

“Annexation or Reunification?”

Linguistic Appraisal of German and Russian news reporting on Crimea

By

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Submitted to the undergraduate degree program in the Department of Germanic Languages and

Literatures of the University of Kansas towards completion of

GERM 599 – Senior Honors Thesis

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Date Defended: April 13, 2018

ABSTRACT

“Fake News” has reached new heights of contestation within recent times around the globe. Appraisal Theory provides a framework through which instances of news platforms’ positive and negative judgments can be identified, including their stances toward what counts as truthful reporting. Previously, researchers have identified the stances of news agencies by conducting linguistic analyses on news articles, showing how news agencies are able to assert their views through textual constructions. However, the expression of stance in German and Russian news articles showing different sides to the same conflict involving the Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula has remained largely unexplored. To address this gap, I selected articles reporting on Russian involvement in Crimea from a liberal German news source, a conservative German news source, and a Russian-state sponsored news source based in Germany. Using a manual linguistic coder, I identified each instance of positive and negative attitude towards Russian involvement in Crimea within each news article. The analysis reveals that German and Russian news sources use different linguistic constructions to moralize Russian actions in Ukraine, with each side reporting information to support a German or Russian worldview respectively. The study shows how news agencies attempt to align readers with a particular worldview and that even if news sources appear to provide information from multiple sources or perspectives, they can still constitute bias.

BACKGROUND

News bias and its ability to influence audiences has recently reached new heights as a highly contested issue. The phrase “fake news” appears in headlines around the globe. In an article published by the German news platform *Die Zeit*, the EU accuses the Russian state of spreading misinformation through the news. According to EU security commissioner Julian King, “Es besteht kaum ein Zweifel daran, dass wir es gegenwärtig mit einer ausgeklügelten, sorgfältig orchestrierten regierungsgestützten prorussischen Desinformationskampagne zu tun haben.” (There is no doubt that we are currently dealing with a sophisticated, meticulously orchestrated government-backed pro-Russian misinformation campaign.) (“EU-Kommissar geißelt,” 2018)¹. The Russian state-sponsored news platform, *RT*, provides a Russian take on “fake news” in an article: “Das Thema Desinformation ist in aller Munde. Westliche Medien zeigen selbstgerecht mit dem Finger auf Russland, das angeblich eine solche betreibt.” (The theme of disinformation is in every mouth. Western media points its finger self-righteously at Russia, which supposedly carries out [a disinformation campaign].) (“Fake-News gestern und heute,” 2018). Given the recent increase in negative attitudes towards news media accuracy and media bias, identifying news articles’ opinions in order to determine the perspectives of editors and authors becomes ever more important.

The Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 has led to increased geopolitical tensions between Russia and Germany. The annexation challenged Western authority in the region and caused further strain on an already tense relationship between Russia and NATO. The West saw the annexation of Crimea as a geopolitical move intended to undermine Western authority in the region and an attempt to restructure the post-Cold War order

¹ All translations from German are the author’s

(Wozniak, 2016). Russian sources, however, claim the overwhelming majority of the Crimean population voted to join Russia in a democratic referendum (“Moralische Gründe: Diskussion,” 2017). Using the linguistic approach of Appraisal analysis, a framework used to identify authors’ stances on an issue (White, 2015), aids in understanding the conflicting views between Germany (representative of a Western worldview) and Russia regarding the annexation of Crimea. Appraisal analysis helps explain the differences in news coverage on the issue by identifying differing linguistic constructions within German and Russian news articles.

Germany and Russia shared a unique political and economic partnership, known as *Ostpolitik*, during the post-Cold War era. As a result of historical ties to Russia, many East Germans are less critical of Russia than West Germans. Former German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, for example, continues to believe *Ostpolitik* is vital to a successful political and economic relationship between Germany and Russia (McMillan, 2016). German Chancellor Angela Merkel, on the other hand, has adopted harsher policies towards Russia within recent years, although dissident voices push for the return of *Ostpolitik* (Yoder, 2015). The differing positions of German politicians regarding Germany’s relationship with Russia reflect those of German-speaking news sources on the topic. Understanding that the partnership between Germany and Russia has historically been much closer than that which existed between Russia and other Western states at the time, and that former East Germany still has closer economic and political ties with Russia than former West Germany, helps with conducting a comparative analysis of German and Russian perspectives on Russian involvement in Ukraine.

The focus of this study is to understand the differences in discourse of the German free democratic press and the Russian state-sponsored press targeted at German speakers. Using linguistic analysis, this study focuses on news portrayal of Russian involvement in

Ukraine. Appraisal Theory provided a framework for analyzing the ways German and Russian sources moralize the crisis in Ukraine. Applying the framework to German and Russian news texts revealed stark differences in attitudes between German and Russian sources regarding Russian involvement in Crimea. Examining the way words and phrases are used within news articles to align readers with news agencies helps with understanding how the public is influenced by newspaper discourse.

In this study, I analyze the linguistic differences between German and Russian news reporting on the crisis in Ukraine. Previous research has been conducted on news reporting and its ability to influence audiences, and comparative analyses have examined differences in reporting between different international presses. Using previous studies as models, I selected three news platforms for analysis: *RT Deutsch*, *Zeit Online*, and *Die Welt*, with *RT Deutsch* representing a Russian state-sponsored news source based in Berlin and *Zeit Online* and *Die Welt* representing a liberal and conservative free German democratic press respectively. Using Appraisal analysis, I identified the different attitudes present in each news source, allowing me to determine each news platform's stance on the issue. The study reveals how even when news sources report on the same issue the presentation of the text and the angle of reporting can differ greatly due to specific linguistic choices made by the author.

LITERATURE REVIEW

News reporting

The news media has the ability to control audience exposure to an issue, influencing perceptions of news events and leading audiences to frame an issue as positive, negative, or neutral. News platforms in different states will often report the same news content from a slightly different angle. Although this occurs within a single state's media, the phenomenon is

often more drastic between states if the states' policy aims differ. Political and economic motives have been the most influential factors in a news agency's decision to report on an international current event (Markham, 1961). News platforms have historic and geopolitical reasons for selecting which international news events to cover and how to report the events. The geopolitical relevance of a news event to a state often controls the way news reports broadcast information, although the target population may believe the reports provide comprehensive coverage.

