a discursive approach to the analysis of news values, stating that newsworthiness should be viewed as a property of discourse that exists and is being constructed through discursive practices.

Various scholars in media and journalism studies worked out lists of news values (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1982; Hetherington, 1985; Bell, 1991; Craig, 1994; Harcup and O’Neill, 2001; Brighton and Foy, 2007). Bednarek and Caple (2013) arrived at the conclusion that there is much overlap between all the lists. Moreover, the term news values is understood in a variety of ways by different researchers. Apart from that, Richardson (2007) argues that news values tend to change with the passage of time due to a number of reasons, such as

demands of target audiences, changes in the social and political context and so on. It brings to a conclusion that news values possess a constitutive force as far as the content of news is concerned, but being a very flexible category, they should be adjusted to a particular news engine taking into account all the above-mentioned factors.

Intertextuality, as well as interdisciplinarity, is one of the key principles that underpin Critical Discourse Analysis of news. The concept of intertextuality rests on the assumption that no text can be analyzed in isolation from other texts, as they are not produced or understood in isolation. According to Blommaert (1995: 5), “every text incorporates, reformulates, reinterprets or re-reads previous texts, every act of communication is grounded in semantic and pragmatic histories which are not simple or linear, but complex, multi-layered and fragmented”. In application to news discourse, Richardson (2007) exemplifies intertextual properties of running stories as a running story is being updated and sometimes recontextualized interdiscursively. Each discourse is viewed as a link in a chain in terms of internal and external intertextuality.

The third stage of the development of CDA approaches is concerned with the multimodal turn in the analysis of news discourse (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, 1998; 2001, 2005; Van Leeuwen, 2004; Machin, 2007, 2013; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Machin and Niblock, 2007, 2008, Bednarek and Caple, 2012; Caple, 2013; Kelsey, 2015a). According to Kelsey (2017), the theoretical grounds of multimodal discourse analysis were adopted from semiotic theories (Barthes, 1993; Thibault, 1991). Adherents of multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis argue that there is a dearth of research on the meaningfulness of a newspaper layout. According to them, newspaper discourse is an interplay of several modes of expression (the linguistic and the visual) that should not be scrutinized in isolation as each of them enforces the idea that is to be communicated.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), who are considered to usher the idea of interaction of verbal and visual devices, provided a framework for the analysis of their communicative potential in the media. Newspaper layout, spatial arrangement of text on the page, the choice of images, colors, fonts (and its characteristics, such as size, boldness, curvature) are signifying systems that are chosen with due regard to a number of ideological reasons, not just a purely

aesthetic one. According to Machin and Niblock (2008), particular attention that is paid to the visual part of newspapers rests on a common tendency of commercialization of press that was previously mentioned. Everyday choices made by news discourse producers display a shift to more commercialized discourse, where target audience is no longer viewed as public but consumers whose demands should be taken into account (Machin and Niblock, 2008: 244).

Apart from the tendency to employ interdisciplinary and multimodal analysis, Wodak and Busch (2004) point out increasing interest in multilingual and cross-national analysis, as a growing body of research is devoted to the representation of news across different countries, their journalistic cultures, political and social contexts in order to reveal patterns that are universally replicated and those that are culture-specific and, consequently, give a broader description of media landscapes and their particular representatives (Kuo and Nakamura, 2005; Alvaro, 2015; Juuko, 2015; Way, 2015).

2.3.2. CDA studies of identity constructions of political actors

This section deals with the study of political actors through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, as CDA is an explicitly political approach, since it aims at disclosing discourse-based strategies of producing, maintaining and reinforcing dominance in the society. When analyzing discourses produced by politicians, critical discourse analysts rely on Foucault's ideas that their identities are perceived as products of dominant discourses dependent on social practices; existing identities reflect a particular ideological vision of the society and are supposed to "serve hegemonic ends and preserve the status quo" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 31).

The discourse of professional politicians has been of interest and has come under detailed scrutiny by various scholars in order to reveal recurrent discursive patterns that underlie existing ideologies, values, opinions and stereotypes. Although, the overwhelming part of research done on the discourse of politicians is limited to the analysis of a vast number of discursive aspects labelled under a broad term *persuasive techniques*. Transitivity, interpersonality (especially hedging and the use of personal pronouns), modality, the choice of vocabulary (emotive language against neutral expressions) and conceptual metaphors are the

most frequent aspects that are analyzed in articles through which persuasiveness can be attained.

Halliday's *transitivity model* (1985b) is one of the most frequent approaches applied to the analysis of political actors in order to examine the communicative functions of the linguistic choices made by a particular politician based on Halliday's six processes (Ulfa, 2013; Kazemian, 2014; Sharififar, 2015; Zhao, Zhang, 2017). The transitivity model suggests that the predominance of certain process types and the absence of others point to specific conclusions. For example, Naz, Alvi and Baseer (2012) analyzed Benazir Bhutto's speeches, where material clauses prevail over all the other types (64%), followed by mental and behavioral clauses, each constituting 14% of all clauses. That distribution contributes to her image as a person with a developed managerial mindset who suggested effective courses of action who is not devoid of concerns for major domestic issues. Zhang (2017) analyzed Clinton and Trump's political debate and showed that material processes prevail in both discourses (38% and 35% respectively), as the major part of their speech is devoted to the measures that will be taken after one of them wins the presidency.

Modality and the choice of modals is another aspect that is frequently analyzed as far as political social actors are concerned (Sharififar, 2015; Hernández-Guerra, 2016; Yang, 2017). Halliday (2000) states that modality performs an interpersonal metafunction of showing to what degree a particular proposition is valid. For instance, Sharififar (2015) and Shayegh (2012) analysed the modality of Obama's speeches, showing the prevalence of *will* and *can*, that manifest Obama's confidence and a desire to manufacture political consent of the public.

The use of personal pronouns by political actors is another aspect that is frequently analyzed (Harwood, 2007; Hakansson, 2012; Bello, 2013; Proctor, I-Wen Su, 2011; Tyrkko, 2016 and others). Researchers arrive at similar conclusions stating that the choice of pronouns depends on the impact politicians aim at, such as bridging the gap, invoking the sense of collectivity, solidarity and shared responsibility with in-group members; bringing into prominence the individual self of the politician; or creating distance between politicians and their ideological opponents (out-group members).

Although various approaches have been used in order to analyze the discourse of professional politicians, the analysis of their personal identity and the way it is construed have rarely been a specific subject of study. Most research done on the identity construction is limited to *social* identities, as opposed to personal ones, while personal identities of political social actors receive only brief treatment. Social identities are viewed as different collectivities of people classified in terms of gender, ethnicity, social background, political affiliation and others. There is a vast number of studies within Critical Discourse Analysis that explore the construction of a particular identity category such as *gender, masculinity and femininity* (Buchholz, Liang and Sutton, 1999; Johnson and Meinhof, 1997; Barker and Golosinski, 2001; Litosseliti, 2006); *age* (Phelan, 2018); *national identities* (Wodak et al., 1999; Van Dijk, 2000; Barker and Golosinski, 2001; de Fina, 2004; Joseph, 2004), *political identities* (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, 1999; Greene, 1999; Croucher, 2003; Van Dijk, 2006) and others. Meanwhile, personal identities tend to be ignored, even if the basis of a personal identity is social (De Fina, Schiffrin, Bamberg, 2006; Van Dijk, 2010).

Schaffner (1997) and Bhatia (2006) argue that politicians habitually do not act as individuals, but as representatives of their countries, ethnicities, governments, socio-political systems and cultures; consequently, politicians are to be studied as a conjunction of various national, political and cultural identities and the way these identities are incarnated in a particular person. For instance, Mettomaki (2017) analyzed Obama's and Trump's inaugural speeches and showed how the techniques of positive representation of foreigners found in Obama's discourse go in line the ideology of the Democratic party that supports internationalism, while Trump's negative depiction of foreigners coincides with the ideology of the Republicans that promotes strong national defense. Leth et al (2016) analyzed Trump's discourses to prove that his American nationalist and anti-establishment rhetoric is an example of right-wing populism, which again is a number of political identities that found their realization in a single person. Wallstrom (2017) analyzed speeches made by Donald Trump's wife, Melania, in order to find out how her image deviates from the traditionally accepted identity of First lady. According to Bhatia (2006: 177), CDA can be used in order to make an

attempt to fill in the research gap and to expose to “what extent their statements, claims, assertions and denials are the product of their own individual and socio-political ideologies”.

Therefore, there are several key theoretical assumptions that underpin the critical studies of identity that can be further applied to the study of political actors. The first one is shared with other discursive approaches to the study of identity and it holds that identities tend to have a contradictive nature, as they are “more or less stable, relatively permanent” (Van Dijk, 2010: 30), and simultaneously “fluid, dynamic and shifting...capable of both reproducing and destabilizing the discursive order” (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 34). The distinction between the *strong* and *weak* versions of identity (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) generates a vast number of questions whether identity has a stable core or it is impermanent, hybrid and subjected to changes due to a number of extrinsic factors. Critical perspectives in discourse analysis focus on the latter approach as a view that identity is a stable, clear-cut entity comes under widespread criticism. According to Thornborrow (2004), identity is being constructed and negotiated all the time through continuous interaction with others. The second theoretical assumption frequently emphasized by critical discourse analysts has to do with an anti-essentialist view of identity that means that identity is a product of representation through semiotic systems and does not reflect the true self of the identified actors.

Identities turn out to be the outcome of negotiating and embracing social roles, therefore, identity is “more a situational performance than a stable trait of a sense of subjective continuity” (Grad and Martin Rojo, 2008: 6). According to Hall (2000), identity is a social construct is constantly negotiated, that is why the focus should be made on *doing* rather than *being*, on the process of identification rather than on the assignment of a number of qualities to a social actor. Hall (2000) also acknowledges that there is a political need to exploit already formed identities in order to maintain the current state of affairs that the hegemon deems favorable. Nevertheless, identities are inclined to change and renegotiation.

The third assumption stipulates that identities are social and context-bound phenomena, that is why social and cultural background possesses a constitutive force that determines or puts constraints on the production of identities. Discourses do not represent or describe political identities and their essence, but rather constitute them.

The notion of identity is studied across various disciplines and it is often used interchangeably together with such terms as self, selfhood, image, personality, subject, agent, persona and many others (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006) that led to the overuse of the concept. According to Grad and Martin Rojo (2008), critical discourse analysts may make a contribution through the problematization of identity that would show how social mechanisms of control and domination influence the construction and negotiation of identities. Discourse producers have a wide range of discursive tools at hand in order to create identities that are called *representational strategies* (Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2003) within the framework of CDA. These strategies help to bring into prominence certain features of identity that one would like to draw special attention to or to level. They usually give reference to values, opinions, ideas and stereotypes that are well-known to the target audience and undoubtedly are able to create a desirable effect.

Archetti (2017) states that there is a dearth of research done on the image of politicians within the field of political science as well and the way their identities are constructed and represented. In view of the fact that contemporary politics is undergoing the process of mediatization and politicians have been transformed into media personalities, the boundaries between media images, social identities and the individual self are blurred. The issue of the identity construction of political actors takes on an added importance as personal identities of politicians bear specific ideologies, values and attitudes that are of interest for Critical Discourse Analysis and other adjacent disciplines.

3. Research objective and hypothesis

The motivation to carry out the current study originates in my personal background, as I was born and lived in Russia until I turned 25 in 2015. Apart from that, I belong to the generation that has lived a major part of their life under Putin's rule, who, in his turn, marked the 18th anniversary of acceding to power on 7 May 2000 after the 2018 Russian presidential election. Besides, I have always taken a particular interest in journalistic and political discourse, as my undergraduate dissertation was on political slang in journalistic discourse and my master's dissertation elaborated on the discursive representation of the Ukrainian conflict in Russian and Western press.

Since 2000, Russia has changed beyond recognition and the current political situation in Russia is a mounting concern for its citizens as it faces isolation and economic sanctions. The Ukrainian crisis and Russian military intervention followed by the annexation of Crimea and subsequent economic, financial and diplomatic sanctions sparked a new wave of Russian-Western tensions, which were labelled by many journalists as a new wave of the Cold War or even Cold War II (although some suggest that it is a misnomer). Kremlin-backed media outlets, including *Russia Today*, were blamed for massive anti-Western rhetoric since Russia's relations with the West have been going downhill. The current research was primarily motivated by an interest to find out if one can actually speak of a new round of the Cold War demonstrated through an information war waged by *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* which may be viewed as counterparts as they are both state-financed news engines accused of establishment propaganda. Consequently, both sources are expected to be highly subjective and advocate specific standpoints. The analysis of the articles retrieved from *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* might give an insight on the way subjectivity finds its realization in propaganda discourses.

3.1. General objective

Subjectivity has always been an important issue in journalism, often depicted as something unwanted and opposed to the idea of an ideal detached reporting. Latest studies show that both academics and journalists tend to question the canon of objectivity. This

tendency rests on the premise that subjectivity is “shaped by the consciousness of individuals” (Steensen, 2017: 27), thus, no journalistic discourse can be devoid of values, attitudes, opinions and judgements. Moreover, the actual journalistic practice reveals a tendency towards a more interpretative stance. Most researchers agree on the idea that subjectivity is an essential part of any journalistic discourse, both intentionally or not, and only differs in its intensity – from more subtle forms to overt ones.

In addition, researchers emphasize the necessity to be in tune with contemporary thinking on subjectivity, as “once considered potentially knowable and conceptually one-dimensional, [subjectivity] has been rendered various, fractured, and indefinite in recent theorizations, largely because of a new recognition of the complexity of our social roles and the multiplicity of our interactions” (Hall, 2004: 118). Consequently, the general objective of the current study is to find out how subjectivity is articulated in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*. Both sources to be analyzed in this study are state-financed news outlets accused of pro-establishment propaganda. Critics frequently regard *Russia Today* as a propaganda outlet for the Russian government and its foreign policy, while *Voice of America* is said to be a mouthpiece for the American government on questions of foreign and internal policies, thus, they may be viewed as sources that offer opposite perspectives on the way events are depicted.

The analysis is done on the methodological basis of interpersonal metadiscursive framework, which describes linguistic choices made by authors in order to project their self in the discourse. Apart from that, the current study makes an attempt to access the data from the perspective of CDA that may give an insight into how identities of political actors are construed. Since the study revolves around the figure of Vladimir Putin and the journalistic discourse practice during his electoral campaign, it is also of interest to complement the study of recurrent interpersonal markers, tracing to what extent the author’s self is present, with insights into the discursive construction of Vladimir Putin’s identity from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis.

3.2. Specific objectives

As the general objective of the research is to analyze the discursive techniques of constructing subjectivity from the perspective of interpersonal metadiscourse, interpersonal markers are of particular interest to the study. The distribution of interpersonal markers in discourses often constitute recurrent patterns that may be explained by specific communicative aims pursued by their authors. Together with the overall number of interpersonal markers present in the discourse under analysis one can assess to what extent the author's self is present in a piece of writing, as the current study relies on the assumption that any journalistic discourse is a form of advocacy. It is argued that advocacy is omnipresent, and its forms of realization abound. Consequently, the first objective of the research is to reveal recurrent interpersonal patterns constituted by markers in the articles taken from *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* during Vladimir Putin's electoral campaign within the period from the 6th of December 2017, when he officially announced that he was going to run for the presidency, till the 18th of March 2018, the end of the electoral campaign. The number of markers, their distribution and meanings they constitute may support the claim that straight news stories as a journalistic genre tend to advocate certain ideologies and values. Consequently, the study might make a contribution to the ongoing cross-disciplinary debate about the standard of objectivity in journalism, whether it needs to be redefined or substituted for a more feasible one.

The interpersonal framework and the taxonomy used in the study was worked out by Hyland and Tse (2004) and was initially applied to academic discourse. When applied to other discourses, important limitations of the taxonomy were exposed. Journalists have a larger number of linguistic means at their disposal and enjoy greater freedom of expression in comparison with academic discourse as they are not restricted by rigid stylistic norms of the scientific community. Thus, the taxonomy needs to be adjusted to journalistic discourse, as interpersonality is flexible, context-sensitive and contains variables (Suau-Jiménez, 2016). The second objective of the research is to make an attempt to fine-tune the interpersonal framework in application to the political news genre, taking into account its generic peculiarities and deviations from the accepted taxonomy. The third objective is closely related to the second one,

that is to describe new or alternative forms of realization of interpersonality in the discourse under analysis that might help to adjust the taxonomy in application to journalistic genres.

The above-mentioned objectives may help to reach another objective of the research that is to reveal linguistic strategies employed by *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* in order to construct discursive identities of political actors complementing the approach of interpersonal metadiscourse with a CDA perspective. This may show how mechanisms of control and domination, such as state-funded media, influence the construction and negotiation of identities, specifically looking into the discursive construction of the identity of the main political actor, Vladimir Putin.

3.3. Hypothesis

I start from the assumption that *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* display different recurrent interpersonal patterns in the articles under analysis with the prevalence and/or absence of certain interpersonal markers. That may be explained by different journalistic cultures in Russia and the United States and also by different communicative aims set by journalists. A specific distribution of interpersonal markers and their overall number may prove the assumption that a straight news story, in spite of the fact that it is supposed to deliver facts without judgement, is a form of advocacy. Consequently, the canon of objectivity, that has long been viewed as a cornerstone of the professional ethics, would be called into question, that had been previously argued by both academics and practitioners, thus, needs to be redefined, substituted or adjusted to meet the requirements of the contemporary professional practice.

Apart from interpersonal patterns, I also venture to suppose that new forms of realization of interpersonality may be found in the corpus as interpersonality enjoys considerate flexibility and other forms apart from those described by Hyland and Tse (2004) can be viewed as interpersonal markers once they perform their persuasive function in the coverage of the 2018 presidential electoral campaign in Russia.

3.4. Research questions

Taking into consideration general and specific objectives of the current study, I outlined the following research questions that are of utmost importance for the analysis:

RQ1: What recurrent interpersonal patterns are found in the two sources that relate to the coverage of the presidential campaign in Russia in 2018? What communicative function do they perform? Are the quantifications for each interpersonal pattern statistically significant?

RQ2: Are there any alternative forms of realization of interpersonality found in the articles under analysis, which could point at the necessity to fine-tune the original taxonomy when applied to other genres rather than academic discourse?

RQ3: How can the original taxonomy offered by Hyland and Tse (2004) be adjusted in application to journalistic genres?

RQ4: What strategies of identity construction of political actors are employed by journalists from *Voice of America* and *Russia Today* in application to Vladimir Putin?

The four research questions mentioned above would help to understand the way subjectivity is being construed metadiscursively and how the use of metadiscursive techniques may be interpreted from the perspective of CDA in terms of hegemony, control and domination in application to the coverage of 2018 presidential campaign in Russia.

4. Methodology

The current section describes the methodology applied in order to carry out the study, such as the main framework, interpersonality, its traditional and alternative applications; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an additional approach to interpret data obtained from interpersonal analysis in terms of identity construction, corpus linguistics and the description and justification of the corpus and its characteristics compiled for the study.

4.1. Research framework

This section elaborates on the frameworks applied in the study mentioned in the order of priority, as the corpus was analyzed with the use of the interpersonal framework, while the obtained findings were interpreted from the perspective of CDA to make an additional contribution as far as identity construction of political actors is concerned. A separate section is dedicated to corpus linguistics and its relation to the current study.

4.1.1. Interpersonal metadiscourse and its application to journalistic discourses

The notion of interpersonal metadiscourse refers to the discursive tools and practices employed by authors in order to manifest their identity and viewpoint, to “project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the propositional content and the audience of the text” (Hyland and Tse, 2004: 156), to conceptualize “text interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users” (Hyland, 2005: 1). This concept is “based on a view of writing as social engagement” (Hyland, 2004: 133), which presupposes the author’s intention to establish a connection with potential readers of the text with the aim of reaching certain communicative goals, “to acknowledge, negotiate and construct social relations” (Hyland, 2005: 173).

Despite the fact that the term is frequently used in discourse analysis, there are various interpretations of what metadiscourse is. The ground for much of this thinking, according to Hyland (2005), is the fact that “metadiscourse is an umbrella term, used to include an apparently heterogeneous array of cohesive and interpersonal features which help to relate a text to its

context” (Hyland, 2005: 16). Williams (1986: 212) defines metadiscourse as “whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed”. Vande Kopple (1985) suggests that metadiscourse is “the linguistic material that does not add propositional information but which signals the presence of an author”. Crismore et al. (1983) argue that metadiscourse is “linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given” (Crismore et al., 1983: 40). Using the term “propositional”, Crismore (1983) refers to factual information present in the text and uses this notion to juxtapose it to metadiscourse. Various linguists point at the fact that the term is universally accepted, used in a wide sense but it is difficult to draw limits to its use (Nash, 1992: 100).

Definitions of metadiscourse that are of major importance for the current research underpin the idea that metadiscourse is concerned with both propositional and interpersonal content. Hyland and Tse (2004) arrive at a conclusion that propositional and metadiscoursal elements frequently appear simultaneously and borders between those elements are blurry, that is why there cannot be any clear distinction between metadiscourse and propositional content (Hyland and Tse, 2004: 161). Moreover, “the distinction between textual and interpersonal metadiscourse is unhelpful and misleading” (Hyland and Tse, 2004: 164), as the same language units may serve several purposes simultaneously.

The approach taken by Hyland and Tse (2004) and later developed by Hyland (2005, 2008) give a different research perspective to the notion of metadiscourse that was previously “under-theorized” and “empirically vague” as the notion encompassed a broad range of discursive tools. They contended that interpersonal and propositional content is inseparable and the better understanding of the notion of interpersonality was encumbered by strict division of discourse into levels, propositional, textual and interpersonal with no possibilities of their overlapping. The taxonomy introduced by Hyland and Tse (2004) in application to academic discourse in the English language, was employed and adapted in further analyses of discourse pertaining to different genres.

One of the key aspects of interpersonal metadiscourse is its context-sensitivity, “the close relationship it has to the norms and expectations of those who use it in particular settings”

(Hyland, 2005: 87), that is why the diversity of interpersonal patterns is governed by “the audience, the purpose and other aspects of the social context” (Hyland, 2005: 87). Originally the term metadiscourse was widely studied on the basis of various texts belonging to the academic genre, such as research articles, popular scientific articles, master’s dissertations and doctoral theses, textbooks and others. (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Aguilar, 2008; Lorés-Sanz et al., 2010; Zarei, 2011; Kuhl, 2014). Hyland explained the interest for academic discourse from interpersonal perspective, as writer-reader textual engagement in media, politics and journalism is “likely to yield the richest crop of explicitly evaluative examples” and “these public genres tend to offer writers far more freedom to position themselves interpersonally than academic genres”(Hyland, 2005: 175), while it is considered that a writer’s presence in the academic discourse is effaced. Hyland states that metadiscursive strategies followed by the writer’s aim of “adopting a professionally accepted persona and a relationship with readers which seeks balance between the researcher’s authority as expert-knower and his or her humility as disciplinary servant” (Hyland, 2005: 91). Nevertheless, the balance between stance and engagement, the choice of interpersonal markers and their distribution within the academic domain strongly depends on the genre of a particular academic piece of writing that determines its purpose (Suau-Jiménez, 2016). Suau-Jiménez (2016) argues that different genres, such as, for instance, a research article and a grant proposal, have different engagement patterns as the latter pursues the aim of getting funding that is only possible through establishing successful engagement with the recipients of the proposal, which emphasizes its promotional essence, while the former is aimed at academic appraisal and integration into the academic community or cementing an already gained position (Suau-Jiménez, 2016).

The taxonomy introduced by Hyland and Tse (2004) was worked out on the basis of the analysis of English academic discourse; further research carried out by scholars across languages and in non-academic genres (Mapelli, 2008; Lorés-Sanz, 2011; Suau-Jiménez, 2011, 2014, 2016; Edo-Marzá, 2012) disclosed the limitations of Hyland and Tse’s taxonomy as it takes into account only the specificities of the academic genre in English that it was originally applied to. Because of this metadiscourse as a concept comes under frequent criticism in view of the

multifunctional nature of interpersonal markers that are flexible and dependent on the context and other variables.

Suau-Jiménez (2016) proposes that interpersonality is flexible and context-sensitive, which suggests that contextual variables, such as genre, language, discipline, gender and others are to be taken into consideration that is intrinsic to a better understanding and decoding author's communicative intentions and implications that underlie the discourse under analysis (Suau-Jiménez, 2012b, 2014b). Besides, variables may determine and constitute metadiscursive patterns, with prevalence of particular markers and scarcity of others. The application of the framework with due consideration of variables suggests that other parts of speech can also be viewed as interpersonal markers apart from those mentioned if they manage to perform their persuasive function, while a researcher is consistent and transparent when classifying metadiscursive markers.

Hyland (2017) admits that metadiscourse is a fuzzy category and one cannot compile an exhaustive list of markers, as they may be of "varied length, from individual words to whole clauses of sentences" (Hyland, 2017: 18). Moreover, a vast number of individual (contextual) cases can be found and they can be classified in a variety of ways as the classification itself suggests that borders between markers are blurry and thus open to interpretation. The same markers may perform different functions depending on the context and author's intentions. Moreover, the same unit may perform more than one function, in this case it is "solely determined by the researcher's intuition" (Hyland, 2017: 18). It contributes to the idea that researchers should not rely only on corpus-based approaches while analyzing the use of interpersonality. Corpora should be viewed as an auxiliary tool and research should not be purely based on the formal results of the use of corpus tools, that is why manual contextual checking followed by qualitative analysis are essential.

In view of the fact that there is no agreement on the limits of metadiscourse and what should be regarded as such, a new concept, *discursive interpersonality*, was suggested in order to create an alternative approach to metadiscourse that would take into account all the variables to make the framework more applicable to other discourses rather than academic one (Suau-

Jiménez et al., 2021). Contrasting discursive interpersonality with the traditional approaches to metadiscourse (Mauranen, 1993; Hyland, 2005a; 2017), the former regards propositionality as an intrinsic feature of interpersonal interactions, whereas the latter excludes it. Two major concepts are of utmost importance to the model, such as the notion of *interpersonality* (Lorés-Sanz, Mur-Dueñas, Lafuente-Millán, 2010), previously introduced as an umbrella term for all the forms of realization of metadiscourse, and *discursive turn* (Jaworski, Pritchard, 2005) that “sees discourse as an identity axis or departure point for analysis”, which means that interpersonal discourse analysis should depart from disciplinary and generic features that may include propositional linguistic choices if they are central to the discipline and genre nature, as it happens with non-academic ones (Suau-Jiménez et al., 2021).

The current research is carried out in accordance with the abovementioned flexible version of interpersonality that takes into account the contextual, generic and other features as the framework is applied to political media discourse and needs to be adjusted to this genre. The model is based on the division of all the interpersonal tools into *stance* and *engagement* markers. The former category of markers is author-oriented and conveys standpoints and judgements, while the latter focuses on the interaction with potential readers. As journalists have more diverse linguistic tools at their disposal in comparison with academics who have to follow strict rules of the scientific community, it is expected to find alternative forms of realization of interpersonality. To ensure that the classification of markers is transparent and consistent, the Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries were used to consult definitions in order to clarify meanings and possible interpersonal functions of words with due consideration of the context in the articles.

Quotations were analyzed separately from the body of the articles as it is argued that quotations are chosen deliberately and serve the aim of supporting particular statements made in the discourse under analysis. The classification of markers, their function and examples are given in Table 1 and 2:

Interpersonal markers	Function	Example
Hedges	to diminish the assertiveness of a statement	Putin <i>may</i> win presidential election in first round.
Boosters	to increase the assertiveness of a statement	Putin inherited a Russia which was <i>very obviously</i> on its knees.
Positive attitude markers	to give positive evaluation (surprise, approval, admiration, agreement and others)	Meanwhile, many <i>shrewd</i> pundits believe his final election tally will be significantly higher than polls currently suggest.
Negative attitude markers	to give negative evaluation (frustration, criticism, disapproval, sarcasm and others)	That was done by US President George W. Bush <i>killing a 30-year-old</i> missile treaty in 2002, he told NBC.
Self-mentions	to refer explicitly to the author	Putin complained that " <i>no one wanted to talk to us then, no one listened.</i> "

Table 1. Stance markers

Interpersonal markers	Function	Example
Reader pronouns	to refer explicitly to readers or audience (in quotations)	"Dear friends, thank <i>you</i> , that on this frosty Moscow night we gathered here in the capital's heart. Thank <i>you</i> for <i>your</i> support," Putin told the audience.
Appeals to shared knowledge	to draw readers' attention to statements to recognize them as truthful	Putin, who <i>famously</i> called the dissolution of the USSR the greatest geopolitical tragedy of 20th century, said he would have prevented its collapse if given the power to alter one thing in the past.
Directives	to engage readers into a physical or cognitive activity	<i>Let's be blunt here:</i> given her family's past association with Putin, a lot of people believe Sobchak's involvement in the election is part

		of a “Kremlin project” – something she strongly denies.
Questions	to involve readers into a rhetorical dialogic interaction with the author	The big question as Russians headed to polling stations was: <i>What percentage of the population would turn out to vote?</i>
Personal asides	to introduce a commentary inside a statement	To that end, Sobchak opposes the re-absorption of Crimea, calling for a fresh referendum on its status, and even requested permission from Ukraine to visit the disputed peninsula (<i>Kiev was not impressed</i>).

Table 2. Engagement markers

To conclude, interpersonal markers, being interactional language tools, are insightful means for doing discourse analysis that reveal how discourse producers manage to maintain their persona in their writing with due regard to generic conventions and to engage with readers in order to sound persuasive and authoritative within a range of contexts. The proliferation of the concept into many genres is salient and in-depth discourse analysis is only feasible when all the possible variables that may occur in a piece of discourse and their multifunctional nature are taken into account.

4.1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to be regarded in this thesis as a methodological approach that acts as an umbrella framework that focuses on the semiotic mechanisms of producing and reproducing dominance, power abuse and political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality in the social and political context. The aim of critical discourse analysts is to uncover strategies, techniques and certain properties of discourse that ensure the ongoing reproduction of dominance (Van Dijk, 1993), “to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized... by language use” (Wodak, 2001: 10). Discourse in this case may take a linguistic form fully or partially, as all the semiotic components (apart from language) should be taken into account in order to do thorough multimodal analysis. This may

include non-verbal modes of conveying meaningful messages and establishing communication, such as gestures, images and others. Researchers now recognize that many properties and aspects of discourse have communicative potential, thus they make a significant contribution to the overall impact and the message. Fairclough suggests using the term *semiosis* in order to avoid confusion of discourse viewed as all the semiotic elements (language, but also, for instance, visual semiosis, body language and others) with particular instances of discourse, such as political speeches, news articles and others (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer, 2004).

CDA sees language as “social practice” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258) that implies that a discursive event, social context, institutions and social structures within which a discursive event takes place are interconnected and interdependent. Moreover, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 258) argue that “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped”, pointing up the idea of reciprocal influence of discourse and society on each other. That is to say, discourse lays the ground for much of the current thinking and the ongoing production of meanings concerned with such topical social issues as racism, sexism, feminism and others, while social institutions and structures shape and enforce the perception of the issue under discussion. Moreover, according to Fairclough (1995), changes in discourse practice provoke social change that is viewed as an ultimate aim of research done by critical discourse analysts.

Unlike social and political scientists and other discourse analysts that strive for impartiality and objectivity, critical discourse analysts usually take a certain stance on the issues in question and make clear their position from outset in order to promote a better understanding of the undercurrents of inequality and dominance issues. Critical discourse analysts usually advocate the position of those who suffer from the current state of affairs in the society, expressing “solidarity with those who need it most” (Van Dijk, 1993: 252). Besides, CDA is focused on the repetitive instances of dominance of one social groups over others, that is to say, individual cases of dominance and inequality are viewed as an example of a greater tendency detected in the society, of “power relations within groups” (Van Dijk, 1993: 253).

To be able to provide a deeper insight into the problem and to attempt to disclose fundamental causes, conditions and consequences of inequality, dominance and the current distribution of power that exist in the society due to social, psychological and political factors,

it is of utmost importance not only to carry out a profound discourse analysis taking into account solely the linguistic features of the discourse. Discourse analysts need to be knowledgeable about politics and society or they need to collaborate with political and social scientists. According to Wodak and Meyer (2011: 2), “CDA is therefore not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach”. Combining diverse perspectives that belong to different disciplines and theories apart from CDA ensures “empirically adequate critical analysis of social problems” (Van Dijk, 2008: 353). Interdisciplinarity is demonstrated through the use of various approaches within CDA; collaboration with specialists from other relevant fields of knowledge; various techniques of the collection and analysis of data (Wodak and Meyer, 2011). Various terms are used in order to refer to this type of research, such as inter- and multidisciplinary, while Fairclough suggests that it is more accurate to use the term *transdisciplinary* that implies the emergence of a new theoretical framework as a result of the theoretical and methodological development “through dialogue with other disciplines and theories which are addressing contemporary processes of social change” (Fairclough, 1995: 1).

It is necessary to emphasize that CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework and “has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory” (Wodak and Meyer, 2011: 5). Depending on the issue in question, researchers make use of various approaches in order to yield the most exhaustive results. Besides, the keys notions typical for CDA, such as *power*, *ideology*, *discourse* and *dominance* may be viewed from different perspective by different researchers, that is why it is reasonable that the notion of a “school” of CDA was introduced in order to avoid confusion and offer various outlooks on the way CDA should be implemented.

The framework of Critical Discourse Analysis is anchored in several constitutive concepts, such as power, ideology and hegemony. Adequate understanding of the above-mentioned concepts leads to a better understanding of the way they are constructed, maintained and reproduced. According to Van Dijk (1993), CDA directs its focus primarily on social *power* and tends to neglect personal power, unless it is a demonstration of group power through an

individual. Power presupposes that one social group exercises control over other social groups that is demonstrated through 'action and cognition' (Van Dijk, 1993: 254), that is to say, a dominant power group may curtail physical freedom of others as well as try to mold the public way of thinking linguistically through "persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation" (Van Dijk, 1993: 254). Wodak (2008) states that power does not derive from language, but language can be used as a tool of challenging power relations in the society. Language "indexes" power, that is why critical discourse analysts evince an interest in linguistic forms and expressions of power abuse that occur on certain occasions "by means of a genre of a text" (Wodak, Meyer, 2001: 11).

Ideology is another concept that forms an essential part of the framework and is viewed as a weighty component of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations in the society. According to Van Dijk (2006: 729), ideologies are social and are generally associated with different "social groups, classes, castes, or communities, which thus represent their fundamental interests". Ideology usually includes basic principles that produce and reproduce social representations and is viewed as one of the dimensions that constitute social identities. Van Dijk argues that ideologies are relatively stable because of the ongoing production of identical ideological discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis takes a particular interest not only in well-known negative ideologies but also in inconspicuous ones that tend to be overlooked or represented as common knowledge.

The notion of *hegemony* is used in Critical Discourse Analysis when dominated layers of society accept the existing distribution of power. Hegemonic discourse is produced at the societal level (it is never individual) and gains its legitimacy due to the social hierarchy or conventions. According to Van Dijk (1993), the primary function of hegemonic discourse is to seek and gain general acceptance and legitimacy. Moreover, Van Dijk draws attention to the fact that hegemony, as well as ideology, is far from being direct and outspoken and does not provide a clear distinction between the dominant and the dominated.

As far as practical application of the framework is concerned, critical discourse analysts see discourse as "a form of social action" (Fairclough, Wodak, 1997: 279) and it means that apart from the goal of unraveling linguistic patterns of establishing mental control and power relationships in the society, linguists' ultimate aim is to change discursive practices in order to

redress the balance in favor of those whose rights were infringed. Scholars that belong to the CDA group admit being partial and express their stance towards particular issues explicitly and usually take an active part in social and political life. According to Van Dijk, “critical discourse scholars should... be social and political scientists, as well as social critics and activists” (Van Dijk, 1993: 253). They try to raise public awareness and show how discriminatory language contributes to the domination of one society group over others, as “consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (Fairclough, 1989: 1).

4.1.3. Corpus linguistics

Since this study is corpus-based, it was considered important to refer here to Corpus Linguistics on which scholars doing corpus-based studies rely, often drawing on criteria, methods and techniques for data retrieval, distribution and analysis.

Corpus linguistics is “the study of language based on examples of real-life language use” (McEnery, Wilson, 1996: 1) that offers various computational techniques to analyze linguistic data and to reveal recurrent linguistic patterns that are meaningful in the production of discourses. A corpus is an electronically stored collection of naturally occurring language data compiled with due consideration of language, genre or other aspects (Sinclair, 1991; Biber et al., 1994; Flowerdew, 2004).

Linguistic corpora are characteristic of several specific properties that distinguish them from simple collections of texts. Linguistic data included in the corpus is *authentic*, which means that it is genuine language produced for the purpose of communication and not specifically for subsequent linguistic analysis (Sinclair, 1996). A corpus is to be *representative*, so that the distribution of samples of language use found in the corpus can be identical to the distribution of these samples in a larger corpus or in the language in general. Representativeness is essential when it is necessary to trace trends and make generalizations (Leech, 1991). Nevertheless, the issue of representativeness is open to discussion as it can be neither guaranteed nor evaluated objectively, thus, any statement about the representativeness of a corpus is “largely an act of faith rather than a statement of fact” (McEnery et al., 2006: 16).

The issue of corpus size is tightly related to the issue of representativeness. Flowerdew (2002) observes two opposing trends in corpus compilation. On the one hand, corpora are becoming bigger (“mega-corpora”), on the other hand, smaller, specialized corpora are being compiled (Flowerdew, 2002: 96). Generally, corpora can be of various sizes, for instance, advanced large-scale corpora that are substantial in size and contain more than 1 million words usually increase the generalizability of results. Smaller specialized corpora focus on specific aspects of language and are compiled with due consideration of such parameters as genre, type of discourse, language, subject matter and others (Flowerdew, 2004). Although some linguists say that bigger corpora give more opportunities (Sinclair, 1991; Stubbs, 1996), all types of corpora have their limitations when it comes to analysis, such an issue of manageability of a large amount of data, limited generalizability of small-scale corpora and others. Most scholars arrive at the conclusion that the size should be determined with due consideration of research objectives. The task to study particular features of a specific genre may be accomplished with the use of a small-scale corpus, whether a larger corpus is needed in order to reveal latest tendencies in the use of language.

As the current research is also aimed at describing particular interpersonal features of a specific genre, a small specialized corpus was compiled as this kind of corpus “gives insights into patterns of language use in particular settings” (Koester, 2010: 67). Sometimes the use of corpus data is criticized because it is raw, decontextualized data (Widdowson, 1998; 2000), that is why a small specialized corpus allows a closer link between the corpus and the context as a researcher enjoys “greater familiarity with the context” (Koester, 2010: 67). As a result, linguistic patterns observed in the corpus may give an insight into the social, cultural, political and other contexts that may be of interest (Flowerdew, 2008).

Although, a certain degree of variability may be present in the corpus that is compiled of discourse samples of the same genre. If all the samples were taken from a single source (or, as in the case of the current research, from two sources), the findings would represent the peculiarities of the genre of the source and not of a genre as a whole (Koester, 2010). This is partly related to the issue of “local densities” (Moon, 1998: 68) that are defined as numerous instances of particular linguistic units frequently found in a source, but the findings should not

be generalized in application to the genre in general. It must be taken into consideration when doing analysis.

Corpora are analyzed with the help of a specially designed software that 1) searches for instances of an item; 2) counts the number and frequencies of the item found in the corpus; 3) shows instances of the item in discourses in the corpus so that the researcher could conduct further investigation, as, according to Stubbs (2001b: 215), “repeated patterns show that...meanings are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, but widely shared in a discourse community”. Baker (2006) suggests that repeated patterns found in the corpus may reveal hegemonic discourses or discourses that are viewed as common ways of presenting certain issues. Moreover, Baker highlights that contrasting examples can also be found that suggests the existence of an alternative types of discourse that may not be conspicuous without a corpus-based analysis.

Tognini-Bonelli (2001) emphasizes the importance of making a distinction between the two possible types of analysis that can be carried out: *corpus-based* or *corpus-driven* analysis. The former uses a corpus as a source of examples to justify previous findings, “to check researcher intuition or to examine the frequency and/or plausibility of the language contained within a smaller data set” (Baker, 2006: 16). The latter views a corpus itself as the data and the investigation is completely based on the use of corpora, when linguists are “strictly committed to the integrity of the data as a whole” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84).

Corpus linguistics is frequently viewed as a purely quantitative method of analysis and is sometimes also criticized because of over-emphasizing quantitative data (Stubbs, 2009). Though, as Biber (1998) points out, corpus-based research requires both quantitative and qualitative methods, as numerical data on the occurrence of particular linguistic phenomena needs “functional (qualitative) interpretation”. Stubbs (2009) emphasizes the importance of having various types of data and techniques at hand, that, when combined, can be used to discover aspects of language use that otherwise might stay unnoticed.

Corpora may contain “raw” information, meaning that apart from texts no additional data is provided. In this case users may look for keywords and collocations. Advanced corpora

are normally annotated, that is to say, they contain parts-of-speech tagging to facilitate search, lemmatization (reduction of inflectional variants of words to a lemma, as they appear in the dictionaries), parsing (syntactic annotation), semantic, pragmatic and stylistic annotation.

Traditional manual methods of analyzing discourse are criticized in view of the fact that they are not completely devoid of bias, as researchers' values, ideas and standpoints always interfere with objective research. Corpus-based research can offer improved reliability and help to avoid "cherry-picking" (Widdowson, 2004), "so that the pre-existing views and prejudices of the analyst do not interfere with the early stages of analysis" (Baker, McEnery, 2015: 8). The analysis of corpora can provide an analyst with a vast number of samples over a certain period of time than can uphold the validity of a previously made claim. Moreover, corpus-based research may uncover unexpected intricacies of language use that can be of interest.

Corpus linguistics provides additional linguistic tools of analysis together with other methods used in discourse analysis. Corpus tools are able to bring an additional dimension to the research, as they give access to large data collections that may partially exclude bias and preconceived notions. They can help to unravel how particular discourses that are being produced in certain socio-political contexts, may shape ideologies, relationships and standpoints.

The current is a corpus-based study that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The corpus was compiled in accordance with all the requirements for a corpus and objectives of the study.

4.2. Characteristics of the corpus, scope and delimitation of corpus size

The corpus compiled for this research is comprised of news articles taken from *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* during the presidential campaign throughout the period from 5, December 2017 till 18, March 2018. The timespan is quite limited that suggests that interpersonal patterns, if found, are expected to be stable and homogeneous and will not depend on external factors, thus, may yield conclusive results. The corpus consists of 112 sample unannotated texts with a total wordcount of 59,586 words. The corpus is divided into two

subcorpora (64 articles with 30,558 words in total in *Russia Today* and 48 articles with 29,028 words in *Voice of America*) according to the source, that is proportionate and suitably balanced and ensures that no source is under- or overrepresented in the corpus. When examples of markers are given, the sources and the article number is placed at the end in square brackets, e.g. [1.15], where the first digit refers to the source, 1 for *Russia Today* and 2 for *Voice of America*, and the second one for the number of article from the corpus.

The corpus compiled for the current study complies with the requirements for thorough linguistic analysis, such as authenticity, representativeness and proper sampling (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Articles downloaded for analysis are authentic texts published on the websites of *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*, thus, are samples of naturally occurring discourse that had not been produced for the sake of linguistic analysis. Articles were selected manually through the search of a key word “Putin” on the websites of the sources. In order to compile the corpus in a principled and systematic manner, the choice of articles was made with due consideration of the genre in order to ensure its representativeness that would serve as the basis for possible generalizations. That is why the present study focuses on informative news articles only that were taken from respective sections of their official websites, although the boundaries between straight news stories and opinion articles are blurred to a serious extent.

The size of the corpus is tightly related to the principle of representativeness. The compilation of a small-scale corpus for the current study is justified by manual analysis that has to be carried out in view of the necessity to explore forms of realization of interpersonality in the corpus and find deviations from the previously described forms, if there are any. That is to say, corpus representativeness depends on the purpose and linguistic features that are going to be studied (Bowker and Pearson, 2002). Moreover, small-scale corpora compiled of texts of specialized genres make it possible to spot specific aspects and trends within a limited period of time, such as during an electoral campaign. As Flowerdew (2011) puts it, smaller corpora are appropriate to study features of a specific genre or register.

The choice of the sources was guided by a number of similar characteristic features that make the two sources comparable: the two news engines are both state-financed, offer pro-

establishment perspectives on a wide range of issues, both accused of state propaganda and frequently seen as ideological adversaries.

Voice of America is a US government-funded news service that began broadcasting to the Soviet Union and other countries behind the Iron Curtain in 1947 in view of the escalation of the Cold War. The primary objective was to combat anti-American propaganda spread by the Soviet Union and other countries under communist rule and to offer an American perspective on political issues, acting as a mouthpiece for the American government on questions of foreign and internal policies. Although *Voice of America* has become closely associated with counter-disinformation programs, many sources claim that it has been used as an instrument of US foreign policy and a powerful anti-communist propaganda tool against the Soviet Union.

Russia Today is a media vehicle that is sponsored by the government as well as *Voice of America* and serves similar ends, offering pro-Kremlin perspectives. *Russia Today* was viewed as a tool to improve Russia's image abroad and counter the anti-Russian bias present in the Western media, according to the Kremlin. Critics frequently regard *Russia Today* as a propaganda outlet for the Russian government and its foreign policy.

5. Analysis and results

The section is separated in four sub-sections, the first one dedicated to the analysis of articles from *Russia Today* and the second sub-section deals with the analysis of articles from *Voice of America*. Both sub-sections, in their turn, present quantitative and qualitative analyses separately according to the thematic category of articles in the corpus. The third sub-section describes the results of statistical analysis. The fourth one offers an interpretation of the findings from the first two sub-sections from the perspective of CDA in terms of identity construction.

5.1. Articles from Russia Today

This section presents the results of analysis of articles on Putin, election and the poisoning of the Skripals, with quantitative and qualitative analysis for each thematic category of articles.

5.1.1. Quantitative analysis of Putin-related articles

The corpus under analysis is comprised of 64 articles taken from *Russia Today* within the period from the 6th of December till the 18th of March and is divided into three thematic parts. This division is based on an observation made during the process of corpus compilation, as it became apparent that the articles published throughout the period can be classified into three categories, the first one including articles that cover only election-related issues, the second category mainly focuses on Putin's internal and external policies and the third one which covers the poisoning of the Skripals. The thematic distribution of the articles is uneven (30, 14 and 20, respectively), although previously expected to be so, as the current research is particularly interested in the construction of subjectivity during the electoral period, when a bigger number of articles on the upcoming election was expected. The prevalence may be explained by *Russia Today's* objective to justify the necessity of Putin's second consecutive (fourth overall) term in office, offering a particular pro-Kremlin perspective on the presidential candidates while articles purely concerned with Putin are aimed at strengthening the identity that is being imposed, thus, ensuring a double impact on the target audience.

The results of quantitative analysis of the articles from *Russia Today* on Putin’s policies and the distribution of stance and engagement markers are shown in Table 3.

	Stance markers	Engagement markers	Total
Number	153	2	155
Percentage	98.7%	1.3%	

Table 3. Stance and engagement markers in Putin-related articles (*Russia Today*)

The analysis shows total prevalence of stance markers over engagement markers. The average number of stance markers found in the articles under analysis is 10.9, the number ranging from 2 to 34 in each article. As far as engagement markers are concerned, they are mostly underrepresented in the discourse under analysis due to the stylistic peculiarities of an informative news article, where directives, reader pronouns and personal asides are not supposed to be found.

Table 4 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers for the author’s voice:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions	Total
			Positive	Negative		
Number	29	28	54	42	0	153
Percentage	18.95%	18.3%	35.29%	27.46%	0%	

Table 4. Distribution of stance markers in Putin-related articles (*Russia Today*)

We observe substantial prevalence of attitudinals over hedges and boosters in the articles concerned with Putin’s policies, while self-mentions are absent. Their absence may be explained by the conventions of the genre (news story) that does not presuppose any explicit reference to the author of the news story as it is supposed to be purely informative (as compared to an opinion article, where a journalist’s personality can be brought forward). The prevalence of positive attitudinals suggests that is the major persuasive technique employed in Putin-related articles in order to underpin the existing “favorable” image of Putin and his political activities created by *Russia Today*. A moderate number of boosters in comparison with attitudinals may be explained by the fact that persuasion is attained by primarily with the help of positive evaluation while boosters act as a complimentary tool. Hedging techniques are present which

suggests that journalists make an attempt to mitigate the assertiveness of their statements. The overall number of stance markers reinforces the premise that the analyzed articles are saturated with the author's self.

The examples of stance markers found in the articles are as follows:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) In an interview for the documentary, the Russian leader said modern crime drama *tended* to exaggerate the level of lawlessness in the country at that time, but said “*in general, the situation was quite militant.*” [1.1]
- 2) GDP per capita *almost* tripled to \$27,900 to become the largest among BRICS countries. [1.2]
- 3) It was US President George W. Bush who withdrew from the ABM Treaty, which had been one of the main pillars of the détente and held for *nearly* 30 years. [1.3]
- 4) The Russian president went on that he still believes the two countries *should* focus on what they can do together. [1.3]
- 5) As long-time politicians, Merkel and Putin have come across each other's paths more than once, so *perhaps* it makes sense that they *would* take part in *some* friendly gift-giving. [1.4]
- 6) *Perhaps* Donald Trump will give Kim Jong-un a nice gift basket sometime in the future? [1.4]
- 7) The figure had *almost* tripled by 2017 and has now reached \$27,900. [1.6]
- 8) The average nominal monthly wage has grown *almost* 11-fold from \$61 to \$652. [1.6]
- 9) When Putin was elected in 2000, Russia had just \$12 billion in reserves, accompanied by a public debt, which was *almost* equal to the country's economic output at 92.1 percent. [1.6]
- 10) Russia started exporting grain in 2002, selling *a little* over seven million tons. [1.6]
- 11) The estimated time of arrival for such munitions from the Norwegian Sea to Moscow is only *around* 15 minutes, the president added. [1.7]
- 12) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States *tend to* calm themselves by calling Russia “*a weak regional power*” but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were total nonsense. [1.8]

- 13) The US **should** give Russia evidence about the alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election and the 13 Russians indicted for it, President Putin said. [1.9]
- 14) When confronted by Kelly, who listed an array of charges against Russia, from “*hacking into DNC*” to “*creating bots on Twitter and Facebook*” and “*spreading misinformation*” on the presidential election and even the Black Lives Matter movement, Putin reiterated that the evidence **should** be handed to the Russian authorities. [1.9]
- 15) While ties between Moscow and Washington have deteriorated in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, war in Syria and allegations of Russian meddling in the 2016 US elections, further accusations **would** lead nowhere, Putin said. [1.10]
- 16) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons **would** have dire consequences for humanity, he maintained that Russia **would** be forced to defend itself using all available means if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]
- 17) The list includes the newest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has **virtually** no range limit, high-precision hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and even combat lasers. [1.11]
- 18) In the following years, the US has **virtually** encircled Russia with its missile defense installations, in particular by stationing them in Romania and Poland. [1.11]
- 19) Last week, Alexander Fomin, Russia’s deputy defense minister, said that the number of anti-ballistic missiles deployed in the vicinity of the Russian borders as part of the US military buildup **could** soon reach as many as 400. [1.11]
- 20) At the same time, Putin was **apparently** not keen on gazing into the future. [1.12]
- 21) Wilder says while he didn’t like a lot of the policies of Russian President Vladimir Putin, but he **would** like to see a nationalist stance like Putin's in other European nations. [1.13]
- 22) The resulting erosion of control over things like budget or immigration policies to a group of unelected members of the European Commission has proven to be disastrous and a potential existential threat to EU members, **he believes**. [1.13]
- 23) Wilders **believes** that a lack of proper conversation is, to a great degree, responsible for what some journalists in the West perceive as Russia starting an arms race. [1.13]

- 24) In his message to Russia's Federal Assembly, Putin spent **around** four minutes on the new-generation Sarmat ICBM, and on an as-yet-unnamed nuclear cruise missile. [1.14]
- 25) The Russian President, who is facing re-election later this month, emphasized that both of these systems have **almost** unlimited reach, and are invulnerable to interception in-flight. [1.14]
- 26) **Almost** every major mainstream outlet included references to "a *new armsrace*" or a "new Cold War," either in the text or the headline, while the Daily Beast accused the Russian leader of "boasting." [1.14]

- **Boosters:**

- 1) Putin has **repeatedly** described the "shock-therapy" reforms of the 1990s as a mistake that led to poverty for the majority of Russians, while few chosen 'oligarchs' gained tremendous riches. [1.1]
- 2) President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia will retain the status of a great power, including in the defense industry, if innovation becomes the **main** driver of development. [1.2]
- 3) The path that led towards confrontation could have been avoided had the US agreed to cooperate on the development of anti-missile defenses with Russia – an offer **repeatedly** extended by Moscow. [1.3]
- 4) It is, **of course**, fitting that each of the leaders has gifted something that their respective country is known for. [1.4]
- 5) Bears, tigers and maternity benefits – that was the subject of Vladimir Putin's short talk with the US First Lady at the G20 summit in Hamburg, he said in a new documentary. **And no**, he **definitely** did not try to recruit her. [1.5]
- 6) Things have changed **markedly** in 18 years, as Russia's public debt has now shrunk to 17.4 percent of GDP and reserves have increased to \$356 billion. [1.6]
- 7) The Central Bank of Russia (CBR) added 9.3 tons of gold to its reserves in December, bringing the total yearly holdings to a record 1,838.211 tons – worth **over** \$76 billion in monetary terms. [1.6]
- 8) Russia started exporting grain in 2002, selling a little **over** seven million tons. [1.6]
- 9) The Northern Clover military facility on the New Siberian Islands, for example, is an **entirely** closed self-sufficient complex, which has a minimum effect on the ecosystem. [1.7]
- 10) While exploring and developing the Arctic region, Russia is paying **particular** attention to the ecological situation in the region. [1.7]

- 11) Over the past few years, Russia has **greatly** expanded its presence in the region, constructing new bases and refurbishing old ones, erecting long-range radars and deploying new troops. [1.7]
- 12) Russian lawmakers **emphasize** that Putin's address was a call for peace and talks. [1.8]
- 13) The senator went on to point out that Russia **has been inviting** western nations to hold talks and sign treaties **for years and decades** without any proper response from the US and its allies. [1.8]
- 14) He then expressed hope that the international community will listen attentively to Putin's latest statements and eventually find some "*windows of opportunities*," because collective effort is the **only** way to tackle common threats. [1.8]
- 15) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he **maintained** that Russia would be forced to defend itself using all available means if its very existence is put at stake. [1.8]
- 16) Senator Aleksey Pushkov said in comments to RT that he thought that the main message of Putin's address to the international community was **very clear**. [1.8]
- 17) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend to calm themselves by calling Russia "*a weak regional power*" but the presentation made by the Russian president had **made it absolutely clear** that any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were **total** nonsense. [1.8]
- 18) Putin then said that this demonstration was neither a threat nor a bluff, but **another** attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]
- 19) Without evidence, the accusations are **nothing but** "yelling and hollering." [1.9]
- 20) Kremlin officials have **repeatedly** denied the charges. [1.10]
- 21) <...> further accusations would lead nowhere, Putin said. He **asserted** that the US leader realized that too. [1.10]
- 22) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he **maintained** that Russia would be forced to defend itself using all available means if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]
- 23) The list includes the newest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has virtually no range limit, high-precision hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and **even** combat lasers. [1.11]
- 24) Geert Wilders, a Dutch politician and leader of the anti-immigration Party for Freedom, says European nations lack the kind of leadership he sees in the US and Russia, where the interests of their own people are **prioritized**. [1.13]

- 25) Wilders believes that a lack of proper conversation is, **to a great degree**, responsible for what some journalists in the West perceive as Russia starting an arms race. [1.13]
- 26) But while the Russian leader's words **definitely** caught the international media's attention, whatever diplomatic intent was behind them went unheeded. [1.14]
- 27) In his message to Russia's Federal Assembly, Putin spent around four minutes on the new-generation Sarmat ICBM, and on an as-yet-unnamed nuclear cruise missile. The Russian President, who is facing re-election later this month, **emphasized** that both of these systems have almost unlimited reach, and are invulnerable to interception in-flight. [1.14]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) Vladimir Putin had to protect himself with firearms due to criminality in Russia during the pro-market reforms of the 1990s, and **even considered taking a side-job as a taxi driver**, the president revealed in an interview. [1.1]
- 2) President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia will **retain the status of a great power**, including in the defense industry, if innovation becomes the **main driver of development**. [1.2]
- 3) With a \$4 trillion GDP in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Russia **has become the sixth-largest economy in the world** after China, the United States, India, Japan and Germany. [1.2]
- 4) Since 1999, Russia has **enjoyed a 30-fold increase** in foreign currency reserves, and **public debt has shrunk to 17.2 percent** of GDP compared to over 92 percent 18 years ago. [1.2]
- 5) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth only \$620 billion, but that **has increased by 600 percent** in the last 18 years. [1.2]
- 6) The total value of assets in the Russian banking system **has risen 24-fold** to \$1.43 trillion. [1.2]
- 7) GDP per capita almost **tripled** to \$27,900 to become **the largest** among BRICS countries. [1.2]
- 8) It was US President George W. Bush who withdrew from the ABM Treaty, which **had been one of the main pillars of the détente** and held for nearly 30 years. [1.3]
- 9) The US nuclear build-up on Russia's doorstep triggered a response from Moscow, which deployed its **newest** Iskander systems to its Kaliningrad exclave, citing the threat posed by US missile launchers deployed in Poland and Romania. [1.3]

- 10) The path that led towards confrontation ***could have been avoided*** had the US agreed to cooperate on the development of anti-missile defenses with Russia – ***an offer repeatedly extended by Moscow***. [1.3]
- 11) The Russian president went on that he ***still believes the two countries should focus on what they can do together***. [1.3]
- 12) Russian economy under Putin: ***Quality of life tripled, foreign debt fell 75%***. [1.6]
- 13) Before Putin's election, Russia had a \$9,889 GDP per capita by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). The figure had almost ***tripled*** by 2017 and has now reached \$27,900. [1.6]
- 14) Russia has ***the highest*** GDP per capita among its fellow BRICS countries, with the next-highest, China, having just \$16,624. [1.6]
- 15) ***The average nominal monthly wage has grown almost 11-fold*** from \$61 to \$652. [1.6]
- 16) ***Unemployment has contracted*** from 13 percent to 5.2 percent. [1.6]
- 17) ***Pensions have grown over 1,000 percent*** in the same period from \$20 to \$221. [1.6]
- 18) Russia is ***the sixth-largest*** economy in the world by PPP, with a \$4-trillion GDP. [1.6]
- 19) PwC has predicted that, by 2050, the country will become ***the largest*** economy in Europe by this measure, leaving behind Germany and the United Kingdom. [1.6]
- 20) So, in the last 18 years, Russian ***economic output*** in these terms ***has increased by 600 percent***. [1.6]
- 21) ***Inflation rates have decreased*** from 36.5 percent to 2.5 percent by the end of 2017. [1.6]
- 22) ***The total value of assets*** of the Russian banking system ***has risen 24-fold*** to \$1.43 trillion. [1.6]
- 23) ***Capitalization of the Russian Stock Market has grown more than 15-fold*** to \$621 billion. [1.6]
- 24) Things have changed markedly in 18 years, as Russia's ***public debt has now shrunk*** to 17.4 percent of GDP and ***reserves have increased to \$356 billion***. [1.6]
- 25) ***Russian gold reserves have increased by more than 500 percent*** since 2000. The Central Bank of Russia (CBR) added 9.3 tons of gold to its reserves in December, bringing the total yearly holdings to a ***record*** 1,838.211 tons – worth over \$76 billion in monetary terms. [1.6]
- 26) The World Gold Council shows that Russia is ***the largest*** buyer of gold and is the world's third-biggest producer, with the Central Bank purchasing from domestic miners through commercial banks. [1.6]

- 27) While the Russian economy remains dominated by oil and gas revenues, its agriculture sector **has boomed** in recent years. [1.6]
- 28) Russian farmers produced their **largest ever** crop in the 2017 agricultural year, **breaking the 40-year-old Soviet record**, and **harvesting more than 130 million tons**. [1.6]
- 29) Since the early 2000s, the Russian **share of the world wheat market has quadrupled from four to 16 percent**. [1.6]
- 30) In 2017, Russia wanted to sell 45 million tons – **an increase of more than 600 percent**. [1.6]
- 31) Russia will expand its presence in the Arctic **to ensure the safety of its citizens**, President Vladimir Putin said. While **Moscow does not seek to intimidate anyone**, it **will continue to develop the vital region**. [1.7]
- 32) At the moment, the country has four compounds there including the northernmost military installation, dubbed Arctic Trifol. The station is **the world's only** permanent structure built at 80 degrees latitude north of the Equator. [1.7]
- 33) The Northern Clover military facility on the New Siberian Islands, for example, is an **entirely closed self-sufficient** complex, which has a minimum effect on the ecosystem. [1.7]
- 34) Head of the Upper House Foreign Relations Committee Konstantin Kosachev told RT that the parliamentary address that Vladimir Putin delivered on Thursday could share the fate of Putin's 2007 **historical** speech in Munich. [1.8]
- 35) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend to calm themselves by calling Russia "a weak regional power" but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that **any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were total nonsense**. [1.8]
- 36) The president spoke on a wide range of issues, touching upon the economy, the social situation and the environmental issues, but the part that caused the most intense reaction from audience and media alike was the description of Russia's **newest** weapons, complete with 3D graphic presentations. [1.8]
- 37) Putin then said that this demonstration was neither a threat nor a bluff, but **another attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks** rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]
- 38) President Vladimir Putin, who recently startled the world by unveiling Russia's **advanced** nuclear arsenal, has again spoken of nuclear arms, clarifying the circumstances in which Moscow is prepared to enter a nuclear war. [1.11]

- 39) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he maintained that Russia would be forced to defend itself **using all available means** if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]
- 40) On March 1, the Russian president unveiled a set of **brand-new** Russian nuclear weapons during his state of the nation address. The list includes **the newest** intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has virtually no range limit, **high-precision** hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and even combat lasers. [1.11]
- 41) He also claimed to be a **decent** cook. [1.12]
- 42) In his message to Russia's Federal Assembly, Putin spent around four minutes on the **new-generation** Sarmat ICBM, and on an as-yet-unnamed nuclear cruise missile. The Russian President, who is facing re-election later this month, emphasized that both of these systems have almost unlimited reach, and are invulnerable to interception in-flight. [1.14]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) In an interview for the documentary, the Russian leader said modern crime drama tended **to exaggerate the level of lawlessness in the country** at that time, but said *"in general, the situation was quite militant."* [1.1]
- 2) Putin has repeatedly **described the "shock-therapy" reforms of the 1990s as a mistake that led to poverty** for the majority of Russians, while few chosen 'oligarchs' gained **tremendous** riches. [1.1]
- 3) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth **only** \$620 billion, but that has increased by 600 percent in the last 18 years. [1.2]
- 4) Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied **accusations** he revived an arms race by unveiling Russia's new nuclear deterrent. [1.3]
- 5) That was done by US President George W. Bush **canceling a 30-year-old** missile treaty in 2002, he told NBC. [1.3]
- 6) In an interview with NBC's *"Megyn Kelly Today"* on Thursday, the Russian leader **brushed off claims** in the Western media that by introducing new nuclear-powered missiles, including the hypersonic Sarmat, he has signaled a new arms race. [1.3]
- 7) **The alarmist rhetoric that fills Western news outlets is just another form of propaganda**, Putin said. [1.3]
- 8) In the years following, the US **has encircled** Russia with its missile defense installations, extending its anti-missile shield to Romania and Poland, deploying for the first time a battery of Patriot long-range anti-aircraft system to Lithuania for war games. [1.3]

- 9) *The US nuclear build-up on Russia's doorstep* triggered a response from Moscow, which deployed its newest Iskander systems to its Kaliningrad exclave, citing the threat posed by US missile launchers deployed in Poland and Romania. [1.3]
- 10) Kelly raised the topic of *speculation* that the new weapon systems have not yet undergone any successful tests. [1.3]
- 11) Putin, who had used Thursday's state of the nation address to unveil the weapons, dismissed *the rumors*. [1.3]
- 12) The two met briefly at a G20 summit dinner last year, and photos of Donald Trump's wife laughing at Putin's jokes *stirred much speculation* in the US media. [1.5]
- 13) Russia has the highest GDP per capita among its fellow BRICS countries, with the next-highest, China, having *just* \$16,624. [1.6]
- 14) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth *only* \$620 billion. [1.6]
- 15) When Putin was elected in 2000, Russia had *just* \$12 billion in reserves, accompanied by a public debt, which was almost equal to the country's economic output at 92.1 percent. [1.6]
- 16) US Ohio-class submarines, capable of carrying 24 Trident nuclear missiles, are *very* active in Norwegian Sea. The estimated time of arrival for such munitions from the Norwegian Sea to Moscow is *only* around 15 minutes, the president added. [1.7]
- 17) *Pre-empting Western interpretations of the presidential address to parliament as saber rattling*, several Russian lawmakers explained the stating of Russia's strength. [1.8]
- 18) The senator went on to point out that Russia has been inviting western nations to hold talks and sign treaties for years and decades *without any proper response* from the US and its allies. [1.8]
- 19) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend *to calm themselves by calling Russia* "a weak regional power" but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were total nonsense. [1.8]
- 20) The president spoke on a wide range of issues, touching upon the economy, the social situation and the environmental issues, but the part that caused *the most intense* reaction from audience and media alike was the description of Russia's newest weapons, complete with 3D graphic presentations. [1.8]

- 21) Putin then said that this demonstration was *neither a threat nor a bluff*, but another attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]
- 22) The US should give Russia evidence about the *alleged* meddling in the 2016 presidential election and the 13 Russians indicted for it, President Putin said. [1.9]
- 23) In mid-February, the US Justice Department indicted 13 Russian individuals and three firms over *suspected* interference in the US election process. [1.9]
- 24) *While the topic of Russia's meddling in the US democratic processes never seems to dwindle, no solid evidence has been presented so far.* [1.9]
- 25) While ties between Moscow and Washington have deteriorated in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, war in Syria and *allegations of Russian meddling* in the 2016 US elections, further accusations would lead nowhere, Putin said. [1.10]
- 26) President Vladimir Putin, who recently *startled the world* by unveiling Russia's advanced nuclear arsenal, has again spoken of nuclear arms, clarifying the circumstances in which Moscow is prepared to enter a nuclear war. [1.11]
- 27) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have *dire consequences for humanity*, he maintained that Russia would be forced to defend itself using all available means if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]
- 28) The US then proceeded with *a massive arms build-up right on Russia's doorstep.* [1.11]
- 29) In the following years, the US *has* virtually *encircled* Russia with its missile defense installations, in particular by stationing them in Romania and Poland. [1.11]
- 30) The Russian president answered several *speculative* and personal questions at an event in Kaliningrad, including the one about living in another time and changing the past. [1.12]
- 31) Putin, who famously called the dissolution of the USSR *the greatest geopolitical tragedy of 20th century*, said he would have prevented its collapse if given the power to alter one thing in the past. [1.12]
- 32) The resulting erosion of control over things like budget or immigration policies to a group of unelected members of the European Commission has proven to be *disastrous and a potential existential threat* to EU members, he believes. [1.13]
- 33) The politician is in Russia with the goal of building bridges in an atmosphere of animosity between Moscow and the West, which he described as *dangerous and often irrational.* [1.13]

- 34) He cited a recent example of Halbe Zijlstra, who had to resign as Dutch foreign minister instead of conducting a visit to Russia – a first for a person in that office in several years – after he was caught lying about Putin’s *alleged expansionist ambitions*. [1.13]
- 35) *Unsurprisingly*, Western news outlets focused on *only one short segment of Vladimir Putin’s two-hour speech* on Thursday, *reframing the state-of-the-nation address as a (nuclear-tipped) sabre rattle in front of a watching world*. [1.14]
- 36) But while the Russian leader’s words definitely caught the international media’s attention, whatever diplomatic intent was behind them *went unheeded*. [1.14]
- 37) Putin “wants modern weapons, not a modern Russia,” *boomed* Bloomberg’s headline. [1.14]
- 38) Others took a more *light-hearted* approach, using Putin’s speech for (predominantly anti-Trump) gibes. [1.14]

As far as engagement markers are concerned, they are almost absent:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	1	0	1	2
Percentage	0%	50%	0%	50%	

Table 5. Distribution of engagement markers in Putin-related articles (Russia Today)

The total absence of reader pronouns is expected due to the specificity of the genre of a news article which is supposed to inform, and direct appeals to the audience are excluded. The absence of directives and a single instance of appeals to shared knowledge and questions may imply that the authors of the articles under analysis were not specifically aimed at establishing direct contact with potential readers. Moreover, the overall number of stance markers compared to engagement markers contribute to the idea that imposing a particular vision was more important rather than building a relationship with the target audience.

