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Bachelor's thesis

PORTRAYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MASS MEDIA DISCOURSE

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Рівність прав, інклюзія та свобода вираження власної ідентичності це ті явища, за які постійно борються люди з інвалідністю. Наперекір цьому прагненню, медіа не завжди сприяє створенню позитивного образу людини з обмеженими можливостями в очах суспільства. Тому вкрай важливим є дослідити притаманні для цієї теми лінгвістичні та дискурсивні засоби, адже вони допомагають виявити застарілі стереотипи та упереджене ставлення до людей з інвалідністю, що формуються на сучасному етапі розвитку медіа. Це й визначає актуальність даної теми.

Об'єктом дослідження є інвалідність представлена через призму мас-медійного дискурсу, в той час як предметом слугують лінгвістичні засоби, що зображують людей з інвалідністю в англомовних Інтернет виданнях. Мета — детальне вивчення лінгвістичних нюансів зображення інвалідності в медіа. Серед цілей виокремлені такі: визначення понять “дискурс” та “дискурс масової інформації”; аналіз наративів, де фігурує тема інвалідності та лінгвістичних засобів, що супроводжують дані наративи; групування евфемізмів, що використовуються при звертанні до людей з інвалідністю. До методів дослідження входять: спостереження, вибірка, описовий аналіз, дискурсивний аналіз, кількісний аналіз та класифікація.

Робота складається з двох основних блоків: теоретичного та практичного. Перша частина включає аналіз різних видів наукових праць. Друга ж частина це базоване на теорії власне вивчення даної теми з сучасної точки зору.

З огляду на це, результати показали, що медіа й надалі активно маніпулює аудиторією, зображуючи людину з інвалідністю жертвою, тягарем або ж героєм. Для цього вони застосовують лексику, що викликає жаль, співчуття, а з іншого боку надмірне захоплення. Разом з тим, з метою досягти політкоректності медіа представники наповнюють свій текст евфемізмами, зокрема тими, що в першу чергу демонструють особистість. Але, як виявилось, самі ж люди з обмеженими

можливостями надають перевагу зверненням, де передує їхня ідентичність. Таким чином, вони намагаються показати своє "я", уникаючи пасивної участі.

Ключові слова: дискурс, медійний дискурс, модель інвалідності, наратив, стереотипна роль, репрезентація, евфемізм, дисфемізм, ідентично-орієнтована мова, людино-орієнтована мова.

ABSTRACT

Equal rights, inclusion, and the freedom to express one’s identity are things that people with disabilities are constantly fighting for. Against this aspiration, the media does not always contribute to creating a positive image of people with disabilities in front of society. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the linguistic and discursive means inherent to this topic, as they help identify outdated stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes toward people with impairments that are being formed at the current stage of media development. This determines the relevance of the topic.

The object of this study is disability through the prism of mass media discourse, while the subject focuses on the linguistic means used to portray people with disabilities in English-language online publications. The aim is a detailed study of the linguistic nuances in the portrayal of disability in the media. The main objectives include: defining the concepts of “discourse” and “mass media discourse”; analyzing narratives that address the topic of disability and the linguistic devices accompanying these narratives; and categorizing euphemisms used when referring to people with disabilities. Research methods include: observation, sampling, descriptive analysis, discourse analysis, quantitative analysis, and classification.

The thesis comprises two main sections: a theoretical section and a practical section. The first chapter includes an analysis of various types of scholarly works. The second chapter is a theory-based study of the given topic from a contemporary perspective.

Considering this, the results showed that the media continues to actively manipulate its audience by portraying people with disabilities as victims, burdens, or heroes. For this purpose, they use language that evokes pity, sympathy, and, on the other hand, excessive admiration. At the same time, to achieve political correctness, media representatives fill their texts with euphemisms, particularly those that primarily highlight personality. However, as it turned out, people with disabilities themselves prefer forms of address that prioritize their identity. In this way, they try to express their “I” and avoid passive participation.

Key words: discourse, media discourse, disability model, narrative, stereotypical role, representation, euphemism, dysphemism, Identity-first language, Person-first language.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The media has always had a huge impact on people's understanding and perception of certain information. It acts as a powerful intermediary between events, ideas, and the audience, establishing narratives that influence common perspectives [Guzlar 2023, p. 30]. The way the information is presented in articles, television or social networks is very important, especially for people who need to be heard, accepted and equal in rights, namely people with disabilities. The main tool of media discourse is language. Therefore, every chosen word, grammatical construction and stylistic device is essential.

The study examines a number of important concepts that help to fully explore all possible aspects of this topic from a linguistic perspective, notably discourse and media discourse.

Before offering a specific definition of discourse, prominent scholars debated for a long time what linguists should actually study. Scholars such as de Saussure and Chomsky argued that it should be language as a set of clear rules, while Malinowski and others maintained that studying language without context is impossible. Precisely these considerations contributed to the modern understanding of discourse, and researchers such as Halliday, Brown & Yule, Fairclough and van Dijk were able to provide a clear definition and outline its main characteristics.

Scholars such as Thornborrow, O'Keeffe, Talbot, Bergien and others have focused their attention more specifically on media discourse. O'Keeffe provides a definition of media discourse as a specific type of interaction between the sender and the recipient via various communication platforms, where the recipient is not present, while Talbot supports this idea by demonstrating the difference between how ordinary discursive events occur and how this differs from media discourse. However, they conclude that the recipient is no longer absent thanks to the development of modern technologies. Beyond this, a detailed investigation of media discourse highlights its main functions. Researchers identify the main ones as informing, influencing, shaping public opinion, and establishing ideology.

Disability in mass media discourse is largely studied through the lenses of social policy, psychology, and pedagogy, whereas the linguistic dimension, which profoundly affects the aforementioned areas, is seldom considered.

The relevance of research lies in the growing interest in the ways how media reflect and shape social reality. Studying the linguistic and discursive representation of disability helps reveal stereotypes, biases, and strategies of media framing that shape social perception. The investigation into the ways people with disabilities are portrayed is especially important in contemporary linguistics due to increasing attention to equality, diversity, and ethical communication in public discourse.

The aim of the study is a comprehensive examination of the depiction of disability in mass media discourse from a linguistic viewpoint.

The research includes the following **objectives**:

1) to define the concepts of 'discourse', 'media discourse' and indicate its main functions;
2) to analyze narrative patterns in articles that raise the topic of disability;
3) to highlight all the linguistic devices that usually appear in the context of disability;
4) to classify euphemisms as the primary means of referring to people with disabilities.

The object is disability from the perspective of mass media discourse.

The subject is linguistic means as the primary tool of presenting people with disabilities in leading English-language news outlets.

The material of this study consists of 76 articles from 16 major global news media sources, particularly those based in the UK and the US, including The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC News, New York Post, The Daily Mail, The Daily Express, The Daily Mirror, The Sun, The Observer, The Independent, The Spectator, The Scotsman, The Washington Post, Miami Herald, USA Today and The National.

To thoroughly examine the collected material, we used the following **research methods**:

a) method of observation (reading and analyzing a large number of articles on the topic of disability from various newspapers);
b) method of sampling (selecting a specific number of first- and third-person articles useful to our study);
c) method of discourse analysis (analysis of the context in which people with disabilities are portrayed and what impact this has on the public);
d) descriptive method (collecting and analyzing lexical, grammatical, and stylistic devices that are frequently accompanied by the topic of disability);
e) classification method (grouping euphemisms by their purpose);
f) method of quantitative analysis (research on the frequency of use of Identity-first language and Person-first language among people with disabilities themselves).

This bachelor's paper consists of theoretical and practical parts, each of which is summarized, a conclusion and list of references.

The first part is called 'Theoretical foundation for studying the representation of disability in media discourse' and focuses on the study and comparison of fundamental scientific works and articles on discourse and media discourse. We explore the existing models of disability as well as various linguistic means that appear in the communication environment of people with disabilities, in particular: metaphors, Person-First language & Identity-First language, x-phemisms (euphemisms, orthophemisms, dysphemisms), outdated, stigmatized and acceptable terminology.

In the empirical part 'Portrayal of people with disabilities in contemporary anglophone media discourse', we examine the most common narratives regarding disability and the stereotypical roles that people with disabilities are sometimes assigned in leading English-language online newspapers. In addition, the study includes an analysis of the lexical, grammatical and stylistic devices that help shape these narratives, specifically considering how they influence the audience and what role they play in the text. Particular attention is paid to euphemisms and dysphemisms. We explain the conditions and purposes under which these stylistic devices are used. Finally, we analyze how the portrayal of disability by journalists differs from how

people with disabilities describe it themselves in the “Opinion” section of the newspapers.

In the general conclusion, we summarize all the results of the work that we obtained according to the objectives specified in the introduction.

I. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR STUDYING THE REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

1.1. The foundations of discourse as a phenomenon

Discourse is a fairly broad and vague notion that has been actively researched since the last century up to the present day. Typically, discourse analysts tend to define it as a form of language use that includes both spoken and written language, as well as communication and interaction [van Dijk 1997, p. 2]. In other words, discourse is language in use. Moreover, context is its important and integral part [Yule & Brown 1983].

However, scholars did not immediately reach a more or less uniform understanding of this concept. They gradually demonstrated their theories, encouraging others to develop or refute one idea or another. The presence of the word "language" in all definitions is not accidental, as it forms the basis of all research.

Ferdinand de Saussure was the first to focus his attention on language as a coherent sign system. In his work *Course in General Linguistics* (1959), he sought to demonstrate that the proper object of linguistic inquiry was language (*langue*), rather than speech (*parole*). He distinguishes between these two concepts and explains that language (*langue*) is a system of stable signs collectively shared and understood within a society, whereas speech (*parole*) refers to the individual act of communication carried out by speakers in their own particular way [de Saussure 1959]. As a result of Saussure's theoretical framework, later other linguists and discourse scholars became interested precisely in what he had defined as *parole*.

One of the first scholars to question the methods of general linguistics in text analysis was anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. Although he was not directly associated with linguistics, his research frequently involved the study of the languages of indigenous tribes. In his work *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages* (1923), Malinowski discusses the difficulties he encountered when translating indigenous words into English. In many cases, it was impossible to find an equivalent for words whose underlying concepts were either unfamiliar to members of another

culture or interpreted differently by them. This led him to the conclusion that without context, the analysis of a text cannot yield meaningful results. In other words, a word in isolation does not carry meaning. Only by taking into account **the context of situation** and the circumstances in which a word or utterance is used can its meaning be fully understood [Malinowski 1923].

Later, British linguist John R. Firth developed Malinowski's ideas. He argued that any text can be considered as a component of the context of situation. Considering language in the matrix of experience, the focus is on language text, which has two main sets of relations: **internal** and **situational**. Internal relations are directly related to the text itself and are divided into syntagmatic (relations of different structures, for example, phonological and grammatical) and paradigmatic (relations of the choice of certain elements). On the other hand, situational relations include internal relations in the context of situation (participants, their verbal & non-verbal actions, relevant objects & non-verbal events, the effect of verbal action) and analytical relations (relations between parts of the text and certain objects in the situation). As a result, the text is a unified system that has meaning only when it functions simultaneously in two dimensions: linguistic and situational [Firth 1962].

On the other hand, there were still researchers who studied language without any social context. De Saussure's successor was the American linguist Noam Chomsky. While de Saussure distinguished between *langue* and *parole*, Chomsky differentiated between concepts such as **competence** and **performance**. Competence referred to general knowledge of a language, while performance meant its direct use in specific situations [Chomsky 2014].

Linguistic theory was primarily involved in the study of the ideal speaker-listener as someone who had mastered their language and made no mistakes in real communication. Therefore, Chomsky believed that basic competence of this speaker-listener was one of the most important components, which was necessary for a thorough study of linguistic activity. Based on this, he argued that performance cannot be the subject of linguistics, because a serious discipline cannot simply study who says what and how they react in a particular context. In general, the idea was identical to

that of de Saussure, except that he did not consider language to be a set of signs; for him, it was a whole structure consisting of grammatical rules that subsequently form sentences [Chomsky 2014].

In contrast, linguist and sociolinguist Dell Hymes strongly rejects this linguistic theory and, in particular, Chomsky's opinions on the concept of performance. He believes that Chomsky presents “performance” as a false reflection of “competence”. For him, this view is very limited. When studying language, scientists must take into account social factors, cultural differences, interlocutors, and the situation as a whole. Hymes argues that competence varies and therefore proposes an expanded concept of “**communicative competence**”. In doing so, he proves that competence depends on both knowledge and its use [Hymes 1972].

All these theoretical studies ultimately led to the understanding that language cannot exist without a social context, which is the essence of discourse.

