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# MANIPULATION STRATEGY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ESP TEACHING AT HIGHER MILITARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Received:** June 16, 2025 | **Revised:** June 26, 2025 | **Accepted:** June 30, 2025

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.33445/psssj.2025.6.2.2>

## **Abstract**

The article analyzes the means of verbal persuasion used in modern English political discourse within the framework of ESP teaching at Yevheniy Berezhnyak Military Academy. Current issues of political rhetoric, outlining the main means and strategies of linguistic manipulation in modern English political discourse are also highlighted. It is emphasized, that the strategy of linguistic manipulation is an integral component of political communication, since politicians actively use manipulative means to influence the electorate and shape public opinion. The analysis of political speeches shows that manipulative discourse is characterized by mixed lexical composition, the involvement of colloquial components, and the use of stylistically marked linguistic units that contribute to the expressiveness and persuasiveness of statements.

**Key words:** English language, political discourse, politician, manipulation, manipulative features, verbal means.

## **Introduction**

Currently, manipulative technologies are extremely important means to carry out political activities at all levels. Their application contributes much to the effective implementation of electoral processes, political campaigns, the adoption of strategically important decisions, etc. Due to the widespread and growing influence of social networks, manipulative technologies are reaching new levels of influence. Nowadays manipulation is also used in everyday management of society. To achieve their goals, manipulators can restrict citizens' access to information, deliberately hide data, present it in a way that makes critical analysis impossible, or use discrediting techniques such as labeling. The application of political manipulation threatens the informational and psychological security both of an individual and society, causing disorientation of the population, social tension, and a distorted perception of reality. The relevance of the article is due to the acuteness of modern English media manipulative potential aimed at changing the behavior of the public in a beneficial for the manipulators way; increased control over information that determines public opinion, political views and beliefs of the audience. Moreover, the problem of linguistic manipulation is associated with the growing role of manipulative strategy within political communication, since the purpose of linguistic manipulation is to form the addressee's attitude towards the object, regardless of his desires and interests.

Good command of English political discourse manipulative features is a necessary requirement for future military professionals in the sphere of diplomacy, as they need to be skillful enough in obtaining necessary information from foreign sources, applying it to solve professional tasks, communicate with native speakers at a professional level in order to resolve arising issues and non-standard situations in the course of their official duties.

## ***Theoretical background***

Manipulative strategy is of a particular importance in political discourse, as it is a significant means of linguistic influence. The analysis of research and publications shows that it has been studied by both domestic and foreign scholars, namely: demagogic techniques and manipulative tactics within the framework of a manipulative strategy (O. Parshyna, Y.Sudus, O. Romanovska), strategy of hidden communicative influence depending on the explicit communicative intention of the addressee (P. Kriuchkova, B. McNair), strategies of veiling, mystification, anonymity (Y. Sheihal, R. Perloff, N. Hrebin), features of political discourse manipulative techniques and linguistic means of implementing manipulative strategies based on the material of English-language political interviews and speeches (A. Chashchyna, Y.Fedoriv, J.Boitnott, J.Unger, I.Pulenko, T.Sazykina), political discourse within the framework of ESP teaching for students aspiring to succeed in the political sector (V.Gagarina, I.Baez, A. Siddiqui, K. Hadj Djelloul, M. Melouk).

Despite a large number of scientific and methodological developments on the above-mentioned topic, the issue of studying verbal means of language manipulation within the framework of ESP teaching to military professionals specializing in diplomacy remains unsolved, since there are practically no scientific developments that would take into account the specifics of future diplomatic employees' work features.

## ***Research question***

Our studying seeks to analyze available in English media arsenal and aimed at mass manipulation verbal means of English political discourse within the framework of ESP teaching at Yevhenyi Bereznyak Military Academy (hereinafter referred to as the MA).

## ***Research Methods***

To reach the goal the following methods were used: analysis of the researched problem; systematization and generalization of the information obtained from the theoretical sources; methods of comparative analysis, classification, abstraction, induction and deduction.