An example of differing news coverage can be found by examining a report on the Watergate scandal. The French newspaper *Le Monde* pointed out the faults of American newspapers, criticizing the heavy reporting on the president's disposal but ignoring the atrocities the US was committing abroad (Green, Hurwitz, & Segal, 1976). US news platforms are careful with the reporting of foreign policy and generally report foreign involvement issues in a way that aligns with the US national agenda (Soderlund, 1990). Another example of reporting aligning with national agenda in context comes from the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*. During the Watergate scandal, *Pravda* did not cover the internationally significant event at all out of fear that readers would question the Soviet government and because the newspaper did not perceive the event to hold significance for the Soviet Union (Green, Hurwitz, & Segal, 1976). Understanding the political and economic reasons behind news platforms' choice of whether or not to cover an issue and the choice of how to cover an issue helps explain differences in news coverage between different states. Keeping in mind that newspapers may show partiality towards a state agenda also helps in understanding why news coverage targeted at the German speaking population varies depending on which state produces the news articles and consequently why *RT* articles' reporting differs from reporting in *Die Welt* and *Die Zeit*.

Appraisal Theory

Linguists have the ability to assess an actor's perspective through evaluative research. Different linguistic theories and frameworks exist for assessing an actor's perspective, and this study focuses on Appraisal theory. Appraisal theory provides a framework through which linguists are able to analyze an agency's stance. However, problems arise when assessing exactly whose stance is presented in a news article, since news reports are shaped by factors such as reporting agency, country, editor, and author. For the purpose of this study, a reference to the author or reporting agency refers collectively to all actors involved in the production of the news article. In media reports, evaluating the patterns of language leads to an understanding of the perspective of the agency doing the reporting (Biro, 2008). The appraisal framework shows how texts present authors' feelings, biases, and opinions both implicitly and explicitly and how texts adopt positive or negative stances on an issue (White, 2015). Appraisal theory deals with specific constructions authors use to indicate their level of investment, perspective, or position (White, 2015). In the media, though reports may claim objectivity, articles cannot exist without some conditioning of the writer's background, personal experiences, or ideology (Iedema, Reez, & White, 1994). Using the appraisal framework to analyze German and Russian news articles relating to Russian involvement in Ukraine will highlight the instances of the author's positive and negative assessments within the text. Assessing the position of the two states' news presses on the crisis in Ukraine can show the difference in exposure that German-speaking readers of German- and Russian-sponsored news articles receive on the crisis in Ukraine.

The subsystem of Appraisal theory used to evaluate positive and negative views is termed Attitude (White, 2015). Attitude can provide a framework for the analysis of the ideals and values of a reporting agency. Attitude is often divided into three subgroups, the focus of this

study being the Judgment subgroup. The study focuses on Judgment, since the category best aids in the evaluation of the research question by dealing with moralization of issues within texts. Judgment assesses human behavior in relation to social norms. Texts can contain instances of positive and negative attitudes without explicitly using words that, when examined out of context, are either positive or negative. These are “invoked” attitudes. When a lexical item appears in a text and has a positive or negative meaning out of the context of the text, then the attitude is “inscribed” (White, 2015). For example, in this study, “Angst” is an example of inscribed attitude because even when removed from context the word still conveys negative meaning. The phrase “verstecktes Detail” while still coded for negative attitude, is an example of invoked attitude because the text does not appear negative without its surrounding context (in this case the “verstecktes Detail” being a mysterious QR-Code located on the back of Russian rubles featuring images of a monument in Sevastopol).

The appraisal framework allows for the identification of instances in which the author moralizes events or agencies. Examining instances of social sanctions in the text and evaluating whether the attitude is positive or negative allows for an interpretation of the author’s intent. The appraisal framework can categorize actors’ moves as positive or negative in accordance with social and ethical values and compares an action to what is considered normal socio-culturally (Biro, 2008). The perspective of an actor or agency is identifiable through the comparison of positive to negative evaluations (Biro, 2008). For example, in this study, German reporting revealed a higher number of negative attitude instances regarding Russian involvement in Ukraine than positive attitude instances, showing the actors in this study (representing a German worldview) perceive the Russian moves overall as negative. Texts are carefully evaluated by the reporting agency, and “reports and judgments are carefully formulated and reformulated for the

purposes of minimizing or maximizing inferential moves” (Sarangi, 2003, p. 168). Identifying instances of evaluation of Russian Ukraine involvement within German and Russian newspaper articles will highlight the positive or negative tendencies of the agency providing the news coverage. Examining how the evaluations are made within German and Russian news coverage will illuminate differences in the type of moralization of the Russian-Ukraine conflict that readers receive.

Language has monumental social effects on individuals and society as a whole. The language used in media texts has the ability to impact readers’ moral and political alignments. Appraisal Theory can offer insight “...into how speakers/writers may manage relations of solidarity and power, and into the workings of texts which function to persuade and influence public opinion” (White, 2015, p. 6). Another aspect of appraisal is the possibility of creating an “Us vs. Them” dynamic and engendering feelings of belonging, allowing for the potential formation of solidarity (Martin, 2004). Language can act as a tool for action and an organizational mechanism for human affiliation (Martin, 2004). As Martin describes, “...appraisal may reposition us as a text unfolds – for example, from a rather universal communality invoking our humanity (sorrow for another’s loss) to a much more specific alignment playing on our moral and political response to American rhetoric (castigation of their overreaction)” (Martin, 2004, p. 327). A consideration of the effects of appraisal on audiences can reveal how differences in German and Russian news articles impact the ways German-speaking audiences moralize Russian involvement in Ukraine. Moreover, keeping socio-cultural norms in mind helps explain one reason why the same issues receive different news coverage within different states.