As early as 1978, the renowned linguist Halliday studied language and text in a broader sense, namely in the sense of discourse. He proves his point that the text is an illustration of social meaning in a specific contextual situation. As a result, we expect the situation to be embodied or embedded in the text not in fragments, but in a way that reflects the systematic connection between the semantic structure and the social environment. There are three interrelated components that form the context of the text (discourse) situation:

- field of discourse (the kind of activity and subject matter)
- tenor of discourse (the significance of relationships among participants)
- mode of discourse (the part that language plays in the general event) [Halliday 1976]

Further, the discourse was studied from various perspectives. For example, British linguist Norman Fairclough (1989) analysed discourse with a specific focus on the interplay between language and power. He argues that, from a discourse viewpoint, language is a form of social practice, meaning that language is 1) a part of society, 2) a social process, and 3) a socially conditioned process [Fairclough 2013].

According to the first implication, language and society are not two separate entities that sometimes intersect; they share an internal connection. Linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special kind, whereas social phenomena are (partly) linguistic phenomena [Fairclough 2013].

Turning to the second implication of viewing language as social practice, Fairclough shows the difference between notions such as ‘text’ and ‘discourse’. As he indicates, the text is the outcome of the process of producing the text. Discourse, on the other hand, is a whole process of social interaction, of which text is only a part. This process, in addition to the text itself, includes the production process (the product of which is the text) and the interpretation process (the resource of which is the text) [Fairclough 2013].

Finally, the third implication lies in the fact that language is influenced by broader, non-linguistic structures of society. No explanation of the processes of production and interpretation is complete without taking into account that they are socially determined. People assimilate what is socially produced and becomes available to them, and use this internalized language to participate in their social practices, including discourse [Fairclough 2013].

In addition, there is a third concluding thought on how discourse should be considered and studied. Van Dijk notes that in analyzing discourse, researchers should not only study grammatical structures, style, rhetoric, pragmatics, and context, but also take cognition into account [van Dijk 2006].

Although many disagree with this, arguing that research should be limited to what can be observed, van Dijk considers cognition to be important. In his opinion, it helps to explain such discursive phenomena as anaphora, metaphor, argumentation, speech acts, intentions, and many others [van Dijk 2006].

To sum up, discourse is not just the study of language according to theoretical rules, but its direct application in real life. Linguists gradually developed this idea. At first, language was considered as the only material for study, but later everyone realized that a set of specific grammatical rules lacked context. This makes it possible to understand the conditions under which certain grammatical structures are used, i.e.,

what contributes to this. Finally, it was concluded that for a complete picture, it is necessary to include cognition, which contributes to the study of a person's knowledge and certain beliefs. Thus, a complete discourse analysis has the structure of language + context + cognition.

1.2. Media discourse as a space for constructing social reality

Mass media has become one of the main sources through which we gain access to a significant portion of information about the world, as well as to many forms of entertainment [Thornborrow 2004, p. 50]. In view of its substantial impact on our lives, the concept of 'media discourse' has emerged.

Media discourse is an interaction that takes place through a platform of communication, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is directed at an absent reader, viewer, or listener. Although the discourse is oriented toward these recipients, they are often unable to respond immediately to the producer(s) of the discourse. In other words, media discourse is a public, on record, constructed form of interaction. Therefore, it is not impromptu or spontaneous; it is neither private nor confidential [O'Keeffe 2012, p. 441].

Discursive events always presuppose a certain form of addresser and addressee. Taking, for example, a live theater performance, both the actors (addressers) and the audience (addressees) are physically present, so that production (at least, its final result in a rehearsal performance) and consumption occur simultaneously. Media discourse is quite different; there is usually a significant distance, in space and time, between the production of a media text and its consumption [Talbot 2007, p. 18]. However, with the rapid development of modern technologies, the situation in the mass media world has changed significantly. Nowadays, readers no longer read articles in isolation; they can comment on them via websites, send them by email, and post them on social media for discussion. Journalists often respond to comments under their articles, thus creating a continuation of the process-product-process-(product-process) ... [O'Keeffe 2012].

One of the most comprehensive functions of media discourse is to inform the audience. However, journalists write stories not only to inform us about something, but also to shock, impress, inspire, teach, convince, or entertain us [Jones et al 2020, p. 84].

Other equally important but somewhat hidden functions of the media are influencing and shaping public opinion.

The media shape public opinion and influence discourse through agenda-setting and framing. Agenda-setting theory argues that the media have the power to determine which issues are important to the public by selecting and emphasizing certain topics over others. For example, when the media constantly cover a particular social issue, such as climate change or healthcare reform, it can raise public awareness and encourage discussion. On the other hand, media frames provide a certain perspective or context through which events or topics are portrayed, shaping the audience's perceptions and attitudes. For example, framing an economic downturn as a crisis caused by government policy may elicit a different public response than framing it as the result of global market forces [Gulzar 2023, p. 34].

Finally, it is important to note that the media creates a certain ideology. Ideologies are systems of beliefs shared only by certain (ideological) groups of people and are not usually shared or accepted as valid by the entire sociocultural community [Dijk 2013, p. 177]. Media producers have specific agendas and often shape stories in such a way that they correspond to the ideology underlying these agendas. In order to identify and analyze specific agendas, attention is paid to lexico-grammatical resources such as **transitivity**, **nominalization**, **evaluation**, and **naming practices** [Jones et al 2020, p. 84].

To describe what people do in our speech and writing, we use the **transitivity** system of language, i.e., the resources that language provides us with to represent different participants and their connection to different types of processes. The choices we make about participants and processes determine who is included in our version of the story and who is excluded, as well as who is depicted as an active participant (someone who does something) and who is depicted as passive (someone who has something done to or for them). Broadly speaking, transitivity distinguishes between

two roles of a participant: agent and patient. The agent is usually the person or entity that performs the action expressed by the verb. In English, the agent is usually placed in the subject position. The patient, however, is the person or entity on the receiving end of the action and is found in the object position. In the sentence *John beat Tom*, *John* is the agent performing the action of beating, while *Tom* takes on the role of the patient. Traditional grammar describes this type of sentence as an active sentence. Also writers use passive sentences, which can sometimes put more emphasis on the agent of the action by placing it at the end of the sentence. In other cases, a passive sentence may place greater emphasis on the patient (in the subject position), particularly when the agent is left out of consideration due to so-called agentless passivization, as in the case of *Tom was beaten*, which "hides" the performer of the action [Jones et al 2020, pp. 84-85].

Nominalization is another linguistic technique that can help convey ideological connotations. Basically, nominalization is a kind of textual condensation; it involves transforming a process into a noun or noun phrase, so that the process becomes a "thing." For instance, the clause *A teenager died from stab wounds* can be nominalized as *Teenagers's death by stab wounds*. Nominalization denaturalizes processes by concealing details that, for example, caused the actions. It can distract readers' attention from the action itself and from critical questions such as "who killed the teenager and under what circumstances?" [Jones et al 2020, p. 85]

Evaluation is a core feature of human behavior and an important instrument for interpreting the world around us. When media producers create news, they employ a range of evaluative options to tell the story in the way they want it to be understood. Adjectives, verbs, nouns, and noun phrases can be used to describe and evaluate people, actions, and events. In particular, descriptions of people using various naming practices can carry explicit and implicit (often ideologically charged) meanings [Jones et al 2020, p. 85].

On closer inspection, the **naming practices** are frequently encountered in the media because of the framing context. Frames highlight fragments of information about a person, object, or event. The use of a name instead of an appellative primarily

indicates the author's intention to refer to a separate entity with the expectation that the recipient will be able to make a similar identification. Therefore, if we give a name to a certain notion, it will reflect the meaning we attach to that notion, and this undoubtedly influences the interpretation of the nature of the notion, the influence of culture, and our encyclopedic knowledge about that name. This shows that frames draw attention to certain aspects, but at the same time distract attention from other aspects. For example, the name *Obama*, when used in the sentence *Pope Francis is the new Obama*, evokes a very particular frame of the name *Obama*, that is, a person on whom great hopes are pinned [Bergien 2013, p. 24].

Moreover, in order to shape public opinion, media discourse employs various persuasive methods, ranging from stylistic to grammatical ones. First of all, media representatives choose which **style** of speech to use when addressing a particular topic. If they want to evoke readers' emotions, they use informal language; however, when drawing attention to an important issue that requires logical reasoning, they use formal language. Following this, various stylistic devices are employed. **Antithesis**, where one clause contrasts with another, is used to ensure that readers retain the message in their memory; **repetition** serves to emphasize important information, while **euphemisms** aim to make this information more acceptable to the audience [Jones et al 2020, pp. 115-116].

Among the grammatical means of persuasion that contribute to interpersonal communication are **pronouns** and **modality**. The use of the pronoun *us* indicates that the author appeals to people who agree with them, while the pronoun *them* refers to those who hold an opposing view. Moreover, if the author addresses readers using *you*, it suggests an attempt to establish closeness with them. On the other hand, the use of certain modal verbs and expressions allows the author to show how confident they are in what they are saying, or to what extent others are obliged to act in accordance with what is stated [Jones et al 2020 pp. 116-117].

Overall, media discourse is a form of interaction between the author and the reader (listener, viewer) that takes place on a particular communication platform. For a long time, this discourse was directed at an absent addressee, but with the

development of technology, this has changed. The main functions of media discourse are informing, influencing, and shaping public opinion and ideology. The tools of influence include various linguistic approaches, such as nominalization, transitivity, evaluation, naming practices, as well as certain stylistic and grammatical devices.

1.3. The evolution of disability models and their linguistic reflection.

It is generally accepted that mass media consists of television, print, radio, video, audio recordings and, most notably, the Internet [Duignan 2026]. These media platforms convey various types of information, which, as we mentioned earlier, influences people and shapes their opinions. Therefore, representation is particularly important for socially marginalized groups, which include people who differ in race, gender, sexual orientation, skin color, religion, and finally, physical and mental abilities [Kastrup 2023, p. 236].

Disability is a highly sensitive and complex topic in our society, which is viewed from completely different angles. And it is the media that shapes society's attitude toward disability in this way.

According to one of the studies, all information presented to us by the media contains framing. The topic of disability is no exception. As Goethals et al. (2020) have found, disability has nine basic frames and three counterframes that are expressed primarily through metaphors and selected vocabulary.

Disability is most often portrayed as ***"suffering"*** and causes **fear of degeneration**. It is explained as an incurable disease that brings constant pain and torment that accompanies a person throughout their life. This frame is intended to evoke sadness and grief. In contrast, people with disabilities are also depicted as ***"the heavy burden"*** on their surroundings. Here, more attention is paid not to the individuals with disabilities themselves, but to the suffering of their families and caregivers in general. Some media outlets view disability solely from the perspective of **human enhancement**. They are not interested in excessive sentimentality and aim to find a solution in the world of medicine to improve the defect [Goethals et al 2020].

According to the next frame, a person with a disability is ***"the goer"*** or, in other words, ***"the hero"***, which means that he/she is expected to be confident and determined to overcome all difficulties in their life. This way of thinking appeared around the early 1990s. During that time, a new term, ***"supercrip"*** was intended to inspire and motivate others. However, despite its positive connotations, it generated considerable controversy, particularly among individuals with disabilities themselves. [Alaniz 2014] Based on the image of a ***"supercrip"***, there was also a misconception about the ideality of being a person with a disability, suggesting that one must accomplish the extraordinary and achieve remarkable success in order to prove one's worth. For this reason, they were often compared to fantastic ***"cyborgs"***. This has provoked criticism among many, who argue that people with disabilities should not be expected to demonstrate their value through exceptional achievements. [Grue 2015]

On the opposite side of heroism, people with disabilities are perceived as ***"victims"***. The media portrays the helplessness of such people and encourages society to protect and defend them from humiliation in every possible way. A similar frame is **charity**, where people with disabilities act only as objects of assistance from benefactors. The most tragic is considered the next frame, which is called ***"the lurking monster"***. This is a direct intimidation of people about living with a disability. Typically, this is how stories are told about people whose disabilities were caused by accidents or other disasters. Disability is a monster that has come and taken your life away: your career, relationships, dreams, and you will never be able to exist in society as before. **Mind–body dualism** is related to the previous frame, as it also depicts disability as the end of the world. The body and mind are separated from each other, and the person loses their former self. Based on this, people with disabilities are often metaphorically referred to as ***"empty shells"*** or ***"plants"***. On the other hand, there is a completely opposite representation known as **carpe diem**, which is translated from Latin as "seize the day". This frame conveys the idea that life is short and that individuals are the sole masters of their own destiny, with happiness resting entirely in their hands. However, its problematic aspect lies in the oversimplification of the situation of people with disabilities in the media [Goethals et al 2020].

While negative representations of disability remain predominant, there are also more constructive and inclusive portrayals. This includes **human rights**, **disability creates opportunities** and **interdependence**. These counterframes explain that people with and without disabilities have equal rights; creating equal living conditions is not assistance, but the duty of the state; people with disabilities are fully capable of contributing to society; mutual respect and support are key factors in communication between all people [Goethals et al 2020].

