

УДК 81'42:811.11  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32838/2710-4656/2022.3/16>

**Hlavatska Yu. L.**

Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University

## ENGLISH SATIRICAL FAKE NEWS: THE WAYS OF DECONTEXTUALIZATION VIA THE SATIRICAL CODE

*The article investigates the ways of decontextualization in the texts of fake news via the satirical code. It has been noted that the Internet is considered to be a basic fake platform due to the high speed of content delivery. Often Internet users cannot distinguish fake (false) information from reliable information, and journalists, in their turn, successfully achieve their own goal – without much effort to mislead “thirsty” readers and convince them of the truth of a particular message.*

*It has been clarified that scientists have always seen fake news as a message stylistically created like real news but false fully or partially, on the one hand, and false stories created to influence political views or as a joke, on the other hand. Among the functions of fake news are misinformation of the audience; inducing to a specific action; attraction of the audience's attention and interest; infotainment; propaganda etc.*

*A striking feature of fake news is humorous or satirical narration. As a result, the article aims at finding a solution for the problem of manner of fake news delivery, satire to be exact. Our goal is to describe the interaction of satire and deception through the decontextualization in the texts of fake news. The material for the research includes the fake news taken from The Onion (American newspaper organization) and some trustful ones.*

*The transmission of news (from truthful to fake ones) is due to the decoding of the ideological content of the fake news, under satirical mask, carried out by linguo-stylistic approach allowing to explore the stylistic features of satire at all language levels. The novelty of the study is the reconstruction of the satirical code which, as a result, is considered to be the symbiosis of statements given in the text by the author and his verbal evaluation (negative or positive) expressed either explicitly or implicitly. The elements of the calculating analysis are used to show the percentage of verbal actualization of explicit and implicit means of satire manifestation.*

**Key words:** fake news, satirical code, satirizing attitude, decontextualization, linguo-stylistic means of satire manifestation.

**Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration.** The modern media space functions in conditions of increased speed of communication processes that generate “waves” of information noise. In this regard, blurring of the boundaries between truth and lies, media heroes and media enemies becomes increasingly clear, as a result fake news is progressively appearing in the media field.

In contemporary online media the authors, editors, content managers simply do not have enough time to check the facts and credibility of news. Sensational message goes first into news feeds and spreads over the Web at the speed of light, and from there it penetrates into other media – television and newspapers.

Many experts consider such functions of fake news as misinformation of the audience; promotion of somebody's vision, policy or position; cause of aggression; shaking position of the individual and forcing doubt about the fact; sowing of panic; changing the mind of the audience; inducing to a specific

action; attraction of the audience's attention and interest; convincing the audience with the help of fictitious facts; intimidating the audience; infotainment; propaganda etc. In the traditional approach fake news is usually presented in humorous or satirical light.

The linguistic expression of satire is extremely susceptible to transformations in society and culture, adjusting its system and its individual constituents to an artistic representation of reality with the help of laughter and accusatory images. And at present, satire is mainly defined as a negative subjective-evaluative attitude of the author to reality and, moreover, it is a figurative denial of reality. That's why, to our mind, fake news is attracting considerable interest due to the ways of satirizing attitude of its sender towards its content.

**Research analysis.** Fake news has become a central issue of our scientific field of studying. Our previous findings have been focused on various scientific approaches among which we distinguish linguistic as well as journalistic research methods [8], some steps

of linguo-stylistic approach as for fake news [7], synergetic aspect of fake news via its classification [2]. Moreover, our knowledge of fake news is largely based on the ways of distortion of information [6] as well as the ways of comic presentation in the texts of fake news [1].

The problem of satire manifestation has received substantial interest in scientific circles. V. Yurchyshyn, for example, pays attention to linguo-pragmatic means of satirical methods realization in British media discourse, using the definition of satire, proposed by P. Simpson, according to which satire is a discursive interaction between its three participants – the satirist, the recipient of satire and the object of satire [4, p. 136; 9, p. 8].

