

LINGUISTIC MEANS OF SPEECH MANIPULATION IN MODERN ENGLISH-  
LANGUAGE FOREIGN POLICY MEDIA DISCOURSE: SYNERGISTIC  
APPROACH

**Shchyhlo Larysa,**

Sumy State University, Ukraine

ORCID ID 0000-0002-4505-5094

Corresponding author: [l.schiglo@gmail.com](mailto:l.schiglo@gmail.com)

**Korovai Maksym,**

Sumy State University, Ukraine

**Abstract.** *The modern realities confronting the world are a reflection of human activity – engine of progress and development. Any system, be it linguistic, political, or otherwise, functions as a mechanism designed to achieve specific goals or to support existing circumstances. Language, in particular, is a crucial component of the political system, as throughout history and across all nations, politicians have pursued their objectives through the utilization of this universal tool. The political system is a complex mechanism in which language plays a significant role.*

*The focal point of the article is the elucidation of linguistic means employed in the expression of speech manipulation within the modern English-language foreign policy media discourse. This analysis is conducted with reference to the three-level model of information and communication influence, encompassing micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.*

*It has been substantiated that linguistic devices such as euphemisms present in political speeches not only impart emotional nuances to the text but also exert a significant manipulative influence on the audience of listeners and readers. It has been elucidated those linguistic strategies such as hedging and the grammatical category of modality (in our case – the conditional mood) are actively employed by political leaders, serving as tools for the accomplishment of their own intentions.*

*Additionally, the communication hierarchy of the political agenda is addressed, which is shaped by politicians to achieve their set objectives. Furthermore, certain aspects of implementing such a political strategy have been delineated. The research findings attest that comprehending the mechanisms of linguistic manipulation contributes not only to a critical understanding of information but also to the development of media literacy.*

**Keywords:** *English language, foreign policy discourse, linguistic synergy, manipulative influence, media discourse, linguistic manipulation.*

**Received:** 17 May, 2024

**Revised:** 24 May, 2024

**Accepted:** 28 May, 2024

**How to cite:** Shchyhlo L., Korovai M. (2024). Linguistic Means of Speech Manipulation in Modern English-Language Foreign Policy Media Discourse: Synergistic Approach. *Philological Treatises*, 16(1). [https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16\(1\)-18](https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16(1)-18)



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. For open-access publication within the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC)

---

© Shchyhlo L., Korovai M., 2024

## МОВНІ ЗАСОБИ МОВЛЕННЄВОГО МАНІПУЛЮВАННЯ В СУЧАСНОМУ АНГЛОМОВНОМУ ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНОМУ МЕДІА-ДИСКУРСІ: СИНЕРГЕТИЧНИЙ ПІДХІД

**Щигло Лариса,**

Сумський державний університет, Україна

ORCID ID 0000-0002-4505-5094

Автор, відповідальний за листування: [l.schiglo@gmail.com](mailto:l.schiglo@gmail.com)

**Коровай Максим,**

Сумський державний університет, Україна

**Анотація.** Сучасні реалії, з якими стикається світ, є відображенням людської діяльності - рушія прогресу та розвитку. Будь-яка система - мовна, політична чи інша - функціонує як механізм, призначений для досягнення певних цілей або підтримки існуючих обставин. Мова є важливою складовою політичної системи, оскільки протягом усієї історії та у всіх народів політики досягали своїх цілей, використовуючи цей універсальний інструмент. Політична система є складним механізмом, в якому мова відіграє важливу роль.

Метою статті є з'ясування мовних засобів, що використовуються для вираження мовленнєвого маніпулювання в сучасному англомовному зовнішньополітичному медіа-дискурсі. Аналіз здійснюється з опорою на трирівневу модель інформаційно-комунікативного впливу, що охоплює мікро-, мезо- та макрорівні.