All of these frames originate from broader conceptualizations that have developed over many years. This concerns the models of disability, i.e., the understanding of what disability is. Numerous scholars distinguish various models, but the most fundamental are considered to be the **moral**, **medical**, and **social** models. They have influenced not only the political sphere of life but also linguistics, as language has actively accompanied each model of disability.

One of the oldest models of disability is **moral**, or as it is often called, **religious**, because it is directly linked to divine beliefs and the Bible. Nowadays, this way of thinking is much less common in the media compared to others, but it still occurs. According to this model, disability is to be viewed in two ways:

1) as punishment for sin before God (blindness, deafness, lameness and mental illness were considered indicators of sin)
2) as a gift from God, carrying with it a valuable life lesson that other people are unable to comprehend [Retief & Letšosa 2018].

According to this, we can say that language here reflects people's sacred and spiritual beliefs. Disability is directly associated with ***"evil", "evil incarnation", "intrusion into the soul", "loss of spirit", "sinfulness", "dirt"***, ***"uncleanness"*** [Rose 1997]; based on the second theory, people with disabilities were called ***"blessed"*** [Retief & Letšosa 2018].

With the advent of new technologies and treatment methods, the medical industry has developed significantly. Within this context, **the medical model**, which carries the idea that disability is a disease, has emerged. According to this principle, a person with a disability is seen as someone with certain deviations from the norm and

as an object of treatment, i.e., a person is primarily a problem. Such a negative attitude has led to the spread of terms such as ***"cripple", "handicapped", "invalid", "retarded"*** and ***"spastic"*** [Retief & Letšosa 2018].

In contrast, the medical model has charitable undertones. In particular, medical professionals see people with disabilities as those who need help and care, but when it becomes clear that it is impossible to cure them, they are seen as people who are unable to live without supervision. Therefore, people with disabilities are referred to as ***"patients"*** and are portrayed as those who are different from ordinary people. This can be illustrated by terms such as ***"sick", "unfortunate", "useless", "different"*** and ***"oppressed"*** [Barnes 2019]. The lexicon includes typical expressions such as ***"suffering from", "afflicted by", "a victim of", "sufferer", "special needs", "disadvantaged",*** etc., which reinforce a person's worthlessness and sense of helplessness. The terms ***"confined/restricted to a wheelchair", "wheelchair-bound", "chained to a wheelchair"*** also have a negative connotation [Stopa 2012].

The medical model of disability has always been criticized and condemned, if not for its views, then for the terminology that was used. As a result, over time, people began to consider that it was necessary to stop using derogatory (***"mongol", "cripple"***, *etc.*) and depersonalizing vocabulary (***"the blind", "the deaf", "the handicapped"***, *etc.*) [Oliver & Barnes 2012, p. 3]. All these factors contributed to the creation of **the social model**. However, this did not happen on the principle that the medical model ceased to exist and was replaced by the social model; they began to develop side by side and constantly contrasted with each other.

In 1972, disabled activist Paul Hunt and South African psychologist Vic Finkelstein founded the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in Britain. Their association consisted of radical-minded people with Marxist views and aimed to fight for a full life for people with disabilities in society. They were able to raise the issues of people with disabilities to a high political level and in 1981 participated in the first International World Congress of People with Disabilities. Later, English sociologist Mike Oliver joined them and helped to theoretically present and

formulate their ideas. It was Oliver who first used the term “social model of disability” in 1983 [Shakespeare 2006] .

Firstly, representatives of this association clearly distinguished between the concepts of ***“impairment”*** and ***“disability”.*** “Impairment” referred purely to physical, mental, sensory, and other deficiencies, while “disability” referred to a condition imposed by society. This brings us to the distinction between the medical and social models of disability. The social model considered the relationship between impaired people and society, which made them feel inadequate, while the other focused on the defect and personal trauma of the individual. In addition, following the medical approach, impaired people were called ***“people with disabilities”*** and according to the social approach, ***“disabled people”.*** This was explained by the fact that, from a medical point of view, this was only the number of people who needed prevention, treatment, or rehabilitation. On the other hand, the social approach defines “disabled people” as a certain group of people whose rights are restricted by society, that is why identity must come first [Shakespeare 2006].

To summarize, framing is the main tool used to shape public opinion about people with disabilities in the media. There are 12 commonly known frames in total. Disability is depicted from different angles, for example, suffering, a burden on family, an object of charity, a loss of connection between body and mind, a lurking monster, a path to new opportunities, interdependence, the struggle for equal rights, as well as from the perspective of improving a person's condition and “seize the day”. In addition, people with disabilities are portrayed as both heroes and victims. However, all of these frames have been shaped by the development of three influential models of disability: moral, medical, and social. Since ancient times, people believed that disability was a punishment from God (“loss of spirit”), then with the development of medicine, they realized that it was just a problem that needed treatment (“patients”, “people with disabilities”). Later, the social model became dominant, and all its forces were directed toward equal rights in society (“disabled people”).

1.4. Linguistic Mechanisms for Portraying People with Disabilities

The media constantly tries to be cautious in their statements. They adhere to political correctness, which consists of avoiding or replacing vocabulary that is considered offensive to certain communities and minorities [Cherniak 2024]. Hence, they need to understand which words have changed their meaning over time and are no longer acceptable in today's tolerant world.

One of the most significant and enduring questions concerns how people with disabilities should be referred to in contemporary society. Earlier, we examined two main models of disability: medical and social. The former tended to favor **Person-First language** ("*people with disabilities"*), whereas the latter was closely associated with **Identity-First language** ("*disabled people"*). Since the medical model in every way suppressed a person's identity, the social model, represented by people with disabilities themselves, gained broader support and recognition. However, "disabled people" ultimately become a universally accepted or fixed designation, as the meanings that people attached to both linguistic approaches have undergone significant changes over time.

Disability studies began to emerge in the 1970s, but developed more fully in the early 1990s. These periods are referred to as the first and second waves of disability studies. Their primary aim was to unite people with disabilities, since previously, for example, wheelchair users did not associate themselves with people with visual impairments. American culture, in turn, relied on the medical model, which encouraged people with disabilities to focus solely on treatment, prosthetic intervention, and adaptation to the realities of life. However, after the end of the Vietnam War, the situation changed to a great extent, as the return of severely injured war veterans contributed to the development of a civil rights movement for people with disabilities. It ultimately led to the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) [Davis 2013].

ADA was aimed at expanding the rights of people with disabilities and reshaping societal perceptions of them. Language played a particularly significant role in this process, as the terminology used to designate a particular social group inevitably

conveyed specific ideological meanings. Activists primarily sought the permanent elimination of the term "handicapped" from media discourse, advocating instead for the more neutral concept of "disability." In line with this objective, they emphasized the use of Person-First language [Haller et al 2006].

Following the adoption of the ADA, scholars in the fields of education and psychology began to publish works that also actively promoted the use of Person-First language. They considered it more appropriate to replace premodified nouns (e.g., *"disabled people"*) with postmodified constructions (e.g., *"people with disabilities"*). This led to a range of transformations: ***"mentally ill person" - "person with mental illness", "amputee" - "person with an amputation", "paraplegics" - "individuals with paraplegia", "the retarded" - "children with mental retardation", "retarded adult" - "adult with mental retardation", "the physically disabled" - "individuals with a physical disability",*** etc [Halmari 2011].

On the other hand, despite the fact that the Person-First language approach is positive in nature and focuses primarily on the individual as a person, there are certain communities of people, particularly those with some types of disabilities, who oppose it. For example, the Blind, Deaf, and Autistic communities advocate for Identity-First language, as they take pride in who they are and are not ashamed to acknowledge their differences. They do not accept Person-First language, perceiving it as an attempt by society to frame disability as a problem that should be hidden. This leads to the conclusion that there is no single correct option, but most people adhere to the generally accepted Person-First language approach [Ferrigon & Tucker 2019].

Another significant point is the use of terminology that aligns with the preferences of the community and demonstrates respect. Consequently, outdated and stigmatizing terms have been substituted with more appropriate alternatives. This can be illustrated by numerous examples, such as ***"deaf"*** became ***"hard of hearing"; "dump" - "with a speech/communication disability"; "hyper-sensitive", "psycho", "crazy", "insane", "wacko", "nuts" - "with a psychiatric disability or with a mental health disability"; "retarded", "slow", "brain-damaged" - "with a learning or cognitive disability"***[Ferrigon & Tucker 2019]***; "integration", "integrate"*** -

"inclusion", "include"; "an invalid wheelchair" - "wheelchair"; "for wheelchairs" - "for wheelchair users"; "special needs" - "special requirements"; "handicapped parking", "disabled parking" - "parking places designated for people with disabilities", "parking for disabled drivers"; "disability toilets" - "accessible toilets"; "disabled services" - "services for people who are disabled"; "care", "in care" - "has personal assistance/personal support"; "carer" - "assistant", "attendant", "care worker"; "schizophrenic", "schizo", "schizoid" - "has schizophrenia"; "stricken/afflicted/suffers from/victimized by muscular dystrophy" - "has muscle dystrophy"; "a dwarf", "a midget" - "with restricted growth or short/small stature" and many others. However, an important nuance is that each community perceives certain terms differently; what is considered acceptable by some may be offensive or demeaning to others [Stopa 2012].

Indeed, the majority of these expressions may be regarded, in one way or another, as euphemisms. They are linguistic means used to substitute harsh, undelicate and taboo words or phrases with more polite ones [Merriam-Webster, n.d.]. In other words, euphemisms are expressions that serve to avoid offensive and unpleasant words [Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.]. One of the main classifications of euphemisms is based on the functions they perform.

There are six main types of euphemisms according to their functions. The **protective euphemisms** are considered the most important. They are intended to avoid offensive expressions on taboo topics such as sex, illness, bodily functions, death, drunkenness, insanity, etc. in certain contexts. The second type is **underhand euphemisms**. They are prevalent in medical, military, and political jargon and are distinguished by their trickiness in deliberately concealing the essence of the problem and diverting attention away from it. In such cases, "*killing"* may be called "*the unlawful deprivation of life"*. Equally important are **uplifting euphemisms**. These are alternative words and phrases that help to present something or someone in a favorable light, for example, *"accommodation of stationary vehicles"* instead of "*parking places"*. Similar to the previous type of euphemisms, they are mostly found in jargon. The fourth type is **provocative euphemisms**. They are the complete opposite of

underhand euphemisms, as their primary purpose is to highlight an important issue. Such euphemisms are often found in a political context. For instance, the term *"African Americans"* is used instead of "*Black people"*, thereby shifting the focus from skin colour to the historical and cultural origins of the community. **Cohesive euphemisms** are another type that serves to unite certain groups or communities at a particular social level. For example, medical workers often encounter disease or even death and therefore use euphemisms. The last type of euphemisms are **ludic ones**, which are created purely for entertainment. They are the result of creative wordplay. This can be illustrated by using *"the differently pleasured"* as a euphemism for "*sado-masochists"* [Burridge 2012].

On the other hand, euphemisms are classified thematically. The first main group includes **euphemisms that soften discrimination of any kind**. This comprises racial ("*person of colour"* for *"black")*, ethnic, age ("*middlescence"* for "*old")*, property ("*low-income"* for "*poor")* discrimination and logically discrimination against people with mental or physical disabilities ("*physically challenged"* for "*invalid")*. The next group consists of **euphemisms that diminish superstitious fear of any phenomena** ("*moonchild"* instead of "*albino"*). Subsequently, there are **euphemisms that enhance the status of a particular profession** ("*hairstylist"* or *"beautician"* for "*haircutter"; "funeral director"* in place of *"undertaker")*. Another group of **euphemisms are those that divert attention from negative aspects of reality** ("*emerging nations"* for *"third world countries")*. Lastly, there are well-defined **euphemisms related to crimes** ("*custodial officers"* for *"prison guards")*, **gender** ("*mail carrier" to "postman")*, **religion** ("*Oh, my God!"* is replaced by "*Oh, my Gosh!"*), **death** ("*pass away"* or "*go to a better place"* instead of *"die")* and **miscellaneous** ("*animal companions"* for *"pets")* [Kuriata & Kasatkina-Kubyshkina 2020].

Euphemisms that mitigate discrimination against people with disabilities are quite similar. According to *How Not to Say What You Mean: A Dictionary of Euphemisms* (2002) the usual designations of types of disability are paraphrased using words such as **challenged**, **handicapped** and **inconvenienced**.

a) ***deaf*** *- aurally challenged, aurally handicapped, aurally inconvenienced;*

b) ***blind*** - *visually challenged, visually handicapped, visually inconvenienced;*

c) ***mentally ill*** - *cerebrally challenged,* etc.;

d) ***low intelligence*** - *developmentally challenged,* etc.;

e) ***lame*** - *physically challenged*, etc [Holder 2002].