## ***Results and Discussion***

**Manipulation** is a polysemic concept. In the article, it is used to denote a type of psychological influence, the skillful implementation of which leads to the unconscious emergence of human intentions that do not coincide with the available wishes [1, pp. 52-53]. Language manipulation can also be defined as a covert language influence on the addressee with the aim of deliberate misleading him/her regarding the intention or content [2, pp. 107-108].

In political discourse, various types of manipulation are used, which are an integral part of any strategy. Y. Sheihal distinguishes two types of speech manipulation, which are subdivided into referential and argumentative [3, pp. 130-131].

**Referential manipulation** is a distortion of denotate's/referent's image in the process of illuminating reality:

a) factual manipulation (any changes of real facts: exaggeration, understatement, concealment, falsification, misleading, etc.).

b) focused manipulation (changing the focus of coverage of an event, statement, or behavior associated with the denotation, to make the recipient perceive the situation from a favorable to the manipulator perspective).

**Argumentative manipulation** is a distortion of communication postulates:

a) violation of the logic or integrity of the text, usually expressed in avoiding a direct answer, specific comments, or deviation from the topic;

b) evasion from providing evidence by intentionally incomplete presentation of available information or expressing a statement in an undeniable form;

c) masking logical actions.

Summarizing the above mentioned, we can suggest the following definition: language manipulation is the purposeful use of language tools and features of phrase constructions that contribute to the emergence of illusions and delusions in the minds of recipients in order to induce them to behave in a beneficial to the manipulator way.

It should be noted that there are both negative and potentially positive aspects of manipulation. On the one hand, manipulative technologies can be used to maintain social stability, build national unity, or prevent panic. On the other hand, they limit freedom of choice, distort information, and can serve as a tool for the abuse of power. Manipulation of public opinion is one of the main mechanisms of information warfare. It is aimed at shaping moods, beliefs and behavioral patterns that are beneficial to the manipulator. Political manipulations use an appeal to basic human needs and motives, which makes them difficult to recognize and counteract.

Within the framework of political manipulation, various methods are used, including: substitution of thesis, manipulative reduction or expansion of statements, creation of false cause-and-effect relationships, incorrect dichotomies, passing off false judgments as true, use of pseudoscientific arguments, etc. [4, p. 187].

Let us analyze some verbal means of implementing the manipulative strategy in English political discourse, which were revealed in the process of analyzing the factual material used within ESP teaching in MA. The headlines of articles deserve special attention, since it is the title of the article that is the decisive factor in making a decision on further familiarization with its content. The headline, which is a compact, limited-volume text, not only conveys the main semantic load, but also brings to the public the first characteristics (labels) of various events, situations and phenomena of reality, the first comments (usually those that are beneficial to the elites controlling this or that media). Thus, the headlines of articles create a certain stereotype, thereby programming a negative or positive attitude of readers. It is necessary to take into account the fact that all words have a connotative meaning, that is, they contain a targeted emotional charge. For example, phrases such as *drone attack*, *new spy ship*, *cyber-geddon*, *jet damage* are used purposefully in headlines [5].

Manipulation by headlines can create the effect of rejection, negative attitude towards the state, event, subject, etc. The main goal of manipulation is to create a picture of the world in people's minds that is favorable to the customer and reduce the recipients' ability to think critically, creating the illusion of free choice.

In modern media, the stylistic technique of playing with precedent phenomena is widely used, designed to evoke the necessary associations of the addressee. Any precedent unit reduces the described situation to a stereotyped image. For example, *"...the problem of describing a government in which officials, magnats and organised crime are bound together in a virtual mafia state – one, moreover, that has just won the World Cup – is how you deal with it"* [6]. Using vocabulary related to the thematic group "Crime" (*organized crime*, *virtual mafia state*), manipulators emphasize the aforementioned analogy, imposing on the reader the image of a virtual mafia state.

Nowadays, words with negative connotations have become common. Modern media language is characterized by such properties as negative expression and aggressiveness: *"Russia is seeking to weaponise information. Deploying its state-run media organisations to plant fake stories and photoshopped images in an attempt to sow discord in the West and undermine our institutions"* [6].

