МАНІПУЛЯТИВНІ ВЛАСТИВОСТІ ПЕРЕДВИБОРЧОГО ДИСКУРСУ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

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MANIPULATIVE PROPERTIES OF ENGLISH ELECTIVE DISCOURSE

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У добу загостреної політичної поляризації та впливу медіа стратегічне використання мови стало ключовим інструментом контролю в політичній комунікації. Це дослідження аналізує тактики мовної маніпуляції, використані під час президентської кампанії Дональда Трампа у 2024 році, зосереджуючись на тому, як риторичні стратегії систематично застосовуються для викривлення сприйняття, поляризації громадської думки та зміцнення дихотомії «свої – чужі». Спираючись на сучасні лінгвістичні та психологічні концепції Абдуллая (2025), а також Гаспаряна і Арутюнян (2021, 2022), аналіз виявляє цілісну систему маніпулятивних технік — емоційні апеляції, фальшивий авторитет, замовчування контексту та лексичні спотворення — які спрямовані на утвердження домінування певного наративу в режимі реального часу. Через якісний аналіз виступів Трампа та його участі в дебатах дослідження демонструє, як мова перетворюється на інструмент впливу не випадково, а систематично — з метою формування ідеологічної лояльності та затемнення фактичної реальності. Отримані результати підкреслюють необхідність прикладного критичного дискурсивного аналізу для викриття і декодування механізмів політичної маніпуляції, а подальші дослідження можуть зосередитись на вивченні вразливості різних демографічних груп до подібних риторичних стратегій.

Ключові слова: *лінгвістичні маніпуляції, політичний дискурс, риторичні стратегії, наративний контроль, президентська кампанія.*

In an era of heightened political polarization and media influence, the strategic use of language has become a central mechanism of control in political communication. This study examines the linguistic manipulation tactics employed during Donald Trump's 2024 presidential campaign, with a focus on how rhetorical strategies are orchestrated to distort perception, polarize public opinion, and reinforce in-group/out-group dynamics. Drawing on recent linguistic and psychological frameworks by Abdullai (2025) and Gasparyan & Harutyunyan (2021, 2022), the analysis identifies a cohesive system of manipulative techniques—emotional appeals, false authority, contextual omission, and lexical distortion—that serve to consolidate narrative dominance in real-time political discourse. Through qualitative analysis of Trump's speeches and debate performances, the study reveals how language is weaponized not incidentally, but systematically, to construct ideological loyalty and obscure factual reality. The findings underscore the need for applied critical discourse analysis to expose and decode the

mechanisms of political manipulation, while future research may explore demographic susceptibilities to such rhetorical strategies.

Key words: *linguistic manipulation, political discourse, rhetorical strategies, narrative control, presidential campaign.*

Introduction

In the current era of political polarization and media saturation, the strategic use of language has become a powerful tool for shaping public perception and controlling political narratives. While considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the psychological and linguistic mechanisms of manipulation, the intersection of these strategies within the context of political discourse—particularly during live, high-stakes events such as presidential campaigns—remains insufficiently explored. Researchers such as Abdullai (2025) and Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2021, 2022) have offered comprehensive classifications of manipulative techniques, including emotional appeals, false authority, information bias, and the exclusion of contextual information. However, there exists a critical gap in applied analysis that illustrates how these strategies function together as a cohesive system of influence in contemporary political rhetoric.

This study addresses that gap by examining the rhetorical strategies employed in Donald Trump's 2024 presidential campaign, focusing on how linguistic manipulation is not used incidentally or in isolation, but systematically to polarize public opinion, obscure factual reality, and reinforce in-group versus out-group dynamics. Drawing on recent linguistic and psychological research, the study situates manipulative language as a form of communicative control deliberately embedded within political discourse. Through the analysis of Trump's campaign speeches and debate performances, the research demonstrates how emotionally charged language, logical fallacies, strategic omission, and rhetorical distortions are orchestrated to maintain dominance over political narratives and shape voter behavior. Ultimately, this investigation aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of political communication by highlighting the practical applications of manipulation theory within real-time political contexts.

Formulation of the problem

Despite a growing body of literature on the linguistic and psychological dimensions of manipulation, the intersection of rhetorical strategies and political discourse remains a critically underexplored area — especially in the context of real-time political events such as presidential campaigns. While scholars such as Abdullai (2025) and Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2021, 2022) have provided detailed classifications of manipulative strategies — including emotional appeal, false authority, information bias, and context omission — there is a noticeable lack of applied analysis that demonstrates how these techniques function cohesively in contemporary political rhetoric.