Appraisal Research

Previous Appraisal Theory research has analyzed attitudes and positive/negative stances within news media articles. One study used Appraisal Theory to evaluate attitudes in *CosmoVotes* online news articles to understand the ways editors express ideology and assess editors' political interpretations of current events (Mayo & Taboada, 2017). The study found that the editors' negative perspective on the state of women's rights was prevalent in the evaluated articles. Previous research has also examined whether a country's policies aligned with the news portrayal of conflicts. One example of state policy aims aligning with news portrayal comes from a study of newspaper portrayals of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Zagorcic (2015) found that US news sources depicted the military capacity of the Palestinian army as negative and the Israeli army as positive, though both descriptions involved loss and destruction. Furthermore, US news sources negatively evaluated not only Palestinian forces but also Russian forces, since Russia is considered a Palestinian ally.

Another important aspect of the appraisal framework's positive and negative evaluations, inscribed versus invoked evaluations, also known as attitude-explicitness, surfaces in the Israel-Palestine articles. The positive appraisal of Israeli forces is inscribed, further enhancing the positive description, while the negative appraisal of the Palestine forces is invoked (Zagorcic, 2015). Another study (Jullian, 2011) used Appraisal Theory to compare how Western and Chinese online news articles respectively covered Chinese dissident, Liu Xiaobo's, acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize. The articles were coded for instances of positive and negative appraisal, and the investigator found that both sides gave almost strictly one-sided coverage. While Chinese media published material aimed against the award, Western news sources strongly supported the award. A study on Russian newspapers found that a common persuasion tool

intended to align the reader with a Russian agenda included using expressions that were not overtly offensive and softening negativities (A'Beckett, 2009).

Existing studies help show the potential the appraisal framework can offer a study comparing Russian and German news coverage of the annexation of Crimea. Previous research provides examples for uncovering editors' opinions as well as biased coverage on behalf of different states, showing how news reports tend to sympathize with a national agenda. Identifying differences in reporting between German and Russian news articles will likely reveal an alignment with German and Russian political aims respectively.

Previous studies show that articles can report news events from multiple perspectives while still skewing the reporting to work in favor of a particular political aim. Even though an article may appear to provide information from multiple sides of an issue, the way the different sides are covered often constitutes bias. In a study on Russian news' characterization of Ukrainian politicians, the Ukrainian perspective was provided, however, the perspective was not supported by the authorial voice in the articles (A'Beckett, 2009). Unflattering insinuations and a lack of validation often diminished any positive views and positive opinion holders were often given negative descriptions including negative connotations (A'Beckett, 2009). Keeping in mind that providing an array of opinions and sides of an issue can sometimes be misleading helps when evaluating German and Russian newspapers' choice of including other voices.

METHODS

The primary way I collected data was through German and Russian news articles and online database research. The German online news sites www.welt.de and www.zeit.de provide access to a plethora of news articles written and published by the German news platforms *Die Welt* and *Zeit Online* (the online versions of *Die Zeit*) respectively. *Die Zeit* is the most widely

read German weekly newspaper. The news platform is based in Hamburg and reports from a liberal standpoint (“Media in the German Speaking Countries”, n.d.). *Die Welt*, published in Berlin, offers an opposing German view by reporting from a conservative stance (“Media in the German Speaking Countries”, n.d.). The news platforms were selected due to their opposing political leanings and high rate of circulation in comparison to many other German news platforms. Both platforms are representative of a free democratic press.

In order to obtain data targeted at German-speakers from a Russian perspective, I used the online news source *RT Deutsch* (<https://deutsch.rt.com/>), a branch of *RT* news based in Berlin, Germany. *RT*, formerly known as *Russia Today*, is a Russian state-funded news network, broadcasting in over 100 countries (“About RT”, 2018). According to the *RT* website, the news platform “creates news with an edge for viewers who want to Question More. *RT* covers stories overlooked by the mainstream media, provides alternative perspectives on current affairs, and acquaints audiences with a Russian viewpoint on major global events” (“About RT”, 2018). However, *Die Zeit* refers to *RT* reporting as “twisted” and insists the platform creates a “parallel universe” meant to cast doubt on Western news sources (Luther, 2014). The *RT* news platform provides online content in English, Russian, German, French, Arabic and Spanish, although the German articles are the focus of this study. *RT Deutsch* represents a government sponsored press rather than a free press. I was unable to find specific information on the *RT Deutsch* authors, so it is not entirely clear whether native German speakers are hired to write the articles or whether the articles are translated into German from Russian.

For each of the three news platforms, I searched “Krim” in the search bar of the news website’s main page to reveal all the articles in the sites’ databases relating to the topic of Crimea. I then refined the search by limiting the time frame of the articles’ publication date from

January 2017 to January 2018 in order to collect data on the most recent news reporting. I skimmed the resulting article titles for relevance, then skimmed the relevant articles to ensure the text dealt with Russian involvement in Crimea. For each news source I skimmed 10-12 news articles before selecting four articles from each source that appeared most relevant to this study. The guidelines for selecting an article were that the article must mention Russian involvement in Ukraine, specifically Crimea, or Russian policy regarding Crimea. The resulting set of data consisted of four articles per news platform (see *Figure 1*). One limitation of the research was time, since a plethora of articles and information regarding the crisis in Ukraine existed but the research had to be conducted within a limited time frame.

Die Zeit News Articles

Ukraine stuft Russland als "Aggressor und Besatzer" ein	Russland riegelt Krim mit Grenzzaun ab	USA erweitern Sanktionen gegen Russland	Russischer Kampfjet soll sich US-Flieger auf 1,50 Meter genähert haben
Z1	Z2	Z3	Z4

Die Welt News Articles

Russland drückt neuen Geldschein mit Krim-Halbinsel	Mit der Ukraine- Krise begann Putins globale Offensive	Abbau von Russland- Sanktionen gefordert	Dieser Krieg wird noch lange dauern
W1	W2	W3	W4

RT News Articles

UN-Mandat für Krim und Frieden mit Russland – Talk mit Gabriele Krone- Schmalz und Matthias Platzeck	Moralische Gründe: Diskussion über sowjetisches Krim- Dekret nimmt Fahrt auf	Russland bietet Rückgabe ukrainischer Militärtechnik auf der Krim an - Kiew schweigt	Krim-Verwaltung: Alle ukrainischen Blockadeversuche der Halbinsel fehlgeschlagen
RT1	RT2	RT3	RT4

