

# Discursive use of modality in RT's coverage of Russia's war on Ukraine

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*Received November 24, 2024; Revised December 10, 2024; Accepted December 28, 2024*



**Abstract.** The current article looks into various types of modality use through the prism of critical discourse analysis strategies in the coverage of Russia's war against Ukraine by the international news provider RT. It aims to uncover how discursive practices, in the name of the Russian state ideology, govern the choice of modality means and explain their dependence on and relevance to the news stories, actors and circumstances within the broader field of representation. The corpus for this article was compiled on RT's website from July 17th to 24th, 2024. It consists of 93 news stories of Ukraine related content comprising 41,418 words and containing different types of modality, occasionally with references to alternative sources, in order to assess and uncover the biased ideological practices on the RT channel. Epistemic modality with its divisional kinds along with the modality of negativity is uncovered; as well as deontic modality, which reflects the ideology of RT's propagandistic narratives centered around Western states positioned against Russia's friendly nations. Conflicting tendencies of factive and emotional reporting are discerned. Quantitative results have been arrived at resorting to both the percentage format and a Mann-Whitney U test, taking into account a similar corpus on the Venezuela crisis of 2019–2020. Modality implementation and distribution provides insight into the RT's propaganda techniques. The article redirects critical discourse analysis towards news consumption, raising awareness of the readership and enhancing news literacy.

**Keywords:** *modality, critical discourse analysis, discursive strategy, bias, RT, ideology, propaganda.*

**Мацелюх Ігор. Дискурсивне використання модальності у висвітленні каналом RT війни Росії проти України.**

**Анотація.** У цій статті розглядаються різні типи використання модальності крізь призму стратегій критичного дискурс-аналізу у висвітленні війни Росії проти України міжнародним новинним провайдером RT. Вона має на меті виявити, як дискурсивні практики в ім'я російської державної ідеології керують вибором засобів модальності та пояснити їхню залежність і релевантність до новинних сюжетів, акторів, обставин у ширшому полі репрезентації. Корпус для цієї статті було зібрано на сайті RT протягом

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*East European Journal of Psycholinguistics*, 11(2), 95–119. <https://doi.org/10.29038/eejpl.2024.11.2.mat>

тижня з 17 по 24 липня 2024 року, тобто майже через два з половиною роки після повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну. Вона складається з 93 новинних матеріалів про Україну загальним обсягом 41 тис. 418 слів. У межах корпусу проаналізовано різні типи модальності, іноді з посиланнями на альтернативні джерела, щоб оцінити та виявити упереджені ідеологічні практики на каналі RT. Виявлено епістемічну модальність з її різновидами та модальністю негативу, а також деонтичну модальність, яка відображає ідеологію пропагандистських наративів RT, зосереджених на західних державах, що протиставляються дружнім до Росії країнам. Виявлено суперечливі тенденції фактологічного та емоційного висвітлення подій. Кількісні результати отримані з використанням як відсоткового формату, так і U-критерію Манна-Вітні, з урахуванням аналогічного корпусу даних про венесуельську кризу 2019–2020 років. Реалізація та поширення модальностей дає уявлення про пропагандистські технології RT. Стаття переорієнтовує критичний дискурс-аналіз на сприймання новин, привертаючи увагу до різних типів модальності та їхньої функціональності в критичному дискурс-аналізі новинних матеріалів, підвищуючи обізнаність читацької аудиторії та покращуючи новинну грамотність.

**Ключові слова:** модальність, критичний дискурс-аналіз, дискурсивна стратегія, упередженість, RT, ідеологія, пропаганда.

## Introduction

### Research Background

Critical discourse analysis of perceiving mass communication as a way of spreading mediated reality was established in the 1990s in the scholarly works of van Dijk (1988), Fairclough (1989), (1995), (2001), Wodak and Meyer (2001). Media discourses and specifically news reports constitute a separate sociocultural practice within a broader field of political discourses and studies ranging from the periodical *Discourse and Society*, founded in 1990, to numerous publications, from Chilton (2004) to Fowler, et al (2019), and onwards to dissertations, such as Badran (2002) and Ngula (2015).

One of the ubiquitous and less researched CDA tools in media is modality as a means to present an utterance in a certain attitude of truth commitment, volition, advice, reservation or irony. Modality is one of the more subtle means if we expand it beyond the basic auxiliary modal verbs (*must, will, would, can, could, may, might*, and others), notional verbs and adverbs with inherent modality (*desire, condemn, prefer, allegedly, supposedly*, and others), nominative modal structures (*it is necessary, it is with condemnation that ...*, and others), (Lillian, 2008). Given all the political tensions of the 21<sup>st</sup> c., new ideological discursive practices aspects come to the fore, as was partially suggested by one of the founders of CDA: “Both modality and evaluation will be seen in terms of what authors *commit* themselves to, with respect to what is true and what is

necessary (modality), and with respect to what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad (evaluation)” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 164).

Regardless of the propagandistic rating for RT, we mean to produce independent results in terms of biased modality on RT International English-language webcast, to define the research method and our guiding premises and draw conclusions as to the use of different modalities in the service of ideology.

The concept of modality stems from Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday (2004, p. 613ff) and pertains to the interpersonal linguistic metafunction where the discourse concerns the position and commitment of the speaker or writer towards their utterances. Alongside other discursive means, modality, in its versatile manifestations, helps to identify the attitude of the author or editorial board towards the reality in focus and indicate how power and ideology are implemented within news discourse. As Hodge and Kress (1988, p. 123) wrote in their seminal work *Social Semiotics*:

Modality is, consequently, in play at all times, in every semiotic act. The affirmation of ‘security’ over the system of classification is an instance of the operation of modality, as much as the assertion of its ‘insecurity.’ Consequently all utterances ... are modalized.

Since the mid-20th century scholars have focused primarily on the two categories of modality: epistemic and deontic. The former refers to the knowledge of the world and embraces both the factual state of the social or natural environment and the speaker or writer’s level of commitment to it (Sebeok, 1986, p. 553). Another definition of epistemic modality originates in Matheson (2005, p. 180): “Modality: describes aspects of language that tell listeners (or readers) how much the speaker vouches for or attaches him or herself to what is being said.”