Within this subgroup, we can observe an emotional gradation over time. Initially, a person with disability was referred to as ***"invalid,"*** then ***"handicapped,"*** and later softened to ***"disabled," "differently-abled," "physically challenged," "physically different,"*** etc. As shown earlier, the name changed for each type of disability. For example, ***"blind"*** became ***"unseeing,"*** and ***"retarded children"*** was replaced with ***"children with learning difficulties," "learning disabled," "special,"*** and ***"mentally challenged people"*** [Kuriata & Kasatkina-Kubyshkina 2020].

As discussed above, from the early 1990s onward, Person-First language came into general use. Previously, more attention was paid to disability, but over time, the person became the focus. However, not only was a new syntactic pattern (noun + prepositional phrase) introduced, but also lexical euphemisms. Typical examples are ***"people who are hearing impaired"*** instead of ***"deaf," "people who use wheelchairs"*** or ***"people who are mobility impaired"*** in place of ***"cripples," "people with a shortened arm"*** for ***"deformed," "people with Down Syndrome"*** instead of ***"mongoloid,"*** and many others [Halmari 2011].

The emergence of outdated or offensive vocabulary and its replacement with euphemistic terminology are components of the formation of politically correct language. All this is not without reason, as there is a whole cycle of events that explains why a word that was once considered acceptable to describe a certain type of disability has acquired an insulting meaning, making it necessary to replace it with a more softened term. This cycle is called the "Euphemism Treadmill" and has three stages. Initially, there are words with a neutral meaning (orthophemisms) that clearly describe disability as it is. Then, various bullies and offenders begin to use these words to insult and mock a person who clearly does not have a disability. People with disabilities feel ridiculed for their condition, and as a result, orthophemisms turn into dysphemisms (words that are considered more unpleasant and derogatory than usual) [Collins

English Dictionary, n.d.]. Thus, the authorities create euphemisms to avoid misunderstandings and negative associations. But the cycle does not end there, because the created euphemisms eventually become neutral, and the whole process starts all over again. To illustrate this point, such terms as ***"idiot"***, ***"moron"*** and ***"mentally retarded"*** were previously considered standard medical terms denoting intellectual disability, but according to the aforementioned manipulation, they are now considered strictly derogatory terms and have been replaced by ***"differently abled"*** or ***"having special needs"*** [O'Neill 2011, pp. 282-283].

The relentlessness of this process can be confirmed by the change in the meaning of the euphemism ***"special needs"***. Opinions on this expression began to diverge over time. It is currently regarded as a euphemism intended to soften the harshness of the term ***"disability"***, but in reality, it perpetuates the individual's disadvantaged status. Through the research, Gernsbacher et al. (2016) confirmed the negative connotations associated with ***"special needs"***. Their findings indicated that most people prefer the term ***"person with a disability"*** or even specific labels such as ***"blind"*** or ***"deaf"***, while ***"special needs"*** is directly associated with words like ***"needy"***, ***"annoying"*** and ***"helpless"***. Nevertheless, not everyone perceives this term entirely negatively. For many parents of children with disabilities, ***"special needs"*** is a more acceptable expression when communicating with them, whereas ***"disability"*** can sound cruel [Gernsbacher et al 2016].

Finally, there are certain words and expressions that cannot be replaced with euphemisms because they should not be used at all in relation to people with disabilities. The most inappropriate thing is to divide people into ***"normal"*** and ***"abnormal"***. These words are usually used when comparing people with and without disabilities, but this is a violation of human dignity and a direct manifestation of ableism. A similar observation can be made regarding the well-known phrase ***"to overcome a disability"***, which certainly does not refer to recovery, as this is impossible. In fact, this expression means to exceed one's limits in order to adapt to the demands of society. This gives rise to another expression ***"to pass a disability"***, which means

being able to disguise oneself as a person who does not have a disability in order to avoid negative treatment and experience what it means to ***"be normal"*** [Linton 1998].

All things considered, the main approaches to referring to people with disabilities are Person-First language ("people with disabilities") and Identity-First language ("disabled people"). Moreover, in the context of disability, it is often possible to see and hear stigmatized, offensive, outdated, and, on the other hand, acceptable vocabulary. The most common stylistic devices used by the media to describe people with disabilities are euphemisms, for instance, ***"people who use wheelchairs"*** or ***"physically challenged"***. According to classifications, these euphemisms serve a protective function, but they can also conceal certain meanings for the reasons of political correctness.

Conclusion to Part 1

Starting with de Saussure, there has been a lot of research into language as a system of signs; this trend gained momentum and scholars such as Malinowski, Firth and Hymes demonstrated that studying language without context is meaningless. These arguments eventually led to the emergence of the concept of discourse, which refers to language (written or spoken) in use. In addition, van Dijk added that the correct approach to discourse analysis includes not only text & talk (language), context, but also cognition.

One type of discourse is media discourse. It is defined as a specific form of interaction between the sender and the receiver on a communicative platform. Its main functions include informing, influencing, shaping public opinion and ideology. Various linguistic devices accompany these functions. Transitivity is a crucial technique used by the media, as it allows them to focus attention on or divert attention from a particular subject, as well as to show which characters are active participants in the narrative and which are passive. A similar function is performed by nominalization. This is the process of replacing a verb with a noun or noun phrase in order to decentralize certain information. Another important approach is evaluation, which means that a variety of adjectives, verbs, nouns and noun phrases must be utilized to interpret a certain topic.

Besides, the employment of various stylistic devices, modal verbs and even pronouns helps the media effectively persuade readers on a particular issue.

Disability is considered a marginalized topic in society which is covered in the media from various perspectives. In most cases, a person with a disability is portrayed as a victim, a burden, or even a supercrip. People with disabilities may be featured in the context of charity or social advancement. Such frames portray the disability community as passive participants. In contrast, there are frames where people with disabilities play an active role, such as human rights and interdependence. These perceptions of people with disabilities have emerged as a result of the main models of disability: the medical and the social. The medical model depicts people with disabilities as a problem or a defect, which is why offensive and stigmatizing language is used. Meanwhile, the social model focuses on the person with a disability from the perspective of equality. The widespread use of euphemisms, or words that soften the meaning, is associated with the development of this model. As a result, the term **"people with disabilities"** has become widely used; however, some groups of people with disabilities do not support such terminology.

In general, euphemisms are classified by function (protective, underhand, uplifting, provocative, cohesive, and ludic) and by theme (euphemisms that soften discrimination of any kind, that diminish superstitious fear of any phenomena, that enhance the status of a particular profession, that divert attention from negative aspects of reality, and those related to crimes, gender, religion, death, and miscellaneous). Euphemisms related to the topic of disability directly fall into the category of protective euphemisms and those that mitigate discrimination of any kind.

Nevertheless, it is important to know that euphemisms do not arise out of nowhere; there is a three-stage cycle involved. Initially, a word has a neutral meaning (orthophemism), but over time, through improper use, it becomes offensive (dysphemism). In the final stage, people invent a more acceptable alternative to replace this offensive word, which is called a euphemism - the preferred tool of the media in representing the topic of disability.

II. PORTRAYAL OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE MEDIA DISCOURSE

2.1. Dominant narratives and stereotypical roles in disability coverage

A narrative is a method by which a situation, event, or story can be demonstrated and explained in such a way that a person forms a certain opinion, idea, or belief about it [Merriam-Webster, n.d.]. The media constantly creates various narratives in order to inform society about a particular topic or issue, and most importantly, to influence the formation of their point of view. However, narratives can be both positively and negatively oriented.

After analyzing a bunch of articles related to the topic of disability, we identified the following most common narratives: inspiration porn, suffering, human rights and innovation.

Inspiration porn

Inspiration porn is a phenomenon that specifically targets people with visible disabilities. Typically, it involves physical activities that are meant to inspire able-bodied people. It has a negative impact due to its objectification, underestimation, individualization, and mystification. This implies that a person with a disability becomes an object of inspiration for able-bodied people; their achievements are often reduced to managing daily tasks, and it is suggested that willpower and self-improvement can "overcome" their disability. Through this approach, the media attempts to portray people with disabilities as heroes of their own lives while skillfully concealing the real challenges they face due to societal attitudes and living conditions [Grue 2016].

There are two types of inspiration porn: (1) people doing ordinary things, like walking from the bedroom to the kitchen, which are portrayed as great achievements; (2) people (mostly Paralympians) demonstrating incredible physical feats that not everyone is capable of. As a result, people who read these stories are inspired by them, but in a way that makes them feel relieved that none of this is happening to them and that their lives aren't the worst [Grue 2016].

Based on our observations, there are several plotlines in this narrative. The first involves stories of people who previously had no disabilities, but whose lives changed after a certain incident occurred. This is followed by descriptions of how they did not give up, made an effort and managed to overcome their disability (these stories are mostly about people with visible disabilities). The second storyline features people who have had a disability since birth; they learn to cope with it, ultimately achieve success and overcome their disability. In the second storyline, the main characters are people with invisible disabilities, specifically the deaf, the blind, and the mute.

According to previous studies, this narrative has undergone some changes over the past ten years. The most significant change is a reduction in the objectification of people with disabilities. Almost all of the articles we analyzed, except for the author's account, also include direct quotes from people with disabilities in which they themselves describe their feelings, experiences and thoughts. The only articles in which a person with a disability appears purely as an object are those that posthumously celebrate the person and their achievements.

Such inspirational stories consist of tragedy and triumph. Headlines are mostly motivational and inspiring. As a result, a person with a disability takes on the role of a hero in the eyes of the public. The article “I was paralyzed and thought I couldn’t walk again — now I’m running my first half marathon” [Swartz 2025] is a perfect illustration of this narrative. The title, as expected, is as promising as the main plot. The author tells the story of how a woman who seemed to have endured so much hardship managed to overcome her illnesses and get back on her feet to run a marathon. Following a typical narrative, the story begins by detailing the many challenges the woman has faced in her life: she was an orphan from birth, suffered from severe gastrointestinal issues and later became paralyzed from the waist down due to a botched colonoscopy. But eventually, she pulled herself together and thanks to her strength of spirit and regular training, she was able not only to regain the ability to walk but also to run her first marathon.

Suffering

This narrative focuses on physical and emotional suffering. Furthermore, it is not limited to the suffering of people with disabilities. The struggles of those who care for them are also frequently covered in the media. It presents everything in terms of the worst-case scenario and people with disabilities are assigned the stereotypical roles of victims and burdens. The main purpose of the narrative is to evoke pity and compassion in the audience.

Stories in which a person with a disability is portrayed as a victim typically begin with an accident that serves as a turning point in their life. This is accompanied by a significant amount of grief, pain and despair. The attention is focused on how the person became disabled; their injuries are exaggerated, along with how many surgeries and doctor's visits they have endured. After this stage, the story depicts how the person adjusts to their new and meaningless life. The narrative concludes with the realization that things will never be the same again. For example, the article "Woman, 55, left confined to wheelchair after mother-of-seven testing new SUV ploughs into her at dealership while struggling with controls" [Tozer & Parker 2025] tells the story of a woman who wanted to buy a new car to make her mobility easier, as she was about to undergo hip surgery, but a terrible tragedy struck — she was hit by another woman driving a car. The accident left her with severe injuries, and she was hospitalized, where she remained in a coma for 10 days. After that, she suffered a stroke, and to make matters worse, due to sepsis, doctors were forced to amputate her lower limb. Ultimately, her life became a constant cycle of doctor visits and her sons were forced to become her caregivers.

However, victims are not always people with disabilities, but also their caregivers, namely their family. People with disabilities, in particular children with disabilities (such as those with autism) cause significant problems for their parents; as they grow older, they become a great burden.

Stories like these usually begin with parents welcoming their children into the world. At first, they think everything is fine, but later they discover a certain disability in their infants. Then their lives change dramatically and they are forced to completely sacrifice themselves to adapt to the child's needs. Many problems arise: a lack of

personal space, financial constraints and specific challenges in caring for the child. Frequently, the parents' grief is also described due to the very fact that their child was born with a disability. A clear example of this is the article "When you're pregnant you have hopes - the reality has been different" [Leathers 2025]. Full attention is focused on the struggles of a mother whose child has been diagnosed with autism and a number of other conditions. The woman describes how difficult it was to come to terms with this reality of motherhood and how hard it was not to compare herself to families with healthy children. She also talks about the drastic changes in her life: how she changed jobs to be closer to her daughter, thereby saving money. Financial difficulties force her to constantly think about where to get money, since a child with a disability has many needs.

Human rights

It is considered one of the dominant narratives. People with disabilities are portrayed as advocates for justice and equality, while the authorities play the role of the villain. The narrative highlights the challenges that people with disabilities face due to the implementation of new laws and reforms. In addition, great emphasis is placed on their active participation in the fight for the treatment they deserve.

Although this narrative depicts the hardships faced by people with disabilities (accessibility issues, inadequate government benefits, and so on), its primary goal is to highlight the opposition. Without government reforms, people with disabilities would not be victims. They advocate for equality, inclusion and the provision of decent living conditions. In the article "Dear PM, thanks for the welfare concessions, but I still won't vote for your bill. Scrap the whole thing" [Burgon 2025], for example, the author highlights the issue of a new government bill. He explains how the government intends to cut costs by reducing benefits for people with disabilities, which could lead to poverty and a lower standard of living for people with disabilities. Furthermore, people who become disabled in the future will receive even smaller benefits. Overall, the author aims to support the disability community and influence change through this article. At the same time, he proposes an alternative: collecting taxes from the rich instead of people with disabilities.