Figure 1. Analyzed articles taken from *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt*, and *RT* with their abbreviations used in the text.

	rt	die_zeit	die_welt
Length:			
- Number of segments:	67	92	135
- Words in segments:	376	251	286
- Tokens in segments:	400	261	290
Text Complexity:			
- Av. Word Length (chars):	6.75	7.66	7.96
- Av. Word Length (syllables):	2.84	3.06	3.19
- Av. Segment Length (tokens):	5.61	2.73	2.12
- Min. Segment Length (tokens):	1	1	1
- Max. Segment Length (tokens)	37	14	19

Table 1. Dataset General Statistics. Generated with UAM corpus tool (O’Donnell, 2017). Tokens = total number of words in a segment; words= total number of uniquely occurring words in a segment; chars. = characters.

I analyzed the newspaper articles through discourse analysis using the Appraisal framework. To collect data on the selected news articles, I used a coding system. Using a Systemic Coder allowed for the annotation of texts and the subsequent retrieval of all instances of the coded features and their frequencies for analysis. I used the UAM CorpusTool Software (O’Donnell, 2017), which enabled the manual selection of cases of positive and negative attitudes in the articles. The coding focused only on the attitude subsection of the Appraisal Theory, and only lexical items describing events in Crimea were selected for coding. I coded the lexical item as German, Russian, or Ukrainian, depending on which state’s perspective the reporting represented. In the schema of my study, this agency perspective is referred to as “source.” For example, if a Russian politician was quoted in a German news article, then I coded the source of the word or phrase as “Russian.” I then coded for positive or negative attitude and

for inscribed versus invoked explicitness (see section *Appraisal Research* above). Positive and negative evaluations were assigned depending on whether the source was German, Ukrainian, or Russian. For example, if an instance of attitude was negative from a Russian government worldview, then the attitude was coded as negative. Some coded segments consisted of only one token, while the longest coded segment was 37 tokens (see *Table 1*). For example, within the texts I coded shorter constructions such as “inhaftiert,” “Vereinbarungen und internationales Recht gebrochen,” and “in Brand zu stecken” as well as longer constructions such as “...überwiegende Mehrheit der Einwohner die Wiedervereinigung mit Russland nach wie vor unterstützt und bei einem wiederholten Referendum wieder dafür stimmen würde.” The average length of a coded segment was four tokens. Some of the studies mentioned above included coded features of varying lengths, such as A’Beckett (2009) and Zagoric (2015). The number of segments coded per news platform ranged from 135 in *Die Welt* to 67 in *RT* and the total number of coded words within all segments ranged from 376 in *RT* to 251 in *Die Zeit*. The number of tokens in coded segments ranged from 261 in *Die Zeit* to 400 in *RT*. The categories of attitude-polarity and explicitness were taken from the coding scheme originally developed by Martin (2005). However, I added the source category after an initial screening revealed that the news articles often included another agency’s attitude. I decided to focus only on attitude-polarity (negative or positive), explicitness (inscribed or invoked evaluation), and source (perspective) due to time limitations, since even the judgment component of Appraisal Theory is elaborate. The full coding scheme is depicted in Figure 2. After coding all the articles, I then revisited each article, reviewing the coded phrases in order to improve coding reliability. To enhance the coding reliability further, research mentor Professor Nina Vyatkina checked portions of the coding afterwards as well. After coding the texts, the software allowed for the viewing of

comparative statistics between frequencies of positive and negative descriptions in German and Russian news articles as well as of specific examples for each coded feature. The coder provided a tool for linguistic comparison between the stances of the German and Russian news press. The final results show the different ways two separate states' news press portrays Russian involvement in Ukraine. Furthermore, the data collected can provide helpful information for analyzing the perspectives of the German free democratic press versus the Russian state and reveal the difference in reporting on a single issue.

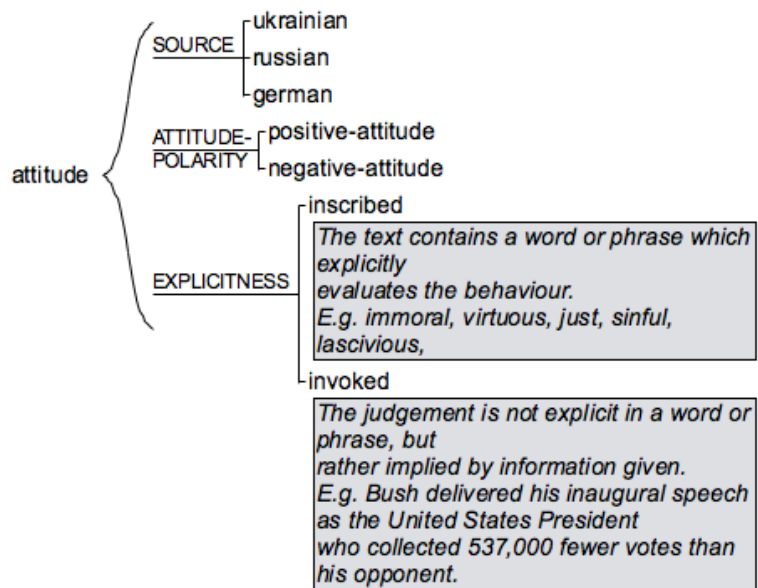


Figure 2. The coding scheme used in this study (partially based on Martin, 2004). Generated with UAM corpus tool (O'Donnell, 2017).

ANALYSIS

Pictured below is a dataset comparison table featuring the results of coding *RT*, *Zeit Online*, and *Die Welt* news articles. Not all categories total 100 percent, since some segments were coded for attitude but the source/perspective was ambiguous. In some cases, the source was clear but polarity and explicitness were ambiguous. Texts including some ambiguous features were still coded for their unambiguous features because the texts’ meanings provided important information for qualitative analysis. In the table, N = the number of coded segments per news platform.