It should be stated that a fundamental study of the implementation of the category of the comic in journalistic texts of a critical direction in the pragmatic and cognitive aspects is the monograph of Kharkiv Scientific School scholars [3]. From a pragmatic point of view, such texts (reports, feuilletons, pamphlets) have satirical codes. These codes underlie the author's speech strategies. From the informational point of view, the comic is often realized by "throwing information", its rapid and unexpected increment, in other terms. This involves a number of stylistic devices that also serve the process of creating satirical codes [3, p. 99]. In short, the literature pertaining to fake news itself and the satire it is based on strongly suggests and outlines our aim.

**The present paper aims** to describe the interaction of satire and deception through the decontextualization in the fake news.

**Presenting main material.** The term "satirical code" refers to both the author's and the reader's axiological evaluation of the objects described. We, using the methods of linguo-stylistic analysis, can state that satirical fake news has a clear focus on the object of ridicule, it is documentary, accurate in expressing thoughts, distinguished by a deep characterization of images and artistic details. Publicistic features of fake news are displayed in synthesis; analytical thought correlates with imagery, emphasized by satirical colouring.

In addition, typical features of the news analyzed are allegory; the ability to display the urgent topic depicted by distant, often curious associations; a non-standard beginning (we often observe a play on words in the title of a fake news, where the main meaning of the news is focused); the use of comic situations; acute intrigue, and language stylization.

Thus, the satirical code is the system of verbal signals presented in the text of fake news with the help

of the author's speech strategies. The verbal evaluation of statements (positive or negative in form) is expressed either explicitly or implicitly.

The satirical code is based and revealed via modal evaluation of the communication object as the author's goal is to pick up and apply the code to persuade the reader in the comic of the object described. For this reason, the author of fake news decontextualizes the sense of the news achieving wide distribution. That's why the satirical code has a double quality: a) it partially coincides with the code of the reader, with which he is accustomed to denote the comic; b) code signs should be artistic and publicistic techniques necessary to create an image-thesis or an image-thought of a ridiculed object [3, p. 111].

In our case the first quality corresponds with the marker "Alerts", which is located next to date and time of the news, meaning "be attentive", "be watchful", "caution". The second feature, respectively, reflects the arsenal of linguistic means creating the satirical effect of fake news. By means of this the sender of the message forms in his recipient a certain communicative and pragmatic attitude towards the phenomena of reality. The comic meaning of statements, formed by various linguistic means, implicit or explicit, requires active intellectual participation of the recipient of the message in the communication process.

In our opinion, among all the means of expressing the comic in satirical fake news, the most effective in terms of conveying the satirizing attitude of the sender of the message to the phenomena of the described reality are language figurative means, the pragmatic potential of which most fully helps to reflect his communicative intentions.

We have managed to analyze fifty satirical stories taken from the Onion to describe a mechanism of creating the satirical code. Taken together, these findings implicate a role of the satirical code in decontextualization in the texts of satirical fake news. For depicting the way of the satirical code reconstructing and being restricted by the volume of this paper we have focused on the event dated on June, 22, 2021, when America discussed voting reform bill. It's attracting considerable interest due to various publications in media space: "*The bill is a top priority for Democrats seeking to ensure access to the polls and mail in ballots, but it is opposed by Republicans as a federal overreach*" [10].

The political battle between US Republicans and Democrats, in fact, clearly viewed in the texts of news of reliable sources. Its verbal actualization based on contrast is brightly illustrated: "*stop the partisan power grab*", "*the opposite of the current GOP plat-*

form”, “*While Democrats want more national standards in voting, Republicans are working hard at the state level to make it ever so slightly more difficult, hoping to lop off enough votes at the margins to take back the House and Senate in 2022*” [11]; “*the fight is far from over*”, “*this continuous struggle*”, “*to block consideration of the bill*”, “*He vowed that the vote was the “starting gun” and not the last time voting rights would be up for debate*” [10].