Thus, the narrative is geared toward condemning the state decisions and supporting people with disabilities.

Innovations

The final one is the innovation narrative. From this viewpoint, disability is seen as a source of progress and the development of various technologies aimed at improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

This narrative functions as hidden advertising. Therefore, developers of new technologies are portrayed as saviors. They highlight all the opportunities that their innovation will provide, emphasizing how it will radically raise the standard of living of people with disabilities.

In order to be more convincing, these stories focus on a person with a disability who has already tested a prototype of the new invention and confirmed its potential. Consequently, the person with a disability is no longer a victim, a burden, or a hero; he/she is an optimistic individual open to new technologies that can make their life easier. A striking example of this narrative is the article titled “Patients set to benefit from new tech that can diagnose complex eye conditions and could slash waiting lists” [Chafer 2025]. The article begins by noting that thousands of patients, especially those in remote areas, will greatly benefit from a new technology called Aetheia. It enables the remote diagnosis of eye conditions. During this testing process, a high-quality image of the eye is captured and the data is transmitted in real time to an optometrist, who immediately analyzes it and provides a diagnosis to the patient. Thousands of patients have already tried this technology and have given positive feedback. Its biggest advantage is that it has reduced queues for doctors across the country. Moreover, experts have described this technology as revolutionary, as it is particularly helpful in urgent cases.

Therefore, an innovative narrative aims to generate excitement and interest among the audience, as well as offer hope for a better future to those who need it most. In particular, it makes people believe in new possibilities.

To sum up, there are four common narratives used to portray people with disabilities in the media: inspiration porn, suffering, human rights and innovation.

According to inspiration porn, people with disabilities are heroes. Such stories typically include both tragic and motivational parts. The suffering narrative portrays a person with a disability as both a victim and a burden to evoke sympathy. Human rights narrative focuses on the state as an obstacle to normal lives of people with disabilities. In addition, the disability community acts as an active figure. The latter narrative focuses on innovations that can improve the lives of people with disabilities. Its main goal is to convince everyone of the effectiveness of new technologies.

2.2. Linguistic means as the main tools of media influence

All narratives depicting disability rely strongly on linguistic devices: lexical, grammatical and stylistic. They serve an important function in a certain context, thereby helping to influence the audience in a particular way.

First and foremost, the **lexical** content of a text influences how readers perceive the information. As the topic of disability tends to focus primarily on human suffering and the hardships of daily life, the articles contain a great deal of negative vocabulary that evokes feelings of pity toward people with disabilities. This includes language that directly illustrates their feelings. Frequently, intensifiers are added to adjectives to heighten the sense of helplessness and vulnerability.

1) *She's shattered and angry* [Meko 2026].
2) *In the weeks after the attack, the extent of her injuries plunged Ms. Yilmaz into despair* [Meko 2026].
3) *She worked for several minutes until the pain shooting up her arm became unbearable* [Meko 2026].
4) *Abandoned, abused and belittled: how Oksana Masters survived a torturous childhood – and became a world-beating athlete* [Saner 2024].
5) *Yet, on that cold day last month, glued to his bed in London, he was now utterly immobile. And completely alone* [Dewar 2026].

Similar vocabulary is also used to refer to family members who have children or relatives with disabilities. It highlights the challenges caregivers face and how difficult this can be for them.

6) *Kirsty Northam is opening up about the harsh realities of raising a disabled child, particularly when it comes to finances* [Leathers 2025].
7) *It's a bit of a desperate situation* [Warren 2024].
8) *We are constantly exhausted, financially drained, emotionally spent. These cuts won't just make life harder. They will make it impossible* [Skelton & McNally 2025].
9) *I deal with stressful situations all the time, but the battle to get things in place for my son is much more stressful* [Warren 2024].

Moreover, the medical model expressions prevail in the context of people with disabilities. In other words, the emphasis is placed on the diagnosis and on disability as a difficult challenge.

10) *She is now confined to a wheelchair and will never walk again* [Tozer & Parker 2025].
11) *Now instead of enjoying family time and walking her dog, her life revolves around trips to hospital, she added* [Tozer & Parker 2025].
12) *Mrs Smaali said her sons now had to act as her carers, leaving her feeling guilty, while she is blighted by phantom pains and nightmares* [Tozer & Parker 2025].
13) *Adults with cerebral palsy risk developing early-onset health conditions like chronic pain, mobility difficulties and cardiovascular disease* [Robertson 2026].
14) *She is unable to play violin as she suffers from long-term nerve damage to two nerves in her left arm (...)* [Sears & Greenhill 2026].

By contrast, in the aforementioned inspiration porn narrative, the authors of the articles concentrate more on the achievements of people with disabilities, rather than their suffering. To create a "wow" effect and impress the reader with the abilities of people who have certain physical impairments, they use positive and expressive language.

15) *Flo Fox, an indomitable photographer who was born blind in one eye and who later lost her vision in the other from multiple sclerosis (...)* [Roberts 2025]

16) *Then Masters was adopted, and thrived, becoming a phenomenal rower, skier and cyclist* [Saner 2024].

17) *Jake Eyers is a personal trainer with some serious drive* [Cliff & Huckle 2014].

18) *Monger's optimism can, at times, appear superhuman* [Lewis 2025].

The central theme is **"overcoming disability"**. However, the very idea of this concept is the core problem with this narrative. As Linton notes, this phrase simply means conforming to the norms of modern society [Linton 1998]. In other words, a person with a disability pushes their limits to be "better", even though they don't have to prove anything to anyone.

19) *The 35-year-old children's book author and aspiring actress has overcome a lifetime of illnesses — even paralysis — to run her first half marathon* [Swartz 2025].

20) *Flo Fox, 79, Dies; Street Photographer Overcame Blindness and Paralysis* [Roberts 2025].

21) *Emirati artist with cerebral palsy shows how talent and creativity can overcome disability* [Al Shouk 2025].

In addition, people with disabilities often face discrimination, not only in the form of verbal abuse but also through restrictions on their rights and opportunities. This gives rise to the following terminology, that exposes the flaws in society and the unjust decisions made by government officials:

22) *An activist with cerebral palsy has said she feels there is a 'dehumanising perspective' on what she can 'offer society' after feeling 'contempt' while attending music festivals* [Johnston 2022].

23) *In promoting it, I chose to turn down any interview with a broadcaster who has a track record of ableism or go on a "pundit v pundit" format in which bigotry and equality are pitched as equal points of view* [Ryan 2025].

24) *Instead of calling disabled jobseekers lazy, let's discuss the real causes of disability unemployment: biased employers (...)* [Ryan 2025].

25) *I recently published a book, Who Wants Normal?, in an attempt to carve out a nuanced look at disabled life: the joy, humour and talent alongside the pills and the prejudice* [Ryan 2025].

26) *Years of austerity measures coupled with media scapegoating – on top of existing structural inequality and attitudes* (...) [Ryan 2025].

On the other hand, there are words and phrases that illustrate what people with disabilities are fighting for and how they stand up against constant discrimination. The vocabulary is related to justice, equal rights and raising awareness of the community's needs.

27) *It still strips billions in support from those who need it most, still forces huge numbers into poverty, and still undermines the dignity and independence of disabled people* [Burgon 2025].

28) *No matter the level of involvement of disability groups in co-producing a scheme for new applicants (...)* [Lamb 2025].

29) *Starr, along with carers, parents and union members, protested outside Hove Town Hall before the council's annual budget meeting on 26 February* [Leader de Saxe & Booker Lewis 2026].

30) *She criticised the council's proposed cost-cutting as a "false economy"* [Leader de Saxe & Booker Lewis 2026].

31) After you've made it clear that you oppose this change (and why), you can check that the board is allowed to do this work [Terreri Ramos 2026].

32) *A person with disabilities has a right to a reasonable accommodation in instances where it's necessary for his equal use and occupancy of his residence* [Terreri Ramos 2026].

33) *His Job Is to Make the Subway Accessible* [Fitzsimmons 2025].

34) *Residents with disabilities in Scotland could be eligible for free bus travel using the National Entitlement Card* [Rowlands & Howard 2026].

The main issue people with disabilities face today is economic; specifically, the UK disability community has been dealing with this over the past six months due to new reforms aimed at cutting benefits.

Consequently, the media is filled with abbreviations referring to different types of benefits. For example, *Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Adult Disability Payment (ADP), Child Disability Payment (CDP)* and *Disability Living Allowance (DLA)* [Rowlands & Howard 2026]. Equally prevalent is the topic of educational reform concerning children with disabilities, where the widely used abbreviation SEND is also employed. For instance, *"The very term Send – special educational needs and disabilities – embeds a damaging assumption that some children sit outside mainstream learning"* [Braverman 2026].

To enhance public awareness and reach a broader audience, abbreviations in articles are often initially explained, enabling readers unfamiliar with the issue to quickly understand the context. As the text progresses, only the abbreviated forms are used, allowing readers to become accustomed to them. Accordingly, when encountering these abbreviations in future headlines, readers can readily recall their meanings and are more likely to engage with the content.

It is also worth noting that the topic of disability is closely linked to modern technology. More and more inventors are developing various innovative devices designed to improve the lives of people with disabilities. As a result, the articles are filled with technical vocabulary.

35) *Researchers at the Battelle Memorial Institute developed a new type of system to tackle these tragic cases, and it begins with a brain implant* [Wehner 2020].

36) *The robotic arm you can control with your MIND* [MacDonald 2016].

37) *(...) disability community say that they aren't excited by stair-climbing wheelchairs, mechanical exoskeletons or brain-controlled prosthetics* [Perry 2020].

38) *He swings by a facility belonging to Meta to try out some smart glasses* [Samadder 2025].

In this context, persuasion techniques are evident. The authors of the articles seek to promote and disseminate the inventions developed by their creators, which accounts for their use of a large number of adjectives that emphasize the novelty and

uniqueness of a particular device. Furthermore, the frequent use of the superlative form of adjectives - sometimes combined with the present perfect tense and the intensifying adverb “ever” - serves as a powerful tool. This is a subtle way to impress the reader, give them hope for a better future and assure them that this innovation will radically simplify and transform the lives of people with disabilities.

39) *For disabled people, tech has already brought about life-changing advancements* [Samadder 2025].

40) *A glass screen with no buttons sounds like the most excluding device imaginable, McCausland acknowledges, yet his phone became the most accessible tool he’s ever used* [Samadder 2025].

41) *The system uses advanced signal processing and machine learning to convert ‘thoughts’ into actions (...)* [MacDonald 2016].

42) *It’s a game-changing innovation which brings the professional to the patient – and potentially revolutionary, particularly for urgent eye care* [Chafer 2025]*.’*

43) *Smartphones, where I find my GPS, may be the most powerful accessibility devices in history* [Perry 2020].

These considerations lead us directly to the **grammatical** aspects of how people with disabilities are portrayed in the media. The primary grammatical devices are modal verbs and expressions. They play a particularly significant role in narratives of suffering and innovation.

The most commonly used are **“can”** and **“be able to”** in the negative form, which clearly indicate an inability or lack of opportunity to do something due to a disability. **“Have to”** is also frequently employed to express a strong external obligation. It is often used to demonstrate the sacrifices family members make to ensure proper care for relatives with disabilities.

44) *She is unable to play violin as she suffers from long-term nerve damage to two nerves in her left arm and cannot separate two fingers on her left hand* [Sears & Greenhill 2026].

45) *Doctors told Machado and her husband that their son could not be cured, that all they could hope for was a comfortable quality of life* [Kaufman 2023].

46) *(...) "I had to give up earning a salary because I am the primary carer, so we are a one-income family living in Service Family Accommodation* [Leathers 2025].

47) *Mrs Smaali said her sons now had to act as her carers, leaving her feeling guilty (...)* [Tozer & Parker 2025].

48) *I can't work, not out of choice, but because I am caring full-time for two incredible, vulnerable human beings in the total absence of meaningful provision* [Skelton & McNally 2025].

Meanwhile, articles on innovation are rich in action verbs that emphasize the new possibilities offered by a particular invention. These verbs can appear in sentences either independently or following causative verbs such as **help**, **allow**, **enable**, etc. Modal verbs also play an essential role here: **"can"** is used to indicate the actual ability of an innovation to improve people's lives, **"could"** indicates a hypothetical ability and **"may"** indicates cautious predictions regarding effectiveness of a particular technology.

49) *The information can be communicated through speech, helping blind people and those with visual impairments to navigate streets, recognise objects and negotiate traffic lights and crossings* [Potier 2019].

50) *Designed to help those with paralysis to stand and walk (...)* [Potier 2019].