- Appeals to shared knowledge:

- 1) Putin, who *famously* called the dissolution of the USSR the greatest geopolitical tragedy of 20th century, said he would have prevented its collapse if given the power to alter one thing in the past. [1.12]

- **Questions:**

- 1) *Perhaps Donald Trump will give Kim Jong-un a nice gift basket sometime in the future?* [1.4]

In the current research it is argued that quotations present a particular interest for interpersonal metadiscourse as far as informative news articles are concerned. The analysis shows that there is little variety within the category of engagement markers, but the analysis of quotations reveals the presence of both stance and engagement markers:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions		Total
			Positive	Negative	1 st p. sing.	1 st p. pl.	
Number	20	25	13	32	29	30	149
Percentage	13.42%	16.77%	8.7%	21.47%	19.46%	20.2%	

Table 6. *Distribution of stance markers in Putin-related articles (Russia Today) in quotations*

In quotations we observe a similar interpersonal pattern, where attitudinals prevail, while boosters and hedges reach almost the same number, as compared to Table 4. Although, the distribution of positive and negative attitudinals is different, as in quotations we see that negative attitudinals are more numerous. As the choice of quotations is always deliberate and it is governed by the aim to substantiate a standpoint, both attitudinals and boosters as a complimentary tool are used in order to boost *Russia Today's* message and the existing image of Putin. While the body of the articles under analysis contains a high quantity of attitudinals, quotations substantiate *Russia Today's* standpoint, trying to replicate the pattern.

Apart from a different percentage of positive and negative attitudinals, one can also observe the presence of self-mentions, both in the 1st person singular and plural. The number of self-mentions in the 1st person plural suggests that various attempts to create a sense of unity were made, while an extensive use of pronouns in the 1st person singular suggests that an emphasis was made on a particular political actor, such as Putin, in order to quote a first-hand experience that may contribute to the process of the construction of Putin's positive identity. The following examples were found:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) “*I thought about what to do, thought about **maybe** seeking work as a taxi driver.*” [1.1]
- 2) “*Instead of creating threats to one another, great powers **should** pool their efforts in protecting against terrorists,*” he told Kelly. [1.3]
- 3) “*As is expected in such cases, I boasted **a bit** [about the size of my catch],*” he said. “*How can one speak about fishing and not boast **a little?**” [1.5]*
- 4) “*The Arctic has a very fragile ecology, it **should** be treated with great care. One **should** create infrastructure which ensures environmental safety,*” Putin said. [1.7]
- 5) “*We **cannot** respond to that if they do not violate Russian laws,*” the Russian leader told NBC’s Megyn Kelly in an interview broadcast on Friday. [1.9]
- 6) “*We, Russia, **cannot** prosecute anyone if they have not violated the Russian law.*” “*This **has** to go through official channels, not through the press or yelling and hollering in the United States Congress,*” Putin noted. [1.9]
- 7) “*It **would** just mean depriving our countries of their last chance for dialogue, simply the last chance. This **would** be extremely unfortunate.*” [1.10]
- 8) “*Certainly, it **would** be a global disaster for humanity; a disaster for the entire world.*” [1.11]
- 9) “*as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I must ask myself: Why **would** we want a world without Russia?*” [1.11]
- 10) “*A decision on the use of nuclear weapons **may** only be taken if our ballistic missile attack warning system not only detects a launch, but also predicts that the warheads **would** hit Russian territory. This is called a retaliation strike,*” he said in the interview. [1.11]
- 11) “*Therefore I **believe** Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are more favorable than our own leaders.*” [1.13]
- 12) “*We **should** understand each other better, work together and not talk in Russophobia or in war time talk,*” Wilders said. [1.13]
- 13) “*If we need Russia and America as allies, we **should** engage in responsible and adult conversation.*” [1.13]
- 14) “*It is bombastic talk in the extreme: a wagging of military parts in the faces of other nations, **most likely** right now the United States, whose own commander in chief is massively ramping up defense spending while downsizing his diplomatic power,*” he wrote. [1.14]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) “We **need to make sure** that the innovative component of Russia’s development is the **main** driver of the country’s development.” [1.2]
- 2) “If we achieve this... then, **without a doubt**, Russia **will** retain its status a great power, including the defense capability of the state,” Putin said in the documentary film ‘World Order 2018’ by journalist Vladimir Solovyev. [1.2]
- 3) “Without an efficient economy, without a social sphere that creates a basis for political stability, **there can be no question** of any greatness,” Putin added. [1.2]
- 4) “If we are to speak of an arms race, then an arms race started **precisely** at that point”. [1.3]
- 5) “**Every single** weapon system that I have discussed today **easily** surpasses and avoids anti-missile defense systems,” Putin said, <...> [1.3]
- 6) “For my part, I once got some **very** good smoked fish,” Merkel said. [1.4]
- 7) “In this sense, the Arctic region is **extremely** important for Russia,” the president stated in a new documentary titled ‘Putin.’ [1.7]
- 8) Moscow has already “reestablished itself **firmly**” in the Arctic, but other countries, including the US, are also seeking to expand their military presence there. [1.7]
- 9) “**Not a single** [other] country in the world has a nuclear icebreaker fleet. The Soviet Union used to have it, Russia has it, and we have plans to develop a powerful new-generation icebreaker fleet,” Putin said. [1.7]
- 10) “The Arctic has a very fragile ecology, it should be treated with great care. One should create infrastructure which **ensures** environmental safety,” Putin said. [1.7]
- 11) “This is **definitely** not the case because Putin was **very clear** on the message that Russia does not threaten any country, Russia does not challenge any country and Russia does not plan to force its national interests on any country,” Kosachev said. [1.8]
- 12) “I am **absolutely sure** that now we will see a hysterical reaction from the US mass media, but it is **important to stress** that there is a second part to Putin’s message – it is not just a display of our capabilities, it is also an offer to discuss and come to some solutions,” Pushkov told RT. [1.8]
- 13) “With all due respect for you personally, with all due respect for Congress, you **must** have people with legal degrees, **100 percent you do**. You have to understand, what it takes is an official request to the general prosecutor of the Russian Federation,” Putin said. [1.9]
- 14) “It would just mean depriving our countries of their last chance for dialogue, simply the last chance. This would be **extremely** unfortunate.” [1.10]

- 15) *“**Certainly**, it would be a global disaster for humanity; a disaster for the entire world,”* Putin said, in an interview for a Russian documentary “The World Order 2018,” adding that *“as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I **must** ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?”* [1.11]
- 16) *“I make salad. It’s **really** tasty, I’ll serve you some later,”* he told the host of the event. [1.12]
- 17) *“Vladimir Putin is a leader, **whatever you think of him**. I criticize a lot of his policies. But I applaud him as I applaud Mr. Trump for being leaders, who are standing there on behalf of the Russian and the American people,”* he said. <...> *Therefore I believe Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are more favorable than our own leaders.”* [1.13]
- 18) *“Russia is not our enemy. The Russian people [are] **certainly** not our enemy.”* [1.13]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) *Key to Russia’s **greatness** is strong economy & innovation – Putin.* [1.2]
- 2) *“If we achieve this... then, without a doubt, Russia will **retain its status a great power**, including the defense capability of the state,”* Putin said in the documentary film ‘World Order 2018’ by journalist Vladimir Solovyev. [1.2]
- 3) *“Instead of creating threats to one another, **great** powers should pool their efforts in protecting against terrorists,”* he told Kelly. [1.3]
- 4) *“For my part, I once got some very **good** smoked fish,”* Merkel said. [1.4]
- 5) *“Not a single [other] country in the world has a nuclear icebreaker fleet. The Soviet Union used to have it, Russia has it, and we have plans to develop a **powerful new-generation icebreaker fleet**,”* Putin said. [1.7]
- 6) *“In this sense, the Arctic region is extremely **important** for Russia,”* the president stated in a new documentary titled ‘Putin.’ [1.7]
- 7) *“Vladimir Putin is a **leader**, whatever you think of him. I criticize a lot of his policies. But I **applaud** him as I **applaud** Mr. Trump for being leaders, who are standing there on behalf of the Russian and the American people,”* he said. <...> *Therefore I believe Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are **more favorable** than our own leaders.”* [1.13]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) In an interview for the documentary, the Russian leader said modern crime drama tended to exaggerate the level of lawlessness in the country at that time, but said *“in general, the situation was **quite militant**.”* [1.1]

- 2) Putin has repeatedly described the “**shock-therapy**” reforms of the 1990s as a mistake that led to poverty for the majority of Russians, while few chosen ‘**oligarchs**’ gained tremendous riches. [1.1]
- 3) Last year, Putin reiterated this position when speaking to an international economic forum, blaming the gap between the richest and poorest Russian citizens on a “**nasty tendencies**” rooted in 1990s. [1.1]
- 4) “My point of view is that **the individuals** saying that a new Cold War has started **are not really analysts; they do propaganda**,” he said, as translated by NBC. [1.3]
- 5) Bush argued that the treaty hindered the US’ ability to protect itself from “**future terrorist or rogue state attacks**.” [1.3]
- 6) “**Instead of creating threats to one another**, great powers should pool their efforts in protecting against terrorists,” he told Kelly. [1.3]
- 7) “Just as the Munich speech was **mispresented as an aggressive and assertive one**, analysts will seek messages in this speech which will present Russia again as an **aggressive and assertive country**,” the senator said. [1.8]
- 8) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend to calm themselves by calling Russia “a **weak regional power**” but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that any speculations about Russia’s supposed weakness were total nonsense. [1.8]
- 9) “He says this is **meaningless**, you will not achieve anything so let us sit down and talk. I am absolutely sure that now we will see a **hysterical** reaction from the US mass media, but it is important to stress that there is a second part to Putin’s message – it is not just a display of our capabilities, it is also an offer to discuss and come to some solutions,” Pushkov told RT. [1.8]
- 10) We need facts, not ‘**yelling and hollering**’ Putin says of ‘**meddling**’ indictment against 13 Russians. [1.9]
- 11) In mid-February, the US Justice Department indicted 13 Russian individuals and three firms over suspected interference in the US election process. They were accused of “**supporting the presidential campaign of then-candidate Donald J. Trump...and disparaging Hillary Clinton**.” [1.9]
- 12) When confronted by Kelly, who listed an array of charges against Russia, from “**hacking into DNC**” to “**creating bots on Twitter and Facebook**” and “**spreading misinformation**” on the presidential election and even the Black Lives Matter movement, Putin reiterated that the evidence should be handed to the Russian authorities. [1.9]
- 13) “**Until we see facts, everything else will be just blather**,” Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in Munich last month. [1.9]

- 14) “It would just mean depriving our countries of their **last chance** for dialogue, **simply the last chance**. This would be extremely **unfortunate**.” [1.10]
- 15) “Certainly, it would be a **global disaster for humanity; a disaster for the entire world**,” Putin said, in an interview for a Russian documentary “The World Order 2018”. [1.11]
- 16) “Europe, being a non-entity, countries combined – almost 30 in our days and still trying to enlarge – where there is a **total lack of sense and identity**.” [1.13]
- 17) “There is a **lot of enmity, too much enmity**.” [1.13]
- 18) “He had to step down because **it was all lies, it was all Russophobia and fake news**.” [1.13]
- 19) Western media accuses Putin of ‘starting new arms race’ after ‘**terrifying**’ nuclear missile ‘**boasts**’. [1.14]
- 20) CNN’s International Diplomatic Editor said that Putin’s words sent out a “**chilling message for everyone**.” [1.14]
- 21) “**It is bombastic talk in the extreme: a wagging of military parts in the faces of other nations**, most likely right now the United States, whose own commander in chief is massively ramping up defense spending while downsizing his diplomatic power,” he wrote. [1.14]
- 22) “Without a coherent vision of the future or an attractive model for others to imitate, without any soft power to speak of, without an economic model that can ensure sustainable growth or keep people out of poverty **the missile-rattling is a terrifying but hollow sound**,” wrote expat Russian journalist Leonid Bershidsky. [1.14]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person singular):**

- 1) “In my country home, I had to put a pump-action shotgun near **my** bed, this is true.” [1.1]
- 2) “I thought about what to do, thought about maybe seeking work as a taxi driver. I am not joking, I had to do something, I had two small kids. So, when they offered **me** legal work in Moscow on the presidential staff, I agreed and moved.” [1.1]
- 3) “**My** point of view is that the individuals saying that a new Cold War has started are not really analysts; they do propaganda,” he said, as translated by NBC. [1.3]
- 4) “Every single weapon system that I have discussed today easily surpasses and avoids anti-missile defense systems.” [1.3]

- 5) Putin: *I didn't try to recruit Melania, even though I used to love doing this.* [1.5]
- 6) *"No, I have not been doing this for a very long time,"* the president, who used to be an intelligence agent in Soviet times, responded with a laugh. *"Although I used to love doing this. That was my job for many years."* [1.5]
- 7) *"As is expected in such cases, I boasted a bit [about the size of my catch],"* he said. [1.5]
- 8) *"I have to see first what they've done. Give us materials, give us information,"* Putin said. [1.9]
- 9) *"I have other means of expressing my point of view or making decisions."* [1.10]
- 10) *"as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I must ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?"* [1.11]
- 11) *"You see, all my ancestors were peasant serfs, and I am head of a state,"* he explained. [1.12]
- 12) *"I make salad. It's really tasty, I'll serve you some later,"* he told the host of the event. [1.12]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural):**

- 1) *"We need to make sure that the innovative component of Russia's development is the main driver of the country's development. If we achieve this... then, without a doubt, Russia will retain its status a great power, including the defense capability of the state,"* Putin said in the documentary film 'World Order 2018' by journalist Vladimir Solovyev. [1.2]
- 2) *"If we are to speak of an arms race, then an arms race started precisely at that point".* [1.3]
- 3) *"They were very interested in this. They were surprised how large our maternity benefits are,"* Putin claimed. [1.5]
- 4) *"We won't threaten anybody, but, using our advantages, of a territorial nature in this case, we will ensure the security of Russia and its citizens."* [1.7]
- 5) *"Not a single [other] country in the world has a nuclear icebreaker fleet. The Soviet Union used to have it, Russia has it, and we have plans to develop a powerful new-generation icebreaker fleet,"* Putin said. [1.7]
- 6) *"He says this is meaningless, you will not achieve anything so let us sit down and talk. I am absolutely sure that now we will see a hysterical reaction from the US mass media, but it is important to stress that there is a second part to Putin's message – it is not just a display of our capabilities, it is also an offer to discuss and come to some solutions,"* Pushkov told RT. [1.8]
- 7) **We** need facts, not 'yelling and hollering,' Putin says of 'meddling' indictment against 13 Russians. [1.9]

- 8) *“We cannot respond to that if they do not violate Russian laws,”* the Russian leader told NBC’s Megyn Kelly in an interview broadcast on Friday. [1.9]
- 9) *“Give us materials, give us information,”* Putin said. [1.9]
- 10) *“Give us a document, give us an official request,”* he stressed. *“We, Russia, cannot prosecute anyone if they have not violated the Russian law.”* [1.9]
- 11) *“Until we see facts, everything else will be just blather,”* Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in Munich last month. [1.9]
- 12) *“Even though this is his first term as President, he is a quick study, and he understands perfectly well that trading accusations or insults at our level is a road to nowhere,”* Putin said. *“It would just mean depriving our countries of their last chance for dialogue, simply the last chance.”* [1.10]
- 13) *“as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I must ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?”* [1.11]
- 14) *“A decision on the use of nuclear weapons may only be taken if our ballistic missile attack warning system not only detects a launch, but also predicts that the warheads would hit Russian territory.”* [1.11]
- 15) *“to begin with, we did not start this... nuclear bomb was first developed not by us but by the US,”* he said in the interview, pointing out that *“we have never used nuclear weapons [although] the US used them against Japan.”* [1.11]
- 16) Putin complained that *“no one wanted to talk to us then, no one listened.”* [1.14]
- 17) *“Listen to us now,”* he said on Thursday to applause. [1.14]
- 18) *“There was a double message here. Firstly, to the West: Don’t push us.”* [1.14]

The distribution of engagements markers within quotations is shown in Table 7:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	2	3	7	3	15
Percentage	13.33%	20%	46.67%	20%	

Table 7. Distribution of engagement markers in Putin-related articles (Russia Today) in quotations

Directives are the most frequent engagement markers that are employed in order to establish a direct contact with the target audience through quotations. They were absent in the body of the articles but are present in quotations. Together with questions, appeals to shared

knowledge and reader pronouns, their objective is to impose a certain standpoint advocated by *Russia Today*. The examples are as follows:

- **Appeals to shared knowledge:**

- 1) When asked about the gift swaps by a reporter at a press conference on Monday, Merkel said "***it's well known that Russian president likes German beer.***" [1.4]
- 2) "***With all due respect for you personally, with all due respect for Congress, you must have people with legal degrees, 100 percent you do. You have to understand, what it takes is an official request to the general prosecutor of the Russian Federation,***" Putin said. [1.9]
- 3) Putin also denied Russia was interested in pursuing a nuclear arms race, saying that "***to begin with, we did not start this... nuclear bomb was first developed not by us but by the US,***" he said in the interview, pointing out that "***we have never used nuclear weapons [although] the US used them against Japan.***" [1.11]

- **Questions:**

- 1) "***How can one speak about fishing and not boast a little?***" [1.5]
- 2) "***as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I must ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?***" [1.11]

- **Directives:**

- 1) "***Don't even think of using any kind of weapons against Russia and don't have any illusions about Russia's strength in the military field.***" [1.8]
- 2) "***Give us materials, give us information,***" Putin said. [1.9]
- 3) "***Give us a document, give us an official request,***" he stressed. [1.9]
- 4) "***Listen to us now,***" he said on Thursday to applause. [1.14]
- 5) "***There was a double message here. Firstly, to the West: Don't push us. And, with elections coming up, there was this for the Russian people: Vote for Putin and you'll be voting for national security,***" wrote Steven Rosenberg, a BBC News correspondent in Moscow. [1.14]

- **Reader pronouns:**

- 1) “*You see, all my ancestors were peasant serfs, and I am head of a state,*” he explained. [1.12]
- 2) “*And, with elections coming up, there was this for the Russian people: Vote for Putin and you’ll be voting for national security,*” wrote Steven Rosenberg, a BBC News correspondent in Moscow. [1.14]

To sum up, the analysis shows that those engagement markers that are not supposed to be used in the body of the articles appear in quotations. In their turn, quotations enjoy considerable expressive potential and a wider variety of markers that may be employed in order to strengthen the interpersonal component in the discourse. Moreover, it is a safe discursive measure as journalists provide a piece of discourse uttered by a different person in order to back up their statements, transferring the responsibility for the utterance, even though the choice of quotations is deliberate.

5.1.2. Qualitative analysis of Putin-related articles

As it was explained before, the articles under analysis were thematically separated into three categories: election-related articles, articles on the poisoning of the Skripals and articles devoted solely to Putin and his policies. The quantitative analysis of stance markers showed the prevalence of attitudinals over boosters and hedges that are represented almost equally and absent self-mentions in the third category of articles. An extensive use of positive attitudinals was explained as an urge to strengthen the existing positive identity of the Russian president created by *Russia Today*.

All the interpersonal markers found in the articles under analysis can be divided into several semantic categories depending on the topic they bring up. A significant number of interpersonal markers found in the articles convey the idea of an exponential growth of Russian economy in Putin’s times. Such positive attitude markers as verbs from the semantic field of growth *increase, rise, grow, boom, harvest, break the record* or verbs with the meaning of quantitative changes, such as *triple* and *quadruple* together with boosting adjectives in the superlative degree (*the largest, largest ever, the highest*), adverbs (*over, markedly*) and numerals

(by 600 per cent, 15-fold, 24-fold) create an image of a major economic breakthrough that Russia has experienced during Putin's presidential terms:

- 1) With a \$4 trillion GDP in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Russia **has become the sixth-largest economy in the world** after China, the United States, India, Japan and Germany. [1.2]
- 2) Since 1999, Russia has **enjoyed a 30-fold increase** in foreign currency reserves, and **public debt has shrunk to 17.2 percent** of GDP compared to over 92 percent 18 years ago. [1.2]
- 3) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth only \$620 billion, but that **has increased by 600 percent** in the last 18 years. [1.2]
- 4) The total value of assets in the Russian banking system **has risen 24-fold** to \$1.43 trillion. [1.2]
- 5) GDP per capita almost **tripled** to \$27,900 to become **the largest** among BRICS countries. [1.2]
- 6) Russian economy under Putin: **Quality of life tripled, foreign debt fell 75%**. [1.6]
- 7) Before Putin's election, Russia had a \$9,889 GDP per capita by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). The figure had almost **tripled** by 2017, and has now reached \$27,900. [1.6]
- 8) Russia has **the highest** GDP per capita among its fellow BRICS countries, with the next-highest, China, having just \$16,624. [1.6]
- 9) **The average nominal monthly wage has grown almost 11-fold** from \$61 to \$652. [1.6]
- 10) **Unemployment has contracted** from 13 percent to 5.2 percent. [1.6]
- 11) **Pensions have grown over 1,000 percent** in the same period from \$20 to \$221. [1.6]
- 12) Russia is **the sixth-largest** economy in the world by PPP, with a \$4-trillion GDP. [1.6]
- 13) PwC has predicted that, by 2050, the country will become **the largest** economy in Europe by this measure, leaving behind Germany and the United Kingdom. [1.6]
- 14) So, in the last 18 years, Russian **economic output** in these terms **has increased by 600 percent**. [1.6]
- 15) **Inflation rates have decreased** from 36.5 percent to 2.5 percent by the end of 2017. [1.6]
- 16) **The total value of assets** of the Russian banking system **has risen 24-fold** to \$1.43 trillion. [1.6]

- 17) *Capitalization of the Russian Stock Market has grown more than 15-fold* to \$621 billion. [1.6]
- 18) Things have changed *markedly* in 18 years, as Russia's *public debt has now shrunk* to 17.4 percent of GDP and reserves *have increased to \$356 billion*. [1.6]
- 19) *Russian gold reserves have increased by more than 500 percent* since 2000. The Central Bank of Russia (CBR) added 9.3 tons of gold to its reserves in December, bringing the total yearly holdings to a *record* 1,838.211 tons – worth *over* \$76 billion in monetary terms. [1.6]
- 20) The World Gold Council shows that Russia is *the largest* buyer of gold and is the world's third-biggest producer, with the Central Bank purchasing from domestic miners through commercial banks. [1.6]
- 21) While the Russian economy remains dominated by oil and gas revenues, its agriculture sector *has boomed* in recent years. [1.6]
- 22) Russian farmers produced their *largest ever* crop in the 2017 agricultural year, *breaking the 40-year-old Soviet record*, and *harvesting more than 130 million tons*. [1.6]
- 23) Since the early 2000s, the Russian *share of the world wheat market has quadrupled from four to 16 percent*. [1.6]
- 24) Russia started exporting grain in 2002, selling a little *over seven million tons*. [1.6]
- 25) In 2017, Russia wanted to sell 45 million tons – *an increase of more than 600 percent*. [1.6]

With the help of attitude markers that convey negative judgement, authors juxtapose current economic results with the situation before Putin was elected or compare Russia's economic performance with other countries to emphasize Putin's achievements:

- 1) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth *only* \$620 billion, but that has increased by 600 percent in the last 18 years. [1.2]
- 2) Russia has the highest GDP per capita among its fellow BRICS countries, with the next-highest, China, having *just* \$16,624. [1.6]
- 3) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth *only* \$620 billion. [1.6]
- 4) When Putin was elected in 2000, Russia had *just* \$12 billion in reserves, accompanied by a public debt, which was almost equal to the country's economic output at 92.1 percent. [1.6]

Nevertheless, the number of boosters and positive attitudinals shows that journalists preferred not to saturate the discourse with negative examples and mainly focused on the positive ones. In order to slightly reduce the assertiveness of the above-mentioned statements,

journalists employ hedges, such as *almost* and *a little* to demonstrate a lack of precision and to show that although those figures are approximate, they show a drastic change in the quality of life in post-Yeltsin period:

- 1) GDP per capita **almost** tripled to \$27,900 to become the largest among BRICS countries. [1.2]
- 2) The figure had **almost** tripled by 2017, and has now reached \$27,900. [1.6]
- 3) The average nominal monthly wage has grown **almost** 11-fold from \$61 to \$652. [1.6]
- 4) When Putin was elected in 2000, Russia had just \$12 billion in reserves, accompanied by a public debt, which was **almost** equal to the country's economic output at 92.1 percent. [1.6]
- 5) Russia started exporting grain in 2002, selling **a little** over seven million tons. [1.6]

Developing the topic of economic growth, journalists from *Russia Today* make use of boosters of certainty together with negative attitudinals that disclose Putin's attitude towards the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent crisis in the 90s, showing what Putin inherited from the previous government to emphasize his economic overperformance:

- 1) Putin has **repeatedly** described *the "shock-therapy" reforms of the 1990s as a mistake that led to poverty for the majority of Russians*, while few chosen 'oligarchs' gained **tremendous** riches. [1.1]
- 2) Last year, Putin reiterated this position when speaking to an international economic forum, blaming the gap between the richest and poorest Russian citizens on a "**nasty tendencies**" rooted in 1990s. [1.1]

Another semantic category that was revealed in the process of analysis is aimed at amplifying the scope of Putin's achievements for the benefit of the state. Innovation and power are major topics in these sentences, and positive attitudinals (*newest, the world's only, advanced, brand-new, high-precision, new-generation*) together with boosters (*emphasized, made it absolutely clear*) are used to create a threatening image of unique high technology weapons created in Russia:

- 1) The US nuclear build-up on Russia's doorstep triggered a response from Moscow, which deployed its **newest** Iskander systems to its Kaliningrad exclave, citing the threat posed by US missile launchers deployed in Poland and Romania. [1.3]

- 2) Over the past few years, Russia has **greatly** expanded its presence in the region, constructing new bases and refurbishing old ones, erecting long-range radars and deploying new troops. At the moment, the country has four compounds there including the northernmost military installation, dubbed Arctic Trifol. The station is **the world's only** permanent structure built at 80 degrees latitude north of the Equator. [1.7]
- 3) The Northern Clover military facility on the New Siberian Islands, for example, is an **entirely closed self-sufficient** complex, which has a minimum effect on the ecosystem. [1.7]
- 4) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend to calm themselves by calling Russia "a weak regional power" but the presentation made by the Russian president had **made it absolutely clear** that **any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were total nonsense**. [1.8]
- 5) The president spoke on a wide range of issues, touching upon the economy, the social situation and the environmental issues, but the part that caused the most intense reaction from audience and media alike was the description of Russia's **newest** weapons, complete with 3D graphic presentations. [1.8]
- 6) President Vladimir Putin, who recently startled the world by unveiling Russia's **advanced** nuclear arsenal, has again spoken of nuclear arms, clarifying the circumstances in which Moscow is prepared to enter a nuclear war. [1.11]
- 7) On March 1, the Russian president unveiled a set of **brand-new** Russian nuclear weapons during his state of the nation address. The list includes **the newest** intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has virtually no range limit, **high-precision** hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and **even** combat lasers. [1.11]
- 8) In his message to Russia's Federal Assembly, Putin spent around four minutes on the **new-generation** Sarmat ICBM, and on an as-yet-unnamed nuclear cruise missile. The Russian President, who is facing re-election later this month, **emphasized** that both of these systems have almost unlimited reach, and are invulnerable to interception in-flight. [1.14]

While describing the new ballistic missiles and systems brought into operation, journalists employ hedging techniques in order to slightly diminish the display of power in order not to sound falsely omnipotent:

- 1) The list includes the newest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has **virtually** no range limit, high-precision hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and even combat lasers. [1.11]
- 2) The Russian President, who is facing re-election later this month, emphasized that both of these systems have **almost** unlimited reach, and are invulnerable to interception in-flight. [1.14]

Quotations represent another form of realization of interpersonality in the journalistic discourse. In the articles under analysis positive attitudinals together with boosters, self-mentions (both 1st person singular and plural) are used in the quotes by Putin that contribute to the overall idea of power and the image of Russia as a strong and wealthy state due to Putin's wise policies:

- 1) *Key to Russia's **greatness** is strong economy & innovation* – Putin. [1.2]
- 2) *“**We need to make sure** that the innovative component of Russia's development is the **main driver** of the country's development.”* [1.2]
- 3) *“If we achieve this... then, **without a doubt**, Russia will retain its status a **great power**, including the defense capability of the state,”* Putin said in the documentary film ‘World Order 2018’ by journalist Vladimir Solovyev. [1.2]
- 4) *“Without an efficient economy, without a social sphere that creates a basis for political stability, **there can be no question of any greatness**,”* Putin added. [1.2]
- 5) *“**Every single** weapon system that I have discussed today **easily** surpasses and avoids anti-missile defense systems,”* Putin said, <...> [1.3]
- 6) Moscow has already *“reestablished itself **firmly**”* in the Arctic, but other countries, including the US, are also seeking to expand their military presence there. [1.7]
- 7) *“**Not a single [other] country in the world** has a nuclear icebreaker fleet. The Soviet Union used to have it, Russia has it, and we have plans to develop a **powerful new-generation icebreaker fleet**,”* Putin said. [1.7]

Signaling a new round of the arms race, these markers are aimed at showing technological advancements in the military sphere achieved through Putin's policies. The aim of bolstering Putin's media image as a wise supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces is also achieved through the use of self-mentions. While the use of the 1st person singular highlights Putin's political identity of a president and an ultimate commanding authority of the Russian army, the use of the 1st person plural creates the idea of unity with the country and the government and simultaneously brushes off allegations of establishing dictatorship in Russia, thus, showing that what comes after we means a joint decision and effort, rather than Putin's personal choice. The necessity of the revival of the arms race is justified by the image of an external threat posed by the United States of America and a number of European countries,

which is another major semantic category in the articles under analysis. Attitude markers are the most frequent ones in this category:

- 1) That was done by US President George W. Bush **killing a 30-year-old** missile treaty in 2002, he told NBC. [1.3]
- 2) In the years following, the US **has encircled** Russia with its missile defense installations, extending its anti-missile shield to Romania and Poland, deploying for the first time a battery of Patriot long-range anti-aircraft system to Lithuania for war games. [1.3]
- 3) **The US nuclear build-up on Russia's doorstep** triggered a response from Moscow, which deployed its newest Iskander systems to its Kaliningrad exclave, citing the threat posed by US missile launchers deployed in Poland and Romania. [1.3]
- 4) US Ohio-class submarines, capable of carrying 24 Trident nuclear missiles, are **very** active in Norwegian Sea. The estimated time of arrival for such munitions from the Norwegian Sea to Moscow is **only** around 15 minutes, the president added. [1.7]

The US then proceeded with a massive arms build-up right on Russia's doorstep. [1.11]

- 5) In the following years, the US **has** virtually **encircled** Russia with its missile defense installations, in particular by stationing them in Romania and Poland. [1.11]

Nevertheless, journalists from *Russia Today* tend to not to level direct accusations against the United States, that is why a number of hedges are employed in combination with attitudinals:

- 1) It was US President George W. Bush who withdrew from the ABM Treaty, which **had been one of the main pillars of the détente** and held for **nearly** 30 years. [1.3]
- 2) The estimated time of arrival for such munitions from the Norwegian Sea to Moscow is **only around** 15 minutes, the president added. [1.7]
- 3) In the following years, **the US has virtually encircled Russia with its missile defense installations**, in particular by stationing them in Romania and Poland. [1.11]
- 4) Last week, Alexander Fomin, Russia's deputy defense minister, said that the number of anti-ballistic missiles deployed in the vicinity of the Russian borders as part of the US military buildup **could** soon reach as many as 400. [1.11]

Construing an image of an explicit threat, *Russia Today* offers a particular vision of a situation: a new wave of armament build-up stems from the reluctance of the United States to look for a joint solution and the abandonment of international treaties in the military sphere.

Positive attitudinals and boosters such as verbs *emphasize*, *maintain* and *assert*, ascribed to Putin, depict him as determined and insistent, trying to defuse renewed tension between the United States and Russia:

- 1) The path that led towards confrontation ***could have been avoided*** had the US agreed to cooperate on the development of anti-missile defenses with Russia – ***an offer repeatedly extended by Moscow***. [1.3]
- 2) Russian lawmakers ***emphasize*** that Putin’s address was a call for peace and talks. [1.8]
- 3) The senator went on to point out that Russia ***has been inviting*** western nations to hold talks and sign treaties ***for years and decades*** without any proper response from the US and its allies. [1.8]
- 4) He then expressed hope that the international community will listen attentively to Putin’s latest statements and eventually find some “*windows of opportunities*,” because collective effort is the ***only*** way to tackle common threats. [1.8]
- 5) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he ***maintained*** that Russia would be forced to defend itself using ***all available means*** if its very existence is put at stake. [1.8]
- 6) Senator Aleksey Pushkov said in comments to RT that he thought that the main message of Putin’s address to the international community was ***very clear***. [1.8]
- 7) Putin then said that this demonstration was neither a threat nor a bluff, but ***another attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks*** rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]
- 8) <...> further accusations would lead nowhere, Putin said. He ***asserted*** that the US leader realized that too. [1.10]
- 9) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he ***maintained*** that Russia would be forced to defend itself ***using all available means*** if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]

Negative attitudinals in this case demonstrate journalists’ disapproval of the US attitude showing that the US government is to blame for exacerbating the existing tension:

- 1) The senator went on to point out that Russia has been inviting western nations to hold talks and sign treaties for years and decades ***without any proper response*** from the US and its allies. [1.8]

- 2) Putin then said that this demonstration was *neither a threat nor a bluff*, but another attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]
- 3) But while the Russian leader's words definitely caught the international media's attention, whatever diplomatic intent was behind them *went unheeded*. [1.14]

Quotes strengthen the idea of Putin being insistent and assertive with the help of boosters:

- 1) "If we are to speak of an arms race, then an arms race started *precisely at that point*". [1.3]
- 2) "I am *absolutely sure* that now we will see a hysterical reaction from the US mass media, but *it is important to stress* that there is a second part to Putin's message – it is not just a display of our capabilities, it is also an offer to discuss and come to some solutions," Pushkov told RT. [1.8]
- 3) "This is *definitely* not the case because Putin was *very clear* on the message that Russia does not threaten any country, Russia does not challenge any country and Russia does not plan to force its national interests on any country," Kosachev said. [1.8]

And directives:

- 1) "Listen to *us* now," he said on Thursday to applause. [1.14]

Apart from that, many interpersonal markers are used to create an image of a protector of the state that is another way of justifying Putin's actions and fending off accusations of starting a new round of arms race. The idea of protection is realized with the help of positive attitudinals and boosters:

- 1) Russia will expand its presence in the Arctic *to ensure the safety of its citizens*, President Vladimir Putin said. While *Moscow does not seek to intimidate anyone*, it *will continue to develop the vital region*. [1.7]
- 2) While exploring and developing the Arctic region, Russia is paying *particular* attention to the ecological situation in the region. [1.7]
- 3) Geert Wilders, a Dutch politician and leader of the anti-immigration Party for Freedom, says European nations lack the kind of leadership he sees in the US and Russia, where the interests of their own people are *prioritized*. [1.13]

A combination of hedges (*would*), boosters (*maintained*), positive attitude markers (*using all available means*) and negative attitude markers (*dire consequences for humanity*)

strengthen the impact of Putin's message that he is ready to start a nuclear war if there is a threat for Russia:

- 1) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons **would** have **dire consequences for humanity**, he **maintained** that Russia **would** be forced to defend itself **using all available means** if its very existence is put at stake. [1.11]

The idea of protection, both of citizens and the territory, is backed up by Putin's quotations with the use of hedges, boosters and positive attitudinals:

- 1) "A decision on the use of nuclear weapons **may** only be taken if our ballistic missile attack warning system not only detects a launch, but also predicts that the warheads **would** hit Russian territory. This is called a retaliation strike," he said in the interview. [1.11]
- 2) "The Arctic has a very fragile ecology, it **should** be treated with great care. One **should** create infrastructure which **ensures environmental safety**," Putin said. [1.7]

Self-mentions that are used in this semantic category are 1st person plural, while no 1st person singular pronouns were found. They convey the idea that a decision to use nuclear weapons can only be taken by both president and the government, not Putin himself, though being a chief military authority, thus, once again fending off the accusations of being a dictator:

- 1) "**We** won't threaten anybody, but, using **our** advantages, of a territorial nature in this case, **we** will ensure the security of Russia and its citizens." [1.7]
- 2) "A decision on the use of nuclear weapons may only be taken if **our** ballistic missile attack warning system not only detects a launch, but also predicts that the warheads would hit Russian territory." [1.11]

The idea of protection is also enforced by directives found in quotations that also may be interpreted as a counter-threat:

- 1) "**Don't** even **think** of using any kind of weapons against Russia and **don't have** any illusions about Russia's strength in the military field." [1.8]

A vast number of interpersonal markers that contribute to the idea of protection from an external threat is a positive strategy that helps journalists to create an alternative, Pro-Kremlin viewpoint that is necessary to defend the government and Putin in particular amid accusations of armaments build-up, US election meddling and Skripal poisoning scandal. Accusations are refuted through an extensive use of attitudinals that convey negative judgement

suggesting that they are groundless and require substantial proof. Besides, the professional practice of Western media is seriously questioned by journalists from *Russia Today* as they accuse their Western counterparts of doing anti-Russian propaganda, using such negative attitudinals as *accusations, allegations, brushed off claims, speculation, rumors* and many more:

- 1) Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied **accusations** he revived an arms race by unveiling Russia's new nuclear deterrent. [1.3]
- 2) In an interview with NBC's "Megyn Kelly Today" on Thursday, the Russian leader **brushed off claims** in the Western media that by introducing new nuclear-powered missiles, including the hypersonic Sarmat, he has signaled a new arms race. [1.3]
- 3) **The alarmist rhetoric that fills Western news outlets is just another form of propaganda**, Putin said. [1.3]
- 4) Kelly raised the topic of **speculation** that the new weapon systems have not yet undergone any successful tests. [1.3]
- 5) Putin, who had used Thursday's state of the nation address to unveil the weapons, dismissed **the rumors**. [1.3]
- 6) The two met briefly at a G20 summit dinner last year, and photos of Donald Trump's wife laughing at Putin's jokes **stirred much speculation** in the US media. [1.5]
- 7) **Pre-empting Western interpretations of the presidential address to parliament as saber rattling**, several Russian lawmakers explained the stating of Russia's strength. [1.8]
- 8) The US should give Russia evidence about the **alleged** meddling in the 2016 presidential election and the 13 Russians indicted for it, President Putin said. [1.9]
- 9) In mid-February, the US Justice Department indicted 13 Russian individuals and three firms over **suspected** interference in the US election process. [1.9]
- 10) **While the topic of Russia's meddling in the US democratic processes never seems to dwindle, no solid evidence has been presented so far**. [1.9]
- 11) While ties between Moscow and Washington have deteriorated in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, war in Syria and **allegations of Russian meddling** in the 2016 US elections, further accusations would lead nowhere, Putin said. [1.10]
- 12) He cited a recent example of Halbe Zijlstra, who had to resign as Dutch foreign minister instead of conducting a visit to Russia – a first for a person in that office in several years – after he was caught lying about Putin's **alleged expansionist ambitions**. [1.13]
- 13) **Unsurprisingly**, Western news outlets focused on **only one short segment of Vladimir Putin's two-hour speech** on Thursday, **reframing the state-of-the-nation address as a (nuclear-tipped) sabre rattle in front of a watching world**. [1.14]

- 14) Putin "*wants modern weapons, not a modern Russia,*" **boomed** Bloomberg's headline. [1.14]
- 15) Others took a more **light-hearted** approach, using Putin's speech for (predominantly anti-Trump) gibes. [1.14]

A few boosters are also used to deny accusations of aggression, slightly diminishing the assertiveness with a hedge in [1.13]:

- 1) Without evidence, the accusations are **nothing but** "yelling and hollering." [1.9]
- 2) Kremlin officials have **repeatedly** denied the charges. [1.10]
- 3) Wilders **believes** that a lack of proper conversation is, **to a great degree**, responsible for what some journalists in the West perceive as Russia starting an arms race. [1.13]

Several hedges contribute to the idea of groundless accusations against Russia suggesting that Kremlin requires evidence:

- 1) The US **should** give Russia evidence about the alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election and the 13 Russians indicted for it, President Putin said. [1.9]
- 2) When confronted by Kelly, who listed an array of charges against Russia, from "*hacking into DNC*" to "*creating bots on Twitter and Facebook*" and "*spreading misinformation*" on the presidential election and even the Black Lives Matter movement, Putin reiterated that the evidence **should** be handed to the Russian authorities. [1.9]
- 3) While ties between Moscow and Washington have deteriorated in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, war in Syria and allegations of Russian meddling in the 2016 US elections, further accusations **would** lead nowhere, Putin said. [1.10]
- 4) **Almost** every major mainstream outlet included references to "a *new armsrace*" or a "*new Cold War*," either in the text or the headline, while the Daily Beast accused the Russian leader of "*boasting*." [1.14]

As in the previous categories, the interpersonal component finds its realization in quotations as well, where Putin and other representatives of the government voice the idea of anti-Russian propaganda, false accusations and misrepresentation of Russia in Western media through an extensive use of negative attitudinals that equals the number of attitudinals found in the body of the articles on this topic:

- 1) "**Instead of creating threats to one another**, great powers should pool their efforts in protecting against terrorists," he told Kelly. [1.3]

- 2) “Just as the Munich speech was **mispresented as an aggressive and assertive one**, analysts will seek messages in this speech which will present Russia again as an **aggressive and assertive country**,” the senator said. [1.8]
- 3) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States tend to calm themselves by calling Russia “a **weak regional power**” but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that any speculations about Russia’s supposed weakness were total nonsense. [1.8]
- 4) “He says this is **meaningless**, you will not achieve anything so let us sit down and talk. I am absolutely sure that now we will see a **hysterical** reaction from the US mass media, but it is important to stress that there is a second part to Putin’s message – it is not just a display of our capabilities, it is also an offer to discuss and come to some solutions,” Pushkov told RT. [1.8]
- 5) **We need facts, not ‘yelling and hollering’** Putin says of **‘meddling’** indictment against 13 Russians. [1.9]
- 6) When confronted by Kelly, who listed an array of charges against Russia, from “**hacking into DNC**” to “**creating bots on Twitter and Facebook**” and “**spreading misinformation**” on the presidential election and even the Black Lives Matter movement, Putin reiterated that the evidence should be handed to the Russian authorities. [1.9]
- 7) “**Until we see facts, everything else will be just blather**,” Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in Munich last month. [1.9]
- 8) “**There is a lot of enmity, too much enmity.**” [1.13]
- 9) “**He had to step down because it was all lies, it was all Russophobia and fake news.**” [1.13]
- 10) Western media accuses Putin of ‘starting new arms race’ after ‘**terrifying**’ nuclear missile ‘**boasts**’. [1.14]
- 11) CNN’s International Diplomatic Editor said that Putin’s words sent out a “**chilling message for everyone.**” [1.14]
- 12) “**It is bombastic talk in the extreme: a wagging of military parts in the faces of other nations, most likely right now the United States, whose own commander in chief is massively ramping up defense spending while downsizing his diplomatic power,**” he wrote. [1.14]
- 13) “**Without a coherent vision of the future or an attractive model for others to imitate, without any soft power to speak of, without an economic model that can ensure sustainable growth or keep people out of poverty the missile-rattling is a terrifying but hollow sound,**” wrote expat Russian journalist Leonid Bershidsky. [1.14]

In the articles devoted to the issue of the meddling in the US presidential election in 2016 the semantic category of protection appears again as Putin is trying to position himself as impartial and fair suggesting there is no one above the law in Russia, thus, denying accusations of lawlessness and dictatorship once more. This is done predominantly with the use of hedges, self-mentions in the 1st person plural, directives and a single instance of an appeal to shared knowledge:

- 1) **We** need facts, not **'yelling and hollering'** Putin says of 'meddling' indictment against 13 Russians. [1.9]
- 2) **"We cannot respond to that if they do not violate Russian laws,"** the Russian leader told NBC's Megyn Kelly in an interview broadcast on Friday. [1.9]
- 3) **"We, Russia, cannot prosecute anyone if they have not violated the Russian law."** **"This has to go through official channels, not through the press or yelling and hollering in the United States Congress,"** Putin noted. [1.9]
- 4) **"I have to see first what they've done. Give us materials, give us information,"** Putin said. [1.9]
- 5) **"Give us a document, give us an official request,"** he stressed. **"We, Russia, cannot prosecute anyone if they have not violated the Russian law."** [1.9]
- 6) **"Until we see facts, everything else will be just blather,"** Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in Munich last month. [1.9]
- 7) **"With all due respect for you personally, with all due respect for Congress, you must have people with legal degrees, 100 percent you do. You have to understand, what it takes is an official request to the general prosecutor of the Russian Federation,"** Putin said. [1.9]

The idea of protection and denying accusations while blaming the US for waging an information war against Russia ultimately contributes to the image of the United States as an aggressor, while Kremlin is depicted as a peace campaigner and has only good intentions, which is another recurrent semantic category in the articles under analysis:

- 1) The Russian president went on that **he still believes the two countries should focus on what they can do together.** [1.3]
- 2) Putin then said that this demonstration was neither a threat nor a bluff, but **another attempt to persuade western nations to solve contradictions through talks** rather than resorting to military force. [1.8]

Quotations contain hedged phrases with some instances of positive attitude utterances by Putin or others in order to show that Putin has every intention of bringing about lasting peace:

- 1) “*Instead of creating threats to one another, **great powers should pool their efforts in protecting against terrorists,***” he told Kelly. [1.3]
- 2) “*It **would** just mean depriving our countries of their last chance for dialogue, simply the last chance. This **would** be extremely unfortunate.*” [1.10]
- 3) “*Certainly, it **would** be a global disaster for humanity; a disaster for the entire world.*” [1.11]
- 4) “*We **should** understand each other better, work together and not talk in Russophobia or in war time talk,*” Wilders said. [1.13]
- 5) “*If we need Russia and America as allies, we **should** engage in responsible and adult conversation.*” [1.13]

To conclude, Diagram 1 shows all the semantic categories found in the articles in *Russia Today* that constitute a particular message: Russia has experienced steady **economic growth** in Putin’s times, despite the crisis and sanctions, which enabled Russia to increase and demonstrate **power** and **insistence** in the military sphere. The exercise of power is justified by the necessity of **protection** of the country and its citizens in view of an **external threat** that is represented by the United States of America. The US level **accusations** and do **propaganda** against Russia, while Russia’s aim is to foster peace and cooperation, thus, showing only **good intentions**, according to *Russia Today*.

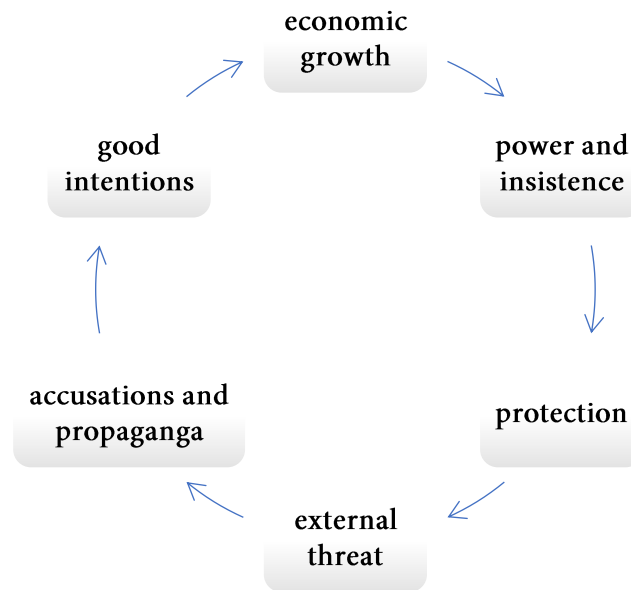


Diagram 1. Major semantic categories in Putin-related articles in *Russia Today*.

These semantic categories make it possible to construct a particular vision of Putin's identity. An extensive use of boosters contributes to his image of an assertive, confident, dominant and categorical person. When talking about economy, juxtaposition of many positive attitudinals against few negative ones creates an idea that major economic breakthrough took place because of Putin's policies, which in the end led to a better quality of life in the country. The image of a protector of the state, a peacemaker and power he demonstrates complement the assertive and dominant image that Putin has in the articles from *Russia Today*.

Nevertheless, apart from construing Putin's identity as a political actor, some interpersonal markers, such as hedges, boosters and self-mentions within quotations are employed when talking about Putin's personal matters, pointing out his personal qualities, consequently, switching public attention from his political identity to the personal one. Putin is depicted as generous:

- 1) As long-time politicians, Merkel and Putin have come across each other's paths more than once, so *perhaps* it makes sense that they *would* take part in *some* friendly gift-giving. [1.4]
- 2) "For my part, I once got some *very good* smoked fish," Merkel said. [1.4]

Able to protect himself and his family:

- 1) Vladimir Putin had to protect himself with firearms due to criminality in Russia during the pro-market reforms of the 1990s, and **even considered taking a side-job as a taxi driver**, the president revealed in an interview. [1.1]
- 2) *“In my country home, I had to put a pump-action shotgun near **my** bed, this is true.”* [1.1]
- 3) *“I thought about what to do, thought about **maybe** seeking work as a taxi driver. I am not joking, I **had to** do something, I had two small kids. So, when they offered **me** legal work in Moscow on the presidential staff, I agreed and moved.”* [1.1]

Wise:

- 1) At the same time, Putin was **apparently** not keen on gazing into the future. (The president said he would reject an offer of learning what would happen to him in five to 10 years) [1.12]

He is also depicted as hospitable:

- 1) He also claimed to be a **decent** cook. [1.12]
- 2) *“I make salad. It’s **really** tasty, I’ll serve you some later,”* he told the host of the event. [1.12]
- 3) And even simple:
- 4) *“As is expected in such cases, I boasted a **bit** [about the size of my catch],”* he said. *“How can one speak about fishing and not boast a **little**?”* [1.5]

All the above-mentioned descriptions are aimed at highlighting Putin’s personal qualities as if nothing human is alien to him, thus, bridging the gap between him and the audience, making him more attractive for potential voters.

The analysis shows that boosters is a very flexible interpersonal category as they can be represented by different parts of speech, such as nouns and adjectives, verbs, modal verbs, adverbs and prepositions. Besides, the impact is strengthened when boosters are used with attitudinals, thus, boosting a positive or a negative quality. Moreover, boosting can be attained grammatically:

- 1) The senator went on to point out that Russia **has been inviting** western nations to hold talks and sign treaties **for years and decades** without any proper response from the US and its allies. [1.8]

The Present Perfect Continuous tense is used to denote an action that started in the past and continues up to the present with an emphasis on the duration of action that is intensified with the help of a noun phrase *for years and decades*. This observation contributes to the idea of context-sensitive nature of interpersonal communication.

Attitude markers are most frequent stance markers found in the articles under analysis. As well as boosters, attitudinals are flexible and can be represented by different parts of speech and whole sentences. They are employed when it is necessary to carry out a positive or negative evaluation so that qualities are brought into prominence.

Hedges are as numerous as boosters. They serve a function of slightly moderating the intensity of discourse. Also hedging creates an ironical effect in some articles:

- 1) As long-time politicians, Merkel and Putin have come across each other's paths more than once, so *perhaps* it makes sense that they *would* take part in some friendly gift-giving. [1.4]
- 2) *Perhaps* Donald Trump will give Kim Jong-un a nice gift basket sometime in the future? [1.4]
- 3) Pushkov noted that certain circles in the United States *tend to* calm themselves by calling Russia "a *weak regional power*" but the presentation made by the Russian president had made it absolutely clear that any speculations about Russia's supposed weakness were total nonsense. [1.8]

In comparison with boosters and attitudinals, hedges do not enjoy such flexibility and are quite repetitive (*almost, around, tend to, perhaps, virtually*).

Self-mentions are absent in the body of the articles but are numerous within quotations. Putin makes use of the 1st person singular pronouns when talking about personal matters but prefers the 1st person plural when he speaks on behalf of the state and the government. This is done in order to disguise Putin's autocratic identity showing that any political decision is made after taking into consideration the opinion of the government, simultaneously creating the idea of unity between the president and the government.

Engagement markers are underrepresented in the discourse under analysis, thus, do not have significant interpersonal impact.

5.1.3. Quantitative analysis of election-related articles

The second thematic category of articles under analysis is directly concerned with the presidential election and electoral campaign carried out by presidential candidates. This category is more numerous and is comprised of 30 articles against 14 in the previous section. 8 out of 30 articles are devoted solely to Putin. Such a number suggests that *Russia Today* made an attempt to depict all the contenders for the presidential post equally and qualitative analysis would be able to give an explanation for such thematic distribution within the category of election-related articles.

The results of quantitative analysis of the articles from *Russia Today* on the presidential election and electoral campaign and the distribution of stance and engagement markers are shown in Table 8.

	Stance markers	Engagement markers	Total
Number	379	4	383
Percentage	98.9%	1.1%	

Table 8. Stance and engagement markers in election-related articles (*Russia Today*)

The analysis shows absolute prevalence of stance markers over engagement markers. The average number of stance markers found in the articles under analysis is 12.4, the number ranging from 2 to 38 in each article. As far as engagement markers are concerned, they are largely underrepresented in the articles under analysis due to the stylistic peculiarities of a straight news article, where directives, reader pronouns and personal asides are not supposed to be found.

Table 9 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers for the author's voice:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions	Total
			Positive	Negative		
Number	122	75	35	147	0	379
Percentage	32.18%	19.78%	9.23%	38.81%	0%	

Table 9. Distribution of stance markers in election-related articles (Russia Today)

We observe substantial prevalence of attitude markers over other stance markers, such as hedges and boosters. As in the previous section, self-mentions are absent due to the specificity of the genre that does not presuppose using self-mentions, as the emphasis is made on the events rather than on the author's self. Within the category of attitude markers negative ones are four times as frequent compared to positive attitudinals. It may be explained by a necessity to highlight certain negative features related to the electoral campaign in comparison to positive ones. A bigger number of hedges found in this section may be explained by an objective to mitigate the assertiveness of particular statements, intentionally creating vagueness and ambiguity. Boosters are quite numerous and, as suggested in the previous section, are frequently used to enforce either positive or negative characteristics of attitude markers. The overall number of stance markers reinforces the premise that the analyzed articles are saturated with the author's self.

The examples of stance markers found in the articles are as follows:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) Putin *may* win presidential election in first round – poll. [1.15]
- 2) Current Russian President Vladimir Putin *may* win the upcoming presidential election in the first round, a survey by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center revealed, two months before the March 18 vote. [1.15]
- 3) *If* the Russian presidential election *were* held next Sunday, the current president *would* receive 81.1% of the vote and win in the first round, with Communist Party candidate Pavel Grudinin receiving 7.6 percent, and Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy receiving 4.2 percent. [1.15]
- 4) *About* six percent said they did not plan to, and 11 percent said they had not yet decided. [1.16]

- 5) In a separate VTSIOM poll, 70 percent of the respondents said they **would** support the incumbent president. Just over seven percent said they **would** vote for Grudinin, and just under six percent said they **would** vote for Zhirinovskiy. Support for other candidates stands at **around** one percent or less. [1.16]
- 6) The activist alleged that the law **should** be applied only to those handed custodial sentences, as opposed to suspended ones. In the ruling, the Constitutional Court said that the complaint **should** be refused because it did not meet the requirements of the law ‘On the Russian Constitutional Court,’ and added that “*legal democracy requires effective legal mechanisms capable of protecting it from abuse and criminalization of public authority, the legitimacy of which is largely based on the trust of the community.*” [1.17]
- 7) The scandal developed when Ksenia Sobchak, the former socialite and now glossy magazine editor, proposed that Aleksey Navalny, the anti-corruption blogger turned opposition activist, **should** cooperate with the new political party that she wanted to launch. [1.18]
- 8) **Some** 1,000 people took part in the protest on Tverskaya Street in the Russian capital, according to police. [1.19]
- 9) The rallies **reportedly** took place in dozens of cities, with many of them having been approved by the local authorities. [1.19]
- 10) On Monday, representatives from Vladimir Putin’s election headquarters delivered **around** 315,000 paper forms with supporters’ signatures to the main office of the Central Election Commission in Moscow. [1.20]
- 11) His headquarters earlier said that volunteers had collected many more signatures than necessary – **around** a million and a half. [1.20]
- 12) Putin’s run for a new term, **if successful, would** be his fourth overall, but second in a row. [1.21]
- 13) In a poll conducted by state-run agency VTSIOM in late January, 71 percent of respondents said they intended to vote in the March 18 election. **About** six percent said they did not plan to, and 11 percent said they had not yet decided. [1.21]
- 14) In a separate VTSIOM poll, 70 percent of the respondents said they **would** support Vladimir Putin’s candidacy. Just over seven percent said they **would** vote for Grudinin, and just under six percent said they **would** vote for Zhirinovskiy. Support for other candidates stands at **around** one percent or less. [1.21]
- 15) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into “cheap shows,” and said he **would** no longer take part after other contenders exchanged insults and even threw water at each other. [1.22]
- 16) The latest opinion polls indicate that President Vladimir Putin is **likely** to win in the first round. [1.22]

- 17) Baburin's election slogan "A Russian choice for Russia" is also an attempt to sway the ethnically-conscious voters; ethnic Russians make up **about** 80 percent of the Russian Federation's population. [1.23]
- 18) Another video does briefly show the incumbent, but quickly switches to images of monuments and beautiful landscapes with narrative saying that "a strong president" **would** ensure protection and support for all strata of the population, as well as generally successful development of the country. [1.23]
- 19) Russian business ombudsman and head of the Party of Growth Boris Titov has **probably** the simplest video of all — text on a reddish background states existing problems like unemployment and poverty and **claims** that "*the authorities think that they are doing everything right.*" [1.23]
- 20) The presidential program published on Titov's web-site is based on the plan to send groups of effective managers to target destinations who **would** gradually reform the economy. The first such group **would** be an 'Administration of Growth' set up to develop a detailed program for economic reforms and later oversee its implementation. [1.23]
- 21) In a different video Yavlinsky silently sits in a chair in a dark room and holds up signs saying that those who are happy with the crisis **can** stay home on election day but those who want a better life **should** come out and vote. [1.23]
- 22) Last week, head of the Central Elections Commission Ella Pamfilova said that in practice this **could** mean that party candidates have an advantage over the independent ones because they will be promoted both in their own ads and those of their parties. [1.23]
- 23) In March 2015, she told the Polish edition of Newsweek that she considered the discussion over Crimea to be over, as Crimea had become a part of Russia and any further discussion whether it **should** be returned or not made no sense. [1.24]
- 24) Sobchak is running on the ticket of the minor political party Civic Initiative, but is positioning herself as an option for those who **would** prefer to fill the no-longer-existing 'none of the above' line on the ballot papers. [1.24]
- 25) Public opinion polls conducted in recent years have shown that the overwhelming majority of Crimea's population **believe** that reunification with Russia was the right choice. [1.24]
- 26) Putin's address came as the votes are still being counted. According to preliminary results, he has secured a decisive lead with **some** 75 percent of vote after **around** half of the ballots were processed. [1.25]
- 27) This, Slabunova argued, **could** be a violation of the law guaranteeing equal opportunities for self-promotion to all candidates in the election race. [1.26]
- 28) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys the largest support among voters, most **likely** sufficient to win in the first round. [1.26]

- 29) Her appeal, however, **apparently** had an opposite effect, as it only infuriated the veteran politician. [1.27]
- 30) Sobchak then responded with some jibes of her own, but she eventually decided to resort to an **apparently** more persuasive tool from her standpoint. [1.27]
- 31) In a letter to the court, Sobchak explained that Putin’s candidacy **should** be annulled because he has already repeatedly occupied the post, saying that he was elected president three times and also was acting president in early 2000, before he was first elected. [1.28]
- 32) According to information on candidates’ finances, released by the committee, Grudin’s income over the past five years amounted to **some** 157.5 million rubles (US\$2.8 million). [1.29]
- 33) Life.ru estimated the price of this gold at **about** \$230,000. [1.29]
- 34) A few days later, Sobchak was also doused with water in an **apparent** act of retribution by a man shouting: “*This is for Zhirinovsky.*” [1.30]
- 35) The attacker **reportedly** acted in “retaliation” for Sobchak earlier pouring a glass of water on another candidate, Vladimir Zhirinovsky. [1.31]
- 36) Telegram channel Mash later published footage of the incident, **apparently** recorded by the attacker himself. It purports to show that the man only doused Sobchak with water, and he did not touch her. Following the incident, a woman, **presumably** the presidential candidate herself, **could** be heard swearing at the attacker. [1.31]
- 37) The attacker shouted “*This is for Zhirinovsky,*” **apparently** referring to an incident at presidential debates earlier this week. [1.31]
- 38) In late 2017, a member of the Central Elections Commission, Anton Lopatin, told Vedomosti newspaper that 40,000 polling stations and 2,765 regional elections commissions will be using online video monitoring at the forthcoming presidential elections, explaining this **would** mean that **about** 80 percent of all Russian voters will be using stations equipped with these systems. He also said that the authorities had spent **around** 2.8 billion roubles (just under \$50 million) on such measures. [1.33]
- 39) From Soviet comparisons to accusations of authoritarianism, mainstream coverage of Russia’s presidential election has **barely** changed since 2004, though mentions of the UK spy poisoning scandal did add a fresh layer of insinuation. [1.34]
- 40) In its top report. CNN said that Putin “*seeks tighter grip on power,*” while also reminding its readers that “*he is already the country’s longest-serving leader since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin*” (which is not actually true – that **would** be Leonid Brezhnev). [1.34]
- 41) The leader of the Russian nationalist-populist party LDPR has said that the current anti-harassment campaign **could** cause men and women start hating each other, which **would** cause the extinction of humans as a species. [1.35]

- 42) Last week, State Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said that he was taking the situation with Slutsky under personal control and promised that the Ethics Commission **would** thoroughly study all letters with accusations against the LDPR MP. [1.35]
- 43) The polls **may** indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he's **almost** certain to win comfortably, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 44) While it's still a long shot, their partnership **might** help finally unite Russia's small, perennially fractured, pro-Western opposition, which has **arguably** been its own worst enemy: unable to rally around a single leader or find a common cause. [1.36]
- 45) At the same time, the KPRF was slowly becoming a zombie party, whose support base was **literally** dying out. But Grudin, despite being a millionaire himself, has shown voters that there **may** still be some life in the once-omnipresent movement. [1.36]
- 46) VTSIOM also noted that its project of using blockchain technology in exit polls **would** become one of the first examples of such system of data storage in the world. [1.37]
- 47) All the latest opinion polls indicate that Putin will most **likely** win in the first round. [1.37]
- 48) In the first televised debates of this year's presidential campaign, all candidates present agreed that Russian military forces must be strong. However, they differed on how the nation **should** achieve this goal. [1.38]
- 49) He noted, however, that in his view Russian authorities **could** no longer effectively control the borders and proposed an increase in strength for the military forces, with possible cuts to the police and National Guard. [1.38]
- 50) He then said he **would** mend the situation by measures such as maintaining conscription and stripping citizens of their voting rights if they are fit for service but have never done it. He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was absolutely wrong to elect a female president because it **would** result in a "military commander in chief wearing a skirt." [1.38]
- 51) Sobchak said she **would** only debate the incumbent president. [1.38]
- 52) He also warned about the threat of Islamic extremism in Central Asia and hinted at the **possible** threat of Chinese expansion, but did not make any proposals on how to counter them. [1.38]
- 53) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys the largest support among voters and will most **likely** win in the first round. [1.38]
- 54) The backlash from Russian politicians came **almost** immediately, forming a mixture of indignation and bewilderment. [1.39]

- 55) MP Ruslan Balbek, who worked in the Crimean government before taking a seat in the State Duma, said that Sobchak's words **could** elicit a violent response from the Crimean population. [1.39]
- 56) Deputy speaker of the Crimean legislature, Yefim Fiks, told reporters that Sobchak **should** be removed from the presidential polls for her behavior. [1.39]
- 57) With Zyuganov **seemingly** unwilling to fully relinquish control but the party in desperate need of a fresh face, they've opted for a Russian solution to a Russian problem, **presumably** in a bid to at least come second. [1.41]
- 58) The company is famous for presenting itself as an "oasis of socialism," where workers, and their families, enjoy access to Soviet-esque social programs, **almost** akin to the Japanese "company man" model. [1.41]
- 59) He accuses the current authorities of being slow to tackle corruption and **believes** this failure means Russian's living standards are well below where they **could** reach. He's also **suggested** many people close to Putin **should** be in prison. [1.41]
- 60) Furthermore, his status as a multi-millionaire **may** act as a turn-off for traditional Communist Party voters. [1.41]
- 61) Currently at **around** 7.5 percent, which is a pretty weak showing considering Grudinin offers something different to the status quo. [1.41]
- 62) Meanwhile, many shrewd pundits **believe** his final election tally will be significantly higher than polls currently **suggest**. [1.41]
- 63) There has been talk of Grudinin becoming agriculture minister in the next government. But, given his attacks on the current Russian leaders, this **may** prove fanciful. Instead a good showing **may** open the door for him to become permanent leader of the Communists. [1.41]
- 64) After an interregnum as prime minister, he **basically** swapped jobs with his protege in 2012. [1.42]
- 65) On a personal level, despite how he's portrayed in the West, Putin is **quite** liberal by Russian standards. [1.42]
- 66) While that isn't realistic, even attaining half of this goal **would** improve conditions. [1.42]
- 67) Another ambitious policy is extending life expectancy to 80 years, which **would** surpass that of the United States. [1.42]
- 68) Navalny has been barred from running for president due to a criminal conviction **he says** was politically motivated. [1.42]

- 69) He will have various options on the table: he **could** choose a successor and back them to succeed in the powerful role of president; or he **might** propose a more parliamentary style of governance for Russia. [1.42]
- 70) Either way, Putin's legacy is at stake, and he **appears** to be well aware of the responsibility. [1.42]
- 71) Yet, **assuming he wins**, he then immediately faces a greater headache: how to plan his succession. [1.42]
- 72) The gig was lucrative (her earnings reached **around** \$3 million annually) and Sobchak was soon labelled Russia's "Paris Hilton" due to her taste for designer clothes and glamorous parties. [1.43]
- 73) Despite her father's close relationship with Putin, Ksenia strongly opposes the Russian president, **believing** he has overstayed his welcome in office. [1.43]
- 74) She also accuses the current Russian authorities of encouraging a "fake patriotism" and **believes** Moscow must urgently repair its relations with the West. [1.43]
- 75) The candidate also **believes** Russia's elections are "fake" by Western standards. [1.43]
- 76) Her campaign is light on specific pledges, largely due to its ethos of "against all," which was Ksenia's initial slogan, until replaced by something **slightly** more substantial. [1.43]
- 77) Let's be blunt here: given her family's past association with Putin, a lot of people **believe** Sobchak's involvement in the election is part of a "Kremlin project" – something she strongly denies. [1.43]
- 78) Her critics **claim** she was inserted in the contest to split the liberals and soak up Alexey Navalny's supporters. The latter is seen in the West as leading Russia's protest figure and was polling at **around** 2% late last year. However, he has been barred from running for office owing to a criminal conviction (which **he claims** was politically motivated). [1.43]
- 79) Critics and cynics **have suggested** that Ksenia only got involved in the race so she **could** return to mainstream TV. [1.43]
- 80) She also **claims** "there is no such thing as state interests; there are only people's interests." [1.43]
- 81) The party's support fell to **around** 11 percent through much of the '00s, before rising to 13 percent in the 2016 ballot. As a presidential candidate, he scored 8 percent in 1991 and recorded his worst score (**almost** 3 percent) in 2000, before bouncing back with 9 percent in 2008. [1.44]
- 82) And also warned his German audience how he **would** reverse Western anti-Russia sanctions by bringing the world "to the brink of war. I would say, 'either you do what I want, or you'd better hide in a bunker.'" [1.44]

- 83) Zhirinovsky acts as a sponge for disgruntled Russian nationalists and, unlike Sobchak or Grudinin, **seems** to have no real political goals, at this point. [1.44]
- 84) For instance, he recently told Germany's state-broadcaster, Deutsche Welle, how Russia **should** now "*choose a monarch and change the country's name to the 'Russian Empire.'* *The president would be called the 'supreme ruler.'*" [1.44]
- 85) Indeed, many of his warnings about how the West views Russia have been proven to be **quite** accurate since relations took a nosedive in 2013. [1.44]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) A telephone survey by the Communist Party showed that 10 percent of those who are **definitely** going to vote **will** do so for Grudinin, who is running for president for the first time and is not **even** a KPRF member. [1.15]
- 2) Fifteen percent of those surveyed have not decided whether or not they **will** vote, with 3 percent saying they **will** "*definitely*" skip this election. [1.15]
- 3) The head of Russia's Central Elections Commission told reporters that the number of candidates in the upcoming presidential election **will** not exceed eight, noting that only two people have been registered so far. [1.16]
- 4) The law allows the commission to take up to 10 days for this task, after which the person who submitted the signatures **must** be either confirmed as a presidential candidate or disqualified from the race if the proportion of signatures identified as invalid due to error or fraud exceeds 5 percent. [1.20]
- 5) Under Russian law, anyone who runs for the presidency as an independent candidate **must** present not less than 300,000 and not more than 315,000 of his supporters' signatures. [1.20]
- 6) According to public opinion polls, Vladimir Putin remains **the most** popular presidential candidate among Russian citizens. [1.20]
- 7) Last week, head of the Central Elections Commission Ella Pamfilova said that in practice this could mean that party candidates have an advantage over the independent ones because they **will** be promoted both in their own ads and those of their parties. [1.23]
- 8) Sobchak **reiterated** her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current poor state of international relations, and calling the reunification of Crimea and with Russia a violation of international law. [1.24]
- 9) Public opinion polls conducted in recent years have shown that the **overwhelming** majority of Crimea's population believe that reunification with Russia was the right choice. [1.24]