It should be mentioned that there is not the only one, but some trusted articles on the basis of which the fake satirical article can be created. The image-thesis discussed in several trusted news (in our case it is a sweeping bill that could review US election system and voting rights) is satirically highlighted on the Onion in the article “Experts Encourage Americans To Start Thinking About What Form Of Government They’d Like To Try After Democracy Crumbles” [5].

Using the method of linguo-stylistic analysis we show the system of signs constituting the satirical code of the satirical story mentioned above and dated 6/22/21, 11:50AM. The author’s speech strategy and the rules of the signs’ usage are clearly seen. This rule, to our mind, can be called the rule of consistently approaching the goal (ridiculing an object, creating an image-thesis). The image-thesis of the given fake news is built on the opposition between US Republicans and Democrats. Such a battle is verbally pictured by means of verbal signals, on the one hand, and positive or negative evaluation of the author, on the other hand.

Our linguo-stylistic analysis of the satirical fake news is organized as follows: statements as signs of the satirical code given in the text of the fake news are presented one by one; linguo-stylistic marker and the language level it is used on are indicated; moreover, verbal evaluation of the statements (positive or negative) in the text of the fake news is pointed out.

1. *Urging the nation to get a head start on what they described as an inevitable decision, the Brookings Institute released a statement Tuesday encouraging Americans to start thinking about what form of government they would like to try after democracy crumbles*: the idiom *to get a head start* meaning *to anticipate* (lexical level), positive (explicit); the subjunctive mood (*they would like to try*) denoting unreality in combination with the polysemantic verb *to try* (*to test, to seek, to view, to taste*) (syntactic and lexical levels), negative (explicit) and, correspondently, negative (implicit) verbal evaluation; metaphor (*democracy crumbles*): *democracy* doesn’t merely decay, but in pieces (lexical level), negative (implicit);

2. *We’re urging this country’s citizens to really put their heads together on how they’d like the country to be governed after the federal government ultimately implodes and leaves a massive power vacuum*,” said policymaking expert James Kimberly, explaining to the country’s 330 million residents that there were some “really cool” options to consider for the post-democracy America, *ranging from a constitutional monarchy to an outright banana republic*: the idiom *to put one’s heads together* meaning *to think over, to deliberate* (lexical level), positive (explicit); hyperbola (*the federal government ultimately implodes*): not merely *destroys* or *changes* (lexical level), negative (explicit); metaphor (*leaves a massive power vacuum*): government is figuratively compared with empty space (lexical level), negative (implicit); substitution of one onym by the other one (*James Kimberly*): real name of policymaking expert is Garth-James Kimberley; the omission of the letter *e* sends us to the name of English actor and comedian – James Kimberly Corden (phonetic level), positive (explicit); irony (“*really cool*” options): semantics of *cool* and *options* imply *new and free choice* of Americans; the adverb *really* as well as inverted commas hint ironical sense (lexico-semantic level), negative (implicit); irony (*ranging from a constitutional monarchy to an outright banana republic*): in the view of actual political events US is considered to be the country standing at a crossroads – it leads US to politically unstable country (semantics of *banana republic*) (lexico-semantic level), negative (implicit);

3. “*How about a totalitarian dictatorship? Anarcho-syndicalism?*”: sarcasm: enumeration of two types of government with the focus on banning people to partake in political decision making (*totalitarianism*) and direct actions of labour movement (*anarcho-syndicalism*) (lexico-semantic level), negative (explicit);

4. *Or, hey, Japan did some cool stuff with a shogun back in the day. Nothing saying we can’t have an American shogun. There’s also always complete chaos to consider, which would make a lot of sense given where we’re heading*: sarcasm (*a shogun*): semantics of *a shogun* predetermines a military ruler – one more form of governing the country leading to *American shogun* (lexico-semantic level), negative (explicit); paraphrase (*complete chaos*): *chaos* is something like a catalyst of government ruling forms mentioned above; it’s used in the meaning *total lack of order* (lexical level), negative (explicit);