51) *Smartphones provide navigation, manage hearing aids, run speech apps and can even drive a wheelchair* [Perry 2020].

52) *Future exoskeletons may replace wheelchairs, providing greater mobility and health benefits* [Potier 2019].

53) *Automation, scheduling, and voice control enable users to easily control a host of devices* [Cericola 2025].

54) *Amazon Alexa, Google Home, and Apple Home are three different apps that allow you to control connected devices through a few methods* [Cericola 2025].

55) *(...) simultaneous advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence can enable these vehicles to understand spoken instructions, observe nearby surroundings and communicate with people* [Saripalli 2017].

56) *The device could help a million people with a severe form of macular degeneration to be able to see enough to read* [Kolata 2025].

Finally, it is important to consider the **stylistic** devices that accompany all disability-related narratives.

To begin with, readers primarily focus on the headline of an article; if it captures their interest, they are more likely to proceed to the main body of the text. Consequently, narratives portraying individuals who, after severe accidents or traumatic experiences, manage to rebuild their lives and achieve extraordinary outcomes must immediately engage the audience. This effect is often achieved through the use of **antithesis**. As a result, a tragic past is contrasted with a present-day success. This can be exemplified by the following cases:

57) *I was paralyzed and thought I couldn't walk again — now I'm running my first half marathon* [Swartz 2025].

58) *She Was Paralyzed by a Subway Train. Today, She's Reclaiming Her Life* [Meko 2026].

The key stylistic device typically found in the context of disability is **metaphor**. It is a stylistic trope, or as it is also called a hidden comparison, which gives the object its name. The name here refers to an indirect meaning that is conveyed by analogy or similarity [Neborsina 2023, p. 12]. In this case, its role is to amplify the scale of the tragedy and illustrate the emotional distress experienced by a person with a disability. Mostly, it is used to describe the lives of those who care for people with disabilities, which elicits nothing but sadness.

59) Cerebral palsy health care a 'never-ending battle' [Robertson 2026]

60) *It can be a tough journey, being thrown into the medical world with no preparation* [Wilson 2025].

61) *It is an ongoing battle for Ms Daniels to get things in place for Shaka, whose school is not meeting his needs (...)* [Warren 2024].

62) *The colors of our lives changed forever* [Kaufman 2023].

63) *I deal with stressful situations all the time, but the battle to get things in place for my son is much more stressful. It sucks the life out of me* [Warren 2024].

Sometimes, the use of metaphors to portray a person as a hero can become truly absurd, which resonates deeply with the actual reality lived by people with disabilities. This point is supported by the following examples:

64) *Yet he said losing a limb has been a blessing (...)* [Farnell 2022].

65) *He felt reborn after the amputation – although he had to learn to walk again* [Cliff & Huckle 2014].

To conclude, lexical, grammatical, and stylistic devices significantly help shape people's perceptions of disability. Some words can evoke pity ("shattered", "desperate", "suffer from"), while others, on the contrary, heighten the reader's admiration for a person with a disability ("phenomenal", "indomitable"). Conversely, rights-based language uplifts the spirit and encourages support, while language addressing discrimination allows others to better understand the specific challenges faced by people with disabilities. Frequently, we also encounter persistent stereotypes such as "to overcome disability", which the public comes to accept as the norm.

Meanwhile, grammatical and stylistic devices perform similar roles, particularly the role of persuasion. For instance, modal verbs and expressions subconsciously lead us to believe in the ability of new technologies to improve life with a disability, whereas the stylistic device of antithesis convinces us that a person with a disability can achieve what seems impossible.

2.3. The pragmatics of euphemism and dysphemism in disability discourse

The primary stylistic devices used to portray disability in mass media discourse are euphemisms. These are polite, indirect and conventional words that replace offensive ones [Neborsina 2023, p. 16]. In other words, their main function is to mitigate offensive expressions in order to avoid any form of discrimination, in our case, discrimination against people with disabilities.

These euphemisms can be classified based on their semantic characteristics, that is, according to their meanings. Thus, with regard to the topic of disability, we have identified three distinct groups of euphemisms. Their common goal is to substitute derogatory terms such as “invalid”, “cripple”, “mongol”, “handicapped”, “retarded” and many others.

The first and most commonly used group consists of **euphemisms that emphasize the person**. Therefore, the individual comes first and only then their disability. They are used in all possible contexts and demonstrate respect for the disability community.

1) *(...) a man in early middle age with a round, placid face who lives in a village community in eastern Norway for people with learning and developmental disabilities* [Bradshaw 2026].
2) *Drag Syndrome, a drag collective made up of performers with Down’s syndrome (...)* [Barradale 2026].
3) *(...) it is also accessible to people with other disabilities, including those with mobility impairments* [Rao 2026].
4) *(...) she also works with 'people from most ends of the disability spectrum,' including clients with autism, down syndrome, war injuries, cerebral palsy, and varying degrees of paralysis* [Sterne 2025].

From these examples, we can observe that most often these phrases are constructed with the preposition **“with”**, but euphemisms in this group can also take other forms. It is possible to say that a person **has** a certain disability, or that a person **is (to be)** a certain type of disability (only when using softened language). This is illustrated in the following sentences:

5) *The Foglia Residences, a nine-story, 76-unit affordable housing unit designed for people who are blind and visually impaired, opened in the fall of 2024* [Rao 2026].
6) *Former actor and beauty therapist Nicola Holmes , 55, lives in Tewkesbury with husband Wayne, an electrician, and their two children Ethan, 18, who has autism, Down’s syndrome and severe anxiety, and Ella, 16, who has PDA*

(pathological demand avoidance) anxiety and is situationally mute [Skelton & McNally 2025].

7) *She's also one of even fewer workers who 'specialize' in working with clients who have physical and developmental disabilities* [Sterne 2025].

The next group of euphemisms is the exact opposite of the previous one, as these are **euphemisms that emphasize identity**. They do not conceal the fact of disability, which is why the structure looks as follows: disability + person.

According to the theory discussed above, this group of euphemisms can be considered not entirely acceptable vocabulary. However, based on our observations, authors of articles in popular and well-known English-language newspapers, magazines and broadcast platforms use them as interchangeable alternatives to euphemisms that highlight the person. The point is that these are synonymous expressions, and generally they do not carry any offensive connotations; on the contrary, they avoid explicitly unpleasant words.

8) *Now, the double bassist has created the UK's first roster of disabled musicians, aiming to get artists with disabilities on to lineups and address the career barriers they face* [Barradale 2026].

9) *The visually impaired refugee from Myanmar had spent a year at a county jail in Buffalo (...)* [Ley 2026].

10) *For a long time, physically disabled students who dreamed of studying at the UK's most prestigious film and TV production school had nowhere to stay in the local area* [Hall 2026].

11) *The nationwide customer insight survey, completed by over 300 respondents, found that while many disabled drivers, passengers and people with limited mobility rely on established schemes to access a vehicle (...)* [SWNS Media Group 2026].

12) *Some are focused on helping disabled people walk, others on a series of applications, including making standing less tiring for factory workers* [Reuters 2021].

Examples 8 and 11 clearly demonstrate the synonymy of the terms. Euphemisms focused on the person intersperse with those focused on identity to avoid excessive repetition and make the text more balanced.

The last group is the least common in today's media landscape and is referred to as **euphemisms that do not directly mention disability**. This is the only group that truly hides the fact of disability. These euphemisms are used to distance the discussion from disability and focus attention on a person's specific challenges, needs and differences.

13) *After Rachel Zoeller became a wheelchair user in 2019 as a result of a spinal cord injury, going out to meet friends took strategy and research* [Weisstuch 2026].

14) *The needs of differently abled people have not been high on many fashion designers' agendas, but this is slowly beginning to change* [Kars 2021]

15) *First look as 'physically challenged' Phil Collins performs seated on Genesis tour: Watch* [Kyriazis 2021]

16) *Under the plans unveiled by Bridget Phillipson, mainstream schools in England will assess pupils with special needs and draw up individual support plans (ISPs) (...)* [Adams & Stacey 2026].

Most of these euphemisms are used for the purpose of **political correctness**. The media tries to avoid conflicts arising from ableism, which means unfair and disrespectful comments or actions by people without disabilities toward people with disabilities, based on the belief that they do not deserve to be part of this society because they are worse than able-bodied people [Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.].

On the other hand, the use of euphemisms can be seen in the context of **relationships between parents and children with disabilities** or in situations where teachers or caregivers take the place of parents. There are many articles in which they share their experiences and challenges in caring for children with disabilities. This is not about avoiding discrimination; it is about treating children with disabilities with gentleness. As a result, they avoid using direct statements. The most commonly used term is **"special needs"**. For instance:

17) *Mental Help 365 received funding from UNICEF, the United Nations' children's fund, and gathered a team of specialists to provide psychological support to 1,657 children with special needs across the country* [Varenikova 2023].

As there are milder words, there are also outdated, stigmatizing words, which are also known as dysphemisms. These are the words mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter. Although in recent years such vocabulary has rarely been seen in the media; nevertheless, it does still occur.

Usually, dysphemisms can be found in headlines. Based on this, we can conclude that by using these words, authors are trying to grab readers' attention as quickly as possible, regardless of the method.

18) *Ex-teammate of quadruple amputee US cornhole pro accused of murder says case shocks him* [Vargas 2026]

19) *UK mom recounts broken elevator's 'humiliating' effect on wheelchair-bound daughter* [Skelding 2021]

20) *Dad builds exoskeleton to help wheelchair-bound son walk* [Reuters 2021]

21) *'Treatment resistant' paranoid schizophrenic decapitated neighbour in his front garden after going two months without a visit from medics, inquest hears* [Haigh 2025].

The key goal is attracting attention, because the main text of these articles is filled with euphemisms. This is done to avoid negative comments and reviews. To illustrate this, there are examples of text excerpts from those articles with the titles listed above.

22) *The former doubles partner of a professional, championship-winning cornhole player who had his four limbs amputated in his infancy and is now accused of a deadly shooting (...)* [Vargas 2026].

23) *A man with 'treatment resistant' schizophrenia decapitated his neighbour in his front garden after going two months without a visit from medics, an inquest has heard* [Haigh 2025].

In other cases, the articles contain many dysphemisms. In particular, they are used to emphasize the suffering. Such language encourages people to feel even more pity for people with disabilities.

24) *Castillo, who had been confined to a wheelchair since 2022, had spoken openly about her decision and the suffering she says led her to it* [Pogrund et al 2026].

25) *It is understood the aim of the reforms is to increase the incentives for people to stay employed, even if they suffer from a disability or health condition* [Christie 2025].

26) *Disabled man who has visited more than 50 countries reveals how he travels the world despite being wheelchair-bound* [Gissen 2025].

Finally, truly offensive words, which have definitely fallen out of use in civilized society, are very rarely encountered. They can be found either in references to past events in the form of accurate statements, that is, how people with disabilities were previously referred to and how certain things were described, or in direct quotes where a person with a disability refers to themselves in an offensive manner and devalues themselves.

27) *Ola describes himself as "slow" and yet also appears perfectly intelligent and articulate* [Bradshaw 2026].

28) *But just when you think you've got a handle on the film as a kind-hearted time capsule of a forgotten haven for the disabled, "Crip Camp" turns much grander and even more inspiring* [Oleksinski 2020].

29) *Called Camp Jened, it was "a summer camp for the handicapped run by hippies," co-director and then-attendee Jim LeBrecht says in the doc* [Oleksinski 2020].

30) *For years after he was diagnosed in 2009, Mr. Parlatore, 42, felt like schizophrenia had swallowed him up, leaving him "more or less a vegetable," he said* [Bajaj 2026].

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that words such as **"blind"**, **"deaf"** and **"mute"** are not considered offensive, since the communities with these types of disabilities refer to themselves by these terms and want others to use them as well.

31) *That photo has stuck with Khan, who is deaf and mute, and when he saw other Rohingya becoming photographers, using budget smartphones to document daily life, he fully understood the power of an image* [Ahmed 2024].

32) *(...) and she energized movements that revolutionized help for the blind and the deaf* [Weisstuch 2026].

All things considered, to portray people with disabilities accurately, the media uses various euphemisms. These can be person-centered, identity-centered or designed to avoid explicitly referring to disability in order to divert attention. Dysphemisms are also common on the online space, even though not as much as a few years ago. Their meaning is the opposite of euphemisms. They're used to draw attention, emphasize tragedy, refer to past realities and in direct quotes.

2.4. The representation of voice: self-perception and the struggle for self-representation

Besides stories from third parties, there are also many articles online written by people with disabilities themselves. These are usually opinion columns where people can express their personal views on various issues and problems that concern them. In our case, people with disabilities share their experiences and lifestyles, defend their positions, or fight for equality and rights.

Self-representation is equally important in our study, as it helps us explore the full picture of how disability is portrayed in the media from all angles. First-person articles actually have some notable differences from those written by journalists and media representatives. The main feature of such stories is the expression of identity by people with disabilities. Ultimately, the person with a disability takes center stage.