To impose an assessment, manipulators use linguistic means, primarily vocabulary, characterized by a wide range of condensed semantic, emotional, ideological and political connotations: *political dialogue*, *democratic development*, *increased level of confidence*, *the spheres of democratization*, *strengthening the guarantees of citizens' rights*, *the new level of development*

*of the electoral system, mutual respect, civic values, sustainable development of the country, maintaining stability, the creative force of power, productive activities, political modernization, American realities, rhetoric of intolerance etc. [5].*

Linguistic means used in political speeches create the effect of trust between the speaker and the audience. For this purpose, politicians and state leaders use linguistic means that identify the addressee with them by territorial features, namely: the pronoun “we” with a vague meaning, interrogative-affirmative constructions, rhetorical questions and some other linguistic/speech means. Narrative texts are gaining popularity: a speech accompanied by personal remarks, assessments and impressions captivates more reliably than other types of manipulation: *it to us on the shoulder; this, you will agree, a powerful incentive.*

The British media also actively use the lexical potential of language, but their goals are clearly hidden. The authors of the publications use various words with a pronounced negative connotation: *captors, the president's thuggish cousin*, etc. To implement the implicature “*a large number of victims*”, they use numerals, as well as other parts of speech that express the idea of plurality: *200 people, thousands of protesters, dozens of people, the nation, the others*. This technique makes it possible to discredit indirectly the opponent of the party in question. Almost every article uses gradation, which is also implemented by using lexical means.

Speaking about manipulation in the media, it is necessary to note how the spread of the idea of political correctness has influenced the lexical composition of the English language, in particular, the formation of a new **euphemistic vocabulary**. The use of a special terminological “veil” in the media of English-speaking countries, euphemistic phrases and expressions, and corrected terms, contributes to the creation of the effect of mitigation and masking, blunting negative emotions and forming a loyal public opinion. Euphemisms successfully veil military actions, their consequences, and any hints that it is about death, about the loss of people.

For example, during the Vietnam War, the euphemism *body bags* (containers for transporting the remains of dead soldiers) appeared, the Gulf War gave rise to the euphemism *human remains pouches* (bags for transporting the remains of dead soldiers). The euphemism *transfer tubes* (a container in the form of a tube for transporting the remains of dead soldiers) owes its appearance to the war in Iraq. The euphemism *dignified transfer* is used instead of the expression *transfer case*. The presence of the word *dignified* in the composition of the euphemistic substitute creates the effect of ennobling death [6]. Thus, the use of euphemisms is a type of manipulation, when the replacement of the concept gives the denotate new properties, makes certain changes to its essence and models the perception of reality from a position that is advantageous for the initiator of communication. It should be noted that, due to the targeted efforts of linguists working for the political elite, euphemistic nominations are created with the purpose to conceal partially the true meaning of events and diminish their negative perception by a wide audience.

There has also been a tendency in the language of politicians to use more abstract forms of expression, that has led to the increase of **nominatives**, verbs substantivized into abstract nouns. Some nominatives are formed by combining a verb and an adverb, for example: *build-up* - concentration of military forces; *lay-out* - a person who has lost his job; *take-over* - seizure of power, etc.

Let us consider the features of linguistic manipulation within the framework of political discourse in the speeches of modern English-speaking politicians.

The US Ex-President J. Biden during a joint press conference with V. Zelensky at the White House emphasizes: “*And as I said when Putin rolled his tanks into Ukraine in February: American – American people are prepared to have us stand up to bullies, stand up for freedom*” [7]. The word *bullies* belongs to the colloquial vocabulary. The use of such an expression goes beyond the formal register and adds expressiveness to the speech. In the context of assessing the actions of the Russian troops, this word performs several functions at once: it emphasizes the harshness of Biden's

position, demonstrates his emotional involvement, and enhances the effect of what was said. Thus, Biden not only expresses indignation at the aggression of the Russian Federation, but also manifests support for Ukraine on behalf of the American people. Ex-President Biden also uses the advantages of linguistic manipulation to reduce the distance between himself and his interlocutor. Answering the journalist's question, the American leader notes: *"Let me be straight forward with you here. Look, the fact is that it's important to remember that before Russia invaded, we had dedicated an enormous amount of security assistance to Ukraine"* [7]. The fragment *"Let me be straight forward with you here"*, shows that the journalist can feel as much a full participant in the conversation as the world leaders present at the event.