- 10) He expressed gratitude to all his supporters and voters, stating that the election results *clearly* indicate that the people support his political course, despite the hard times Russia recently went through. [1.25]
- 11) Speaking with the reporters at his HQ, Putin addressed *the hottest* political issues. [1.25]
- 12) Russia's leader condemned the situation in Ukraine, stating that the Kiev's decision to block Russian diplomatic facilities and prevent voters from accessing polling stations was a *clear* violation of international laws. [1.25]
- 13) Russia's president expressed hopes for fruitful work and success in the future, *stressing* the importance of national unity and securing the trust of those who voted for other candidates. [1.25]
- 14) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys *the largest* support among voters, most likely sufficient to win in the first round. [1.26]
- 15) There are currently eight candidates in the race and public opinion polls predict that Vladimir Putin *will* win in the first round. [1.28]
- 16) Kinev also told reporters that the issue with Grudinin's foreign assets *will* be discussed at the Central Elections Commission's session on March 7, adding that most likely the commission's members *will* ask regional elections bodies to put the information about Grudinin's bank accounts on campaign posters, along with a statement that the candidate had attempted to file false information about himself to the state elections authorities. [1.29]
- 17) Recent legislative, organizational and technical measures *ensure* that the March 18 presidential polls *will* be *the most* open in Russia's history, according to Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the country's upper house. [1.33]
- 18) The upper house speaker also said that "tremendous" legislative work had amended Russian electoral law to match *the highest* international standards. [1.33]
- 19) In late 2017, a member of the Central Elections Commission, Anton Lopatin, told Vedomosti newspaper that 40,000 polling stations and 2,765 regional elections commissions *will* be using online video monitoring at the forthcoming presidential elections, explaining this would mean that about 80 percent of all Russian voters *will* be using stations equipped with these systems. [1.33]
- 20) Calling the election a "*hollow exercise*," the New York Times reached for *the most* predictable of parallels. [1.34]
- 21) In its top report. CNN said that Putin "*seeks tighter grip on power*," while also reminding its readers that "*he is already the country's longest-serving leader since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin*" (which is not *actually* true – that would be Leonid Brezhnev). [1.34]
- 22) Rupert Murdoch's News Corp Australia didn't *even* bother with such nuances, calling Putin a *straight-up* "*dictator*," though the article was later amended to *merely* describe the vote as "*inevitable*." [1.34]

- 23) ‘Epidemic’ of harassment charges **will** lead to end of humanity, claims Russian presidential hopeful. [1.35]
- 24) He is one of **the most** experienced politicians in Russia and is known for his flamboyant style and fiery statements. [1.35]
- 25) The polls may indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he’s almost **certain** to win comfortably, the 2018 campaign hasn’t all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 26) It’s designed to **ensure** transparency of data collection and protection against hacking. [1.37]
- 27) General Director Valery Fedorov said he personally thinks using blockchain in elections research **significantly** fortifies the protection against hacker attacks. [1.37]
- 28) All the latest opinion polls indicate that Putin **will most** likely win in the first round. [1.37]
- 29) In the first televised debates of this year’s presidential campaign, all candidates present agreed that Russian military forces **must** be strong. [1.38]
- 30) Zhirinovskiy commenced with the promise that the Third World War **will** begin really soon and then added some drama by stating that Russia was **completely** surrounded by enemies (such as the NATO bloc) and traitors (such as liberal journalists) and had undermined its defense capabilities from the inside. [1.38]
- 31) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was **absolutely** wrong to elect a female president because it would result in a “military commander in chief wearing a skirt.” [1.38]
- 32) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys **the largest** support among voters and **will** most likely win in the first round. [1.38]
- 33) The candidate **reiterated** this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the reunification of Crimea with Russia a violation of international law. [1.39]
- 34) Russian presidential candidate Kseniya Sobchak, a daughter of Vladimir Putin’s friend and mentor, has **strongly** denied reports that she is the incumbent’s goddaughter, but admitted Putin was present at her baptism. [1.40]
- 35) Sobchak also **insisted** that she maintains no personal contact with Russia’s incumbent president. [1.40]
- 36) The newcomer **will** hope his rating rises after the debates, which commence this week. Meanwhile, many shrewd pundits believe his final election tally **will** be **significantly** higher than polls currently suggest. [1.41]
- 37) Some other factors also affect his chances of a **total** landslide. [1.42]
- 38) Does he have political experience? - **Plenty**. [1.42]

- 39) The reabsorption of Crimea has proven *especially* popular, *even* allowing for resultant sanctions from NATO countries. [1.42]
- 40) However, he bitterly opposed George W. Bush and Tony Blair's illegal invasion of Iraq, and *clearly* hoped to make an alliance with France and Germany during the fallout. [1.42]
- 41) Putin inherited a Russia which was *very obviously* on its knees. [1.42]
- 42) Between 67-70 percent but, given Putin's *overwhelming* popularity, a close eye *will* be kept on turnout. [1.42]
- 43) **What is his likely post-election role?** - This is a *pivotal* moment for Putin and, by extension, Russia itself. [1.42]
- 44) He *will* have various options on the table: he could choose a successor and back them to succeed in the powerful role of president; or he might propose a more parliamentary style of governance for Russia. [1.42]
- 45) However, her childhood had *evidently* left a mark and in the early 2010s she re-invented herself as a liberal political activist. [1.43]
- 46) Despite her father's close relationship with Putin, Ksenia *strongly* opposes the Russian president, believing he has overstayed his welcome in office. She backed liberal candidate Mikhail Prokhorov in the 2012 election and has *repeatedly* called for fresh blood in the Kremlin. She also accuses the current Russian authorities of encouraging a "fake patriotism" and believes Moscow *must urgently* repair its relations with the West. To that end, Sobchak opposes the re-absorption of Crimea, calling for a fresh referendum on its status, and *even* requested permission from Ukraine to visit the disputed peninsula (Kiev was not impressed). [1.43]
- 47) Let's be blunt here: given her family's past association with Putin, a lot of people believe Sobchak's involvement in the election is part of a "Kremlin project" – something she *strongly* denies. [1.43]
- 48) But Sobchak herself rubbishes this suggestion and says she *genuinely* wants to build a national, liberal political movement over the coming years. [1.43]
- 49) Her connections with this movement, which hasn't received widespread support in Russia, *severely* damaged Sobchak's mainstream TV career. [1.43]
- 50) This sort of division is nothing new amongst members of Russia's fringe pro-West movement, which *has long been* a snake pit of infighting, usually driven by clashes of ego. This *of course* suits the establishment, which hasn't had to compete with a united liberal bloc. [1.43]
- 51) Russians will choose between eight presidential candidates on March 18, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is *the most* electorally experienced hopeful. [1.44]

- 52) Does he have political experience? – *Plenty of it*. [1.44]
- 53) *Of course*, this rhetoric was nothing new, by his standards. [1.44]
- 54) A candidate who has never managed more than 10 percent in five presidential elections *obviously* has a lot of negatives. [1.44]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) *Despite needing only 300,000*, Putin’s team is planning to continue collecting signatures so that “*everyone who wants to do so could express their support*” for the candidate, Rossiyska Gazeta reported. [1.15]
- 2) On Monday, representatives from Vladimir Putin’s election headquarters delivered around 315,000 paper forms with supporters’ signatures to the main office of the Central Election Commission in Moscow. HQ spokesman Andrey Kondrashov told reporters that the documents were brought in 28 large boxes. *All of them were brought to the commission through the back door in order not to block traffic*. [1.20]
- 3) Putin has become the first candidate to submit his supporters’ signatures to the election officials. His headquarters earlier said that volunteers had collected *many more signatures than necessary* – around a million and a half. [1.20]
- 4) Sobchak reiterated her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current poor state of international relations, and calling the *reunification* of Crimea and with Russia a violation of international law. [1.24]
- 5) She acknowledged, however, that the overwhelming majority of Crimeans supported *reunification* with Russia in 2014. [1.24]
- 6) The Crimean Republic *reunited* with the Russian Federation in mid-2014 after *more than 96 percent* of its population – the majority of whom are ethnic Russians – *approved the move in a referendum*. [1.24]
- 7) Public opinion polls conducted in recent years have shown that the overwhelming majority of Crimea’s population believe that *reunification* with Russia *was the right choice*. [1.24]
- 8) He expressed gratitude to all his supporters and voters, stating that the election results clearly indicate that the people support his political course, *despite the hard times Russia recently went through*. [1.25]
- 9) Putin’s address came as the votes are still being counted. According to preliminary results, he has *secured a decisive lead* with some 75 percent of vote after around half of the ballots were processed. [1.25]

- 10) Moments before his speech in the HQ, Russia's president made a brief appearance at the 'Russia. Sevastopol. Crimea' concert in Red Square, marking the anniversary of Crimea's **reunification** with Russia. [1.25]
- 11) Telegram channel Mash later published footage of the incident, apparently recorded by the attacker himself. It purports to show that the man **only** doused Sobchak with water, and he did not touch her. [1.31]
- 12) Top senator describes forthcoming elections as **most transparent** in modern Russia's history. [1.33]
- 13) Recent legislative, organizational and technical measures ensure that the March 18 presidential polls will be **the most open** in Russia's history, according to Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the country's upper house. [1.33]
- 14) The upper house speaker also said that "tremendous" legislative work had amended Russian electoral law **to match the highest international standards**. [1.33]
- 15) As Putin was thanking his supporters for a **landslide** victory from the stage in Red Square, Western outlets rolled out long, pre-written news stories, liberally mixing reporting and opinion. [1.34]
- 16) The date is **significant** because it's the fourth anniversary of Crimea's **reunification** with Russia in 2014. [1.36]
- 17) The polls may indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he's almost certain to win **comfortably**, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 18) Putin, who **has long enjoyed a massive lead** in the polls, **has remained aloof from the fray, preferring to set out his agenda through set-piece speeches and rallies. Naturally, he's also had to focus on his day job**. [1.36]
- 19) State-run VTSIOM will introduce **cutting-edge** blockchain technology for exit polls at the forthcoming Russian presidential elections. [1.37]
- 20) The candidate reiterated this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the **reunification** of Crimea with Russia a violation of international law. [1.39]
- 21) Meanwhile, **many shrewd** pundits believe his final election tally will be significantly higher than polls currently suggest. [1.41]
- 22) **Putin needs little introduction**. [1.42]
- 23) The country had defaulted on its international debt in 1998, with citizens meagre savings wiped out, while a disastrous war raged in the Chechnya region. Putin **quickly ended the conflict and stabilised the economy, helped by rising resource prices**, especially in oil and gas. **He also reasserted state control of vital sectors**, which irked many in the West. [1.42]

- 24) Putin's third period in the *Kremlin has seen his approval ratings reach new heights alongside an assertive foreign policy, despite economic difficulties*. The reabsorption of Crimea *has proven especially popular*, even allowing for resultant sanctions from NATO countries. [1.42]
- 25) However, this never materialised and, as NATO moved closer to Russia's borders, his position *hardened*. [1.42]
- 26) The stagnation in living standards of recent years also hurts Putin, *but a return to economic growth offsets some of those worries*. [1.42]
- 27) The man from St. Petersburg has become the *towering* political figure of his age and has *redefined* his country. [1.42]
- 28) " Her campaign is light on specific pledges, largely due to its ethos of "against all," which was Ksenia's initial slogan, *until replaced by something slightly more substantial*. [1.43]
- 29) This sort of division is nothing new amongst members of Russia's fringe pro-West movement, which has long been a snake pit of infighting, usually driven by clashes of ego. *This of course suits the establishment, which hasn't had to compete with a united liberal bloc*. [1.43]

- **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) *The Liberal Democrats have even more trust in Zhirinovsky*, who has taken part in a *record five presidential elections, but has never received more than 10 percent of the vote*. [1.15]
- 2) *Just* over seven percent said they would vote for Grudinin, and *just* under six percent said they would vote for Zhirinovsky. [1.16]
- 3) Navalny *suffers latest election blow* as Supreme Court body *scraps* complaint. [1.17]
- 4) Opposition activist Alexey Navalny *suffered a further blow to his hopes* of running in Russia's 2018 presidential election, after the Supreme Court Presidium dismissed a complaint seeking to override the ban on his participation. [1.17]
- 5) On Friday, the lawyer of Navalny's NGO Foundation for Countering Corruption, Ivan Zhdanov, *mocked* the ruling by tweeting that the refusal was issued in record time, while other cases spent "many months" in the Supreme Court. *He did not back up his claim with any particular examples*. [1.17]
- 6) The activist *alleged* that the law should be applied only to those handed custodial sentences, as opposed to suspended ones. [1.17]

- 7) As two Russian politicians discussed the future after the presidential election, their discussion quickly turned into a confrontation, **with both sides accusing each other of lies, hypocrisy and betrayal of the liberal cause.** [1.18]
- 8) Sobchak tried to win Navalny's sympathies by reminding him that she also built her political platform around **numerous allegations of corruption in the higher echelons of Russian power.** [1.18]
- 9) The response was **quick, harsh and unambiguous.** [1.18]
- 10) Navalny himself was detained at an **unsanctioned** rally in a central Moscow square for violating rules on organizing public demonstrations. [1.19]
- 11) Other **unsanctioned** rallies took place in Vladivostok, Murmansk, Kaliningrad, Volgograd and elsewhere. [1.19]
- 12) Navalny has been calling on his supporters to boycott the presidential election, **claiming** that the government bars opposition candidates from running a campaign. [1.19]
- 13) In a separate VTSIOM poll, 70 percent of the respondents said they would support Vladimir Putin's candidacy. **Just** over seven percent said they would vote for Grudinin, and **just** under six percent said they would vote for Zhirinovskiy. Support for other candidates stands at around one percent or less. [1.21]
- 14) Communist Party candidate withdraws from debates as TV discussion **descends into chaos.** [1.22]
- 15) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into "cheap shows," and said he would no longer take part after other contenders **exchanged insults and even threw water at each other.** [1.22]
- 16) Grudinin's reaction came soon after two presidential candidates – Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the Liberal Democratic Party and Ksenia Sobchak, who is running as a "none-of-the-above" candidate – started **to bicker** during the debates and then **resorted to verbal assaults.** [1.22]
- 17) Earlier, business-oriented Russian newspaper Vedomosti quoted the head of Sobchak's election HQ, Timur Valeyev, as saying that Grudinin, Sobchak and Zhirinovskiy had **allegedly** agreed not to follow the rules imposed on them by organizers of the debates and to start bilateral arguments. [1.22]
- 18) The video overlays beautiful views of residential buildings with **claims** of high salaries, free healthcare, interest-free credits and other benefits for workers. [1.23]
- 19) Sobchak claims that "*there is no such thing as state interests; there are only people's interests*" and then recites a list of "*traditional values,*" from **abstract** "freedom" to an "*independent court system*" **that are supposed to** help the nation reach peace and prosperity. [1.23]
- 20) Maksim Suraikin, who is running on the ticket of his own political party "Communists of Russia," does so **in his trademark style of mimicking Soviet-era propaganda bordering on**

satire. In the video Suraikin describes himself as a Stalinist and promotes his program of “10 Stalinist blows to capitalism,” with plans of major nationalization, restoration of the USSR and **openly populist promises**, like an increased minimum wage and a ban on raising the retirement age. [1.23]

- 21) Lawmakers from a district council in Sevastopol have asked the Central Elections Commission to exclude candidate Kseniya Sobchak from the upcoming election due to her **allegation** that “*Crimea is Ukrainian.*” [1.24]
- 22) Sobchak made the **controversial** statement in October last year, and soon afterwards, the magazine editor, TV host and socialite first announced her presidential ambitions. [1.24]
- 23) Sobchak reiterated her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current **poor** state of international relations, and calling the reunification of Crimea and with Russia **a violation of international law.** [1.24]
- 24) Sobchak also asked the Russian Supreme Court to cancel Vladimir Putin’s registration as a candidate in the 2018 election. Sobchak accused Putin and longtime ally Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of **alleged** “*conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely.*” [1.24]
- 25) The decision was prompted by events caused by **the ousting of the democratically elected president of Ukraine during a violent coup** in Kiev. [1.24]
- 26) **Slurs & water fly** at Russian presidential debate as Lib Dem leader faces off with Sobchak. [1.27]
- 27) A discussion focusing on Russia’s Armed Forces and other defense issues **unexpectedly spiraled into bickering** between the two political opponents during a speech from Sergey Baburin. [1.27]
- 28) “*Such a coarse woman should not be here. This is filth! It is ‘Dom-2’ [the House-2] where all the depravity is!*” the politician shouted in anger, referring to a **highly controversial reality TV show** which Sobchak once hosted. [1.27]
- 29) Sobchak then responded **with some jibes of her own**, but she eventually decided **to resort to an apparently more persuasive tool from her standpoint.** [1.27]
- 30) **That move only led to another outburst of anger from Zhirinovsky**, and eventually prompted the TV debate host to intervene and restore order. [1.27]
- 31) Zhirinovsky, who is known for his often **provocative** remarks, **is no stranger to controversy.** [1.27]
- 32) On one occasion back in 1995, he **scolded** the then-Nizhny Novgorod governor, the late Boris Nemtsov, and threw a glass of juice at him **only to get douched in return.** [1.27]

- 33) In addition, Sobchak accused Putin and his longtime ally, Dmitry Medvedev, of *alleged* “conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely.” [1.28]
- 34) Also on Monday, Russian tabloid news site Life.ru reported that it possessed documents proving that Grudinin was a client of UBS Switzerland AG bank, and that apart from various currencies the candidate kept their over 174 troy ounces (about 5.4kg) in gold bars. Life.ru estimated the price of this gold at about \$230,000. Life.ru also recalled that in his campaign materials Grudinin had emphasized that *it was important to stop the capital outflow from the country and take urgent measures to force Russian investors to bring back the money that they keep in the US and European banks, as well as in various offshore locations.* [1.29]
- 35) At the same time, Grudinin heavily uses his company in the election campaign, *claiming* that he has managed to build “an island of socialism” in modern Russia. [1.29]
- 36) Russian reality star/presidential hopeful bursts into tears in *live debate chaos.* [1.30]
- 37) Socialite-turned-politician Ksenia Sobchak *stormed out* of a live TV presidential debate in tears after interruptions by fellow contestants, *flamboyant* Liberal Democratic leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and other candidates. [1.30]
- 38) *Tempers flared* in the studio of Rossiya 1 channel near the end of the debate on Wednesday. When Sobchak, who positions herself as the opposition candidate “against all,” tried to deliver her 30-second address to the voters, *she couldn’t get a word in edgewise* because her opponents were *heckling* her. [1.30]
- 39) Zhirinovskiy, meanwhile, continued his *barrage.* [1.30]
- 40) Ksenia Sobchak, who rose to fame as the host of the *scandalous* “Dom 2” reality TV show and used to be called the “*Russian Paris Hilton,*” *has become the archrival* of veteran nationalist leader Zhirinovskiy in the run-up to the March 18 election. The 71-year-old refuses to treat the former socialite seriously and keeps *mocking* her at every debate. [1.30]
- 41) In late February, Zhirinovskiy, labelled Sobchak a “*dumb fool of a woman,*” among other *unpleasant* things, which *brought her wrath down on him* – as well as a glass of water to the face. [1.30]
- 42) Following the incident, a woman, presumably the presidential candidate herself, could be heard *swearing* at the attacker. [1.31]
- 43) Sobchak, in her turn, doused the politician with a glass of water, *only to receive a new mouthful of insults.* [1.31]
- 44) ‘They should seek treatment’: Election official *blasts* Deutsche Welle bid to influence Russian polls. [1.32]

- 45) A Central Election Commission member has described a recent set of instructions for protests at presidential polls, published on a German media website, as a **blatant** attempt to interfere with Russia's internal affairs. [1.32]
- 46) He said the recommendations released by DW showed a very **low** level of professionalism among their authors. [1.32]
- 47) Earlier this month, the Russian upper house Commission for Protection of State Sovereignty released a report stating that, in view of the March 18 presidential elections, **foreign governments and groups had boosted funding to various Russian opposition movements and politicians**. The Russian senators noted that a typical example of a campaign favored by foreign sponsors is **the call for an elections boycott, spread by anti-corruption blogger-turned-political activist Alexey Navalny and his allies**. [1.32]
- 48) Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has told the commission that **most of the attempts to influence Russian internal politics from the outside were made by the United States**. [1.32]
- 49) 'Dictator' Putin wins 'fraud-tainted' vote: Western **media sticks to narrative** on Russian election. [1.34]
- 50) **From Soviet comparisons to accusations of authoritarianism**, mainstream coverage of Russia's presidential election has barely changed since 2004, though mentions of the UK spy poisoning scandal did **add a fresh layer of insinuation**. [1.34]
- 51) As Putin was thanking his supporters for a landslide victory from the stage in Red Square, Western outlets **rolled out long, pre-written news stories, liberally mixing reporting and opinion**. [1.34]
- 52) Calling the election a "**hollow exercise**," the New York Times **reached for the most predictable of parallels**. [1.34]
- 53) Rupert Murdoch's News Corp Australia **didn't even bother with such nuances**, calling Putin a straight-up "**dictator**," though the article was later amended to merely describe the vote as "**inevitable**." [1.34]
- 54) This year, **the usual analysis was also sprinkled with allegations** that a Moscow agent poisoned Sergei Skripal with the toxin "**Novichok, a gruesome calling card**" to provoke a British response, according to the Guardian. [1.34]
- 55) Zhirinovskiy is currently running for the presidency on the ticket of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). He is one of the most experienced politicians in Russia and is known for his **flamboyant** style and **fiery** statements. [1.35]
- 56) Russian TV channel Dozhd initially reported about the charges, **quoting anonymous sources**. [1.35]

- 57) Dozhd's own producer, Darya Zhuk, wrote a letter to the State Duma Ethics Committee providing details of Slutsky's **alleged** sexual harassment against her. [1.35]
- 58) Slutsky himself continues to maintain his innocence and claims that he has become a victim of a **smear** campaign ahead of the presidential election. [1.35]
- 59) The polls may indicate that the contest is a **one-horse race**, but while he's almost certain to win comfortably, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 60) While it's still a **long shot**, their partnership might help finally unite Russia's **small, perennially fractured, pro-Western opposition**, which has **arguably been its own worst enemy: unable to rally around a single leader or find a common cause**. [1.36]
- 61) At the same time, the KPRF was slowly becoming a **zombie** party, whose support base **was** literally **dying out**. But Grudinin, despite being a millionaire himself, has shown voters that **there may still be some life in the once-omnipresent movement**. Nevertheless, **his own reputation has been damaged by tabloid media coverage linking him to a large amount of Swiss bank accounts and undeclared wealth**. [1.36]
- 62) Another contender is **nationalist firebrand** Vladimir Zhirinovsky, in his sixth shot at the presidency. As Putin didn't participate in the debates (and Grudinin eventually withdrew), **the veteran rabble-rouser** spent much of the TV sessions arguing with Sobchak. [1.36]
- 63) Presidential candidates **wrangle** over military issues, NATO threat in televised debates. [1.38]
- 64) The nationalists and leftists, **predictably, attempted to play on the audience's nostalgia**. [1.38]
- 65) **Suraikin, whose rise to fame has been based on provocative statements in the spirit of Soviet propaganda, was true to his style**. [1.38]
- 66) He went on to say that Russia needed to restore its global network of military bases and speculated that the current situation in the Middle East **has been deliberately constructed by Russia's enemies** in order to bring down oil prices. [1.38]
- 67) But if Grudinin **lacked flamboyancy** in his presentation, **this was compensated by Vladimir Zhirinovsky – an experienced populist dwelling on nationalist sentiments** and the leader of one of Russia's oldest political parties – the LDPR. [1.38]
- 68) Zhirinovsky commenced with the promise that the Third World War will begin really soon and then **added some drama** by stating that Russia was completely **surrounded by enemies** (such as the NATO bloc) **and traitors** (such as liberal journalists) and had undermined its defense capabilities from the inside. [1.38]
- 69) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was absolutely **wrong** to elect a female president because it would result in a "military commander in chief wearing a skirt." [1.38]

- 70) *These were based on various unproven theories circulated by mass media*, such as the demand for explanation over Russian military servicemen's *alleged* deaths in the Ukrainian conflict, and the *alleged* activities of Russian military contractors in Syria. Sobchak also insisted on the transition from conscription to a fully-professional army and criticized Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, *albeit not over the forces' actual performance, but rather for blunders by his PR department*. [1.38]
- 71) Yavlinsky's representative repeated the points that Yabloko has been defending since its foundation in the 1990s – he urged the transition to a fully-professional army, and criticized the existing military commanders and weapons producers for *allegedly* excessive advertising of every success. He also warned about the threat of Islamic extremism in Central Asia and hinted at the possible threat of Chinese expansion, *but did not make any proposals on how to counter them*. [1.38]
- 72) Ksenia Sobchak's claim that she requested permission from Ukraine to visit Crimea *has caused outrage among Russian politicians*, while the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry *likened the move to schizophrenia*. [1.39]
- 73) The backlash from Russian politicians came almost immediately, *forming a mixture of indignation and bewilderment*. [1.39]
- 74) MP Andrey Kozenko *blasted Sobchak's claims as hypocrisy*. [1.39]
- 75) Kozenko also suggested that Sobchak *was simply attempting to incite conflict* through her planned trip. [1.39]
- 76) *Events took an unexpected turn when comments of bewilderment also began to arrive from Kiev*. [1.39]
- 77) *It's not the first time Sobchak has achieved notoriety* through statements about Crimea. In October last year, shortly before officially embarking on her presidential campaign, she *unambiguously* revealed her position on the subject. "*From the point of international law, Crimea is Ukrainian. Period. Let us move on with our conversation*," RIA Novosti quoted Sobchak as saying at a press conference. The candidate reiterated this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the reunification of Crimea with Russia *a violation of international law*. [1.39]
- 78) On Wednesday morning, Ukrainian news agency UNIAN quoted an *unnamed* "high-placed source" in the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow as saying that they had not received any messages from Sobchak so far. [1.39]
- 79) Ksenia Sobchak is running for the presidency on the ticket of pro-business party Civic Platform, but her program is based mainly on *all-enveloping* criticism of the authorities, and she presents herself as a "none of the above" option for those who are disinclined to vote for any of the other seven candidates. [1.40]
- 80) After receiving *flak* in Russian media over this *curious* status, Grudinin stated that "*it is not important what party certificate you hold, what is important is how you see yourself*." [1.41]

- 81) The Communists were ***in a bind*** at the end of 2017, with ***perennial*** candidate Gennady Zyuganov, now in his 70s, polling in third behind another veteran, the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. With Zyuganov seemingly unwilling to fully relinquish control but the party ***in desperate need of a fresh face***, they've opted for a Russian solution to a Russian problem, presumably in a ***bid to at least come second***. So, rather than promoting from inside, ***they've parachuted in a charismatic outsider***. [1.41]
- 82) Grudinin ***has been around the fringes*** of Russian politics for some time. [1.41]
- 83) Russian tabloid Life News ***has been bashing*** Grudinin for some weeks. [1.41]
- 84) At the same time, ***Grudinin's expressions of admiration for Stalin have also raised a few eyebrows***, in a country deeply divided on the Soviet leader's legacy. [1.41]
- 85) Putin inherited a Russia which was very obviously ***on its knees***. The country had defaulted on its international debt in 1998, ***with citizens meagre savings wiped out, while a disastrous war raged in the Chechnya region***. Putin quickly ended the conflict and stabilised the economy, helped by rising resource prices, especially in oil and gas. He also reasserted state control of vital sectors, ***which irked many in the West***. [1.42]
- 86) By 1991, as modern Russia ***emerged from the ashes of the USSR***, Putin was working for a pro-democracy movement in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). [1.42]
- 87) However, he bitterly opposed George W. Bush and Tony Blair's ***illegal*** invasion of Iraq, and clearly hoped to make an alliance with France and Germany during the fallout. [1.42]
- 88) However, ***this never materialised*** and, as NATO moved closer to Russia's borders, his position hardened. [1.42]
- 89) On a personal level, ***despite how he's portrayed in the West***, Putin is quite liberal by Russian standards. [1.42]
- 90) They include ***voter fatigue due to his longevity in office***, and corruption ***allegations*** concerning his inner circle, which have been led by the protest leader Alexei Navalny. [1.42]
- 91) ***The stagnation in living standards of recent years also hurts Putin***, but a return to economic growth offsets some of those worries. [1.42]
- 92) Yet, assuming he wins, ***he then immediately faces a greater headache***: how to plan his succession. [1.42]
- 93) A socialite and candidate "against all," she also ***owes a debt to her chief rival***, Vladimir Putin. [1.43]
- 94) Leningrad-born ***with a silver spoon in her mouth*** as the daughter of a noted academic, ***the utensil turned golden*** in her teenage years when her father Anatoly became the first freely elected mayor of Russia's "second capital." [1.43]

- 95) The gig was lucrative (her earnings reached around \$3 million annually) and Sobchak was soon **labelled Russia's "Paris Hilton"** due to her taste for designer clothes and glamorous parties. [1.43]
- 96) Her connections with this movement, **which hasn't received widespread support in Russia**, severely damaged Sobchak's mainstream TV career. [1.43]
- 97) Anyone who has ever worked in the media **will tell you** it's full of everyday politics. Nevertheless, Sobchak has no formal track record in governance and has never been elected to any federal, or local, institution. [1.43]
- 98) Yet her opinion of the president **is clouded** by an episode from her childhood. [1.43]
- 99) In addition, the candidate has distanced herself from the alternative opposition's traditional methods, **largely based around street rallies**, saying Russia needs "evolution, not revolution." [1.43]
- 100) **This sort of division is nothing new amongst members of Russia's fringe pro-West movement, which has long been a snake pit of infighting, usually driven by clashes of ego.** [1.43]
- 101) But Sobchak herself **rubberstamps** this suggestion and says she genuinely wants to build a national, liberal political movement over the coming years. [1.43]
- 102) **A rabble-rouser who is notorious for his outspoken views.** [1.44]
- 103) Instead, he's **a hardcore jingoistic nationalist, best described as Russia's version of Donald Trump.** [1.44]
- 104) **More of an entertainer than a politician with serious ambitions these days**, he's a **ubiquitous** figure on Russian television, particularly on the Sixty Minutes and Vladimir Soloviev shows, which score high ratings. [1.44]
- 105) **The LDPR leader makes the aforementioned Trump look like a tolerant and empathetic kind of guy.** [1.44]
- 106) Of course, **this rhetoric was nothing new, by his standards.** [1.44]
- 107) And during the 2008 crisis in UK-Russian relations, **he advocated dropping nuclear bombs over the Atlantic Ocean to cause floods in Britain.** [1.44]
- 108) In fairness, **his scorn isn't reserved for liberals either.** only last year he threatened to "shoot and hang" MPs from the United Russia party, should he ever come to power. [1.44]
- 109) **While many dismiss him as a clown**, Zhirinovskiy is far more intelligent than he is often given credit for. [1.44]

- 110) *Zhirinovsky acts as a sponge for disgruntled Russian nationalists* and, unlike Sobchak or Grudinin, seems to have no real political goals, at this point. [1.44]
- 111) *He enjoys his celebrity and notoriety and a continued high-profile TV presence is the summit of his ambitions.* [1.44]

As far as engagement markers are concerned, they almost absent as well as in Putin-related articles:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	3	1	0	4
Percentage	0%	75%	25%	0%	

Table 10. Distribution of engagement markers in election-related articles (Russia Today)

Three instances of appeals to shared knowledge and one directive suggest that journalists tried to give personal commentaries and commands, thus, increasing the presence of the authorial stance in the articles, making it more pervasive. Reader pronouns are absent, as the genre of a straight news article does not presuppose any direct appeal to the audience. The examples of engagement markers are as follows:

▪ **Personal asides:**

- 1) In its top report. CNN said that Putin “*seeks tighter grip on power,*” while also reminding its readers that “*he is already the country’s longest-serving leader since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin*” (***which is not actually true – that would be Leonid Brezhnev***). CNN added that Putin is “*banking on confrontation with international players this election.*” [1.34]
- 2) “*Kremlin politics have become a bloodsport,*” wrote Andrew Roth, the Guardian’s correspondent for Moscow. “*With a shrinking economy [also untrue] and elites manoeuvring before a possible succession battle, the knives are out.*” [1.34]
- 3) To that end, Sobchak opposes the re-absorption of Crimea, calling for a fresh referendum on its status, and even requested permission from Ukraine to visit the disputed peninsula (***Kiev was not impressed***). [1.43]

▪ **Directives:**

- 1) ***Let’s be blunt here:*** given her family’s past association with Putin, a lot of people believe Sobchak’s involvement in the election is part of a “Kremlin project” – something she strongly denies. [1.43]

As it was previously mentioned, quotations were analyzed separately from the body of the articles in order to find out if they follow the same pattern or other markers and forms of realization of interpersonality appear in quotations:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions		Total
			Positive	Negative	1 st p. sing.	1 st p. pl.	
Number	23	17	1	60	2	7	109
Percentage	21.1%	15.59%	0.91%	55.04%	1.83%	5.53%	

Table 11. Distribution of stance markers in election-related articles (Russia Today) in quotations

The interpersonal stance pattern observed in election-related articles within quotations is similar to the pattern of the main body of the articles, with the prevalence of negative attitudinals, a significant number of hedges, a relatively small number of boosters and almost absent positive attitude markers. Almost the same distribution of stance markers within quotations suggests that they replicate and enforce the main message of the articles, adding a more subjective dimension to the discourse under analysis. Self-mentions are present, but they were expected to be found within quotes. The following examples were found:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) Sixty-seven percent of the respondents intend to vote, and the attitude of this group is *“usually close to the actual turnout,”* Valery Fedorov, who heads VTsIOM, told Kommersant. [1.15]
- 2) Despite needing only 300,000, Putin’s team is planning to continue collecting signatures so that *“everyone who wants to do so could express their support”* for the candidate, Rossiyska Gazeta reported. [1.15]
- 3) The president commented on the Skripal case and the accusations the UK has raised against Russia. Putin dismissed them, stating that it was *“nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia would do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup.”* [1.25]
- 4) *“What can be our reaction to these instructions? The best advice we can give them is to seek treatment. The elections will be held normally. We are ready for any provocation and we have prepared everything to ensure the free expression and the highest level of trust in results that the Central Election Commission will announce,”* Sirotkin told reporters. [1.32]

- 5) *“They are pushing people towards mistakes. What do they mean by taking a ballot home? If this ballot is used for the distortion of poll results, the person who carried it out of the station **would** be punished, and I doubt very much that they [DW journalists] **would** then speak in this person’s defense,” he said. [1.32]*
- 6) *“Like hell they will succeed. I **would** advise them to give us no advice,” Sirotkin added. [1.32]*
- 7) *“The Central Elections Commission has entered into cooperation with political structures and civil-society organizations, arranging training for monitors so that they **could** carry out their mission both professionally and honestly,” Matviyenko told reporters, adding that a large number of foreign monitors are expected at the forthcoming polls. [1.33]*
- 8) *“The vote was tainted by widespread reports of ballot-box stuffing and forced voting, but the complaints will **likely** do little to undermine Putin,” wrote AP’s lead report. [1.34]*
- 9) *“The diplomatic crisis this poisoning case has caused **may** help him get more people into polling booths,” echoed Australia’s ABC. [1.34]*
- 10) *“The Russian leader’s popularity remains high despite his suppression of dissent and reproach from the West over Russia’s increasingly aggressive stance in world affairs and **alleged** interference in the 2016 U.S. election.” [1.34]*
- 11) *“A row with London **can** do Putin no harm, especially among voters who share his uncompromising nationalist worldview and his smouldering sense of victimhood,” an article in the Guardian said this week. [1.34]*
- 12) *“We **should** understand that if the epidemic of accusations against men does not stop normal relations between sexes **could** stop completely,” Vladimir Zhirinovskiy wrote in a Telegram message on Monday. “Instead of love, men and women **would** hate each other. Try to imagine that: one half of humanity hates the other. Everyone understands that this **could** lead to our extinction as a species.” [1.35]*
- 13) *“In case of success the project **would** become a foundation for the ‘Digital VTSIOM’ program that is being developed in the center and that is scheduled for realization throughout 2018-2021,” the release reads. [1.37]*
- 14) *“If I ever travel to Crimea, I will do it through Ukrainian territory, I think this **would** be the right thing to do. If I get permission for entry through Ukrainian territory, I will go.” [1.39]*
- 15) *“The statement was **probably** based not on international law, but on PR and media strategies, because such a statement is simply rude in regard to the choice made by the people, the Crimean residents,” Russian MP and former chief prosecutor of Crimea, Natalya Poklonskaya, told Komsomolskaya Pravda radio. [1.39]*

- 16) “*I **would** like this presidential candidate to explain why she did not need any permission from Kiev when she visited Crimea in April 2014, but suddenly needed it now, when the election campaign is in full swing.*” [1.39]
- 17) “*Ksenia Sobchak with her political views risks causing such an outrage in Crimea that the police **would** be forced to take her under protection,*” he said. [1.39]
- 18) And also warned his German audience how he would reverse Western anti-Russia sanctions by bringing the world “*to the brink of war. I **would** say, ‘either you do what I want, or you’d better hide in a bunker.’*” [1.44]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) The majority of Russians “***will** come to the polls,*” according to the research conducted one week ago. [1.15]
- 2) Fifteen percent of those surveyed have not decided whether or not they will vote, with 3 percent saying they will “***definitely***” skip this election. [1.15]
- 3) “*Six more candidates have submitted their supporters’ signatures. It is **clear** that there **will** be no more than eight candidates on the ballots,*” Central Elections Commission head Ella Pamfilova said at a press conference following the conclusion of the period during which presidential hopefuls are required to submit their supporters’ signatures to the commission. [1.16]
- 4) “*It is **absolutely obvious** that they are trying to influence the polls, to prevent people from going to ballot stations,*” Sergey Sirotkin said, according to RIA Novosti. [1.32]
- 5) “*The elections **will** be held normally. We are ready for any provocation and we have prepared everything to ensure the free expression and the highest level of trust in results that the Central Election Commission **will** announce,*” Sirotkin told reporters. [1.32]
- 6) “*Like hell they **will** succeed. I would advise them to give us no advice,*” Sirotkin added. [1.32]
- 7) “*I am **confident** that our efforts **will** make the 2018 presidential elections **the most** open in the history of modern Russia,*” she stated. [1.33]
- 8) “*The vote was tainted by widespread reports of ballot-box stuffing and forced voting, but the complaints **will** likely do little to undermine Putin,*” wrote AP’s lead report. [1.34]
- 9) “*Our project provides for storage of the data that we receive during exit polls at polling stations in a special blockchain bank. This **will** prevent any external changes to the information, decrease the effectiveness of hacker attacks and ensure the transparency of the data collection and aggregation,*” reads the statement by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center. [1.37]

10) “If I ever travel to Crimea, I **will** do it through Ukrainian territory, I think this would be the right thing to do. If I get permission for entry through Ukrainian territory, I **will** go.” [1.39]

11) “The truth here is very banal. I swear that my baptism at the age of 12 was not **really** a memorable event... Vladimir Putin was there, among other people, but as my mother says, he was not my godfather,” Sobchak said in a recent interview with Ekho Moskvyy radio. [1.40]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

1) “I am confident that our efforts will make the 2018 presidential elections the most **open** in the history of modern Russia,” she stated. [1.33]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

1) “Everything that you have just said are **just empty words**,” Navalny said in a conversation that was broadcasted live on Youtube. “I don’t want to be a part of a **cartoonish opposition that you are painting now together with Putin.**” [1.18]

2) The activist went on to describe all of Sobchak’s latest activities as “**despicable and hypocritical**” and then, while still live on internet broadcast, he said that a few months ago Sobchak visited him at home and told him and his wife, Yulia, that she had been offered “a **tremendous sum of money**” for agreeing to participate in the presidential elections and that she did not know what to do. [1.18]

3) “**All of these are lies from the beginning to the end, you were used to turn even more people away from the opposition,**” Navalny replied, before calling Sobchak “**Putin’s tool.**” [1.18]

4) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into “**cheap shows,**” and said he would no longer take part after other contenders exchanged insults and even threw water at each other. [1.22]

5) “What is going on here is not debates, it is **more like a bazaar with all the shouting without waiting for turns. Debates are arguments between opponents and here we see questions and answers – this is called an interview,**” Grudinin said after announcing that he was refusing to participate in further debates. [1.22]

6) “The Central Elections Commission and central TV channels do not want us to debate one-on-one, they **turned these debates into a so-called show,** and now they do only one thing – they spoil the public attitude to the presidential polls,” he stated. [1.22]

7) “I am not going to participate in this anymore, because you are doing everything to prevent the people from coming to the elections. Because all this is more like **buffoonery,**” Grudinin said before leaving. [1.22]

- 8) In further comments posted on his Instagram account, he addressed incumbent President Vladimir Putin with a proposal to hold “**real**” debates followed by “**real**” elections. [1.22]
- 9) In addition, Vladimir Putin has refused to participate in “**joint promotional events on federal TV channels**” — the official name for election debates. [1.23]
- 10) The head of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, used his videos to emphasize the existing problems faced by the nation, such as poverty, inflation and the general “**humiliation of the people.**” [1.23]
- 11) Sobchak accused Putin and longtime ally Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of alleged “**conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely.**” [1.23]
- 12) The president commented on the Skripal case and the accusations the UK has raised against Russia. Putin dismissed them, stating that it was “**nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia would do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup.**” [1.25]
- 13) “**Such a coarse woman should not be here. This is filth! It is ‘Dom-2’ [the House-2] where all the depravity is!**” the politician shouted in anger, referring to a highly controversial reality TV show which Sobchak once hosted. He then proceeded to denounce the magazine editor, TV host and socialite as a “**dumb fool of a woman.**” [1.27]
- 14) On Friday, Judge Nikolai Romanov announced the verdict rejecting Sobchak’s lawsuit. Earlier in the day, prosecutors said that the arguments listed in the lawsuit “**were based on an erroneous interpretation of the law.**” [1.28]
- 15) But Zhirinovskiy used the remark as an opening for another attack, shouting: “**Return her to the kindergarten and put her on a potty. Maybe the girl will feel better.**” [1.30]
- 16) “**This man (Zhirinovskiy) badmouths me constantly – only me. The man calls me a w***e and a dirty witch at your program. And you allow this every time. I have my time assigned to me by law and this man constantly offends me.**” [1.30]
- 17) “**I think it’s horrible,**” the host said. “**But such are the rules.**” [1.30]
- 18) In late February, Zhirinovskiy, labelled Sobchak a “**dumb fool of a woman,**” among other unpleasant things, which brought her wrath down on him – as well as a glass of water to the face. [1.30]
- 19) The leader of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy lost his temper and verbally assaulted Sobchak, calling her “**dumb fool of a woman**” and criticizing her activities, when she used to be a host of a popular Russian reality show. [1.31]
- 20) “**Like hell they will succeed. I would advise them to give us no advice,**” Sirotkin added. [1.32]

- 21) ‘*Dictator*’ Putin wins ‘*fraud-tainted*’ vote: Western media sticks to narrative on Russian election. [1.34]
- 22) “The vote was *tainted by widespread reports of ballot-box stuffing and forced voting, but the complaints will likely do little to undermine Putin,*” wrote AP’s lead report. [1.34]
- 23) “The Russian leader’s popularity remains high despite his suppression of dissent and reproach from the West over Russia’s increasingly aggressive stance in world affairs and alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. election.” [1.34]
- 24) The Washington Post called Sunday’s vote an “*elaborate presidential-election-day spectacle*” that sought “to legitimize the election,” which “critics described as a *charade,*” by boosting the turnout as “a *lack of suspense or popular opposition candidates threatened to keep people home.*” [1.34]
- 25) Calling the election a “*hollow exercise,*” the New York Times reached for the most predictable of parallels. [1.34]
- 26) “*Gone were the Soviet days when there was just one name on the ballot and the winner habitually harvested 99 percent of the vote. The spirit was similar, however, with pictures of Mr. Putin and his campaign slogan, ‘Strong president, strong Russia,’ blanketing the country,*” it wrote. [1.34]
- 27) In its top report. CNN said that Putin “*seeks tighter grip on power,*” while also reminding its readers that “*he is already the country’s longest-serving leader since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin*” (which is not actually true – that would be Leonid Brezhnev). [1.34]
- 28) For the Guardian, “*paradoxically, the first order of business now... is for Putin to set up an escape plan.*” [1.34]
- 29) “*Kremlin politics have become a bloodsport,*” wrote Andrew Roth, the Guardian’s correspondent for Moscow. “*With a shrinking economy [also untrue] and elites manoeuvring before a possible succession battle, the knives are out.*” [1.34]
- 30) This year, the usual analysis was also sprinkled with allegations that a Moscow agent poisoned Sergei Skripal with the toxin “*Novichok, a gruesome calling card*” to provoke a British response, according to the Guardian. [1.34]
- 31) “A row with London can do Putin no harm, especially among voters who share his *uncompromising nationalist worldview and his smouldering sense of victimhood,*” an article in the Guardian said this week. [1.34]
- 32) “We should understand that if *the epidemic of accusations against men does not stop normal relations between sexes could stop completely,*” Vladimir Zhirinovsky wrote in a Telegram message on Monday. [1.35]

- 33) “*The goal of these manipulators is to halt humanity’s healthy development, to rule all people. To make them hostages to stereotypes for profits,*” he wrote. [1.35]
- 34) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was absolutely wrong to elect a female president because it would result in a “*military commander in chief wearing a skirt*.” [1.38]
- 35) He also listed the main threats that Russia faces as being NATO’s attempts to set up a global hegemony and the general desire of Western nations to “*destroy the Russian spirit*.” He proposed countering them through joint effort in national defense. [1.38]
- 36) “*The statement was probably based not on international law, but on PR and media strategies, because such a statement is simply rude in regard to the choice made by the people, the Crimean residents,*” Russian MP and former chief prosecutor of Crimea, Natalya Poklonskaya, told Komsomolskaya Pravda radio. [1.39]
- 37) “*Ksenia Sobchak with her political views risks causing such an outrage in Crimea that the police would be forced to take her under protection,*” he said. [1.39]
- 38) In particular, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin tweeted that Sobchak’s behavior was akin to “*political schizophrenia,*” because she was requesting legal permission for a visit that is part of a campaign for a presidential election which the Ukrainian authorities view as illegal. [1.39]
- 39) On Wednesday morning, Ukrainian news agency UNIAN quoted an unnamed “*high-placed source*” in the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow as saying that they had not received any messages from Sobchak so far. [1.39]
- 40) “*It only causes bewilderment that a Russian presidential candidate, a person who intends to rule the whole country, does not know such elementary things, does not know the Russian Constitution in which the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol are defined as subjects of the Russian Federation,*” RIA Novosti quoted the politician as saying. [1.39]
- 41) “*The truth here is very banal. I swear that my baptism at the age of 12 was not really a memorable event... Vladimir Putin was there, among other people, but as my mother says, he was not my godfather,*” Sobchak said in a recent interview with Ekho Moskvyy radio. [1.40]
- 42) The election candidate added that she had not been a very religious person and agreed to the baptism on her mother’s insistence “*in exchange for three chewing gums*”. [1.40]
- 43) She also accuses the current Russian authorities of encouraging a “*fake patriotism*” and believes Moscow must urgently repair its relations with the West. [1.43]
- 44) The candidate also believes Russia’s elections are “*fake*” by Western standards. [1.43]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person singular):**

- 1) *"I want to address those who gathered in Moscow and the supporters all across the territory of our enormous country. Thank you very much for the result! You are our joint team, and I'm a member of your team."* [1.25]
- 2) *"I have already sent a letter to the Ukrainian embassy and now we are waiting for their reply,"* Sobchak said in a Tuesday interview with Echo Moskvyy radio station. *"If I ever travel to Crimea, I will do it through Ukrainian territory, I think this would be the right thing to do. If I get permission for entry through Ukrainian territory, I will go."* [1.39]
- 3) *"The truth here is very banal. I swear that **my** baptism at the age of 12 was not really a memorable event... Vladimir Putin was there, among other people, but as **my** mother says, he was not **my** godfather,"* Sobchak said in a recent interview with Ekho Moskvyy radio. [1.40]
- 4) *"I have only met him on sad anniversaries of **my** father's death. I don't have and I have never had any other connections to Vladimir Putin,"* she stated. [1.40]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural):**

- 1) *"Dear friends, thank you, that on this frosty Moscow night **we** gathered here in the capital's heart. Thank you for your support,"* Putin told the audience. *<...> You are **our** joint team, and I'm a member of your team."* [1.22]
- 2) One of the reporters asked the president whether *"**we**'ll see a new Putin or old Putin"* in the next six years. *"Everything changes. **We** all change,"* Putin said with a smile. [1.22]
- 3) *"They are trying to persuade **our** people not to take part in the elections."* Sergey Sirotkin said, according to RIA Novosti. [1.24]
- 4) *"I have already sent a letter to the Ukrainian embassy and now **we** are waiting for their reply,"* Sobchak said in a Tuesday interview with Echo Moskvyy radio station. [1.39]

The distribution of engagements markers within quotations is shown in Table 12:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	6	0	5	1	12
Percentage	50%	0%	41.66%	8.34%	

Table 12. Distribution of engagement markers in election-related articles (Russia Today) in quotations

Reader pronouns are the most numerous among engagement markers in quotations, followed by directives and a single question, while appeals to shared knowledge are absent. The number of reader pronouns suggests that there were attempts to establish contact with the audience through the use of quotes, giving reference to some of the presidential candidates. Directives are more probable to be found in quotes as they were pronounced during the electoral campaign, when candidates make an extensive use of different linguistic strategies to sway voters. The following examples were found:

- **Reader pronouns:**

- 1) “Dear friends, thank **you**, that on this frosty Moscow night we gathered here in the capital’s heart. Thank **you** for **your** support,” Putin told the audience. “I want to address those who gathered in Moscow and the supporters all across the territory of our enormous country. Thank **you** very much for the result! **You** are our joint team, and I’m a member of **your** team.” [1.25]

- **Directives:**

- 1) “**Let’s make a powerful leap forward together**” is the slogan for the Liberal Democrats. [1.23]
- 2) “From the point of international law, Crimea is Ukrainian. Period. **Let us move on with our conversation**,” RIA Novosti quoted Sobchak as saying at a press conference. [1.24]
- 3) “**Come on, start crying!** Your mom will be here in an instant,” he said. The other candidates weighed in, with Maksim Shevchenko telling the voters: “**Don’t believe those tears.**” [1.30]
- 4) “**Try to imagine that: one half of humanity hates the other.**” [1.35]

- **Questions:**

- 1) Then the video shows the slogan “**And what about Titov?**” that is also read out by the narrator. [1.23]

To conclude, the interpersonal pattern observed in this section is different from the one revealed in Putin-related articles, with the prevalence of negative attitudinals and hedges. Meanwhile, quotations replicate the interpersonal pattern found in the body of the articles, thus, reinforcing the gist of the articles under analysis. A possible explanation for such distribution is offered in the qualitative analysis of election-related articles.

5.1.4 Qualitative analysis of election-related articles

The second thematic category of the articles under analysis is comprised of 30 articles that are devoted to the coverage of the electoral campaign carried out by Putin and other presidential candidates.

8 out of 30 articles are fully devoted to the frontrunner of the election, Putin, while other articles elaborate on the events that took place throughout the electoral campaign. On the one hand, it may be explained as an attempt to give equal treatment for all the candidates, a practice that is frequently labelled as ‘false balance’ when journalists try to give an equal amount of information concerning a controversial issue in order not to seem biased (Bruggemann, 2017; Fahy, 2017). On the other hand, the thematic distribution within election-related articles can be explained by the necessity to ensure positive representation of the incumbent president, while other contenders are massively depicted in the negative light, thus, to accentuate Putin’s positive image against an array of negative judgement of his contenders.

When talking about Putin, hedges are one of the most frequently employed markers. Hedges that express modality, such modal verbs *may* and *would* and a modal adjective *likely* are used to forecast the outcome of the election, showing that Putin is the frontrunner of the campaign, simultaneously suggesting that the outcome of the election is still unknown:

- 1) Putin **may** win presidential election in first round – poll. [1.15]
- 2) Current Russian President Vladimir Putin **may** win the upcoming presidential election in the first round, a survey by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center revealed, two months before the March 18 vote. [1.15]
- 3) If the Russian presidential election were held next Sunday, the current president **would** receive 81.1% of the vote and win in the first round, with Communist Party candidate Pavel Grudinin receiving 7.6 percent, and Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy receiving 4.2 percent. [1.15]
- 4) In a separate VTSIOM poll, 70 percent of the respondents said they **would** support the incumbent president. [1.16]
- 5) Putin’s run for a new term, **if successful, would** be his fourth overall, but second in a row. [1.21]

- 6) The latest opinion polls indicate that President Vladimir Putin is *likely* to win in the first round. [1.22]
- 7) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys the largest support among voters, *most likely* sufficient to win in the first round. [1.26]
- 8) The polls *may* indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he's *almost* certain to win comfortably, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 9) All the latest opinion polls indicate that Putin will *most likely* win in the first round. [1.37]
- 10) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys the largest support among voters and will *most likely* win in the first round. [1.38]
- 11) Yet, *assuming he wins*, he then immediately faces a greater headache: how to plan his succession. [1.42]

Nevertheless, such boosters as *total* and *certain* and several instances of the future form *will* were found when providing forecasts about Putin's expected victory. The verb *will* was classified as a booster due to its modal meaning (something is highly probable to happen) and it is sometimes used in combination with a hedge in order to slightly reduce assertiveness, or with a positive attitudinal to strengthen the effect:

- 1) There are currently eight candidates in the race and public opinion polls predict that Vladimir Putin *will* win in the first round. [1.28]
- 2) The polls may indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he's almost *certain* to win *comfortably*, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 3) All the latest opinion polls indicate that Putin *will* most likely win in the first round. [1.37]
- 4) The latest public opinion polls have shown that Putin enjoys the largest support among voters and *will* most likely win in the first round. [1.38]
- 5) Some other factors also affect his chances of a *total* landslide. [1.42]

Other hedges, classified as approximators, are used as an evasive tool in order not to give precise numbers, creating certain vagueness in favor of Putin:

- 1) On Monday, representatives from Vladimir Putin's election headquarters delivered *around* 315,000 paper forms with supporters' signatures to the main office of the Central Election Commission in Moscow. [1.20]

- 2) His headquarters earlier said that volunteers had collected many more signatures than necessary – **around** a million and a half. [1.20]
- 3) Putin’s address came as the votes are still being counted. According to preliminary results, he has secured a decisive lead with **some** 75 percent of vote after **around** half of the ballots were processed. [1.25]

An expected electoral turnout is another topic that contributes to a positive image of the presidential election and Putin at large through the use of particular metadiscursive markers, such as hedges (*about*) and boosters (*will*). As preliminary forecasts suggest that Putin was going to win the election by a landslide, information on the expected high turnout at the polling booths enforces Putin’s chances to win, according to *Russia Today*:

- 1) In a poll conducted by state-run agency VTSIOM in late January, 71 percent of respondents said they intended to vote in the March 18 election. **About** six percent said they did not plan to, and 11 percent said they had not yet decided. [1.21]
- 2) Fifteen percent of those surveyed have not decided whether or not they **will** vote, with 3 percent saying they **will** “*definitely*” skip this election. [1.15]

The majority of positive attitudinals (frequently in combination with boosters) found in the election-related articles refer to Putin and his internal policies that explain his extreme popularity with voters, according to *Russia Today*:

- 1) **Despite needing only 300,000**, Putin’s team is planning to continue collecting signatures so that “*everyone who wants to do so could express their support*” for the candidate, Rossiyska Gazeta reported. [1.15]
- 2) On Monday, representatives from Vladimir Putin’s election headquarters delivered around 315,000 paper forms with supporters’ signatures to the main office of the Central Election Commission in Moscow. HQ spokesman Andrey Kondrashov told reporters that the documents were brought in 28 large boxes. **All of them were brought to the commission through the back door in order not to block traffic.** [1.20]
- 3) Putin has become the first candidate to submit his supporters’ signatures to the election officials. His headquarters earlier said that volunteers had collected **many more signatures than necessary** – around a million and a half. [1.20]
- 4) He expressed gratitude to all his supporters and voters, stating that the election results clearly indicate that the people support his political course, **despite the hard times Russia recently went through.** [1.25]
- 5) Putin’s address came as the votes are still being counted. According to preliminary results, he has **secured a decisive lead** with some 75 percent of vote after around half of the ballots were processed. [1.25]

- 6) As Putin was thanking his supporters for a **landslide** victory from the stage in Red Square, Western outlets rolled out long, pre-written news stories, liberally mixing reporting and opinion. [1.34]
- 7) The polls may indicate that the contest is a one-horse race, but while he's almost certain to win **comfortably**, the 2018 campaign hasn't all been about incumbent Vladimir Putin. [1.36]
- 8) **Putin needs little introduction.** [1.42]
- 9) The country had defaulted on its international debt in 1998, with citizens meagre savings wiped out, while a disastrous war raged in the Chechnya region. Putin **quickly ended the conflict and stabilised the economy, helped by rising resource prices, especially in oil and gas. He also reasserted state control of vital sectors**, which irked many in the West. [1.42]
- 10) Putin's third period in the **Kremlin has seen his approval ratings reach new heights alongside an assertive foreign policy, despite economic difficulties.** The reabsorption of Crimea **has proven especially popular**, even allowing for resultant sanctions from NATO countries. [1.42]
- 11) The stagnation in living standards of recent years also hurts Putin, **but a return to economic growth offsets some of those worries.** [1.42]
- 12) The man from St. Petersburg has become the **towering** political figure of his age and has **redefined** his country. [1.42]

Apart from mentioning the results of internal policies attained by Putin, a vast number of positive attitudinals are used to describe the annexation of Crimea, a controversial issue of Putin's external policy that triggered a severe international response that resulted in a number of economic sanctions against Russia, while Russian population was divided over the issue of the disputed peninsular that once belonged to Soviet Russia. In this case, *Russia Today* supports positive pro-Kremlin standpoint, employing a positive attitudinal *reunification*:

- 1) Sobchak reiterated her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current poor state of international relations, and calling the **reunification** of Crimea and with Russia a violation of international law. [1.24]
- 2) She acknowledged, however, that the overwhelming majority of Crimeans supported **reunification** with Russia in 2014. [1.24]
- 3) The Crimean Republic **reunited** with the Russian Federation in mid-2014 after **more than 96 percent of its population** – the majority of whom are ethnic Russians – **approved the move in a referendum.** [1.24]

- 4) Public opinion polls conducted in recent years have shown that the overwhelming majority of Crimea's population believe that **reunification** with Russia **was the right choice**. [1.24]
- 5) Moments before his speech in the HQ, Russia's president made a brief appearance at the 'Russia. Sevastopol. Crimea' concert in Red Square, marking the anniversary of Crimea's **reunification** with Russia. [1.25]
- 6) The date is **significant** because it's the fourth anniversary of Crimea's **reunification** with Russia in 2014. [1.36]
- 7) The candidate reiterated this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the **reunification** of Crimea with Russia a violation of international law. [1.39]
- 8) The reabsorption of Crimea **has proven especially popular**, even allowing for resultant sanctions from NATO countries. [1.42]

Positive attitudinals are accompanied by boosters in order to ensure maximum impact when talking about the annexation of Crimea staged by Putin with a single instance of hedges (*believe*):

- 1) Public opinion polls conducted in recent years have shown that the **overwhelming** majority of Crimea's population *believe* that reunification with Russia was the right choice. [1.24]
- 2) The reabsorption of Crimea has proven **especially** popular, even allowing for resultant sanctions from NATO countries. [1.42]

Another set of interpersonal markers is employed in order to create an image of a free and transparent presidential election, fending off accusations of vote rigging and massive state interference carried out in order to bring about a desired election outcome. It is done with the help of positive attitudinals in the form of adjectives in the superlative form or adjectives from the semantic field of technological advancement that were previously used in Putin-related articles:

- 1) Top senator describes forthcoming elections as **most transparent** in modern Russia's history. [1.33]
- 2) Recent legislative, organizational and technical measures ensure that the March 18 presidential polls will be **the most open** in Russia's history, according to Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the country's upper house. [1.33]
- 3) The upper house speaker also said that "tremendous" legislative work had amended Russian electoral law **to match the highest international standards**. [1.33]

- 4) State-run VTSIOM will introduce **cutting-edge** blockchain technology for exit polls at the forthcoming Russian presidential elections. [1.37]

Boosters are used in order to strengthen the positive component brought about by positive attitudinals when creating a positive image of vote processing:

- 1) Recent legislative, organizational and technical measures **ensure** that the March 18 presidential polls **will** be the most open in Russia's history, according to Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the country's upper house. [1.33]
- 2) In late 2017, a member of the Central Elections Commission, Anton Lopatin, told Vedomosti newspaper that 40,000 polling stations and 2,765 regional elections commissions **will** be using online video monitoring at the forthcoming presidential elections, explaining this would mean that about 80 percent of all Russian voters **will** be using stations equipped with these systems. [1.33]
- 3) It's designed to **ensure** transparency of data collection and protection against hacking. [1.37]
- 4) General Director Valery Fedorov said he personally thinks using blockchain in elections research **significantly** fortifies the protection against hacker attacks. [1.37]
- 5) Between 67-70 percent but, given Putin's **overwhelming** popularity, a close eye **will** be kept on turnout. [1.42]

Several hedges echo the idea of highly advanced and technological election that ensures transparency in the presidential election:

- 1) In late 2017, a member of the Central Elections Commission, Anton Lopatin, told Vedomosti newspaper that 40,000 polling stations and 2,765 regional elections commissions will be using online video monitoring at the forthcoming presidential elections, explaining this **would** mean that **about** 80 percent of all Russian voters will be using stations equipped with these systems. He also said that the authorities had spent **around** 2.8 billion roubles (just under \$50 million) on such measures. [1.33]
- 2) VTSIOM also noted that its project of using blockchain technology in exit polls **would** become one of the first examples of such system of data storage in the world. [1.37]

Quotations contain a number of interpersonal markers, such as hedges, that back up and enforce the idea of fair and transparent election and a high turnout to be expected through citing relevant sources:

- 1) Despite needing only 300,000, Putin's team is planning to continue collecting signatures so that "everyone who wants to do so **could** express their support" for the candidate, Rossiyska Gazeta reported. [1.15]
- 2) "In case of success the project **would** become a foundation for the 'Digital VTsIOM' program that is being developed in the center and that is scheduled for realization throughout 2018-2021," the release reads. [1.37]
- 3) Sixty-seven percent of the respondents intend to vote, and the attitude of this group is "**usually** close to the actual turnout," Valery Fedorov, who heads VTsIOM, told Kommersant. [1.15]
- 4) Despite needing only 300,000, Putin's team is planning to continue collecting signatures so that "everyone who wants to do so **could** express their support" for the candidate, Rossiyska Gazeta reported. [1.15]

Boosters are found as well in combination with positive attitude markers to talk about the election, the expected turnout and allegations of possible international interference into the election:

- 1) The majority of Russians "**will** come to the polls," according to the research conducted one week ago. [1.15]
- 2) Fifteen percent of those surveyed have not decided whether or not they will vote, with 3 percent saying they will "**definitely**" skip this election. [1.15]
- 3) "**It is absolutely obvious** that they are trying to influence the polls, to prevent people from going to ballot stations," Sergey Sirotkin said, according to RIA Novosti. [1.32]
- 4) "The elections **will** be held normally. We are ready for any provocation and we have prepared everything to ensure the free expression and the highest level of trust in results that the Central Election Commission **will** announce," Sirotkin told reporters. [1.32]
- 5) "**I am confident** that our efforts **will** make the 2018 presidential elections **the most open in the history of modern Russia**," she stated. [1.33]
- 6) "Our project provides for storage of the data that we receive during exit polls at polling stations in a special blockchain bank. This **will prevent any external changes to the information, decrease the effectiveness of hacker attacks and ensure the transparency of the data collection and aggregation**," reads the statement by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center. [1.37]

A quote on the election that contains a hedge, a booster and a negative attitudinal:

- 1) "**Like hell they will** succeed. I would advise them to give us no advice," Sirotkin added. [1.32]

To sum up, all the metadiscursive markers related to Putin construct the following thematic pattern: Putin's *accomplishments* in the internal and external policies made him immensely popular with voters that results in highly *positive forecasts* that expect him to win the popular vote in the first round, while *turnout* is expected to be high. *Free, fair and transparent election* is ensured by cutting-edge technologies introduced by the state:

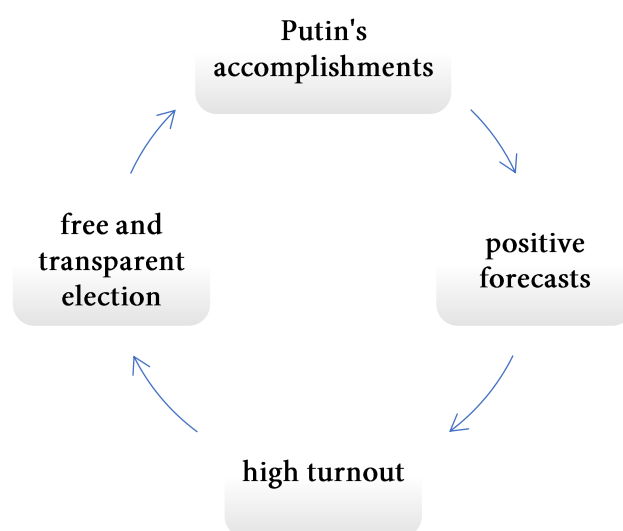


Diagram 2. Major semantic categories in election-related articles from Russia Today.