Такі мовні засоби, як евфемізми, присутні в політичних промовах, не лише надають тексту емоційних відтінків, але й здійснюють значний маніпулятивний вплив на аудиторію слухачів і читачів. З'ясовано, що такі лінгвістичні стратегії, як хеджування та граматична категорія модальності (у нашому випадку - умовний спосіб) активно використовуються політичними лідерами, слугуючи інструментами для реалізації власних намірів.

Крім того, йдеться про комунікативну ієрархію політичного порядку денного, який формується політиками для досягнення поставлених цілей. Крім того, окреслено певні аспекти реалізації такої політичної стратегії. Результати дослідження засвідчують, що розуміння механізмів мовного маніпулювання сприяє не лише критичному сприйняттю інформації, а й розвитку медіаграмотності.

**Ключові слова:** англійська мова, зовнішньополітичний дискурс, лінгвістична синергія, маніпулятивний вплив, медіа-дискурс, мовна маніпуляція.

**Отримано:** 17 травня 2024 р.

**Отримано після доопрацювання:** 24 травня 2024 р.

**Затверджено:** 28 травня 2024 р.

**Як цитувати:** Щигло Л., Коровай М. (2024). Мовні засоби мовленнєвого маніпулювання в сучасному англомовному зовнішньополітичному медіа-дискурсі: синергетичний підхід. *Філологічні трактати*, 16(1).

[https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16\(1\)-18](https://www.doi.org/10.21272/Ftrk.2024.16(1)-18)

### Introduction

At the modern stage of societal development, information has become an axiomatic dominator, directly associated with the impact of conveyed messages on the recipient. Information permeates various spheres of individual activity, such as the economy, education, culture, as well as politics, where political events, illuminated in national and foreign mass media, exert a specific influence on the audience.

As is well-known, ancient Greek orators considered language to be the most

effective means of influencing human consciousness. Analysis of recent scholarly contributions indicates that the issue of manipulative influence has been explored by researchers such as V. Akkurat, Y. Dolynskiy, O. Dyachenko, Teun Van Dijk, George Lakoff, and others.

From the perspective of the linguosynergetic concept, we conceive linguistic manipulation as a multidimensional system of a fractal nature, inducing implicit information-psychological influence on the recipient, realized through both verbal and non-verbal means.

It is worth emphasizing that political discourse, as a unique “conglomerate” of social, economic, cultural, and psychological components, necessitates the study of one of the prerogative instruments in the political sphere – linguistic manipulation. This tool serves as a means of influencing the audience by selectively conveying information to shape public opinion, a crucial requirement for a specific political force or political leader.

**The main goal** of the article is to analyze linguistic means of expressing manipulative influence in modern English-language foreign policy media discourse through the lens of the linguosynergetic concept.

### Research materials and methods

The empirical material for the study consisted of speeches by political leaders aimed at identifying linguistic means of manipulative influence employed at the personal level of communication. Specifically, speeches analyzed included Barack Obama's address to the American people (Obama, 2010), Donald Trump's speeches at the United Nations (Trump, 2018) and during interviews (Trump, 2023), his inaugural speech (Trump, 2017), Boris Johnson's speech within the British Parliament (Johnson, 2019), as well as Michelle Rempel's address (Rempel Garner, 2022).

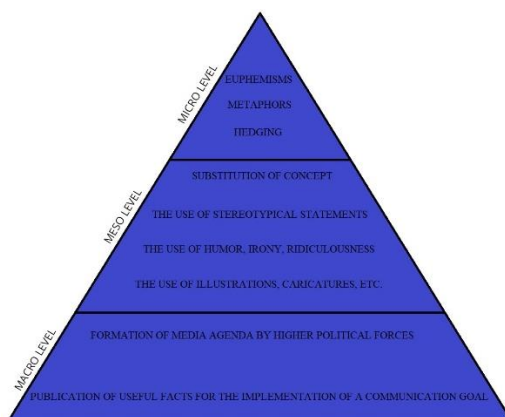
The following methods were employed in the course of the research:

–theoretical analysis of scientific sources related to manipulative influence technologies in the political sphere was utilized to determine the level of development of the investigated problem;

–the comparative method, relying on empirical material, facilitated the identification of linguistic manipulation strategies at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.