Palmer (2001, p. 22) developed two categories of modality – 1) propositional modality, consisting of epistemic (speculative, deductive, assumptive) and evidential (reported, sensory) modality; 2) event modality, consisting of deontic (permissive, obligatory, commissive) and dynamic (abilitive, volitive) modality. Epistemic modality reflects the author’s attitude towards the utterance in terms of truth-value or factuality and judgments, while evidential modality provides evidence to prove the proposition. Such distinction directly corresponds to our findings, since RT coverage tries to counterbalance weakly supported propagandistic content with factual cross-references elsewhere in the news stories.

Van Linden (2012, p. 7), on the other hand, argues that modality cases, especially the dynamic and deontic categories, are related to the adjectival and adverbial complements. Her findings suggest that the latter are equally loaded with modal meaning in the lexico-semantic plane, which is traceable in our

corpus, e.g. *repeatedly denied, miraculously survived, legally binding, massive loan, damaged infrastructure, windfall profits, outright “theft,” sovereign funds, warring parties*, and similar collocations. Attributes lack the accompanying meaning of obligation or permission in a number of modal verbs; however, they are active in the evaluative aspect, making them one of the key constituents of the assumptive sub-category of epistemic modality.

Another aspect of modality, briefly touched in Palmer (2001), concerns the objective and subjective modality as epistemic subtypes of modality elaborated on in Martirosyan (2022), the main premise of which is the acquisition of various modalities in different contextual circumstances. The researcher points out that subjective modality is more prominent and in our corpus we come across multiple instances where subjective attitudes are presented as obvious, and thus objective, categories, e.g. *The country [Germany] also joined other members of the US-led bloc*, where the attributive *US-led* has little informative relevance to Germany’s military spending; nevertheless, it implies the previous history of US interventions in global conflicts interpreted by RT as politically convenient precedents. There are 29 detected cases of ironic or condescending modality emanating from the ideological stance of RT as a state-commissioned webcaster, e.g. *much-touted, ruse, Ukrainian grand offensive, pulling the rug from under, the so-called*. RT heavily relies on lexeme *liberate*, when describing the newly occupied settlements, *On Sunday, the Russian Defense Ministry announced the liberation of Urozhaynoye, a large village located in the southwest of Russia’s Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR)*, taking the latter as its own territory.

Another ironic instance is the imposition of *martial law ... due to the conflict with Russia*, which betrays the notion of *conflict* that stands for the full scale military invasion. And yet another proof of Russia’s double-talk, *Moscow still declares that peace is only possible through establishing political dialogue*.

## Methodology

The mainstay of the current research is CDA, introduced by Fairclough (1995) and his approach towards modality in Fairclough (2003, p. 164ff), who affirmed that authors commit themselves differently to “knowledge exchanges.” Likewise, the textual choices of RT’s editorial board produce different discursive representations and different levels of commitment towards Russia’s political and military adversaries as compared to Russia’s more friendly states. Such discrepancies are detectable throughout the RT news feed at the level of presuppositions, implicatures and nominalizations, transitivity and agency,

irony, intertextuality and modality. It is the concept of modality that constitutes the focus of the current article, although the former ones are powerful tools in the service of power relations and ideology.

Nevertheless, we have to admit that not all of the modality cases serve ideological purposes; it is the larger context of the discourse and background assumptions along with the triggered presuppositions that make the given example of modality ideologically biased. Since numerous other factors come into play when defining modality bias, it makes both the qualitative and quantitative approaches quite challenging; hence we have to agree on several research premises, and the **first premise** defines the unit of biased content. Considering the rather high word count per sentence – 30.2, there are numerous cases of multiple modalities of smaller syntagms. Hence, collocations, phrases or clauses that contain modality in the service of ideology, regardless of their type or intensity, are counted as units of biased content, e.g. *Such incidents serve as evidence of Western powers being complicit in the “criminal activity of the Kiev regime.”* We are setting our findings against the overall sentence count – 1,713, as each of them can display at least one modality case, with three in the previously cited one.

The **second** premise posits an issue of the key elements' substitution or elimination within the text in order to see their function more clearly, by which we modify the original context and gain an insight into the author's intent. It is to be resorted to when the context offers no clear solution as to the biased content, e.g. *The US has acknowledged that there are indeed a number of biolabs on Ukrainian soil, but insists that they are entirely legal.* The enhancers *indeed, entirely,* and to a degree *insists* add to the persuasiveness of the excerpt, and distort the neutrality of the utterance.

The **third** premise concerns the degree of visibility, frequency and intensity of a modality case. The nature of modality and the surrounding discourse usually shed light on the attitudinal aspect; and we assume that the intensity level and repeatedness indicate a biased presentation on the grounds of its penetrative nature, and, technically, the archival retrieval on RT reaches years in the past. In the sentence, *Moscow has accused Ukraine of routinely using the systems to launch indiscriminate attacks on Russian territory, including on civilian targets,* apart from strong accusatory deontic modality of the predicate, *has accused,* the utterance contains two lexical and one structural arbitrary elements, *routinely, indiscriminate,* and *including on civilian targets.* By eliminating these items from the discourse, we receive a more neutral report. In fact, the original wording precisely

mirrors Russia's deadly strikes on Ukraine, which is excluded from the RT news feed whatsoever.

The **fourth** premise concerns the decisions based on contextual environment; micro and macro-contexts define the degree of ideological bias, taking into account political players and their typical roles that are commensurable with the Kremlin's list of the unfriendly states. Regardless of the qualitative degree, sentence *Ukrainian forces are deploying chemical weapons against Russian troops on the battlefield, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has said* is still viewed as a unit of biased modality, as no evidence is provided, rather than the authorizational reference to an official.

The **fifth** premise concerns the propagandistic tendentiousness of all the detected modality cases, which may belong to both anti-West and pro-Russia contents and should reflect the ideological intentions of RT directly or other reported actors, clearly corresponding to the current geopolitical affairs. We assume that our findings correspond to an average level of engagement of an educated college graduate, as indicated in the readability index in Table 1. In *Warsaw sent regular army soldiers to reinforce the Border Guard in 2021, when it first accused Russia and Belarus of waging a "hybrid war" by allegedly channeling migrants to Poland*, e.g. the main clause of factual epistemic modality is followed by implicated numerous accusations of deontic obligatory modality against Russia, which poses as innocent with quotation marks distancing the notion in question and with speculative epistemic *allegedly* that casts doubts on the this otherwise true story.