Nevertheless, as it was mentioned before, the most part of articles found in the category of election-related articles elaborate predominantly on other presidential candidates rather than Putin. Moreover, only 3 out of 41 positive attitude markers are used to refer to other candidates, while other positive attitudinals are fully devoted to Putin. Other candidates are characterized through a vast number of negative attitudinals. For instance, *Russia Today* introduces the following negative attitudinals in the articles that cover a series of presidential debates that Putin preferred to abstain from:

- 1) As two Russian politicians discussed the future after the presidential election, their discussion quickly turned into a confrontation, ***with both sides accusing each other of lies, hypocrisy and betrayal of the liberal cause.*** [1.18]
- 2) Communist Party candidate withdraws from debates as TV discussion ***descends into chaos.*** [1.22]
- 3) Earlier, business-oriented Russian newspaper Vedomosti quoted the head of Sobchak's election HQ, Timur Valeyev, as saying that Grudinin, Sobchak and Zhirinovskiy had

- allegedly* agreed not to follow the rules imposed on them by organizers of the debates and to start bilateral arguments. [1.22]
- 4) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into “cheap shows,” and said he would no longer take part after other contenders **exchanged insults and even threw water at each other**. [1.22]
 - 5) Grudinin’s reaction came soon after two presidential candidates – Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the Liberal Democratic Party and Ksenia Sobchak, who is running as a “*none-of-the-above*” candidate – started **to bicker** during the debates and then **resorted to verbal assaults**. [1.22]
 - 6) Earlier, business-oriented Russian newspaper Vedomosti quoted the head of Sobchak’s election HQ, Timur Valeev, as saying that Grudinin, Sobchak and Zhirinovskiy had **allegedly** agreed not to follow the rules imposed on them by organizers of the debates and to start bilateral arguments. [1.22]
 - 7) **Slurs & water fly** at Russian presidential debate as Lib Dem leader faces off with Sobchak. [1.27]
 - 8) A discussion focusing on Russia’s Armed Forces and other defense issues **unexpectedly spiraled into bickering** between the two political opponents during a speech from Sergey Baburin. [1.27]
 - 9) “Such a coarse woman should not be here. This is filth! It is ‘Dom-2’ [the House-2] where all the depravity is!” the politician shouted in anger, referring to a **highly controversial reality TV show** which Sobchak once hosted. [1.27]
 - 10) Sobchak then responded **with some jibes of her own**, but she eventually decided **to resort to an apparently more persuasive tool from her standpoint**. [1.27]
 - 11) **That move only led to another outburst of anger from Zhirinovskiy**, and eventually prompted the TV debate host to intervene and restore order. [1.27]
 - 12) Zhirinovskiy, who is known for his often **provocative** remarks, **is no stranger to controversy**. [1.27]
 - 13) On one occasion back in 1995, he **scolded** the then-Nizhny Novgorod governor, the late Boris Nemtsov, and threw a glass of juice at him **only to get doused in return**. [1.27]
 - 14) Russian reality star/presidential hopeful bursts into tears in **live debate chaos**. [1.30]
 - 15) Socialite-turned-politician Ksenia Sobchak **stormed out** of a live TV presidential debate in tears after interruptions by fellow contestants, **flamboyant** Liberal Democratic leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and other candidates. [1.30]
 - 16) **Tempers flared** in the studio of Rossiya 1 channel near the end of the debate on Wednesday. When Sobchak, who positions herself as the opposition candidate “against all,” tried to

- deliver her 30-second address to the voters, *she couldn't get a word in edgewise* because her opponents were *heckling* her. [1.30]
- 17) Zhirinovskiy, meanwhile, continued his *barrage*. [1.30]
 - 18) Ksenia Sobchak, who rose to fame as the host of the *scandalous* "Dom 2" reality TV show and used to be called the "*Russian Paris Hilton*," *has become the archrival* of veteran nationalist leader Zhirinovskiy in the run-up to the March 18 election. The 71-year-old refuses to treat the former socialite seriously and keeps *mocking* her at every debate. [1.30]
 - 19) In late February, Zhirinovskiy, labelled Sobchak a "*dumb fool of a woman*," *among other unpleasant things*, which *brought her wrath down on him* – as well as a glass of water to the face. [1.30]
 - 20) Sobchak, in her turn, doused the politician with a glass of water, *only to receive a new mouthful of insults*. [1.31]
 - 21) Presidential candidates *wrangle* over military issues, NATO threat in televised debates. [1.38]

In this context *apparently*, classified as a hedge, acquires a sarcastic tone that adds a more negative tone to the overall message:

- 1) Her appeal, however, *apparently* had an opposite effect, as it only infuriated the veteran politician. [1.27]
- 2) Sobchak then responded with some jibes of her own, but she eventually decided to resort to an *apparently* more persuasive tool from her standpoint. [1.27]

Many quotations were found in the articles that give direct reference to the participants of the presidential debates with the help of negative attitudinals that reveal *Russia Today's* message to the audience:

- 1) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into "*cheap shows*," and said he would no longer take part after other contenders exchanged insults and even threw water at each other. [1.22]
- 2) "*What is going on here is not debates, it is more like a bazaar with all the shouting without waiting for turns. Debates are arguments between opponents and here we see questions and answers – this is called an interview*," Grudinin said after announcing that he was refusing to participate in further debates. [1.22]
- 3) "*The Central Elections Commission and central TV channels do not want us to debate one-on-one, they turned these debates into a so-called show, and now they do only one thing – they spoil the public attitude to the presidential polls*," he stated. [1.22]

- 4) *"I am not going to participate in this anymore, because you are doing everything to prevent the people from coming to the elections. Because all this is more like **buffoonery**,"* Grudinina said before leaving. [1.22]
- 5) In addition, Vladimir Putin has refused to participate in "*joint promotional events on federal TV channels*" — the official name for election debates. [1.23]
- 6) The head of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, used his videos to emphasize the existing problems faced by the nation, such as poverty, inflation and the general "*humiliation of the people*." [1.23]
- 7) Sobchak accused Putin and longtime ally Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of alleged "*conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely*." [1.23]
- 8) *"Such a coarse woman should not be here. This is filth! It is 'Dom-2' [the House-2] where all the depravity is!"* the politician shouted in anger, referring to a highly controversial reality TV show which Sobchak once hosted. He then proceeded to denounce the magazine editor, TV host and socialite as a "*dumb fool of a woman*." [1.27]
- 9) But Zhirinovskiy used the remark as an opening for another attack, shouting: "*Return her to the kindergarten and put her on a potty. Maybe the girl will feel better*." [1.30]
- 10) *"This man (Zhirinovskiy) badmouths me constantly – only me. The man calls me a w***e and a dirty witch at your program. And you allow this every time. I have my time assigned to me by law and this man constantly offends me."* [1.30]
- 11) *"I think it's horrible,"* the host said. *"But such are the rules."* [1.30]
- 12) In late February, Zhirinovskiy, labelled Sobchak a "*dumb fool of a woman*," among other unpleasant things, which brought her wrath down on him – as well as a glass of water to the face. [1.30]
- 13) The leader of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy lost his temper and verbally assaulted Sobchak, calling her "*dumb fool of a woman*" and criticizing her activities, when she used to be a host of a popular Russian reality show. [1.31]
- 14) *"The goal of these manipulators is to halt humanity's healthy development, to rule all people. To make them hostages to stereotypes for profits,"* he wrote. [1.35]
- 15) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was absolutely wrong to elect a female president because it would result in a "*military commander in chief wearing a skirt*." [1.38]
- 16) He also listed the main threats that Russia faces as being NATO's attempts to set up a global hegemony and the general desire of Western nations to "*destroy the Russian spirit*." He proposed countering them through joint effort in national defense. [1.38]

All the above-mentioned negative attitude markers and hedges are aimed at representing presidential candidates in the negative light, thus, twisting the meaning and the ultimate aim of presidential debates for the benefit of Putin as he preferred not to participate. His decision was explained with the use of positive attitudinal phrases and boosters *massive* and *naturally*:

- 1) Putin, who *has long enjoyed a massive lead* in the polls, *has remained aloof from the fray, preferring to set out his agenda through set-piece speeches and rallies. Naturally, he's also had to focus on his day job.* [1.36]

Apart from a joint description of the candidates made in the articles on the presidential debates, each of them received a personal description that replicates the pattern, as it is mostly built on an extensive use of negative attitudinals. For instance, Ksenia Sobchak, the only female candidate, daughter of the first mayor of Saint-Petersburg who was Putin's mentor, positioned herself as a straight-up protest candidacy with the slogan "Sobchak against all" as she openly acknowledged that no one but Putin could win the rigged election. According to Sobchak, votes casted for her would mean Russians' general dissatisfaction with Russia's ailing economy, rampant corruption and massive crackdowns on dissent. *Russia Today* portrays her background and political convictions in the following way to show that she is inept for the position she strives to obtain:

- 1) Sobchak claims that "*there is no such thing as state interests; there are only people's interests*" and then recites a list of "*traditional values,*" from *abstract "freedom"* to an "*independent court system*" *that are supposed to* help the nation reach peace and prosperity. [1.23]
- 2) Leningrad-born *with a silver spoon in her mouth* as the daughter of a noted academic, *the utensil turned golden* in her teenage years when her father Anatoly became the first freely elected mayor of Russia's "second capital." [1.43]
- 3) The gig was lucrative (her earnings reached around \$3 million annually) and Sobchak was soon *labelled Russia's "Paris Hilton"* due to her taste for designer clothes and glamorous parties. [1.43]
- 4) Anyone who has ever worked in the media *will tell you* it's full of everyday politics. Nevertheless, Sobchak has no formal track record in governance and has never been elected to any federal, or local, institution. [1.43]
- 5) Yet her opinion of the president *is clouded* by an episode from her childhood. [1.43]

- 6) A socialite and candidate “against all,” she also *owes a debt to her chief rival*, Vladimir Putin. [1.43]
- 7) But Sobchak herself *rubbishes* this suggestion and says she genuinely wants to build a national, liberal political movement over the coming years. [1.43]

As Sobchak was largely associated with the opposition movement at that time, she frequently criticizes the actual government for widespread corruption, while *Russia Today* labels her accusations as *allegations*, suggesting that she offers no proofs, consequently, her assertions are groundless:

- 1) Sobchak tried to win Navalny’s sympathies by reminding him that she also built her political platform around *numerous allegations of corruption in the higher echelons of Russian power*. [1.18]
- 2) The response was *quick, harsh and unambiguous*. [1.18]
- 3) Sobchak also asked the Russian Supreme Court to cancel Vladimir Putin’s registration as a candidate in the 2018 election. Sobchak accused Putin and longtime ally Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of *alleged “conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely.”* [1.24]
- 4) In addition, Sobchak accused Putin and his longtime ally, Dmitry Medvedev, of *alleged “conspiracy to grab the presidential post for their group for a long period of time or indefinitely.”* [1.28]
- 5) *These were based on various unproven theories circulated by mass media*, such as the demand for explanation over Russian military servicemen’s *alleged* deaths in the Ukrainian conflict, and the *alleged* activities of Russian military contractors in Syria. Sobchak also insisted on the transition from conscription to a fully-professional army and criticized Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, *albeit not over the forces’ actual performance, but rather for blunders by his PR department*. [1.38]
- 6) Ksenia Sobchak is running for the presidency on the ticket of pro-business party Civic Platform, but her program is based mainly on *all-enveloping* criticism of the authorities, and she presents herself as a “none of the above” option for those who are disinclined to vote for any of the other seven candidates. [1.40]

Apart from negative attitudinals, journalists make use of boosters to add a hint of sharpness and energy to the image of Sobchak to show that she is insistent, confident and may act as a rival to Putin. It may be done in order to convey *Russia Today’s* attitude towards the general presumption that Sobchak’s run for the presidency was agreed on in the Kremlin so as to create a pseudo-opposition that would legitimize the election:

- 1) Sobchak **reiterated** her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current poor state of international relations, and calling the reunification of Crimea and with Russia a violation of international law. [1.24]
- 2) The candidate **reiterated** this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the reunification of Crimea with Russia a violation of international law. [1.39]
- 3) Russian presidential candidate Kseniya Sobchak, a daughter of Vladimir Putin’s friend and mentor, has **strongly** denied reports that she is the incumbent’s goddaughter, but admitted Putin was present at her baptism. [1.40]
- 4) Sobchak also **insisted** that she maintains no personal contact with Russia’s incumbent president. [1.40]
- 5) However, her childhood had **evidently** left a mark and in the early 2010s she re-invented herself as a liberal political activist. [1.43]
- 6) Despite her father’s close relationship with Putin, Ksenia **strongly** opposes the Russian president, believing he has overstayed his welcome in office. She backed liberal candidate Mikhail Prokhorov in the 2012 election and has **repeatedly** called for fresh blood in the Kremlin. She also accuses the current Russian authorities of encouraging a “*fake patriotism*” and believes Moscow **must urgently** repair its relations with the West. To that end, Sobchak opposes the re-absorption of Crimea, calling for a fresh referendum on its status, and **even** requested permission from Ukraine to visit the disputed peninsula (Kiev was not impressed). [1.43]
- 7) Let’s be blunt here: given her family’s past association with Putin, a lot of people believe Sobchak’s involvement in the election is part of a “Kremlin project” – something she **strongly** denies. [1.43]

The directive *let’s be blunt here* found in the last example directs the reader towards a desired conclusion. Nevertheless, *Russia Today* is aimed at giving negative evaluation of alternative points of views expressed by Sobchak and also fending off versions why she decided to offer her candidacy with the help of hedges:

- 1) In a letter to the court, Sobchak explained that Putin’s candidacy **should** be annulled because he has already repeatedly occupied the post, saying that he was elected president three times and also was acting president in early 2000, before he was first elected. [1.28]
- 2) Despite her father’s close relationship with Putin, Ksenia strongly opposes the Russian president, **believing** he has overstayed his welcome in office. [1.43]
- 3) She also accuses the current Russian authorities of encouraging a “*fake patriotism*” and **believes** Moscow must urgently repair its relations with the West. [1.43]
- 4) The candidate also **believes** Russia’s elections are “*fake*” by Western standards. [1.43]

- 5) Her campaign is light on specific pledges, largely due to its ethos of “*against all*,” which was Ksenia’s initial slogan, until replaced by something *slightly* more substantial. [1.43]
- 6) Let’s be blunt here: given her family’s past association with Putin, a lot of people *believe* Sobchak’s involvement in the election is part of a “Kremlin project” – something she strongly denies. [1.43]
- 7) Her critics *claim* she was inserted in the contest to split the liberals and soak up Alexey Navalny’s supporters. The latter is seen in the West as leading Russia’s protest figure and was polling at *around* 2% late last year. However, he has been barred from running for office owing to a criminal conviction (which he *claims* was politically motivated). [1.43]
- 8) Critics and cynics *have suggested* that Ksenia only got involved in the race so she *could* return to mainstream TV. [1.43]
- 9) She also *claims* “*there is no such thing as state interests; there are only people’s interests.*” [1.43]

Russia Today also lambasts Sobchak for criticizing the annexation of Crimea, as she ponders that Russian involvement was a breach of obligations to Ukraine under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that guaranteed sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states that entered into the agreement. *Russia Today* suggests that Sobchak’s statements go against public opinion suggesting that Sobchak advocates the pro-Western, anti-Kremlin, thus, according to *Russia Today*, anti-Russian perspective. Moreover, *Russia Today* justifies the fact of annexation saying that it followed a US-instigated coup in Kiev when the then president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, Putin’s ally, was ousted:

- 1) Lawmakers from a district council in Sevastopol have asked the Central Elections Commission to exclude candidate Kseniya Sobchak from the upcoming election due to her *allegation* that “*Crimea is Ukrainian.*” [1.24]
- 2) Sobchak made the *controversial* statement in October last year, and soon afterwards, the magazine editor, TV host and socialite first announced her presidential ambitions. [1.24]
- 3) Sobchak reiterated her position in a November interview with CNN, saying that she personally considered Russia responsible for the current *poor state* of international relations, and calling the reunification of Crimea and with Russia *a violation of international law*. [1.24]
- 4) The decision was prompted by events caused by *the ousting of the democratically elected president of Ukraine during a violent coup* in Kiev. [1.24]

- 5) Ksenia Sobchak's claim that she requested permission from Ukraine to visit Crimea **has caused outrage among Russian politicians**, while the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry **likened the move to schizophrenia**. [1.39]
- 6) The backlash from Russian politicians came almost immediately, **forming a mixture of indignation and bewilderment**. [1.39]
- 7) MP Andrey Kozenko **blasted Sobchak's claims as hypocrisy**. [1.39]
- 8) Kozenko also suggested that Sobchak **was simply attempting to incite conflict** through her planned trip. [1.39]
- 9) **Events took an unexpected turn when comments of bewilderment also began to arrive from Kiev**. [1.39]
- 10) **It's not the first time Sobchak has achieved notoriety** through statements about Crimea. In October last year, shortly before officially embarking on her presidential campaign, she **unambiguously** revealed her position on the subject. "From the point of international law, Crimea is Ukrainian. Period. Let us move on with our conversation," RIA Novosti quoted Sobchak as saying at a press conference. The candidate reiterated this stance in a November interview with CNN, calling the reunification of Crimea with Russia **a violation of international law**. [1.39]
- 11) On Wednesday morning, Ukrainian news agency UNIAN quoted an **unnamed** "high-placed source" in the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow as saying that they had not received any messages from Sobchak so far. [1.39]

As Sobchak was tightly linked to opposition activists and, as she put it, supports opposition leader Alexey Navalny. He was considered to be Putin's most credible challenger and was barred from running on specious legal grounds. *Russia Today* makes use of her name in order to switch public attention to the opposition in order to criticize their activities and compromise their reputation, as some pundits suggest that Sobchak is a Kremlin-back decoy used to design an air of legitimacy and split opposition. In any case, it is depicted with the help of an array of negative attitudinals and boosters (*finally, perennially, severely, has long been*) and hedges (*might, arguably*):

- 1) While it's still **a long shot**, their partnership **might** help finally unite Russia's **small, perennially fractured, pro-Western opposition**, which has **arguably been its own worst enemy: unable to rally around a single leader or find a common cause**. [1.36]
- 2) Her connections with this movement, **which hasn't received widespread support in Russia, severely** damaged Sobchak's mainstream TV career. [1.43]

- 3) In addition, the candidate has distanced herself from the alternative opposition's traditional methods, *largely based around street rallies*, saying Russia needs "evolution, not revolution." [1.43]
- 4) *This sort of division is nothing new amongst members of Russia's fringe pro-West movement, which has long been a snake pit of infighting, usually driven by clashes of ego.* [1.43]

At the end of the last article journalists employ a positive attitudinal with a booster of course to query the competitiveness of the opposition on the political arena in comparison with Putin:

- 1) This sort of division is nothing new amongst members of Russia's fringe pro-West movement, which has long been a snake pit of infighting, usually driven by clashes of ego. *This, of course, suits the establishment, which hasn't had to compete with a united liberal bloc.* [1.43]

A vast number of negative attitudinals that describe Sobchak, her activities and the opposition at large are found in quotes as well as they tend to replicate the pattern found in the body of the articles:

- 1) "Everything that you have just said are *just empty words*," Navalny said in a conversation that was broadcasted live on Youtube. "I don't want to be a part of a *cartoonish opposition that you are painting now together with Putin.*" [1.18]
- 2) The activist went on to describe all of Sobchak's latest activities as "*despicable and hypocritical*" and then, while still live on internet broadcast, he said that a few months ago Sobchak visited him at home and told him and his wife, Yulia, that she had been offered "*a tremendous sum of money*" for agreeing to participate in the presidential elections and that she did not know what to do. [1.18]
- 3) "*All of these are lies from the beginning to the end, you were used to turn even more people away from the opposition,*" Navalny replied, before calling Sobchak "*Putin's tool.*" [1.18]

Navalny, a blogger-turned-politician, being Putin's most vocal opponent, who enjoyed immense popularity with potential voters, was mentioned only cursorily in a number of articles, following the same pattern:

- 1) Navalny *suffers latest election blow* as Supreme Court body *scraps* complaint. [1.17]
- 2) Opposition activist Alexey Navalny *suffered a further blow to his hopes* of running in Russia's 2018 presidential election, after the Supreme Court Presidium dismissed a complaint seeking to override the ban on his participation. [1.17]

- 3) On Friday, the lawyer of Navalny's NGO Foundation for Countering Corruption, Ivan Zhdanov, **mocked** the ruling by tweeting that the refusal was issued in record time, while other cases spent "many months" in the Supreme Court. **He did not back up his claim with any particular examples.** [1.17]
- 4) The activist **alleged** that the law should be applied only to those handed custodial sentences, as opposed to suspended ones. [1.17]
- 5) Navalny himself was detained at an **unsanctioned** rally in a central Moscow square for violating rules on organizing public demonstrations. [1.19]
- 6) Other **unsanctioned** rallies took place in Vladivostok, Murmansk, Kaliningrad, Volgograd and elsewhere. [1.19]
- 7) Navalny has been calling on his supporters to boycott the presidential election, **claiming** that the government bars opposition candidates from running a campaign. [1.19]

Apart from negative attitudinals, Navalny's activities and ban on running for the presidency are described with the use of hedges, such as *should*, *some* and *reportedly*, in order to mitigate the importance of his anti-establishment activities:

- 1) The activist alleged that the law **should** be applied only to those handed custodial sentences, as opposed to suspended ones. In the ruling, the Constitutional Court said that the complaint **should** be refused because it did not meet the requirements of the law 'On the Russian Constitutional Court,' and added that "*legal democracy requires effective legal mechanisms capable of protecting it from abuse and criminalization of public authority, the legitimacy of which is largely based on the trust of the community.*" [1.17]
- 2) The scandal developed when Ksenia Sobchak, the former socialite and now glossy magazine editor, proposed that Aleksey Navalny, the anti-corruption blogger turned opposition activist, **should** cooperate with the new political party that she wanted to launch. [1.18]
- 3) **Some** 1,000 people took part in the protest on Tverskaya Street in the Russian capital, according to police. [1.19]
- 4) The rallies **reportedly** took place in dozens of cities, with many of them having been approved by the local authorities. [1.19]
- 5) Navalny has been barred from running for president due to a criminal conviction **he says** was politically motivated. [1.42]

Other opponents are depicted in accordance with the same negative attitudinal pattern. Zhirinovskiy, a veteran ultra-nationalist politician, the head of the Liberal Democratic Party of

Russia, who has run in every presidential election since the collapse of the Soviet Union, was characterized as follows:

- 1) *The Liberal Democrats have even more trust in Zhirinovskiy, who has taken part in a record five presidential elections but has never received more than 10 percent of the vote.* [1.15]
- 2) Grudinin's reaction came soon after two presidential candidates – Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the Liberal Democratic Party and Ksenia Sobchak, who is running as a “none-of-the-above” candidate – started **to bicker** during the debates and then **resorted to verbal assaults**. [1.22]
- 3) Zhirinovskiy is currently running for the presidency on the ticket of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). He is one of the most experienced politicians in Russia and is known for his **flamboyant** style and **fiery** statements. [1.35]
- 4) Another contender is **nationalist firebrand** Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, in his sixth shot at the presidency. As Putin didn't participate in the debates (and Grudinin eventually withdrew), **the veteran rabble-rouser** spent much of the TV sessions arguing with Sobchak. [1.36]
- 5) But if Grudinin **lacked flamboyancy** in his presentation, **this was compensated by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy – an experienced populist dwelling on nationalist sentiments** and the leader of one of Russia's oldest political parties – the LDPR. [1.38]
- 6) Zhirinovskiy commenced with the promise that the Third World War will begin really soon and then **added some drama** by stating that Russia was completely **surrounded by enemies** (such as the NATO bloc) **and traitors** (such as liberal journalists) and had undermined its defense capabilities from the inside. [1.38]
- 7) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was absolutely **wrong** to elect a female president because it would result in a “military commander in chief wearing a skirt.” [1.38]
- 8) *A rabble-rouser who is notorious for his outspoken views.* [1.44]
- 9) Instead, he's a **hardcore jingoistic nationalist, best described as Russia's version of Donald Trump**. [1.44]
- 10) *More of an entertainer than a politician with serious ambitions these days*, he's a **ubiquitous** figure on Russian television, particularly on the Sixty Minutes and Vladimir Soloviev shows, which score high ratings. [1.44]
- 11) *The LDPR leader makes the aforementioned Trump look like a tolerant and empathetic kind of guy.* [1.44]
- 12) Of course, *this rhetoric was nothing new, by his standards.* [1.44]

- 13) And during the 2008 crisis in UK-Russian relations, **he advocated dropping nuclear bombs over the Atlantic Ocean to cause floods in Britain.** [1.44]
- 14) In fairness, **his scorn isn't reserved for liberals either.** only last year he threatened to “shoot and hang” MPs from the United Russia party, should he ever come to power. [1.44]
- 15) **While many dismiss him as a clown,** Zhirinovsky is far more intelligent than he is often given credit for. [1.44]
- 16) **Zhirinovsky acts as a sponge for disgruntled Russian nationalists** and, unlike Sobchak or Grudinin, seems to have no real political goals, at this point. [1.44]
- 17) **He enjoys his celebrity and notoriety and a continued high-profile TV presence is the summit of his ambitions.** [1.44]

Zhirinovsky's negative image is enforced with the use of boosters that increase the overall negativity of the message:

- 1) ‘Epidemic’ of harassment charges **will** lead to end of humanity, claims Russian presidential hopeful. [1.35]
- 2) Zhirinovsky commenced with the promise that the Third World War **will** begin really soon and then added some drama by stating that Russia was **completely** surrounded by enemies (such as the NATO bloc) and traitors (such as liberal journalists) and had undermined its defense capabilities from the inside. [1.38]
- 3) He also launched a personal attack on Sobchak, telling the audience that it was **absolutely** wrong to elect a female president because it would result in a “military commander in chief wearing a skirt.” [1.38]
- 4) **Of course,** this rhetoric was nothing new, by his standards. [1.44]
- 5) A candidate who has never managed more than 10 percent in five presidential elections **obviously** has a lot of negatives. [1.44]

Other candidates are considered to be marginal and are mentioned in passing with the help of negative attitudinals. For instance, Grudinin, the Communist party's candidate, who runs a privatized company called Lenin State Farm, suggested that his farm gave him a role model to follow when he talked about his vision of the country. *Russia Today* mentioned him in brief, stating that he had a large sum of money in Swiss bank accounts, although he had notified the Central Election Commission that his foreign bank accounts had been closed:

- 1) Also on Monday, Russian tabloid news site Life.ru reported that it possessed documents proving that Grudinin was a client of UBS Switzerland AG bank, and that apart from various currencies the candidate kept their over 174 troy ounces (about 5.4kg) in gold bars. Life.ru estimated the price of this gold at about \$230,000. Life.ru also recalled that in his campaign materials Grudinin had emphasized that *it was important to stop the capital outflow from the country and take urgent measures to force Russian investors to bring back the money that they keep in the US and European banks, as well as in various offshore locations.* [1.29]
- 2) At the same time, Grudinin heavily uses his company in the election campaign, *claiming* that he has managed to build “*an island of socialism*” in modern Russia. [1.29]
- 3) At the same time, the KPRF was slowly becoming a *zombie* party, whose support base *was* literally *dying out*. But Grudinin, despite being a millionaire himself, has shown voters that *there may still be some life in the once-omnipresent movement*. Nevertheless, *his own reputation has been damaged by tabloid media coverage linking him to a large amount of Swiss bank accounts and undeclared wealth.* [1.36]
- 4) After receiving *flak* in Russian media over this *curious* status, Grudinin stated that “*it is not important what party certificate you hold, what is important is how you see yourself.*” [1.41]
- 5) The Communists were *in a bind* at the end of 2017, with *perennial* candidate Gennady Zyuganov, now in his 70s, polling in third behind another veteran, the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. With Zyuganov seemingly unwilling to fully relinquish control but the party *in desperate need of a fresh face*, they’ve opted for a Russian solution to a Russian problem, presumably in *a bid to at least come second*. So, rather than promoting from inside, *they’ve parachuted in a charismatic outsider.* [1.41]
- 6) Grudinin *has been around the fringes* of Russian politics for some time. [1.41]
- 7) Russian tabloid Life News *has been bashing* Grudinin for some weeks. [1.41]
- 8) At the same time, *Grudinin’s expressions of admiration for Stalin have also raised a few eyebrows*, in a country deeply divided on the Soviet leader’s legacy. [1.41]

Suraikin, a far-left candidate and a convinced Stalinist, who opts for the restoration of the Soviet Union:

- 1) Maksim Suraikin, who is running on the ticket of his own political party “Communists of Russia,” does so *in his trademark style of mimicking Soviet-era propaganda bordering on satire*. In the video Suraikin describes himself as a Stalinist and promotes his program of “10 Stalinist blows to capitalism,” with plans of major nationalization, restoration of the USSR and *openly populist promises*, like an increased minimum wage and a ban on raising the retirement age. [1.23]

- 2) The nationalists and leftists, *predictably, attempted to play on the audience's nostalgia*. [1.38]
- 3) Suraikin, *whose rise to fame has been based on provocative statements in the spirit of Soviet propaganda, was true to his style*. [1.38]
- 4) He went on to say that Russia needed to restore its global network of military bases and speculated that the current situation in the Middle East *has been deliberately constructed by Russia's enemies* in order to bring down oil prices. [1.38]

Yavlinsky, the leader of the liberal party Yabloko:

- 1) Yavlinsky's representative repeated the points that Yabloko has been defending since its foundation in the 1990s – he urged the transition to a fully-professional army, and criticized the existing military commanders and weapons producers for *allegedly* excessive advertising of every success. He also warned about the threat of Islamic extremism in Central Asia and hinted at the possible threat of Chinese expansion, *but did not make any proposals on how to counter them*. [1.38]

All the negative descriptions of the presidential candidates mentioned above serve the goal of juxtaposing Putin and others stating that the former is the only candidate that is adequate for the post. Apart from that, these descriptions may create an image of an ostensibly free and fair election to boost Putin's international credibility. Analysts say that Putin's main concern is to achieve a high turnout and a big victory margin to instill the idea of a genuine electoral contest and a clear-cut, first-round victory, that is why several negative attitudinals such as *just* and hedges as *would, around, about* are introduced when talking about the expected turnout and the distribution of votes to show that alternative candidates have little chances of winning the election:

- 1) *About* six percent said they did not plan to, and 11 percent said they had not yet decided. [1.16]
- 2) In a separate VTSIOM poll, 70 percent of the respondents said they *would* support the incumbent president. Just over seven percent said they *would* vote for Grudinin, and just under six percent said they would vote for Zhirinovskiy. Support for other candidates stands at *around* one percent or less. [1.16]
- 3) Currently at *around* 7.5 percent, which is a pretty weak showing considering Grudinin offers something different to the status quo. [1.41]
- 4) The party's support fell to *around* 11 percent through much of the '00s, before rising to 13 percent in the 2016 ballot. As a presidential candidate, he scored 8 percent in 1991 and

recorded his worst score (*almost* 3 percent) in 2000, before bouncing back with 9 percent in 2008. [1.44]

Continuing the topic of an external threat posed by the United States and the European Union mentioned previously in the section on Putin-related articles, *Russia Today* launches an attack against Western media that offer a different perspective on the way the presidential election was carried out in Russia. It is done with the help of negative attitude markers as well:

- 1) ‘They should seek treatment’: Election official *blasts* Deutsche Welle bid to influence Russian polls. [1.32]
- 2) A Central Election Commission member has described a recent set of instructions for protests at presidential polls, published on a German media website, as a *blatant* attempt to interfere with Russia’s internal affairs. [1.32]
- 3) He said the recommendations released by DW showed a *very low level of professionalism* among their authors. [1.32]
- 4) Earlier this month, the Russian upper house Commission for Protection of State Sovereignty released a report stating that, in view of the March 18 presidential elections, *foreign governments and groups had boosted funding to various Russian opposition movements and politicians*. The Russian senators noted that a typical example of a campaign favored by foreign sponsors is *the call for an elections boycott, spread by anti-corruption blogger-turned-political activist Alexey Navalny and his allies*. [1.32]
- 5) Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has told the commission that *most of the attempts to influence Russian internal politics from the outside were made by the United States*. [1.32]
- 6) ‘Dictator’ Putin wins ‘fraud-tainted’ vote: Western *media sticks to narrative* on Russian election. [1.34]
- 7) *From Soviet comparisons to accusations of authoritarianism*, mainstream coverage of Russia’s presidential election has barely changed since 2004, though mentions of the UK spy poisoning scandal did *add a fresh layer of insinuation*. [1.34]
- 8) As Putin was thanking his supporters for a landslide victory from the stage in Red Square, Western outlets *rolled out long, pre-written news stories, liberally mixing reporting and opinion*. [1.34]
- 9) Calling the election a “*hollow exercise*,” the New York Times *reached for the most predictable of parallels*. [1.34]

- 10) Rupert Murdoch's News Corp Australia *didn't even bother with such nuances*, calling Putin a straight-up "dictator," though the article was later amended to merely describe the vote as "inevitable." [1.34]
- 11) This year, *the usual analysis was also sprinkled with allegations* that a Moscow agent poisoned Sergei Skripal with the toxin "Novichok, a gruesome calling card" to provoke a British response, according to the Guardian. [1.34]
- 12) Russian TV channel Dozhd initially reported about the charges, *quoting anonymous sources*. [1.35]
- 13) Dozhd's own producer, Darya Zhuk, wrote a letter to the State Duma Ethics Committee providing details of Slutsky's *alleged* sexual harassment against her. [1.35]
- 14) Slutsky himself continues to maintain his innocence and claims that he has become a victim of a *smear* campaign ahead of the presidential election. [1.35]

In order to express an explicit judgement when commenting statements found in Western sources, authors make use of personal asides:

- 1) In its top report. CNN said that Putin "seeks tighter grip on power," while also reminding its readers that "he is already the country's longest-serving leader since the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin" (*which is not actually true – that would be Leonid Brezhnev*). CNN added that Putin is "banking on confrontation with international players this election." [1.34]
- 2) "Kremlin politics have become a bloodsport," wrote Andrew Roth, the Guardian's correspondent for Moscow. "With a shrinking economy [*also untrue*] and elites manoeuvring before a possible succession battle, the knives are out." [1.34]
- 3) To that end, Sobchak opposes the re-absorption of Crimea, calling for a fresh referendum on its status, and even requested permission from Ukraine to visit the disputed peninsula (*Kiev was not impressed*). [1.43]

To sum up, a major part of discourse under analysis elaborates rather on other presidential candidates than on Putin, as *Russia Today* is a state-funded news vehicle that supports pro-Kremlin standpoint. This is done intentionally in order to emphasize other candidates' inappropriateness in contrast with Putin in order to secure Putin's record victory in spite of expected cases of voting irregularities at polling stations. Negative attitudinals are the markers that prevail in the discourse on alternative candidates, Alexey Navalny and Western media, while all the positive ones refer to Putin, highlighting that he was going to win with a landslide that reflected unwavering popular support, according to *Russia Today*.

5.1.5 Quantitative analysis of articles on the poisoning of the Skripals

The third thematic category found in the corpus under analysis elaborates on the poisoning of a former Russian military officer and double agent for the UK's intelligence services Sergey Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury, England with a military-grade Soviet-era nerve agent. The incident occurred on 4 March 2018 and the corpus covers the span from the date of the incident till the end of the electoral campaign, 18 March 2018. Nevertheless, 20 articles were fully devoted to the coverage of a former agent's exposure to the nerve agent against 14 articles solely about Putin and 30 articles on the electoral campaign. Moreover, the issue of an attempted murder is also briefly mentioned in the articles from other categories that also adds considerable weight to the case. Besides, the amount of articles published within the period of two weeks compared to other categories suggests that, apart from being a tense international standoff, the poisoning of the Skripals makes a significant contribution to the semantic categories found in the articles on Putin and the electoral campaign.

The results of quantitative analysis of the articles from *Russia Today* on the poisoning of the Skripals and the distribution of stance and engagement markers are shown in Table 13.

	Stance markers	Engagement markers	Total
Number	189	0	189
Percentage	100%	0%	

Table 13. Stance and engagement markers in the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals (*Russia Today*)

The total prevalence of stance markers and the absence of engagement markers suggest that the primary goal of this category of articles is to convey a clear-cut authorial stance, repeating the pattern found in the two previous categories on Putin and on the campaign. Apart from that, as it was explained before, directives, questions and 2nd person reader pronouns are not expected to be found due to the specificity of the genre. The average number of stance markers found in the articles under analysis is 10.95, the number ranging from 2 to 23 in each article.

Table 14 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers for the author's voice:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions	Total
			Positive	Negative		
Number	42	57	4	86	0	189
Percentage	22.22%	30.16%	2.12%	45.5%	0%	

Table 14. Distribution of stance markers in the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals (Russia Today)

The prevalence of negative attitude markers is observed, while positive attitudinals are almost absent and do not play a constitutive role in the discourse under analysis. It may be justified by the author's aim to present their side of the story offering an array of negatively charged vocabulary units. Boosters is the second most frequent category of stance markers and their number suggests that they may be extensively used in combination with negative attitudinals to boost their impact, as it was previously found in other articles from the corpus. Although a great number of boosters are employed, a relatively big number of hedges makes it possible to conclude that journalists tend not to sound overwhelmingly assertive when charging discourse with a high level of negativity. Self-mentions are absent due to the genre of a straight news article that do not presuppose the use of the 1st person pronouns.

The examples of stance markers found in the articles are as follows:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) Referring to the very short time frame that the UK scientists managed to come to such a definitive conclusion, Nebenzia **suggested** the UK must have samples and formula of its own. [1.45]
- 2) Russia **should** provide “full and complete disclosure” of Novichok – the nerve agent **allegedly** used to poison the Skripals – to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the statement urged. [1.47]
- 3) **It appears that** the White House and the State Department are out of sync on the matter. [1.49]
- 4) Moscow is prepared to cooperate with a UK investigation into the **suspected** poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.50]

- 5) Those interested in the matter **should** turn to countries they wish to find answers from, not to “*propaganda channels*,” Lavrov added. [1.50]
- 6) Sergey Lavrov said that Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet, and noted that no facts had been presented **to suggest** any Russian involvement in the poisoning of Sergey Skripal and his daughter. [1.50]
- 7) But she did not say anything about the England team boycotting the event, which **suggests** that that is not on the agenda. [1.51]
- 8) Nebenzya questioned why the case was being “*dragged*” before the Council, ignoring procedure. He **alleged** that the real reason the British government broke protocol was that it feared that “*real experts*” in The Hague **would** not be convinced by the evidence. [1.52]
- 9) He alluded to the fact that such rapid analysis and verification by British authorities **might** itself prove damning to their claims. [1.52]
- 10) Earlier, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that, contrary to UK Prime Minister Theresa May's claims that there **could** be “*no alternative conclusion other than the Russian state was responsible*,” the toxin **could** have originated from the UK itself, Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Sweden. [1.53]
- 11) May demanded that Russia provide details of the program, saying otherwise London **would** consider the poisoning an attack directed by the Russian government. [1.54]
- 12) He added that a case of alleged use of chemical weapons **should** be handled through the proper channel, being the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – of which both Russia and Britain are members. [1.54]
- 13) The minister affirmed that Russia has nothing to do with the poisoning of Skripal and **would** assist Britain in the investigation, provided that London meets its own obligations as to how such probes are to be handled. [1.54]
- 14) The OPCW rules allow Britain in this case to send a request to Russia on the **suspected** Russian-made chemical weapon and expect a response within 10 days, Lavrov explained. [1.54]
- 15) If the response is not satisfactory, Britain **would** have to file a complaint with the organization's executive council and the conference of CWC member-states, he said. [1.54]
- 16) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Russia will “definitely” expel UK diplomats as a reciprocal measure in the standoff over ex-spy Sergei Skripal's poisoning. Moscow **would** act “soon,” he added. [1.55]
- 17) UK intelligence **may** be complicit in Skripal's poisoning – ex-FSB head. [1.56]

- 18) A former FSB director **suggested** British intelligence agencies may be complicit in the attempt on the life of former double agent Sergei Skripal, adding the incident has actually caused “enormous harm” to Russia. [1.56]
- 19) Kovalev, who led the FSB from 1996 until 1998, said he **believes** that a series of assassination attempts targeting defectors in the UK makes him think that the British “scapegoat this or that traitor after having utilized him to the maximum extent, and then say the Russians did it.” [1.56]
- 20) Kovalev dismissed the claim, saying the nerve agents **could** have been stored in any post-Soviet country, including Ukraine. [1.56]
- 21) His assessment has been echoed by another former security official who **suggested** the nerve agent allegedly used in the attempt on Skripal’s life was produced in the UK. [1.56]
- 22) Boris Johnson: **Likely** ‘Putin’s decision’ to order use of nerve agent in UK. [1.58]
- 23) British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said it is overwhelmingly **likely** it was Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decision to direct the nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter. [1.58]
- 24) Lavrov also iterated that Russia “has stopped paying attention” to allegations against them, **suggesting** it is a violation of international law that May is now refusing to work with Russia. [1.58]
- 25) The UK **believes** that Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were exposed to a nerve agent. [1.59]
- 26) While Rudd insisted that the investigators “need to be given the space and time” so that they can be “absolutely clear” when assigning blame for the attack, British officials continue to insinuate that a foreign power – **presumably** Russia – was involved. Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister, Boris Johnson vowed to respond “robustly” if evidence emerges of Russian involvement in the incident, **seemingly** disregarding that the former spy with a tainted reputation **could** have made enemies since settling in Britain in 2010. [1.59]
- 27) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet and noted that no facts had been presented **to suggest** any Russian involvement in this latest case. [1.59]
- 28) While details around the case or what the “unknown substance” was that **may** have caused their illness have not yet been released, many were quick **to suggest** the Russian government was involved. [1.60]
- 29) Even though no link has been confirmed, the newspaper sought comment on whether there **would** be “any meaningful action from Britain to Russia.” [1.60]
- 30) The newspaper also claimed the British government **should** be compelled to do something about “the UK’s reputation as a soft playground for Russian criminals.” [1.60]

- 31) “*We don’t do fantasy politics. Once the elements are proven, then the time will come for decisions to be made,*” the spokesperson told a press conference shortly after British Prime Minister Theresa May announced she **would** be expelling 23 Russian diplomats over the poisoning. [1.61]
- 32) Two people have been treated for “*suspected exposure to an unknown substance*” in the city of Salisbury, England, according to police. One of them is **reportedly** a former Russian double agent. [1.62]
- 33) However, London **seemed** to ignore the calls. [1.63]
- 34) The case has seen many “*inconsistencies,*” and the British side **seems** to be “*confusing evidence,*” according to Ermakov. [1.63]
- 35) Haley said that if the Russians want the US government to stop criticizing them, Moscow **should** stop using chemical weapons to kill enemies, and stop supporting Assad. [1.64]
- 36) Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia **would** respond to any formal request but argued that Moscow has yet to receive any official, direct contact from London regarding the case. [1.64]

- **Boosters:**

- 1) He also cast doubt on the **assertion** from the British laboratory that the gas used was **actually** Novichok. Referring to the very short time frame that the UK scientists managed to come to such a definitive conclusion, Nebenzia suggested the UK **must** have samples and formula of its own. [1.45]
- 2) The UK meanwhile dragged the issue to the UN Security Council, where Russian envoy Vassily Nebenzya **stressed** that Moscow has “*nothing to hide.*” [1.46]
- 3) After Moscow said it **will** expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was “*increasingly looking like a rogue state*” and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. [1.46]
- 4) Lavrov said the case **must** come before the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons (OPCW), of which both Russia and the UK are members. [1.48]
- 5) The poisoning is “*a really egregious act*” and **will** “*certainly trigger a response,*” Tillerson told reporters on board an aircraft as he was returning to Washington DC from Nigeria. [1.49]
- 6) However, the Russian FM pointed out that Litvinenko’s death, also blamed on Russia, hasn’t been **fully** investigated. [1.50]

- 7) Home Secretary Amber Rudd **stressed** that the investigation **must** “*respond to evidence not rumor*”. [1.50]
- 8) He said Russia **must** explain which of the two possible explanations is the correct one. She says the ambassador **must** reply by the end of Tuesday. [1.51]
- 9) May says if Russia does not give a “*credible response*” the government **will** conclude that the attack involved “*unlawful use of force by the Russian state against the United Kingdom*.” May says if the government **does** come to that conclusion, she **will** return to the Commons to outline retaliatory proposals. [1.51]
- 10) May says the government **will** be considering whether dignitaries and ministers from the UK **will** be attending the World Cup. [1.51]
- 11) UN Security Council representative Vasily Nebenzya vehemently denied British allegations that Russia perpetrated a nerve agent attack on UK soil, while **implo**ring Council members to think critically about the incident. [1.52]
- 12) He went on to decry the “*completely irresponsible statements*” and “*threats against a permanent member of the UNSC*” made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “*highly likely*” type of proof, while **reaffirming** that Russia “*had nothing to do with this incident*.” [1.52]
- 13) Nebenzya **highlighted** that multiple NATO-member countries had previously initiated programs to develop VX-type nerve agents themselves and that developmental work on Soviet-era nerve agents stopped in 1992. [1.52]
- 14) Moscow has requested samples of the alleged nerve agent to be provided to Russia through Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) channels, but the request has been **repeatedly** rebuked by the UK. [1.53]
- 15) Russia **won't** respond to UK ultimatum until samples of alleged chemical weapon received – Lavrov. [1.54]
- 16) Moscow **will** not respond to the British request about a clandestine Soviet chemical weapon allegedly used in an ex-double agent's poisoning until a sample of the agent is provided, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.54]
- 17) May **demand**ed that Russia provide details of the program, saying otherwise London would consider the poisoning an attack directed by the Russian government. [1.54]
- 18) The minister **affirmed** that Russia has nothing to do with the poisoning of Skripal and would assist Britain in the investigation, provided that London meets its own obligations as to how such probes are to be handled. [1.54]
- 19) Moscow **will** ‘definitely’ expel British diplomats in wake of UK's reaction to Skripal case – Lavrov. [1.55]

- 20) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Russia **will** “definitely” expel UK diplomats as a reciprocal measure in the standoff over ex-spy Sergei Skripal’s poisoning. [1.55]
- 21) Theresa May earlier said the UK **will** expel 23 Russian diplomats, calling them “*undeclared intelligence officers*.” [1.55]
- 22) The Kremlin also said Moscow **will** retaliate to the move. [1.55]
- 23) A former FSB director suggested British intelligence agencies may be complicit in the attempt on the life of former double agent Sergei Skripal, adding the incident has **actually** caused “enormous harm” to Russia. [1.56]
- 24) Nikolay Kovalev, former director of Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), told RIA Novosti on Tuesday it is **mainly** the UK and its ally the US who benefit from Skripal’s poisoning. [1.56]
- 25) May said that the Russian ambassador to the UK **will** be summoned to the Foreign Office, and that he **must** outline which explanation is the 'correct one.' [1.57]
- 26) In that case, May said she **will** return to the House of Commons to outline retaliatory proposals. [1.57]
- 27) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **specifically** addressed the case of Litvinenko on Friday, noting that the UK’s finger-pointing at Moscow runs parallel to what happened in that case. [1.57]
- 28) In the case of Boris Berezovsky, Putin’s critics have **long** speculated that the billionaire was murdered by pro-Putin hitmen in 2013. [1.57]
- 29) British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said it is **overwhelmingly** likely it was Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decision to direct the nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter. [1.58]
- 30) Yesterday, Boris Johnson said the UK **will** allow for an independent international examination of the nerve agent which was used in the attack on the former double agent Sergei Skripal. [1.58]
- 31) He also announced that the UK government **will** give international experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Hague the opportunity to review Britain’s analysis of the sample. [1.58]
- 32) Russia has **repeatedly** denied any involvement in the incident. Speaking at a news briefing Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused London of making “*insane*” accusations while refusing to provide Moscow with any evidence. [1.58]
- 33) In turn, Johnson’s counterpart Sergey Lavrov confirmed to journalists that Moscow **will** respond in kind. [1.58]

- 34) Amid hysteria surrounding the mysterious poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Britain is dedicating a **significant** part of the country's anti-terrorism capacity to look for Moscow's hand in the former Russian double agent's misfortune. [1.59]
- 35) The UK government has diverted **significant** resources, with eight out of Britain's 11 anti-terrorism units currently helping to investigate the poisoning of former GRU agent Sergei Skripal, Home Secretary Amber Rudd revealed, at a time when a "severe" international terrorism threat hangs over Britain. [1.59]
- 36) While it remains unclear what **exactly** happened to Skripal, the British media continue to compare the incident with the infamous case of the former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. Litvinenko's death sparked a **major** crisis in British-Russian relations, as many public figures in the West accused the Russian government of alleged involvement. Moscow denied responsibility. [1.59]
- 37) According to the Times, Prime Minister Theresa May is a step away from naming Russia as the **chief** suspect in the alleged attempted assassination. [1.59]
- 38) Now, the paranoia in the UK in the Skripal case is reaching **massive** proportions, with a junior minister calling on London to contact its NATO allies over the incident. [1.59]
- 39) Moscow also **reiterated** that it is prepared to cooperate with a British investigation. [1.59]
- 40) BBC's Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg took the time to tweet that "As a former Russian double agent fights for his life in a UK hospital today's Russian papers quote Vladimir Putin thanking the FSB for 'uncovering 397 spies.' The Kremlin leader met senior FSB staff yesterday." Rosenberg was **quickly** admonished by Twitter users. [1.60]
- 41) Evidence before accusations: Austria asks for **full-fledged** Skripal investigation. [1.61]
- 42) The UK has so far failed to send a formal inquiry to Moscow about the case, although Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said that London **will** soon provide the OPCW with samples of the nerve agent used in the case. [1.61]
- 43) The British media rushed to compare this case with an incident involving former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. His death sparked a **major** crisis in British-Russian relations, as many public figures in the West accused the Russian government of being involved. [1.62]
- 44) Moscow has **repeatedly** stated that it is ready to cooperate with the UK to investigate the incident which left the former Russian double agent and his daughter in critical condition. [1.63]
- 45) He said that Russia **insists on** being given "all evidence regarding a terrorist attack against Russian citizens at the territory of Great Britain." [1.63]

46) For Russia to consider such allegations, the UK **must** make them via the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Moscow has **repeatedly** and **definitively** denied any involvement in the alleged attack. [1.64]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) Shortly before Tillerson endorsed the UK government, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders refused to attribute the incident, hinting that more proof is **essential** to drawing any definite conclusions. [1.49]
- 2) He was responding to a reporter's question in his campaign headquarters, as early results of Sunday's presidential election indicated his **landslide** victory. [1.53]
- 3) He admitted he didn't know the details surrounding Skripal's collapse but disregarding the **age-old** "**innocent until proven guilty**" mantra said: "[With Russia], one should start with the worst assumption and work back from that." [1.60]
- 4) It's premature to pin the blame in the Skripal poisoning case without first conducting a **proper** investigation, Austria's foreign minister has said. [1.61]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) The proposed draft, **unlike earlier statements by the UK and the US, did not assign blame for the incident**, instead, it urged "**all member states concerned to consult and cooperate**" in the investigation as prescribed by the Chemical Weapons Convention. According to Strzhizhovskiy, the UK wanted to amend the document **in a way that would have distorted its initial meaning**. [1.45]
- 2) Moscow previously rejected a 36-hour ultimatum from UK Prime Minister Theresa May to explain how **what she says** is a Soviet-engineered nerve agent called Novichok was brought into the UK to poison former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter. [1.45]
- 3) Moscow rejected the demand, saying that it was open to cooperation only if Russia was treated as an equal partner in the probe. **However, all the official requests for evidence have fallen on deaf ears**. [1.46]
- 4) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament **lashed out**, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was "**increasingly looking like a rogue state**" and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. Other **hawkish** suggestions included the expulsion of Russia's ambassador to the UK, Alexander Yakovenko, the expansion of the BBC World Service to counter "**Russian disinformation and propaganda**," and re-investigating cases of former spy deaths, dating back decades. [1.46]

- 5) UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said on Thursday that Russia “*should go away and shut up*” when asked about the possible Russian countermeasures to the sanctions. Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said that the **undiplomatic** comment meant that the British authorities are **nervous** and have “*something to hide,*” while Twitter users **blasted Williamson for being childish**. [1.46]
- 6) Authorities in the UK **claim** a Soviet-era nerve agent called Novichok was used in the attack. [1.46]
- 7) Washington, Paris and Berlin back the UK’s **claim** that Moscow was responsible for **what they called “the attack.”** [1.47]
- 8) Also on Thursday, Moscow said that it had urged the UK to hand over samples of the chemical to the OPCW and relevant Russian authorities, **but to no avail**. [1.47]
- 9) Prime Minister Theresa May **alleges** that it was either authorized by the Russian government or Moscow allowed the nerve agent to fall into the wrong hands. [1.48]
- 10) US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has thrown his support behind UK **allegations** that Russia is responsible for the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in the UK, whether directly or through negligence. [1.49]
- 11) Tillerson said that the US has “*full confidence*” in the investigation carried out by the UK authorities and in the preliminary conclusions they have reached on Russia’s **alleged** complicity in the former spy’s death. The US diplomat, however, like the UK PM before him, used the word “*appears*” when attributing the “*attempted murder*” to Russia and **stopped short of providing any new evidence to support the claims**. [1.49]
- 12) He used the opportunity to again **lash out** at Russia for what the US and its allies are pitching as Moscow’s “*destabilizing role*” in Ukraine and Syria, “*and now the UK*.” Moscow, Tillerson **alleged**, “*continues to be an irresponsible force of instability in the world, acting with open disregard for the sovereignty of other states and the life of their citizens.*” [1.49]
- 13) It appears that the White House and the State Department **are out of sync on the matter**. [1.49]
- 14) “*Right now, we are standing with our UK ally,*” she said, when pressed by a reporter on whether the White House condemnation of the incident means **it is joining the blame game**. [1.49]
- 15) Earlier, UK Prime Minister Theresa May gave Moscow until Wednesday to explain Russia’s **alleged** role in the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury. Speaking in the House of Commons, she **alleged** that the attack was either a plot by the Russian state perpetrated on British soil or a result of Russia’s negligence that allowed a military-grade toxic agent to leave a laboratory and fall into the wrong hands. May’s accusations against Russia have yet to be backed by proof, as no evidence has so far been released into the public domain. **It did not stop MPs from pinning the blame on Russia, however, berating it** as a “*rogue state*” and the incident as a “*warlike act*” that calls for a prompt response from the EU and NATO. [1.49]

- 16) Coverage of double agent's *alleged* poisoning is *hysterical propaganda* – Lavrov. [1.50]
- 17) He dismissed *rumors* of the country's involvement as “hysteria” and “propaganda.” [1.50]
- 18) Sergey Lavrov said that *Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet*, and noted that no facts had been presented to suggest any Russian involvement in the poisoning of Sergey Skripal and his daughter. [1.50]
- 19) Lavrov added that *the frenzy of finger-pointing at Russia* sought “parallels” with the case of Alexander Litvinenko. [1.50]
- 20) British police say that more than 20 people in total were injured in the *alleged* attack, which has been described by authorities as “attempted murder.” [1.50]
- 21) Home Secretary Amber Rudd stressed that the investigation must “respond to evidence not rumor”. *But British media wasted no time in blaming Russia for the incident.* [1.50]
- 22) Britain has given Moscow two days to explain the *alleged* use of a military-grade nerve agent it *claims* came from Russia to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal. [1.51]
- 23) She *alleges* the attack was either a direct act by the Russian state on Britain, or the Russian government allowed its nerve agent 'Novichok' to get into the wrong hands. [1.51]
- 24) May says the government will be considering whether dignitaries and ministers from the UK will be attending the World Cup. *But she did not say anything about the England team boycotting the event, which suggests that that is not on the agenda.* [1.51]
- 25) UN Security Council representative Vasily Nebenzya *vehemently* denied British *allegations* that Russia perpetrated a nerve agent attack on UK soil, while imploring Council members to think critically about the incident. [1.52]
- 26) Nebenzya called on his colleagues in the Security Council to invoke the spirit of Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, and think critically about the incident and about the evidence and subsequent *allegations.* [1.52]
- 27) Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed *allegations* that Russia was behind the early March poisoning of former double-agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury. [1.53]
- 28) Moscow is open to working with London to investigate the poisoning, provided the UK is willing, *which is not the case at the moment.* [1.53]
- 29) Earlier, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that, contrary to UK Prime Minister Theresa May's *claims* that there could be “no alternative conclusion other than the Russian state

was *responsible*,” the toxin could have originated from the UK itself, Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Sweden. [1.53]

- 30) On Sunday, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson doubled down on his **accusations** that Russia was complicit in the incident, **claiming** that the UK has been collecting evidence “over the past 10 years” of Moscow devising deadly nerve agents for the purpose of assassination. [1.53]
- 31) Moscow has requested samples of the **alleged** nerve agent to be provided to Russia through Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) channels, but the request has been repeatedly rebuked by the UK. [1.53]
- 32) Moscow will not respond to the British request about a clandestine Soviet chemical weapon **allegedly** used in an ex-double agent’s poisoning until a sample of the agent is provided, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.54]
- 33) He added that a case of **alleged** use of chemical weapons should be handled through the proper channel, being the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – of which both Russia and Britain are members. [1.54]
- 34) The British **theory** is that Russia was either directly responsible for the poisoning, or had lost possession of the chemical weapon that was used. London gave Moscow until Tuesday to explain what had happened. [1.54]
- 35) At a news briefing, Zakharova **lambasted** what she said were “*absolutely insane accusations made by the UK prime minister against Russia and its entire people.*” [1.55]
- 36) The Russian Embassy in London has sent four diplomatic notes to the Foreign Office calling for “*extensive dialogue,*” but received **runarounds** in response. [1.55]
- 37) “*We’ve got formal replies that made no sense,*” she added, calling London’s conduct in the Skripal case part of a **smear** campaign and “*a political show.*” [1.55]
- 38) On Monday, British Prime Minister Theresa May said the poisoning was either “*a direct act by the Russian state on Britain,*” or the Russian government had allowed the **alleged** nerve agent, ‘Novichok’, to get into the wrong hands. [1.56]
- 39) His assessment has been echoed by another former security official who suggested the nerve agent **allegedly** used in the attempt on Skripal’s life was produced in the UK. [1.56]
- 40) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov specifically addressed the case of Litvinenko on Friday, noting that the UK’s **finger-pointing** at Moscow runs parallel to what happened in that case. [1.57]
- 41) Litvinenko died in November 2006, after assassins **allegedly** slipped radioactive polonium 21 into his cup of tea at a London hotel. [1.57]

- 42) Lavrov also iterated that Russia “has stopped paying attention” to **allegations** against them, suggesting it is a violation of international law that May is now refusing to work with Russia. [1.58]
- 43) Amid **hysteria** surrounding the mysterious poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Britain is dedicating a significant part of the country’s anti-terrorism capacity **to look for Moscow’s hand in the former Russian double agent’s misfortune**. [1.59]
- 44) British police say that more than 20 people in total were injured in the **alleged** attack, which has been described by authorities as “*attempted murder*.” [1.59]
- 45) Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister, Boris Johnson vowed to respond “*robustly*” if evidence emerges of Russian involvement in the incident, seemingly disregarding that the former spy with a **tainted** reputation could have made enemies since settling in Britain in 2010. [1.59]
- 46) While it remains unclear what exactly happened to Skripal, the British media continue to compare the incident with the **infamous** case of the former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. Litvinenko’s death sparked a major crisis in British-Russian relations, as many public figures in the West accused the Russian government of **alleged** involvement. Moscow denied responsibility. [1.59]
- 47) According to the Times, Prime Minister Theresa May is a step away from naming Russia as the chief suspect in the **alleged** attempted assassination. [1.59]
- 48) Now, the **paranoia** in the UK in the Skripal case is reaching massive proportions, with a junior minister calling on London to contact its NATO allies over the incident. [1.59]
- 49) Moscow, meanwhile, has labeled the coverage of Skripal’s poisoning as **hysterical propaganda**. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said **Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet**, and noted that no facts had been presented to suggest any Russian involvement in this latest case. [1.59]
- 50) **Blame precedes evidence** as Western media **speculates freely** over ill Russian spy. [1.60]
- 51) As details emerged that a Russian ex-double agent collapsed following “exposure to an unknown substance,” **many were quick to point the finger at the Kremlin**. [1.60]
- 52) While details around the case or what the “*unknown substance*” was that may have caused their illness have not yet been released, **many were quick to suggest the Russian government was involved**. [1.60]
- 53) Speaking to the Press Association, Browder also **claimed** that Russian President Vladimir Putin has “*publicly said that he kills traitors wherever they are in the world*.” Putin has never said this, however. [1.60]

- 54) British newspapers *have also been quick to speculate* on the Russian government's involvement. The Express *splashed* the headline 'Was Sergei Skripal poisoned with polonium? Ex-spy fights for life amid fear of Kremlin hit,' while the Sun asked "Was it Putin?" and the Mirror *claimed* Skripal's case had "*chilling echoes of killing of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko.*" [1.60]
- 55) Alongside its main news story on the incident, the Guardian is running a listicle headlined 'Poisoned umbrellas and polonium: Russian-linked UK deaths,' where it *claims* "*Salisbury's former spy is not the first Russian to fall ill in Britain in mysterious circumstances.*" [1.60]
- 56) In an "analysis" piece by the Times, defense editor Deborah Haynes *claims* there is "no deterrent" to stop Putin from "*authorizing... an assassin.*" [1.60]
- 57) The newspaper also *claimed* the British government should be compelled to do something about "*the UK's reputation as a soft playground for Russian criminals.*" [1.60]
- 58) BBC's Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg took the time to tweet that "*As a former Russian double agent fights for his life in a UK hospital today's Russian papers quote Vladimir Putin thanking the FSB for 'uncovering 397 spies.' The Kremlin leader met senior FSB staff yesterday.*" Rosenberg was quickly *admonished* by Twitter users. [1.60]
- 59) *The UK has already picked Russia as a boogey man in the incident.* [1.61]
- 60) However, *unlike its British counterparts, Austria wants to have the full picture before casting blame on someone specifically.* [1.61]
- 61) Novichok is a Soviet-era nerve agent *allegedly* used in the March 4 incident. [1.61]
- 62) On Monday, Johnson *doubled down on his inflammatory rhetoric*, describing Russian denials of responsibility in the nerve agent attack as "*increasingly absurd.*" [1.61]
- 63) The British media *rushed* to compare this case with an incident involving former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. [1.62]
- 64) UK and US *fire accusations* at UNSC meeting on Salisbury spy case. [1.64]
- 65) British authorities *claim* both were poisoned with a Soviet-engineered nerve agent called Novichok. [1.64]
- 66) For Russia to consider such *allegations*, the UK must make them via the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Moscow has repeatedly and definitively denied any involvement in the *alleged* attack. [1.64]

In view of the absence of engagement markers, we proceed with the quantitative analysis of quotations where different forms of realization of interpersonality were found. The current

research takes a particular interest in the pattern found within quotations whether they differ from the patterns revealed in the body of the articles and what their conspicuous features are. Table 15 shows the distribution of stance markers within quotations:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions		Total
			Positive	Negative	1 st p. sing.	1 st p. pl.	
Number	33	78	8	72	0	16	207
Percentage	15.94%	37.68%	3.86%	34.78%	0%	7.74%	

Table 15. Distribution of stance markers in the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals (Russia Today) in quotations.