### Research results and Discussion

The research, based on the three-level model of information and communication influence, which encompasses three relatively independent levels: micro-, meso-, and macrolevels (see Figure 1), allows for the identification of specific linguistic means with a particular scale of manipulative influence (Shchyhlo, Korovai, 2023: 23 – 27).



**Fig. 1 A three-level linguistic means model of information and communication influence**

As observed from Figure 1, all levels of manipulative influence are interconnected and manifested through linguistic means of varying scales.

Specifically, based on texts from the modern English-language foreign policy media discourse at the micro-level, we identified linguistic means of manipulative influence such as euphemisms and the technique of “linguistic hedging.” It is noteworthy that politicians, especially in present-day circumstances, frequently employ euphemisms to mitigate the gravity of events or to engage in overt manipulation by circumventing facts and legal terms. For instance, in his address on August 31, 2010, U.S. President Barack Obama used the phrase “The end of our combat mission in Iraq.” The terms “war” or “illegal military invasion” (Obama, 2010), which more precisely describe the events at that time since there was no UN mandate for troop deployment, were replaced with “combat mission” to justify the U.S. military presence in the Anglophone state's territory. Thus, by employing euphemism, B. Obama downplayed the seriousness of the situation and provided an opportunity for other countries to use similar expressions to cover up questionable or sometimes even aggressive actions toward other nations, often neighboring ones.

Moreover, as evidenced by the results of the analysis of scientific sources, political discourse is a distinct form of art through which an orator establishes contact with the recipient, utilizing all available verbal and non-verbal means in their arsenal. In particular, Irma Kalynych studies a technique known as hedging, which serves not only for conveying information but also for suggestive influence on the audience (manipulation) (Kalynych, 2018: 554). The term “hedging” originates from the fields of economics and insurance, where it is widely employed. In the context of economics, it denotes the application of measures to hedge against various risks and negative phenomena (Kalynych, 2018: 554).

It is important to note that in linguistics, the term “hedging” largely preserves its primary meaning, namely, “linguistic insurance.” This signifies the protection of the speaker from radical, aggressive, or offensive statements directed towards another party. According to the views of George Lakoff, linguistic hedging is manifested in the use of words and phrases whose function is to blur the clarity and precision of expression (Lakoff, 1972: 195).

It is worth emphasizing that linguistic hedging can easily be confused with euphemisms, thus warranting a more detailed examination of this matter. A direct example of euphemistic usage can be found in the aforementioned expression by Barack Obama, “combat mission,” which, in context, could be replaced with the words “war” or “military invasion.” Moreover, the sense of the statement would remain unchanged; however, it would impart a more aggressive and negative nuance. Another instance of conscious or unconscious employment of this technique is evident in Donald Trump's speech at the United Nations (Donald Trump), where he stated, “Many nations in this hall will agree that the world trading system is in dire need of change (Trump, 2018).” The use of the phrase “many nations will agree” leaves room for not specifying which countries or how many of them actually concur.

Meso-level of manipulative influence in the English-language foreign policy media discourse is characterized by the use of the conditional mood. For instance, Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States, when asked by a journalist about providing aid to Ukraine, responded: “If I were president, this would have never happened. And even the Democrats admit that Putin knew it would have never happened and his pipeline would have never happened. A lot of things would have never happened” (Trump, 2023). Without resorting to conceptual substitutions or outright falsehoods that can be fact-checked, the President chooses to employ the conditional mood, allowing him to leave room for developing his own narrative regarding the situation, citing that under his tenure, the conflict in Ukraine would have been less extensive. This type of manipulation can be attributed to the means of the meso-level of linguistic manipulation since Donald Trump, in his speech, utilizes the conditional mood to construct sentences that do not provide the audience with an exact assessment of events since they did not occur. Consequently, we can only speculate about what could have been. However, the host interrupted him and asked what Democrats specifically believe. Nonetheless, Trump again employed a manipulative technique —