In view of the defined methods and premises, ideology distribution and the functional role of modality, let us offer a sample analysis of a typical RT news story titled, *Andrzej Duda claims that the entire US-led military bloc considers Moscow to be its greatest threat*. Different modalities can be detected here, epistemic authoritative and epistemic assumptive of different intensity. In the former, the tentative *claims* distances the speaker from the uttered "truth" simultaneously enhancing the verity of the claim by the intensifiers, *the entire, its greatest threat*; the *bloc is military* and it stands against the un-allianced and discursively "un-military" Moscow; and the EU members' opinions are not presumed to matter, since the bloc is *US-led*. The verb *considers* places Moscow into the realm of a hypothetical threat rather than a real one, since it is only the bloc's considerations.

The subtitle, *Polish President Andrzej Duda has warned of an imminent war between Russia and NATO if Kiev fails to secure victory in its conflict with Moscow*, further expands on the idea in more realistic terms: verbal lexeme *warned* is by itself a clear indicator of sufficient expertise and authority towards the present geopolitical tensions. Epistemic assumptive *warned, imminent*

hinge on the conditional speculative modality *if Kiev*. It is also prominent that the idea of failure in the war is placed in the subordinate clause, which retreats in structural prominence but allows it to provide information in a less noticeable manner (Jeffries, 2010, p. 48).

The notion of *victory* is severed from the latter by the modality of negativity *fails to secure*, stressing its unrealistic nature, and Russia's war is again shrouded in lexeme *conflict*, by way of speculative epistemic modality. Although we could define different applications of modality in the two titular sentences, their ideological message may range from sharing Russia's real existential threat to wielding its strong power against the bloc.

Two years into the full-scale war, Russia again uses strong assertive modality to reassure the world of its "peaceful" intentions: ... *Duda claimed that if Russia were allowed to defeat Ukraine, it would then attack NATO states – a prospect that Russia has repeatedly denied*. Modality choice towards Russia's reassurance is much stronger than that towards the rest of the utterance, *if ...were allowed to defeat, would then attack*, and this disparity between pro-Russian and pro-Western content is key in our attempt to uncover the bias via modality in RT's coverage of Russia's war on Ukraine.

## Research Material

Our corpus is compiled from the Ukraine related news feed, which showcases the topical and more complex social and political issues, and the CDA theoretical framework often calls for amendments in order to approach our corpus.

The choice of RT (formerly *Russia Today*) was motivated by the swift rise of this news provider to prominence and its international reputation as a propagandistic outlet of the Russian government (Lucas & Pomerantsev, 2016; Aleem, 2017). Despite being banned from aerial service in a number of European countries and Canada (Erlanger, 2017), RT's popularity rose exponentially in the years 2005-2015 (Orttung et al., 2016), and with its never wavering state budget continues to grow in popularity (Michałowska-Kubś & Kubś, 2023; Greenfield, 2022). Against this background it is natural to assume that RT allegedly employs additional strategies rather than factual news reporting (Kling et al., 2022). However, we have to point out the scarcity of CDA research on modality in the output of a single webcaster and lack of unified principles on how to approach a CDA research of a propagandistic channel, such as RT.

The intensity of RT's editorial production increased from March 2022, when it produced 231 news reports within two months, which amounts to about 4 news stories per day; while our corpus, almost 2.5 years into Russia's full-scale war features 13 news stories per day. Such intensity heightens interest in the ideological slant and discursive values of RT's news articles. The intensity of RT's coverage of Russia's war on Ukraine could further be compared to 151 news items on the Venezuela crisis of January to May, 2019, which averages less than one news item daily. Such increase of Ukraine-related material on the international section of RT's homepage deviates from the initial goal of the channel to promote Russia internationally and casts doubts on the channel's impartiality (Lucas & Pomerantsev, 2016).

Table 1 provides quantitative features of the corpus in comparison to that on the Venezuelan crisis.

Table 1

*Quantitative Features of the Selected Corpus in Comparison to That on the Venezuela Crisis*

	<b>Venezuela Crisis</b>	<b>Russia's War on Ukraine</b>
Time period	Jan-July, 2019 (29 weeks)	July 17 – July 22, 2024 (1 week)
News stories	151	93
Paragraphs	1,314	919
Sentences	1,755	1,713
Words	41,493	41,418
Sentence paragraphs	579	714
Subordinate clauses	386	331
Average words per sentence	28.4	30.2
Readability Index	13.201 (college level)	13.170 (college level)

These statistics prove that the intensity of RT's coverage impacts the size of a news story for Ukraine, reaching nine to ten paragraphs, and the count of sentence-paragraphs is significantly higher, making the news narrative even more multi-layered with a plausible explanation that it is easier to place propagandistic information less blatantly within a larger structure (Jeffries, 2010; Buckledee, 2018). To this end might also serve the sentence length, which is 1.8 words higher for Ukraine. Subordinate clauses are another repository for



biased content that eludes direct questioning and their lower count for Ukraine is counterbalanced by 135 extra sentence paragraphs.

## Results

### Modality Types in Corpus Analysis

By analyzing our corpus in terms of various types of modality, we have to keep in mind that for the most part the discourse operates at the level of high-profile representations of various state institutions and between the countries as political entities. These entities speak and act either through the direct voices quoted verbatim or via their reported versions. Thus we acknowledge another implied agent, psychologically less obvious, but even more propagandistically decisive, viz. the news provider itself. Being state funded, RT is liable to fulfill its benefactor's commissions, which finds its realization in the choice of discursive means and the modality of validity, predictability and desirability in particular.

In fact, the diversity of modality types in our corpus and elsewhere on the RT feed offers a substantial array of modal representations. However, for the research purposes of brevity and manageability we have singled out some of the most prominent modality types, such as propositional *epistemic modality*, expressing judgment about the factual status of the reportage; *authoritative modality*, with an expert in focus; *speculative modality*, rendering varying interpretations or various degrees of certainty in the events or decisions; *deductive and assumptive modality*, drawing inferences from the observable data and general knowledge; *reported modality*, when evidence is received from the third parties; *moral modality*, when certain moral values are offered as a reasoning factor; *intentional modality*, when the will of the speaker is brought forward; *the modality of negativity*, when linguistic units, negative in either form or in meaning, create the discourse of criticism and non-acceptance. In the following sections we will be tracing these modality types throughout the corpus against the larger political discourse of RT.

### Modality of a Peacekeeping Mission

Indeed, every single case of modality is unique by itself, and the above types and premises could be prolonged indefinitely. However, what is worth noting is the so-called presuppositional modality, where projections as to the evaluative or consequential aspects of political processes are put forward in an

indirect manner, e. g. in excerpt (o1) where the direct speech of European Council President Mr. Charles Michel represents the adverse reaction of the EU members towards Hungary's overstepping limits of its EU presidency. It can be deducted via the use of the key lexemes, *the Union, rotating Presidency, on behalf of the Union*.