5. *All we’re saying is that we should get the ball rolling on this, because we don’t want to get caught*

*with our pants down* whenever Washington D.C. is *left a smoldering crater*”: the idiom *to get the ball rolling* meaning *to make a start, to get down to business* (lexical level), positive (explicit); the idiom *be caught with your pants down* meaning *to be embarrassed by something that happens because you are not prepared for it* (lexical level), negative (explicit); metaphor (*a smoldering crater*): decaying cavity caused by that *federal government implosion* (lexical level), negative (implicit);

6. *At press time, the nation had unanimously decided that after U.S. democracy collapsed, they would pursue sharia law*: sarcasm (*unanimously*): US citizens *collectively* had voted for the *alternative* form of governing – *Sharia* (Islam legal system) (lexical level), negative (implicit).

We have described the results of reconstruction of the satirical code which show four positive explicit, six negative explicit and seven negative implicit verbal evaluation of the statements presented in the text of the fake news. Moreover, it is significant at all language levels.

The results of calculating analysis after having analyzed fifty satirical fake news presented in Table 1 demonstrate that negative, both explicit and implicit, verbal evaluation is more preferable while reconstructing the satirical code in the texts of fake news. It proves the negative satirizing attitude of the sender of the satirical story.

Table 1

#### Quantitate demonstration of verbal evaluation in the texts of fake news sited on the Onion

Positive (explicit) verbal evaluation	Negative (explicit) verbal evaluation	Negative (implicit) verbal evaluation
13 %	39%	48%

**Conclusions.** Thus, the author’s reconstruction of the satirical code in this text of fake news (his speech strategy) consists in the initial positive evaluation of the event, then through polemical assessments we observe a consistent approach to the creation of the satirical image-thesis of the described phenomenon, and, in conclusion, there is the transition to the sarcastic ridicule of the attributes of the event. Besides, we see the consistent gradation of American democracy comparisons – from its crumbling and implosion to its collapse – presented under a satirical mask with the help of the satirical code.

In addition, the connection of satire and deceit, which is viewed via decontextualization in the fake news, is provided by the author’s negative (explicit and implicit) evaluation of a certain event.

Future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by studying the means of manipulation in the texts of fake news by means of the calculating analysis to show the results of quantitative reflection of the functional dominants reflecting the ways of manipulation.

#### References:

1. Главацька Ю. Л. Презентація засобів комічного у текстах «фейкових» новин масмедійного дискурсу: лінгвостилістичний аспект. *Прикладні наукові розробки та теоретичні дослідження XXI століття* : матеріали Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф., 15 квітня, 2019 р. Вінниця : ГО «Європейська наукова платформа», 2019. Т. 3. С. 97–103.
2. Главацька Ю.Л. Класифікація «фейкових» новин у сучасному медіапросторі: синергетичний аспект. *Науковий вісник Херсонського державного університету. Серія Германістика та міжкультурна комунікація*. 2019. Вип. 1. С. 275–280.
3. Пихтовникова Л. С., Мастерова О. Я., Кабусь Е. П. Немецкоязычные публицистические тексты социально-критического направления: прагматистический и когнитивный аспекты : монография. Харьков, 2016. 164 с.
4. Юрчишин В. М. Лінгвопрагматичні засоби реалізації сатиричних методів у британському медійному дискурсі. *Записки з романо-германської філології*. 2021. Вип. 1 (46). С. 135–149.
5. Experts Encourage Americans To Start Thinking About What Form Of Government They’d Like To Try After Democracy Crumbles. The Onion. URL: <https://www.theonion.com/experts-encourage-americans-to-start-thinking-about-wha-1847149618> (Last accessed: 22.08.2021).
6. Hlavatska Yu. “Fake” news via the comic: distortion of information. *Modern development trends in philology and social communication*. Lviv-Toruń : Liha-Pres, 2019. P. 18–33.
7. Hlavatska Yu. Fake news as a means of media communication: six steps of linguo-stylistic approach. *Філологічні науки: сучасні тенденції та фактори розвитку* : матеріали Міжнародної наук.-практ. конф., 28-29 січня, 2022 р. Одеса : Південноукраїнська організація «Центр філологічних досліджень», 2022. С. 155–158.
8. Hlavatska Yu. Fake news: scientific approaches of its investigation. *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук: міжвузівський збірник наукових праць молодих вчених Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка*. 2022. Вип. 48. Том 3. С. 41–46. URL: [http://www.afhn-journal.in.ua/archive/48\\_2022/part\\_3/7.pdf](http://www.afhn-journal.in.ua/archive/48_2022/part_3/7.pdf) (Last accessed: 08.05.2022).