ignoring the question and continued to adhere to his “if” line of reasoning. After completing his speech, the host remarked that she personally does not know any Democrats who believe that Russia would not have invaded Ukraine if he were president. Furthermore, the President responded “next” to her question, as the question was about whether he would assist Ukraine with weapons and money, which the host later pointed out to him, stating that he did not answer the journalist's question. After several more responses “next” alongside the main question, he eventually replied: “If I’m president, I will have that war settled in one day, 24 hours.” When asked by the host how he would resolve the war, he replied: “First, I’ll meet with Putin. I’ll meet with Zelensky. They both have weaknesses and they both have strengths. And within 24 hours, that war would be settled. It’ll be over” (Trump, 2023). Hence, an analysis of Donald Trump's speech allows us to conclude that constructing sentences using the conditional mood can be attributed to the meso-level of the linguosynergetic model of manipulative influence since, in this case, we can only analyze his assurances based on the political situation when he was president. During Trump's presidency, the war between Russia and Ukraine was not concluded or suspended within four years, and there were no political steps from his side regarding negotiations to end the war in one day, so here, he resorts to the use of deception.

Politicians often employ stylistic devices in their speeches to ensure a high level of emotionality and influence on the audience (Zhmaieva, 2022: 33). An example of linguistic manipulative influence is the use of a pejorative term. In this context, the speaker relies on the idea that their expression will cause an emotional outburst in the listener, elicited by the surprise of hearing such language from a political figure. Thus, the orator suggests that the discussed issue is of great importance, as the use of such lexis in the political sphere is not customary. However, pejorative terms are an integral part of social life, including the political arena. An example of using a pejorative term to draw attention to a problem is the statement of Conservative Party MP Michelle Rempel Garner, who criticized liberals: (Michelle Rempel Garner) “Enough with the 'wokeshit’” (Rempel Garner, 2022). According to the “Urban Dictionary,” the term “wokeshit” is used in modern political discourse and denotes incompetence and lack of character (Urban Dictionary).

We will also examine a phrase from Boris Johnson's speech in the British Parliament on the eve of Brexit: (Boris Johnson) “The shadow education secretary says that their economic policy is like shit or bust” (Johnson, 2019). From the perspective of linguosynergetics and politics, the translation of this quote involves preserving the intended semantic load that the speaker wanted to convey through the pejorative term. This expression is an idiom and does not make sense if translated literally. The quotes from M. R. Garner and B. Johnson exemplify the realization of the meso-level of language communication through the use of emotional speech means. In highlighting B. Johnson, he employed both micro-level means, namely idioms, and meso-level means, using a pejorative term as a tool for emotional reinforcement of his thoughts and drawing attention to their significance.

The macro-level of manipulative influence is characterized by the use of only those facts that contribute to achieving the communicative goal or the disregard of those that hinder it. An example of this can be found in Donald Trump's inaugural speech, the effectiveness of which, within the radius of influence, corresponds to the use of the macro-level means of “shaping the media agenda” to achieve the political forces' objectives (Trump, 2017).

The macro-level of manipulative influence is characterized by the use of only those facts that contribute to achieving the communicative goal or the disregard of those that hinder it. An example of this can be found in Donald Trump's inaugural speech, the effectiveness of which, within the radius of influence, corresponds to the use of the macro-level means of “shaping the media agenda” to achieve the political forces' objectives (Trump, 2017).

### **Conclusions and perspectives**

The analysis of political speeches demonstrates how linguistic means are employed to influence the recipient, who can be both an individual and society as a whole.

The integrative approach, based on the three-level model of information-communication impact, allows revealing the interconnection of linguistic tools and their cumulative effect on manipulating the audience's perception.

Future research in this direction should delve deeper into the specifics of linguistic synergies among different audience groups, taking into account sociocultural differences in responses to manipulative strategies. Studying the dynamics of linguistic manipulation in the constantly evolving media landscape and its adaptation to new technologies will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of modern communication.