(o1) "The rotating Presidency of the Council has no role in representing the Union on the international stage and received no European Council mandate to engage on behalf of the Union," Reuters quoted Michel as writing.

The message came in response to a letter sent by Orban to EU leaders last week, in which he outlined the results of his negotiations with the Ukrainian, Russian, and Chinese leaderships, put forward proposals to end the conflict, and gave his take on Washington's foreign policy following a visit to the US.

It is obvious that a reader of the news would be resorting to their background knowledge of political procedures, the violation of which warrants penal consequences. Strong negational modality, *no role, no ... mandate*, cautions the subsequent presidencies with moral modality, warning against this unwelcome precedent, with a subtle implicature that Russia does not experience problems with authority subordination.

Let us note that the quote per se does not contain an obvious agent, it is impersonal and is carried out in a formal declarative mode of a joint postulate, and further deprecates the individual move of Mr. Orban. Here we mean to outline another modality of editorial intentions, which is veiled by the presupposition that in two and a half years of Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine, it is the first move of an individual country to undertake a peacekeeping mission (Tuzhanskyi, 2024).

We keep in mind the issue of the news response with the target audiences, which might be following different interpretational paths, e. g. extract (o1) comes from the article titled, *EU rejects Orban's Ukraine peace proposals – Reuters*, further subtitled *The Hungarian prime minister recently visited Kiev, Moscow, and Beijing for talks*. Immediately, one can spot the inconsistencies in the message of the first paragraph of (o1) and the title if the target readers resort to alternative news sources. RT forefronts the attitudinal modality, *rejects*, putting the EU in the subject position, i.e. the agency of the proposition. Such predication places the EU in the unfavorable position of the warring side. With a credible news source agency quoted, one could infer from the implied intentional modality that the EU unity is crumbling as it discards peace efforts. The subtitle further propagates the idea of peace talks: and neither *peace proposals* nor *talks* are elaborated upon until the end of the news report. However, that feature could be lost on some readers who might be

scrolling on the newsfeed to another story; and the initial proposition, the negativity of which is almost an asset for the newsworthiness, might stay prominent in readers' minds for a more prolonged time than the story itself. Such cases amount to 364 out of possible 1,713 sentences, and pertain mainly to disagreements among political powers and accusations against the West, which, apart from overt structural negations, are registered in lexical units, such as, *refuse, complicate, escalate, jeopardize; terrorism, failure, mercenary, difficulties, crisislack; hostile, notorious, defunct, aggressive and crippling*.

The second paragraph of (o1) stands in a certain opposition to the first one, in terms of seemingly more neutral modality. In fact, the rheme part of this sentence-paragraph is written out in the three parallel components of the subordinate construal, *he outlined..., put forward ..., and gave his take*, all of which display factual epistemic modality of regular diplomatic procedures considered as the rightful achievements of Hungarian diplomacy. There are 1,328 counted cases of epistemic modality of anti-Western content out of 1,713 sentences throughout the corpus; the more neutral ones pertain mainly to external issues that exclude Russian interests.

Another peculiarity of the RT discourse is a gradual shift towards more specific subject matter and lexis in final sections of the rheme. Even if it is a ubiquitous principle of sentence structures, on RT the initial thematic material pertains towards more general propositions and is more neutral both in wording and modalities. So does this sentence-paragraph, where, firstly, this harsh response might sound unfair towards Orbán's diplomatic efforts. Secondly, it was triggered by a letter, i.e. a norm of high diplomacy correspondence; thirdly, his efforts to end the *conflict*, albeit, not the "war," were underestimated by the EU leadership, hence the presupposition that it is out of step with peace-keeping strategies.

Another kind of modality hinges on lexical choices in the following example (o2). Lexeme *worth* is not an indispensable discourse constituent here; however, it reminds the taxpayers of the finances spend on *military aid* for a foreign nation and might trigger the adverse societal attitude. The last sentence exhibits strong and positive deontic modality rarely attributed to Western leaders.

(o2) The EU and the US have provided Kiev with billions worth of military aid since the outbreak of hostilities with Russia in 2022. Hungary is one of the few EU nations to criticize Brussels' approach to the conflict. Budapest has refused to send weapons to Kiev and has repeatedly blocked sanctions against Russia as well as aid to Ukraine. Orbán has insisted that the Ukraine conflict needs to be resolved through negotiations.

Discursively, *billions* are spent just because of *the outbreak of hostilities* with a neighbouring country, which stands for Russia's war on Ukraine, and might incite the regret of frittering away the state budget. *One of the few EU nations* means that there are diverging views within the EU, and with the factual modality of *is*, the subtle intention of splitting the bloc is activated. A firm position of *refused to send weapons* and *repeatedly blocked sanctions* sends the strong signal of a high moral modality. Finally, *insisted* in the last sentence positions Orban next to the top diplomats who still believe in peaceful resolutions to wars. The verb *insist* is one of those lexical units, among them *want, refuse, reject, deny, promise, doubt*, that emanate their various intentional modalities, which are not easily broken, i.e. one cannot stop wanting or refusing; as a rule, these units tend to reflect factual and prolonged mental or emotional states. This type of modality has to do with a firm individual position, especially prominent in political leaders; it is meant to be unwavering to remain in high esteem in the public eye; the intentional modality type was detected 107 times in our corpus, issuing mainly from the Russian side.

### **Modality in Miscellaneous Excerpts**

The third week of July 2024, during which our corpus was gleaned, encompasses political events such as the above analysed peacemaking mission of Mr. Orban, the Kremlin's reaction towards its frozen assets, another "closed door" trial against an editor of US state-run Radio Free Europe Alsu Kurmasheva, Trump's attitude towards sanctions, Germany's diminished help for Ukraine, and the hypothetical termination of Russia's war on Ukraine.

In political discourses, it is customary to allocate allegiances to one of the warring sides. By analyzing the type and intensity of detected modality we can conclude that RT's coverage of Ukrainian issues is far from impartial, as seen from the quantitative data in Table 2 in Conclusion. For that purpose, the text samples will be selected from thematically different areas in order to escape a researcher's bias and produce more objective results.