Boosters are the most frequently employed stance markers in quotations that is different from the body of the articles where negative attitude markers are predominant. It suggests that boosting is the major metadiscursive tool used in this category that implies a high level of certainty transmitted by speakers. Negative attitudinals are the second most frequent markers that ensure negative evaluation of the events in question. A relatively high number of hedges was found that prompts that there were attempts to mitigate the assertiveness. As the distribution of markers is slightly different, it is suggested that it serves a particular communicative aim that will be analyzed in the following section. The examples are as follows:

- **Hedges:**

- 1) And, although he admits he does not know whether the Russian government had knowledge of the attack, he has agreed with British investigators that Moscow is *"likely responsible."* [1.49]
- 2) The US diplomat, however, like the UK PM before him, used the word *"appears"* when attributing the *"attempted murder"* to Russia and stopped short of providing any new evidence to support the claims. [1.49]
- 3) Britain has given Moscow two days to explain the alleged use of a military-grade nerve agent it claims came from Russia to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal. PM Theresa May says it's *"highly likely"* Moscow was responsible. [1.51]
- 4) *"The government has concluded that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible,"* she said. [1.51]

- 5) He went on to decry the “*completely irresponsible statements*” and “*threats against a permanent member of the UNSC*” made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “*highly likely*” type of proof, while reaffirming that Russia “*had nothing to do with this incident.*” [1.52]
- 6) “*Abiding on presumption of innocence, I can think of a great number of countries that **would** benefit from such accusations,*” Nebenzya said, declining to name them on the UNSC floor, however. [1.52]
- 7) He described Skripal as “*pardoned*” and “*no longer a threat to Russia,*” while simultaneously being “*the perfect victim who **could** justify any unthinkable lie, any kind of untruth tarnishing Russia.*” [1.52]
- 8) “*Merely stating that there is incontrovertible proof is unacceptable. An independent analysis **would** be more appropriate.*” [1.52]
- 9) “*For the British specialists to be perfectly confident that this was a Novichok agent and not any other kind, they **would** need a control standard for proof.*” [1.52]
- 10) It is “*nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia **would** do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup,*” Putin said, touching on the subject for the first time since the incident. [1.53]
- 11) “*As soon as the rumors came up that the poisoning of Skripal involved a Russia-produced agent, which **almost** the entire English leadership has been fanning up, we sent an official request for access to this compound so that our experts could test it in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention [CWC],*” Lavrov said. [1.54]
- 12) “***It looks like** British secret services are complicit in it,*” Kovalev went on. [1.56]
- 13) “*The government has concluded that it is highly **likely** that Russia was responsible,*” she said. [1.56]
- 14) General Vladimir Mikhailov, a former high-ranking FSB officer, told RIA Novosti that if Vil Mirzayanov, a Russian chemical weapons expert who defected to the West in the early 1990s, had disclosed the formula, MI6 “***could** have synthesized the agent and use it for political purposes.*” [1.56]
- 15) “*Our quarrel is with Putin’s Kremlin, and with his decision – and we think it overwhelmingly **likely** that it was his decision – to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the UK, on the streets of Europe for the first time since the Second World War.*” [1.58]
- 16) “*It is usually the state level actors that have the capability of producing this sort of agent. However, in terms of who **might** have used it – that is a different question,*” Machon said. “*To say that if it’s a state made agent, it must be a state attack is, I think, disingenuous, at best. People **can** get their hands on this sort of thing. Gangsters and criminals **can** get their hands on this sort of thing if they’ve got the right money to pay for it.*” [1.59]

- 17) “There are lots of things that the United Kingdom **can** do. It is a powerful country with a powerful economy, powerful allies, powerful military and powerful other capabilities – and we shall look at all those.” [1.59]
- 18) He admitted he didn’t know the details surrounding Skripal’s collapse, but disregarding the age-old “innocent until proven guilty” mantra said: “[With Russia], one **should** start with the worst assumption and work back from that.” [1.60]
- 19) He added: “I **would** assume that until proven otherwise, the assumption **should** be that this man was poisoned, that he was poisoned with some kind of substance from what is known as the KGB poison factory.” [1.60]
- 20) Annie Machon, a former MI5 Intelligence Officer, responded to Browder’s claims by saying: “I think we are rather jumping the gun here.” “There are many known unknowns in this case,” she added, “and I think it is **slightly** inflammatory to start throwing around accusations particularly in the era of ‘Russiagate’ and the Trump stuff.” [1.60]
- 21) “The Russians **would** not have handed him over, this guy back to the West if they still felt he **could** have caused damage. There **seems** to be little motivation to do anything against him,” Machon told RT. “This just might be some sort of a drug incident. [1.62]
- 22) London sees the poisoning of Skripal and his daughter as “an attempted assassination attempt,” she said, adding that “the UK concluded that it was highly **likely** that Russia was responsible for the attempted murder of these two people.” [1.63]
- 23) “We are closely following the developments of the Skripal case... I am sure that the authors and the participants of this provocation will soon be punished... I **would** like to stress that Russia does not accuse anyone of anything.” [1.63]
- 24) “Logic **suggests** that there are only two possible things. Either the British authorities are not able to provide protection from such a, let’s say, terrorist attack on their soil, or they – whether directly or indirectly, I am not accusing anyone – have orchestrated an attack on a Russian citizen,” he added. [1.63]
- 25) “The United States **believes** that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent,” US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said, adding the “assassination in Salisbury is part of an alarming rise in the use of chemical weapons. [1.64]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) Putin ‘**extremely** concerned’ over UK’s ‘destructive, provocative’ stance in Skripal case – Kremlin. [1.46]

- 2) his first public reaction to the UK measures against Russia in ex-spy Sergei Skripal's poisoning, President Vladimir Putin said he was "**extremely concerned**" by the "*destructive and provocative*" stance of the UK. [1.46]
- 3) "**Extreme concern** was expressed about the destructive and provocative stance taken by the British side," the spokesman added. [1.46]
- 4) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was "**increasingly looking like a rogue state**" and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. [1.46]
- 5) "*Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,*" the minister said at a press conference. "**We will uphold international law and we don't see that our British partners have any arguments on the case,**" he added. [1.48]
- 6) Ex-spy Skripal poisoning '**clearly came from Russia**' & '**will trigger response**' – Tillerson. [1.49]
- 7) The poisoning is "**a really egregious act**" and will "**certainly trigger a response,**" Tillerson told reporters on board an aircraft as he was returning to Washington DC from Nigeria. [1.49]
- 8) Tillerson said that the US has "**full confidence**" in the investigation carried out by the UK authorities and in the preliminary conclusions they have reached on Russia's alleged complicity in the former spy's death. [1.49]
- 9) "*The use of a highly lethal nerve agent against UK citizens on UK soil is an outrage,*" Sanders said, without speculating on culpability. [1.49]
- 10) "*The response will be that Russia will remember forever. It's not serious, it's propaganda at its finest and pressing hysteria,*" said the foreign minister, who was speaking at a press conference alongside his Ethiopian counterpart, Workneh Gebeyehu. [1.50]
- 11) "*I want to remind people that Litvinenko's death was also attributed to Russia, but hasn't been investigated, because court proceedings, which were called 'public,' were in fact closed.*" [1.50]
- 12) Britain has given Moscow two days to explain the alleged use of a military-grade nerve agent it claims came from Russia to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal. PM Theresa May says it's "**highly likely**" Moscow was responsible. [1.51]
- 13) "*The government has concluded that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible,*" she said. [1.51]
- 14) "**We will not tolerate such a brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.**" [1.51]
- 15) "**We wanted to make sure everyone sees what's happening here,**" Nebenzya said. [1.52]

- 16) He went on to decry the “**completely** irresponsible statements” and “threats against a permanent member of the UNSC” made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “**highly likely**” type of proof, while reaffirming that Russia “had nothing to do with this incident.” [1.52]
- 17) “We trust they **will** provide samples of the substances for examination for a joint investigation.” [1.52]
- 18) “**Merely** stating that there is incontrovertible proof is unacceptable. An independent analysis would be more appropriate.” [1.52]
- 19) It [the substance used in the attack] **must** be compared to a control substance,” Nebenzya stated. “They have a collection and they have the formula. In other words, if the UK is so **firmly** convinced this is Novichok, they have samples and formula and are capable of formulating it themselves.” [1.52]
- 20) “It is no longer **necessary** to show the Council test tubes with white substances. It is enough to send letters with egregious accusations,” he said. [1.52]
- 21) He dismissed the theory that it was a military-grade toxic agent that was used in the poisoning, because if that were the case “people, **of course**, would have died on the spot.” [1.53]
- 22) “We have **certainly** heard the ultimatum voiced in London,” Lavrov said on Tuesday. [1.54]
- 23) Moscow will ‘**definitely**’ expel British diplomats in wake of UK’s reaction to Skripal case – Lavrov. [1.55]
- 24) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Russia will “**definitely**” expel UK diplomats as a reciprocal measure in the standoff over ex-spy Sergei Skripal’s poisoning. [1.55]
- 25) “You **do** understand that we, as polite people, **will** first deliver our response to our British counterparts,” Lavrov said, replying to a question from RIA Novosti. [1.55]
- 26) A response “**won’t** take long to see,” Dmitry Peskov, President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman, told reporters on Thursday. [1.55]
- 27) “Proposals [for retaliation] **will** be worked out by the Foreign Ministry and other agencies, but it is indeed the president who **will** make the final decision,” Peskov said. [1.55]
- 28) At a news briefing, Zakharova lambasted what she said were “**absolutely** insane accusations made by the UK prime minister against Russia and its **entire** people.” [1.55]
- 29) “We have been **entirely** in conformity with OPCW procedures ... We **will** be submitting a sample so that they can look at the Novichok [nerve agent] and make their own assessment,” Johnson told the BBC. He added that “the evidence is **overwhelming** that it is

Russia,” explaining that the “smug, sarcastic response” from Moscow somehow “indicates their **fundamental** guilt.” [1.55]

- 30) A former FSB director suggested British intelligence agencies may be complicit in the attempt on the life of former double agent Sergei Skripal, adding the incident has actually caused “**enormous** harm” to Russia. [1.56]
- 31) “[Defectors] are **fully** under surveillance ... the secret services are monitoring them, they know their whereabouts and schedules. And then you have such strange events happen in a row.” [1.56]
- 32) Kovalev, who led the FSB from 1996 until 1998, said he believes that a series of assassination attempts targeting defectors in the UK makes him think that the British “scapegoat this or that traitor after having utilized him **to the maximum extent**, and then say the Russians did it.” [1.56]
- 33) “The government has concluded that it is **highly** likely that Russia was responsible,” she said. [1.56]
- 34) “The conclusion is **obvious**: this is **another** information and political campaign, based on provocation,” said Maria Zakharova, commenting on the words of Theresa May. [1.57]
- 35) “Our quarrel is with Putin’s Kremlin, and with his decision – and we think it **overwhelmingly** likely that it was his decision – to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the UK, on the streets of Europe for the first time since the Second World War.” [1.58]
- 36) While Rudd insisted that the investigators “need to be given the space and time” so that they can be “**absolutely** clear” when assigning blame for the attack, British officials continue to insinuate that a foreign power – presumably Russia – was involved. Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister, Boris Johnson vowed to respond “**robustly**” if evidence emerges of Russian involvement in the incident, seemingly disregarding that the former spy with a tainted reputation could have made enemies since settling in Britain in 2010. [1.59]
- 37) “To say that if it’s a state made agent, it **must** be a state attack is, I think, *disingenuous, at best.*” [1.59]
- 38) Meanwhile, security minister Ben Wallace said that the culprit would feel the “**full** force” of Britain’s might. “We **will** respond with the **full** force of the United Kingdom’s resources if that is the appropriate and proportionate thing to do.” Wallace told Radio 4. [1.59]
- 39) “There are lots of things that the United Kingdom can do. It is a **powerful** country with a **powerful** economy, **powerful** allies, **powerful** military and **powerful** other capabilities – and we **shall** look at all those.” [1.59]
- 40) “France shares Britain’s assessment that there is no other plausible explanation and **reiterates** its solidarity with his ally,” the statement said. [1.61]

- 41) On Monday, the EU's Foreign Affairs Council released a statement hailing the UK's "commitment" to work closely with the OPCW, and calling on Russia to "provide **immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok program**" to the organization. [1.61]
- 42) "The fact, that they [UK officials] **categorically** reject to file an official request and deliberately and arrogantly fan anti-Russian rhetoric in the public sphere bordering on hysteria, indicates that they **clearly** understand they have no formal pretext to go down a legal road," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday. [1.61]
- 43) On Monday, Johnson doubled down on his inflammatory rhetoric, describing Russian denials of responsibility in the nerve agent attack as "**increasingly absurd.**" [1.61]
- 44) Police declared a "**major incident**" after a man and woman were reported to be in distress at a shopping center in Salisbury, in Wiltshire in southern England on Sunday. [1.62]
- 45) London sees the poisoning of Skripal and his daughter as "an attempted assassination attempt," she said, adding that "the UK concluded that it was **highly** likely that Russia was responsible for the attempted murder of these two people." [1.63]
- 46) "They **emphasized** that **certain** chemical substances which they call 'Novichok' were used in the poisoning [of the former Russian double agent]. I can say that none of these versions which we've heard stands up to any criticism," he added. [1.63]
- 47) "We are **closely** following the developments of the Skripal case... **I am sure** that the authors and the participants of this provocation **will** soon be punished... I would like to **stress** that Russia does not accuse anyone of anything." [1.63]
- 48) "We take no pleasure in **constantly** criticizing Russia," she said. "We have **full** confidence in the British investigation," French representative Francois Delattre said. "Here we have reached a new stage, namely the use of a substance that was never declared to the OPCW. France **will** never accept impunity for those who use chem weapons." [1.64]
- 49) "Allegations, not confession, are **merely** the queen of evidence of the UK," Lavrov said, adding, "we **will** uphold international law and we don't see that our British partners have any arguments on the case." [1.64]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) The UK has blocked a UN Security Council statement drafted by Russia, which called for an "**urgent and civilized**" investigation into the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury. [1.45]
- 2) "The Russia-proposed March 14 project of a short and fact-based UNSC press statement calling for an **urgent and civilized** investigation into a resonant chemical incident in Britain

in line with OPCW standards was crudely blocked by this country's representatives under a politicized pretext," Russian UN mission spokesman Fedor Strzhizhovskiy said. [1.45]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) *"The Russia-proposed March 14 project of a short and fact-based UNSC press statement calling for an urgent and civilized investigation into a resonant chemical incident in Britain in line with OPCW standards was **crudely** blocked by this country's representatives **under a politicized pretext,**"* Russian UN mission spokesman Fedor Strzhizhovskiy said. [1.45]
- 2) Putin '*extremely **concerned***' over UK's '***destructive, provocative***' stance in Skripal case – Kremlin. [1.46]
- 3) In his first public reaction to the UK measures against Russia in ex-spy Sergei Skripal's poisoning, President Vladimir Putin said he was "*extremely **concerned***" by the "***destructive and provocative***" stance of the UK. [1.46]
- 4) "*Extreme **concern** was expressed about the **destructive and provocative** stance taken by the **British side,**"* the spokesman added. [1.46]
- 5) He said the UK was more interested in waging "***propagandist war***" than finding the truth in the Skripal case. [1.46]
- 6) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was "*increasingly looking like a **rogue state***" and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. Other hawkish suggestions included the expulsion of Russia's ambassador to the UK, Alexander Yakovenko, the expansion of the BBC World Service to counter "***Russian disinformation and propaganda,***" and re-investigating cases of former spy deaths, dating back decades. [1.46]
- 7) UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said on Thursday that Russia "***should go away and shut up***" when asked about the possible Russian countermeasures to the sanctions. Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said that the undiplomatic comment meant that the British authorities are nervous and have "***something to hide,***" while Twitter users blasted Williamson for being childish. [1.46]
- 8) Britain of refusing to share any evidence in the case, while making "***insane***" accusations. [1.47]
- 9) The Russian embassy in London has sent four requests to the Foreign Office calling for "*extensive dialogue,*" but received "*formal replies **that made no sense.***" [1.47]
- 10) "***Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,***" the minister said at a press conference. [1.48]

- 11) The poisoning is "*a really **egregious act***" and will "*certainly trigger a response*," Tillerson told reporters on board an aircraft as he was returning to Washington DC from Nigeria. [1.49]
- 12) He used the opportunity to again lash out at Russia for what the US and its allies are pitching as Moscow's "***destabilizing role***" in Ukraine and Syria, "*and now the UK.*" Moscow, Tillerson alleged, "*continues to be an irresponsible force of instability in the world, acting with open disregard for the sovereignty of other states and the life of their citizens.*" [1.49]
- 13) "*The use of a highly lethal nerve agent against UK citizens on UK soil is an outrage*," Sanders said, without speculating on culpability. [1.49]
- 14) It did not stop MPs from pinning the blame on Russia, however, berating it as a "*rogue state*" and the incident as a "*warlike act*" that calls for a prompt response from the EU and NATO. [1.49]
- 15) "*We haven't heard a single fact, we only watch TV coverage, where your colleagues speak **fervently** with serious faces that if it is Russia. The response will be that Russia will remember forever. It's not serious, it's **propaganda at its finest and pressing hysteria**,*" said the foreign minister, who was speaking at a press conference alongside his Ethiopian counterpart, Workneh Gebeyehu. [1.50]
- 16) "*However, to conduct such matters, **one shouldn't run to TV screens with baseless accusations**, but turn professionally to existing channels, including law enforcement,*" he added. [1.50]
- 17) "*I want to remind people that Litvinenko's death was also attributed to Russia, but hasn't been investigated, because court proceedings, which were called 'public,' were in fact closed. They were carried out **in a very strange way**, and numerous facts, which emerged throughout investigation, haven't come into the public domain,*" the minister said. [1.50]
- 18) "*We offered our assistance and cooperation, however British justice decided that they are above this, and it was enough just to come out with a verdict which is not inclusive,*" Lavrov added, saying that many facts linked to the tragedy have been "***swept under the carpet.***" [1.50]
- 19) Those interested in the matter should turn to countries they wish to find answers from, not to "***propaganda channels***," Lavrov added. [1.50]
- 20) He dismissed rumors of the country's involvement as "***hysteria***" and "***propaganda***". [1.50]
- 21) Home Secretary Amber Rudd stressed that the investigation must "*respond to evidence not rumor.*" [1.50]
- 22) "*We will not tolerate such a **brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.***" [1.51]

- 23) He went on to decry the “*completely irresponsible statements*” and “*threats against a permanent member of the UNSC*” made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “*highly likely*” type of proof, while reaffirming that Russia “*had nothing to do with this incident.*” [1.52]
- 24) He described Skripal as “*pardoned*” and “*no longer a threat to Russia,*” while simultaneously being “*the perfect victim who could justify any unthinkable lie, any kind of untruth tarnishing Russia.*” [1.52]
- 25) “*We demand material proof of the alleged Russian nerve agent traces from this event,*” he said. [1.52]
- 26) “*It is no longer necessary to show the Council test tubes with white substances. It is enough to send letters with egregious accusations,*” he said. [1.52]
- 27) “*It’s nonsense*’ to think Russia tried to poison Skripals ahead of elections & World Cup – Putin. [1.53]
- 28) It is “*nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia would do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup,*” Putin said, touching on the subject for the first time since the incident. [1.53]
- 29) “*Concerning this tragedy that you’ve mentioned, I learned about it from the media,*” Putin told reporters. [1.53]
- 30) “*Russia doesn’t have such means, and we have destroyed all our chemical weapons under the supervision of international observers,*” he stated, adding that Russia was the first to get rid of its arsenals while other countries “*have promised [to do the same], but have not met their commitments yet, unfortunately.*” [1.53]
- 31) “*As soon as the rumors came up that the poisoning of Skripal involved a Russia-produced agent, which almost the entire English leadership has been fanning up, we sent an official request for access to this compound so that our experts could test it in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention [CWC],*” Lavrov said. [1.54]
- 32) “*The spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry has commented on our attitude to this,*” he added referring to Maria Zakharova branding of May’s appearance in Parliament as a “*circus.*” [1.54]
- 33) He added that the British accusations were “*baseless,*” and noted that the UK began issuing such statements before any information on the substance used to poison the Skripals surfaced. [1.55]
- 34) Earlier on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused London of refusing to share any evidence in Skripal’s case, while making “*insane*” accusations. [1.55]

- 35) At a news briefing, Zakharova lambasted what she said were “*absolutely insane accusations made by the UK prime minister against Russia and its entire people.*” London is reluctant to share “*any factual information on the [Skripal] case ... for instance, samples of the substance retrieved from the crime scene,*” Zakharova said. [1.55]
- 36) “*We’ve got formal replies that made no sense,*” she added, calling London’s conduct in the Skripal case part of a smear campaign and “*a political show.*” [1.55]
- 37) He added that “*the evidence is overwhelming that it is Russia,*” explaining that the “*smug, sarcastic response*” from Moscow somehow “*indicates their fundamental guilt.*” [1.55]
- 38) Kovalev, who led the FSB from 1996 until 1998, said he believes that a series of assassination attempts targeting defectors in the UK makes him think that the British “*scapegoat this or that traitor after having utilized him to the maximum extent, and then say the Russians did it.*” [1.56]
- 39) ‘*Circus*’ at the British Parliament – Russian Foreign Ministry reacts to May’s words on Skripal case. [1.57]
- 40) A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry called the hearing at the British parliament on the Skripal case a “*circus show.*” [1.57]
- 41) “*Before creating new fairy tales, let somebody in the kingdom tell us what was the result of the previous investigations into the Litvinenko, Berezovsky and Perepilichny cases,*” Zakharova suggested. [1.57]
- 42) Zakharova's comments come after May said earlier on Monday that the “*attempted murder*” of Skripal was either “*a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others.*” [1.57]
- 43) Writing in Germany’s Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper, the UK Foreign Minister said the poisoning of the former spy was part of a “*pattern of lawless behavior*” by Russia. [1.58]
- 44) Speaking at a news briefing Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused London of making “*insane*” accusations while refusing to provide Moscow with any evidence. [1.58]
- 45) The UK government has diverted significant resources, with eight out of Britain’s 11 anti-terrorism units currently helping to investigate the poisoning of former GRU agent Sergei Skripal, Home Secretary Amber Rudd revealed, at a time when a “*severe*” international terrorism threat hangs over Britain. [1.59]
- 46) “*To say that if it’s a state made agent, it must be a state attack is, I think, disingenuous, at best.*” [1.59]

- 47) “Some big questions arise, as to how do you stand up to a **clandestine and sinister attack deliberately done to play havoc in our society?**” [1.59]
- 48) BBC’s Newsnight on Monday suggestively asked a panel of “**experts**”: “Was the Russian state involved?” [1.60]
- 49) The Express splashed the headline ‘Was Sergei Skripal poisoned with polonium? Ex-spy fights for life amid fear of Kremlin hit,’ while the Sun asked “Was it Putin?” and the Mirror claimed Skripal’s case had “**chilling echoes of killing of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko.**” [1.60]
- 50) In an “**analysis**” piece by the Times, defense editor Deborah Haynes claims there is “no deterrent” to stop Putin from “**authorizing... an assassin.**” [1.60]
- 51) A Russian embassy press secretary said: “*The situation in the media space is rapidly evolving into a new round of an anti-Russian campaign in the UK. Readers are offered various speculations, the essence of which is ultimately to slander Russia.*” [1.60]
- 52) Speaking in Brussels on Monday, Karin Kneissl said that she viewed the poisoning of former double-agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, as “**abhorrent.**” [1.61]
- 53) “*The fact, that they [UK officials] categorically reject to file an official request and deliberately and arrogantly fan anti-Russian rhetoric in the public sphere bordering on hysteria, indicates that they clearly understand they have no formal pretext to go down a legal road,*” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday. [1.61]
- 54) On Monday, Johnson doubled down on his inflammatory rhetoric, describing Russian denials of responsibility in the nerve agent attack as “**increasingly absurd.**” [1.61]
- 55) The ministry’s top official called all accusations towards Russia “**groundless**” and “**hysterical.**” Ermakov said Russia has nothing to do with the poisoning of 66-year-old Skripal, noting that such a “**gamble**” is not in Moscow’s interests.[1.63]
- 56) The case has seen many “**inconsistencies,**” and the British side seems to be “**confusing evidence,**” according to Ermakov. [1.63]
- 57) “*The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent,*” US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said, adding the “**assassination in Salisbury is part of an alarming rise in the use of chemical weapons.**” [1.64]
- 58) “**Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,**” Lavrov said, adding, “*we will uphold international law and we don’t see that our British partners have any arguments on the case.*” [1.64]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural):**

- 1) “**We** will uphold international law and **we** don’t see that **our** British partners have any arguments on the case,” he added. [1.48]
- 2) “**We** offered **our** assistance and cooperation, however British justice decided that they are above this, and it was enough just to come out with a verdict which is not inclusive,” Lavrov added, saying that many facts linked to the tragedy have been “swept under the carpet.” [1.50]
- 3) “**We** haven’t heard a single fact, **we** only watch TV coverage, where your colleagues speak fervently with serious faces that if it is Russia.” [1.50]
- 4) ‘**We** have nothing to hide’: Russia’s UN envoy calls for more critical thinking in Skripal case. [1.52]
- 5) “**We** asked for samples of the substance used to assist in a joint investigation.” [1.52]
- 6) “**We** wanted to make sure everyone sees what’s happening here,” Nebenzya said. [1.52]
- 7) “**We** trust they will provide samples of the substances for examination for a joint investigation. This is not optional, this is a mandatory requirement. **We** have nothing to fear and nothing to hide.” [1.52]
- 8) “The British ultimatum isn’t worthy of **our** attention and is null and void,” he said. [1.52]
- 9) “**We** have not seen this so far, but **we** keep that on the agenda while planning **our** bilateral work,” Putin said, adding that Russia is ready “to discuss any issues and overcome any difficulties” with London. [1.53]
- 10) “Russia doesn’t have such means, and we have destroyed all **our** chemical weapons under the supervision of international observers,” he stated, adding that Russia was the first to get rid of its arsenals while other countries “have promised [to do the same], but have not met their commitments yet, unfortunately.” [1.53]
- 11) “**We** have certainly heard the ultimatum voiced in London,” Lavrov said on Tuesday. “The spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry has commented on **our** attitude to this,” he added referring to Maria Zakharova branding of May’s appearance in Parliament as a “circus.” [1.54]
- 12) “You do understand that **we**, as polite people, will first deliver **our** response to **our** British counterparts,” Lavrov said, replying to a question from RIA Novosti. [1.55]
- 13) “**We**’ve got formal replies that made no sense,” she added, calling London’s conduct in the Skripal case part of a smear campaign and “a political show.” [1.55]

- 14) *"Before creating new fairy tales, let somebody in the kingdom tell us what was the result of the previous investigations into the Litvinenko, Berezovsky and Perepilichny cases," Zakharova suggested. [1.57]*
- 15) *"Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK," Lavrov said, adding, "we will uphold international law and we don't see that our British partners have any arguments on the case." [1.64]*

Engagement markers found in quotations are several directives and questions that are attributed to politicians. They are traditionally viewed as powerful persuasive techniques used to establish a direct contact with their target audience. Their distribution is shown in Table 16:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	0	3	5	8
Percentage	0%	0%	37.5%	62.5%	

Table 16. Distribution of engagement markers in the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals (Russia Today) in quotations

▪ **Directives:**

- 1) *"Let me repeat. Russia had nothing to do with this incident." [1.52]*
- 2) *"Before creating new fairy tales, let somebody in the kingdom tell us what was the result of the previous investigations into the Litvinenko, Berezovsky and Perepilichny cases," Zakharova suggested. [1.57]*
- 3) *"Logic suggests that there are only two possible things. Either the British authorities are not able to provide protection from such a, let's say, terrorist attack on their soil, or they – whether directly or indirectly, I am not accusing anyone – have orchestrated an attack on a Russian citizen," he added. [1.63]*

▪ **Questions:**

- 1) *"Is this something that benefits Russia on the eve of Russian elections and the World Cup?" [1.52]*
- 2) *"Some big questions arise, as to how do you stand up to a clandestine and sinister attack deliberately done to play havoc in our society?" said UK Government Minister at the Ministry of Defence Tobias Ellwood, vouching a "robust response." [1.59]*
- 3) *BBC's Newsnight on Monday suggestively asked a panel of "experts": "Was the Russian state involved?" [1.60]*

- 4) The Express splashed the headline ‘Was Sergei Skripal poisoned with polonium? Ex-spy fights for life amid fear of Kremlin hit,’ while the Sun asked “*Was it Putin?*” and the Mirror claimed Skripal’s case had “*chilling echoes of killing of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko.*” [1.60]
- 5) Hugh Whitfeld, the Europe Bureau chief for Seven Network Australia, asked his followers: “*International Spy Games?*” [1.60]

To conclude, the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals constitute a third interpersonal pattern that is different from the two previous patterns that may be explained by different communicative goals pursued by journalists. Although, the pattern observed in quotations is slightly different and a possible explanation will be offered in the following section.

5.1.6 Qualitative analysis of articles on the poisoning of the Skripals

The third thematic category of the articles under analysis is comprised of 20 articles that cover the timespan of two weeks from the day of the attempted murder of Sergey and Yulia Skripal on 4 March, 2018 till the last day of the electoral campaign. The prevalence of negative attitude markers in this category makes it possible to suggest that the pattern found in the election-related articles that was aimed at negative othering is duplicated here. Although the current research takes a particular interest in the identity of the Russian president, it is our contention that British and Russian governments are the major actors in this category of articles that, in their turn, contribute to the construction of Putin’s identity.

A whole array of stance markers is used to create the images of Britain, their allies and Russia from the vantage point of *Russia Today*. It seems reasonable to start the analysis with quotations of British politicians placed in the articles, where a substantial number of hedges, such as *likely, can, should, would and believe* are used to blame Russian government for the attempted assassination of a former double spy. It is notable that the modal adverb *likely* is frequently accompanied by boosters *highly* and *overwhelmingly*, consequently, levelling the hedging effect:

- 1) And, although he admits he does not know whether the Russian government had knowledge of the attack, he has agreed with British investigators that Moscow is “*likely responsible.*” [1.49]

- 2) Britain has given Moscow two days to explain the alleged use of a military-grade nerve agent it claims came from Russia to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal. PM Theresa May says it's "**highly likely**" Moscow was responsible. [1.51]
- 3) "*The government has concluded that it is **highly likely** that Russia was responsible,*" she said. [1.51]
- 4) "*The government has concluded that it is **highly likely** that Russia was responsible,*" she said. [1.56]
- 5) "*Our quarrel is with Putin's Kremlin, and with his decision – and we think it **overwhelmingly likely** that it was his decision – to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the UK, on the streets of Europe for the first time since the Second World War.*" [1.58]
- 6) "*It is usually the state level actors that have the capability of producing this sort of agent. However, in terms of who **might** have used it – that is a different question,*" Machon said. "*To say that if it's a state made agent, it must be a state attack is, I think, disingenuous, at best. People **can** get their hands on this sort of thing. Gangsters and criminals **can** get their hands on this sort of thing if they've got the right money to pay for it.*" [1.59]
- 7) He admitted he didn't know the details surrounding Skripal's collapse, but disregarding the age-old "*innocent until proven guilty*" mantra said: "*[With Russia], one should start with the worst assumption and work back from that.*" [1.60]
- 8) He added: "*I would assume that until proven otherwise, the assumption should be that this man was poisoned, that he was poisoned with some kind of substance from what is known as the KGB poison factory.*" [1.60]
- 9) London sees the poisoning of Skripal and his daughter as "*an attempted assassination attempt,*" she said, adding that "*the UK concluded that it was **highly likely** that Russia was responsible for the attempted murder of these two people.*" [1.63]
- 10) "*The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent,*" US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said, adding the "*assassination in Salisbury is part of an alarming rise in the use of chemical weapons.*" [1.64]

There was a considerable number of hedges found outside quotations in sentences formulated by RT journalists themselves. It was observed that hedges employed by journalists do mitigate the assertiveness of statements and are never accompanied by boosters, suggesting that RT journalists' intention was to downplay the impact of accusations, denying Russian involvement into the reported matter:

- 1) Russia **should** provide “*full and complete disclosure*” of Novichok – the nerve agent **allegedly** used to poison the Skripals – to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the statement urged. [1.47]
- 2) Earlier, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that, contrary to UK Prime Minister Theresa May's claims that there **could** be “*no alternative conclusion other than the Russian state was responsible,*” the toxin **could** have originated from the UK itself, Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Sweden. [1.53]
- 3) May demanded that Russia provide details of the program, saying otherwise London **would** consider the poisoning an attack directed by the Russian government. [1.54]
- 4) If the response is not satisfactory, Britain **would** have to file a complaint with the organization’s executive council and the conference of CWC member-states, he said. [1.54]
- 5) The UK **believes** that Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were exposed to a nerve agent. [1.59]
- 6) While Rudd insisted that the investigators “*need to be given the space and time*” so that they can be “*absolutely clear*” when assigning blame for the attack, British officials continue to insinuate that a foreign power – **presumably** Russia – was involved. [1.59]
- 7) While details around the case or what the “*unknown substance*” was that **may** have caused their illness have not yet been released, many were quick **to suggest** the Russian government was involved. [1.60]
- 8) Even though no link has been confirmed, the newspaper sought comment on whether there **would** be “*any meaningful action from Britain to Russia.*” [1.60]
- 9) The newspaper also claimed the British government **should** be compelled to do something about “*the UK’s reputation as a soft playground for Russian criminals.*” [1.60]
- 10) “*We don’t do fantasy politics. Once the elements are proven, then the time will come for decisions to be made,*” the spokesperson told a press conference shortly after British Prime Minister Theresa May announced she **would** be expelling 23 Russian diplomats over the poisoning. [1.61]
- 11) Two people have been treated for “*suspected exposure to an unknown substance*” in the city of Salisbury, England, according to police. One of them is **reportedly** a former Russian double agent. [1.62]
- 12) Haley said that if the Russians want the US government to stop criticizing them, Moscow **should** stop using chemical weapons to kill enemies, and stop supporting Assad. [1.64]

For instance, the booster *overwhelmingly* employed by Boris Johnson in his speech was omitted by *Russia Today* in the headline in an attempt to play down the guilt for the attempted murder, while it appears in the body of the article:

- 1) Boris Johnson: *Likely* 'Putin's decision' to order use of nerve agent in UK. [1.58]
- 2) British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said it is *overwhelmingly likely* it was Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to direct the nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter. [1.58]

Apart from hedges, the semantic category of accusations is also represented by boosters than intensify the meaning of adjacent markers, stressing that the lethal Soviet-developed nerve agent could only be manufactured by state actors at the highest-grade state laboratories and expertise that suggests direct involvement of the Kremlin, by implication Putin:

- 1) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was "*increasingly looking like a rogue state*" and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. [1.46]
- 2) "*The use of a highly lethal nerve agent against UK citizens on UK soil is an outrage*," Sanders said, without speculating on culpability. [1.49]
- 3) "*We have been entirely in conformity with OPCW procedures ... We will be submitting a sample so that they can look at the Novichok [nerve agent] and make their own assessment*," Johnson told the BBC. He added that "*the evidence is overwhelming that it is Russia*," explaining that the "*smug, sarcastic response*" from Moscow somehow "*indicates their fundamental guilt*." [1.55]
- 4) While Rudd insisted that the investigators "*need to be given the space and time*" so that they can be "*absolutely clear*" when assigning blame for the attack, British officials continue to insinuate that a foreign power – presumably Russia – was involved. [1.59]

British government and their allies demonstrate resolution that is proved by the use of boosters of insistence within quotations, such as *clearly, certainly, really*, the modal verb *will* and others when talking about possible measures to be implemented by Britain against Russia over the attempted assassination of the Skripals. Boosters turn out to be the most frequent stance markers found within quotations unlike the body of the articles, where negative attitude markers prevail:

- 1) Ex-spy Skripal poisoning '*clearly came from Russia*' & '*will trigger response*' – Tillerson. [1.49]
- 2) The poisoning is "*a really egregious act*" and will "*certainly trigger a response*," Tillerson told reporters on board an aircraft as he was returning to Washington DC from Nigeria. [1.49]
- 3) Tillerson said that the US has "*full confidence*" in the investigation carried out by the UK authorities and in the preliminary conclusions they have reached on Russia's alleged complicity in the former spy's death. [1.49]
- 4) "*The response will be that Russia will remember forever. It's not serious, it's propaganda at its finest and pressing hysteria*," said the foreign minister, who was speaking at a press conference alongside his Ethiopian counterpart, Workneh Gebeyehu. [1.50]
- 5) "*We will not tolerate such a brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*" [1.51]
- 6) Meanwhile, security minister Ben Wallace said that the culprit would feel the "*full force*" of Britain's might. "*We will respond with the full force of the United Kingdom's resources if that is the appropriate and proportionate thing to do.*" Wallace told Radio 4. [1.59]
- 7) "*France shares Britain's assessment that there is no other plausible explanation and reiterates its solidarity with his ally*," the statement said. [1.61]
- 8) On Monday, the EU's Foreign Affairs Council released a statement hailing the UK's "*commitment*" to work closely with the OPCW, and calling on Russia to "*provide immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok program*" to the organization. [1.61]

Negative attitude markers convey British, European and American stances on the attempted murder that sparked another international diplomatic crisis after the wars in Syria and Ukraine when Russia's relations with Europe and the United States have started going downhill. Negative attitudinals are frequently accompanied by boosters that intensify the negative charge:

- 1) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was "*increasingly looking like a rogue state*" and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. Other hawkish suggestions included the expulsion of Russia's ambassador to the UK, Alexander Yakovenko, the expansion of the BBC World Service to counter "*Russian disinformation and propaganda*," and re-investigating cases of former spy deaths, dating back decades. [1.46]
- 2) UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said on Thursday that Russia "*should go away and shut up*" when asked about the possible Russian countermeasures to the sanctions. [1.46]

- 3) The poisoning is "*a really **egregious** act*" and will "*certainly trigger a response*," Tillerson told reporters on board an aircraft as he was returning to Washington DC from Nigeria. [1.49]
- 4) He used the opportunity to again lash out at Russia for what the US and its allies are pitching as Moscow's "*destabilizing role*" in Ukraine and Syria, "*and now the UK.*" Moscow, Tillerson alleged, "*continues to be an irresponsible force of instability in the world, acting with open disregard for the sovereignty of other states and the life of their citizens.*" [1.49]
- 5) "*The use of a highly lethal nerve agent against UK citizens on UK soil is an **outrage**,*" Sanders said, without speculating on culpability. [1.49]
- 6) It did not stop MPs from pinning the blame on Russia, however, berating it as a "*rogue state*" and the incident as a "*warlike act*" that calls for a prompt response from the EU and NATO. [1.49]
- 7) "*We will not tolerate such a **brazen** attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*" [1.51]
- 8) He added that "*the evidence is overwhelming that it is Russia,*" explaining that the "*smug, sarcastic response*" from Moscow somehow "*indicates their fundamental guilt.*" [1.55]
- 9) Zakharova's comments come after May said earlier on Monday that the "*attempted murder*" of Skripal was either "*a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially **catastrophically** damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others.*" [1.57]
- 10) Writing in Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper, the UK Foreign Minister said the poisoning of the former spy was part of a "*pattern of lawless behavior*" by Russia. [1.58]
- 11) The UK government has diverted significant resources, with eight out of Britain's 11 anti-terrorism units currently helping to investigate the poisoning of former GRU agent Sergei Skripal, Home Secretary Amber Rudd revealed, at a time when a "*severe*" international terrorism threat hangs over Britain. [1.59]
- 12) "*Some big questions arise, as to how do you stand up to a **clandestine and sinister attack deliberately done to play havoc in our society?***" [1.59]
- 13) The Express splashed the headline '*Was Sergei Skripal poisoned with polonium? Ex-spy fights for life amid fear of Kremlin hit,*' while the Sun asked "*Was it Putin?*" and the Mirror claimed Skripal's case had "*chilling echoes of killing of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko.*" [1.60]
- 14) Speaking in Brussels on Monday, Karin Kneissl said that she viewed the poisoning of former double-agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, as "*abhorrent.*" [1.61]
- 15) On Monday, Johnson doubled down on his inflammatory rhetoric, describing Russian denials of responsibility in the nerve agent attack as "*increasingly **absurd.***" [1.61]

- 16) *"The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom using a military-grade nerve agent,"* US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said, adding the *"assassination in Salisbury is part of an alarming rise in the use of chemical weapons."* [1.61]

All the above-mentioned markers, such as hedges, boosters and negative attitudinals, are used to continue building up the image of an external threat posed by the West ahead the presidential election that was previously observed in Putin-related articles, supposedly, with the aim to get across to RT's domestic audience that Russia is being victimized, and, therefore, a strong leader, such as Putin, is vital to offer stiff resistance.

Another major constellation of interpersonal markers is used to refer to accusations against Russia voiced by the UK. This category includes markers that are employed 1) to deny accusations that the attempted assassination was sanctioned by the Russian government; 2) to suggest that accusations against Russia are proofless; 3) to present counter-claims and accusations. As Russia's relationship with the West came to be characterized as assuming an adversarial nature, thus, this is another means employed by *Russia Today* to convey the idea that European countries and the United States pose an imminent threat to Russia and its citizens. Hedges are found within quotations and give a direct reference to the authorities who deny Russian involvement into the poisoning:

- 1) *"For the British specialists to be perfectly confident that this was a Novichok agent and not any other kind, they would need a control standard for proof."* [1.52]
- 2) It is *"nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia **would** do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup,"* Putin said, touching on the subject for the first time since the incident. [1.53]
- 3) *"As soon as the rumors came up that the poisoning of Skripal involved a Russia-produced agent, which almost the entire English leadership has been fanning up, we sent an official request for access to this compound so that our experts could test it in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention [CWC],"* Lavrov said. [1.54]

Hedges such as *assertion*, *suspected*, *to suggest* and others are also used outside quotations to deny accusations, backing up the official statements made by the Kremlin that offered various explanations who might have been behind the nerve agent poisoning:

- 1) He also cast doubt on the **assertion** from the British laboratory that the gas used was actually Novichok. [1.45]

- 2) Moscow is prepared to cooperate with a UK investigation into the **suspected** poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.50]
- 3) Sergey Lavrov said that Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet, and noted that no facts had been presented **to suggest** any Russian involvement in the poisoning of Sergey Skripal and his daughter. [1.50]
- 4) The OPC W rules allow Britain in this case to send a request to Russia on the **suspected** Russian-made chemical weapon and expect a response within 10 days, Lavrov explained. [1.54]
- 5) Kovalev dismissed the claim, saying the nerve agents **could** have been stored in any post-Soviet country, including Ukraine. [1.56]
- 6) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet, and noted that no facts had been presented **to suggest** any Russian involvement in this latest case. [1.59]

Interpersonal markers that are used to deny accusations are not that numerous in comparison to the markers used to suggest that British accusations offer no concrete proof of Russia's involvement, showing that Britain is in the habit of making wild accusations without proof, according to *Russia Today*. This is done with the help of an array of negative attitude markers, among which such words as *claim*, *allege*, *alleged*, *allegedly*, *allegations*, *theory* were found. They were characterized as negative attitudinals as Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines *claim* as “to state or assert that something is the case, typically without providing evidence or proof”, *allege* as “to claim or assert that someone has done something illegal or wrong, typically without proof”, and *theory* as “an opinion or idea that somebody believes is true but that is not proved”:

- 1) Moscow previously rejected a 36-hour ultimatum from UK Prime Minister Theresa May to explain how **what she says** is a Soviet-engineered nerve agent called Novichok was brought into the UK to poison former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter. [1.45]
- 2) Authorities in the UK **claim** a Soviet-era nerve agent called Novichok was used in the attack. [1.46]
- 3) Washington, Paris and Berlin back the UK's **claim** that Moscow was responsible for **what they called** “the attack.” [1.47]
- 4) Prime Minister Theresa May **alleges** that it was either authorized by the Russian government or Moscow allowed the nerve agent to fall into the wrong hands. [1.48]

- 5) US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has thrown his support behind UK **allegations** that Russia is responsible for the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in the UK, whether directly or through negligence. [1.49]
- 6) Tillerson said that the US has “*full confidence*” in the investigation carried out by the UK authorities and in the preliminary conclusions they have reached on Russia’s **alleged** complicity in the former spy's death. The US diplomat, however, like the UK PM before him, used the word “*appears*” when attributing the “*attempted murder*” to Russia and **stopped short of providing any new evidence to support the claims**. [1.49]
- 7) He used the opportunity to again **lash out** at Russia for what the US and its allies are pitching as Moscow's "destabilizing role" in Ukraine and Syria, “*and now the UK*.” Moscow, Tillerson **alleged**, “*continues to be an irresponsible force of instability in the world, acting with open disregard for the sovereignty of other states and the life of their citizens*.” [1.49]
- 8) Earlier, UK Prime Minister Theresa May gave Moscow until Wednesday to explain Russia’s **alleged** role in the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury. Speaking in the House of Commons, she **alleged** that the attack was either a plot by the Russian state perpetrated on British soil or a result of Russia’s negligence that allowed a military-grade toxic agent to leave a laboratory and fall into the wrong hands. May’s accusations against Russia have yet to be backed by proof, as no evidence has so far been released into the public domain. **It did not stop MPs from pinning the blame on Russia, however, berating it** as a “*rogue state*” and the incident as a “*warlike act*” that calls for a prompt response from the EU and NATO. [1.49]
- 9) Coverage of double agent’s **alleged** poisoning is **hysterical propaganda** – Lavrov. [1.50]
- 10) British police say that more than 20 people in total were injured in the **alleged** attack, which has been described by authorities as “*attempted murder*.” [1.50]
- 11) Home Secretary Amber Rudd stressed that the investigation must “*respond to evidence not rumor*”. **But British media wasted no time in blaming Russia for the incident**. [1.50]
- 12) Britain has given Moscow two days to explain the **alleged** use of a military-grade nerve agent it **claims** came from Russia to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal. [1.51]
- 13) She **alleges** the attack was either a direct act by the Russian state on Britain, or the Russian government allowed its nerve agent 'Novichok' to get into the wrong hands. [1.51]
- 14) UN Security Council representative Vasily Nebenzya **vehemently** denied British **allegations** that Russia perpetrated a nerve agent attack on UK soil, while imploring Council members to think critically about the incident. [1.52]
- 15) Nebenzya called on his colleagues in the Security Council to invoke the spirit of Arthur Conan Doyle’s famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, and think critically about the incident and about the evidence and subsequent **allegations**. [1.52]

- 16) Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed **allegations** that Russia was behind the early March poisoning of former double-agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury. [1.53]
- 17) Earlier, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that, contrary to UK Prime Minister Theresa May's **claims** that there could be “*no alternative conclusion other than the Russian state was responsible,*” the toxin could have originated from the UK itself, Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Sweden. [1.53]
- 18) On Sunday, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson doubled down on his **accusations** that Russia was complicit in the incident, **claiming** that the UK has been collecting evidence “over the past 10 years” of Moscow devising deadly nerve agents for the purpose of assassination. [1.53]
- 19) Moscow has requested samples of the **alleged** nerve agent to be provided to Russia through Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) channels, but the request has been repeatedly rebuked by the UK. [1.53]
- 20) Moscow will not respond to the British request about a clandestine Soviet chemical weapon **allegedly** used in an ex-double agent’s poisoning until a sample of the agent is provided, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.54]
- 21) He added that a case of **alleged** use of chemical weapons should be handled through the proper channel, being the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – of which both Russia and Britain are members. [1.54]
- 22) The British **theory** is that Russia was either directly responsible for the poisoning, or had lost possession of the chemical weapon that was used. London gave Moscow until Tuesday to explain what had happened. [1.54]
- 23) On Monday, British Prime Minister Theresa May said the poisoning was either “*a direct act by the Russian state on Britain,*” or the Russian government had allowed the **alleged** nerve agent, ‘Novichok’, to get into the wrong hands. [1.56]
- 24) His assessment has been echoed by another former security official who suggested the nerve agent **allegedly** used in the attempt on Skripal’s life was produced in the UK. [1.56]
- 25) Litvinenko died in November 2006, after assassins **allegedly** slipped radioactive polonium 21 into his cup of tea at a London hotel. [1.57]
- 26) Lavrov also iterated that Russia “has stopped paying attention” to **allegations** against them, suggesting it is a violation of international law that May is now refusing to work with Russia. [1.58]
- 27) British police say that more than 20 people in total were injured in the **alleged** attack, which has been described by authorities as “*attempted murder.*” [1.59]
- 28) Litvinenko’s death sparked a major crisis in British-Russian relations, as many public figures in the West accused the Russian government of **alleged** involvement. Moscow denied responsibility. [1.59]

- 29) According to the Times, Prime Minister Theresa May is a step away from naming Russia as the chief suspect in the *alleged* attempted assassination. [1.59]
- 30) While details around the case or what the “*unknown substance*” was that may have caused their illness have not yet been released, *many were quick to suggest the Russian government was involved*. [1.59]
- 31) Speaking to the Press Association, Browder also *claimed* that Russian President Vladimir Putin has “*publicly said that he kills traitors wherever they are in the world.*” Putin has never said this, however. [1.59]
- 32) Alongside its main news story on the incident, the Guardian is running a listicle headlined ‘Poisoned umbrellas and polonium: Russian-linked UK deaths,’ where it *claims* “*Salisbury’s former spy is not the first Russian to fall ill in Britain in mysterious circumstances.*” [1.60]
- 33) In an “*analysis*” piece by the Times, defense editor Deborah Haynes *claims* there is “no deterrent” to stop Putin from “*authorizing... an assassin.*” [1.60]
- 34) The newspaper also *claimed* the British government should be compelled to do something about “*the UK’s reputation as a soft playground for Russian criminals.*” [1.60]
- 35) Novichok is a Soviet-era nerve agent *allegedly* used in the March 4 incident. [1.61]
- 36) British authorities *claim* both were poisoned with a Soviet-engineered nerve agent called Novichok. [1.64]
- 37) For Russia to consider such *allegations*, the UK must make them via the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Moscow has repeatedly and definitively denied any involvement in the *alleged* attack. [1.64]

Although these expressions are journalistic clichés, when they are employed by Russian journalists, they acquire a negative charge, suggesting that accusations are baseless. Meanwhile, when the same expressions are employed by their British counterparts, they function as hedges, as politicians and journalists do not want to sound too assertive when voicing their suppositions.

Counter-accusations present the third set of markers within the semantic category of accusations against Russia. In order to convince a global audience of innocence, Russian officials offered various inconsistent explanations that ranged from claims that Britain itself was behind the assassination bid to insinuations that other countries may be to blame. Counter-accusations are expressed with the help of hedges, such as *suggest, allege, believe*, modal verbs *would, might, could* and *may*.

- 1) He also cast doubt on the **assertion** from the British laboratory that the gas used was actually Novichok. Referring to the very short time frame that the UK scientists managed to come to such a definitive conclusion, Nebenzia **suggested** the UK must have samples and formula of its own. [1.45]
- 2) Nebenzia questioned why the case was being “*dragged*” before the Council, ignoring procedure. He **alleged** that the real reason the British government broke protocol was that it feared that “*real experts*” in The Hague **would** not be convinced by the evidence. [1.52]
- 3) He alluded to the fact that such rapid analysis and verification by British authorities **might** itself prove damning to their claims. [1.52]
- 4) UK intelligence **may** be complicit in Skripal’s poisoning – ex-FSB head. [1.56]
- 5) A former FSB director **suggested** British intelligence agencies may be complicit in the attempt on the life of former double agent Sergei Skripal, adding the incident has actually caused “enormous harm” to Russia. [1.56]
- 6) Kovalev, who led the FSB from 1996 until 1998, said he **believes** that a series of assassination attempts targeting defectors in the UK makes him think that the British “*scapegoat this or that traitor after having utilized him to the maximum extent, and then say the Russians did it.*” [1.56]
- 7) Kovalev dismissed the claim, saying the nerve agents **could** have been stored in any post-Soviet country, including Ukraine. [1.56]
- 8) His assessment has been echoed by another former security official who **suggested** the nerve agent allegedly used in the attempt on Skripal’s life was produced in the UK. [1.56]
- 9) Lavrov also iterated that Russia “has stopped paying attention” to allegations against them, **suggesting** it is a violation of international law that May is now refusing to work with Russia. [1.58]

Apart from hedges, boosters are used to introduce counter-accusations as well:

- 1) He also cast doubt on the assertion from the British laboratory that the gas used was **actually** Novichok. Referring to the very short time frame that the UK scientists managed to come to such a definitive conclusion, Nebenzia suggested the UK **must** have samples and formula of its own. [1.45]
- 2) Moscow has requested samples of the alleged nerve agent to be provided to Russia through Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) channels, but the request has been **repeatedly** rebuked by the UK. [1.53]
- 3) A former FSB director suggested British intelligence agencies may be complicit in the attempt on the life of former double agent Sergei Skripal, adding the incident has **actually** caused “enormous harm” to Russia. [1.56]

- 4) Nikolay Kovalev, former director of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), told RIA Novosti on Tuesday it is **mainly** the UK and its ally the US who benefit from Skripal's poisoning. [1.56]
- 5) Amid hysteria surrounding the mysterious poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Britain is dedicating a **significant** part of the country's anti-terrorism capacity to look for Moscow's hand in the former Russian double agent's misfortune. [1.59]
- 6) The UK government has diverted **significant** resources, with eight out of Britain's 11 anti-terrorism units currently helping to investigate the poisoning of former GRU agent Sergei Skripal, Home Secretary Amber Rudd revealed, at a time when a "severe" international terrorism threat hangs over Britain. [1.59]
- 7) While it remains unclear what **exactly** happened to Skripal, the British media continue to compare the incident with the infamous case of the former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. Litvinenko's death sparked a **major** crisis in British-Russian relations, as many public figures in the West accused the Russian government of alleged involvement. Moscow denied responsibility. [1.59]

Several hedges used to present counter-accusations were found within quotes that refer to the officials that voiced them:

- 1) The US diplomat, however, like the UK PM before him, used the word "**appears**" when attributing the "*attempted murder*" to Russia and stopped short of providing any new evidence to support the claims. [1.49]
- 2) "*Abiding on presumption of innocence, I can think of a great number of countries that **would** benefit from such accusations,*" Nebenzya said, declining to name them on the UNSC floor, however. [1.52]
- 3) He described Skripal as "*pardoned*" and "*no longer a threat to Russia,*" while simultaneously being "*the perfect victim who **could** justify any unthinkable lie, any kind of untruth tarnishing Russia.*" [1.52]
- 4) "***It looks like*** British secret services are complicit in it," Kovalev went on. [1.56]
- 5) General Vladimir Mikhailov, a former high-ranking FSB officer, told RIA Novosti that if Vil Mirzayanov, a Russian chemical weapons expert who defected to the West in the early 1990s, had disclosed the formula, MI6 "***could*** have synthesized the agent and use it for political purposes." [1.56]
- 6) "*There are lots of things that the United Kingdom **can** do. It is a powerful country with a powerful economy, powerful allies, powerful military and powerful other capabilities – and we shall look at all those.*" [1.59]
- 7) "*Logic **suggests** that there are only two possible things. Either the British authorities are not able to provide protection from such a, let's say, terrorist attack on their soil, or they – whether directly or indirectly, I am not accusing anyone – have orchestrated an attack on a Russian citizen,*" he added. [1.63]

Boosters within quotes:

- 1) “*Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,*” the minister said at a press conference. [1.48]
- 2) “*I want to remind people that Litvinenko’s death was also attributed to Russia, but hasn’t been investigated, because court proceedings, which were called ‘public,’ were **in fact** closed.*” [1.50]

Accusations expressed primarily with hedges and boosters are extensively backed up by negative attitude markers that contribute to the overall negative message of the information war waged by Russia and shows all the possible linguistic tools that the Kremlin-controlled media machinery has at its disposal:

- 1) “*The Russia-proposed March 14 project of a short and fact-based UNSC press statement calling for an urgent and civilized investigation into a resonant chemical incident in Britain in line with OPCW standards was **crudely** blocked by this country’s representatives **under a politicized pretext,***” Russian UN mission spokesman Fedor Strzhizhovskiy said. [1.45]
- 2) Putin ‘*extremely **concerned***’ over UK’s ‘***destructive, provocative***’ stance in Skripal case – Kremlin. [1.46]
- 3) In his first public reaction to the UK measures against Russia in ex-spy Sergei Skripal’s poisoning, President Vladimir Putin said he was “*extremely **concerned***” by the “***destructive and provocative***” stance of the UK. [1.46]
- 4) “*Extreme concern was expressed about the **destructive and provocative stance taken by the British side,***” the spokesman added. [1.46]
- 5) He said the UK was more interested in waging “*propagandist war*” than finding the truth in the Skripal case. [1.46]
- 6) Britain of refusing to share any evidence in the case, while making “***insane***” accusations. [1.47]
- 7) The Russian embassy in London has sent four requests to the Foreign Office calling for “*extensive dialogue,*” but received “*formal replies **that made no sense.***” [1.47]
- 8) “*Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,*” the minister said at a press conference. [1.48]
- 9) “*We haven’t heard a single fact, we only watch TV coverage, where your colleagues speak **fervently** with serious faces that if it is Russia. The response will be that Russia will remember forever. It’s not serious, it’s **propaganda at its finest and pressing hysteria,***” said the foreign minister, who was speaking at a press conference alongside his Ethiopian counterpart, Workneh Gebeyehu. [1.50]

- 10) *“However, to conduct such matters, **one shouldn’t run to TV screens with baseless accusations**, but turn professionally to existing channels, including law enforcement,”* he added. [1.50]
- 11) *“I want to remind people that Litvinenko’s death was also attributed to Russia, but hasn’t been investigated, because court proceedings, which were called ‘public,’ were in fact closed. They were carried out **in a very strange way**, and numerous facts, which emerged throughout investigation, haven’t come into the public domain,”* the minister said. [1.50]
- 12) *“We offered our assistance and cooperation, however British justice decided that they are above this, and it was enough just to come out with a verdict which is not inclusive,”* Lavrov added, saying that many facts linked to the tragedy have been *“**swept under the carpet.**”* [1.50]
- 13) Those interested in the matter should turn to countries they wish to find answers from, not to *“**propaganda channels**”*, Lavrov added. [1.50]
- 14) He dismissed rumors of the country’s involvement as *“**hysteria**”* and *“**propaganda**”*. [1.50]
- 15) He went on to decry the *“**completely irresponsible statements**”* and *“**threats against a permanent member of the UNSC**”* made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond *“**highly likely**”* type of proof, while reaffirming that Russia *“**had nothing to do with this incident.**”* [1.52]
- 16) He described Skripal as *“**pardoned**”* and *“**no longer a threat to Russia,**”* while simultaneously being *“**the perfect victim who could justify any unthinkable lie, any kind of untruth tarnishing Russia.**”* [1.52]
- 17) *“It is no longer necessary to show the Council test tubes with white substances. It is enough to send letters with egregious accusations,”* he said. [1.52]
- 18) *‘**It’s nonsense**’* to think Russia tried to poison Skripals ahead of elections & World Cup – Putin. [1.53]
- 19) It is *“**nonsense and absurd to claim that Russia would do anything like that before the elections and the World Cup,**”* Putin said, touching on the subject for the first time since the incident. [1.53]
- 20) *“Concerning this **tragedy** that you’ve mentioned, I learned about it from the media,”* Putin told reporters. [1.53]
- 21) *“Russia doesn’t have such means, and we have destroyed all our chemical weapons under the supervision of international observers,”* he stated, adding that Russia was the first to get rid of its arsenals while other countries *“**have promised [to do the same], but have not met their commitments yet, unfortunately.**”* [1.53]
- 22) *“As soon as the rumors came up that the poisoning of Skripal involved a Russia-produced agent, which almost the entire English leadership has been fanning up, we sent an official*

request for access to this compound so that our experts could test it in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention [CWC],” Lavrov said. [1.54]

- 23) *“The spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry has commented on our attitude to this,” he added referring to Maria Zakharova branding of May’s appearance in Parliament as a “**circus.**” [1.54]*
- 24) *“We’ve got formal replies **that made no sense,**” she added, calling London’s conduct in the Skripal case part of a smear campaign and “**a political show.**” [1.55]*
- 25) *Kovalev, who led the FSB from 1996 until 1998, said he believes that a series of assassination attempts targeting defectors in the UK makes him think that the British “**scapegoat this or that traitor after having utilized him to the maximum extent, and then say the Russians did it.**” [1.56]*
- 26) *‘**Circus**’ at the British Parliament – Russian Foreign Ministry reacts to May’s words on Skripal case. [1.57]*
- 27) *A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry called the hearing at the British parliament on the Skripal case a “**circus show.**” [1.57]*
- 28) *“Before creating new **fairy tales,** let somebody in the kingdom tell us what was the result of the previous investigations into the Litvinenko, Berezovsky and Perepilichny cases,” Zakharova suggested. [1.57]*
- 29) *Speaking at a news briefing Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused London of making “**insane**” accusations while refusing to provide Moscow with any evidence. [1.58]*
- 30) *A Russian embassy press secretary said: “The situation in the media space is rapidly evolving into a new round of an anti-Russian campaign in the UK. Readers are offered various speculations, the essence of which is ultimately to slander Russia.” [1.60]*
- 31) *“The fact, that they [UK officials] categorically reject to file an official request and **deliberately and arrogantly fan anti-Russian rhetoric in the public sphere bordering on hysteria,** indicates that they clearly understand they have no formal pretext to go down a legal road,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday. [1.61]*
- 32) *The ministry’s top official called all accusations towards Russia “**groundless**” and “**hysterical.**” Ermakov said Russia has nothing to do with the poisoning of 66-year-old Skripal, noting that such a “**gamble**” is not in Moscow’s interests. [1.63]*
- 33) *The case has seen many “**inconsistencies,**” and the British side seems to be “**confusing evidence,**” according to Ermakov. [1.63]*

- 34) *“Allegations, not confession, are merely the queen of evidence of the UK,”* Lavrov said, adding, *“we will uphold international law and we don’t see that our British partners have any arguments on the case.”* [1.64]

Negative attitude markers found outside quotes follow the same idea as expressed by the Kremlin in quotations above:

- 1) Moscow rejected the demand, saying that it was open to cooperation only if Russia was treated as an equal partner in the probe. *However, all the official requests for evidence have fallen on deaf ears.* [1.46]
- 2) After Moscow said it will expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament *lashed out*, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was *“increasingly looking like a rogue state”* and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. Other *hawkish* suggestions included the expulsion of Russia’s ambassador to the UK, Alexander Yakovenko, the expansion of the BBC World Service to counter *“Russian disinformation and propaganda,”* and re-investigating cases of former spy deaths, dating back decades. [1.46]
- 3) UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said on Thursday that Russia *“should go away and shut up”* when asked about the possible Russian countermeasures to the sanctions. Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said that the *undiplomatic* comment meant that the British authorities are *nervous* and have *“something to hide,”* while Twitter users *blasted Williamson for being childish.* [1.46]
- 4) Also on Thursday, Moscow said that it had urged the UK to hand over samples of the chemical to the OPCW and relevant Russian authorities, *but to no avail.* [1.47]
- 5) It appears that the White House and the State Department *are out of sync on the matter.* [1.49]
- 6) *“Right now, we are standing with our UK ally,”* she said, when pressed by a reporter on whether the White House condemnation of the incident means *it is joining the blame game.* [1.49]
- 7) He dismissed *rumors* of the country’s involvement as “hysteria” and “propaganda.” [1.50]
- 8) Sergey Lavrov said that *Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet,* and noted that no facts had been presented to suggest any Russian involvement in the poisoning of Sergey Skripal and his daughter. [1.50]
- 9) Lavrov added that *the frenzy of finger-pointing at Russia* sought “parallels” with the case of Alexander Litvinenko. [1.50]
- 10) At a news briefing, Zakharova *lambasted* what she said were *“absolutely insane accusations made by the UK prime minister against Russia and its entire people.”* [1.55]
- 11) The Russian Embassy in London has sent four diplomatic notes to the Foreign Office calling for *“extensive dialogue,”* but received *runarounds* in response. [1.55]

- 12) “We’ve got formal replies that made no sense,” she added, calling London’s conduct in the Skripal case part of a **smear** campaign and “a *political show*.” [1.55]
- 13) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov specifically addressed the case of Litvinenko on Friday, noting that the UK’s **finger-pointing** at Moscow runs parallel to what happened in that case. [1.57]
- 14) Amid **hysteria** surrounding the mysterious poisoning of Sergei Skripal, Britain is dedicating a significant part of the country’s anti-terrorism capacity **to look for Moscow’s hand in the former Russian double agent’s misfortune**. [1.59]
- 15) Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister, Boris Johnson vowed to respond “**robustly**” if evidence emerges of Russian involvement in the incident, seemingly disregarding that the former spy with a **tainted** reputation could have made enemies since settling in Britain in 2010. [1.59]
- 16) While it remains unclear what exactly happened to Skripal, the British media continue to compare the incident with the **infamous** case of the former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. [1.59]
- 17) Now, the **paranoia** in the UK in the Skripal case is reaching massive proportions, with a junior minister calling on London to contact its NATO allies over the incident. [1.59]
- 18) Moscow, meanwhile, has labeled the coverage of Skripal’s poisoning as **hysterical propaganda**. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said **Russia is blamed for everything that goes wrong on the planet**, and noted that no facts had been presented to suggest any Russian involvement in this latest case. [1.59]
- 19) **Blame precedes evidence** as Western media **speculates freely** over ill Russian spy. [1.60]
- 20) As details emerged that a Russian ex-double agent collapsed following “exposure to an unknown substance,” **many were quick to point the finger at the Kremlin**. [1.60]
- 21) British newspapers **have also been quick to speculate** on the Russian government’s involvement. The Express **splashed** the headline ‘Was Sergei Skripal poisoned with polonium? Ex-spy fights for life amid fear of Kremlin hit,’ while the Sun asked “Was it Putin?” and the Mirror **claimed** Skripal’s case had “*chilling echoes of killing of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko*.” [1.60]
- 22) BBC’s Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg took the time to tweet that “As a former Russian double agent fights for his life in a UK hospital today’s Russian papers quote Vladimir Putin thanking the FSB for ‘uncovering 397 spies.’ The Kremlin leader met senior FSB staff yesterday.” Rosenberg was quickly **admonished** by Twitter users. [1.60]
- 23) **The UK has already picked Russia as a boogey man in the incident**. [1.61]
- 24) However, **unlike its British counterparts, Austria wants to have the full picture before casting blame on someone specifically**. [1.61]

- 25) On Monday, Johnson **doubled down on his inflammatory rhetoric**, describing Russian denials of responsibility in the nerve agent attack as *"increasingly absurd."* [1.61]
- 26) The British media **rushed** to compare this case with an incident involving former Russian security officer Alexander Litvinenko, who died from radioactive poisoning in 2006. [1.62]
- 27) UK and US **fire accusations** at UNSC meeting on Salisbury spy case. [1.64]

Besides, apart from negatively charged statements, some interpersonal markers are used to add a sarcastic tone to the statement, for instance, hedges:

- 1) ***It appears that*** the White House and the State Department are out of sync on the matter. [1.49]
- 2) But she did not say anything about the England team boycotting the event, which **suggests** that that is not on the agenda. [1.51]
- 3) Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister, Boris Johnson vowed to respond **"robustly"** if evidence emerges of Russian involvement in the incident, **seemingly** disregarding that the former spy with a tainted reputation could have made enemies since settling in Britain in 2010. [1.59]
- 4) However, London **seemed** to ignore the calls. [1.63]
- 5) The case has seen many **"inconsistencies,"** and the British side **seems** to be **"confusing evidence,"** according to Ermakov. [1.63]

Negative attitudinals convey a sarcastic tone as well:

- 1) May says the government will be considering whether dignitaries and ministers from the UK will be attending the World Cup. ***But she did not say anything about the England team boycotting the event, which suggests that that is not on the agenda.*** [1.51]
- 2) Moscow is open to working with London to investigate the poisoning, provided the UK is willing, ***which is not the case at the moment.*** [1.53]

While expressing an explicitly negative attitude towards accusations adding a sarcastic tone, the impact is being enforced with an extensive use of boosters both inside and outside quotations that convey the idea of determination and insistence that was previously found in Putin-related articles. It is a means to show that in spite of the threat posed by the West, Russia demonstrates confidence and the ability to offer resistance:

- 1) ***"We will uphold international law and we don't see that our British partners have any arguments on the case,"*** he added. [1.48]

- 2) “We wanted **to make sure** everyone sees what’s happening here,”Nebenzya said. [1.52]
- 3) He went on to decry the “**completely irresponsible statements**”and “*threats against a permanent member of the UNSC*”made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “**highly likely**”type of proof, while reaffirming that Russia “*had nothing to do with this incident.*” [1.52]
- 4) “We trust they **will** provide samples of the substances for examination for a joint investigation.” [1.52]
- 5) “**Merely** stating that there is incontrovertible proof is unacceptable. An independent analysis would be more appropriate.” [1.52]
- 6) *It [the substance used in the attack] must be compared to a control substance,*”Nebenzya stated. “*They have a collection and they have the formula. In other words, if the UK is so firmly convinced this is Novichok, they have samples and formula and are capable of formulating it themselves.*” [1.52]
- 7) Moscow will ‘**definitely**’ expel British diplomats in wake of UK’s reaction to Skripal case – Lavrov. [1.55]
- 8) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Russia will “**definitely**” expel UK diplomats as a reciprocal measure in the standoff over ex-spy Sergei Skripal’s poisoning. [1.55]
- 9) “You **do** understand that we, as polite people, **will** first deliver our response to our British counterparts,” Lavrov said, replying to a question from RIA Novosti. [1.55]
- 10) A response “**won’t** take long to see,”Dmitry Peskov, President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman, told reporters on Thursday. [1.55]
- 11) “Proposals [for retaliation] **will** be worked out by the Foreign Ministry and other agencies, but it is indeed the president who **will** make the final decision,” Peskov said. [1.55]
- 12) At a news briefing, Zakharova lambasted what she said were “**absolutely insane accusations made by the UK prime minister against Russia and its entire people.**” [1.55]
- 13) “Allegations, not confession, are **merely** the queen of evidence of the UK,”Lavrov said, adding, “we **will** uphold international law and we don’t see that our British partners have any arguments on the case.” [1.64]

An interesting example of a boosting effect of the word *powerful* can be observed in the sentence below. When repeated four times within the same phrase, it boosts the message that Britain does present a serious threat to national security together with the modal booster *shall*:

- 1) “There are lots of things that the United Kingdom can do. It is a **powerful** country with a **powerful** economy, **powerful** allies, **powerful** military and **powerful** other capabilities – and we **shall** look at all those.” [1.59]

Boosters are also frequently found outside quotations and they perform the same function as the examples above:

- 1) The UK meanwhile dragged the issue to the UN Security Council, where Russian envoy Vassily Nebenzya **stressed** that Moscow has “*nothing to hide.*” [1.46]
- 2) After Moscow said it **will** expel UK diplomats as a mirror response, the British Parliament lashed out, with Labor MP Chris Leslie saying that Russia was “*increasingly looking like a rogue state*” and calling for its rights in the UN Security Council to be limited. [1.46]
- 3) Lavrov said the case **must** come before the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons (OPCW), of which both Russia and the UK are members. [1.48]
- 4) UN Security Council representative Vasily Nebenzya vehemently denied British allegations that Russia perpetrated a nerve agent attack on UK soil, while **imploring** Council members to think critically about the incident. [1.52]
- 5) He went on to decry the “*completely irresponsible statements*” and “*threats against a permanent member of the UNSC*” made by British politicians calling the international community to look beyond “*highly likely*” type of proof, while **reaffirming** that Russia “*had nothing to do with this incident.*” [1.52]
- 6) Nebenzya **highlighted** that multiple NATO-member countries had previously initiated programs to develop VX-type nerve agents themselves and that developmental work on Soviet-era nerve agents stopped in 1992. [1.52]
- 7) Russia **won’t** respond to UK ultimatum until samples of alleged chemical weapon received – Lavrov. [1.54]
- 8) Moscow **will** not respond to the British request about a clandestine Soviet chemical weapon allegedly used in an ex-double agent’s poisoning until a sample of the agent is provided, the Russian foreign minister said. [1.54]
- 9) The minister **affirmed** that Russia has nothing to do with the poisoning of Skripal and would assist Britain in the investigation, provided that London meets its own obligations as to how such probes are to be handled. [1.54]
- 10) Moscow **will** ‘definitely’ expel British diplomats in wake of UK’s reaction to Skripal case – Lavrov. [1.55]
- 11) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Russia **will** “definitely” expel UK diplomats as a reciprocal measure in the standoff over ex-spy Sergei Skripal’s poisoning. [1.55]

- 12) The Kremlin also said Moscow **will** retaliate to the move. [1.55]
- 13) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **specifically** addressed the case of Litvinenko on Friday, noting that the UK's finger-pointing at Moscow runs parallel to what happened in that case. [1.57]
- 14) Russia has **repeatedly** denied any involvement in the incident. Speaking at a news briefing Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused London of making "*insane*" accusations while refusing to provide Moscow with any evidence. [1.58]
- 15) In turn, Johnson's counterpart Sergei Lavrov confirmed to journalists that Moscow **will** respond in kind. [1.58]
- 16) Moscow also **reiterated** that it is prepared to cooperate with a British investigation. [1.59]
- 17) Moscow has **repeatedly** stated that it is ready to cooperate with the UK to investigate the incident which left the former Russian double agent and his daughter in critical condition. [1.63]
- 18) He said that Russia **insists on** being given "*all evidence regarding a terrorist attack against Russian citizens at the territory of Great Britain.*" [1.63]
- 19) Moscow has **repeatedly** and **definitively** denied any involvement in the alleged attack. [1.64]

To sum up, the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals duplicate particular semantic categories that were previously observed in Putin-related articles (see Diagram 3), such as accusations and anti-Russian propaganda, an external threat, power and insistence displayed by Russia and, consequently, Putin, that lead to the main idea that the country needs serious protection from the threat, thus, an experienced and decisive leader is needed and the right choice can be made as the election day is approaching. Negative attitude markers prevail as well as in the election-related articles where negative othering is the predominant technique used to emphasize Putin's qualities.

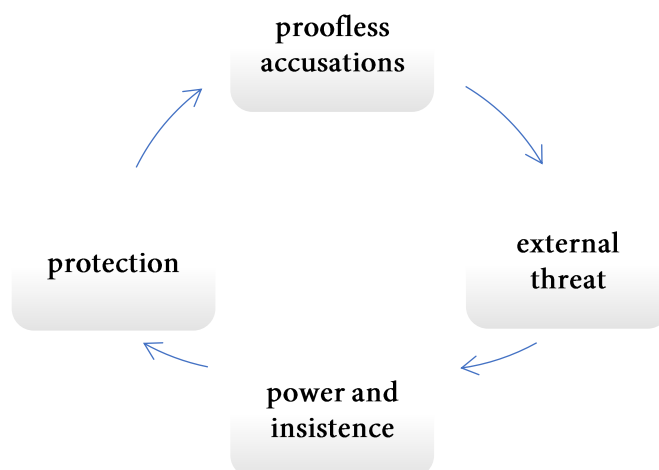


Diagram 3. Major semantic categories in the articles on the poisoning of the Skripals in *Russia Today*.

5.2. Articles from *Voice of America*

The second part of the corpus is comprised of 47 articles taken from *Voice of America* within the period from the 6th of December till the 18th of March. Unlike the articles from *Russia Today*, only two categories were observed in this part of the corpus. The first one covers the electoral campaign and all the election-related issues, while the second category embraces a wide range of issues related to Putin and his external policies, such as military action in Syria, alleged Russian meddling in the US election, US economic sanctions imposed on Russia, the poisoning of the Skripals and many others. The distribution is uneven as well (26 against 21) that was also expected and may be explained that the electoral campaign was viewed as a more newsworthy issue within a relatively short time span.

5.2.1. Quantitative analysis of election-related articles

The first thematic category in the corpus covers the electoral campaign and all the related issues. The results of quantitative analysis of the articles from *Voice of America* on the electoral campaign and the distribution of stance and engagement markers are shown in Table 17:

	Stance markers	Engagement markers	Total
Number	256	6	262
Percentage	97.7%	2.3%	

Table 17. Stance and engagement markers in election-related articles (Voice of America)

The analysis reveals the absolute prevalence of stance markers over engagements markers that shows a clear authorial stance observed in the articles. The average number of stance markers found in the articles under analysis is 9, the number ranging from 1 to 26 in each article. As far as engagement markers are concerned, they are almost absent in the articles under analysis due to the stylistic peculiarities of an informative news article, where directives, questions, reader pronouns and personal asides are not supposed to be found.

Table 18 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers for the author's voice:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions	Total
			Positive	Negative		
Number	102	84	4	44	1	235
Percentage	43.4%	35.74%	1.7%	18.74%	0.42%	

Table 18. Distribution of stance markers in election-related articles (Voice of America)

We observe a substantial prevalence of hedges over other stance markers that suggests that journalists make a substantial effort to diminish the assertiveness that is the main interpersonal technique used in the discourse under analysis. Boosters are the second most frequent stance markers that are employed to strengthen the assertiveness of statements that seems contradictory to the number of hedges. An attempt to explain such a pattern will be made in the qualitative analysis. Negative attitude markers are the third most frequent markers that suggests that authors are in the habit of offering negative evaluation when covering election-related issues. A low number of positive attitudinals and self-mentions do not play an important role in the pattern. The overall number of markers found in the articles reinforces the premise that journalistic discourse is not devoid of the author's self.