My analysis focuses first on RT news articles, examining the prominent attitudes and source trends in each text. I then examine *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt*, also describing trends in source and polarity. Lastly, I discuss my findings regarding inscribed and invoked explicitness within all three texts, since similar patterns were present across all three news platforms.

Feature	rt		die_zeit		die_welt	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total Units	67		93		139	
SOURCE	N=67		N=93		N=139	
- ukrainian	8	11.94%	9	9.68%	26	18.71%
- russian	59	88.06%	16	17.20%	2	1.44%
- german	0	0.00%	66	70.97%	109	78.42%
ATTITUDE-POLARITY	N=67		N=93		N=139	
- positive-attitude	28	41.79%	20	21.51%	14	10.07%
- negative-attitude	32	47.76%	71	76.34%	122	87.77%
EXPLICITNESS	N=67		N=93		N=139	
- inscribed	43	64.18%	70	75.27%	108	77.70%
- invoked	16	23.88%	21	22.58%	27	19.42%

Table 2. Dataset Comparison. Generated with UAM corpus tool (O’Donnell, 2017).

1. “RT” News Articles

The coding revealed that *RT* articles report events on the annexation of Crimea from a Russian perspective the vast majority of the time. The Ukrainian and German perspectives receive little coverage. *Table 2* (above) shows that in the coded *RT* articles around 88% of the reporting on Ukraine comes from a Russian perspective, including quotations from politicians and the author's reporting voice. The Ukrainian perspective on the crisis is given about 12% of the coverage, while the German viewpoint does not surface at all. Although the Ukrainian perspective emerges, the perspective is not given unbiased or positive coverage. The results show *RT* articles strongly favor the Russian perspective and readers receive little exposure to voices outside of those consistent with Russian worldviews. In *RT* texts, the authorial voice and quotes from Russian politicians provide a Russian perspective or source of information. The Ukrainian perspective is comprised of carefully selected quotes from the Ukrainian military alongside perspectives the author provides and passes off as Ukrainian. For example, the author writes that Ukraine attempts "Russland als Ursprung des Bösen auf Erden zu kennzeichnen," a statement attempting to show readers how Ukrainians characterize Russia (RT 2).

The attitude-polarity in *RT* articles is more evenly divided between positive and negative attitude than the attitude-polarity in the German news articles (see *Table 2*). Around 42% of the text coded for positive and negative attitude in *RT* articles conveys a positive attitude on the crisis in Ukraine. About 48% of the references made to the situation in Crimea are negative. However, it is important to differentiate between the instances of negative attitude towards Russian involvement in Crimea and negative attitude directed towards German and NATO reactions to Russian involvement. For example, RT4 mentions "Propaganda," "Hindernisse," and "Schikanen" directed towards action in Crimea. However, "Hindernisse" and "Schikanen"

reference the Ukrainian government's supposed attempt to restrict mainland Ukraine's access to Crimea, and the word "Propaganda" is used to describe Western news reporting on the topic.

1.1 "RT" Positive Russian Attitude

The Russian perspective on Russia's involvement in Crimea in *RT* articles is highly positive, creating an image of Russian morality, fairness, and willingness to cooperate. The instances of positive Russian attitude give the impression of unwillingness of the West to cooperate. The RT3 text references a Russian offer to the Ukrainian government to return Ukrainian military equipment remaining on the Crimean peninsula post-annexation. The text refers to Russian President Vladimir Putin's offer as a "Geste des guten Willens" and describes the offer as having "viele Vorteile für Kiew" (RT3). These statements are followed by a discussion of the Ukrainian reaction, saying that Kiev has not yet accepted the offer and that the Ukrainians are skeptical, believing the equipment may be rigged with explosives. The attitude toward Russian behavior is positive and the depicted image evokes Russian generosity countered by Ukrainian reluctance to accept the kind gesture.

Another key aspect of the conflict in Ukraine receiving positive coverage from the Russian perspective is the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. The annexation is not described as unlawful, or as an annexation at all, but rather as a reunification decided upon by democratic vote. RT2 describes the joining of Crimea to Russia by stating the peninsula "...wurde im März 2014 wieder ein Teil der Russischen Föderation..." emphasizing that the peninsula was once part of Russia and that it is once again. *RT* articles emphasize the reunification of Crimea with Russia manifested as the result of over 96% of the Crimean population favoring reunification in a vote. RT2 positively states that "über 96 Prozent ihrer Einwohner, mehrheitlich ethnische Russen, den Schritt in einem kurzfristig anberaumten Referendum gebilligt hatten" and that the

“überwiegende Mehrheit der Einwohner die Wiedervereinigung mit Russland nach wie vor unterstützt.” The emphasis on the joining of Crimea to Russia as being the people’s choice, along with using the word reunification, gives the reader the impression that Crimea has logically been reunified with its country of origin.

1.2 “RT” Negative Russian Attitude

Many examples from *RT* texts show how expressions of negative attitude are intended to support the Russian perspective by negatively describing Ukrainian government involvement in Crimea. RT4 describes Ukrainian attempts to isolate the Crimean peninsula and prevent tourists from visiting from mainland Ukraine. Occasions of Russian negative attitude claiming that Ukraine is making efforts to isolate the Crimean peninsula emerge in phrases such as “trotz aller Versuche der ukrainischen Behörden, die Halbinsel zu isolieren und deren tourismusorientierter Wirtschaft zu schaden”. The Russian perspective denounces the isolation of the Crimean peninsula, attributing the isolation efforts to the Ukrainian government’s fear of mainland Ukrainians visiting Crimea and discovering that the “true” situation is not as bad as the Ukrainian government and the West has fabricated it to be. Instances of a negative Russian perspective aimed at Ukraine such as “Schikanen an der Grenze,” “Angst vor der Empörung ihrer eigenen Bürger,” and “Blockadebemühen” all back the Russian position that the Ukrainian government has barred Ukrainian civilians from Crimea and is hiding them from true Russian intentions. Phrases such as “Einsetzung einer von ukrainischen Nationalisten unterstützten Regierung” and “Umsturz des legitimen ukrainischen Präsidenten” directly undermine the Ukrainian government’s credibility itself, radicalizing it (RT2).