The key type of modality in news discourses is epistemic, related to how truth is presented. Looking back to excerpts (o1), (o2), we face the penalizing discourse of the EU reaction to Orban's mission against the supportive factual tone of RT's version in (o1) and next-to-praise multiple listing of the Hungarian political accomplishments in (o2). Finally, we arrive at the story titled, *EU may not be right fit for Hungary – member state*. As is often the case on RT, titles are delivered in strong objective modality hiding the voice of RT. Apart from the presupposition that Hungary may forge another alliance, it might be implied in

the larger context of Russian-Hungarian discourse that the title is both an invitation to leave the EU and an attempt at destabilizing the bloc.

In sample (o3) again, the Russia-friendly content is sustained in factual neutral modality *he met*, while the EU reaction is kept in the military domain, *triggering the ire*, a poetical and latinized one, from the opening words of a Latin hymn from the mass for the dead "Dies ire." The level and intensity of modality is different, and more image-provoking with the intertextuality of the church service. In terms of epistemic modality, i.e. how the journalists of the RT channel commit themselves to the statements, it is both factual acceptance and disparaging sermon-like reproach, which might be subtly placing the authorship of RT in the righteous camp (Gaufman, 2017).

(o3) As part of the mission, he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, triggering the ire of EU leaders. Orban stressed he does not need a mandate from Brussels to promote peace and that his discussions cannot be considered official talks. In a rebuke of Orban's solo diplomatic efforts on Ukraine, the EU's next informal meeting of foreign and defense ministers will take place in Brussels instead of Budapest, Borrell said on Monday. He called the change of venue 'a signal' to Hungary.

The second paragraph reiterates the modality of the previous one, and likewise projects it via lexical items *rebuke, solo*; the latter, coming from Italian musical terminology, further undermines its poetical significance via intertextuality. Although still a voice of RT, it projects the viewpoint of the EU foreign policy chief, who further proceeds with penal measures. The hint of shifting to another *venue* is a type of speculative modality, which testifies to the power of the news provider to inflict political hints. Such instances amount to 285 out of 1,713 sentences of the corpus, which is quite numerous, given that moderately-puzzled indirect talk decipherable by the readers is likely to be stored in long-term memory as the understanding of these comes with more creative mental efforts (McGaugh, 2000).

By shifting focus on the authorization cases in our corpus, we note a discrepancy between the representation of the Russian president along with other Kremlin dignitaries and leadership and those of other countries; thus the name of the former is invariably spelled out in 39 cases, apart from another 14 cases when that name immediately follows its full title in the preceding sentence. Others are deprived of this consistency, with the exception of Hungarian leader in 19 cases, e. g. *Trump, Biden, Michel, Duda, Zelensky*. It is noteworthy that RT's rhetoric towards Ukrainian Presidency changed after the mid-2024 and it is very often referred to as *Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky*. There are 224 cases of anti-West authoritative modality out of 1,713 sentences.

The issue of Russia's frozen assets abroad has been raised numerous times since the full-scale invasion, and 20 times in this corpus alone within a week. The modality of RT's stance, as expected, is quite predictable, as in an excerpt (04) from the story titled, *Japan to send billions to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets – media*. The unspecified quantity “billions” conjures up an impressive amount. Further on, Japan looks indebted to Russia for this gesture of support for Ukraine with instrumental modality *using*.

(04) Tokyo will shoulder 520 billion yen (\$3.3 billion) in loans to Kiev funded by proceeds from Russian assets blocked as part of Western sanctions..

In May, Brussels approved a plan to use windfall profits generated by the frozen assets to support Ukraine's recovery and military defense.

In the first paragraph the modality of reassurance governs the predicate, again without any explanation of the reasons for the Western sanctions, or the Russian blocked assets. Another type of modality, that of emotional assessment, *windfall*, reinforced by the plural, *profits* reigns in the second paragraph.

The title of another news item, *Ukraine to get first \$1.5 billion of seized Russian cash – Euroclear*, posits the idea of a theft and indirectly a thief, with a universal message of unaccepted wrongs, yet again, no word on where the Russia's woes stem from (05). The same lexical and auxiliary modality of affirmation, *confirmed*, *will*, reveals the European position on this case, with three reminders of the stolen funds, *interest generated by the frozen Russian funds, belonging to Russia's central bank, frozen Russian assets*. Thus, towards the adversaries and their actions RT applies strong accusatory modality, and repeatedly inserts the fragments of this story, whose multiplicity constitutes the reiterative modality of insistence verging on naturalization, when the information is repeated to a degree that it becomes a norm or an institution (Jeffries, 2010, p. 99).

(05) Brussels-based depository and clearing house Euroclear has confirmed that it will confiscate interest generated by the frozen Russian funds that it holds and will transfer the money to Ukraine.

It follows months of deliberations among EU and G7 nations about how to use billions of dollars belonging to Russia's central bank that were immobilized as part of Ukraine-related sanctions.

However, the purpose for the money transfer is mostly the same, as in this title, *EU sets date of transfer of Russian money to Ukraine for arms purchases*, dominated by factual, and hence unquestionable modality, further developed in the subtitle, *Kiev will receive €1.4 billion, the interest accrued on frozen funds, early next month, the bloc's top diplomat has said*, with confirmative modality.

The purpose, *for arms purchases*, is stated unequivocally, as if there are no other needs for Ukraine than buying more arms. Excerpt (o6) is quoted here for the purpose of highlighting the numerous examples of naturalization, which is related to the modality of persistence.

(o6) The EU has revealed when it will begin sending Russian money to Ukraine. The bloc's top diplomat Josep Borrell has claimed that the first tranche of interest accruing on some €300 billion in frozen Russian assets, totaling some €1.4 billion, will be sent to Kiev in the first week of August to fund arms purchases.

Excerpt (o7) comes from a news item under the title, *Kremlin responds to proposed EU militarization plan*, where the response is factual, and it is the EU that initiates militarization for no reason or motives provided in this rheme-positioned nominalization. The subtitle, *The EU Commission president's push to create a "European Defense Union" means the bloc is heading towards confrontation, Dmitry Peskov says*, is rendered in a mitigated modality of assumption, *Peskov says*, and again ascribes the habitual, *once again*, warring intentions to the bloc, *confrontation*.

(o7) European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's idea to transform the EU into a defense union is further proof that the bloc is seeking to escalate the security situation on the continent, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said. Commenting on von der Leyen's pledge, Peskov remarked that the official was signaling the EU's "change of priorities" to focus more on the military domain. This "once again confirms that European states in general are pushing towards militarization and reliance on confrontational methods in their foreign policy," the spokesman said.