Further research into intercultural aspects of manipulative linguistic strategies in English-language foreign policy media discourse can provide valuable insights into the global impact of such practices. Comparative studies across different linguistic and cultural contexts will enrich our understanding of the universality or cultural specificity of linguistic manipulation.

Moreover, further attention is required to examine the impact of digital media platforms on the evolution of manipulative linguistic strategies. Ongoing technological progress and the increasing popularity of social media necessitate continuous exploration of how linguistic manipulations adapt to these new means of communication.

## REFERENCES

- Haken, 2000 – *Haken Hermann* (2000). *Information and Self-organization: A Macroscopic Approach to Complex Systems*. 2nd enlarged ed. (Springer Series in Synergetics). Berlin: Springer-Verlag. 226 p.
- Johnson, 2019 – Boris Johnson swears during first PMQs in House of Commons. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sw6uvKpceBU&ab\\_channel=euronews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sw6uvKpceBU&ab_channel=euronews) (accessed: 20.09.2023)
- Kalynych, 2018 – *Kalynych Irma* (2018). *Khedzhuvannia yak rytorychna stratehiia u politychnomu dyskursi* [Hedging as a rhetorical strategy in political discourse]. URL: <https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/jspui/handle/lib/37286> [In Ukrainian]. (accessed: 20.09.2023)
- Lakoff, 1972 – *Lakoff G.* (1972). *Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts*. CLS, V. 8, pp. 183–228
- Obama, 2010 – The End of the Combat Mission in Iraq. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZO9LZzZoOk&ab\\_channel=TheObamaWhiteHouse](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZO9LZzZoOk&ab_channel=TheObamaWhiteHouse) (accessed: 10.11.2023)
- Rempel Garner, 2022 – Conservative MP swears during liberal affordability legislation rant. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXHYNlr5z9Q&ab\\_channel=GlobalNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXHYNlr5z9Q&ab_channel=GlobalNews) (accessed: 21.09.2023)
- Shchyhlo, Korovai, 2023 – *Shchyhlo L., Korovai M.* (2023). *The phenomenon of language manipulation in foreign policy discourse: a linguosynergistic perspective*. Sumy: Sumy State University. pp. 23 – 27
- Shchyhlo, Korovai, 2023 – *Shchyhlo L., Korovai M.* (2023). *Towards a new paradigm for the language research: synergistic context*. *International scientific journal grail of science*, № 25, pp. 250–253
- Shchyhlo, 2018 – *Shchyhlo L.* *SKASE* (2018). *Journal of Theoretical Linguistics : electronic on-line journal*, Volume 15, No. 3, P. 107. URL: [http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL38/pdf\\_doc/05.pdf](http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL38/pdf_doc/05.pdf) (accessed: 17.11.2023)
- Trump, 2017 – Trump Inauguration Speech. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRBsJNdK1t0&ab\\_channel=ABCNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRBsJNdK1t0&ab_channel=ABCNews) (accessed: 15.12.2023)
- Trump, 2018 – President Trump addresses U.N. General Assembly. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfVdIKaQzW8&t=46s&ab\\_channel=C-SPAN](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfVdIKaQzW8&t=46s&ab_channel=C-SPAN) (accessed: 15.11.2023).

- Trump, 2023 – Trump won't say whether he wants Russia or Ukraine to win war. URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L07fMoafVh4&ab\\_channel=CN](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L07fMoafVh4&ab_channel=CN)(accessed: 19.11.2023)
- Urban Dictionary. URL: [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) (accessed: 21.11.2023)
- Zhmaieva, 2022 – *Zhmaieva N.* (2022). Do pytannia stratehii perekladu politychnykh promov [On the issue of translation strategies of political speeches]. *Naukovyi visnyk Pivdenoukrainskoho natsionalnoho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni K. D. Ushynskoho*, № 34, S. 28 – 37 [In Ukrainian].