The problem this study addresses lies in the gap between theoretical frameworks on linguistic manipulation and their practical application in the analysis of political speech. Specifically, it explores how these strategies are used not as isolated rhetorical tools, but as an orchestrated system of influence designed to polarize public opinion, obscure facts, and reinforce in-group/out-group dynamics. Using Donald Trump's 2024 presidential campaign rhetoric as a case study, this research highlights the pressing need to understand manipulation not as an incidental flaw in democratic discourse, but as a deliberate and systematic form of communicative control.

Analysis of recent studies and publications

According to Abdullai (2025, 11) manipulation is a form of social power abuse, where discourse is used to exert control over others in a way that serves the interests of the manipulator, often against the interests of those being manipulated. Unlike persuasion, which is a legitimate means of influence where interlocutors have access to information and can make informed decisions, manipulation involves misleading or controlling others without their full awareness or against their best interests. Manipulation often features strategies that enhance the speaker's power and moral superiority while discrediting opponents. The use of emotional appeals, selective detailing of information, and the establishment of a clear distinction between 'Us' (the in-group) and 'Them' (the out-group) are typical. Manipulation thrives on privileged access to information, as speakers may present themselves as omniscient or as possessing special insights that the audience lacks. Politicians may use statistics to lend credibility to their claims, presenting themselves as objective assessors while influencing public perception. Moreover, agentless passive constructions can be used to obscure responsibility for negative actions of the in-group, creating a narrative that avoids direct blame. Metaphors and presuppositions can serve to disconnect the speaker from government failures, positioning the speaker as a prospective savior.

Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2021, 11) define manipulation as a psychological and linguistic strategy used to influence people's behavior, thoughts, and emotions, often unfairly or deceptively. It involves encoding intentions into speech that appears rational or informative, but subtly steers the listener's thoughts. Manipulators know their targets' weak points, often using emotionally charged language to trigger trust, confusion, or guilt. Manipulation differs from coercion, as it does not reduce the target's options — it distorts their judgment and decision-making process. Instead, it is about presenting seemingly rational arguments with key facts withheld, using ambiguity to misrepresent the truth and exploiting the structure and tone of language to make something dishonest seem reasonable. The manipulator's goal is to create the illusion of choice while influencing decisions and beliefs in their own favor.

There are four types of manipulation: negative (makes the victim feel inadequate or self-doubting to establish control), positive (flatters or entices to gain concessions), deception and intrigue

(distorts reality to alter perception), and strategic helplessness (plays victim to exploit compassion and responsibility).

As for political manipulation, it is used to create the illusion of leadership, conceal incompetence, and control public perception. Politicians rely on rhetorical techniques like positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Positive self-presentation is elevating one's own image through glorified speech while negative other-presentation is discrediting opponents with blame, fear tactics, or ridicule. Political manipulation also involves: domino logic/slippery slope arguments (exaggerating consequences to sway opinion), false authority (citing supposed experts or symbols (flags, military, tradition) to justify irrational positions), "whataboutism" (redirecting blame back onto critics).

In other work Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2022, 13) study media-manipulative discourse. They come to a conclusion that lexical manipulation refers to how the choice and arrangement of words can influence the meaning and interpretation of news articles. They assert that words are fundamental to creating meaning and, thus, can be used to manipulate public perception.

The use of polysemantic words (words with multiple meanings) can lead to manipulation as they allow for varied interpretations. For instance, the word "puppet" can suggest both a "toy" and a person controlled by another, tailoring its impact depending on context and usage. This layered meaning can distort the intended message, exemplifying how nuanced lexical choices can manipulate interpretation.

Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2022, 19) distinguish several manipulative techniques: emotional appeal, information bias, exclusion of context, guilt-baiting and victimization and various linguistic tricks. Language can evoke strong emotions, and manipulators often use emotional appeals to engage the audience. Utilizing dramatic or charged language creates a visceral response that can shape the audience's opinions and beliefs.

Manipulation often manifests through information bias, where the selection and presentation of facts can skew public perception. For example, headlines may contain loaded terminology designed to favor one political figure over another, shaping the audience's understanding of events.

Manipulative techniques also may include the omission of critical context, leading to misinterpretations. When key background information is excluded, readers may arrive at skewed conclusions based on presented facts.

Techniques like guilt-baiting, where the language used induces guilt or sympathy towards one party, can significantly sway public opinion. For example, framing one candidate as a victim can elicit emotional support and alter the audience's perception of events.

Various linguistic tricks, such as the use of doublespeak, oxymorons, and misleading or vague statements, contribute to language manipulation. Such techniques can obscure truth, mislead audiences, and foster misconceptions.