9. Simpson P. On the discourse of satire: toward a stylistic model of satirical humor. Amsterdam, The Netherlands : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003. 256 p.

10. Slodyshko B., Cassidy Ch., Mascaro L. GOP Filibuster Blocks Democrats' Big Voting Rights Bill. *US News*. URL: <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2021-06-22/gop-ready-to-block-elections-bill-in-senate-showdown> (Last accessed: 22.08.2021).

11. Wolf Z. B. This is democracy in America in 2021. *CNN politics*. URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/06/22/politics/what-matters-voting-rights/index.html> (Last accessed: 22.06.2021).

### **Главацька Ю. Л. АНГЛІЙСЬКОМОВНІ САТИРИЧНІ ФЕЙКОВІ НОВИНИ: ШЛЯХИ ДЕКОНТЕКСТУАЛІЗАЦІЇ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ САТИРИЧНОГО КОДУ**

*У статті досліджуються шляхи деконтекстуалізації в текстах фейкових новин за допомогою сатиричного коду. Зазначається, що Інтернет вважається базовою фейковою платформою через високу швидкість доставки контенту. Часто інтернет-користувачі не можуть відрізнити фейкову (неправдиву) інформацію від достовірної, а журналісти, у свою чергу, успішно досягають своєї мети – без особливих зусиль ввести «спраглих» читачів в оману та переконати їх у правдивості того чи того повідомлення.*

*З'ясовано, що вчені завжди розглядали фейкові новини як повідомлення, стилістично створені як справжні новини, але фальшиві повністю або частково, з одного боку, і фальшиві історії, створені для впливу на політичні погляди або як жарт, з іншого боку. Серед функцій фейкових новин – дезінформація аудиторії; спонукання до певної дії; залучення уваги та інтересу аудиторії; інформаційно-розважальна; пропаганда тощо.*

*Яскравою рисою фейкових новин постає розповідь у гумористичній або сатиричній формі. В результаті стаття спрямована на пошук вирішення проблеми способу передачі фейкових новин, а точніше сатири. Наша мета – описати взаємодію сатири та неправдивої інформації шляхом деконтекстуалізації текстів фейкових новин. Матеріал дослідження – фейкові новини, взяті зі шпальт американської газетної організації «The Opion», та декілька новин із достовірних джерел.*

*Передача новин (від правдивих до фейкових) відбувається шляхом розшифровки ідейного змісту фейкових новин під сатиричною маскою, що здійснюється за допомогою лінгвостилістичного підходу, який дозволяє окреслити стилістичні особливості сатири на всіх рівнях мови. Новизною дослідження постає реконструкція сатиричного коду, який, як наслідок, вважається симбіозом висловлювань, поданих у тексті, та словесної авторської оцінки (негативної чи позитивної), вираженої експліцитно або імпліцитно. За допомогою елементів калькуляційного аналізу показано відсоток словесної актуалізації експліцитних та імпліцитних засобів прояву сатири.*

**Ключові слова:** *фейкові новини, сатиричний код, сатирична позиція, деконтекстуалізація, лінгвостилістичні засоби прояву сатири.*