1.3 “RT” Negative Ukrainian Attitude

Although the negative Ukrainian perspective receives representation in *RT* articles, the instances show negativity towards Russia and/or are meant to undermine the Ukrainian viewpoint. Some examples of negative attitude are intended to render the Ukrainian perspective absurd and/or invalid. The RT3 text gives an example of a Ukrainian view stating the Ukrainian aim: "...Russland als Ursprung des Bösen auf Erden zu kennzeichnen." The phrase is a harsh overstatement, giving the reader the impression that demonizing Russia is foolish. Another word that, in context, strives to achieve a similar impression is "Sprengstoff" (RT3). The article states that a Ukrainian general warns of the possible implantation of Russian explosives on Ukrainian equipment in Crimea. The statement comes after *RT* claims Russia wanted to return the equipment to Ukraine as a gesture of good will, creating the appearance of unnecessary demonization of Russia on behalf of Ukraine despite Russian attempts at a considerate gesture (RT3). Negative attitude from the Ukrainian viewpoint can also have the effect of undermining Ukrainian authority. In fact, the Russian "Geste des guten Willens" allegedly causes the government in Kiev "Kopfzerbrechen" (RT3). The word "besetztes" is used in quotation marks (RT3). The word displays the Ukrainian view that Russia has unlawfully occupied Crimea. However, by adding quotation marks around the word "besetztes," *RT* reporting attempts to convince the reader that the occupation is "supposed" and invalidates Ukrainian accusations of unlawful annexation.

2. "Die Zeit" News Articles

The German newspaper *Die Zeit* offers the most varied perspective on the issues in Ukraine. German, Russian, and Ukrainian perspectives all appear in the text, although the German perspective appears most frequently. Around 71% of the coverage came from the German viewpoint, 17% from the Russian's, and 10% from the Ukrainian side (see *Table 2*).

Similarly to the *RT* articles, even though articles from *Die Zeit* provided information from multiple sources or perspectives on the issue, the coverage given particularly from the Russian side was not presented as unbiased or equivalent to the German authorial voice. The German voice is comprised solely of the authorial voice in the articles selected from *Die Zeit*. The Russian voice comes from official Russian reports referenced in the articles, quotes from Russian politicians, and German reporting on how the author believes Russia views the crisis and Russian motives. The motives are almost always presented in quotation marks giving the reader the impression that they are supposed. The Ukraine sources of information come from German reporting on how the author believes Ukraine views the crisis as well as quotes from Ukrainian politicians. There are minimal examples of positive Ukrainian and negative Russian attitude in *Die Zeit* articles. The attitude in *Die Zeit* is highly polarized with just under 22% of the instances of attitude in *Die Zeit* relating to Russian involvement in Crimea being positive.

2.1 “Die Zeit” Negative German Attitude

Many instances of negative German reporting appear in *Die Zeit*. Adjectives such as “unsicher” and “illegal” are used to qualify Russian maneuvers on the Crimean peninsula (Z4). “Sanktionen” and “Strafmaßnahmen” also appear with negative attitudes, since contextually both words function as measures causing harm to the German economy (Z3). When referring to the Crimean region, *die Zeit* describes the peninsula with phrases like “annektiert,” “kontrollierte Gebiete,” and “Rebellengebiete” (Z2, Z1). While the *RT* articles use phrases such as “Wiedervereinigung” and “wieder ein Teil von Russland” to emphasize Crimean reunification with Russia, phrases such as “vom Mutterland trennen” appear in Z2, emphasizing the German perspective that Crimea was annexed from its rightful homeland, Ukraine.

2.2 “Die Zeit” Positive German Attitude

Instances of German positive attitude are relatively few with the majority appearing in Z3 and Z4. Of the nine instances of positive German attitude, seven are invoked, softening the effect of the positive attitude (see *Literature Review*, p. 7, above and the *Explicitness* section of analysis below). Nearly all instances are related to a decrease in German sanctions against Russia and show positive former-East German attitudes towards the decrease in sanctions. Phrases such as “Sanktionen lockern,” “Abbau der Strafmaßnahmen,” and “gegen eine Weiterführung der Sanktionen” appear in Z3 and refer to East German prime ministers’ desire to loosen sanctions against Russia. The prime ministers of Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt are specifically cited for opposing the sanctions and for being particularly concerned about the negative effects of the sanctions on the German economy. Although there is negativity regarding the effects of the sanctions, the attitude is positive towards willingness to cooperate with Russia, specifically economically. It is important to note that the German positive reporting on Russia in *Die Zeit* comes mostly from an East German perspective, supporting the previous research (McMillan, 2016) that Germany, particularly former East Germany, still has strong economic and political ties to Russia.

2.3 “Die Zeit” Negative Ukrainian Attitude

Only one instance of positive Ukrainian attitude occurs in *Die Zeit* articles, with the vast majority of Ukrainian attitude being negative. Negative phrases are often aimed at characterizing Russia as an aggressor and showing fear on behalf of the Ukrainian side. Words like “Aggressor” and “Besatzer” appear in descriptions of Russia, while phrases such as “Drohungen,” “befürchtet,” and “einen Angriff Russlands” show a fearful Ukrainian reaction (Z1, Z2). The German and Ukrainian expressions of negative attitude share similarities in that both are directed towards Russia’s maneuvers in Crimea. By presenting negative Ukrainian

attitudes in German news articles, *Die Zeit* helps support its negative position on Russian involvement in Ukraine.

2.4 “Die Zeit” Russian Positive Attitude

Reporting from the positive Russian perspective appeared in all four articles retrieved from *Die Zeit*. Most instances of positive Russian attitude involved statements of Russian justification for involvement in Crimea. Z1 quotes Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov stating, “Es sei nicht hinnehmbar, dass Russland als Aggressor dargestellt werde”. Z1 also reports Putin’s perspective saying “Russland sieht sich nicht als Konfliktpartei in dem Krieg, sondern als Vermittler.” Z2 and Z3 provide Russian perspective on the construction of a wall around the Crimean peninsula. While the German perspective provides a narrative of the wall as a Russian attempt to barricade Crimea from mainland Ukraine, Russian officials claim that “sollen die Befestigungen die Sicherheit der Krimbewohner und der Touristen gewährleisten” (Z2). Construction efforts are allegedly taking place to benefit Crimeans, and according to Z3, Russia’s aim is “Infrastruktur auszubauen.” Instances of Russian positive reporting in *Die Zeit* provide the reader insight on possible Russian motives and perspectives on involvement in Crimea. The positive Russian stance, however, comes mostly from statements by Russian officials and is not supported or validated by *Die Zeit* articles.