The similar effect is created by language means in British Ex-Prime Minister B. Johnson's farewell speech, when he addresses the nation with the words: *"Well this is it folks"* [8]. The lexemes *well* and *folks* have a clearly expressed colloquial tone. The word *well* signals about an informal tone of address, while *folks* is used to shorten the distance between the politician and the audience. Thus, Johnson demonstrates openness and tries to position himself as a part of the community which he appeals to.

US President D. Trump's public speeches can be characterized by active use of the manipulative strategy involving partial or complete discrediting of the opponent. This strategy is designed to explicitly or implicitly form a negative recipients' opinion regarding the subject of communication and to destabilize the perception of his political competitors.

*"... I watch what's happening with some horrible things, like Obamacare where your health insurance and health care is going up by numbers that are astronomical 68%, 59%, 71% when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is for us it's a one-sided transaction"* [9]. Criticizing the healthcare reform of his predecessor B. Obama, D. Trump implements the manipulative strategy of presenting the activities of his predecessor and political competitor in an extremely negative light. This is evidenced by Trump's use of words and phrases with negative connotations, in particular, such as *"one-sided transaction"*, *"horrible things"* or the hyperbole *"numbers that are astronomical"* and numerals to highlight the incredible percentage of unjustified expenditures as a result of unsuccessful decisions of the former US president's administration.

*"Obamacare is a disaster, you know it, we all know it it's going up at numbers that nobody's ever seen worldwide. It's nobody is ever seen numbers like this for health care, it's only getting worse in 17 implodes by itself their method of fixing it is to go back and ask congress for more money, we have right now almost 20 trillion dollars in debt. Obamacare will never work"* [9]. Several techniques are used here: hyperbolization (*"disaster"*), rhetorical structures (*"you know it, we all know it"*), which create the illusion of general recognition of statements. Such a linguistic strategy forces the audience to perceive information without critical analysis. Also, an American politician in the analyzed fragment of his speech uses such a technique as clarification: *"It's nobody is ever seen numbers like this for health care"*, emphasizing that the situation will only deteriorate: *"It's only getting worse"*. The above mentioned statement is characterized by significant hyperbolization, as the speaker resorts to a grotesque exaggeration of the shortcomings of the healthcare reform, portraying it as completely unprofitable for the state and the people and as one that exists only by the will of the previous administration.

## Conclusions

The analysis of verbal means of English political discourse manipulative strategy implementation into educational process within the phramework of ESP teaching in MA shows that the main part of the resources for manipulating public opinion in modern English media are specially selected lexical means with special connotative semantics, which can turn the recipient into an object of manipulative influence on condition they are used skillfully.

The use of linguistic manipulation in political discourse provides a concise and imaginative transmission of content, attracts the attention of the audience and forms the necessary emotional reactions. Political leaders use manipulative techniques depending on the communicative tasks: to create the effect of proximity, discredit opponents or enhance the emotional impact. The features of such strategies depend on the cultural context and speech traditions of a particular politician.

Profound knowledge of widely used by the English media verbal means, methods and ways of linguistic manipulation, together with linguistic, socio-cultural, scientific and professional competencies, will enable future military professionals to hold a constructive dialogue with their foreign colleagues.

### **Prospects for Further Research**

Further investigation of English political discourse verbal means aimed at manipulating public opinion, within the framework of ESP teaching to future military diplomatic professionals.

### **Funding**

This study received no specific financial support.

### **Competing interests**

The author declares that she has no competing interests.

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