The examples of stance markers found in the articles are as follows:

▪ **Hedges:**

- 1) She has also called for the resignation of top Russian officials **she says** are responsible for the country's sports-doping scandal and has rejected Kremlin claims of U.S. meddling in Russian politics, saying interference by foreign players **could** not significantly impact domestic affairs. [2.1]
- 2) Aleksei Navalny, Russia's most well-known opposition politician, has also declared his intention to run in the March election, although the authorities are blocking his candidacy based on a criminal conviction **Navalny says** is politically motivated. [2.1]
- 3) With approval ratings regularly exceeding 80 percent, Putin, who is running as an independent, **appears** set to easily win his second consecutive term, and fourth overall, in the balloting. [2.1]
- 4) Police said his car **may** have been used in a crime, according to Kankiya. [2.4]
- 5) Days before Sunday's election, which polls show incumbent Vladimir Putin is on track to win comfortably, Golos, a non-governmental organization that monitors Russian elections, **says** it is under unprecedented pressure. [2.4]
- 6) Its problems are part of **what Kremlin critics say** is a wider campaign by authorities to hinder or silence dissenting voices. [2.4]
- 7) Opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was shot dead in 2015, while current opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been barred from running in Sunday's election over **what he says** is a trumped-up fraud conviction. [2.4]
- 8) Equally, the Central Election Commission says it will do everything it **can** to ensure Sunday's vote is free of fraud and has turned to Golos for advice on how to do that. [2.4]
- 9) Kankiya, the Golos coordinator in southern Russia, said he **would** continue his work regardless. [2.4]
- 10) Political scientist Nikolai Petrov of Moscow's National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRUHSE) says although uneven voter turnout in cities and rural areas **may** not affect the outcome of the election, severe irregularities **would** be bad for Putin's political legacy. [2.5]
- 11) Facing weak candidates — some **likely** encouraged to run by a Kremlin eager to give the election a veneer of competitiveness — Putin, who has held power since succeeding Boris Yeltsin in 1999, had always been guaranteed victory in an election timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the Russian annexation of Crimea. [2.6]
- 12) Putin's only credible challenger, blogger and activist Alexei Navalny, was barred from running because of a fraud conviction **he said** was designed to exclude him from electoral politics. [2.6]

- 13) The deputy chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission dismissed *allegations* of irregularities, tweeting: "There is not a single other country in the world that has the level of transparency that we are demonstrating today." [2.6]
- 14) The big question as Russians headed to polling stations was: What percentage of the population *would* turn out to vote? [2.6]
- 15) Kremlin officials clearly had been determined to produce an outsized vote for Putin as a demonstration of his legitimacy — and by lunchtime, seven hours before the polls closed, election officials projected the turnout *would* be 70 percent. [2.6]
- 16) Kremlin insiders said before polling day the desired outcome *would* be 70/70 — 70 percent of the vote for Putin from a 70 percent turnout. [2.6]
- 17) That suggestion was vehemently denied in the run-up to the polls by Putin aides, who said Russia was not involved in the nerve-agent attack. Some officials *allege* the British made up the incident. [2.6]
- 18) He said he hoped Sobchak, who some Putin critics suspect was encouraged by the Russian president to run, *would* form a new party after the election. [2.6]
- 19) The group said it received more than 2,000 *alleged* violations, including claims ballot boxes had been positioned out of sight of observation cameras. [2.6]
- 20) Casting his ballot in Moscow Sunday, Putin said "any" result that allowed him to continue as president *would* be a "success." [2.6]
- 21) Some analysts say the uncertainty *could* trigger power struggles within the Kremlin, as possible successors jockey and maneuver against each other in case Putin decides to name a successor. [2.6]
- 22) Asked if he *would* seek the presidency again in 2030, the 65-year-old Russian leader snapped, "It's ridiculous. Do you think I will sit here until I turn 100?" [2.7]
- 23) Navalny, an anti-corruption crusader and opposition leader, called for the boycott after being barred from the March 18 presidential election because of a financial-crimes conviction *that he and his supporters contend* was Kremlin-engineered retribution. [2.8]
- 24) With the Kremlin controlling the levers of political power nationwide after years of steps to suppress dissent and marginalize political opponents, it is *virtually* certain that the election will hand Putin a new six-year term. Political commentators say Putin, 65, is eager for a high turnout to strengthen his mandate in what *could* be his last stint in the Kremlin, as he *would* be constitutionally barred from seeking a third straight term in 2024. [2.8]
- 25) Navalny has accused the rest of the field of presidential hopefuls of playing into Putin's hands and aiding *what he says* is a Kremlin bid to portray the vote as a legitimate, competitive contest. [2.8]

- 26) At a meeting with top Moscow police officials, First Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandr Gorovoi said that police **would** respect the right of citizens to hold public gatherings, as provided by the constitution and other legislation — but emphasized they **would** "absolutely toughly ... prevent violations of these laws." [2.8]
- 27) Days before the police warning, a Moscow district court ruled on January 22 that the foundation Navalny and his allies have used to rent premises and pay salaries at campaign headquarters **should** be shut down. [2.8]
- 28) Opposition Leader Says He **Could** Beat Putin in Fair Election. [2.9]
- 29) Navalny's criminal record will **probably** keep him off the ballot — a sign, **he says**, of how much he frightens the political class. [2.9]
- 30) Navalny, in his first interview since the start of the presidential campaign, said he **would** win it "if I am allowed to run and if I'm allowed to use major media." [2.9]
- 31) That support certainly looks strong: The latest independent poll, conducted this month by the Levada Center, **suggests** 75 percent of Russians **would** vote for Putin. [2.9]
- 32) But there are also signs that enthusiasm for Putin **may** be starting to wane. [2.9]
- 33) Even so, his face is everywhere — at his annual news conference last week, carried live for **nearly** four hours on Russian television, he touted his accomplishments and even taunted Navalny — but stuck to his practice of not saying his name. [2.9]
- 34) Unlike Putin's focus on foreign policy, Navalny's platform is **almost** entirely domestic, which he credits for growing support in places like Novosibirsk, Russia's third-largest city, where he drew a large crowd in October. [2.9]
- 35) Police said **about** 40,000 people attended Putin's short speech, having to wait first for several hours to listen to patriotic songs. An AFP correspondent at the scene put the crowd at **nearer** 20,000. [2.10]
- 36) Ahead of the vote, authorities are presenting the annexation as a major legacy of Putin's current term, with Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warning recently that failing to endorse Putin on Sunday **would** amount to opposing the move. [2.10]
- 37) Putin is running as an independent candidate, keeping a distance from the top Kremlin party, United Russia, which has been dogged by corruption **allegations** against some of its top members. [2.11]
- 38) The agency, Roskomnadzor, had demanded that Navalny remove a video **alleging** that Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Prikhodko received lavish hospitality from billionaire Oleg Deripaska. [2.12]
- 39) Polls say that incumbent President Vladimir Putin will **likely** win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.13]

- 40) Putin, a former KGB officer, is running as an independent, a decision some observers **believe would** enhance his image as a leader of a nation instead of a party political figure. [2.13]
- 41) Polls show that Putin is **likely** to win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.15]
- 42) Navalny has been barred from the election because of a suspended prison sentence **he says** was fabricated. [2.15]
- 43) Putin, a former KGB officer, is running as an independent, a decision some observers **believe would** enhance his image as a leader of a nation instead of a party political figure. [2.15]
- 44) Navalny said Sunday's election **would** be marked by illegitimacy. He has called for a boycott. [2.16]
- 45) With another Putin win **practically** guaranteed, Navalny and other experts say Russian authorities will try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.16]
- 46) Levada Center was listed as a foreign agent in 2016 under a new law aimed at curbing **alleged** foreign influence on public life in Russia. [2.17]
- 47) Levada's director, Lev Gudkov, told the Russian daily *Vedomosti* on Tuesday that the agency is carrying out election polling but will not publish results during the campaign because it fears that this **could** be viewed as election meddling and **could** lead to a motion to close down the pollster. [2.17]
- 48) That raised fears of a lower turnout at the election, which **would** be a major embarrassment for the Kremlin. [2.17]
- 49) The European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have refused to send election monitors to Crimea, fearing it **would** be seen as legitimizing the Russian occupation. [2.18]
- 50) With another Putin win **practically** guaranteed, Navalny and other experts say, Russian authorities **could** try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.18]
- 51) Asked whether a bloodless succession **could** be guaranteed without Putin's wealthy and powerful allies remaining in power, she said the president's departure **would** require a politically strategic transition. [2.19]
- 52) A slow, "evolutionary" change in Russian politics, she added, **would** require "minimizing aggression" by allowing "new people, new talent and hav[ing] a new

compromise political figure that would be satisfying for the opposition, but also acceptable for Putin.” [2.19]

- 53) “Our job is to demonstrate that we want regime change, but we don’t want vengeance for the years that already happened,” Sobchak said, adding that building a new Russian political era on retribution **would** only “scare the regime even more and Putin will never leave.” [2.19]
- 54) Neither Moscow nor Washington’s political leadership, she said, **can** be expected to break the current diplomatic impasse, which has been most pronounced by dueling foreign agent registration laws that Sobchak says she opposes. [2.19]
- 55) Saying she **wouldn’t** “expect Putin to make the first step,” Sobchak insisted that “we need to do whatever is possible to make both leaders let go of their male egos and make that first step.” [2.19]
- 56) He is barred from running because of a suspended prison sentence for embezzlement – **a charge he and his followers say** was contrived and political. [2.21]
- 57) Navalny made his name by using social media to report on **what he says** is corruption by top Russian leaders. [2.21]
- 58) Russians turned up at polling stations Sunday in an election few voters had any doubts about who **would** emerge the winner. [2.22]
- 59) Soon after the polls closed in the enclave of Kaliningrad, preliminary results indicated incumbent President Vladimir Putin had secured victory in an election **critics say** was stage-managed. [2.22]
- 60) According to Russia's election commission, Putin was heading to secure 71.9 percent of the vote, but it was unclear whether voter turnout had reached 70 percent, a Kremlin goal. But Kremlin aides insisted the final result **would** show it had. [2.22]
- 61) Navalny **claims** his 2013 conviction for embezzlement was engineered by the Kremlin to keep him from public office. [2.23]
- 62) Proving that Russian authorities had political motives in arresting him and not allowing his rallies to go ahead **would** set an important precedent for activists across Russia, Navalny told reporters. [2.23]
- 63) Several thousand people braved sub-zero temperatures in cities across Russia to protest **what they say** is a lack of competition ahead of March presidential elections all but guaranteed to extend Vladimir Putin’s grip on power through 2024. [2.24]
- 64) Barred from participating by Russia’s courts and state election commission, Navalny’s campaign has shifted to calls to boycott the election — arguing low voter turnout nationwide will take the shine off a Putin victory and high voter approval ratings that, **they argue**, are inflated by state manipulation. [2.24]

- 65) Video published online showed police roughly dragging him into a police van **almost** as soon as he arrived on Moscow's central Tverskaya Street. [2.24]
- 66) Indeed, turnout was smaller than previous Navalny-led protests from the past year, when tens of thousands of Russians came out to protest **alleged** corruption at the highest levels of government. [2.24]
- 67) She was among hundreds of thousands who once had demanded change, and **suggested** a new generation **could** learn from that history. [2.24]
- 68) Yet Ludmilla Sidodova, a pensioner at the Moscow rally who was a veteran of the massive pro-democratic movement of the late-Soviet period, argued it **would** simply take a wider movement if Russians hoped to evoke real change. [2.24]
- 69) But a ban on Russia taking part in the Winter Olympics is **likely** to make support for him even stronger, by uniting voters around his message: The world is against us. [2.25]
- 70) Putin announced on Wednesday that he **would** run for re-election in March's presidential vote, setting the stage for him to extend his dominance of Russia's political landscape into a third decade. [2.25]
- 71) Opinion polls regularly give him an approval rating of **around** 80 percent. [2.25]
- 72) But casting the IOC ban as a Western plot to hurt Russia, something he did when Russian athletes were banned from last year's Summer Olympics in Rio over doping, **could** help him mobilize the electorate. [2.25]
- 73) Public anger over the IOC move **could** help Putin overcome signs of voter apathy and ensure a high turnout which, in the tightly controlled limits of the Russian political system, is seen as conferring legitimacy. [2.25]
- 74) Without Russia, he said, the Olympics **would** not be valid. [2.25]
- 75) He linked the decision to a Western anti-Russian campaign **which many Russians believe** took hold after Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. [2.25]
- 76) Blaming the West is an approach the Kremlin has often used before when faced with international **allegations** of wrongdoing — over Crimea's annexation, the shooting down of a Malaysian passenger plane over Ukraine in July 2014 and charges of meddling in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists rebelled against rule from Kiev after Crimea was annexed. [2.25]
- 77) The tactic taps into Russians' patriotism and makes Putin **almost** bullet-proof when it comes to scandal. [2.25]

- 78) When at the start of the year *it seemed* there was a window to repair relations with the West after the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, who said he wanted better ties, the narrative of Russia versus the world was muted. [2.25]
- 79) But when it became clear that U.S. *allegations* of Russian meddling in Trump's election precluded any rapprochement, Putin doubled down on the narrative. In October, he launched a stinging critique of U.S. policy, listing *what he called* the biggest betrayals in U.S.-Russia relations. [2.25]
- 80) The Kremlin, *they say*, is determined to ensure a big turnout to demonstrate that Putin remains Russia's "irreplaceable leader," 18 years after first coming to power, and that his grip on the nation hasn't weakened. [2.26]
- 81) Navalny, who rose to prominence galvanizing street protests in Moscow against *alleged* voter fraud in the 2011 legislative elections, says other candidates are handpicked or useful as props. Kremlin officials deny the accusation. [2.26]
- 82) A leaked Kremlin document outlining ways to get voters to the polls *suggest* there are indeed worries among Putin's officials about apathy and boycotts. [2.26]
- 83) Under the plan, celebrities and famous sports figures *could* be enlisted to promote the "Photo at the Polls" contest. [2.26]
- 84) The 41-year-old was barred last month from standing in the March poll by the country's election commission on the grounds that he has a 2013 embezzlement conviction that *Navalny says* was politically motivated and engineered to keep him out of the election. [2.26]
- 85) An opinion survey released in December by the Moscow-based Levada Center, a polling company, *suggested* that Putin will *likely* fall short of securing the Kremlin-earmarked goal of 70 percent of the vote — and that turnout will fall below that number as well. [2.26]
- 86) But Vitali Shkliarov, one of her advisers, indicated this week that her campaign *may* well fit into the Kremlin's electoral management plans. [2.26]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) Critics of Sobchak — including liberal opposition Yabloko party leader Grigory Yavlinsky — say her effort to run plays into the hands of the Kremlin, *merely* giving the appearance of a democratic process by having another well-known person on the ballot. [2.1]
- 2) Russia denies interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs, despite *compelling* evidence that Moscow has provided military, economic and political support to the separatists. [2.1]
- 3) In a Russian presidential campaign season in which Kremlin officials have *insisted* that candidates abide by federal election laws, numerous news outlets have reported President Vladimir Putin's exception to the rule. [2.2]

- 4) While exploitation of state resources to bolster the candidacy of an established leader is a time-tested feature of Russian politics, this year it is **completely** different — and **exactly** the same — says Maria Lipman, editor of the Moscow-based Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint), an open-access Russian-language journal of politics and society published by George Washington University. [2.2]
- 5) But ensuring Putin's sustained super majority rule in Russia — where the 65-year-old leader enjoys **substantial** popular support, especially outside of major cities — requires a constant updating of strategies, which have evolved over time. [2.2]
- 6) “*But today legitimization is achieved by promoting a ‘besieged fortress’ image*” of a nation economically beset by **myriad** Western sanctions. [2.2]
- 7) Kremlin: Spy Scandal **Won't** Disrupt Presidential Election. [2.3]
- 8) Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman says a mushrooming diplomatic scandal over the poisoning of an ex-spy in Britain **won't** disrupt Russia's presidential election. [2.3]
- 9) Peskov **strongly** denied Russian responsibility in the March 4 attack. [2.3]
- 10) Putin is **overwhelmingly** expected to win another term after 18 years in power, riding in part on his argument that he **must** stand up to Western aggressors. [2.3]
- 11) Days before Sunday's election, which polls show incumbent Vladimir Putin is on track to win comfortably, Golos, a non-governmental organization that monitors Russian elections, says it is under **unprecedented** pressure. [2.4]
- 12) Equally, the Central Election Commission says it **will** do everything it can **to ensure** Sunday's vote is free of fraud and has turned to Golos for advice on how to do that. [2.4]
- 13) However, opposition leader Navalny, accused by Putin of being Washington's pick for president, has predicted the authorities **will** resort to **widespread** fraud to deliver a Putin landslide and has spoken of organizing post-election protests of the kind that roiled Russia after Putin's last election victory in 2012. [2.4]
- 14) It **will** deliver its verdict on how clean the election was on Monday. [2.4]
- 15) Its volunteers have complained of being **systematically** stopped for long periods when leaving or entering the country by border staff who tell them there's a note by their name that says they are linked to terrorism, Golos said. [2.4]
- 16) According to NRUHSE social scientist Alexander Kynev, Putin and those tasked with **ensuring** his re-election walk a fine line when it comes to presenting research about his popular appeal. **Excessively** high popularity ratings for Putin, he said, risks giving his support base the impression that there is no need to bother going out to the polls. [2.5]
- 17) The Kremlin's preference for a high voter turnout to give a Putin re-election the appearance of democratic legitimacy has been **widely** reported in international media. [2.5]

- 18) Putin, who **will** serve another six-year-term bringing him just short of ruling Russia for as long as Communist dictator Joseph Stalin, didn't wait for the final tally and addressed supporters at a flag-waving anniversary rally off Moscow's Red Square, marking Crimea's annexation by Russia four years ago. [2.6]
- 19) Putin's win over seven challengers **will** extend his time in office to nearly a quarter of a century, until 2024, by which time he will be 71 years old. [2.6]
- 20) Opposition monitors said they were finding **stark** differences in their turnout counts from the official ones, ranging from 12 to 25 percent in some towns and regions. [2.6]
- 21) Kremlin officials **clearly** had been determined to produce an outsized vote for Putin as a demonstration of his legitimacy — and by lunchtime, seven hours before the polls closed, election officials projected the turnout would be 70 percent. [2.6]
- 22) Putin **emphasized** in the run-up to the polls that Russia's power had been restored, **notably** in his annual state of the nation address in which he said the world was now forced to listen to Russia. [2.6]
- 23) When asked by reporters if he **will** run again he laughed, saying, "*What you are saying is a bit funny. Do you think that I will stay here until I'm 100 years old? No!*" he said. [2.6]
- 24) Russians unhappy with the prospect of six more years under President Vladimir Putin are expected to protest nationwide on Sunday, backing Alexei Navalny's call for an election boycott amid warnings from authorities that they **will** be tough on demonstrators deemed to have broken the law. [2.8]
- 25) With the Kremlin controlling the levers of political power nationwide after years of steps to suppress dissent and marginalize political opponents, it is virtually **certain** that the election **will** hand Putin a new six-year term. Political commentators say Putin, 65, **is eager** for a high turnout to strengthen his mandate in what could be his last stint in the Kremlin, as he would be constitutionally barred from seeking a third straight term in 2024. [2.8]
- 26) At a meeting with top Moscow police officials, First Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandr Gorovoi said that police would respect the right of citizens to hold public gatherings, as provided by the constitution and other legislation — but **emphasized** they would "absolutely toughly ... prevent violations of these laws." [2.8]
- 27) In a blog post on Saturday, Navalny **urged** people to come to the rallies on Sunday, writing that "to stay at home is to send them [those in power] the signal: 'I'm ready to endure this for another six years.'" [2.8]
- 28) Police have **repeatedly** cracked down on demonstrations organized by Navalny in the past. [2.8]
- 29) Putin's approval rating is **astronomical** and he is **widely** expected to win another term with ease, but the fact that he **won't** even say Navalny's name suggests the anti-corruption

crusader has struck a nerve. Navalny's criminal record **will** probably keep him off the ballot — a sign, he says, of how much he frightens the political class. [2.9]

- 30) That support **certainly** looks strong: The latest independent poll, conducted this month by the Levada Center, suggests 75 percent of Russians would vote for Putin. [2.9]
- 31) Unlike Putin's focus on foreign policy, Navalny's platform is almost **entirely** domestic, which he credits for growing support in places like Novosibirsk, Russia's third-largest city, where he drew a large crowd in October. [2.9]
- 32) With the visibility came the backlash: The 41-year-old Navalny has been convicted on two sets of unrelated charges, and his brother was sent to prison in what was **largely** viewed as political revenge. [2.9]
- 33) While Navalny has captured the attention of a younger generation and the politically active via social media, he conceded he **won't** be able to reach the broader population as long as he is barred from state television. [2.9]
- 34) Navalny was not a candidate during Russia's last presidential election in 2012, but he spearheaded **massive** anti-government protests that rattled Putin. [2.9]
- 35) Putin is running for a historic fourth term in a poll **all but guaranteed** to hand him another mandate. [2.10]
- 36) The annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was slammed by the international community and led to sanctions against Moscow but is celebrated by most Russians and resulted in a **major** boost of Putin's popularity at the time. [2.10]
- 37) After Putin's speech, the U.S. State Department reacted with a statement titled **starkly**: "Crimea is Ukraine." [2.10]
- 38) Russian authorities scheduled the election for March 18 to mark **exactly** four years since Putin signed a treaty with representatives from Crimea to make it a part of Russia. [2.10]
- 39) Ahead of the vote, authorities are presenting the annexation as a **major** legacy of Putin's current term, with Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warning recently that failing to endorse Putin on Sunday would amount to opposing the move. [2.10]
- 40) Polls say that incumbent President Vladimir Putin **will** likely win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.13]
- 41) The opposition leader says Putin's popularity is **largely** due to biased state media and an electoral system that excludes legitimate opponents. [2.13]
- 42) Though the vote Friday from the Federation Council is **largely** a formality, it formally kick-starts the campaign. [2.14]

- 43) President Vladimir Putin last week ended weeks of speculation, saying he **will** run for the fourth term. Putin's 80 percent approval ratings make his victory **all but certain**. [2.14]
- 44) Navalny has been convicted on two separate sets of charges **largely** viewed as politically motivated. [2.14]
- 45) Navalny says Putin's popularity is **largely** due to biased state media and an electoral system that excludes legitimate opponents. [2.15]
- 46) Putin faces seven challengers, but is expected to take an **overwhelming** majority of the vote. [2.16]
- 47) With another Putin win practically guaranteed, Navalny and other experts say Russian authorities **will** try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.16]
- 48) Navalny said the elections are staged to look free and fair, but that **at best** they are an insincere effort. [2.16]
- 49) Authorities **insist** that the law does not aim to target critics of the Kremlin. [2.17]
- 50) Results of Levada's polls have not differed **dramatically** from those by the two main state-owned polling agencies in terms of support for Putin and the ruling party. But recent polls **did** show a difference regarding the turnout for the upcoming vote. [2.17]
- 51) That raised fears of a lower turnout at the election, which would be a **major** embarrassment for the Kremlin. [2.17]
- 52) Neither Moscow nor Washington's political leadership, she said, can be expected to break the current diplomatic impasse, which has been **most pronounced** by dueling foreign agent registration laws that Sobchak says she opposes. [2.19]
- 53) Kremlin critics say most of the other candidates are window dressing in a vote Putin is **certain** to win in Russia's tightly controlled political environment. [2.19]
- 54) Former presidential candidate Alexey Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has been blocked from participating in the elections over legal problems **widely** seen as manufactured to keep him out of the race, was reported to have been in attendance. [2.20]
- 55) While the verdicts were welcomed by supporters of Nemtsov, the investigation and trial were condemned for failing to uncover the masterminds of the killing or addressing the motive, which is **widely** believed to be political. [2.20]
- 56) He is **urging** Russians to boycott the March presidential election, in which Vladimir Putin is just about assured to win a fourth term. [2.21]

- 57) Several thousand people braved sub-zero temperatures in cities across Russia to protest what they say is a lack of competition ahead of March presidential elections **all but guaranteed** to extend Vladimir Putin's grip on power through 2024. [2.24]
- 58) The rallies were part of a nationwide "Voters Strike" called by opposition leader and erstwhile presidential candidate Alexey Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has been blocked from participating in the elections over legal problems **widely** seen as manufactured to keep him out of the race. [2.24]
- 59) Yet Sunday's protests reflected a realization among Navalny's camp that such a direct contest **will** not take place. [2.24]
- 60) Barred from participating by Russia's courts and state election commission, Navalny's campaign has shifted to calls to boycott the election — arguing low voter turnout nationwide **will** take the shine off a Putin victory and high voter approval ratings that, they argue, are inflated by state manipulation. [2.24]
- 61) **Notable** exceptions were Russia's two main cities — Moscow and St. Petersburg — where police and interior ministry troop presence were heavy and authorities threatened arrests. [2.24]
- 62) But Sunday's smaller numbers, despite temperatures as low as -40C in Siberia, were **all but certain** to fuel debate in opposition circles over the wisdom of Navalny's call for a nationwide boycott of the vote. [2.24]
- 63) Navalny's supporters have **largely** derided Sobchak's campaign as a Kremlin ploy to legitimize the vote. [2.24]
- 64) Opinion polls show Vladimir Putin is already a **shoo-in** to win a fourth presidential term. [2.25]
- 65) Sources close to the Russian government say the IOC ban, along with continued Western sanctions over Ukraine and the prospect of new sanctions, **will** help the authorities rally voters around the banner of national unity which Putin embodies. [2.25]
- 66) Vladimir Putin's re-election as president is **assured**. Yet while he remains **highly** popular, according to opinion polls, the overall success of the presidential election isn't, and opposition activists say the Kremlin is worried as it tries to balance between keeping tight control over campaigning and avoiding voter apathy. [2.26]
- 67) The country's **only** truly independent opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner, has been excluded from standing; his disqualification was upheld Saturday by Russia's Supreme Court. [2.26]
- 68) An opinion survey released in December by the Moscow-based Levada Center, a polling company, suggested that Putin **will** likely fall short of securing the Kremlin-earmarked goal of 70 percent of the vote — and that turnout **will** fall below that number as well. [2.26]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) Alexei Navalny, the *charismatic* anticorruption crusader who has built a national following by railing against endemic corruption, made a similar observation several months ago. [2.19]
- 2) Most voters encountered by VOA in Moscow said Putin was the *ideal* candidate. [2.22]
- 3) The country's only *truly independent* opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner, has been excluded from standing; his disqualification was upheld Saturday by Russia's Supreme Court. [2.26]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) Sobchak has also *irked* some Kremlin supporters with comments saying that Crimea is legally part of Ukraine despite its *annexation* by Moscow. [2.1]
- 2) Russia's *annexation* of Crimea has not been recognized by the international community. [2.1]
- 3) She has also called for the resignation of top Russian officials she says are responsible for the country's sports-doping scandal and has rejected Kremlin *claims* of U.S. meddling in Russian politics, saying interference by foreign players could not significantly impact domestic affairs. [2.1]
- 4) Only the incumbent himself *remains above the fray*, exempted from debates in exchange for *fawning* 90-minute documentaries by Rosiya-1 state television. [2.2]
- 5) While exploitation of state resources to bolster the candidacy of an established leader is a *time-tested* feature of Russian politics, this year it is completely different — and exactly the same — says Maria Lipman, editor of the Moscow-based Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint), an open-access Russian-language journal of politics and society published by George Washington University. [2.2]
- 6) The Russian campaign remains *lackluster* just three days before the vote. [2.3]
- 7) The program depicted Golos as a *shadowy* Western-funded group that worked to discredit Russia in the eyes of the world. [2.4]
- 8) Political scientist Nikolai Petrov of Moscow's National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRUHSE) says although uneven voter turnout in cities and rural areas may not affect the outcome of the election, *severe* irregularities would be bad for Putin's political legacy. [2.5]
- 9) Putin, who will serve another six-year-term bringing him just short of ruling Russia for as long as Communist dictator Joseph Stalin, didn't wait for the final tally and addressed

supporters at a flag-waving anniversary rally off Moscow's Red Square, marking Crimea's **annexation** by Russia four years ago. [2.6]

- 10) Facing weak candidates — some likely encouraged to run by a Kremlin eager to give the election a veneer of competitiveness — Putin, who has held power since succeeding Boris Yeltsin in 1999, had always been guaranteed victory in an election timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the Russian **annexation** of Crimea. [2.6]
- 11) Nonetheless, activists posted videos online showing **blatant** violations. [2.6]
- 12) That suggestion was **vehemently** denied in the run-up to the polls by Putin aides, who said Russia was not involved in the nerve-agent attack. Some officials allege the British made up the incident. [2.6]
- 13) He was referring to 37-year-old Ksenia Sobchak, a former socialite and broadcaster, once famous for a **raunchy** reality television show. [2.6]
- 14) In Crimea, the territory Russia said it **annexed** from Ukraine, a few European politicians who are friendly with Putin acted as election observers. [2.7]
- 15) Opposition leader Navalny told VOA's Russian service on Thursday that Putin's observers in Crimea were political **cronies**, not objective observers. [2.7]
- 16) On Thursday, police issued a **stern** warning to anti-government protesters. At a meeting with top Moscow police officials, First Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandr Gorovoi said that police would respect the right of citizens to hold public gatherings, as provided by the constitution and other legislation — but emphasized they would "absolutely toughly ... prevent violations of these laws." [2.8]
- 17) Navalny's campaign chief, Leonid Volkov, described the ruling as **absurd** and vowed to appeal. [2.8]
- 18) Even so, his face is everywhere — at his annual news conference last week, carried live for nearly four hours on Russian television, he **touted** his accomplishments and even **taunted** Navalny — but stuck to his practice of not saying his name. [2.9]
- 19) Navalny was not a candidate during Russia's last presidential election in 2012, but he spearheaded massive anti-government protests that **rattled** Putin. [2.9]
- 20) Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday thanked residents of Crimea for voting **to annex** the peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, calling the move "*real democracy*" in a speech days ahead of Sunday's presidential election. [2.10]
- 21) The **annexation** of Crimea in March 2014 was **slammed** by the international community and led to sanctions against Moscow but is celebrated by most Russians and resulted in a major boost of Putin's popularity at the time. [2.10]

- 22) Ahead of the vote, authorities are presenting the **annexation** as a major legacy of Putin's current term, with Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warning recently that failing to endorse Putin on Sunday would amount to opposing the move. [2.10]
- 23) Putin is running as an independent candidate, keeping a distance from the top Kremlin party, United Russia, which has been **dogged** by corruption allegations against some of its top members.[2.11]
- 24) Russians are expected to vote Sunday in a presidential election, but disqualified opposition candidate Alexei Navalny told VOA's Russian service that he expected the entire process to be a **sham**, even down to the European election observers. [2.16]
- 25) In Crimea, the territory Russia says it has **annexed** from Ukraine, a few European politicians who are friendly with Putin are acting as election observers. [2.18]
- 26) Opposition leader Navalny told VOA's Russian service on Thursday that Putin's observers in Crimea were political **cronies**, not objective observers. [2.18]
- 27) Sobchak, 36, whose candidacy has been questioned by opposition activists and political observers who suspect her campaign is a Kremlin **ploy** to boost turnout and help Putin's bid for another six-year term, is not the first to make this claim. [2.19]
- 28) Alexei Navalny, the charismatic anticorruption crusader who has built a national following by railing against **endemic** corruption, made a similar observation several months ago. [2.19]
- 29) Washington first hit Moscow with asset freezes and travel bans in 2014, following Russia's **annexation** of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and the outbreak of fighting between government forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. [2.19]
- 30) Kremlin critics say most of the other candidates are **window dressing** in a vote Putin is certain to win in Russia's tightly controlled political environment. [2.19]
- 31) Soon after the polls closed in the enclave of Kaliningrad, preliminary results indicated incumbent President Vladimir Putin had secured victory in an election critics say was **stage-managed**. [2.22]
- 32) Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has taken his **feud** with President Vladimir Putin to Europe's highest rights court. [2.23]
- 33) Navalny's supporters have largely **derided Sobchak's campaign as a Kremlin ploy** to legitimize the vote. [2.24]
- 34) With ties between the Kremlin and the West at their lowest point for years, the International Olympic Committee's decision to bar Russia from the 2018 Pyeongchang Games over doping is seen in Moscow as a **humiliating and politically tinged act**. [2.25]

- 35) Putin, *echoing his familiar refrain that his country is facing a treacherous Western campaign to hold it back*, said he had “no doubt” that the IOC’s decision was “absolutely orchestrated and politically-motivated.” [2.25]
- 36) He linked the decision to a Western anti-Russian campaign which many Russians believe took hold after Russia *annexed* the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. [2.25]
- 37) Blaming the West is an approach the Kremlin has often used before when faced with international allegations of wrongdoing — over Crimea's *annexation*, the shooting down of a Malaysian passenger plane over Ukraine in July 2014 and charges of meddling in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists rebelled against rule from Kiev after Crimea was annexed. [2.25]
- 38) In October, he launched a *stinging* critique of U.S. policy, listing what he called the biggest betrayals in U.S.-Russia relations. [2.25]
- 39) In a recent television interview, Putin wouldn’t even mention Navalny by name, but the Russian leader *gruffly* said he wouldn’t allow Navalny to “*destabilize our country*.” [2.26]
- 40) The 36-year-old Sobchak denies accusations by Navalny that she’s *a stooge* and is coordinating her campaign with the Kremlin. [2.26]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural pronouns):**

- 1) But a ban on Russia taking part in the Winter Olympics is likely to make support for him even stronger, by uniting voters around his message: The world is against *us*. [2.25]

As far as engagement markers are concerned, they almost absent as well as in election-related articles from *Voice of America*:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	0	0	6	6
Percentage	0%	0%	0%	100%	

Table 19. Distribution of engagement markers in election-related articles (*Voice of America*)

Questions are found 6 times in the articles, three of them are repeated twice. Nevertheless, the absence of reader pronouns, appeals to shared knowledge and directives and a low number of questions show that engaging with the audience is not the primary task set by journalists. The examples of questions found in the corpus are as follows:

- **Questions:**

- 1) The big question as Russians headed to polling stations was: *What percentage of the population would turn out to vote?* [2.6]
- 2) Now, the question is: *What will happen when his new term expires in six years? Will someone else take the helm, or will he change the constitution?* [2.6]

Quotations were analyzed separately as it the previous sections as it is argued that quotations possess considerable interpersonal potential as they are chosen deliberately while they are primarily supposed to give reference. The current research is also interested in finding out whether quotations replicate patterns found in the body of the articles or constitute a different one. Table 20 shows the distribution of stance markers within quotations:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions		Total
			Positive	Negative	1 st p. sing.	1 st p. pl.	
Number	27	55	4	28	9	30	156
Percentage	17.3%	35.25%	2.56%	17.94%	5.76%	21.19%	

Table 20. Distribution of stance markers in election-related articles (Voice of America) in quotations

The interpersonal pattern observed in quotations is different, with the prevalence of boosters, a high number of negative attitudinals and 1st personal plural pronouns, and a smaller number of hedges in comparison with the body of the articles. Enforcing the message and boosting its assertiveness seems to be a more salient feature of the pattern together with a higher number of negatively charged attitude markers. It may be explained that quotations bear a more negative charge as compared to the body of the articles, so as to convey negative evaluation indirectly through referencing as a safe measure that may be used by journalists in case they are accused of bias. The examples of stance markers within quotations can be found below:

▪ Hedges:

- 1) “Even in 2008, it was clear that whichever candidate Putin proposed to his fellow citizens as a successor **would** be accepted, supported and voted for by the nation simply because Putin recommended him.” [2.2]
- 2) “In such a system, public administration and power are concentrated **virtually** in the hands of one person,” she said. “This person **should** be beyond competition.” [2.2]
- 3) “In 2008, legitimization was achieved due to revenue growth: oil prices increased and Russia’s economic growth was **quite** substantial, which led to a significant decrease in the number of poor people in Russia,” Lipman said. [2.2]
- 4) “Our media monitoring initiative has not recorded a single negative mention of Putin, although one **can** always find grounds for criticism of a leader who has been in power for so many years,” Melkonyants said. [2.2]
- 5) “In this sense, it **may** be better to preserve the intrigue and induce the voter, regardless of the fact that the result looks predetermined, to come out and vote on March 18,” Kynev said. [2.2]
- 6) “Putin has nothing to say,” Navalny said. “All he **can** promise is what he used to promise before, and you **can** check that these promises did not come true and cannot come true.” [2.9]
- 7) In a rallying call, he said there were still things to improve in Crimea, but “we will definitely do everything, because when we are together, we are a huge force that **can** resolve the most difficult problems.” [2.10]
- 8) “We are faced with a construct in which they, the authorities, look into the eyes of the public and say: ‘You know we will not allow you to choose your own people’s representatives. We offered you some people — you **can** vote for them,’” he said. [2.16]
- 9) “Yes, I think [he really **would** retire],” she said. “It’s just hard to convince him that there’s an exit and that he **can** trust the people who [**would**] guarantee that, and that nothing like what happened to [former Chilean dictator Augusto] Pinochet or [former Libyan dictator Moammar] Gadhafi **would** happen to him. He’s really afraid of that.” [2.19]
- 10) “The question here is about a change of the entire system, so that those people **would** not stay in power either,” Sobchak said. “We’re talking about politics and [a long-term] strategy, so in six years [Putin] **wouldn’t** think about new changes to the constitution and again take part in elections.” [2.19]
- 11) A slow, “evolutionary” change in Russian politics, she added, would require “minimizing aggression” by allowing “new people, new talent and hav[ing] a new compromise political figure that **would** be satisfying for the opposition, but also acceptable for Putin.” [2.19]

- 12) “Not just to give him guarantees, but show that Russia **can** develop evolutionarily and is ready for political race through elections ... [where] Putin doesn’t have to worry that the courts—the very courts he has turned into puppet courts—will prosecute him,” she said. [2.19]
- 13) “**It seems** like we’re back in the Cold War again,” Sobchak said, explaining that she **would** aim to be an intermediary between Moscow and Washington. “*In this situation, just like during the Cold War, we need informal international relationships to reach a compromise,*” she said. “*I’m definitely a person who **could** become a liaison.*” [2.19]
- 14) “They **believe** Putin **can** beat Navalny, and we **believe** Navalny **can** beat Putin,” he added. [2.24]
- 15) Writing for CNN, he said: “*The Kremlin **may** be afraid of lower voter turnout - an indication of voter apathy and a decreasing legitimacy in the government. By allowing the semblance of increased competition, the Kremlin **may** be hoping to engage more voters - and get higher voter turnout on Election Day.*” [2.26]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) Sobchak, sometimes called the Russian Paris Hilton for her reality-TV fame, has said she wants to make her country's "**extremely intolerant**" society and political system more open and democratic. [2.1]
- 2) “*Even in 2008, it **was clear** that whichever candidate Putin proposed to his fellow citizens as a successor would be accepted, supported and voted for by the nation simply because Putin recommended him.*” [2.2]
- 3) “*It is **necessary** to demonstrate such an **overwhelming** superiority that no one has **the slightest** doubt that this is the right order of things in Russia.*” [2.2]
- 4) “*In 2008, legitimization was achieved due to revenue growth: oil prices increased and Russia’s economic growth was quite **substantial**, which led to a **significant** decrease in the number of poor people in Russia,*” Lipman said. [2.2]
- 5) “*This particular way of legitimization was even apparent in 2012, when Putin’s **colossal** advantage over political competitors was less obvious, and his rating fell to little more than 60 percent,*” she said. “*We remember the protests that accompanied his return to the presidency in 2012, so, this time, the super majority is **critical** to restoring his political legitimacy.*” [2.2]
- 6) “*Others watch this and understand that if they overplay their hand or attempt to sit atop the pedestal occupied by [Putin], there **will** be problems,*” Melkonyants said. [2.4]
- 7) “*Our media monitoring initiative has not recorded a **single** negative mention of Putin, although one can always find grounds for criticism of a leader who has been in power for **so many** years,*” Melkonyants said. [2.4]

- 8) Andrei Klimov, a senator who heads up a committee in the upper house of parliament to prevent interference in Russia's internal affairs, told the program such groups posed a threat. "*They [Golos and other groups] **will** try to trigger protest,*" said Klimov. [2.4]
- 9) In this sense, he said, "*he **must** not lose in a **significant** way in this internal, mental competition*" to secure his long-term political and populist legitimacy. [2.5]
- 10) Speaking from a stage to a cheering crowd, Putin said his victory was a recognition of what had been achieved in the past few years. "*I see in this trust and hope, the hope of our people that we **will** work with the same intensity, with the same sense of responsibility and with even greater results,*" he added, before leading the crowd in a chant of "*Russia, Russia!*" [2.6]
- 11) When asked by reporters if he will run again he laughed, saying, "*What you are saying is a bit funny. Do you think that I **will** stay here until I'm 100 years old? No!*" he said. [2.6]
- 12) Putin's nearest rival, Communist candidate Pavel Grudinin, who was on course to secure 11.9 percent, told reporters Monday that the election was *the "filthiest ever."* [2.6]
- 13) The deputy chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission dismissed allegations of irregularities, tweeting: "*There is **not a single** other country in the world that has the level of transparency that we are demonstrating today.*" [2.6]
- 14) "I am **sure** the program I am offering is the right one," he told reporters. [2.6]
- 15) Asked if he would seek the presidency again in 2030, the 65-year-old Russian leader snapped, "*It's ridiculous. Do you think I **will** sit here until I turn 100?*" [2.7]
- 16) "***Of course**, this is an **absolute** fake. It's ridiculous and unpleasant to look at how Putin corrupted and turned into his puppets a significant part of the European establishment.*" [2.7]
- 17) On Thursday, police issued a stern warning to anti-government protesters. At a meeting with top Moscow police officials, First Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandr Gorovoi said that police would respect the right of citizens to hold public gatherings, as provided by the constitution and other legislation — but emphasized they would "***absolutely** toughly ... prevent violations of these laws.*" [2.8]
- 18) "*It's the **main** reason they don't want me to run,*" he said. "*They understand **perfectly** how ephemeral the support for them is.*" [2.9]
- 19) "*We have won among the active political class despite the ban,*" he said. "*The politically active class **will** turn the politically dormant one in our favor. It's going to happen in this election if I'm allowed to run.*" [2.9]
- 20) "*In his campaign rally in Crimea today, President Putin **reiterated** Russia's false claims to Ukrainian territory in another open admission that the Russian government disdains the international order and disrespects the territorial integrity of sovereign nations,*" spokeswoman Heather Nauert said. [2.10]

- 21) In a rallying call, he said there were still things to improve in Crimea, but "we **will definitely do everything**, because when we are together, we are a **huge force that can resolve the most difficult problems**." [2.10]
- 22) "**Of course**, this is an **absolute fake**. It's ridiculous and unpleasant to look at how Putin corrupted and turned into his puppets a significant part of the European establishment." [2.16]
- 23) "Our task in this campaign is that as many people as possible understand that these are not elections" and refuse to take part in them, Navalny said. "And we **will fight for it**." [2.16]
- 24) "We are faced with a construct in which they, the authorities, look into the eyes of the public and say: 'You know we **will not allow you to choose your own people's representatives**. We offered you some people — you can vote for them,'" he said. [2.16]
- 25) "Yes, I think [he really would retire]," she said. "It's just hard to convince him that there's an exit and that he can trust the people who [would] guarantee that, and that nothing like what happened to [former Chilean dictator Augusto] Pinochet or [former Libyan dictator Moammar] Gadhafi would happen to him. He's **really** afraid of that." [2.19]
- 26) "Our job is to demonstrate that we want regime change, but we don't want vengeance for the years that already happened," Sobchak said, adding that building a new Russian political era on retribution would only "scare the regime even more and Putin **will never leave**." [2.19]
- 27) "Not just to give him guarantees, but show that Russia can develop evolutionarily and is ready for political race through elections ... [where] Putin doesn't have to worry that the courts—the **very courts** he has turned into puppet courts—**will prosecute him**," she said. [2.19]
- 28) "It seems like we're back in the Cold War again," Sobchak said, explaining that she would aim to be an intermediary between Moscow and Washington. "In this situation, just like during the Cold War, we need informal international relationships to reach a compromise," she said. "I'm **definitely** a person who could become a liaison." [2.19]
- 29) "Look, if they're not ready, I **will make that first step**," she said. "I came here, I am willing to meet people. I'll have meetings with many government officials and also I think that I **will have a meeting with [President] Donald Trump**. I want to start this process." [2.19]
- 30) "As long as I've been alive, Putin has **always** been in. I'm tired of nothing being changed." a 19 year-old marcher in St. Petersburg said. [2.21]
- 31) "The authorities are used to thinking that Russians **will just sit quietly and wait for change**. Well, our generation **won't wait**. We want a better life," says Ivan Savin, a high school student who attended the rally. [2.24]
- 32) "I know a lot of people who don't come because it **really does** scare them. They think they'll get fined for not doing what the government tells them." [2.24]

- 33) Putin, echoing his familiar refrain that his country is facing a treacherous Western campaign to hold it back, said he had “**no doubt**” that the IOC’s decision was “**absolutely** orchestrated and politically-motivated.” [2.25]
- 34) The sport-loving leader cast his hosting of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, at which the IOC says there was “unprecedented **systematic** manipulation” of the anti-doping system, as a symbol of Russia's success under his rule. [2.25]
- 35) “Russia **will** continue moving forwards, and nobody **will** ever be able to stop this forward movement,” Putin said. [2.25]

- **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) Evolving ‘**Super Candidate**’ Putin Strategizing for ‘**Super Majority**’ Turnout. [2.2]
- 2) He should not simply be one of the candidates, but a ‘**super candidate**’ elected by ‘**super majority**.’ [2.2]
- 3) "Thank you for the fact that we have such a **powerful, millions-strong** team. Success awaits us." [2.6]
- 4) "With your decision, you showed the whole world what is **real**, rather than sham, democracy. You came to the referendum and made a decision. You voted for your future and future of your children," Putin said. [2.10]

- **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) Sobchak, sometimes called the Russian Paris Hilton for her reality-TV fame, has said she wants to make her country's "**extremely intolerant**" society and political system more open and democratic. [2.1]
- 2) “The whole campaign looks like this: a **giant facing down scores of political dwarves**.” [2.2]
- 3) Barred from leveraging so-called “**administrative resources**” — the bureaucratic machinery of various state-backed media, security and educational institutions — to promote their respective candidacies, presidential hopefuls, such as Grigory Yavlinsky of the liberal Yabloko Party, rely instead on the “**Kremlin-orchestrated circus**” of reality TV-style debates defined by water-throwing, name-calling and threats of physical violence. [2.2]
- 4) With final results still to be declared, Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared on course to be re-elected decisively in what one of his challengers described as a "**filthy election**." [2.6]

- 5) Putin's nearest rival, Communist candidate Pavel Grudinin, who was on course to secure 11.9 percent, told reporters Monday that the election was the "**filthiest** ever." [2.6]
- 6) Asked if he would seek the presidency again in 2030, the 65-year-old Russian leader snapped, "**It's ridiculous. Do you think I will sit here until I turn 100?**" [2.7]
- 7) "**Of course, this is an absolute fake. It's ridiculous and unpleasant to look at how Putin corrupted and turned into his puppets a significant part of the European establishment.**" [2.7]
- 8) "**With your decision, you showed the whole world what is real, rather than sham, democracy. You came to the referendum and made a decision. You voted for your future and future of your children,**" Putin said. [2.10]
- 9) "**In his campaign rally in Crimea today, President Putin reiterated Russia's false claims to Ukrainian territory in another open admission that the Russian government disdains the international order and disrespects the territorial integrity of sovereign nations,**" spokeswoman Heather Nauert said. [2.10]
- 10) "**Of course, this is an absolute fake. It's ridiculous and unpleasant to look at how Putin corrupted and turned into his puppets a significant part of the European establishment.**" [2.16]
- 11) Commenting on the pollster's announcement, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday it was "**unfortunate**" that Levada will not be able to publish its polls but said it was a matter of following the law. [2.17]
- 12) "**Not just to give him guarantees, but show that Russia can develop evolutionarily and is ready for political race through elections ... [where] Putin doesn't have to worry that the courts—the very courts he has turned into puppet courts—will prosecute him,**" she said. [2.19]
- 13) Navalny is calling it a "**pseudo-election.**" [2.21]
- 14) Putin has been Russian president or prime minister since the last day of 1999. Many of the young marchers who have known no other leader say they are sick of living in what one of them calls a "**quagmire.**" [2.21]
- 15) "As long as I've been alive, Putin has *always* been in. **I'm tired of nothing being changed.**" a 19 year-old marcher in St. Petersburg said. [2.21]
- 16) Others waved signs denouncing Putin as a "**thief**" and a "**czar**." [2.21]
- 17) Putin, echoing his familiar refrain that his country is facing a treacherous Western campaign to hold it back, said he had "no doubt" that the IOC's decision was "**absolutely orchestrated and politically-motivated.**" [2.25]

- 18) “They are targeting our national honor ... our reputation ... and our interests. They (the West) **bought out the traitors ... and orchestrated media hysteria**,” Kosachyov wrote on social media. [2.25]
- 19) The sport-loving leader cast his hosting of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, at which the IOC says there was “**unprecedented** systematic manipulation” of the anti-doping system, as a symbol of Russia's success under his rule. [2.25]
- 20) “*Choosing between the people in Crimea, who wept when the Russian flag was run up and who were **doomed to genocide**, and sportspeople taking first place on the podium, I choose the people who couldn't defend themselves,*” Kudrashov said. [2.25]
- 21) The European Court of Human Rights has ruled the proceedings against the opposition leader were “**arbitrary and unfair**.” [2.26]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person singular):**

- 1) “*I see in this trust and hope, the hope of our people that we will work with the same intensity, with the same sense of responsibility and with even greater results,*” he added, before leading the crowd in a chant of “*Russia, Russia!*” [2.6]
- 2) When asked by reporters if he will run again he laughed, saying, “*What you are saying is a bit funny. Do you think that I will stay here until I'm 100 years old? No!*” he said. [2.6]
- 3) “*I am sure the program I am offering is the right one,*” he told reporters. [2.6]
- 4) Asked if he would seek the presidency again in 2030, the 65-year-old Russian leader snapped, “*It's ridiculous. Do you think I will sit here until I turn 100?*” [2.7]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural):**

- 1) “*I see in this trust and hope, the hope of **our** people that **we** will work with the same intensity, with the same sense of responsibility and with even greater results,*” he added, before leading the crowd in a chant of “*Russia, Russia!*” [2.6]
- 2) “*Thank **you** for the fact that **we** have such a powerful, millions-strong team. Success awaits **us**.*” [2.6]
- 3) The deputy chairman of Russia’s Central Election Commission dismissed allegations of irregularities, tweeting: “*There is not a single other country in the world that has the level of transparency that **we** are demonstrating today.*” [2.6]
- 4) He addressed thousands on the Manezhnaya Square near the Kremlin late Sunday. He hailed those who voted for him as a “*big national team,*” adding that “***we** are bound for success.*” [2.7]

- 5) "**Our** government is in the grip of illusions. They deal with Syria and they're not interested in what's happening in Novosibirsk, and people there feel it," Navalny told the AP. [2.9]
- 6) In a rallying call, he said there were still things to improve in Crimea, but "**we** will definitely do everything, because when **we** are together, **we** are a huge force that can resolve the most difficult problems." [2.10]
- 7) "We are faced with a construct in which they, the authorities, look into the eyes of the public and say: 'You know we will not allow you to choose your own people's representatives. **We** offered you some people — you can vote for them,'" he said. [2.16]
- 8) "They are targeting **our** national honor ... **our** reputation ... and **our** interests. [2.25]
- 9) "Outside pressure just makes **us** stronger," said one such source who declined to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the media. [2.25]
- 10) "What haven't we been forced to suffer from **our** 'partners' in the course of **our** history," she wrote. "But they just can't bring **us** down. Not via a world war, the collapse of the Soviet Union or sanctions ... **We** soak it up and survive." [2.25]
- 11) In a recent television interview, Putin wouldn't even mention Navalny by name, but the Russian leader gruffly said he wouldn't allow Navalny to "destabilize **our** country." [2.26]

The distribution of engagements markers within quotations is shown in Table 21:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	12	0	1	0	13
Percentage	92.31%	0%	7.69%	0%	

Table 21. Distribution of engagement markers in election-related articles (Voice of America) in quotations

Reader pronouns are the most numerous engagement markers in quotations which means that the person referred to make an attempt to engage with the audience in order to establish contact. There is a single instance of directives and no appeals to shared knowledge and questions. The following examples were found:

- **Reader pronouns:**

- 1) "With **your** decision **you** restored historical justice," he told the crowd of supporters in Sevastopol, home to the Black Sea Fleet's base. [2.10]

2) “With **your** decision, **you** showed the whole world what is real, rather than sham, democracy. **You** came to the referendum and made a decision. **You** voted for **your** future and future of **your** children,” Putin said. [2.10]

3) “We are faced with a construct in which they, the authorities, look into the eyes of the public and say: ‘**You** know we will not allow you to choose **your** own people’s representatives. We offered **you** some people — **you** can vote for them,’” he said. [2.16]

▪ **Directives:**

1) “**Let** the young people start running the country. We don’t want another war, and with Sobchak, there won’t be a war,” he said. [2.2]

To conclude, the two patterns found in the body of the articles and quotations are quite different, as hedges and boosters are prevalent in the main part, while boosters and negative attitude markers are more numerous in quotations. A possible explanation for such distribution is offered in the qualitative analysis of election-related articles from *Voice of America*.

5.2.2. Qualitative analysis of election-related articles

The first thematic category in the second part of the corpus is comprised of 26 articles on the electoral campaign in Russia. Putin, as an expected frontrunner of the election, is mentioned in all the articles under analysis. Out of all the alternative candidates running for presidency the only one, Ksenia Sobchak, is mentioned, while not a single mention was made about the others. Besides, *Voice of America* devoted several articles to Alexey Navalny, a political activist who gained prominence via his blog and YouTube channel where he posted documents and investigations about corruption by Russian state officials, organized political demonstrations and promoted political campaigns. After a series of charges and criminal cases that are frequently labelled as politically motivated he was barred from pursuing a political career as a result of a suspended sentence.

Nevertheless, a major part of interpersonal markers used in the articles are employed to describe Putin and his political activities. One of the key semantic categories formed by interpersonal markers is Putin’s probabilities to win the election. A vast number of boosters are used in this category (such as verbs *assure*, *ensure*, *guarantee*; modal verbs *will* and *must*, adjectives and participles as *certain*, *all but guaranteed*, *all but certain*, adverbs *overwhelmingly*,

widely, certainly, clearly and others) that suggests that journalists tend not to cast a doubt on the outcome of the election:

- 1) Putin is **overwhelmingly** expected to win another term after 18 years in power, riding in part on his argument that he **must** stand up to Western aggressors. [2.3]
- 2) According to NRUHSE social scientist Alexander Kynev, Putin and those tasked with **ensuring** his re-election walk a fine line when it comes to presenting research about his popular appeal. **Excessively** high popularity ratings for Putin, he said, risks giving his support base the impression that there is no need to bother going out to the polls. [2.5]
- 3) Putin, who **will** serve another six-year-term bringing him just short of ruling Russia for as long as Communist dictator Joseph Stalin, didn't wait for the final tally and addressed supporters at a flag-waving anniversary rally off Moscow's Red Square, marking Crimea's annexation by Russia four years ago. [2.6]
- 4) Putin's win over seven challengers **will** extend his time in office to nearly a quarter of a century, until 2024, by which time he will be 71 years-old. [2.6]
- 5) Kremlin officials **clearly** had been determined to produce an outsized vote for Putin as a demonstration of his legitimacy — and by lunchtime, seven hours before the polls closed, election officials projected the turnout would be 70 percent. [2.6]
- 6) With the Kremlin controlling the levers of political power nationwide after years of steps to suppress dissent and marginalize political opponents, it is virtually **certain** that the election **will** hand Putin a new six-year term. Political commentators say Putin, 65, **is eager** for a high turnout to strengthen his mandate in what could be his last stint in the Kremlin, as he would be constitutionally barred from seeking a third straight term in 2024. [2.8]
- 7) Putin's approval rating is **astronomical** and he is **widely** expected to win another term with ease, but the fact that he **won't** even say Navalny's name suggests the anti-corruption crusader has struck a nerve. Navalny's criminal record **will** probably keep him off the ballot — a sign, he says, of how much he frightens the political class. [2.9]
- 8) That support **certainly** looks strong: The latest independent poll, conducted this month by the Levada Center, suggests 75 percent of Russians would vote for Putin. [2.9]
- 9) Putin is running for a historic fourth term in a poll **all but guaranteed** to hand him another mandate. [2.10]
- 10) Polls say that incumbent President Vladimir Putin **will** likely win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.13]
- 11) President Vladimir Putin last week ended weeks of speculation, saying he **will** run for the fourth term. Putin's 80 percent approval ratings make his victory **all but certain**. [2.14]

- 12) Putin faces seven challengers but is expected to take an **overwhelming** majority of the vote. [2.16]
- 13) Kremlin critics say most of the other candidates are window dressing in a vote Putin is **certain** to win in Russia's tightly controlled political environment. [2.19]
- 14) Several thousand people braved sub-zero temperatures in cities across Russia to protest what they say is a lack of competition ahead of March presidential elections **all but guaranteed** to extend Vladimir Putin's grip on power through 2024. [2.24]
- 15) Opinion polls show Vladimir Putin is already a **shoo-in** to win a fourth presidential term. [2.25]
- 16) Vladimir Putin's re-election as president is **assured**. [2.26]

Although hedges turned out to be the most frequent markers found in *Voice of America*, few of them were found in the category of Putin's probabilities to win which contributes to the idea that journalists anticipate a particular outcome of the election. Journalists used adverbs such as *likely*, *practically*, *virtually* and modal verbs *could* and *would*. When used together with boosters, a hedging effect is levelled:

- 1) With the Kremlin controlling the levers of political power nationwide after years of steps to suppress dissent and marginalize political opponents, it is **virtually certain** that the election **will** hand Putin a new six-year term. Political commentators say Putin, 65, **is eager** for a high turnout to strengthen his mandate in what **could** be his last stint in the Kremlin, as he **would** be constitutionally barred from seeking a third straight term in 2024. [2.8]
- 2) Polls say that incumbent President Vladimir Putin **will likely** win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.13]
- 3) Polls show that Putin is **likely** to win another six-year term when the election is held on March 18. [2.15]
- 4) With another Putin win **practically guaranteed**, Navalny and other experts say Russian authorities **will** try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.16]
- 5) With another Putin win **practically** guaranteed, Navalny and other experts say, Russian authorities **could** try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.18]
- 6) Russians turned up at polling stations Sunday in an election few voters had any doubts about who **would** emerge the winner. [2.22]

Apart from voicing Putin's probabilities to win, journalists express different forecasts and hypothesize about Putin's intentions and plans during and after the electoral campaign that is done with the help of hedges. In this semantic category of forecasts and predictions journalists do employ hedges, such as modal verbs *may*, *would* and *could*, the adverb *likely* and the verb *to suggest*, as one cannot be sure about what changes may bring Putin's new term in office:

- 1) Political scientist Nikolai Petrov of Moscow's National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRUHSE) says although uneven voter turnout in cities and rural areas **may** not affect the outcome of the election, severe irregularities **would** be bad for Putin's political legacy. [2.5]
- 2) The big question as Russians headed to polling stations was: What percentage of the population **would** turn out to vote? [2.6]
- 3) Kremlin officials clearly had been determined to produce an outsized vote for Putin as a demonstration of his legitimacy — and by lunchtime, seven hours before the polls closed, election officials projected the turnout **would** be 70 percent. [2.6]
- 4) Kremlin insiders said before polling day the desired outcome **would** be 70/70 — 70 percent of the vote for Putin from a 70 percent turnout. [2.6]
- 5) Casting his ballot in Moscow Sunday, Putin said "any" result that allowed him to continue as president **would** be a "success." [2.6]
- 6) Some analysts say the uncertainty **could** trigger power struggles within the Kremlin, as possible successors jockey and maneuver against each other in case Putin decides to name a successor. [2.6]
- 7) That support certainly looks strong: The latest independent poll, conducted this month by the Levada Center, **suggests** 75 percent of Russians **would** vote for Putin. [2.9]
- 8) But there are also signs that enthusiasm for Putin **may** be starting to wane. [2.9]
- 9) Ahead of the vote, authorities are presenting the annexation as a major legacy of Putin's current term, with Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warning recently that failing to endorse Putin on Sunday **would** amount to opposing the move. [2.10]
- 10) Levada's director, Lev Gudkov, told the Russian daily *Vedomosti* on Tuesday that the agency is carrying out election polling but will not publish results during the campaign because it fears that this **could** be viewed as election meddling and **could** lead to a motion to close down the pollster. [2.17]
- 11) That raised fears of a lower turnout at the election, which **would** be a major embarrassment for the Kremlin. [2.17]

- 12) The European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have refused to send election monitors to Crimea, fearing it **would** be seen as legitimizing the Russian occupation. [2.18]
- 13) Asked whether a bloodless succession **could** be guaranteed without Putin's wealthy and powerful allies remaining in power, she said the president's departure **would** require a politically strategic transition. [2.19]
- 14) A slow, “*evolutionary*” change in Russian politics, she added, **would** require “minimizing aggression” by allowing “*new people, new talent and hav[ing] a new compromise political figure that would be satisfying for the opposition, but also acceptable for Putin.*” [2.19]
- 15) “*Our job is to demonstrate that we want regime change, but we don’t want vengeance for the years that already happened,*” Sobchak said, adding that building a new Russian political era on retribution **would** only “*scare the regime even more and Putin will never leave.*” [2.19]
- 16) Proving that Russian authorities had political motives in arresting him and not allowing his rallies to go ahead **would** set an important precedent for activists across Russia, Navalny told reporters. [2.23]
- 17) But a ban on Russia taking part in the Winter Olympics is **likely** to make support for him even stronger, by uniting voters around his message: The world is against us. [2.25]
- 18) But casting the IOC ban as a Western plot to hurt Russia, something he did when Russian athletes were banned from last year’s Summer Olympics in Rio over doping, **could** help him mobilize the electorate. [2.25]
- 19) Public anger over the IOC move **could** help Putin overcome signs of voter apathy and ensure a high turnout which, in the tightly controlled limits of the Russian political system, is seen as conferring legitimacy. [2.25]
- 20) But Vitali Shkliarov, one of her advisers, indicated this week that her campaign **may** well fit into the Kremlin’s electoral management plans. [2.26]

Staged election and voting irregularities is another major semantic category formed by interpersonal markers in the discourse under analysis. It is comprised of hedged accusations (mostly of the verb *to allege* and its derivatives and the adverb *likely*) of a rigged election, boosters and negative attitude markers. Here are the examples of hedges found in this category:

- 1) Facing weak candidates — some **likely** encouraged to run by a Kremlin eager to give the election a veneer of competitiveness — Putin, who has held power since succeeding Boris Yeltsin in 1999, had always been guaranteed victory in an election timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the Russian annexation of Crimea. [2.6]

- 2) The deputy chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission dismissed *allegations* of irregularities, tweeting: "There is not a single other country in the world that has the level of transparency that we are demonstrating today." [2.6]
- 3) The group said it received more than 2,000 *alleged* violations, including claims ballot boxes had been positioned out of sight of observation cameras. [2.6]
- 4) Putin is running as an independent candidate, keeping a distance from the top Kremlin party, United Russia, which has been dogged by corruption *allegations* against some of its top members. [2.11]
- 5) Navalny, who rose to prominence galvanizing street protests in Moscow against *alleged* voter fraud in the 2011 legislative elections, says other candidates are handpicked or useful as props. Kremlin officials deny the accusation. [2.26]

As it is demonstrated before, very few hedges were found in this category in comparison to the number of boosters that are shown below. Boosters turn out to be the main interpersonal marker that is used to project *Voice of America's* standpoint in general. They are used to talk about an alternative candidate for the presidential post, such as Ksenia Sobchak, that was frequently accused of being hand-picked by the Kremlin, while other candidates are never mentioned and Putin's most credible challenger was banned from participation. As journalists are expected to follow the standard of objective unbiased reporting, they reduce the amount of evaluative vocabulary, such as attitude markers, and make an extensive use of boosters that intensify the message without providing explicit evaluation:

- 1) Critics of Sobchak — including liberal opposition Yabloko party leader Grigory Yavlinsky — say her effort to run plays into the hands of the Kremlin, *merely* giving the appearance of a democratic process by having another well-known person on the ballot. [2.1]
- 2) In a Russian presidential campaign season in which Kremlin officials have *insisted* that candidates abide by federal election laws, numerous news outlets have reported President Vladimir Putin's exception to the rule. [2.2]
- 3) While exploitation of state resources to bolster the candidacy of an established leader is a time-tested feature of Russian politics, this year it is *completely* different — and *exactly* the same — says Maria Lipman, editor of the Moscow-based Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint), an open-access Russian-language journal of politics and society published by George Washington University. [2.2]
- 4) However, opposition leader Navalny, accused by Putin of being Washington's pick for president, has predicted the authorities *will* resort to *widespread* fraud to deliver a Putin landslide and has spoken of organizing post-election protests of the kind that roiled Russia after Putin's last election victory in 2012. [2.4]

- 5) It **will** deliver its verdict on how clean the election was on Monday. [2.4]
- 6) The Kremlin's preference for a high voter turnout to give a Putin re-election the appearance of democratic legitimacy has been **widely** reported in international media. [2.5]
- 7) Opposition monitors said they were finding **stark** differences in their turnout counts from the official ones, ranging from 12 to 25 percent in some towns and regions. [2.6]
- 8) Navalny has been convicted on two separate sets of charges **largely** viewed as politically motivated. [2.14]
- 9) With another Putin win practically guaranteed, Navalny and other experts say Russian authorities **will** try to use inflated voter turnout numbers to prove the election was a success. [2.16]
- 10) Navalny said the elections are staged to look free and fair, but that **at best** they are an insincere effort. [2.16]
- 11) Results of Levada's polls have not differed **dramatically** from those by the two main state-owned polling agencies in terms of support for Putin and the ruling party. But recent polls **did** show a difference regarding the turnout for the upcoming vote. [2.17]
- 12) That raised fears of a lower turnout at the election, which would be a **major** embarrassment for the Kremlin. [2.17]
- 13) Barred from participating by Russia's courts and state election commission, Navalny's campaign has shifted to calls to boycott the election — arguing low voter turnout nationwide **will** take the shine off a Putin victory and high voter approval ratings that, they argue, are inflated by state manipulation. [2.24]
- 14) Navalny's supporters have **largely** derided Sobchak's campaign as a Kremlin ploy to legitimize the vote. [2.24]
- 15) Sources close to the Russian government say the IOC ban, along with continued Western sanctions over Ukraine and the prospect of new sanctions, **will** help the authorities rally voters around the banner of national unity which Putin embodies. [2.25]

Meanwhile, Alexey Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and Kremlin's leading critic, is characterized with a number of positive attitudinals:

- 1) Alexei Navalny, the **charismatic** anticorruption crusader who has built a national following by railing against endemic corruption, made a similar observation several months ago. [2.19]
- 2) The country's only **truly independent** opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner, has been excluded from standing; his disqualification was upheld Saturday by Russia's Supreme Court. [2.26]

In general, very few negative attitude markers were found in the category of election interference as well as in *Voice of America* in general. It may be explained by the fact that journalists are supposed to be unbiased and give factual information in straight news articles, however, they cannot be fully detached from their attitudes, values and opinions when writing a news story. All the negative markers found in this category evaluate the electoral campaign, reported electoral fraud and presidential candidates:

- 1) The Russian campaign remains *lackluster* just three days before the vote. [2.3]
- 2) Political scientist Nikolai Petrov of Moscow's National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRUHSE) says although uneven voter turnout in cities and rural areas may not affect the outcome of the election, *severe* irregularities would be bad for Putin's political legacy. [2.5]
- 3) Nonetheless, activists posted videos online showing *blatant* violations. [2.6]
- 4) He was referring to 37-year-old Ksenia Sobchak, a former socialite and broadcaster, once famous for a *raunchy* reality television show. [2.6]
- 5) Opposition leader Navalny told VOA's Russian service on Thursday that Putin's observers in Crimea were political *cronies*, not objective observers. [2.7]
- 6) Russians are expected to vote Sunday in a presidential election, but disqualified opposition candidate Alexei Navalny told VOA's Russian service that he expected the entire process to be a *sham*, even down to the European election observers. [2.16]
- 7) Opposition leader Navalny told VOA's Russian service on Thursday that Putin's observers in Crimea were political *cronies*, not objective observers. [2.18]
- 8) Sobchak, 36, whose candidacy has been questioned by opposition activists and political observers who suspect her campaign is a Kremlin *ploy* to boost turnout and help Putin's bid for another six-year term, is not the first to make this claim. [2.19]
- 9) Kremlin critics say most of the other candidates are *window dressing* in a vote Putin is certain to win in Russia's tightly controlled political environment. [2.19]
- 10) Soon after the polls closed in the enclave of Kaliningrad, preliminary results indicated incumbent President Vladimir Putin had secured victory in an election critics say was *stage-managed*. [2.22]
- 11) Navalny's supporters have largely *derided Sobchak's campaign as a Kremlin ploy* to legitimize the vote. [2.24]
- 12) The 36-year-old Sobchak denies accusations by Navalny that she's a *stooge* and is coordinating her campaign with the Kremlin. [2.26]