Excerpt (o7) puts the blame for the insecurity on the EU, with Russia and its invasion of Ukraine as though nonexistent. Deductive modality, *is further proof*, and the presupposition of previous proofs sideline Russia from the conflict zone; indeed, when one keeps accusing one's adversary, it is tempting to believe in the righteousness of the accuser (Gaufman, 2017, p. 16). There are 84 cases of deductive and assumptive modality traced throughout the corpus, all of them within the anti-West content.

Nominalizations, being deprived of overt agency, are susceptible to assume quasi-agency from the immediate and larger thematic context provided by RT. They also introduce the modality of involvement into the activities without an explicit predication and generally belong to the register of traditional objective impersonal journalism and resent being questioned.

A sympathetic stance towards India is seen in excerpt (o8), under the title, *India under 'brazen pressure' over energy ties with Russia – Lavrov*, where

Russia's political partner is under pressure, activating a presupposition of unfair Western bias based on the mere affiliation with Russia.

(08) India has maintained robust ties with Moscow against the backdrop of the Ukraine conflict despite scrutiny from the West. New Delhi has ramped up its purchase of discounted crude oil as well as other commodities from Russia, insisting that it is acting based on "pragmatic" interests...

This passage exemplifies how lexico-semantic modality can be instrumental in propagating RT's ideological position, e. g. *scrutiny*, *ramped up*, *robust*, *insisting*, since these lexemes stand between the acting parties and describe what kind of relationships is involved. In fact, the combined meanings create the atmosphere of defiance and adhering to the Russian values.

RT's coverage also tends to identify the peacekeeping camp of the EU, whilst considering most of it warmongers in (04), (05), (06), (07); the following (09) concerns Serbia and Germany and portrays them in the pro-peace and pro-war camps, respectively. Titled, *Serbian leader tells German chancellor to seek urgent Ukraine peace deal*, it exerts strong deontic modality, *tells ... to seek*, which is further elaborated in the subtitle, *Olaf Scholz should seek a truce now and settle terms later, Aleksandar Vucic has said*, with the explicit deontic *should* that positions the addresser in a more powerful light of the one who dispatches orders.

(09) The Serbian president said he would try to argue for a "more rational approach" and the importance of peace, but that such a position would probably not be met with understanding.

Vucic has resisted EU pressure to join the bloc's sanctions against Russia and declared Serbia's neutrality in the conflict.

The implicature that at present the EU's approach is irrational is accompanied by a more mitigated modality of *would try*, *would probably ... be*; the latter of which puts forward a presupposition of lack of mutual understanding. The discursive marker *but* splits the utterance and introduces a kind of epistemic modality of distrust towards the EU.

RT singles out Serbia and Hungary for its own goals, probably those of disintegrating the bloc, by applying positively furbished connotations into the discourse, *resisted EU pressure*, which by itself places the two countries outside the bloc. Their staunch attitude, as well as *Serbia's neutrality*, is undoubtedly considered praiseworthy on RT.

Excerpt (10) introduces the historical discourse of Russia's involvement in the Second World War, liberating Europe from fascism. Russia also maintains that this time it is exterminating fascism in Ukraine under various pretexts,



including false ones as in this story titled, *Auschwitz Museum responds to RT's Ukrainian Nazi exposé*.

(10) In a series of recent posts on Instagram, Nikita Miroschenko shared photos and reels of him and his girlfriend paying a visit to the death camp in Poland several weeks ago. One of the reels showed the gates of Auschwitz with the infamous Nazi slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' with German military music playing in the background, while another showed him wearing a shirt emblazoned with the text "Where we are, there is no place for anyone else" – a phrase attributed to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. ...

No matter how scrupulously we searched the archives for the quote at the end of the first paragraph of (10), the results never took us to Hitler. In terms of content, it would be most likely attributed to French existentialist philosopher and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre from his play *No Exit* (Fr.: *Huis Clos*), where he explores such themes as existentialism and freedom, and the quote reflects the intense, exclusive relationships among the characters in the confined settings. Nor do we find traces that it belongs to Hitler in *The Third Reich Trilogy* (2003–2008) by British historian of 19<sup>th</sup> – and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe Sir Richard John Evans.

We assume that in RT's representation it is interpreted too literally and conforms to Russia's narrative to inflict the "necessary" context of supremacist ideology on Ukrainians. The tentative modality *attributed* moderates the commitment of RT towards the authorship of the quote, but the text dictates its own values and mentions what it mentions, suppressing the fact of the doubtful attribution. However, on the accompanying video the text runs as *Azov veteran poses with Hitler quote at Auschwitz memorial*, as well as in the subtitle, ... *emblazoned with an Adolf Hitler quote*, where the authorship is undisputed and enclosed within a nominal group, which presents its content as a given (Jeffries, 2010, p. 25). By shifting stronger modality to a more user-friendly medium of video story, the ideological harm has definitely been done.

Factual modality of news reportage prevails in (10), *shared, showed, came to public attention*; the non-finite verbal participles *paying, playing, wearing*, in terms of modality, are functioning here in step with the predicative verbs, adding to their lexicalized modality as well. The clash of logical presuppositional expectations between the peaceful and ubiquitous *paying a visit* and the macabre *death camp* bring the lighthearted modality of attitudes to the place of tragedy. The discourse contains the antipathetic lexical modality of *Auschwitz, Nazi, Hitler, German military music*, so that what this music expresses is orbiting around the implications of the former, enhanced by emotional intensifier *infamous*. Lexeme *emblazoned* positions the editorial staff of RT with the hints of historical intertextual modality of value imposition, since

originally it belonged to heraldry. With such intertextuality RT is directly accusing the neighbouring nation of the revival of fascism.

Emotional modality predominantly hinges on lexico-semantic levels of texts and evokes a deeper personal response triggered mainly by encountering lexemes with strong connotations, such as *slaughter, genocide, firebrand; condemn, slam; merely, intensely, overwhelmingly, delusional, long-hyped; hawkish stance, blatant violation, bungled performance, international condemnation, rampant corruption, a slew of reforms, to foment protests, to dupe countries around the world, to fuel the conflict*. There are 87 counted examples of emotional modality throughout our corpus.

Speaking of neutral modality and producing a quantifiable estimate is quite challenging, since such cases are almost non-existent; however, we singled out some political or sports event renditions, statistics, universal facts, e.g. *10,500 athletes from all over the globe will gather to compete in the SUMMER OLYMPICS...* or *Budapest took over the rotating presidency of the EU Council at the start of July*. However, in the first one, as the news texts unfold we face the neutral front fade away as France's internal problems overshadow the Olympic content. Nevertheless, we have singled out 35 cases of neutral modality detached from larger narratives as these serve a backdrop for the more conspicuous modality cases.