Hence, a person with a disability is no longer a passive object of stories about tragic accidents, a challenging life, or, conversely, extraordinary achievements. Instead, they are an active participant and the protagonist of their own story. They can

share their viewpoint freely and paint a realistic picture of their own life, whether it is sad or completely normal.

The primary way a person with a disability expresses their individual perspective is by using the pronoun **"I"**. This is evident in the following examples: *"The few times I'd been in a pool for physical therapy since my accident, I felt I could only flail. I hated the feeling and vowed never again to step into a pool. I felt more than powerless in water; I felt defeated."* [Balf 2021] and *"I vowed then that I would do all I could to use my skills and experiences of 20 years working in disability law and policy to deliver a country that treats disabled people with dignity and respect"* [Tidball 2025]. It is clear that the pronoun **"I"** plays a central role in the narrative. It allows a person with a disability to confidently assert themselves, to talk about their setbacks and attempts — as in the first example — and to demonstrate their strength and desire to bring about change, as shown in the second case. As a result, a person with a disability can express themselves in a variety of ways.

In addition, the authors of such articles tend to associate themselves with the disability community. For this reason, they use the inclusive pronoun **"we"** to demonstrate their sense of belonging to the group, as well as their unity and solidarity. Through the use of **"we"** and its other grammatical forms, they place significant emphasis on identity and, in particular, make clear which target audience they are addressing. For instance, *"We occupy an awkward Catch-22: Our differences are alienating, so we hide them. But when we pursue diagnosis, we're dismissed if we've been too successful at social camouflage"* [Eloise 2020]. In this case, the girl with autism identifies with other girls like her who are rejected by society. Thus, she seems to be trying to gain their support. In the following quote, the authors of the article — activists for the rights of people with disabilities — use **"we"** and **"us"** to address the entire disability community. *"Yet just as many of the injustices that the Civil Rights Act aimed to eliminate are still very much with us, and still being resisted, the full promise of the Americans With Disabilities Act has yet to be realized. We are not yet where we need to be"* [Heumann & Wodatch 2020].

There are also instances where the author addresses the reader directly using the pronoun **"you"**. In this way, he/she establishes closer contact with the audience, including both people with and without disabilities. This can be illustrated in the following example: *"I share the substance of this packet with you because I find it hilarious and horrifying that the insurance company decided I was no longer too disabled to keep paying as a result of this private investigator's work. I want you to know the kinds of things that are considered evidence of a woman, who says that she is very sick but is, in fact, lying"* [Wang 2025]. Here, the woman wants to share her problem with the general public. By saying **"you"**, she is trying to appeal to people's sense of justice and elicit a response to this terrible unfairness.

Since people with disabilities have a strong voice here and know that they will definitely be heard, they openly express all their views in their articles. This is achieved through the frequent use of verbs that express personal opinion. For example:

1) *I believe that while exposing abuses is important, the framing of the Oct. 9 front-page article, "VA disability runs on an 'honor system.' These veterans are defrauding it.," sent a message that many of us carry with difficulty: that those few bad actors define the rest of us* [Hamilton 2025].
2) *What I find most hilarious about T.E.'s surveillance, which was used against me in my disability claim, is that they were able to get so little footage of me* [Wang 2025].
3) *I guess that mattered to me. As an athlete who was injured later in life, I have struggled with self-consciousness about my disability* [Balf 2021].
4) *I assumed that once doctors could figure out what was wrong, they'd be able to give me some medication or an operation, and I'd get better* [Brown 2024].
5) *There is a weird sense of entitlement over women's bodies, I think* [Yates 2025].
6) *Though, I suppose, they must be thinking the same thing about me* [Yates 2025].
7) *I conclude that, right now, reality is too difficult to work out* [Yates 2025].

Furthermore, precisely by expressing their views, people with disabilities can demonstrate how they feel about themselves and their lives, as well as show their opposition to the unfair and sometimes cruel conditions imposed on them by society.

All the articles we analyzed have a lot in common. They were written, in particular, as a result of difficult life circumstances and unpleasant situations in which people with disabilities speak not so much about the challenges arising from their disability as about the appalling living conditions imposed on them by the state and society in general. In this way, naturally, they describe their suffering. This is reflected in the following quotes:

1) *Many disabled Americans struggle to survive on benefits the government provides* [Arredondo 2019].
2) *Even so, in the immediate aftermath, I found it tough to make ends meet* [Arredondo 2019].
3) *People often emphasize how difficult life is for autistic people. And that's true (...)* [Eloise 2020].

Such statements might be seen as stereotypical and rooted in the medical model of disability, but that's not entirely accurate. People with disabilities might prefer to express themselves more positively and cover other topics in their articles, but they simply cannot avoid mentioning their misfortune. This is due to the fact that, as the media shows, even leading nations like the U.S. and the U.K. have failed to provide adequate living conditions for them. Accessibility and equal rights, for which everyone is fighting, are not what they should be. That is precisely why the theme of suffering is inevitable, even in first-person writings.

However, despite the coverage of the aforementioned issues, people with disabilities also demonstrate that they are not as helpless as everyone assumes; they are capable of leading the lives they are able to, thereby showing that they have learned to see themselves with dignity, even if they were previously unable to do so. The following quotation provides a clear example: *"And I affirm that my body is beautiful. I affirm, despite the medical model that classifies me as abnormal and sets the limits of my body's possibilities, that it was the hearts of all those who embraced me and exalted my humanity that allowed me defy those boundaries, to cross those borders and walk into the open terrain of human freedom"* [Altmann 2019].

Lastly, recognizing that people with disabilities have a confident perception of themselves, it is important to know how they prefer to be addressed, as this is one of the most important aspects of self-representation. As discussed in the previous subchapter, it is generally acceptable to mention both the person and their identity first. Neither construction carries a negative connotation. However, after analyzing 18 first-person articles from British and American newspapers such as The New York Times, The Guardian, The Washington Post, USA Today, The Observer, Miami Herald, The Spectator and The Independent, we were able to determine how people with disabilities predominantly identify themselves. The data was taken from the articles: [Wang 2025], [Balf 2021], [Ledgerwood 2026], [Jameson 2020], [Tidball 2025], [Eloise 2020], [Heumann & Wodatch 2020], [Reid 2025], [Webster 2025], [Sheppard 2019], [Brown 2024], [Hamilton 2025], [Crossan 2025], [Green 2026], [Louise 2020], [Yates 2025], [Altmann 2019] and [Arredondo 2019]. The obtained results are shown in Chart 2.1.

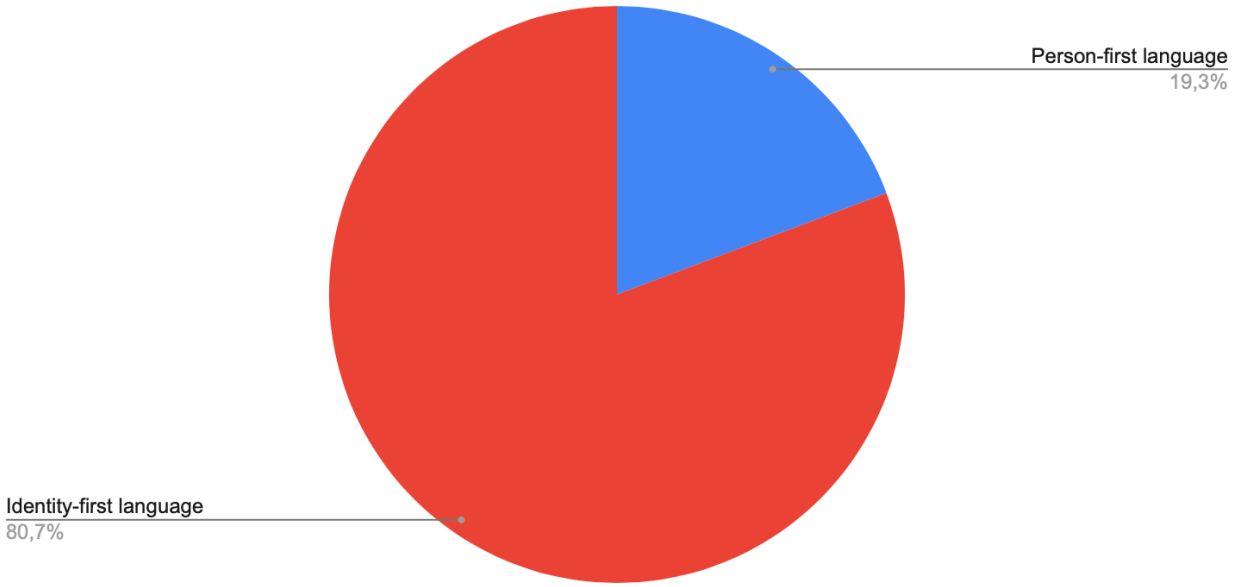

Chart 2.1. A comparison of the frequency of use of person-first language versus identity-first language within the disability community.

According to the chart, the use of identity-first language is significantly more prevalent (80.7%), which confirms the view that people with disabilities confidently express who they are and take pride in their differences. The study also showed that

this approach to addressing people with disabilities is not dependent on a country's specifics, as the articles were taken from newspapers in both the U.S. and the U.K.; this is purely the stance of the disability community. Additionally, it is worth noting that some articles used strictly identity-first language. For example, a well-known member of the British Parliament referred to people only as "disabled people" in her article [Tidball 2025], suggesting that even in a serious political context, this form of address carries greater authority and acceptance in society.

At the same time, the use of person-first language is also seen periodically (19.3%) and is certainly not condemned by the disability community. Meanwhile, the research revealed that this particular form is typically used when referring to people with psychological and neurological impairments, as well as children. The following examples prove this theory:

1) *I wonder how other people feel, such as people with dementia or other disabilities, or how children who are nonverbal express their desires* [Jameson 2020].
2) *It is because of these daily struggles that mental health in people with Tourette's erodes to worrying levels* [Green 2026].
3) *During our lifetimes (we are both in our 70s) we've seen children with disabilities be denied education* [Heumann & Wodatch 2020].

Taken together, self-representation of the disability community in media discourse is vitally important. People with disabilities can freely express their opinions by taking an active role in the narrative ("I think", "I believe"), thereby providing a realistic portrayal of life with a disability. First-person narratives typically use the pronoun "we", which signifies the identity of people with disabilities and clearly draws a line between "us" and "them". This helps unite people in the fight for their rights and equality. Furthermore, the emphasis on personal identity is also dominant when addressing people with disabilities. The majority consciously prefers identity-first language, but person-first language is also sometimes encountered.

Conclusion to Part 2

The topic of disability is an integral part of mass media discourse, which is often portrayed less accurately than it should be. One of the most common narratives is *inspiration porn*, where a person with a disability is portrayed as a supercrip who has overcome their disability through hard training and strong willpower. The second, equally problematic narrative is *suffering*. In this case, a person with a disability is depicted as a victim and a burden. The story is filled with tragedy, pain and torment, while the person with a disability is treated as a passive object; all attention focused on their disability.

On the other hand, there is the *human rights* narrative. It portrays people with disabilities as active advocates for their rights, while also highlighting the hardships they are forced to endure due to the authorities' self-serving decisions and unequal treatment in society. In addition, the topic of disability is often covered through the lens of *innovation*. In this way, people with disabilities become a source of new technologies designed to help improve their lives.

The main tools of these narratives are linguistic means. Lexical, grammatical and stylistic devices help shape society's perception of disability. If an author wants to portray a person with a disability as a victim and a burden, they will use words that elicit feelings of pity. Moreover, they emphasize the conditions in which this person lives, meaning they use words characteristic of the medical model of disability. On the other hand, if the author wants to portray a person with a disability as a hero and a source of inspiration, they will instead use vocabulary that evokes admiration.

Human rights narratives mainly aim to highlight the challenges that people with disabilities deal with on a daily basis, and only then to show how they are overcoming them and what they are ultimately fighting for. This is achieved, on the one hand, through words that denote discrimination and restrictions on human rights and on the other hand, through words that demonstrate equal rights and express a person's active position. Besides, evaluative vocabulary can easily capture the audience's attention and convince them, as in our case, of the effectiveness of new technologies.

Regarding the grammatical aspect, modal verbs play a key role in the context of disability. Typically, they indicate the extent of a person's capabilities and what they and their caregivers must do in the condition of disability, along with what they are forced to give up. Amidst the most commonly used stylistic devices are antithesis and metaphor. The former is frequently employed in “inspiration porn” and serves to create a contrast between a tragic past and a successful, joyful present. Meanwhile, the latter appears in all narratives and serves primarily to amplify both the tragedy of life with a disability and the relief of life after becoming disabled.

However, the most significant stylistic devices that are most closely associated with the topic of disability are euphemisms and their opposites, dysphemisms. According to our study, we classified euphemisms into three groups: euphemisms that emphasize the person, euphemisms that emphasize identity, and finally, euphemisms that do not directly mention disability. All of them are mostly used for the purpose of political correctness in the mass media. Meanwhile, dysphemisms consisting of outdated and offensive vocabulary are becoming increasingly rare.