There is an interesting example of a context-sensitive negative attitudinal *time-tested* found in the characterization of the presidential campaign. It usually defined as “*something that has been used for a long time and has been proved to work well*” that seems to be, at first sight, a positive feature, although, in this context it acquires a clearly negative connotation that contributes to the idea that metadiscursive markers enjoy significant flexibility:

- 1) While exploitation of state resources to bolster the candidacy of an established leader is a *time-tested* feature of Russian politics, this year it is completely different — and exactly the same — says Maria Lipman, editor of the Moscow-based Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint), an open-access Russian-language journal of politics and society published by George Washington University. [2.2]

In the semantic category of staged election journalists prefer to resort to extensive boosting and moderate hedging, while negative attitude markers are almost absent. Meanwhile, more negative attitude markers in combination with boosters are found in quotations, where the negative charge is more salient. Relying on the supposition that quotations are chosen deliberately that may be explained by an attempt to strengthen the message indirectly through referencing other people, thus, shifting responsibility onto the people who these quotations belong to, without being too emotional in the body of the articles:

- 1) “*The whole campaign looks like this: a giant facing down scores of political dwarves.*” [2.2]
- 2) Barred from leveraging so-called “*administrative resources*” — the bureaucratic machinery of various state-backed media, security and educational institutions — to promote their respective candidacies, presidential hopefuls, such as Grigory Yavlinsky of the liberal Yabloko Party, rely instead on the “*Kremlin-orchestrated circus*” of reality TV-style debates defined by water-throwing, name-calling and threats of physical violence. [2.2]
- 3) With final results still to be declared, Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared on course to be re-elected decisively in what one of his challengers described as a “*filthy election.*” [2.6]
- 4) Putin’s nearest rival, Communist candidate Pavel Grudinin, who was on course to secure 11.9 percent, told reporters Monday that the election was *the “filthiest ever.”* [2.6]
- 5) “*Of course, this is an absolute fake. It’s ridiculous and unpleasant to look at how Putin corrupted and turned into his puppets a significant part of the European establishment.*” [2.7]
- 6) Navalny is calling it a “*pseudo-election.*” [2.21]

Another example of indirect evaluation that journalists from *Voice of America* resort to is the use of hedges that subjectivise statements (such as *she says*, *Navalny says*, *what he and his supporters contend*, *some observers believe* and others) suggesting that what is being said is a personal view instead of the absolute truth, while the rest of the vocabulary tends to be non-evaluative language units. The use of indirect speech instead of placing direct quotations in this case is a means of making these propositions more straightforward:

- 1) She has also called for the resignation of top Russian officials **she says** are responsible for the country's sports-doping scandal and has rejected Kremlin claims of U.S. meddling in Russian politics, saying interference by foreign players **could** not significantly impact domestic affairs. [2.1]
- 2) Aleksei Navalny, Russia's most well-known opposition politician, has also declared his intention to run in the March election, although the authorities are blocking his candidacy based on a criminal conviction **Navalny says** is politically motivated. [2.1]
- 3) Days before Sunday's election, which polls show incumbent Vladimir Putin is on track to win comfortably, Golos, a non-governmental organization that monitors Russian elections, **says** it is under unprecedented pressure. [2.4]
- 4) Its problems are part of **what Kremlin critics say** is a wider campaign by authorities to hinder or silence dissenting voices. [2.4]
- 5) Putin's only credible challenger, blogger and activist Alexei Navalny, was barred from running because of a fraud conviction **he said** was designed to exclude him from electoral politics. [2.6]
- 6) Navalny, an anti-corruption crusader and opposition leader, called for the boycott after being barred from the March 18 presidential election because of a financial-crimes conviction **that he and his supporters contend** was Kremlin-engineered retribution. [2.8]
- 7) Navalny has accused the rest of the field of presidential hopefuls of playing into Putin's hands and aiding **what he says** is a Kremlin bid to portray the vote as a legitimate, competitive contest. [2.8]
- 8) Navalny's criminal record will **probably** keep him off the ballot — a sign, **he says**, of how much he frightens the political class. [2.9]
- 9) Putin, a former KGB officer, is running as an independent, a decision **some observers believe would** enhance his image as a leader of a nation instead of a party political figure. [2.13]
- 10) Navalny has been barred from the election because of a suspended prison sentence **he says** was fabricated. [2.15]

- 11) Putin, a former KGB officer, is running as an independent, a **decision some observers believe would** enhance his image as a leader of a nation instead of a party political figure. [2.15]
- 12) He is barred from running because of a suspended prison sentence for embezzlement – a **charge he and his followers say** was contrived and political. [2.21]
- 13) Navalny made his name by using social media to report on **what he says** is corruption by top Russian leaders. [2.21]
- 14) Soon after the polls closed in the enclave of Kaliningrad, preliminary results indicated incumbent President Vladimir Putin had secured victory in an election **critics say** was stage-managed. [2.22]
- 15) Navalny **claims** his 2013 conviction for embezzlement was engineered by the Kremlin to keep him from public office. [2.23]
- 16) Several thousand people braved sub-zero temperatures in cities across Russia to protest **what they say** is a lack of competition ahead of March presidential elections all but guaranteed to extend Vladimir Putin's grip on power through 2024. [2.24]
- 17) Barred from participating by Russia's courts and state election commission, Navalny's campaign has shifted to calls to boycott the election — arguing low voter turnout nationwide will take the shine off a Putin victory and high voter approval ratings that, **they argue**, are inflated by state manipulation. [2.24]
- 18) He linked the decision to a Western anti-Russian campaign **which many Russians believe** took hold after Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. [2.25]
- 19) But when it became clear that U.S. **allegations** of Russian meddling in Trump's election precluded any rapprochement, Putin doubled down on the narrative. In October, he launched a stinging critique of U.S. policy, listing **what he called** the biggest betrayals in U.S.-Russia relations. [2.25]
- 20) The Kremlin, **they say**, is determined to ensure a big turnout to demonstrate that Putin remains Russia's "irreplaceable leader," 18 years after first coming to power, and that his grip on the nation hasn't weakened. [2.26]
- 21) The 41-year-old was barred last month from standing in the March poll by the country's election commission on the grounds that he has a 2013 embezzlement conviction that **Navalny says** was politically motivated and engineered to keep him out of the election. [2.26]

Indirect evaluation of the alleged interference into the presidential election is also achieved through the use of numerous quotations saturated with such interpersonal markers as hedges and boosters that belong to political scientists, activists and lay public that express their opinion on the election, potential voter turnout and its outcome:

- 1) “Even in 2008, it **was clear** that whichever candidate Putin proposed to his fellow citizens as a successor **would** be accepted, supported and voted for by the nation simply because Putin recommended him.” [2.2]
- 2) “In such a system, public administration and power are concentrated **virtually** in the hands of one person,” she said. “This person **should** be beyond competition.” [2.2]
- 3) “Our media monitoring initiative has not recorded a **single** negative mention of Putin, although one **can** always find grounds for criticism of a leader who has been in power for so many years,” Melkonyants said. [2.2]
- 4) “In this sense, it **may** be better to preserve the intrigue and induce the voter, regardless of the fact that the result looks predetermined, to come out and vote on March 18,” Kynev said. [2.2]
- 5) “**It is necessary** to demonstrate such an **overwhelming** superiority that no one has **the slightest** doubt that this is the right order of things in Russia.” [2.2]
- 6) “This particular way of legitimization was even apparent in 2012, when Putin’s **colossal** advantage over political competitors was less obvious, and his rating fell to little more than 60 percent,” she said. “We remember the protests that accompanied his return to the presidency in 2012, so, this time, the super majority is **critical** to restoring his political legitimacy.” [2.2]
- 7) “Others watch this and understand that if they overplay their hand or attempt to sit atop the pedestal occupied by [Putin], there **will** be problems,” Melkonyants said. [2.4]
- 8) In this sense, he said, “he **must** not lose in a **significant** way in this internal, mental competition” to secure his long-term political and populist legitimacy. [2.5]
- 9) “We are faced with a construct in which they, the authorities, look into the eyes of the public and say: ‘You know we **will not** allow you to choose your own people’s representatives. We offered you some people — you **can** vote for them,’” he said. [2.16]
- 10) “As long as I’ve been alive, Putin has **always** been in. I’m tired of nothing being changed.” a 19 year-old marcher in St. Petersburg said. [2.21]
- 11) Writing for CNN, he said: “The Kremlin **may** be afraid of lower voter turnout - an indication of voter apathy and a decreasing legitimacy in the government. By allowing the semblance of increased competition, the Kremlin **may** be hoping to engage more voters - and get higher voter turnout on Election Day.” [2.26]

Another major semantic category found in the articles from *Voice of America* elaborates on the crackdown on dissent in Putin’s Russia in comprised mainly of boosters that are found

in the body of the articles, following the pattern of abstaining from explicit negative evaluation and substituting it with boosters:

- 1) Days before Sunday's election, which polls show incumbent Vladimir Putin is on track to win comfortably, Golos, a non-governmental organization that monitors Russian elections, says it is under **unprecedented** pressure. [2.4]
- 2) Its volunteers have complained of being **systematically** stopped for long periods when leaving or entering the country by border staff who tell them there's a note by their name that says they are linked to terrorism, Golos said. [2.4]
- 3) Russians unhappy with the prospect of six more years under President Vladimir Putin are expected to protest nationwide on Sunday, backing Alexei Navalny's call for an election boycott amid warnings from authorities that they **will** be tough on demonstrators deemed to have broken the law. [2.8]
- 4) At a meeting with top Moscow police officials, First Deputy Interior Minister Aleksandr Gorovoi said that police would respect the right of citizens to hold public gatherings, as provided by the constitution and other legislation — but **emphasized** they would "absolutely toughly ... prevent violations of these laws." [2.8]
- 5) In a blog post on Saturday, Navalny **urged** people to come to the rallies on Sunday, writing that "to stay at home is to send them [those in power] the signal: 'I'm ready to endure this for another six years.'" [2.8]
- 6) Police have **repeatedly** cracked down on demonstrations organized by Navalny in the past. [2.8]
- 7) With the visibility came the backlash: The 41-year-old Navalny has been convicted on two sets of unrelated charges, and his brother was sent to prison in what was **largely** viewed as political revenge. [2.9]
- 8) While Navalny has captured the attention of a younger generation and the politically active via social media, he conceded he **won't** be able to reach the broader population as long as he is barred from state television. [2.9]
- 9) Navalny was not a candidate during Russia's last presidential election in 2012, but he spearheaded **massive** anti-government protests that rattled Putin. [2.9]
- 10) Navalny has been convicted on two separate sets of charges **largely** viewed as politically motivated. [2.14]
- 11) Navalny says Putin's popularity is **largely** due to biased state media and an electoral system that excludes legitimate opponents. [2.15]
- 12) Authorities **insist** that the law does not aim to target critics of the Kremlin. [2.17]

- 13) Former presidential candidate Alexey Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has been blocked from participating in the elections over legal problems **widely** seen as manufactured to keep him out of the race, was reported to have been in attendance. [2.20]
- 14) While the verdicts were welcomed by supporters of Nemtsov, the investigation and trial were condemned for failing to uncover the masterminds of the killing or addressing the motive, which is **widely** believed to be political. [2.20]
- 15) He is **urging** Russians to boycott the March presidential election, in which Vladimir Putin is just about assured to win a fourth term. [2.21]
- 16) Yet Sunday's protests reflected a realization among Navalny's camp that such a direct contest **will** not take place. [2.24]
- 17) **Notable** exceptions were Russia's two main cities — Moscow and St. Petersburg — where police and interior ministry troop presence were heavy and authorities threatened arrests. [2.24]
- 18) But Sunday's smaller numbers, despite temperatures as low as -40C in Siberia, were **all but certain** to fuel debate in opposition circles over the wisdom of Navalny's call for a nationwide boycott of the vote. [2.24]

The annexation of Crimea is another semantic category found in this part of the corpus. The very word *annexation* defined as 'to take possession of an area of land or a country, usually by force or without permission' was classified as a negative attitudinal that expresses *Voice of America's* view of the military manoeuvre performed by the Russian president as compared to *reunification*, the word that is typically used in *Russia Today*. In this category the pattern of avoiding negative attitudinals is observed as well, as the only attitude markers used in this category are derivatives of the verb *to annex*:

- 1) Sobchak has also **irked** some Kremlin supporters with comments saying that Crimea is legally part of Ukraine despite its **annexation** by Moscow. [2.1]
- 2) Russia's **annexation** of Crimea has not been recognized by the international community. [2.1]
- 3) Putin, who will serve another six-year-term bringing him just short of ruling Russia for as long as Communist dictator Joseph Stalin, didn't wait for the final tally and addressed supporters at a flag-waving anniversary rally off Moscow's Red Square, marking Crimea's **annexation** by Russia four years ago. [2.6]
- 4) Facing weak candidates — some likely encouraged to run by a Kremlin eager to give the election a veneer of competitiveness — Putin, who has held power since succeeding Boris

Yeltsin in 1999, had always been guaranteed victory in an election timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the Russian **annexation** of Crimea. [2.6]

- 5) In Crimea, the territory Russia said it **annexed** from Ukraine, a few European politicians who are friendly with Putin acted as election observers. [2.7]
- 6) Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday thanked residents of Crimea for voting **to annex** the peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, calling the move "*real democracy*" in a speech days ahead of Sunday's presidential election. [2.10]
- 7) The **annexation** of Crimea in March 2014 was **slammed** by the international community and led to sanctions against Moscow but is celebrated by most Russians and resulted in a major boost of Putin's popularity at the time. [2.10]
- 8) Ahead of the vote, authorities are presenting the **annexation** as a major legacy of Putin's current term, with Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin warning recently that failing to endorse Putin on Sunday would amount to opposing the move. [2.10]
- 9) In Crimea, the territory Russia says it has **annexed** from Ukraine, a few European politicians who are friendly with Putin are acting as election observers. [2.18]
- 10) Washington first hit Moscow with asset freezes and travel bans in 2014, following Russia's **annexation** of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and the outbreak of fighting between government forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. [2.19]
- 11) He linked the decision to a Western anti-Russian campaign which many Russians believe took hold after Russia **annexed** the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. [2.25]
- 12) Blaming the West is an approach the Kremlin has often used before when faced with international allegations of wrongdoing — over Crimea's **annexation**, the shooting down of a Malaysian passenger plane over Ukraine in July 2014 and charges of meddling in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists rebelled against rule from Kiev after Crimea was annexed. [2.25]

A vast number of interpersonal markers both inside and outside quotations are used to characterize the Russian president, thus, forming another semantic category that is devoted to Putin's image. A relatively high number of negative markers compared to the previous semantic categories (forecasts and probabilities to win, staged election and crackdown on dissent) are found in this category that reveal *Voice of America's* vision of him:

- 1) Only the incumbent himself **remains above the fray**, exempted from debates in exchange for **fawning** 90-minute documentaries by Rosiya-1 state television. [2.2]

- 2) Even so, his face is everywhere — at his annual news conference last week, carried live for nearly four hours on Russian television, he **touted** his accomplishments and even **taunted** Navalny — but stuck to his practice of not saying his name. [2.9]
- 3) Navalny was not a candidate during Russia's last presidential election in 2012, but he spearheaded massive anti-government protests that **rattled** Putin. [2.9]
- 4) Putin is running as an independent candidate, keeping a distance from the top Kremlin party, United Russia, which has been **dogged** by corruption allegations against some of its top members. [2.11]
- 5) Alexei Navalny, the charismatic anticorruption crusader who has built a national following by railing against **endemic** corruption, made a similar observation several months ago. [2.19]
- 6) Putin, **echoing his familiar refrain that his country is facing a treacherous Western campaign to hold it back**, said he had “no doubt” that the IOC’s decision was “absolutely orchestrated and politically-motivated.” [2.25]
- 7) In October, he launched a **stinging** critique of U.S. policy, listing what he called the biggest betrayals in U.S.-Russia relations. [2.25]
- 8) In a recent television interview, Putin wouldn’t even mention Navalny by name, but the Russian leader **gruffly** said he wouldn’t allow Navalny to “destabilize **our** country.” [2.26]

An interesting example of a context-sensitive metadiscourse marker was found in quotations. Putin, labelled as ‘*super candidate*’, which is a positive attitudinal used together with ‘*super majority*’, which is a political term devoid of any emotional charge. This example shows that the same polysemantic word *super* may have different interpersonal functions depending on the context:

- 1) Evolving ‘**Super Candidate**’ Putin Strategizing for ‘**Super Majority**’ Turnout. [2.2]
- 2) He should not simply be one of the candidates, but a ‘*super candidate*’ elected by ‘*super majority*.’ [2.2]

Journalists from *Voice of America* create Putin’s identity with the use of quotations as well as in the previous categories. It is done thorough the introduction of quotations that belong to Putin’s opponents, where hedges and boosters are found:

- 1) "Putin has nothing to say," Navalny said. "All he **can** promise is what he used to promise before, and you **can** check that these promises did not come true and cannot come true." [2.9]

- 2) “Yes, I think [he really **would** retire],” she said. “It’s just hard to convince him that there’s an exit and that he **can** trust the people who [**would**] guarantee that, and that nothing like what happened to [former Chilean dictator Augusto] Pinochet or [former Libyan dictator Moammar] Gadhafi **would** happen to him. He’s really afraid of that.” [2.19]
- 3) “The question here is about a change of the entire system, so that those people **would not** stay in power either,” Sobchak said. “We’re talking about politics and [a long-term] strategy, so in six years [Putin] **wouldn’t** think about new changes to the constitution and again take part in elections.” [2.19]
- 4) A slow, “evolutionary” change in Russian politics, she added, would require “minimizing aggression” by allowing “new people, new talent and hav[ing] a new compromise political figure that **would** be satisfying for the opposition, but also acceptable for Putin.” [2.19]
- 5) “They **believe** Putin **can** beat Navalny, and we **believe** Navalny **can** beat Putin,” he added. [2.24]

And boosters:

- 1) “In his campaign rally in Crimea today, President Putin **reiterated** Russia’s false claims to Ukrainian territory in another open admission that the Russian government disdains the international order and disrespects the territorial integrity of sovereign nations,” spokeswoman Heather Nauert said. [2.10]
- 2) “Yes, I think [he really would retire],” she said. “It’s just hard to convince him that there’s an exit and that he can trust the people who [would] guarantee that, and that nothing like what happened to [former Chilean dictator Augusto] Pinochet or [former Libyan dictator Moammar] Gadhafi would happen to him. He’s **really** afraid of that.” [2.19]
- 3) “Our job is to demonstrate that we want regime change, but we don’t want vengeance for the years that already happened,” Sobchak said, adding that building a new Russian political era on retribution would only “scare the regime even more and Putin **will** never leave.” [2.19]

Apart from using quotations with interpersonal markers that belong to other people, journalists introduce Putin’s words as well, thus, the image of Putin in *Voice of America* is also built through self-characterization as it is argued that the choice of quotations is deliberate. In this category we observe a considerable diversity of markers, such as hedges (*can*), boosters (*will, definitely, bound for, repetition with the same, superlative forms*), positive (*powerful, millions-strong, real*) and negative attitude markers (*sham, ridiculous*), self-mentions both in 1st person singular and plural. Boosters, self-mentions and reader pronouns prevail in these

quotations, suggesting that the intensification of the message and bringing into prominence Putin's personality, as self-mentions and reader pronouns are frequently repeated several times within the same phrase, were paramount to the discourse under analysis:

- 1) Speaking from a stage to a cheering crowd, Putin said his victory was a recognition of what had been achieved in the past few years. "*I see in this trust and hope, the hope of **our** people that we **will** work **with the same** intensity, **with the same** sense of responsibility and **with** even greater results,*" he added, before leading the crowd in a chant of "Russia, Russia!" [2.6]
- 2) "*Thank **you** for the fact that **we** have such a **powerful, millions-strong** team. Success awaits **us**.*" [2.6]
- 3) When asked by reporters if he will run again he laughed, saying, "*What you are saying is a **bit funny**. Do **you** think that I **will** stay here until I'm 100 years old? No!*" he said. [2.6]
- 4) Asked if he would seek the presidency again in 2030, the 65-year-old Russian leader snapped, "*It's **ridiculous**. Do **you** think I **will** sit here until I turn 100?*" [2.7]
- 5) He addressed thousands on the Manezhnaya Square near the Kremlin late Sunday. He hailed those who voted for him as a "*big national team,*" adding that "***we are bound** for success.*" [2.7]
- 6) "*With **your** decision, **you** showed the whole world what is **real**, rather than **sham**, democracy. **You** came to the referendum and made a decision. **You** voted for **your** future and future of **your** children,*" Putin said. [2.10]
- 7) In a rallying call, he said there were still things to improve in Crimea, but "***we will definitely** do everything, because when **we** are together, **we** are a huge force that **can** resolve the **most** difficult problems.*" [2.10]
- 8) "*Russia **will** continue moving forwards, and nobody **will** ever be able to stop this forward movement,*" Putin said. [2.25]
- 9) "*They are targeting **our** national honor ... **our** reputation ... and **our** interests*". [2.25]
- 10) "*What haven't we been forced to suffer from **our** 'partners' in the course of **our** history,*" she wrote. "*But they just can't bring **us** down. Not via a world war, the collapse of the Soviet Union or sanctions ... **We** soak it up and survive.*" [2.25]
- 11) In a recent television interview, Putin wouldn't even mention Navalny by name, but the Russian leader gruffly said he wouldn't allow Navalny to "*destabilize **our** country.*" [2.26]

Diagram 4 shows all the semantic categories found in the articles on the presidential election and mentioned above. Journalists express their opinion of *Putin's probabilities to win* and provide respective *forecasts*, thus, backing their standpoint that the *presidential election*

was staged, as alternative candidates were banned from participation as a result of *crackdown on dissent*. *Annexation of Crimea* is one of the issues that cast a shadow on Putin's image on the political arena. *Putin is characterized indirectly* through quotations that belong to him (*self-characterization*) and to political activists and lay public.

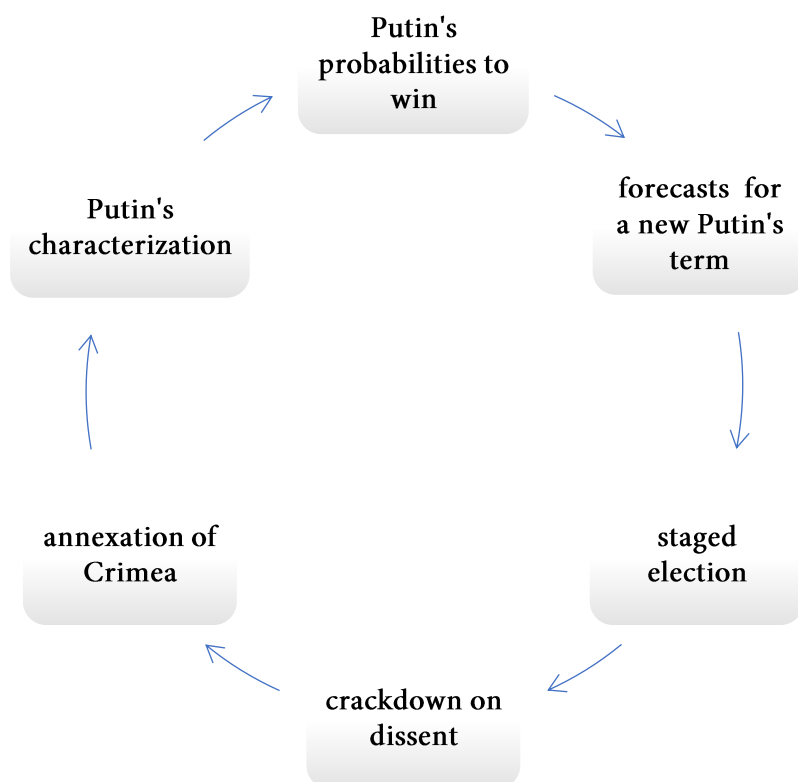


Diagram 4. Major semantic categories in election-related articles in *Voice of America*.

In this section of the corpus we observe the prevalence of hedges and boosters with a relatively small number of negative attitudinals in the body of the articles, while quotations possess a higher interpersonal potential with a bigger number of negative attitude markers and other stance and engagement markers. It may be explained by the necessity to comply with the standard of unbiased reporting, as journalists try to avoid explicit evaluation in the body of the articles, resorting only to boosters and hedges. Nevertheless, hedges are frequently accompanied by boosters that mitigate a hedging effect. Implicit or indirect evaluation is ensured through the use of quotations and hedges that subjectivise expressed opinions and give reference to other people, thus, handing over the responsibility to the people quoted in the articles.

5.2.3. Quantitative analysis of articles on miscellaneous issues.

The second thematic category revealed in the corpus comprised of the articles from *Voice of America* covers a wide range of issues related to both international and domestic policies carried by Vladimir Putin throughout the period of 2019 electoral campaign. These issues include the poisoning of the Skripals in Salisbury, England, Russian meddling in the US election, US and European sanctions on Russia, the military operation in Syria, the Trump-Putin relationship and others. It is notable that commentaries on the then-upcoming election were introduced in almost all the articles under analysis, although the major topic of the article was different. As the presidential election is a highly newsworthy issue, journalists enforce the message previously expressed in the articles that are directly concerned with the election.

The results of quantitative analysis of the articles from *Voice of America* on miscellaneous issues and the distribution of stance and engagement markers are shown in Table 22:

	Stance markers	Engagement markers	Total
Number	193	4	197
Percentage	97.96%	2.04%	

Table 22. Stance and engagement markers in miscellaneous articles (*Voice of America*)

The analysis shows the absolute prevalence of stance markers over engagements markers that shows a clear-cut authorial stance in the corpus, both in election-related and miscellaneous articles. The average number of stance markers found in the articles under analysis is 9, the number ranging from 1 to 21 in each article, almost the same as in the previous category, where the average number was 9 with 1 to 21 markers per article. As far as engagement markers are concerned, they are almost absent in the articles under analysis due to the stylistic peculiarities of an straight news article, where directives, reader pronouns and personal asides are not supposed to be found, although, 4 instances of questions were found in the body of articles that shows a slight attempt to establish a connection with the audience.

Table 23 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers for the author's voice:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions	Total
			Positive	Negative		
Number	101	51	3	38	0	193
Percentage	52.33%	26.42%	1.55%	19.7%	0%	

Table 23. Distribution of stance markers in miscellaneous articles (*Voice of America*)

As in the previous part of the corpus from *Voice of America*, a substantial prevalence of hedges is observed that turns out to be the primary interpersonal technique used in the discourse under analysis. Journalists resort to extensive hedging in order to diminish the assertiveness of statements. Boosters are the second most frequent stance markers. Negative attitude markers are the third most frequent stance markers that show that journalists cannot fully relinquish their opinions and judgements as they tend to give negative evaluation of the events described in the articles. Positive attitude markers are few and self-mentions are absent that means they do not make a significant impact on the overall pattern. The pattern observed here replicates the pattern observed in election-related articles, which means that journalists are consistent in their judgements and style.

The examples of stance markers found in the articles are as follows:

- **Hedges:**

- 1) The gulf between Russia and Britain widened on Friday as they cranked up pressure over a nerve agent attack and a *suspected* murder in Britain that have deepened Western worries about *alleged* Russian meddling abroad. [2.27]
- 2) Putin's spokesman denounced the *claim* as "shocking and inexcusable." [2.27]
- 3) As relations between the two nations sank to a new post-Cold War low, *nearly* two dozen Russian diplomats in London were packing their bags to leave Tuesday after an expulsion order from Britain. [2.27]
- 4) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in *what Western powers see* as the latest sign of increasingly aggressive Russian interference in foreign countries. [2.27]
- 5) The source of the nerve agent — which *Britain says* is Soviet-made Novichok — is unclear, as is the way it was administered. [2.27]

- 6) Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, former commander of the British Army's chemical and biological weapons regiment, called the **claim** that U.S. or British agents **could** have developed Novichok "complete hogwash." [2.27]
- 7) Speaking to the AP, he called it unlikely that some of the nerve agent **could** have gone missing in the years after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. [2.27]
- 8) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, **as Britain claims**, it's "100 percent" clear it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 9) While many British politicians have backed the government in blaming Moscow for the nerve agent attack, the U.K.'s main opposition leader has cautioned against a rush to judgment. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said in the Guardian that it's **possible** that "Russian mafia-like groups," rather than the Russian state, were responsible. [2.27]
- 10) May had been expected to unveil a raft of initial retaliatory measures against Russia, but told parliament her government **would** wait until it had received an explanation from Moscow. [2.28]
- 11) Just before May spoke, Russian President Vladimir Putin brushed off **suggestions** of Kremlin involvement in the poisoning of Skripal, a Russian military intelligence colonel who was recruited as a double agent by Britain's MI6 and freed by Russia in a spy swap in 2010. [2.28]
- 12) British officials say they are encouraging NATO allies, including the United States, to agree to a coordinated response, depending on Russia's response. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel **reportedly** are sympathetic and have agreed to act in concert. [2.28]
- 13) The chairman of the British parliament's foreign affairs committee, Tom Tugendhat, said earlier it **would** be more effective if other countries joined with retaliatory action. [2.28]
- 14) A former director of policy planning for NATO, Fabrice Pothier, warned Monday that Britain **may** face problems in persuading NATO's European members to join in serious coordinated action, highlighting their frustration with Britain over Brexit. [2.28]
- 15) After a public inquiry concluded in 2010 that Litvinenko's murder very **probably** had been Kremlin-sanctioned, Britain remonstrated with Russia and froze the assets of two Russian suspects. [2.28]
- 16) The election has been one devoid of suspense with Putin's victory **seen as** inevitable. [2.28]
- 17) On one level it was the kind of speech an incumbent leader seeking reelection **would** give, offering material improvements, making economic promises, and pledging to create more jobs and build better houses. [2.29]

- 18) Putin's surprise announcement of the development of a new cruise missile **that he claims** can't be intercepted by the U.S. air-defense shield in Europe and Asia, and of a new, heavy payload intercontinental missile, risks upending strategic stability and triggering a new arms race, according to former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt. [2.29]
- 19) While he remains highly popular, according to opinion polls, the Kremlin is worried about voter turnout, and **opposition activists say** Putin's aides are worried as they try to balance between keeping tight control over campaigning and avoiding voter apathy. The Kremlin, **they say**, is determined to ensure a big turnout to demonstrate that Putin remains Russia's "irreplaceable leader" 18 years after first coming to power, and that his grip on the nation hasn't weakened. [2.29]
- 20) The Kremlin has long feared that defensive systems capable of intercepting Russian missiles **would** open the way for Western enemies to launch a first strike against Russia. [2.29]
- 21) Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul also argued it is time to restart arms control negotiations. "*Putin's announcement today about his new nuclear weapons aimed at us should be a wake up call to Trump,*" he tweeted. He said the unveiling of the new super-weapons **may** not be a return to the Cold War, "*but most certainly is a Hot Peace.*" [2.29]
- 22) Mc Faul added the unveiling of the new super-weapons **may** not be a return to the Cold War, "*but most certainly is a Hot Peace.*" [2.29]
- 23) In his annual state of the nation address Thursday, Putin said Russia's technological breakthroughs **could** give its military new global standing and showed videos of new weapons to frequent applause. [2.30]
- 24) Tack said, eventually, some of the capabilities, like the hypersonic missile, **may** force the U.S. and NATO to change the way they approach nuclear deterrence. But he cautioned those Russian capabilities are not yet operational. [2.30]
- 25) Putin Again Rejects **Allegations** of Russian Meddling in US Election. [2.31]
- 26) Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday again rejected **allegations** of Russian interference in last year's U.S. presidential election and said opponents of U.S. President Donald Trump spread the accusations to undermine his legitimacy. [2.31]
- 27) On North Korea, Putin said a use of force by the United States **would** have "*catastrophic consequences.*" [2.31]
- 28) Despite Mueller's 37-page indictment detailing charges against the Russians, Putin said he has seen no evidence that their actions broke any law. He was emphatic that he **would** never extradite the suspects to the United States to face trial. [2.32]

- 29) Putin rejected **allegations** that Russia sought to interfere in the election, despite the conclusion last year by U.S. intelligence agencies that he personally directed a campaign to do so in 2016. [2.32]
- 30) The U.S. intelligence agencies concluded in January 2017 that in addition to aiding Trump, for whom **they said** the Kremlin had developed a clear preference, Russia's aims included undermining faith in the U.S. electoral system and denigrating Trump's main rival, Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. [2.32]
- 31) Trump himself has repeatedly refused to condemn Russia over the **alleged** meddling and has said that he admires Putin as a strong leader. [2.32]
- 32) Most of the new sanctions target those involved in a so-called Russian "troll factory" operation **that U.S. authorities say** flooded social media with posts intended to sway the 2016 election. [2.34]
- 33) The U.S. special prosecutor investigating Moscow's meddling indicted 13 Russians in February for **allegedly** running the secret campaign. [2.34]
- 34) The U.S. has now updated the details of his sanctions listing, adding that he and his Concord company provided "material assistance" to the troll factory, **which Washington says** he owns or controls. He has denied this. [2.34]
- 35) Russian officials from President Vladimir Putin on down have denounced the United States' publication of the so-called "Putin list" - a U.S. Treasury-issued registry of 210 Russians identified as close to the Russian leader - under a new sanctions law tied to **allegations** of Kremlin interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. [2.35]
- 36) Yet Putin indicated that Russia **would** not respond - for now. [2.35]
- 37) Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, mocked **what he saw** as amateur detective work by U.S. intelligence agencies. [2.35]
- 38) Putin was asked about the issue during a campaign meeting with supporters, one of whom asked what he **would** have to do to join the list, to audience laughter. [2.35]
- 39) Putin responded by suggesting the goal of Russians **should** be to develop their economy to the point where "*there's no point to formulating any lists, to hold us back.*"[2.35]
- 40) Meanwhile, online debate **seemed** to be split over the blanket nature of the Treasury list and whether it had gone too far or not far enough. [2.35]
- 41) The U.S. had included **nearly** all of Russia's entire political and economic elite in a web of Russia sanctions that touch on varied issues such as election interference, human rights abuses and the Kremlin's actions in Ukraine. [2.35]
- 42) The journey of Yevgeny Prigozhin from troubled youth to ex-con entrepreneur with companies worth hundreds of millions of dollars reflects **what one expert says** is a typical

pathway to riches in post-Soviet Russia: the willingness to do favors and “dirty tasks” for Putin that others **would** find too risky. [2.37]

- 43) Sobol, whose husband was attacked last year in **what she suspects** was retaliation for her investigation, said Prigozhin keeps a low profile. [2.37]
- 44) Unlike some Russian oligarchs, Prigozhin **might** not mind doing the riskier favors because his interests are more local. [2.37]
- 45) During his remarks in Moscow, Putin accused those investigating **potential** collusion between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign of damaging the U.S. political situation, “incapacitating the president and showing a lack of respect to voters who cast their ballots for him.” [2.38]
- 46) Tensions have escalated further amid the ongoing congressional and FBI investigations into **allegations** of collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia. [2.39]
- 47) **Some have suggested** it was a poisoning in which Russia **may** have had a hand, even though British authorities haven't revealed what the substance was and are still investigating. Moscow has denied any involvement. [2.39]
- 48) U.S. President Donald Trump acknowledged Tuesday British evidence that the Russians **may** have been behind the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England, but he stopped short of blaming Moscow “until we get the facts straight.”[2.40]
- 49) If Russia does not comply with the request, May said Britain **would** take “extensive” retaliatory action. [2.40]
- 50) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov insisted Tuesday Moscow was “not to blame” and **would** only cooperate with a British investigation if it gets samples of the nerve agent **that is believed** to have been used. [2.40]
- 51) Russia's foreign ministry said later Tuesday Moscow **would** retaliate for any sanctions Britain impose in response to the attack. [2.40]
- 52) Prime Minister May said it was “**highly likely**” Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain **would** not tolerate such a “**brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil**”. [2.40]
- 53) **About** a half hour later, emergency personnel were called to assist the two, who were found in “**extremely serious condition**” on a bench near the shopping center. [2.40]
- 54) Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics says Vladimir Putin's recent comments on retaliating against nuclear-armed adversaries, which the Russian president acknowledged **would** lead to a “**global catastrophe**,” represent a level of animosity not seen since the early Cold War. [2.41]

- 55) Asked what he **would** do in the face of an imminent nuclear attack, Putin said he **would** trigger a "reciprocal strike," adding that although the resulting worldwide devastation "*would be a global catastrophe for humanity ... what do we need a world for if there is no Russia in it?*" [2.41]
- 56) During the speech, Putin showed a computer-generated video of one of the new weapons destroying Florida. And he bragged that the new weapons **would** make U.S. missile defense systems "useless." [2.42]
- 57) He also rejected Russian **allegations** that Moscow was pursuing new nuclear weapons because of Washington's failure to abide by previous arms control agreements. [2.42]
- 58) Russia **would** now focus on talks between the Syrian opposition and the government. [2.43]
- 59) The Russian president noted Moscow **would** now concentrate on the ongoing Syrian "national dialogue," and requested Egypt's support in helping to bring the various parties together. [2.43]
- 60) Putin Spokesman: Calls for Election Boycott **May** Be Illegal. [2.44]
- 61) A Kremlin spokesman **suggested** Tuesday that a call by Russian opposition leader Alexi Navalny to boycott next year's presidential election **may** be illegal. [2.44]
- 62) Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) voted to ban the anti-corruption blogger from running because of his conviction on criminal charges. **Navalny and his followers say** those charges were politically motivated. [2.44]
- 63) Following the CEC decision, Navalny released a video declaring a "voter's strike," because — **according to Navalny** — the March contest **would** not really be an election. [2.44]
- 64) Putin **Suggests** Jews, Ethnic Groups **May** Have Meddled in US Election [2.45]
- 65) Russian President Vladimir Putin **is suggesting** that Jews, Ukrainians or Tatars **might** have meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, but again is rejecting Kremlin interference. [2.45]
- 66) Jewish groups condemned Putin's **suggestion** that Jews were responsible for the election meddling. [2.45]
- 67) Trump has reluctantly acknowledged the Russian interference in the U.S. election, but also recently said that the meddling **might** have been carried out by "other countries, and maybe other individuals." [2.45]
- 68) He has repeatedly said that investigation of **allegations** that his campaign colluded with Russia to help him win are an excuse by Democrats to explain his upset victory over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. [2.45]

- 69) Russia's justice ministry has designated nine U.S.-government funded media outlets, including Voice of America, as "foreign agents," a move that **could** complicate their news-gathering operations in Russia. [2.46]
- 70) The ministry also listed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and seven of its affiliates, after warning last month they **could** be affected. [2.46]
- 71) The news outlets, in any information they publish or broadcast to Russian audiences, **would** be required to mention their designation as a "foreign agent." [2.46]
- 72) They **would** be required to submit regular reports on their funding, their objectives, how they spend their money and who their managers are. [2.46]
- 73) A spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, Heather Nauert, told reporters Tuesday that the move is "wrong" and added that the State Department is concerned that the new status **might** result in harassment of U.S. journalists. [2.46]
- 74) Russian officials have called the new legislation a "symmetrical response" to **what they describe** as U.S. pressure on Russian media. [2.46]
- 75) A victory **would** put Putin, 65, on track to become Russia's longest-serving leader since Josef Stalin. [2.47]
- 76) Navalny, 41, has campaigned for the presidency all year despite an implicit ban on his candidacy from a fraud conviction **seen by many as** political retribution. He was formally barred from the ballot earlier this week. [2.47]
- 77) On Wednesday, Navalny announced that a slew of rallies **would** be held across Russia on January 28 to promote an "electoral strike" to protest the Central Election Commission's decision to bar him from the race. [2.47]
- 78) Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters Thursday he had "no doubts" that authorities **would** review Navalny's appeals to determine if they are illegal. [2.47]

▪ **Boosters:**

- 1) Britain's foreign secretary accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of personally ordering the poisoning of ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, describing it as **the most brazen** such move since World War II. [2.27]
- 2) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in what Western powers see as the latest sign of **increasingly** aggressive Russian interference in foreign countries. The tensions threaten to overshadow Putin's expected re-election Sunday for another six-year presidential term. [2.27]

- 3) Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by Russian news agencies as calling Johnson's statement a "*shocking and inexcusable breach of diplomatic propriety.*" Peskov **reiterated** Russian denials of involvement in the attack on the Skripals. [2.27]
- 4) Russia's envoy to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons told The AP his country has no stocks of the Novichok group of nerve agents, insisting that Soviet-era research into the agents was **totally** dismantled before Russia joined the organization. [2.27]
- 5) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, as Britain claims, it's "**100 percent**" **clear** it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 6) After a public inquiry concluded in 2010 that Litvinenko's murder **very** probably had been Kremlin-sanctioned, Britain remonstrated with Russian and froze the assets of two Russian suspects. [2.28]
- 7) British officials say any sanctions that Britain imposes **will** aim to punish the inner circle around Putin and Kremlin-tied oligarchs, who have bought property in London, educate their children in Britain's private schools and use the British capital's finances houses and banks to shield their money and move it around the world. [2.28]
- 8) Analysts say they doubt British retaliation **will** damage Putin in the Russian presidential election being held on Sunday. [2.28]
- 9) Delivering his annual state of the nation address Thursday, his 14th and the last one he **will** make before an election on March 18 he's expected to win easily, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his "*top priority is to preserve the people of Russia and improve their welfare,*" adding that it was "*unacceptable*" that 20 million Russians are living below the official poverty line. [2.29]
- 10) What grabbed international attention, however, wasn't his pledge to spend more on maternity pay, hospitals and childcare as well as urban development and education, but his **highlighting in bold language** Russia's military buildup under his leadership and his focus, especially on the country's nuclear strength. [2.29]
- 11) The speech's venue had been shifted in a **clear** signal that the Kremlin wanted to attract more attention. [2.29]
- 12) They **will** strike "like a meteorite, like a fireball," Putin said dryly in his **most** forceful declaration yet of Russia's military might and nuclear strength. [2.29]
- 13) While he remains **highly** popular, according to opinion polls, the Kremlin is worried about voter turnout, and opposition activists say Putin's aides are worried as they try to balance between keeping tight control over campaigning and avoiding voter apathy. [2.29]
- 14) The country's **only** truly independent opposition leader, anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, has been excluded from running. He is urging supporters to boycott the polls to try to depress the vote. [2.29]

- 15) Speaking at his annual marathon news conference in Moscow, Putin expressed hope that U.S.-Russia relations **will** normalize. [2.31]
- 16) Putin said Thursday that Russia is worried about the United States pulling out of arms control agreements, while his country **will** continue to abide by the pacts. He also said Russia's military **will** develop as it needs to without getting into an arms race with the United States. [2.31]
- 17) The Russian leader told reporters the country should have a more competitive political system and that when he runs for re-election next year he **will** do so as an independent candidate instead of under the United Russia party. [2.31]
- 18) Russian President Vladimir Putin said he "*couldn't care less*" if Russian citizens sought to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, **insisting** that the Kremlin had nothing to do with the efforts. [2.32]
- 19) He was **emphatic** that he would never extradite the suspects to the United States to face trial. [2.32]
- 20) The U.S. intelligence agencies concluded in January 2017 that in addition to aiding Trump, for whom they said the Kremlin had developed a **clear** preference, Russia's aims included undermining faith in the U.S. electoral system and denigrating Trump's main rival, Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. [2.32]
- 21) Trump himself has **repeatedly** refused to condemn Russia over the **alleged** meddling and has said that he admires Putin as a strong leader. [2.32]
- 22) The U.S. treasury also referred to last year's **massive** ransomware attack, known as NotPetya, that the U.S. and Britain have blamed on the Russian military. [2.34]
- 23) Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the Russian Duma, the lower house of parliament, said the list was the latest in a failed U.S. sanctions policy aimed at weakening an **increasingly** powerful Russia. [2.35]
- 24) In advance of the list's publication, the Kremlin had indicated Russia viewed the registry - and any additional sanctions - as an attempt by the U.S. to influence Russia's presidential elections in March, when Putin is **all but guaranteed** re-election to a fourth term. [2.35]
- 25) He noted that his Anti-Corruption Foundation team had carried out its own investigations and produced reports that **highlighted** Kremlin corruption by several of the listed figures. [2.35]
- 26) The U.S. Treasury Department published the report Monday in keeping with a law passed overwhelmingly by Congress last August, after it became **clear** that Russia had meddled in the 2016 presidential election. [2.36]
- 27) Putin wanted Russia's involvement in Syria to be different from its intervention in Afghanistan and Chechnya, which claimed many lives and were **widely** unpopular. [2.37]

- 28) Prigozhin is **hardly the only** Russian oligarch to do favors for Putin. [2.37]
- 29) When Russians were killed earlier this month in a U.S. attack in Syria's Deir el-Zour province, the Russian government **insisted** that Moscow did not send them there. Hiring mercenaries or working as one is against Russian law. [2.37]
- 30) Russian President Vladimir Putin, interviewed by Russian state television, **lavished** praise on President Donald Trump but added that he was sorely disappointed with the U.S. political system, saying that it has been "eating itself up." [2.39]
- 31) Putin, who presented a sweeping array of new Russian nuclear weapons last week, voiced hope that nuclear weapons **will** never be used — but warned that Russia **will** retaliate in kind if it comes under a nuclear attack. [2.39]
- 32) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **insisted** Tuesday Moscow was "not to blame" and would only cooperate with a British investigation if it gets samples of the nerve agent that is believed to have been used. [2.40]
- 33) While some observers have dismissed Putin's comments as **nothing more than** empty threats, Rinkevics said neighboring countries worry that Russian willingness to invade both Ukraine and Georgia over the past decade imbues the comments with an ominous precedent of military follow-through. [2.41]
- 34) Officials, along with some analysts, have also cast doubt on how close some of the Russian weapons are to **actually** being operational. [2.42]
- 35) Terrorist attacks against civilian and military targets have caused a large number of casualties and **major** economic damage during the past year. [2.43]
- 36) Sissi spoke of "*dangerous consequences*" of the decision, while Putin called for a "prompt resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians," saying they **must** be "based on prior international agreements and resolutions." [2.43]
- 37) Navalny **urged** supporters to boycott the March 18 vote after election officials on Monday barred him from running. [2.44]
- 38) Following the CEC decision, Navalny released a video declaring a "voter's strike," because — according to Navalny — the March contest would not **really** be an election. [2.44]
- 39) Putin announced earlier this month that he **will** run for reelection, and it is **widely** assumed he **will** win a fourth term as Russian head of state. [2.44]
- 40) Russia's lower house of parliament, the Duma, says it **will** vote this week on whether it **will** ban access for media organizations designated as foreign agents. [2.46]

41) Reacting to Russia's move Tuesday, VOA Director Amanda Bennett said the Russian Ministry of Justice has indicated the new designation **will** involve more "limitations" on the work of VOA in Russia. [2.46]

42) Russian authorities **will** investigate whether opposition leader Alexei Navalny is breaking the law with his campaign for boycotting next year's presidential election, the Kremlin said Thursday. [2.46]

▪ **Positive attitude markers:**

1) The country's only **truly independent** opposition leader, anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, has been excluded from running. He is urging supporters to boycott the polls to try to depress the vote. [2.29]

2) With stops in Egypt, Turkey and Syria, where he declared Monday that Russia's military had accomplished its goal of saving President Bashar al-Assad from ouster, an **upbeat** Putin appeared eager to stoke national pride and showcase how he has restored Russia's Soviet-era role as a **serious** power. [2.42]

▪ **Negative attitude markers:**

1) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in what Western powers see as the latest sign of increasingly **aggressive** Russian interference in foreign countries. The tensions threaten to overshadow Putin's expected re-election Sunday for another six-year presidential term. [2.27]

2) May's statement marks a **sharp** escalation in an unfolding diplomatic and political crisis that is plunging relations between Britain and Russia to their lowest point since the Cold War. [2.28]

3) The foreign and defense ministers, Boris Johnson and Gavin Williamson, have been campaigning semi-publicly the past few days for the adoption of a much tougher approach toward Russia than was pursued after the **fatal** poisoning in 2006 of another former Russian spy, the dissident Alexander Litvinenko. [2.28]

4) The election has been one **devoid of suspense** with Putin's victory seen as inevitable. [2.28]

5) They began more than a decade ago, after Putin complained **bitterly** about the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and its deployment of missile defense installations in Romania and Poland. [2.29]

- 6) The war scare was revealed subsequently by high-ranking Soviet intelligence defector Oleg Gordievsky, who in a later book described his intelligence bosses as being *in the grip of paranoia*. [2.29]
- 7) U.S. military planners are brushing aside Russian *claims* that its military has an array of new strategic nuclear weapons that can hit any target anywhere in the world. [2.30]
- 8) Russian President Vladimir Putin boasted about his military's newfound capabilities, including "invincible" nuclear weapons ones that cannot be intercepted by foreign adversaries during what has been described as a *saber-rattling* speech Thursday in Moscow. [2.30]
- 9) But U.S. military officials downplayed Putin's *claims* as familiar rhetoric. [2.30]
- 10) Putin *claimed* they have no equivalent and contended the new weapons have made NATO's U.S.-led missile defense "*useless*." Still, some analysts are skeptical of Moscow's *claims*. [2.30]
- 11) Despite such *claims*, U.S. lawmakers were also *unimpressed*. [2.30]
- 12) The most well-known of the Russians indicted, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has ties to Putin and the state. Prigozhin is accused of funneling money into the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, which is often described as a *notorious* "troll factory" and which is also named in the indictment. [2.32]
- 13) Tensions between Russia and the West have been growing following Russia's 2014 *annexation* of Ukraine's Crimea and its subsequent military buildup. [2.33]
- 14) Most of the new sanctions target those involved in a so-called Russian "troll factory" operation that U.S. authorities say *flooded* social media with posts intended to sway the 2016 election. [2.34]
- 15) Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, *mocked what he saw* as *amateur* detective work by U.S. intelligence agencies. [2.35]
- 16) He has been linked to a *shadowy* military firm that has sent private Russian contractors to fight in Ukraine and Syria on the side of Moscow's allies. [2.37]
- 17) Putin wanted Russia's involvement in Syria to be different from its intervention in Afghanistan and Chechnya, which claimed many lives and were widely *unpopular*. [2.37]
- 18) Russia's richest men spent billions of dollars to help construct hotels and sports venues for one of Putin's pet projects, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, which went over budget and *was rife with corruption*. [2.37]
- 19) During his remarks in Moscow, Putin accused those investigating potential *collusion* between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign of damaging the U.S. political

situation, “incapacitating the president and showing a lack of respect to voters who cast their ballots for him.” [2.38]

- 20) Russian President Vladimir Putin, interviewed by Russian state television, lavished praise on President Donald Trump but added that he was **sorely** disappointed with the U.S. political system, saying that it has been "eating itself up." [2.39]
- 21) Tensions have escalated further amid the ongoing congressional and FBI investigations into allegations of **collusion** between Trump's campaign and Russia. [2.39]
- 22) Russia responded by **annexing** Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. [2.39]
- 23) In a **strongly worded** statement released Monday by the State Department, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was fired by Trump on Tuesday, supported May's assertion that Russia was behind the attack. [2.40]
- 24) Speaking to a **staunch** pro-Kremlin TV host in a documentary that aired in Russia just weeks before voters head to the polls in an election that has barred any **serious** competitors from running, Putin made **tough** statements in which he presented himself as an indispensable guarantor against foreign attacks. [2.41]
- 25) While some observers have dismissed Putin's comments as nothing more than **empty threats**, Rinkevics said neighboring countries worry that Russian willingness to invade both Ukraine and Georgia over the past decade imbues the comments with an **ominous** precedent of military follow-through. [2.41]
- 26) Rinkevics and his fellow foreign ministers representing the three Baltic allies exposed on NATO's eastern flank are in Washington to urge Western leaders against being **naive** about Russian threats. [2.41]
- 27) During the speech, Putin showed a computer-generated video of one of the new weapons destroying Florida. And he **bragged** that the new weapons would make U.S. missile defense systems “*useless*.” [2.42]
- 28) Despite the **tough** talk, Rood and Hyten shared few details during Wednesday’s hearing, which lasted just over 30 minutes, with many U.S. lawmakers waiting until a closed-door session to ask their questions. [2.42]
- 29) Five of its affiliates in Russia provide news on Crimea, which Russia **annexed** from Ukraine in 2014, Siberia, the predominantly Muslim North Caucasus region, provincial Russia and the mostly Muslim region of Tatarstan. [2.46]

As far as engagement markers are concerned, they almost absent as well as in election-related articles from *Voice of America*:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	0	0	4	4
Percentage	0%	0%	0%	100%	

Table 24. Distribution of engagement markers in miscellaneous articles (*Voice of America*)

Questions are found 4 times in comparison with 6 questions found in election-related articles, which again replicates the overall pattern observed in this part of the corpus. Reader pronouns, directives and appeals to shared knowledge are absent as expected. The examples of questions found in the corpus are as follows:

▪ **Questions:**

- 1) *New Arms Race?* Putin Boasts of High-Tech Weaponry. [2.29]
- 2) *Why, some asked, hadn't the Kremlin central bankers been included? Where were Russia's senior court judges and the head of the election commission?* [2.35]
- 3) *Putin Declares 'Mission Accomplished' on Syria; but, Could It Prove Premature?* [2.42]

As in the previous sections, quotations found in the articles were analyzed separately as it is argued that they possess a considerable interpersonal potential as the choice of quotations is always deliberate. Moreover, this research takes a particular interest in finding out whether quotations replicate the interpersonal pattern found in the body of the articles or constitute a different one. The distribution of stance markers within quotations is shown in Table 25:

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitudinals		Self-mentions		Total
			Positive	Negative	1 st p. sing.	1 st p. pl.	
Number	28	33	6	47	11	23	148
Percentage	18.91%	22.29%	4.05%	31.75%	7.43%	15.57%	

Table 25. Distribution of stance markers in miscellaneous articles (*Voice of America*) in quotations.

The interpersonal pattern within quotations found in this thematic category differs from the pattern of the body of the articles. Here we observe the prevalence of negative attitudinals,

while they are the third most frequent markers in the body of the articles. It suggests that quotations have a more salient negative charge rather than the main part of the articles. Boosters are the second most frequent markers and in combination with negative attitudinals they are supposed to strengthen the negative message conveyed by journalists. Hedges are not used as extensively as in the body of the articles that means that quotations that were chosen are more straightforward and contain more evaluative language. The examples of stance markers within quotations can be found below:

- **Hedges:**

- 1) While Britain has accused the Russian state of ordering the poisoning of the Skripals, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson took it a step further Friday and said it's "*overwhelmingly likely*" that Putin himself ordered the attack. [2.27]
- 2) "*Our quarrel is with Putin's Kremlin, and with his decision, and we think it overwhelmingly likely that it was his decision, to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the U.K., on the streets of Europe, for the first time since the Second World War,*" Johnson said. [2.27]
- 3) British Prime Minister Theresa May said Monday a "*military-grade nerve agent*" known to have been developed by Russia was used to poison former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and that her government has concluded it is "*highly likely*" Moscow was responsible. [2.28]
- 4) "*If we **could** bring others with us, that **would** make a very big difference,*" he said. [2.28]
- 5) Former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul also argued it is time to restart arms control negotiations. "*Putin's announcement today about his new nuclear weapons aimed at us **should** be a wake up call to Trump,*" he tweeted. He said the unveiling of the new super-weapons may not be a return to the Cold War, "*but most **certainly** is a Hot Peace.*" [2.29]
- 6) Putin described it as "*low-flying, difficult-to-spot*" and "*with a nuclear payload with a **practically** unlimited range and an unpredictable flight path, which **can** bypass lines of interception and is invincible in the face of all existing and future systems of both missile defense and air defense.*" [2.29]
- 7) Putin said the nuclear-powered cruise missile Russia tested several months ago has a "***practically** unlimited*" range and high speed and maneuverability that can pierce any missile defense. [2.30]

- 8) "It's not our goal to interfere. We do not see what goal we **would** accomplish by interfering," Putin said. [2.32]
- 9) He added starkly: "Yes, it will mean a global catastrophe for mankind, for the entire world. But as a citizen of Russia and the head of Russian state I **would** ask: What is such a world for, if there were no Russia?" [2.39]
- 10) "It sounds to me like it **would** be Russia based on all the evidence they have," Trump told reporters outside the White House. [2.40]
- 11) Prime Minister May said it was "**highly likely**" Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain **would** not tolerate such a "**brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.**" [2.40]
- 12) "Russia has previously produced this agent and **would** still be capable of doing so," May said. "Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations, and our assessment that Russia views some defectors as legitimate targets for assassinations, the government has concluded that it is **highly likely** that Russia was responsible for the act against Sergei and Yulia Skripal," she said. [2.40]
- 13) "Getting rid of some identified intelligence officers in the Russian embassy. More importantly **perhaps**, we have a certain amount of financial leverage against those in [Russian President] Putin's circle, who have property or other assets in the U.K." [2.40]
- 14) Asked what he would do in the face of an imminent nuclear attack, Putin said he would trigger a "reciprocal strike," adding that although the resulting worldwide devastation "**would** be a global catastrophe for humanity ... what do we need a world for if there is no Russia in it?" [2.41]
- 15) "There is nothing they can do outside of a massive attack against our country that we **would** not have the ability to respond," he added. [2.42]
- 16) "**Maybe**," Putin suggested, "they are not even Russians, but Ukrainians, Tatars or Jews with Russian citizenship, which **should** also be checked. **Maybe** they have dual citizenship or a green card. **Maybe** the U.S. paid them for this." [2.45]
- 17) The American Jewish Committee said in a Twitter comment, "President Putin **suggesting** that Russian Federation minorities, be they Ukrainian, Tatar, or Jewish, were behind U.S. election meddling is eerily reminiscent of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." He **should** clarify his comments at the earliest opportunity." [2.45]
- 18) The lawmakers said it is "extraordinary and confounding how little your administration is doing to counter Putin's campaign to undermine our grand democracy, including the refusal to implement sanctions that passed Congress **nearly** unanimously." [2.45]
- 19) Trump has reluctantly acknowledged the Russian interference in the U.S. election, but also recently said that the meddling might have been carried out by "other countries, and **maybe** other individuals." [2.45]

- **Boosters:**

- 1) While Britain has accused the Russian state of ordering the poisoning of the Skripals, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson took it a step further Friday and said it's "**overwhelmingly likely**" that Putin himself ordered the attack. [2.27]
- 2) "*Our quarrel is with Putin's Kremlin, and with his decision, and we think it **overwhelmingly likely** that it was his decision, to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the U.K., on the streets of Europe, for the first time since the Second World War,*" Johnson said. [2.27]
- 3) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, as Britain claims, it's "**100 percent**" **clear** it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 4) British Prime Minister Theresa May said Monday a "military-grade nerve agent" known to have been developed by Russia was used to poison former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and that her government has concluded it is "**highly likely**" Moscow was responsible. [2.28]
- 5) "*We **will** not tolerate such a brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*" [2.28]
- 6) "*The question is whether she [Theresa May] **will** be able to rally her NATO European counterparts around more sanctions and this isn't going to be easy.*" [2.28]
- 7) He tweeted: "*Putin & his agents used on purpose military grade nerve agent to try to assassinate Skripal **make sure** we all knew who did it. He is taunting us, daring us to do nothing.*" [2.28]
- 8) Delivering his annual state of the nation address Thursday, his 14th and the last one he will make before an election on March 18 he's expected to win easily, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his "**top** priority is to preserve the people of Russia and improve their welfare," adding that it was "**unacceptable**" that 20 million Russians are living below the official poverty line. [2.29]
- 9) He said the unveiling of the new super-weapons may not be a return to the Cold War, "**but most certainly is a Hot Peace.**" [2.29]
- 10) McFaul added the unveiling of the new super-weapons may not be a return to the Cold War, "**but most certainly is a Hot Peace.**" [2.29]
- 11) "*Giving half the time in the annual address to the Russian parliament to a **graphic** description of new weapons' capabilities is a measure of how close the U.S. and Russia have moved toward military collision,*" tweeted Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, a think tank. [2.29]
- 12) "*This should **absolutely** not be considered a beginning of an arms race,*" Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday. [2.33]
- 13) "*We want and **will** patiently build relations as much as the American side is willing.*" [2.35]

- 14) "New sanctions against Russia **will** lead to **even greater** consolidation of society," he added. [2.35]
- 15) "*That is **real** success, it's **real** money, and it's **real** revenue that is not going to the Kremlin, and is not going to Russia,*" he said. [2.36]
- 16) He described the Western sanctions over Crimea and the insurgency in eastern Ukraine as part of "*illegitimate and unfair*" efforts to contain Russia, adding that "*we **will** win in the long run.*" [2.39]
- 17) "*Those who serve us with poison **will** eventually swallow it and poison themselves,*" he said. [2.39]
- 18) Responding to a question about Russia's growing global leverage, Putin responded: "*If we play strongly with weak cards, it means the others are just poor players, they aren't as strong as it seemed, they **must** be lacking something.*" [2.39]
- 19) He added starkly: "*Yes, it **will** mean a global catastrophe for mankind, for the entire world*". [2.39]
- 20) The White House said Trump agreed with May that Russia "**must provide unambiguous answers**" about how the weapon ended up being used in the U.K. [2.40]
- 21) "*Any threats **will** not remain unanswered,*" a ministry statement said. [2.40]
- 22) Prime Minister May said it was "**highly likely**" Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain would not tolerate such a "brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil." [2.40]
- 23) "*Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations, and our assessment that Russia views some defectors as legitimate targets for assassinations, the government has concluded that it is **highly likely** that Russia was responsible for the act against Sergei and Yulia Skripal,*" she said. [2.40]
- 24) About a half hour later, emergency personnel were called to assist the two, who were found in "**extremely serious condition**" on a bench near the shopping center. The police officer who was first on the scene also remains hospitalized. [2.40]
- 25) "*These kinds of statements are **absolutely** irresponsible,*" he added. [2.41]
- 26) Putin Says Russia to Withdraw '**Significant Part**' of Troops from Syria. [2.43]
- 27) Russian President Vladimir Putin has indicated he has ordered his military to withdraw a "**significant part**" of Russia's forces from Syria, after regaining control of most of the country. [2.43]

- 28) During a Cairo news conference, Putin announced what he called Russia's withdrawal of a "**significant**" portion of its military forces operating in Syria. [2.43]
- 29) Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said Tuesday that efforts by Navalny and his supporters to organize the boycott "**ought to** be carefully studied to see if they are breaking the law." [2.44]
- 30) "It is **deeply** disturbing to see the Russian president giving new life to classic anti-Semitic stereotypes that have plagued his country for hundreds of years." [2.45]
- 31) "*So far, the full nature of these limitations is unknown. We **will** study carefully all communications from the ministry and other official Russian organizations,*" Bennett said. "*At the same time, we remain committed to continuing to serve as a **consistently** reliable and authoritative source of news to our Russian-speaking audiences.*" [2.46]

▪ **Positive attitudinals:**

- 1) The Russian leader spoke before the March 18 election in which he is expected to secure another six years at Russia's helm, saying Russia has advanced far beyond the "*woeful state*" of its military following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. He praised the young scientists working on new weaponry as "**the heroes of our time.**" [2.30]
- 2) "Well, what I can say?" Navalny tweeted. "**We're glad** that they've been officially recognized as thieves and swindlers on the international level." [2.35]
- 3) "**We are a great** power, and no one likes competition," he said. [2.39]
- 4) "*So far, the full nature of these limitations is unknown. We will study carefully all communications from the ministry and other official Russian organizations,*" Bennett said. "*At the same time, we remain committed to continuing to serve as a consistently **reliable** and **authoritative** source of news to our Russian-speaking audiences.*" [2.46]

▪ **Negative attitudinals:**

- 1) Putin's spokesman denounced the claim as "**shocking and inexcusable.**" [2.27]
- 2) Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by Russian news agencies as calling Johnson's statement a "**shocking and inexcusable** breach of diplomatic propriety." [2.27]
- 3) Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, former commander of the British Army's chemical and biological weapons regiment, called the claim that U.S. or British agents could have developed Novichok "**complete hogwash.**" [2.27]
- 4) "*This attempted murder using a weapons-grade nerve agent in a British town was not just a crime against the Skripals, it was an **indiscriminate and reckless** act against the United Kingdom, putting the lives of innocent civilians at risk,*" May told parliament. "*We will not tolerate such a **brazen** attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*" [2.28]

- 5) The Russian embassy said Britain was “*playing a dangerous game*” and warned of serious repercussions. [2.28]
- 6) Delivering his annual state of the nation address Thursday, his 14th and the last one he will make before an election on March 18 he’s expected to win easily, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his “top priority is to preserve the people of Russia and improve their welfare,” adding that it was “*unacceptable*” that 20 million Russians are living below the official poverty line. [2.29]
- 7) Putin claimed they have no equivalent and contended the new weapons have made NATO’s U.S.-led missile defense “*useless*.” [2.30]
- 8) Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina told VOA, “I view Mr. Putin like I view *any murderer or criminal*. When they say something, *they’re probably lying, but you have to take it seriously*.” [2.30]
- 9) The Russian leader spoke before the March 18 election in which he is expected to secure another six years at Russia’s helm, saying Russia has advanced far beyond the “*woeful* state” of its military following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. [2.30]
- 10) On North Korea, Putin said a use of force by the United States *would* have “*catastrophic* consequences.” [2.31]
- 11) Russian President Vladimir Putin said he “*couldn’t care less*” if Russian citizens sought to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, insisting that the Kremlin had nothing to do with the efforts. [2.32]
- 12) “So what if they’re Russians?” Putin told NBC. “There are 146 million Russians. *So what? I don’t care. I couldn’t care less*.... They do not represent the interests of the Russian state.” [2.32]
- 13) “*Could anyone really believe that Russia, thousands of miles away...influenced the outcome of the election? Doesn’t that sound ridiculous, even to you?*” Putin asked NBC interviewer Megyn Kelly. [2.32]
- 14) NATO also criticized Russia, calling Putin’s statements “*unacceptable and counterproductive*.” [2.33]
- 15) “*We’re not prepared to crawl into the wolf’s trap and make the situation worse*,” he said. [2.35]
- 16) “*We’re glad* that they’ve been officially recognized as *thieves and swindlers* on the international level.” [2.35]
- 17) Russian President Vladimir Putin called the report a “*hostile* step,” but said the Kremlin had chosen not to take immediate retaliatory action. [2.36]

- 18) "We were waiting for this list to come out, and I'm not going to hide it: We were going to take steps in response, and, mind you, **serious** steps, that could push our relations to **the nadir**," Putin told a political rally in Moscow Tuesday. "But we're going to refrain from taking these steps for now." [2.36]
- 19) The journey of Yevgeny Prigozhin from troubled youth to ex-con entrepreneur with companies worth hundreds of millions of dollars reflects what one expert says is a typical pathway to riches in post-Soviet Russia: the willingness to do favors and "**dirty tasks**" for Putin that others **would** find too risky. [2.37]
- 20) The 56-year-old Prigozhin is an "**ideal villain who gets asked to handle various delicate and dirty tasks**," said Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Center. "**Actually, it is typical of authoritarian regimes to outsource violence.**" [2.37]
- 21) Putin charged that the U.S. had asked Russia to help persuade then-president Viktor Yanukovich not to use force against protesters and then "**rudely and blatantly**" cheated Russia, sponsoring what he called a "coup." [2.39]
- 22) He described the Western sanctions over Crimea and the insurgency in eastern Ukraine as part of "**illegitimate and unfair**" efforts to contain Russia, adding that "**we will win in the long run.**" [2.39]
- 23) Prime Minister May said it was "**highly likely**" Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain would not tolerate such a "**brazen** attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil." [2.40]
- 24) About a half hour later, emergency personnel were called to assist the two, who were found in "**extremely serious condition**" on a bench near the shopping center. The police officer who was first on the scene also remains hospitalized. [2.40]
- 25) "**These kinds of statements are absolutely irresponsible,**" he added. "**This suicidal behavior makes no sense. I don't think anyone is considering attacking Russia. This is just stupid to think like this.**" [2.41]
- 26) And he **bragged** that the new weapons **would** make U.S. missile defense systems "**useless.**" [2.42]
- 27) U.S. Defense Undersecretary for Policy John Rood told lawmakers Wednesday that Putin's comments, "**while not surprising, were nonetheless disappointing.**" [2.42]
- 28) "**We're concerned about some of the doctrine we see emanating from Russia, talking about early escalation, a greater reliance on nuclear capabilities in a conflict,**" Rood said. [2.42]
- 29) "The United States remains committed to our arms control obligations," Rood said. "**Regrettably, the Russian Federation's track record in terms of its adherence to its arms control obligations leaves a great deal wanting.**" [2.42]

- 30) Sissi spoke of "**dangerous** consequences" of the decision, while Putin called for a "prompt resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians," saying they must be "based on prior international agreements and resolutions." [2.43]
- 31) "So what if they're Russians?" Putin said of the allegations. "There are 146 million Russians. So what? **I don't care. I couldn't care less.** They do not represent the interests of the Russian state." [2.45]
- 32) "Could anyone really believe that Russia, thousands of miles away, influenced the outcome of the election? Doesn't that sound **ridiculous**, even to you?" Putin asked. [2.45]
- 33) Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, said, "President Putin **bizarrely** has resorted to the **blame game** by pointing the finger at Jews and other minorities in his country. It is deeply **disturbing** to see the Russian president giving new life to classic anti-Semitic stereotypes that have **plagued** his country for hundreds of years." [2.45]
- 34) The American Jewish Committee said in a Twitter comment, "President Putin suggesting that Russian Federation minorities, be they Ukrainian, Tatar, or Jewish, were behind U.S. election meddling is **eerily** reminiscent of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." [2.45]
- 35) The lawmakers said it is "**extraordinary and confounding** how little your administration is doing to counter Putin's campaign to undermine our grand democracy, including the refusal to implement sanctions that passed Congress nearly unanimously." [2.45]
- 36) A spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, Heather Nauert, told reporters Tuesday that the move is "**wrong**" and added that the State Department is concerned that the new status might result in harassment of U.S. journalists. [2.46]
- 37) In an interview with VOA, Congressman Eliot Engel, a ranking member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, called the move "**ridiculous**" but added, "*that's typical for a **totalitarian** state with a **totalitarian** leader.*" He said democracy and free speech are "**alien** concepts" to Russian President Vladimir Putin. [2.46]

- **Self-mentions (1st person singular):**

- 1) "**I** want to tell all those who have fueled the arms race over the last 15 years, sought to win unilateral advantages over Russia, introduced unlawful sanctions aimed to contain our country's development: all what you wanted to impede with your policies has already happened," Putin said. "You have failed to contain Russia." [2.29]
- 2) "There are 146 million Russians. So what? I don't care. I couldn't care less.... They do not represent the interests of the Russian state." [2.32]

- 3) *"I have never changed the constitution. I have no such plans today,"* he said. [2.32]
- 4) *"I made some exaggerations,"* the action-loving Russian leader said with a grin. *"When you talk about fishing, you can't help exaggerating."* [2.39]
- 5) Asked jokingly by the interviewer if he was trying to recruit the women, the KGB veteran responded by saying: *"No, I stopped dealing with that a long time ago."* He added with a smile: *"But I liked doing that. It was **my** job for many years."* [2.39]
- 6) He added starkly: *"Yes, it will mean a global catastrophe for mankind, for the entire world. But as a citizen of Russia and the head of Russian state I would ask: What is such a world for, if there were no Russia?"* [2.45]
- 7) *"Why have you decided the Russian authorities, **myself** included, gave anybody permission to do this?"* Putin asked. [2.45]
- 8) *"So what if they're Russians?"* Putin said of the allegations. *"There are 146 million Russians. So what? I don't care. I couldn't care less. They do not represent the interests of the Russian state."* [2.45]

▪ **Self-mentions (1st person plural):**

- 1) *"Sort this out for yourselves first, then come talk to **us**,"* he said. [2.28]
- 2) *"Russia remained a nuclear power, but no one wanted to listen to **us**. Listen to **us** now,"* Putin said after announcing the super-weapons. [2.29]
- 3) *"I want to tell all those who have fueled the arms race over the last 15 years, sought to win unilateral advantages over Russia, introduced unlawful sanctions aimed to contain **our** country's development: all what you wanted to impede with your policies has already happened,"* Putin said. *"You have failed to contain Russia."* [2.29]
- 4) *"**We** in Russia cannot prosecute anyone as long as they have not violated Russian law,"* he said. [2.32]
- 5) *"It's not **our** goal to interfere. **We** do not see what goal **we** would accomplish by interfering,"* Putin said. [2.32]
- 6) *"These arms are not a threat to anyone who is not planning to attack **our** country,"* he added. [2.33]
- 7) Yet Putin indicated that Russia would not respond - for now. *"**We**'re not prepared to crawl into the wolf's trap and make the situation worse,"* he said. *"**We** want and will patiently build relations as much as the American side is willing."* [2.35]

- 8) "The sanctions haven't led to a change in **our** country's political course, or weakened **our** sovereignty, or led to an internal split," Volodin said in a statement posted to the Duma's official website. [2.35]
- 9) "**We** are a great power, and no one likes competition," he said. [2.39]
- 10) "Few expected **us** to act so quickly and so resolutely, not to say daringly," Putin said. [2.39]
- 11) He described the Western sanctions over Crimea and the insurgency in eastern Ukraine as part of "illegitimate and unfair" efforts to contain Russia, adding that "**we** will win in the long run." [2.39]
- 12) "Those who serve **us** with poison will eventually swallow it and poison themselves," he said. [2.39]
- 13) Responding to a question about Russia's growing global leverage, Putin responded: "If **we** play strongly with weak cards, it means the others are just poor players, they aren't as strong as it seemed, they must be lacking something." [2.39]
- 14) "The decision to use nuclear weapons can only be made if **our** early-warning system not only detects a missile launch but clearly forecasts its flight path and the time when warheads reach the Russian territory," he said. "If someone makes a decision to destroy Russia, then **we** have a legitimate right to respond." [2.39]

The distribution of engagements markers within quotations is shown below in Table 26:

	Reader pronouns	Appeals to shared knowledge	Directives	Questions	Total
Number	0	0	3	10	13
Percentage	0%	0%	23.07%	76.93%	

Table 26. Distribution of engagement markers in miscellaneous articles (Voice of America) in quotations

Questions are the most frequent engagement markers within quotations which means that the person who made those questions made various attempt to engage with the audience through rhetorical questions. Directives are found in this part of the corpus which suggests that an attempt to establish a contact with the potential audience was made. The following examples were found:

- **Directives:**

- 1) "**Sort this out** for yourselves first, then **come** talk to us," he said. [2.28]
- 2) "*Russia remained a nuclear power, but no one wanted to listen to us. **Listen to us now**,*" Putin said after announcing the super-weapons. [2.29]

▪ **Questions:**

- 1) "**So what if they're Russians?**" Putin told NBC. "*There are 146 million Russians. **So what?** I don't care. I couldn't care less.... They do not represent the interests of the Russian state.*" [2.45]
- 2) "*Could anyone really believe that Russia, thousands of miles away...influenced the outcome of the election? Doesn't that sound ridiculous, even to you?*" Putin asked NBC interviewer Megyn Kelly. [2.45]
- 3) He added starkly: "*Yes, it will mean a global catastrophe for mankind, for the entire world. But as a citizen of Russia and the head of Russian state I would ask: **What is such a world for, if there were no Russia?***" [2.45]
- 4) "*Why have you decided the Russian authorities, myself included, gave anybody permission to do this?*" Putin asked. [2.45]
- 5) "**So what if they're Russians?**" [2.45]
- 6) "*How can you know that?*" I do not know either," he said. [2.45]
- 7) "*Could anyone really believe that Russia, thousands of miles away, influenced the outcome of the election? Doesn't that sound ridiculous, even to you?*" Putin asked. [2.45]

To conclude, the two patterns found in the body of the articles and quotations are quite different, as hedges and boosters are prevalent in the main part, while boosters and negative attitude markers are more numerous in quotations, the same as in the first thematic category of election in *Voice of America*. A possible explanation for such distribution was offered in the qualitative analysis of election-related articles from *Voice of America* and will be elaborated on in the qualitative analysis of miscellaneous articles.