RT's coverage resorts to outright rudeness, as in the story titled *Putting Ukraine first is 'a middle finger in the face' of Americans – Tucker Carlson*; even if RT resorts to direct speech verbatim, it does make a difference whether it is used in the main text or in the headline. Derision towards ordinary Americans is forefronted at the level of commonplace mockery, and since agentless modality is applied, the implied culprit is the only other political entity mentioned in the title besides Americans. RT, however, claiming to provide a comprehensive alternative view, ignores the support for Ukraine that comes from the very people of America, regardless of what the mainstream politics is, such as "Crates for Ukraine", "Uniting for Ukraine", "USAID."

Authorization modality comes to the fore in (11), pursuing the policy of a "friendly" Russia, and that it is in the best of interests for Americans. Helping Kyiv, which, in the RT's inability to adapt to the sovereign place names, is still russianized *Kiev*, and fighting against Russian totalitarianism is belittled to a scornful *narrative*, speaking of which, the last claim of political degradation of Ukraine is indeed RT's narrative.

(11) Carlson is a long-time critic of the Ukraine policy conducted by the administration of President Joe Biden. He has rejected claims that bolstering the country against Russia is in the interests of the American people. He also criticized the narrative that

sending money to Kiev defends democracy, citing the country's slide towards authoritarianism under Vladimir Zelensky.

The paragraph attaches a negative modality to the Ukrainian president in a manner of attributing to Mr. Zelensky the quality and the name of the Russian president. The name of Ukrainian president spells "Vladimir" instead of "Volodymyr", which fact is ignored by RT.

It's customary of RT to refer to Ukrainians as (neo)-Nazis, as in (10) above, yet in this title it is most forefronted, *Neo-Nazi ex-MP shot dead in Ukraine*. The subtitle, *Irina Farion has been gunned down outside her Lviv home*, discursively pays more weight to the killing rather than to the personality of the deceased (12), forefronting her only merit, *Neo-Nazi*. Much as she defended the rights of the Ukrainian language, RT did not deign to spell her name according to the rules of Ukrainian to English transcription *Iryna*, as well as of Ukrainian President as *Vladimir* in (11), which equals to referring to Putin as *Volodymyr*. Such deliberate disrespect and political sloppiness happens elsewhere, e.g. in American politics (Kornfield, 2024).

(12) Farion was a member of the extreme-right 'Svoboda' (Freedom) party, formerly known as the Social-National Party of Ukraine, led by neo-Nazi Oleg Tyagnibok. A Kiev hotel room in which she lived was reported to have been used by far-right activists to shoot civilians during the so-called 'Maidan' coup in the city in 2014. Farion expressed open sympathy for WWII neo-Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.

Moscow has repeatedly condemned Ukrainian laws restricting the use of the Russian language and policies aimed at eroding cultural and historical ties with the neighboring state.

Actually, there is no tribute to the deceased, rather than promoting Russia's policies of misinformation, in which it whitewashes the pro-Russian governmental atrocities against the demonstrators by putting the blame on the Ukrainian far-right. As the narrative rolls into the second paragraph, it turns into an invective of moral modality of the preachings on behalf of Russia. Promoting the indigenous language of a country on its own land has always been natural. However, Russia, after the centuries of forceful russification, censoring and annihilating Ukrainian language and culture, in 2014 does not choose to see anything but *de-russification*. This narrative does not show the slightest trace of respect to the language of a much richer history and the same Slavic group of the Indo-European family.

Moral and intentional modality in such phrases as *repeatedly condemned*, *eroding cultural and historical ties*, testifies to a sign of erosion of commonsensical values and adherence to the most barbaric way of commemorating a deceased

one, and a total ignorance of the more civilized tradition encapsulated in the Latin proverb “De mortuis nil nisi bonum.”

There are 116 detected cases of moral modality in the corpus generally aiming at the “wrongdoings” of the West, with RT’s scenario of putting Russia in a most righteous position, (Gaufman, 2017, p. 18). There are also 316 cases of reported modality, which enable RT to somewhat distance itself from the narrative and thus from the responsibility for the offered content. Our observations reveal that RT resorts to reported modality whenever the information is either not too convenient for Russia ideologically or when the suspected motifs of lessening the readers’ credibility in the content are quite obvious, e. g. *The White House reportedly gave Kiev permission to use some of the American missiles to attack military targets across the border from Kharkov Region in late May.*

There are news stories with relatively less intensive modality, such as *Air India sends relief plane to US-bound passengers stranded in Russia*, nonetheless the overall message is how safe and efficient Russian airspace is, triggering expressive and evaluative modality; or *Trump tells Zelensky he’ll end war*, where the story posits the reassuring modality of a promise to end the war and casts doubts on the legitimacy of the current Ukrainian government; *Top NATO general claims Ukraine has ‘great’ war strategy*, filled with the irony of hatred towards both the US and Ukraine. Being unable to list every single manifestation of modality types throughout the analysis, we will provide quantitative data in Conclusion.

## Qualitative Data Results

Modality, as a measure of the degree of speakers’ affinity with their statements, is a powerful tool of rendering the ideologically biased content as was seen in the analysis of our corpus. In order to convey Russia’s supremacy mainly epistemic modality with its divisional kinds of speculative, assumptive, expressive, authoritative, emotional and moral modality is employed. However, the prevailing type for the latter is the modality of negativity, as well as expressive and moral modality, which assign enmity, baseness and moral inferiority to the enemy camp.

Through epistemic and, to a lesser degree, deontic modality of a webcaster, RT’s narratives fit into the Moscow ideology of a strong coalition of warmongering states united by Ukraine’s plight, while Russia or Moscow, as if inadvertently, discursively assume a less belligerent stance. Dynamic conflicting modality further propagates a relentless stance towards the West, with, e.g.

warned against further steps, could prompt a mirror response, pervading the entire corpus as amplification of Russia's premonitions.

In fact, objective modality of news reportage prevails throughout the corpus and produces an impression of providing the unmediated truth. It covers mainly the predication centers, which introduce weaker themes and function as a front, while subordinate and other non-predicational constructs are prone to deliver the key ideological content. Such imbalance portrays RT as a less devoted promoter of alternative ideas, despite its slogan "Question More." RT quite often draws on intense insisting modality as in (08). The cases of lexicalized modality of tendentious narratives are also peculiar on RT, e.g. in (09), (12). On the one hand, RT strives to produce an impression of a neutral observer through the extensive use of factive reporting; on the other, though, it deviates into the realm of approximation, emotional and expressive discourse via more subjective modality and emotionally charged lexis (Fowler, 1991, p. 74).