Beyond this, apart from third-person articles, the media also publishes articles written by people with disabilities themselves. They, in turn, have their own distinctive features. Firstly, a person with a disability is an active creator of their own story, who actively speaks about themselves and their genuine thoughts as well as clearly identifies with their community, particularly through the use of the inclusive pronoun **“we”**. Secondly, as the analysis of the articles showed, the disability community highly values its identity; therefore, they prefer the term **“disabled people”**, whereas third-party articles reveal a completely different tendency.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed all the peculiarities of the portrayal of people with disabilities in mass media discourse. Initially, in the theoretical part, we analyzed general information regarding the development of the topic of disability in the media. In the practical part, the main focus was on whether any changes have occurred in the representation of people with disabilities in recent times, particularly over the past 5–7 years. As a result, all objectives were successfully achieved.

First of all, we gradually explored concepts such as discourse and media discourse. To gain a general understanding of how discourse emerged, we examined the main theories of language research proposed by renowned linguists. Subsequently, we identified their direct connection to the origin of discourse and explored its essence and features in the works of Halliday, van Dijk, Brown & Yule and Fairclough. After that, we focused directly on the specific type of discourse relevant to our study, namely media discourse. We presented a definition of this concept, which mainly explained that media discourse is, primarily, an interaction, for example, between the author of an article and their readers. This means that without a certain audience, media discourse would have no reason to exist. Additionally, we identified its main functions: informing, influencing, shaping public opinion, and imposing ideology. All of these functions, in turn, rely entirely on various linguistic devices, including transitivity, modality, nominalization, evaluation and so on.

After that, we conducted our own observations to determine the contexts and perspectives in which disability and the lives of people with various impairments are typically described in media discourse. For this purpose, we analyzed 58 articles from various English-language online publications, such as The New York Times, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, New York Post and many others. This led us to identify four main narratives of disability in the media: inspiration porn, suffering, human rights and innovation. Each of these narratives imposes a certain vision of people with disabilities on the public, ranging from stereotypical to contemporary. For example, “inspiration porn” portrays people with disabilities as superheroes, “suffering” as victims or a burden, “human rights” as advocates, etc.

In the next stage, we highlighted the significance of all linguistic devices most commonly used in the context of disability. They help create a certain impression and influence the public. Lexical devices play the most important role, because the word we choose — for example, to describe a person with a disability — determines how people will perceive them (phenomenal — the stereotypical image of a "supercrip"; shattered — the image of a victim; to protest — a fighter for equality and so on). Grammar devices, on the other hand, also help shape a certain opinion. In our case, the use of modal verbs and expressions is aimed at highlighting capabilities or, conversely, inabilities and obligations. If it is a narrative of suffering, it will contain modal verbs expressing a person with a disability's inability to do something (he can't, she is not able to), or it may be the modal expression "have to", which shows what a caregiver must give up in order to look after a person with a disability. Moreover, stylistic devices are common in stories about disability. Among the articles we analyzed, antithesis and metaphor were the most prominent. Authors typically use antithesis in the "inspiration porn" narrative to create a contrast between a difficult, tragic past and the successful overcoming of one's disability, while metaphor is used to amplify the effect of grief or the absurd idea that disability is a blessing.

Apart from that, we conducted a separate investigation of 18 first-person articles to identify differences in linguistic approaches in stories written by people with disabilities themselves. The most notable feature is the use of the pronouns "I" and "we", which help people with disabilities express their true selves, their thoughts or beliefs, as well as clearly define their own identity and unite the community. The pronoun "we" particularly highlights the solidarity among people with disabilities and their shared struggle for rights. Sometimes, people with disabilities also use the pronoun "you" in their articles to directly address concerned individuals (both within and outside the disability community) for support and to bring attention to important issues. However, the most important piece of research from a linguistic perspective was to determine how people with disabilities choose to refer to themselves. The results showed that 80.7% call themselves "disabled people" (identity-first language) and only 19.3% call themselves "people with disabilities" (person-first language), which once

again proves that the most important thing for the disability community is showing pride in who they are.

Ultimately, we examined the linguistic devices of euphemisms that are most relevant to this topic. It is closely linked to the aforementioned analysis of the use of identity-first language and person-first language, as the main group of euphemisms referring to people with disabilities consists of those that emphasize the person. These are the terms most frequently used by third-person narrators, i.e., journalists, to demonstrate that when they look at people with disabilities, they initially see the person and their individuality rather than their disability. Another group of euphemisms includes those that emphasize identity. They are typically used by authors who are more immersed in the lives of people with disabilities and are familiar with their position. Furthermore, there is also a small group of euphemisms that do not mention disability at all, such as "differently-abled" and "a wheelchair user". Although all these groups have certain semantic differences, they share one common feature: the avoidance of offending the disability community. In contrast, dysphemisms that carry the exact opposite meaning are used usually in direct quotes from people with disabilities, for various reasons.

All in all, the overall portrayal of people with disabilities in the media has changed over the years, but not significantly. The goal of most articles is to highlight the pessimistic aspects of life with a disability, thereby manipulating their audience. In addition, authors are not well-informed about the preferences regarding how people with disabilities want to be addressed. The majority use person-first language and employ a large number of euphemisms for the sake of political correctness. As a result, they completely disregard the views of the disability community, which somewhat differ from the generally accepted norms. However, there are also many articles that tell the story of a person with a disability in an appropriate manner and without exaggeration. Furthermore, now people with disabilities can share their experiences themselves through direct quotes in third-person articles and individual columns such as "Letters" and "Opinion", that allows readers to draw their own conclusions based on true stories.

SUMMARY

Дане дослідження надає всебічний огляд того, як мас-медіа дискурс презентує людей з інвалідністю. Тут висвітлюються як негативні, так і позитивні аспекти такого зображення, зокрема детально показано те, як вміло медіа маніпулює громадськістю за допомогою лінгвістичних засобів.

Актуальність дослідження полягає у зростаючому інтересі до того, як засоби масової інформації відображають і формують соціальну реальність. Вивчення лінгвістичного та дискурсивного представлення інвалідності допомагає виявити стереотипи, упередження та стратегії медіафреймінгу, що формують суспільне сприйняття. Більше того дослідження способів зображення людей з інвалідністю є особливо важливим у сучасній лінгвістиці через посилення уваги до питань рівності, різноманітності та етичної комунікації в публічному дискурсі.

Метою дослідження є комплексний аналіз зображення інвалідності в дискурсі засобів масової інформації з лінгвістичної точки зору.

Дослідження має такі **цілі**:

1) визначити поняття «дискурс», «медійний дискурс» та вказати їхні основні функції;
2) проаналізувати наративні моделі в статтях, що порушують тему інвалідності;
3) виокремити всі мовні засоби, які зазвичай використовуються в контексті інвалідності;
4) класифікувати евфемізми як основний засіб позначення людей з інвалідністю.

Об’єктом дослідження є інвалідність з точки зору дискурсу засобів масової інформації.

Предметом дослідження є лінгвістичні засоби як основний інструмент представлення людей з інвалідністю у провідних англомовних ЗМІ.

Матеріал дослідження містить 76 статей із 16 впливових світових ЗМІ, зокрема тих, що базуються у Великій Британії та США.

Щоб ретельно проаналізувати зібраний матеріал, ми використовували такі **методи дослідження**:

а) метод спостереження;

б) метод вибірки;

в) метод дискурсивного аналізу;

г) описовий метод;

ґ) метод класифікації;

д) метод кількісного аналізу.

У **теоретичній частині** ми насамперед дослідили, як виникло поняття дискурсу. Спочатку лінгвісти у своїх працях дискутували щодо того, як слід вивчати мову: одні стверджували, що її слід розглядати виключно як систему знаків і правил, тоді як інші доводили, що мову неможливо аналізувати поза контекстом; крім того, точилися дискусії щодо включення когнітивних аспектів у цю парадигму. Ці суперечки зрештою привели до появи вже загальноприйнятого поняття дискурсу. Також ми проаналізували більш вузьку галузь — медіадискурс, головною особливістю якого є взаємодія між носієм інформації та її реципієнтом. Крім того, з'ясувалося, що основними функціями медіадискурсу є інформування, вплив, формування суспільної думки та нав'язування певної ідеології. Усі ці функції активно супроводжуються різними лексичними, граматичними та стилістичними засобами, такими як транзитивність, оцінність, модальність та інші.

Слідом за цим ми зосередилися на нашій головній темі, а саме на інвалідності та тому, як її зображують у дискурсі засобів масової інформації. Ми з'ясували, що спочатку існувала моральна модель інвалідності. Згідно з цією моделлю, люди вірили, що інвалідність є покаранням від Бога за гріхи. З розвитком медицини з'явилася медична модель інвалідності, за якою людину з інвалідністю розглядали виключно як проблему, яку потрібно якось вирішити. Але з часом люди з інвалідністю втомилися від таких ярликів, і це призвело до появи асоціацій, що відстоюють права цієї спільноти. У результаті з'явилася соціальна модель інвалідності, яка передавала ідею, що людину з інвалідністю

не потрібно лікувати; натомість необхідно створити умови, щоб вона могла жити нормальним життям. Загалом ці моделі сформували різні образи, через які ЗМІ зображують людей з інвалідністю. До них належать образи жертви, героя та тягаря; загалом інвалідність зображується як монстр, що чатує, або з точки зору захисту прав людини.

У підсумку ми розглянули питання використання мовних конструкцій, що ставлять на перше місце ідентичність, та мовних конструкцій, що ставлять на перше місце особу. Крім того, було визначено, які слова вважаються табуйованими, застарілими або такими, що стигматизують, а які — шанобливими. Головним риторичним прийомом у цьому контексті виявився евфемізм. Як правило, з метою дотримання політичної коректності ЗМІ використовують захисні евфемізми, які пом'якшують будь-яку дискримінацію, хоча вони не завжди схвалюються спільнотою людей з інвалідністю.

У **практичній частині** ми розглянули найпопулярніші наративи, які сьогодні використовуються для зображення інвалідності. Відповідно до теорії, це виявилися наративи страждання, «надихаюче порно», прав людини та інновацій. За допомогою різних лінгвістичних засобів ці наративи зображують людей з інвалідністю як героїв, жертв, тягар, захисників прав та носіїв потенційного прогресу. Найпомітнішими елементами є оцінювальні слова, що можуть викликати жаль або захоплення; модальні дієслова та вирази, які підкреслюють здатність або нездатність людини з інвалідністю, а також жертви, на які змушений йти доглядач; та стилістичні засоби, такі як метафора та антитеза, які значною мірою слугують для посилення відчуття трагічності.

Додатково ми провели детальний розбір евфемізмів, виявлених у статтях. Таким чином, ми згрупували евфемізми за їхнім призначенням: евфемізми, що применшують інвалідність людини (основна увага приділяється особистості); евфемізми, що підкреслюють ідентичність (інвалідність як джерело гордості); та евфемізми, що не згадують інвалідність безпосередньо (дистанціювання від інвалідності). Усі вони мають на меті уникнути образи та дотриматися політичної коректності. З іншого боку, дисфемізми, тобто слова, що за своєю

суттю є образливими, зараз зустрічаються рідше, але все ж існують. Вони можуть з'являтися у висловлюваннях авторів через недостатню обізнаність із проблематикою, задля посилання на застарілі терміни, а також у цитатах самих людей з інвалідністю.

Наостанок, для порівняння, ми проаналізували статті, написані від першої особи. Серед характерних рис ми відзначили часте вживання займенників «I», «we» та «you». Завдяки їхньому використанню автори чітко висловлюють свої погляди, діляться реальним досвідом життя з інвалідністю та окреслюють свою спільноту, що робить заклики до боротьби за свої права більш ефективними. Звідси випливає, що головною темою таких статей є створення єдності, боротьба за рівність та інклюзію, а також протистояння несправедливості. Крім того, найважливішим відкриттям тут було встановлення того, який спосіб звертання переважно використовують самі люди з інвалідністю. Відповідно, результати показали, що пріоритет надається формі звертання, яка насамперед підкреслює ідентичність, тоді як у статтях, написаних від третьої особи, ми спостерігали іншу тенденцію.

Загалом, дивлячись на відомості з теоретичного матеріалу, можна сказати, що на даний момент медіа дещо покращила підхід до зображення людей з інвалідністю. Сучасні онлайн видання дають можливість людям з інвалідністю брати активну участь у репрезентації себе, що дозволяє читачеві побачити реальну картину життя з інвалідністю з таких колонок, як "Opinion", "Letters" та безпосередньо в журналістських статтях у вигляді прямих цитат. Однак більшість статей від третьої особи все ще показують інвалідність з негативної сторони, надмірно використовуючи лексику медичної моделі та необачно застосовуючи евфемістичні вирази.

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