Objective

The research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks of linguistic manipulation and their practical application within political discourse, with a specific focus on the rhetorical strategies employed during Donald Trump's 2024 presidential campaign. By integrating insights from contemporary linguistic and psychological studies on manipulation (Abdullai, 2025; Gasparyan & Harutyunyan, 2021, 2022), the study seeks to demonstrate how emotional appeals, false authority, contextual omissions, and other manipulative techniques function as a cohesive system of influence. The objective is to uncover how these strategies are used not sporadically but systematically to polarize public opinion, distort perception, and reinforce in-group/out-group dynamics in real-time political communication.

Research results

In the 2024 presidential election, the same manipulative tactics were employed. Donald Trump's public appearances and speeches serve as a good illustration of this. He and Kamala Harris engaged in debates on September 10th, during which he used a variety of manipulative techniques to sway the audience in his favor.

First of all, Trump repeatedly boosts his own image and invokes selective authority to support his views: *«Look, I went to the Wharton School of Finance and many of those professors, the top professors, think my plan is a brilliant plan, it's a great plan.»* This aligns with false authority (Gasparyan & Harutyunyan, 2021), where citing vague "professors" or unnamed groups gives his claims unwarranted credibility. It also reflects positive self-presentation — portraying himself as a savior and economic genius.

Moreover, Trump paints Harris and Democrats as dangerous, using exaggeration and fear-mongering: *«On top of that, we have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums.»* These comments are deception and intrigue, presenting distorted, unverified claims to provoke fear. This is also othering — creating an in-group ("real Americans") and an out-group (immigrants, Democrats).

In addition, Trump appeals to emotion — both fear and victimhood: *«I probably took a bullet to the head because of the things that they say about me.»* Here he leverages emotional appeal and strategic helplessness — portraying himself as persecuted by the system to elicit sympathy or indignation from supporters.

Likewise, Trump makes bold claims without substantiating evidence, often omitting key context: *«They allowed criminals. Many, many, millions of criminals. They allowed terrorists. They*

allowed common street criminals. They allowed people to come in, drug dealers, to come into our country, and they're now in the United States.» Trump does not mention specifics or data — just information bias and contextual omission, designed to mislead through repetition and volume, not veracity.

Also, Trump uses loaded, emotionally charged language: *"radical", "insane", "destroyed", "Marxist", "criminals", "execute the baby".* These terms are lexical triggers intended to shape emotional response.

Similarly, Trump exaggerates consequences if Harris was elected: *«But if she ever got elected, she'd change it. And it will be the end of our country.»* This is a slippery slope fallacy — hyperbolically suggesting that a Harris presidency would lead to total societal collapse.

Additionally, at his first 2024 presidential campaign rally in Waco, Texas, Trump used similar techniques. For instance, one can find a lot of emotive language in the speech: *"evil persecution", "radical left maniacs", "horror show", "hell hole".* These aren't neutral terms. They are supposed to trigger fear, anger, or outrage immediately.

Finally, Trump often uses either-or constructions that exclude nuance: *«Either we descend into a lawless abyss of open borders, rampant killings, super hyperinflation, which is what we have right now and not coming down, and festering corruption. Or we evict Joe Biden and the Democrats from the White House, and we make America great again.»* This technique reduces complex realities into simple battles between good and evil, coercing alignment with his side through linguistic pressure.

Conclusions and prospects for further research

Thus, the present analysis confirms that linguistic manipulation remains a powerful and adaptable tool in political discourse, especially in high-stakes environments like presidential campaigns. Drawing from the works of Abdullai (2025), Gasparyan and Harutyunyan (2021, 2022), it becomes evident that manipulation leverages specific linguistic strategies — emotional appeal, false authority, information bias, exclusion of context, and lexical ambiguity — to distort perception while maintaining a façade of rationality.

Donald Trump's rhetorical techniques during the 2024 presidential election debates and campaign speeches exemplify these manipulative patterns. He utilized positive self-presentation, strategic helplessness, and deceptive metaphors to establish moral superiority and exploit audience emotions. Furthermore, his discourse was saturated with binary oppositions, loaded language, and appeals to fear and victimhood — all aimed at polarizing public opinion and consolidating support.

These findings support the notion that political manipulation is not merely incidental but systematic, relying on well-documented linguistic patterns that can be dissected and traced across texts. The intentional use of such rhetorical strategies underscores the manipulator's acute awareness of audience psychology and the subtle dynamics of narrative framing.

As for the prospects for further research, there can be an empirical investigation into how different demographics interpret and respond to manipulative language could shed light on susceptibility factors, including political affiliation, media literacy, or cognitive biases.

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