3. “Die Welt” News Articles

The German conservative newspaper *Die Welt* offers a varied perspective, although not quite as varied as *Die Zeit*. The German viewpoint is expressed about 78% of the time, while the Ukrainian viewpoint received around 19% of the coverage in the selected articles. Just over 1% of the reporting represents the Russian perspective. The German perspective is comprised of the authorial voice and quotes from German politicians. The Russian perspective comes from quotes

by Russian politicians, while quotes from a Ukrainian civilian provide the Ukrainian viewpoint. The articles in *Die Welt* present the highest rate of Ukrainian and German perspectives but the lowest amount of coverage from a Russian perspective. Instances of attitude in *Die Welt* articles are highly polarized. Only 10% of words coded for attitude in *Die Welt* bear a positive meaning. The overwhelming majority of instances of attitude, around 88%, in *Die Welt* are negative (see *Table 2*).

3.1 “Die Welt” Negative German Attitude

The vast majority of judgments made in *Die Welt* regarding Russian involvement in Crimea represent negative German attitude. References to “Konflikt,” “Gewalt,” and “Morddrohungen” appear (W2). Descriptions of Russian actions in Crimea include highly critical adjectives such as “besetzt,” “annektiert,” “krisenhaft,” and “erobert” (W1, W2). The descriptors indicate violent action on behalf of Russia and an emphasis on unwanted Russian presence. The judgments send the message that Russia is unlawfully occupying a space and exerting oppressive force. The lexical items also indicate Crimea was taken by means of force and, therefore, emphasize unwillingness on behalf of Crimea to be annexed. In Z4 phrases like “Kriegsgefangener,” “Gefängnis,” “Haft,” and “Inhaftierten” are used to describe the experience of a Ukrainian man taken prisoner by Russian-backed separatists, indicating an intense level of criticism. The combination of phrases reflecting negative German attitude used not only for simply reporting on the issue but also in the description of a personal Ukrainian experience provides greater emphasis on oppression and use of Russian force.

3.2 “Die Welt” Positive German Attitude

Similar to instances of positive German attitude in *Die Zeit*, features coded for positive German attitude in *Die Welt* involve decreasing sanctions against Russia as well as mentioning

kind German gestures. W3 closely paralleled Z3 reporting on East German attitudes towards sanctions against Russia. Phrases like “Abbau der wechselseitigen Sanktionen” appear in W3 in the context of the prime ministers of East German Bundesländer calling for the dismantling of sanctions for economic reasons. The reporting once again aligns with previous research on East German economic, historic, and political ties with Russia (McMillan, 2016; Wozniak, 2016). W4 mentions a German gesture towards a Ukrainian man taken prisoner by Russian separatists. The article calls the German move a “humanitäre Geste” and gives credit to the German government “Dank der Bundesregierung.” The attitude shows positive judgment of Germany, aligning the reader with the position that Germany is on the “just” side.

3.3 “Die Welt” Negative Ukrainian Attitude

Instances of negative Ukrainian perspective revealed similar assessments of Russian action in Crimea as German negative attitude. Descriptors like “in Gefangenschaft geraten” and “in Gefängnis sterben” in W4 parallel the fear shown by the negative Ukrainian perspective in Z1 and Z1 with phrases such as “befürchtet einen Angriff Russlands,” “Aggressor und Besatzer,” and “Drohungen.” Negative Ukrainian attitudes focus specifically on Ukrainian suffering, emphasized with phrases such as “angegriffen,” “quälen,” and “geriet in ein Minenfeld”(W4). It is important to note that a particularly high number of Ukrainian negatives appear due to the narrative of the article, which focuses on one Ukrainian man’s experience with Russian separatists. Although the focus is on one Ukrainian man, the article still represents information that *Die Welt* chose to report to readers.

4. Explicitness

The articles selected from all three news platforms use comparable ratios of inscribed versus invoked explicitness. *RT*, *Die Zeit*, and *Die Welt* use inscribed attitude, which is more

explicit, far more frequently than invoked attitude, which is less explicit. Examples of lexical items coded for inscribed meaning include “Friedensgesprächen” (Z1), “Gewalt” (W2), and “Nationalisten” (W1) because the phrases still convey positive or negative meaning when separated from the surrounding context. Phrases such as “noch lange dauern” (W4), “Spuren hinterlassen” (W2), and “Abspaltung der Krim” (RT3) are neither positive nor negative when removed from context but invoke a certain attitude in a specific context. In the coded *RT* articles, 64% of text relating to Russian involvement in Ukraine is inscribed, followed by *Die Zeit* with 75% and *Die Welt* with approximately 78% (see *Table 2*). Some examples of inscribed attitude include German reporting on the German government helping a Ukrainian man taken prisoner in Z4. The inscribed attitudes help to accentuate the positive attitude toward Germany because the positive phrases remain positive without context, subsequently strengthening the positive judgment. Similarly, much of the German negative judgments in *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* aimed at Russia are also inscribed, emphasizing the German stance that Russian actions are unlawful. *RT* uses inscribed attitude mostly in Russian positive reporting, although a slightly higher rate of invoked attitude appears in *RT* than in the German news articles.

DISCUSSION

News bias and “fake news” have reached a new level of prominence in today’s discussion of media around the world. Concerns about propaganda and foreign intervention dominate news headlines and political rhetoric. In light of recent political events, Russian foreign involvement and the spread of Russian propaganda has specifically become a growing concern. This study helps show how news sources can provide information from multiple sources or perspectives, while still constituting bias. The news platforms achieve this by carefully selecting quotes and information that supports the authorial voice and views of the news platform. As a reader,

understanding underlying political motives behind news reporting is important for obtaining a well-rounded perspective on news events.