RT demonstrates its strong involvement in the issues of Russia's national security, the praise of its military capabilities and the right decisions; furthermore, it is disparagingly critical of Russia's enemies. The harsh vituperation throughout the corpus directly mirrors Russia's military aggressiveness on the ground and in the air. However, its ideological warfare is fought against the backdrop of Russia's self-imagining as a peaceful nation acting according to international law. Modality cases detected in our corpus underpin its narratives and continue causing ideological harm among global communities.

## Quantitative Data Results

Out of 93 stories, 59 contain anti-western content or 63.4 %, 14 are quite neutral or 15.0 %, and 20 are pro-Russian or 21.5 % if titles are considered. However, out of 919 paragraphs of news text, these categories are distributed as 496 or 54 %, 173 or 18.8 % and 250 or 27.2 %, respectively.

By comparing the current corpus with that on the Venezuela crisis, the intensity of the coverage in both corpora can be traced in the following findings (see Table 2).

Table 2  
*The Intensity of the Coverage in Both Corpora*

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### Modality Types

#### Venezuelan Crisis of 2019-20

#### Russia's War on Ukraine in 2024

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*epistemic modality*, when the journalists report the factual status of the reportage (indicative mode (*is/was, will+verbs, happened, arrived, achieved,*

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<i>escalate</i> ), verity attributes ( <i>true, indeed, real(ly), no doubt</i> ), nominals ( <i>poll, sanctions, deprivation</i> )	
1,182 out of 1,755 sentence possibilities <sup>1</sup>	1,328 out of 1,713 sentence possibilities
<i>authoritative modality</i> , when the focus of expertise is shifted towards an expert ( <i>said, explained, proclaim</i> )	
161 out of 1,755	224 out of 1,713
<i>speculative modality</i> , when varying interpretations of the events or decisions are given or various degrees of certainty in the source ( <i>seem, apparently, allegedly, controversial, gambit</i> )	
372 out of 1,755	285 out of 1,713
<i>deductive and assumptive modality</i> , which is prominent in drawing inferences from the observable data and general knowledge ( <i>you know, arguably, repeatedly, would be (liable, willing)</i> ),	
74 out of 1,755	84 out of 1,713
<i>reported modality</i> , when evidence is received from the third parties ( <i>according to, reportedly, quote</i> )	
372 out of 1,755	316 out of 1,713
<i>moral modality</i> , when certain moral values are offered as a reasoning factor ( <i>servile, violate, side with, subvert the constitution, rightly</i> )	
84 out of 1,755	116 out of 1,713
<i>intentional modality</i> , when the will of the speaker is brought forward ( <i>bid for, insist, agree, prompt, plan, intend</i> , adverbs like <i>even (though)</i> , conjunctions <i>as well as</i> )	
87 out of 1,755	118 out of 1,713
<i>the modality of negativity</i> , when linguistic units, negative in either form or in meaning, create the discourse of criticism and non-acceptance ( <i>criticize, reject, refuse, block, delegitimize, denounce, complicit, no (method, way), hostilities, backlash, crimes against, insurrection, decouple</i> )	
464 out of 1,755	254 out of 1,713
<i>Ironic modality</i> ( <i>US-fueled, Trump's circle of dimwits, ever-obliging European vassals, backfire</i> )	
49 out of 1,755	38 out of 1,713
<i>Emotional modality</i> ( <i>aggressive, all of a sudden, to put it mildly, absolutely, fed up with, fatal, shameful, desperate, cloying, tawdry, flagrant, impetuous, flimsy, capricious</i> ; including questions, exclamations, witty comments)	
188 out of 1,755	87 out of 1,713
<i>Neutral modality</i> (introductory segments, universal facts, statistics)	
59 out of 1,755	28 out of 1,713

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<sup>1</sup> We assume that a sentence usually contains one dominant modality; however, it may feature more than one piece of modality, and never includes all the selected types of modality. Hence, the total of all the counts does not equal the sentence total of the corpus.

Based on the above data, using Jamovi software a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the frequency of anti-West modalities between the two corpora: on the Venezuelan crisis of 2019-2020 and Russia's War on Ukraine of 2022 onwards. This non-parametric test was selected because it does not require the assumption of normality in the data distribution, which is particularly important given the small sample sizes ( $n = 11$  per group) and the high variability in the data, as indicated by the standard deviations ( $SD = 19.0$  for Venezuela,  $SD = 21.5$  for Ukraine).

The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the frequency of anti-West modalities between the Venezuelan corpus (Median = 9.17,  $SD = 19.0$ ) and the Ukrainian one (Median = 6.89,  $SD = 21.5$ ),  $U = 58.0$ ,  $p = .895$ . The mean difference was  $-1.14$  ( $SE = 5.72$ ), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from  $-9.80$  to  $8.29$ .

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of our research testify to the fact that RT's propaganda is disseminated via more subtle means than ubiquitous fact-checking services that offer publicly accessed bias ratings (Mantzaris & Valeeva, 2017). Modality cases defined in our research attenuate the representation of unfavourable factuality for RT, as well as aggravate the ideologically biased propositions directed against the Western camp, and may range from sharing Russia's real existential threat to wielding its strong power against the bloc. We might never arrive at the core intentions of such messages, but in the world of discursive practices of political news creating and sustaining apprehensions about future developments often assume a life of their own.

Modality, used as a supportive device in rendering the news stories in the desired discursive manner, is a less evident, but potent tool to exert leverage on the minds and hearts of global audiences to a degree that there seems to be less and less reporting on Russia's breach of words of February 18, 2022, when RT news item cited: *Russia has vehemently rejected the accusations of hatching any plans to use force against Ukraine...* Strong stative modality of the above utterance turned out to be the international-level falsehood, however, as can be seen, even big lies can be covered by profuse state funding and the world still consumes the Kremlin commissioned news.

As could be gleaned from this article, modality analysis might be one of the CDA tools in identifying a news provider's ideological intentions contained within the textual news discourse. Lessons drawn from the research of RT's journalistic principles of modality distribution may lend insight into the RT's propaganda techniques and raise global audiences to a new level of media literacy in the complex media world.

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