5.2.4. Qualitative analysis of articles on miscellaneous issues

The second thematic category of the corpus from *Voice of America* was labelled under a broad term *miscellaneous* as no predominant topic was found in the articles under analysis, as journalists elaborated on a wide range of domestic and international issues related to Putin.

This part of the corpus is comprised of 21 articles which covers such issues as the poisoning of the Skripals in Salisbury, England, Russian meddling in the US election, US and European sanctions on Russia, the military operation in Syria, the Trump-Putin relationship and others which may be of more interest for American audience. Nevertheless, the election was mentioned in all the articles, although the articles under analysis cover other newsworthy events, as the campaign was in full swing and the corpus was compiled of articles published during the presidential campaign from December, 2017 to March, 2018.

The distribution of interpersonal markers and the overall pattern shows that journalists are consistent in their use of interpersonality as the patterns do not demonstrate significant differences, as hedges are the predominant markers, followed by boosters and negative attitude markers, exactly as in the election-related articles from *Voice of America*, although the topics covered by journalists differ.

As in election-related articles, the interpersonal pattern in *Voice of America* is characteristic of numerous hedges that serve multiple functions in the discourse under analysis. Accusations is a major semantic category in the articles and it is demonstrated through the use of a vast number of hedges that display various degrees of tentativeness on the part of journalists that intend to follow the principle that proofs are essential when presenting a piece of information as an objective fact. As before, journalists make use of such hedges as *suspected*, *alleged*, *allegation*, *suggestion*, *claim*, modals *could* and *may*:

- 1) The gulf between Russia and Britain widened on Friday as they cranked up pressure over a nerve agent attack and a **suspected** murder in Britain that have deepened Western worries about **alleged** Russian meddling abroad. [2.27]
- 2) Putin's spokesman denounced the **claim** as "shocking and inexcusable." [2.27]
- 3) Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, former commander of the British Army's chemical and biological weapons regiment, called the **claim** that U.S. or British agents **could** have developed Novichok "complete hogwash." [2.27]
- 4) Speaking to the AP, he called it unlikely that some of the nerve agent **could** have gone missing in the years after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. [2.27]
- 5) While many British politicians have backed the government in blaming Moscow for the nerve agent attack, the U.K.'s main opposition leader has cautioned against a rush to

judgment. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said in the Guardian that it's **possible** that "Russian mafia-like groups," rather than the Russian state, were responsible. [2.27]

- 6) Just before May spoke, Russian President Vladimir Putin brushed off **suggestions** of Kremlin involvement in the poisoning of Skripal, a Russian military intelligence colonel who was recruited as a double agent by Britain's MI6 and freed by Russia in a spy swap in 2010. [2.28]
- 7) After a public inquiry concluded in 2010 that Litvinenko's murder very **probably** had been Kremlin-sanctioned, Britain remonstrated with Russia and froze the assets of two Russian suspects. [2.28]
- 8) Mc Faul added the unveiling of the new super-weapons **may** not be a return to the Cold War, "*but most certainly is a Hot Peace.*" [2.29]
- 9) Putin Again Rejects **Allegations** of Russian Meddling in US Election. [2.31]
- 10) Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday again rejected **allegations** of Russian interference in last year's U.S. presidential election and said opponents of U.S. President Donald Trump spread the accusations to undermine his legitimacy. [2.31]
- 11) Putin rejected **allegations** that Russia sought to interfere in the election, despite the conclusion last year by U.S. intelligence agencies that he personally directed a campaign to do so in 2016. [2.32]
- 12) Trump himself has repeatedly refused to condemn Russia over the **alleged** meddling and has said that he admires Putin as a strong leader. [2.32]
- 13) The U.S. special prosecutor investigating Moscow's meddling indicted 13 Russians in February for **allegedly** running the secret campaign. [2.34]
- 14) Russian officials from President Vladimir Putin on down have denounced the United States' publication of the so-called "Putin list" - a U.S. Treasury-issued registry of 210 Russians identified as close to the Russian leader - under a new sanctions law tied to **allegations** of Kremlin interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. [2.35]
- 15) Tensions have escalated further amid the ongoing congressional and FBI investigations into **allegations** of collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia. [2.39]
- 16) U.S. President Donald Trump acknowledged Tuesday British evidence that the Russians **may** have been behind the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England, but he stopped short of blaming Moscow "until we get the facts straight." [2.40]
- 17) He also rejected Russian **allegations** that Moscow was pursuing new nuclear weapons because of Washington's failure to abide by previous arms control agreements. [2.42]
- 18) He has repeatedly said that investigation of **allegations** that his campaign colluded with Russia to help him win are an excuse by Democrats to explain his upset victory over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. [2.45]

On the other hand, journalists introduce a number of boosters that are slightly less numerous than hedges when referring to accusations that potentially levels the hedging effect:

- 1) Britain's foreign secretary accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of personally ordering the poisoning of ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, describing it as *the most* brazen such move since World War II. [2.27]
- 2) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in what Western powers see as the latest sign of *increasingly* aggressive Russian interference in foreign countries. The tensions threaten to overshadow Putin's expected re-election Sunday for another six-year presidential term. [2.27]
- 3) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, as Britain claims, it's "*100 percent*" *clear* it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 4) After a public inquiry concluded in 2010 that Litvinenko's murder *very* probably had been Kremlin-sanctioned, Britain remonstrated with Russian and froze the assets of two Russian suspects. [2.28]
- 5) Trump himself has *repeatedly* refused to condemn Russia over the alleged meddling and has said that he admires Putin as a strong leader. [2.32]
- 6) The U.S. treasury also referred to last year's *massive* ransomware attack, known as NotPetya, that the U.S. and Britain have blamed on the Russian military. [2.34]
- 7) Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the Russian Duma, the lower house of parliament, said the list was the latest in a failed U.S. sanctions policy aimed at weakening an *increasingly* powerful Russia. [2.35]
- 8) He noted that his Anti-Corruption Foundation team had carried out its own investigations and produced reports that *highlighted* Kremlin corruption by several of the listed figures. [2.35]
- 9) The U.S. Treasury Department published the report Monday in keeping with a law passed overwhelmingly by Congress last August, after it became *clear* that Russia had meddled in the 2016 presidential election. [2.36]
- 10) Putin wanted Russia's involvement in Syria to be different from its intervention in Afghanistan and Chechnya, which claimed many lives and were *widely* unpopular. [2.37]
- 11) Prigozhin is *hardly the only* Russian oligarch to do favors for Putin. [2.37]
- 12) While some observers have dismissed Putin's comments as *nothing more than* empty threats, Rinkevics said neighboring countries worry that Russian willingness to invade both Ukraine and Georgia over the past decade imbues the comments with an ominous precedent of military follow-through. [2.41]

Hedges found within quotations from the semantic category of accusations are frequently accompanied by boosters as well that diminish the hedging effect, making statements

more assertive and simultaneously helping journalists to shift responsibility for the statements to politicians and experts with the help of references:

- 1) While Britain has accused the Russian state of ordering the poisoning of the Skripals, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson took it a step further Friday and said it's "**overwhelmingly likely**" that Putin himself ordered the attack. [2.27]
- 2) "*Our quarrel is with Putin's Kremlin, and with his decision, and we think it **overwhelmingly likely** that it was his decision, to direct the use of a nerve agent on the streets of the U.K., on the streets of Europe, for the first time since the Second World War,*" Johnson said. [2.27]
- 3) British Prime Minister Theresa May said Monday a "*military-grade nerve agent*" known to have been developed by Russia was used to poison former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and that her government has concluded it is "**highly likely**" Moscow was responsible. [2.28]
- 4) Prime Minister May said it was "**highly likely**" Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain **would** not tolerate such a "*brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*" [2.40]
- 5) "*Russia has previously produced this agent and **would** still be capable of doing so,*" May said. "*Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations, and our assessment that Russia views some defectors as legitimate targets for assassinations, the government has concluded that it is **highly likely** that Russia was responsible for the act against Sergei and Yulia Skripal,*" she said. [2.40]
- 6) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, as Britain claims, it's "**100 percent**" **clear** it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 7) He tweeted: "*Putin & his agents used on purpose military grade nerve agent to try to assassinate Skripal **make sure** we all knew who did it. He is taunting us, daring us to do nothing.*" [2.28]

Moreover, the combination of hedges and boosters is accompanied by negative attitude markers that are the third most frequent interpersonal markers that express journalists' view of the Kremlin's activity and Putin in particular:

- 1) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in what Western powers see as the latest sign of increasingly **aggressive** Russian interference in foreign countries. The tensions threaten to overshadow Putin's expected re-election Sunday for another six-year presidential term. [2.27]
- 2) May's statement marks a **sharp** escalation in an unfolding diplomatic and political crisis that is plunging relations between Britain and Russia to their lowest point since the Cold War. [2.28]

- 3) The foreign and defense ministers, Boris Johnson and Gavin Williamson, have been campaigning semi-publicly the past few days for the adoption of a much tougher approach toward Russia than was pursued after the **fatal** poisoning in 2006 of another former Russian spy, the dissident Alexander Litvinenko. [2.28]
- 4) The war scare was revealed subsequently by high-ranking Soviet intelligence defector Oleg Gordievsky, who in a later book described his intelligence bosses as being **in the grip of paranoia**. [2.29]
- 5) U.S. military planners are brushing aside Russian **claims** that its military has an array of new strategic nuclear weapons that can hit any target anywhere in the world. [2.30]
- 6) Russian President Vladimir Putin boasted about his military's newfound capabilities, including "invincible" nuclear weapons ones that cannot be intercepted by foreign adversaries during what has been described as a **saber-rattling** speech Thursday in Moscow. [2.30]
- 7) But U.S. military officials downplayed Putin's **claims** as familiar rhetoric. [2.30]
- 8) Putin **claimed** they have no equivalent and contended the new weapons have made NATO's U.S.-led missile defense "useless." Still, some analysts are skeptical of Moscow's **claims**. [2.30]
- 9) Despite such **claims**, U.S. lawmakers were also **unimpressed**. [2.30]
- 10) The most well-known of the Russians indicted, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has ties to Putin and the state. Prigozhin is accused of funneling money into the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, which is often described as a **notorious** "troll factory" and which is also named in the indictment. [2.32]
- 11) Most of the new sanctions target those involved in a so-called Russian "troll factory" operation that U.S. authorities say **flooded** social media with posts intended to sway the 2016 election. [2.34]
- 12) He has been linked to a **shadowy** military firm that has sent private Russian contractors to fight in Ukraine and Syria on the side of Moscow's allies. [2.37]
- 13) Speaking to a **staunch** pro-Kremlin TV host in a documentary that aired in Russia just weeks before voters head to the polls in an election that has barred any **serious** competitors from running, Putin made **tough** statements in which he presented himself as an indispensable guarantor against foreign attacks. [2.41]
- 14) While some observers have dismissed Putin's comments as nothing more than **empty threats**, Rinkevics said neighboring countries worry that Russian willingness to invade both Ukraine and Georgia over the past decade imbues the comments with an **ominous** precedent of military follow-through. [2.41]

- 15) Rinkevics and his fellow foreign ministers representing the three Baltic allies exposed on NATO's eastern flank are in Washington to urge Western leaders against being **naive** about Russian threats. [2.41]
- 16) During the speech, Putin showed a computer-generated video of one of the new weapons destroying Florida. And he **bragged** that the new weapons would make U.S. missile defense systems “*useless.*” [2.42]

As well as in the election-related articles from *Voice of America*, a significant number of negatively charged vocabulary is found within quotations that strengthens the overall impact of the discourse apart from just giving reference as quotes are chosen deliberately:

- 1) “*This attempted murder using a weapons-grade nerve agent in a British town was not just a crime against the Skripals, it was an **indiscriminate and reckless** act against the United Kingdom, putting the lives of innocent civilians at risk,*” May told parliament. “*We will not tolerate such a **brazen** attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.*” [2.28]
- 2) Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina told VOA, “I view Mr. Putin like I view **any murderer or criminal**. When they say something, **they’re probably lying, but you have to take it seriously.**” [2.30]
- 3) NATO also criticized Russia, calling Putin's statements “**unacceptable and counterproductive.**” [2.33]
- 4) The journey of Yevgeny Prigozhin from troubled youth to ex-con entrepreneur with companies worth hundreds of millions of dollars reflects what one expert says is a typical pathway to riches in post-Soviet Russia: the willingness to do favors and “**dirty tasks**” for Putin that others **would** find too risky. [2.37]
- 5) The 56-year-old Prigozhin is an “**ideal villain who gets asked to handle various delicate and dirty tasks,**” said Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Center. “**Actually, it is typical of authoritarian regimes to outsource violence.**” [2.37]
- 6) Prime Minister May said it was “**highly likely**” Russia was behind the attacks and warned after meeting with members of her national security council that Britain would not tolerate such a “**brazen** attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.” [2.40]
- 7) About a half hour later, emergency personnel were called to assist the two, who were found in “**extremely serious condition**” on a bench near the shopping center. The police officer who was first on the scene also remains hospitalized. [2.40]
- 8) U.S. Defense Undersecretary for Policy John Rood told lawmakers Wednesday that Putin’s comments, “**while not surprising, were nonetheless disappointing.**” [2.42]
- 9) “**We’re concerned about some of the doctrine we see emanating from Russia, talking about early escalation, a greater reliance on nuclear capabilities in a conflict,**” Rood said. [2.42]

- 10) "The United States remains committed to our arms control obligations," Rood said. "**Regrettably**, the Russian Federation's track record in terms of its adherence to its arms control obligations leaves a great deal wanting." [2.42]
- 11) Sissi spoke of "**dangerous** consequences" of the decision, while Putin called for a "prompt resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians," saying they must be "based on prior international agreements and resolutions." [2.43]
- 12) Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, said, "*President Putin **bizarrely** has resorted to the **blame game** by pointing the finger at Jews and other minorities in his country. It is deeply **disturbing** to see the Russian president giving new life to classic anti-Semitic stereotypes that have **plagued** his country for hundreds of years.*" [2.45]
- 13) The American Jewish Committee said in a Twitter comment, "*President Putin suggesting that Russian Federation minorities, be they Ukrainian, Tatar, or Jewish, were behind U.S. election meddling is **eerily** reminiscent of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."*" [2.45]
- 14) The lawmakers said it is "**extraordinary and confounding** how little your administration is doing to counter Putin's campaign to undermine our grand democracy, including the refusal to implement sanctions that passed Congress nearly unanimously." [2.45]
- 15) A spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, Heather Nauert, told reporters Tuesday that the move is "**wrong**" and added that the State Department is concerned that the new status might result in harassment of U.S. journalists. [2.46]
- 16) In an interview with VOA, Congressman Eliot Engel, a ranking member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, called the move "**ridiculous**" but added, "*that's typical for a **totalitarian** state with a **totalitarian** leader.*" He said democracy and free speech are "**alien** concepts" to Russian President Vladimir Putin. [2.46]

Apart from the evaluation of Putin's way of doing politics, journalists from *Voice of America* introduce negative attitude markers when talking about corruption and the annexation of Crimea. Although not numerous, still they are repeated throughout the corpus as these two major topics are directly associated with Putin's terms in office:

- 1) Tensions between Russia and the West have been growing following Russia's 2014 **annexation** of Ukraine's Crimea and its subsequent military buildup. [2.33]
- 2) Russia's richest men spent billions of dollars to help construct hotels and sports venues for one of Putin's pet projects, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, which went over budget and **was rife with corruption**. [2.37]
- 3) Russia responded by **annexing** Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. [2.39]
- 4) Five of its affiliates in Russia provide news on Crimea, which Russia **annexed** from Ukraine in 2014, Siberia, the predominantly Muslim North Caucasus region, provincial Russia and the mostly Muslim region of Tatarstan. [2.46]

As the corpus consists of articles published during the presidential campaign, journalists tend to mention the topic of the then-upcoming election. In this category several boosters and negative attitudinals were used when talking about Putin's probabilities to win:

- 1) While he remains **highly** popular, according to opinion polls, the Kremlin is worried about voter turnout, and opposition activists say Putin's aides are worried as they try to balance between keeping tight control over campaigning and avoiding voter apathy. [2.29]
- 2) In advance of the list's publication, the Kremlin had indicated Russia viewed the registry - and any additional sanctions - as an attempt by the U.S. to influence Russia's presidential elections in March, when Putin is **all but guaranteed** re-election to a fourth term. [2.35]
- 3) Putin announced earlier this month that he **will** run for reelection, and it is **widely** assumed he **will** win a fourth term as Russian head of state. [2.44]
- 4) The election has been one **devoid of suspense** with Putin's victory seen as inevitable. [2.28]

Apart from explicit evaluation present in the articles which is made with the help of negative attitude markers and boosters, journalists continue making use of a technique that was previously described in the previous section, which is giving indirect evaluation through referencing. Such hedges as *Britain says*, *what Western powers see*, *as opposition activists say*, *that U.S. authorities say*, *seen by many* as and others are used to subjectivize statements to make them sound as a particular opinion rather than a straightforward accusation:

- 1) Geopolitical tensions have been mounting since the poisoning of the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury on March 4, in **what Western powers see** as the latest sign of increasingly aggressive Russian interference in foreign countries. [2.27]
- 2) The source of the nerve agent — which **Britain says** is Soviet-made Novichok — is unclear, as is the way it was administered. [2.27]
- 3) Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, said that if the substance is Novichok, **as Britain claims**, it's "100 percent" clear it came from Russia. [2.27]
- 4) Putin's surprise announcement of the development of a new cruise missile **that he claims** can't be intercepted by the U.S. air-defense shield in Europe and Asia, and of a new, heavy payload intercontinental missile, risks upending strategic stability and triggering a new arms race, according to former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt. [2.29]
- 5) While he remains highly popular, according to opinion polls, the Kremlin is worried about voter turnout, and **opposition activists say** Putin's aides are worried as they try to balance

between keeping tight control over campaigning and avoiding voter apathy. The Kremlin, **they say**, is determined to ensure a big turnout to demonstrate that Putin remains Russia's "irreplaceable leader" 18 years after first coming to power, and that his grip on the nation hasn't weakened. [2.29]

- 6) The U.S. intelligence agencies concluded in January 2017 that in addition to aiding Trump, for whom **they said** the Kremlin had developed a clear preference, Russia's aims included undermining faith in the U.S. electoral system and denigrating Trump's main rival, Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. [2.32]
- 7) Most of the new sanctions target those involved in a so-called Russian "troll factory" operation **that U.S. authorities say** flooded social media with posts intended to sway the 2016 election. [2.34]
- 8) The U.S. has now updated the details of his sanctions listing, adding that he and his Concord company provided "material assistance" to the troll factory, **which Washington says** he owns or controls. He has denied this. [2.34]
- 9) Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, mocked **what he saw** as amateur detective work by U.S. intelligence agencies. [2.35]
- 10) The journey of Yevgeny Prigozhin from troubled youth to ex-con entrepreneur with companies worth hundreds of millions of dollars reflects **what one expert says** is a typical pathway to riches in post-Soviet Russia: the willingness to do favors and "dirty tasks" for Putin that others **would** find too risky. [2.37]
- 11) Sobol, whose husband was attacked last year in **what she suspects** was retaliation for her investigation, said Prigozhin keeps a low profile. [2.37]
- 12) **Some have suggested** it was a poisoning in which Russia **may** have had a hand, even though British authorities haven't revealed what the substance was and are still investigating. Moscow has denied any involvement. [2.39]
- 13) Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) voted to ban the anti-corruption blogger from running because of his conviction on criminal charges. **Navalny and his followers say** those charges were politically motivated. [2.44]
- 14) Following the CEC decision, Navalny released a video declaring a "voter's strike," because — **according to Navalny**— the March contest **would** not really be an election. [2.44]
- 15) Russian officials have called the new legislation a "symmetrical response" to **what they describe** as U.S. pressure on Russian media. [2.46]
- 16) Navalny, 41, has campaigned for the presidency all year despite an implicit ban on his candidacy from a fraud conviction **seen by many as** political retribution. He was formally barred from the ballot earlier this week. [2.47]

Another major technique used to create the identity of the Russian president and his inner circle is the use of boosters, such as the modal verb *will* and verbs as *reiterate*, *insist* and others that convey the idea of insistence when the Kremlin fends off accusations, voices forecasts and intentions:

- 1) Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by Russian news agencies as calling Johnson's statement a "*shocking and inexcusable breach of diplomatic propriety*." Peskov **reiterated** Russian denials of involvement in the attack on the Skripals. [2.27]
- 2) What grabbed international attention, however, wasn't his pledge to spend more on maternity pay, hospitals and childcare as well as urban development and education, but his **highlighting in bold language** Russia's military buildup under his leadership and his focus, especially on the country's nuclear strength. [2.29]
- 3) The speech's venue had been shifted in a **clear** signal that the Kremlin wanted to attract more attention. [2.29]
- 4) They **will** strike "like a meteorite, like a fireball," Putin said dryly in his **most** forceful declaration yet of Russia's military might and nuclear strength. [2.29]
- 5) Speaking at his annual marathon news conference in Moscow, Putin expressed hope that U.S.-Russia relations **will** normalize. [2.31]
- 6) Putin said Thursday that Russia is worried about the United States pulling out of arms control agreements, while his country **will** continue to abide by the pacts. He also said Russia's military **will** develop as it needs to without getting into an arms race with the United States. [2.31]
- 7) The Russian leader told reporters the country should have a more competitive political system and that when he runs for re-election next year he **will** do so as an independent candidate instead of under the United Russia party. [2.31]
- 8) Russian President Vladimir Putin said he "*couldn't care less*" if Russian citizens sought to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, **insisting** that the Kremlin had nothing to do with the efforts. [2.32]
- 9) He was **emphatic** that he would never extradite the suspects to the United States to face trial. [2.32]
- 10) When Russians were killed earlier this month in a U.S. attack in Syria's Deir el-Zour province, the Russian government **insisted** that Moscow did not send them there. Hiring mercenaries or working as one is against Russian law. [2.37]
- 11) Putin, who presented a sweeping array of new Russian nuclear weapons last week, voiced hope that nuclear weapons **will** never be used — but warned that Russia **will** retaliate in kind if it comes under a nuclear attack. [2.39]

- 12) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **insisted** Tuesday Moscow was "not to blame" and would only cooperate with a British investigation if it gets samples of the nerve agent that is believed to have been used. [2.40]
- 13) Russia's lower house of parliament, the Duma, says it **will** vote this week on whether it **will** ban access for media organizations designated as foreign agents. [2.46]
- 14) Russian authorities **will** investigate whether opposition leader Alexei Navalny is breaking the law with his campaign for boycotting next year's presidential election, the Kremlin said Thursday. [2.46]

To summarize the above-mentioned points, the second part of the corpus from *Voice of America* defined as *miscellaneous*, repeats the pattern previously observed in election-related articles, the first part of the corpus. Hedges are prevalent among other interpersonal markers and serve multiple functions besides the primary one. Boosters used in combination with hedges weaken their interpersonal impact, thus, making the discourse under analysis more assertive and subjective. Moreover, it is customary for journalists to use hedges in the form of references as an indirect tool of conveying *Voice of America's* ideas on Putin's policies and governance model. As in the election-related articles, negative attitude markers are few in comparison with hedges and boosters, but the distribution of the three principal markers is different in quotations that are again employed as an indirect tool of strengthening the interpersonal component in the articles. Other markers do not constitute particular patterns or only single instances were found, thus, no conclusive remarks can be made.

5.3. Statistical analysis

The results of quantitative analyses of interpersonal markers in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* were submitted to statistical analysis through Pearson Chi-Squared test and T-test using IBM SPSS Statistics 23. These tests are used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between frequencies of a contingency table that are related in certain features. When the statistical difference between the two sources is equal or below 0,5, it is considered to be significant. If the difference is below 0,1, it is viewed as highly significant. Only election-related articles were subjected to statistical analysis as it is the only semantic category that is found in both sources that makes them comparable. Only those markers that have

instances at least in one of the sources were analyzed. The results are shown in Table 27, with statistically significant differences marked in bold:

Interpersonal markers	Newspaper		Total	Pearson Chi-Square	T-Test
	Russia Today	Voice of America		Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	Significance (2-tailed)
Stance markers					
Stance markers	379	234	613	,159	,160
Hedges	122	102	224	,950	,950
Hedges (epistemic verbs)	17	28	45	,012	,012
Hedges (modal adverbs)	23	9	32	,033	,033
Hedges (approximates)	24	7	31	,006	,006
Hedges (if-clauses)	3	0	3	,111	,112
Hedges (modal verbs)	53	47	100	,693	,694
Hedges (modal verbs – can)	1	2	3	,459	,462
Hedges (modal verbs – could)	9	12	21	,262	,264
Hedges (modal verbs – may)	7	4	11	,531	,533
Hedges (modal verbs – might)	2	0	2	,194	,196
Hedges (modal verbs – would)	24	28	52	,170	,171
Hedges (modal verbs – should)	10	1	11	,013	,013
Hedges in quotes	23	27	50	,206	,207
Hedges in quotes (epistemic verbs)	0	3	3	,099	,099
Hedges in quotes (modal adverbs)	3	1	4	,225	,233
Hedges in quotes (approximates)	0	1	1	,351	,361
Hedges in quotes (modal verbs)	19	22	41	,918	,920
Hedges in quotes (modal verbs – can)	3	9	12	,078	,081
Hedges in quotes (modal verbs – could)	4	1	5	,107	,113
Hedges in quotes	1	3	4	,368	,380

(modal verbs – may)					
Hedges in quotes (modal verbs – would)	10	8	18	,295	,307
Hedges in quotes (modal verbs – should)	1	1	2	,915	,918
Boosters	75	84	159	,037	,037
Boosters (modal verbs)	23	22	45	,532	,535
Boosters (boosting adverbs)	25	28	53	1,000	1,000
Boosters (boosting verbs)	6	9	15	,559	,562
Boosters (boosting adjectives)	7	17	24	,055	,056
Boosters (grammatical boosting)	10	1	11	,003	,002
Boosters (boosting noun phrases)	4	7	11	,457	,460
Boosters in quotes	17	55	72	,000	,000
Boosters in quotes (modal verbs)	10	19	29	,074	,076
Boosters in quotes (boosting adverbs)	3	11	14	,830	,833
Boosters in quotes (boosting verbs)	0	2	2	,425	,432
Boosters in quotes (boosting adjectives)	3	16	19	,349	,356
Boosters in quotes (grammatical boosting)	1	3	4	,946	,947
Boosters in quotes (boosting noun phrases)	0	4	4	,253	,259
Positive attitude markers	35	3	38	,000	,000
Positive attitude markers (nouns)	6	0	6	,435	,448
Positive attitude markers (verbs)	3	0	3	,597	,609
Positive attitude markers (adjectives)	7	3	10	,003	,002
Positive attitude markers (adverbs)	2	0	2	,671	,681
Positive attitude markers (attitudinal phrases)	17	0	17	,104	,110
Positive attitude markers in quotes	1	4	5	,336	,337
Negative attitude markers	147	44	191	,000	,000
Negative attitude markers (nouns)	3	16	19	,000	,000

Negative attitude markers (verbs)	17	11	28	,027	,027
Negative attitude markers (adjectives)	28	11	39	,390	,393
Negative attitude markers (adverbs)	7	2	9	,953	,953
Negative attitude markers (attitudinal phrases)	92	4	96	,000	,000
Negative attitude markers in quotes	60	28	88	,000	,000
Negative attitude markers in quotes (nouns)	4	6	10	,042	,043
Negative attitude markers in quotes (verbs)	1	2	3	,187	,191
Negative attitude markers in quotes (adjectives)	12	13	25	,010	,010
Negative attitude markers in quotes (attitudinal phrases)	42	7	49	,000	,000
Engagement markers					
Engagement markers	4	6	10	,350	,350
Appeals to shared knowledge	3	0	3	,011	,005
Directives	1	0	1	,197	,242
Questions in quotes	1	0	1	,288	,308
Directives in quotes	5	1	6	,047	,049
Reader pronouns in quotes	6	12	18	,019	,018

Table 27. Statistical analysis of interpersonal markers in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*

Table 27 shows that stance markers in total do not demonstrate a significant statistical difference as well as engagement markers, although they slightly exceed in *Russia Today* as compared to *Voice of America*. It suggests that a high absolute frequency of interpersonal markers of stance in both sources contributes to the idea of a highly subjective nature of both sources, although they display different interpersonal patterns and differ in the way interpersonal markers are distributed throughout the corpus. Statistical data may be used as a proof of different levels of advocacy that these two sources display.

Hedges, one of the most frequently used markers in both sources, neither demonstrate significant statistical differences. They were separated into several categories, such as epistemic verbs, modal verbs (can, could, may, might, would, should), modal adverbs, if-clauses,

approximates, within which no significant statistical differences were observed. Hedges, being useful tools of withdrawing commitment and mitigating the impact of statements made by journalists, are inevitable means to ensure that specific conventions of journalistic practice in informative news articles are followed. As no judgement is ideally expected in this genre of journalistic discourse, journalists introduce a wide number of hedges in order to avoid straightforward evaluation that is always present in spite of the requirements for straight news stories.

The difference in boosters in general and most categories of boosters, such as modal verbs, boosting verbs, adverbs, adjectives and noun phrases is not statistically significant as well as hedges that brings to a conclusion that these two interpersonal markers is an inevitable part of journalistic discourse and may be a characteristic feature of the genre or of the two sources under analysis. Journalists from both sources make an extensive use of hedges and boosters that is a professionally accepted way to strengthen the author's self in a piece of discourse if direct evaluation through attitude markers is avoided. Nevertheless, the difference in the use of grammatical boosting is highly statistically significant (.000) that suggests that journalists from *Russia Today* use more various boosting techniques as compared to their American counterpart. Although, journalists from *Voice of America* introduce more quotations with boosters where the difference is highly significant as well. That may support the claim that in an attempt to mitigate the assertiveness of statements in the body of the articles, journalists from *Voice of America* introduce quotes that are highly saturated with interpersonal stance markers that seems to be an indirect way to project the author's standpoint, as quotations are chosen deliberately to support particular claims.

Positive attitude markers in general and positive attitudinal adjectives demonstrate significant differences (.000 and .002/.003 respectively), as journalists from *Russia Today* resort to a great number of positive attitude markers when characterizing the frontrunner of the presidential race, Vladimir Putin, and his activities while their American counterpart introduces a few positive attitude markers to characterize the opponents of the Russian president, making choices in favor of other interpersonal markers or indirect means of conveying stance.

In sharp contrast with hedges and boosters, negative attitude markers and a number of their subcategories display the most numerous highly statistically significant differences among all the interpersonal markers, supporting the idea that negative evaluation is more salient in *Russia Today* than in *Voice of America* both in the body of the articles (such as negative attitude markers in general (,000), nouns (,000) and attitudinal phrases (,000)) and within quotations in general (,000) and in attitudinal phrases found in quotations (,000). An array of negative attitude markers found in election-related articles in *Russia Today* goes against the requirements for a purely informative news story that points at a high level of subjectivity of the source. Quotations are used as an additional tool to convey negative charge already present in the body of the articles.

Engagement markers are few and do not play an important role in the discourse under analysis. No conclusive results can be made on the basis of the scarce instances of engagement markers found in the corpus. T-Test showed that the difference of appeals to shared knowledge is statistically significant (,005), while Chi-Squared Test disproves it (,011).

The above-mentioned findings support the results of the qualitative analysis suggesting that journalists from both sources make an extensive use of interpersonal strategies, clearly displaying their stance according to the communicative aims they pursue, while not being particularly interested in engaging with their readership. The two sources, when compared, do not show significant statistical differences in the most numerous categories of markers, such as hedges and boosters, that may be interpreted as a generic feature typical of propaganda sources. The findings also testify to the presence of a significant negative charge in *Russia Today* both in the body of the articles and in quotations as compared to *Voice of America* that emphasizes a higher level of advocacy in *Russia Today*.

5.4. Identity construction

As it was previously mentioned in the literature review, the sphere of politics has been undergoing a complex process of mediatization, a social change process in which media have become increasingly influential and deeply integrated in the political domain (Stromback, 2008; Stromback & Esser, 2009). Media play an indispensable role in routine political activities, such

as, for instance, electoral campaigns, that are of interest to the current study. Moreover, the constant process of negotiation of identities is also media-driven. As a result, in view of the growing intrusion of media, boundaries between media images, social and personal identities are blurred. This is complicated by the fact that identities are discursive phenomena to a large extent, so with a wide range of media that have different political alignment that project different identities of the same political actors, we tend not to observe mere descriptions of individuals, but products of specific ideological visions that serve hegemonic ends, such as to generate a desired perception of an individual or to enforce the existing one. In case of politicians, well-known high-profile political figures usually generate a various set of attitudes that may be of interest to CDA.

Most politicians have been studied through the lens of their social identity and not their personal one in terms of gender, ethnicity, social, academic and cultural background as they normally do not act as individuals on the political arena but rather as an embodiment of political, social, cultural identities they possess (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, 1999; Greene, 1999; Croucher, 2003; De Fina, Schiffrin, Bamberg, 2006; Van Dijk, 2006, 2010). The identity of Vladimir Putin, the most prominent political actor in the discourse under analysis, is also represented primarily through his social identity in *Voice of America*, while his social and personal ones is brought into prominence only in *Russia Today*. *Voice of America* represents Putin through a number of identities according to 1) his political activities, indirectly criticizing them through the choice of highly negatively charged quotations, abstaining from direct negative evaluation in the body of the articles; 2) gender, intensifying the importance of masculinity and other traits of character, such as toughness and decisiveness, for Putin's public image that are traditionally acknowledged as masculine in patriarchal Russian society that is achieved through extensive boosting; 3) his professional background, such as a former KGB officer that has close ties with the intelligence services. Nevertheless, journalists from *Voice of America* tend to abstain from direct characterization or negative evaluation of Putin, trying to switch attention from the president to the Russian government and foreign policies:

- 1) Putin is running as an independent candidate, keeping a distance from the top Kremlin party, United Russia, which has been dogged by corruption *allegations* against some of its top members. [2.11]

- 2) The Kremlin's preference for a high voter turnout to give a Putin re-election the appearance of democratic legitimacy has been **widely** reported in international media. [2.5]
- 3) **Kremlin critics say** most of the other candidates are **window dressing** in a vote Putin is certain to win in Russia's tightly controlled political environment. [2.19]

Russia Today, being a state-financed news media, is aimed at increasing Putin's allure with readership through a number of identities that may appeal to the public. His political identity received preferential treatment as expected and it may be divided into several components that are key to Putin's public brand, such as *strength*, *decisiveness*, *competence* and *successfulness*. In contrast with the focus of the Soviet propaganda on the strength of the state, the contemporary propaganda of Putin's Russia focuses exclusively on the strength of the leader. Besides, after the resignation of Boris Yeltsin, the first president after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was especially important to emphasize stark differences between Yeltsin and his successor, the former having poor health and alcohol addiction while the latter being young, energetic, healthy and potent. The image of a strong man who can lead his nation through any sort of adversity and hardship is attained through the use of positive attitudinals and boosters. His accomplishments are highlighted in comparison with the situation before Putin ascended to power, when the country was still recovering from the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and yet had to find a sense of direction:

- 1) Putin has **repeatedly** described *the "shock-therapy" reforms of the 1990s as a mistake that led to poverty for the majority of Russians*, while few chosen 'oligarchs' gained **tremendous** riches. [1.1]
- 2) Last year, Putin reiterated this position when speaking to an international economic forum, blaming the gap between the richest and poorest Russian citizens on a "**nasty tendencies**" rooted in 1990s. [1.1]

Information that can be potentially detrimental to Putin's image is omitted, such as the fact that economic growth enjoyed by the country was largely due to the soaring price of oil. Instead, the image of an external threat posed by Europe and the United States is meant to bolster the image of Putin as the protector of the state amid accusations of US election meddling, expansionist policies and poisoning scandals:

- 1) That was done by US President George W. Bush *killing a 30-year-old* missile treaty in 2002, he told NBC. [1.3]
- 2) *The US nuclear build-up on Russia's doorstep* triggered a response from Moscow, which deployed its newest Iskander systems to its Kaliningrad exclave, citing the threat posed by US missile launchers deployed in Poland and Romania. [1.3]
- 3) In the following years, the US *has* virtually *encircled* Russia with its missile defense installations, in particular by stationing them in Romania and Poland. [1.11]

The power Putin wields is also displayed through the description of high-tech weapons Putin frequently talks about drawing parallels between modern Russia and the past glory of the Soviet Union, appealing to people's nostalgic sentiments:

- 1) The station is *the world's only* permanent structure built at 80 degrees latitude north of the Equator. [1.7]
- 2) On March 1, the Russian president unveiled a set of *brand-new* Russian nuclear weapons during his state of the nation address. The list includes *the newest* intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has virtually no range limit, *high-precision* hypersonic missile systems as well as nuclear-powered drone submarines and *even* combat lasers. [1.11]
- 3) President Vladimir Putin, who recently startled the world by unveiling Russia's *advanced* nuclear arsenal, has again spoken of nuclear arms, clarifying the circumstances in which Moscow is prepared to enter a nuclear war. [1.11]

Decisiveness and *insistence* are emphasized with the help of numerous boosters:

- 1) Even though Putin admitted that any conflict involving the use of nuclear weapons would have dire consequences for humanity, he *maintained* that Russia would be forced to defend itself using *all available means* if its very existence is put at stake. [1.8]
- 2) Senator Aleksey Pushkov said in comments to RT that he thought that the main message of Putin's address to the international community was *very clear*. [1.8]

The popularity of any political figure is measured by their success that is why *Russia Today*, when evaluating the results of Putin's several terms in office, aims to construct a narrative of a dutiful leader that succeeds in everything he does, so the component of *successfulness* is attained through a vast number of positive attitude markers and boosters used in a row that produce a cumulative effect, while no negative evaluation was found:

- 1) Since 1999, Russia has *enjoyed a 30-fold increase* in foreign currency reserves, and *public debt has shrunk to 17.2 percent* of GDP compared to over 92 percent 18 years ago. [1.2]
- 2) Back in 1999, the Russian economy by PPP was worth only \$620 billion, but that *has increased by 600 percent* in the last 18 years. [1.2]
- 3) Russian economy under Putin: *Quality of life tripled, foreign debt fell 75%*. [1.6]
- 4) *The average nominal monthly wage has grown* almost *11-fold* from \$61 to \$652. [1.6]
- 5) *Unemployment has contracted* from 13 percent to 5.2 percent. [1.6]
- 6) *Pensions have grown over 1,000 percent* in the same period from \$20 to \$221. [1.6]

Several articles in *Russia Today* are dedicated to Putin's personal image, although Putin usually brings no individualistic or personal flavor to the office of the Kremlin, as little is known about his personal life. In these articles he is depicted as caring, simple, hospitable, as if nothing human is alien to him to present him in a favorable light. In the articles when his hobbies are mentioned, such as hunting and fishing, the idea of masculinity is indirectly emphasized again as these hobbies are traditionally ascribed to males:

- 1) Vladimir Putin had to protect himself with firearms due to criminality in Russia during the pro-market reforms of the 1990s, and *even considered taking a side-job as a taxi driver*, the president revealed in an interview. [1.1]
- 2) *"In my country home, I had to put a pump-action shotgun near my bed, this is true."* [1.1]
- 3) *"I thought about what to do, thought about maybe seeking work as a taxi driver. I am not joking, I had to do something, I had two small kids. So, when they offered me legal work in Moscow on the presidential staff, I agreed and moved."* [1.1]
- 4) *"As is expected in such cases, I boasted a bit [about the size of my catch],"* he said. *"How can one speak about fishing and not boast a little?"* [1.5]
- 5) He also claimed to be a *decent* cook. [1.12]
- 6) *"I make salad. It's really tasty, I'll serve you some later,"* he told the host of the event. [1.12]

Meanwhile, *Voice of America* neglects Putin's personal identity in the articles from the corpus, preferring to focus solely on Putin's political identity.

Other contenders for presidency, such as Pavel Grudinin, Sergey Baburin, Maxim Suraykin, Boris Titov and Grigory Yavlinsky are mentioned in passing in *Russia Today*,

highlighting zero chances to win the election, except for Ksenia Sobchak. Meanwhile, *Voice of America* focuses only on the figure of Vladimir Putin, never mentioning the names of others. Both cases contribute to a higher importance of the incumbent's identity in the discourse under analysis. *Voice of America* makes use of hedged phrases in order to allege that the election is rigged, downplaying the role of alternative candidates as they are never mentioned:

- 1) With the Kremlin controlling the levers of political power nationwide after years of steps to suppress dissent and marginalize political opponents, it is **virtually certain** that the election **will** hand Putin a new six-year term. Political commentators say Putin, 65, **is eager** for a high turnout to strengthen his mandate in what **could** be his last stint in the Kremlin, as he **would** be constitutionally barred from seeking a third straight term in 2024. [2.8]

Meanwhile, *Russia Today* elaborates on a number of issues related to the election in order to intensify Putin's popular image along with other sources of heavy-handed Kremlin propaganda. *Russia Today* juxtaposes Putin and other presidential candidates, allocating 8 articles out of 30 solely to Putin in *election-related articles*. It is frequently explained as an instance of false balance in the press when journalists try to give an equal amount of information concerning a controversial issue in order not to seem biased (Bruggemann, 2017; Fahy, 2017). It is of utmost importance for *Russia Today* to create an idea of a free and transparent election that is ensured by cutting-edge technologies that are employed to exclude any possibility of interference as Putin wants to be identified as a ruler who represents and implements the mandate of the people and exercises power for their benefit. Thus, positive representation is guaranteed through an extensive use of boosters and positive attitude markers:

- 1) Top senator describes forthcoming elections as **most transparent** in modern Russia's history. [1.33]
- 2) Recent legislative, organizational and technical measures ensure that the March 18 presidential polls will be **the most open** in Russia's history, according to Valentina Matviyenko, chair of the country's upper house. [1.33]
- 3) The upper house speaker also said that "tremendous" legislative work had amended Russian electoral law **to match the highest international standards**. [1.33]
- 4) State-run VTSIOM will introduce **cutting-edge** blockchain technology for exit polls at the forthcoming Russian presidential elections. [1.37]

Moreover, to strengthen the positive impact, *Russia Today* resorts to massive negative othering of Putin's opponents, as they are always characterized through the combination of boosters and negative attitudinals suggesting they are no rivals to Putin:

- 1) Pavel Grudinin has accused the election authorities of deliberately turning televised debates into "cheap shows," and said he would no longer take part after other contenders ***exchanged insults and even threw water at each other***. [1.22]
- 2) Zhirinovskiy, who is known for his often ***provocative*** remarks, ***is no stranger to controversy***. [1.27]
- 3) In late February, Zhirinovskiy, labelled Sobchak a "*dumb fool of a woman*," ***among other unpleasant things***, which ***brought her wrath down on him*** – as well as a glass of water to the face. [1.30]

Although, Alexey Navalny, an opposition activist banned from participating in the election that is frequently seen as the only credible challenger to the incumbent, is practically underrepresented, with a few instances of negative attitudinals and hedges that were used to attenuate his authority and popularity with potential voters:

- 1) Opposition activist Alexey Navalny ***suffered a further blow to his hopes*** of running in Russia's 2018 presidential election, after the Supreme Court Presidium dismissed a complaint seeking to override the ban on his participation. [1.17]
- 2) On Friday, the lawyer of Navalny's NGO Foundation for Countering Corruption, Ivan Zhdanov, ***mocked*** the ruling by tweeting that the refusal was issued in record time, while other cases spent "many months" in the Supreme Court. ***He did not back up his claim with any particular examples***. [1.17]

He is also mentioned cursorily in *Voice of America* but is characterized with a number of positive attitude markers, the only ones that were found in all the articles from this source:

- 1) The country's ***only truly independent*** opposition leader, anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, has been excluded from running. He is urging supporters to boycott the polls to try to depress the vote. [2.29]
- 2) Alexei Navalny, the ***charismatic*** anticorruption crusader who has built a national following by railing against endemic corruption, made a similar observation several months ago. [2.19]

To sum up, President Vladimir Putin of Russia turns out to be the primary political actor in the articles under analysis, while identities of other presidential candidates are presented in brief. Their scarcity is meaningful, as Putin is viewed as the frontrunner of the presidential race

in both sources. Putin's identity is built on the basis of several components that are essential to his public image, such as strength and toughness, competence and successfulness in view of an external threat. Nevertheless, this is not an overwhelming list of qualities that are frequently promulgated by the Kremlin and associated media vehicles as far as Putin's persona is concerned, such as, for instance, compassion, humility, honesty; a shift towards sexualization of his public image in the late 2010s (Beale, 2018; Denisova, 2019) and growing adherence to highly conservative gender roles. This fact reveals the limitations of the current research that does not embrace all the identities that are key to understanding Putin's multi-faceted identity because of a limited timespan (the 2018 electoral campaign only) and thematic restrictions. Besides, identities are not stable and tend to evolve as in the case of Putin as well, new components of his identity appear with a passage of time. This is important as the ultimate aim of maintaining above-mentioned identities is to increase Putin's attractiveness to ensure high approval ratings, thus, domestic stability; "by making him appear as the source of national strength and pride, the presidential brand makes a Russia without Putin almost unthinkable" (Beale, 2018: 155).

6. Discussion and conclusions

The discussion of the findings presented in the previous section, answers to research questions and conclusions are divided into several sub-sections according to the research questions stated in Section 3.4. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research can be found at the end of the section.

6.1. Interpersonal patterns, their communicative functions and possible interpretation

The general objective of the current research was to analyze how subjectivity is expressed in two pro-establishment state-funded media vehicles as *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*, frequently seen as ideological adversaries, from the perspective of interpersonal metadiscourse. That is to say, how journalists inevitably demonstrate judgmental inclination with the help of interpersonal markers of stance and engagement. When there is evidence of consistent use of particular markers in a given thematic category of articles, it is suggested that markers constitute an interpersonal pattern that serves specific communicative ends. It was hypothesized that the analysis would reveal different interpersonal patterns in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* with the absence or presence of certain interpersonal markers. The hypothesis was based on the premise that journalistic discourses cannot but advocate particular standpoints in spite of the formal requirements for professional practice and only differ to what extent advocacy is present. Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses of the corpus, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is proved, as the findings demonstrate that interpersonal patterns in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* do differ depending on the thematic category of articles.

The analysis indicated the difference of major thematic categories present in the two sources: *Russia Today* elaborates on the upcoming *election*, *Putin* and his activities and on *the Skripal case*, while *Voice of America*, apart from exploring the issue of *election*, addresses a wide array of topics directly related to the incumbent that could not be divided into smaller units and were labelled as *miscellaneous* (such topics as the Russian military intervention in Syria, external policies, the alleged meddling into the US election, Putin and Trump, the poisoning of the Skripals and others). Such thematic distribution within the corpus may be

conditioned by the two opposite perspectives that these two sources offer, as it was supposed before, because *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* are both state-financed news engines that offer pro-establishment perspectives on a wide range of international and domestic events. The issue of *election* and its coverage was paramount at that period for both sources as far as Putin is concerned. As *Russia Today* is a media network that functions under the auspices of the Russian government, it offers the pro-Kremlin perspective on the issues under analysis, aimed at presenting the incumbent president in a favorable light, thus, a significant number of articles that elaborate solely on *Putin* are found, suggesting he is the frontrunner of the election. In the meantime, the articles from *Voice of America* do not constitute equivalent thematic section devoted only to Putin, while the characterization of the Russian president is achieved through the depiction of his internal and external policies in the *miscellaneous* section. The third thematic category in *Russia Today* is devoted to *the Skripal case*, while in *Voice of America* this event does not receive extensive coverage as only a few articles on the issue were found, when American politicians made official statements about the case that took place on British soil. Consequently, the distribution of topics and the number of articles devoted to them and the differences observed within these categories depend on news values that govern the process of selecting newsworthy events to be covered in news stories (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1982; Hetherington, 1985; Bell, 1991; Craig, 1994; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Brighton and Foy, 2007; Richardson, 2007; Bednarek and Caple, 2013). News values depend on various external factors, such as the political and social context in the country, journalistic cultures, funding methods, political affiliation of a news vehicle and others (Waisbord, 2008). These factors exist independently of journalists and should be analyzed apart in order to gain deeper insight into the choice of topics that are covered (Bell, 1991).

The analysis of topics supports the claim that news values possess a constitutive force as far as the content of news is concerned that is proved by the distribution of topics in the two sources. The choice is conditioned by different newsworthiness of the events for the two sources that took place throughout the electoral campaign.

The distribution of topics in the corpus affects interpersonal patterns in both sources. The presence or absence of particular interpersonal markers in straight news stories can be

usually justified by the conventions of the genre, while deviations can be explained by particular communicative aims set by journalists. Table 28 shows the distribution of interpersonal markers in all the thematic categories in the corpus with the number of respective markers found in quotations placed in brackets:

	Russia Today			Voice of America	
	Election	Putin	Poisoning of the Skripals	Election	Miscellaneous
Stance markers					
Hedges	122 (23)	29 (20)	42 (33)	102 (27)	101 (28)
Boosters	75 (17)	28 (25)	57 (78)	84 (55)	51 (33)
Positive attitude markers	35 (1)	54 (13)	4 (8)	3 (4)	3 (6)
Negative attitude markers	147 (60)	42 (32)	86 (72)	44 (28)	38 (47)
Self-mentions (1 st p. sing.)	0 (2)	0 (29)	0 (0)	1 (9)	0 (11)
Self-mentions (1 st p. pl.)	0 (7)	0 (30)	0 (16)	0 (30)	0 (23)
Total	379 (110)	153 (149)	189 (207)	234 (153)	193 (148)
Engagement markers					
Reader pronouns	0 (6)	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (12)	0 (0)
Appeals to shared knowledge	3 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Directives	1 (5)	0 (7)	0 (3)	0 (1)	0 (3)
Questions	0 (1)	1 (3)	0 (5)	6 (0)	4 (10)
Total	4 (12)	2 (15)	0 (8)	6 (13)	4 (13)

Table 28. Distribution of stance and engagement markers in the articles from Russia Today and Voice of America.

Russia Today demonstrates different interpersonal patterns related to the construction of subjectivity in each thematic category of articles, with the prevalence of negative attitudinals and hedges in *election-related articles*, positive and negative attitudinals in *Putin-related*

articles and negative attitude markers and boosters in the articles on *the Skripal case*. *Voice of America* demonstrates the same pattern with the prevalence of hedges and boosters both in *election-related* and *miscellaneous* articles. Engagement markers are few and possess low interpersonal potential in both sources but are more numerous in quotations. Quotations, in their turn, were analyzed separately. The analysis shows that quotations used in *Russia Today* tend to repeat the pattern found in the body of the articles as far as stance markers is concerned, thus, intensifying the message conveyed in the body of the articles. In *Voice of America*, on the contrary, repeated patterns in and outside quotations are not observed; on the contrary, negative charge that is not salient in the body of the articles, while negative attitude markers and boosters are the most numerous ones in quotations. It means that journalists from *Voice of America* intentionally avoid providing direct negative evaluation, introducing it indirectly through quotations.

The variation of prevailing markers in *Russia Today* is justified by different communicative aims journalists tried to achieve, such as to ensure positive representation of Putin downplaying the importance of alternative candidates for the presidency, to bring into prominence Putin's accomplishments, to create the image of an external threat and Putin's ability to resist, to fend off accusations of poisoning of the Skripals and to offer counter-accusations and others. Journalists from *Voice of America* tend to be more consistent in their interpersonal patterns as they coincide in both thematic categories that suggests that they follow generic conventions, making an extensive use of hedges and boosters and abstaining from demonstrating a clear authorial stance through attitude markers, opting for more implicit strategies of conveying standpoints.

The difference of interpersonal strategies revealed in the analysis and the overall number of stance markers may point at other factors that shape the discourse under analysis apart from journalists' communicative aims. The two sources historically belong to different journalistic cultures, as *Voice of America* is supposed to follow the Anglo-American model of journalism that shaped the classical long-held conception of proper news practice based on the principles of objectivity, impartiality and thorough fact-checking (Chalaby, 1996). Although the Anglo-American model was taken into consideration internationally, social, political and media

contexts shape the way journalism is practiced in a particular country, that is why background knowledge is paramount when analyzing journalistic discourse. Moreover, the total number of interpersonal markers proves that journalists deviate from the accepted model of journalism towards a more interpretative one (Mancini, 2000; Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and the actual journalistic practice is at a very complex midway point as there is a growing demand for a more socially conscious and responsible forms of journalism that acknowledge the diverse nature of subjective reasoning.

Moreover, the analysis shows that the standard of objectivity in the mass media may be questioned again with the means of interpersonality that may act as a framework to measure to what extent the journalist is present in a piece of writing. As it was mentioned before, the corpus was compiled of straight news stories that are supposed to deliver factual information, excluding any interpretation and evaluation. The presence of the journalist's self in this genre of journalistic discourse is out of the question according to the Anglo-American model of journalism that stipulates objective and unbiased reporting as an exemplary practice universally accepted in the journalistic community. Opinion articles, being a different journalistic genre, on the contrary, welcome strongly opinionated articles. Nevertheless, both academics and practitioners argue that the standard of objectivity frequently fails to be complied with, which may be proved by an extensive use of interpersonal markers in the discourse under analysis. Moreover, stance markers demonstrate significant prevalence over engagement markers in all the thematic categories in both sources that suggests that journalists take more interest in conveying their judgements, values, opinions and standpoints, rather than establishing contacts with the readership. Besides, these findings support the claim that the boundaries between straight news stories and opinion articles are blurred to a serious extent as journalists fail to relinquish subjective reasoning due to a number of reasons when producing news. Consequently, metadiscourse demonstrates the way the human factor acts as a major constraint to journalistic objectivity in the corpus. This kind of analysis may be carried out in accordance with the fact that most researchers agree on the idea that advocacy is omnipresent in any journalistic discourse, both intentionally or not, and only differs in its intensity – from more subtle forms of advocacy to overt ones (Fisher, 2013, 2016).

Statistical analysis was carried out in order to prove that quantifications made for the corpus are statistically significant that would contribute to the idea that the discourse under analysis is a form of pro-establishment advocacy. Chi-squared test and T-Test were applied only to *election-related articles* it is the only major thematic category found both in *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*, that is why the generalizability of the obtained results is limited. The qualitative analysis demonstrates that the articles from *Russia Today* are characteristic of tangible negative charge that is conveyed through the use of negative attitude markers both in the body of the articles and in the quotes that intensify the overall negative impact of the discourse. Negative attitudinals are also present in *Voice of America*, but their instances are not so numerous as in *Russia Today*. Both Chi-square and T-tests prove that the difference in *election-related articles* is statistically significant (0,000). Positive attitude markers are not that numerous as compared to negative attitude markers, but the difference between the two sources turns out to be statistically significant as well (0,000). Statistical analysis proves that negative and positive evaluation is more salient in *Russia Today*, suggesting that journalists saturate the discourse with evaluative interpersonal units more than their American counterparts. It goes against the canon of unbiased reporting in purely informative news articles and supports the claim that journalistic discourse tends to interpret events “with at least some degree of conceptualization, selection, theorizing and evaluation” (Ward, 1998: 4).

The difference in the number of hedges and boosters in general is not statistically significant in *election-related articles* that may be explained by the generic conventions of the genre as journalists make use of professional clichés of that are found more frequently among these two categories of interpersonal markers. When particular categories of hedges (such as epistemic verbs, modal verbs, modal adverbs, if-clauses and approximates) and boosters (modal verbs, boosting nouns, verbs, adjectives, grammatical boosters) are analyzed separately, they neither demonstrate the difference that is statistically significant that may support the claim that journalists follow specific conventions accepted in the journalistic community as far as the use of hedges and boosters is concerned. Nevertheless, hedges and boosters point at the author’s presence in the journalistic discourse that seems to be inevitable as journalists tend to advocate

particular standpoints, thus, news stories are never fully objective and different sources only vary in the degree of subjectivity.

6.2. Alternative forms of realization of interpersonal

This research was also aimed at exploring alternative forms of realization of interpersonal when applied to other genres, rather than academic discourse as interpersonal is flexible, context-sensitive and contains variables (Suau-Jiménez, 2016, Suau-Jiménez et al., 2021). The analysis shows that attitude markers enjoy greater linguistic flexibility and contextuality as compared to hedges and boosters due to the complexity of meanings and attitudes they may convey, while hedges and boosters serve the aim of diminishing or intensifying the impact of statements that is relatively limited in comparison with attitude markers. The examples of grammatical boosting through the use of continuous tenses or boosting through repetition of the same words (a cumulative effect) demonstrate that boosters enjoy relative flexibility as well. Besides, many instances of context-sensitive markers were found that point at the fact that the same word or phrase may be a hedge or a negative attitude marker (e.g. *allegations*) depending on the context. In this case, background knowledge is essential in order to analyze and classify markers properly. These examples support the claim that variables should be taken into consideration when applying the interpersonal framework to other genres of discourse to explore different realizations of interpersonal.

6.3. Taxonomy adjustment

The current research was also interested in offering a possible adjustment of the original taxonomy worked out by Hyland and Tse (2004) to journalistic genres in view of the limitations discovered when the taxonomy was applied to other genres rather than academic discourse. The category of attitude markers turns out to be too general, as it embraces a vast array of attitudinal meanings that impedes decoding authors' communicative aims. In order to obtain more conclusive results, it was suggested to separate the category of attitude markers into positive and negative markers as journalists tend to take sides when giving evaluation. The statistical analysis revealed that the two sources differ in negative and positive charge in the process of

Putin's identity construction that may justify the necessity to distinguish the categories of negative and positive attitudinals.

Besides, quotations were emphasized as an implicit means of strengthening the interpersonal potential in the discourse through referencing, thus, they need to be analyzed separately as they contain a vast number of interpersonal markers that either repeat the pattern found in the body of the articles, thus, backing up the main argument as it is done in *Russia Today*, or divert from it, as in *Voice of America*, where quotations contain more negative attitude markers.

6.4. Identity construction

The current study was also interested in discursive strategies employed by journalists from *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* in order to construct identities of political actors mentioned in the corpus. The findings of quantitative and qualitative analyses were interpreted from the perspective of CDA, suggesting that identities are products of particular ideological visions that are created in order to instill a desired set of attitudes.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia is the most prominent political actor in the corpus, while other presidential candidates are either presented in a negative light, as it is done in *Russia Today*, or underrepresented as in *Voice of America*, suggesting that the outcome of the election is clear, consequently, there is no need to elaborate on other contenders as no rivals can offer resistance to the candidacy of Putin. Moreover, journalists from *Voice of America* tend to abstain from direct characterization of the incumbent, preferring to convey the message indirectly through a number of components that are traditionally ascribed to his public image, such as hyper-masculinity, his political style and activities and his professional background in the Soviet intelligence services. Journalists from *Voice of America* resort to extensive boosting and hedging simultaneously when characterizing Putin's activities that finally levels the hedging effect, making statements seem formally restrained, but the overall impact of statements is enforced. Boosters are frequently found together with neutral vocabulary that may also be seen as a compensatory strategy to make the discourse under analysis more assertive without expressing any explicit attitudes with the help of attitude markers. Negative attitudinals are few

and found mostly in reported speech after epistemic verbs or in quotations that is done intentionally in order to subjectivize statements, presenting judgements as opinions expressed by others rather than by journalists from *Voice of America*. It may be explained as another compensatory strategy applied by journalists from *Voice of America* in order to formally follow the standard of objective reporting, but simultaneously offering evaluation expressed by other person in question. It is an example of a technique that is not aimed at ensuring objectivity, but at protecting journalists from the accusations of bias (Glasser, 1992). Meanwhile, under the guise of formal objectivity, journalists manage to fulfil their communicative aims.

Russia Today gives preferential treatment to Putin as well, emphasizing key components of his public persona, such as *strength, decisiveness, competence, insistence* and *successfulness*, which are essential to an image of a strong-willed national leader *Russia Today* wants to convey, which is attained through the use of positive attitudinals and boosters. These traits are intensified in order to bolster Putin's image as the protector of the state against *an external threat* posed by other countries amid accusations of US election meddling, aggressive external policies and spy poisoning scandals. Besides, journalists from *Russia Today* resort to massive negative othering when characterizing alternative candidates with a vast number of negative attitude markers and boosters both in the body of the articles and in quotations to present Putin in a favorable light.

The analysis showed that the findings obtained from the interpersonal analysis of the corpus point at the level of subjectivity in the discourse under analysis that can be measured. Subjectivity, in its turn, is an essential notion in CDA as subjectivized conceptions of reality are eventually transformed into hegemonic representations of particular social issues that are maintained and enforced discursively. It also points at a link between the two frameworks that seem to be complimentary rather than antagonistic and may help to carry out more comprehensive analysis when combined.

7. Limitations of the study and further research

As it was previously mentioned, identities are unstable and subject to changes due to the fact that they are being negotiated discursively on a constant basis. The current study focuses on a limited timespan that covers the 2018 presidential campaign that lasted for 14 weeks. The yielded results and the suggested interpretation only refer to that period; the forms of realization of subjectivity and interpersonality and techniques of identity construction may differ significantly outside the above-mentioned timespan. For further research it is suggested to compile a larger corpus that covers several Putin's presidential terms. It would give an additional insight into the construction of his identity that is constantly evolving with the passage of time due to a number of internal factors, such as sliding approval ratings in a midst of a recession and growing domestic instability. An array of social, political and cultural factors would influence the way Putin is projected in the mass media depending on the presidential term.

The visual component of Putin's public image is essential to the construction of his political image in the mass media. It frequently complements strategies employed to convey his various political identities. In this case, multimodal analysis would also make a profound contribution to the analysis of his identity, as the choice of visuals is always deliberate and serves similar discursive ends.

The results of corpus analysis as far as the forms of realization of subjectivity and interpersonality are concerned only characterize the sources that were used, such as *Russia Today* and *Voice of America*. It may be suggested to explore other sources apart from *Russia Today* and *Voice of America* that are characteristic of a different political affiliation rather than the pro-establishment one, which are typically accused of state propaganda. As subjectivity is an intrinsic feature of human reasoning, thus, journalism is never devoid of judgement; a comparative study of various sources would give a deeper insight into the nature of subjectivity and interpersonality that are of major interest for the current research.

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