Patterns in the way all three platforms provide information from other sources appear across the selected news articles. Both German and Russian news article authors are careful to select information and quotes from opposing viewpoints in a way that fits the article's narrative. In almost all instances, the quotes from politicians, civilians, and military personnel of the opposing side appear ridiculous or unreasonable. Such quotes, though coming from an alternative source and perspective, are used further to support the authorial voice. In *Die Zeit*, nearly every time an explanation for Russian motives is provided from a Russian perspective the word or phrase appears in quotation marks. The same pattern appears in *RT* when the author provides a German characterization of Russia. In both instances, the addition of quotation marks creates the idea that the word or phrase is supposed, signaling to the reader that the author disagrees, and arousing suspicion of the opposing side. An exception is the use of quotes from Ukrainians in German reporting. These quotes support the German worldview and depict Russia as an unlawful aggressor.

Germany's history plays a significant role in opinions on Russia. Because Germany and Russia shared a unique partnership of *Ostpolitik* during the times of post-Cold War-era, the connection between the two states is economically, historically, and politically complex. The data from this study reveals that East German politicians' stances towards Russia differed from the stances of West German politicians, with East Germans being much more concerned about the economic effects of cutting close ties with Russia. Opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center show that East Germans are two times as likely to have confidence in Putin than West Germans (Simmons, Bruce, & Poushter, 2015). East Germans are more likely to hold

favorable opinions towards Russia, a less favorable view of NATO, and are less likely to see Russia as a military threat than West Germans (Simmons, Bruce, & Poushter, 2015). This begs an important question concerning *RT* news' readers in former East Germany, and future research could investigate whether former East Germans are more likely to sympathize with *RT Deutsch* news reporting than West Germans.

Linguists have investigated differences in attitudes present in news reporting across news platforms internationally, but studies had not yet specifically addressed differences in German mainstream news articles and *RT Deutsch* news articles using Appraisal analysis. The use of the Appraisal framework allowed for the identification of each news agency's stance towards Russian action in Ukraine. The results of the study show how three newspaper platforms based within the same country can report on the same issue while providing the reader with differing perspectives. The geopolitical aims of both Germany and Russia differ regarding Ukraine policy, and the news reports reflect each respective state's agenda with *RT Deutsch* aligning with Russian worldviews and *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* reporting consistently with German worldviews. Contrary to previous expectations, *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* reporting did not differ greatly regarding German worldviews despite *Die Zeit* representing a liberal German viewpoint and *Die Welt* representing a conservative German viewpoint. The results support the claim that German news platforms report on Russian involvement in Ukraine by aligning the reader with the German negative perspective of Russia. *RT Deutsch*, on the other hand, portrays Russian involvement in Ukraine as mostly positive, with negative attitudes projected towards Germany and NATO.

The German news sources *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* try to align the reader with the German perspective, while *RT Deutsch* articles attempt to align the reader with the Russian perspective.

The Appraisal Theory states that texts have the ability to align readers both morally and politically as well as persuade and change public opinion (White, 2015). The “Us vs. Them” dynamic also often arises (Martin, 2004), as is seen in both the German and *RT* news articles. The news sources create a narrative of “good” versus “bad.” In the German news articles, Germany takes the positive role, striving for justice, fairness, and an end to conflict. In the *RT* articles, Russia appears as a misunderstood actor whose motives are misrepresented by the West and unfairly demonized. Both sides have the ability to moralize the crisis in Ukraine in very different ways, providing the reader with differing, often conflicting perspectives. Readers of *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* would see the crisis as an illegal and violent attempt by Russia to assert geopolitical dominance, while *RT* readers would see the Russian annexation as fair, being the result of a referendum, and purposefully misrepresented in Western media.

CONCLUSION

RT aligns the reader with a Russian world-view, while *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* align the reader with a German worldview. Through the use of the linguistic Appraisal theory, the identification of the news platforms’ stances was made possible. The results show that readers are exposed to different narratives of the same news event depending on which worldview the news source supports. In some cases, the reader received the perspective of other actors besides the one doing the reporting. Russian, Ukrainian, and German attitudes were present in most of the reports, although the coverage was highly unbalanced and often used to support the authorial voice, often by undermining or invalidating the outside agency’s perspective.

One limitation of the project was the amount of time required to identify and code the news articles used for analysis. In order to ensure minimum coding errors, much time was required for careful reading of the articles and double-checking the coding once the first round

was complete. A plethora of newspaper articles on the topic of Russian involvement in Crimea exist across many German news platforms; however, because the study was conducted within a limited time frame, I had time for the analysis of twelve articles. In future studies, increasing the news article sample size would allow for a broader and more in depth picture of the selected news platforms' attitudes. Employing a second coder would also be useful in order to strengthen coding reliability.

Additional information regarding the identity of the authors of the *RT Deutsch* articles would have also been helpful to the study. The RT website did provide a list of some of the authors of the site's online articles. However, the website was unclear about which author wrote which article and did not provide information about which authors write specifically for *RT Deutsch*. Although *RT Deutsch* is a Russian state-sponsored news source based in Germany, I found no information on the nationality and affiliations of the authors. In order to obtain more information on the authors, I contacted *RT Deutsch* via email. However, I received no response. Even though the identity of the authors is unknown, the study still revealed that the reporting aligned with Russian political aims.

Future research could widen the scope of the project to include more news articles as well as expanding to other sections of the Appraisal framework. I have only applied the attitude subsection of the Judgment category of the framework, since it was best suited for answering my research question by focusing on the moralization of issues within the texts. Coding for other categories within the framework other than attitude could prove helpful to achieving a broader understanding of the linguistics of appraisal behind the perspectives of *RT Deutsch*, *Die Zeit*, and *Die Welt* newspaper articles. The Judgment category itself could also be expanded upon, since my study focused solely on one subdivision. Other studies have focused more broadly on

multiple categories of the Appraisal theory, but other linguistic theories could be applied to further explore the complexities of newspaper discourse.

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