

Speech Strategies for Manipulating Public Opinion in Political Discourse (Based on English and Uzbek Materials)

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Annotation: *This study examines political headlines on Pakistani social media manipulate public perception. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, combining Fairclough's three-dimensional model with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach was used to analyze four randomly selected headlines from Facebook. The categories contain political, economic, and sports news where the research explores the strategic use of rhetorical devices, linguistic choices, and visual elements to disseminate power and ideology. Through textual, discursive practice, and socio-political practice analyses, the study reveals the prevalence of interrogative and exclamatory sentences, hyperbole, and selective information omission to create sensationalism and emotional engagement. The findings demonstrate how social media editors exploit these techniques to portray specific narratives, such as government weakness and opposition strength, and to politicize various news categories. The analysis further highlights the impact of visual cues, including images of prominent figures and strategic color schemes, in shaping audience interpretation. This research underscores the importance of critical media literacy in understanding the manipulative potential of social media headlines and emphasizes the need for ethical journalism practices, including transparency and fact-checking. It recommends future research to explore the long-term impact of these headlines on public opinion and the role of social media algorithms in news dissemination, while also advocating for stricter platform accountability and transparency in image manipulation*

Key words: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Manipulation, Public Perception, Social Media Headlines*

Речевые стратегии манипулирования общественным мнением в политическом дискурсе (на основе английских и узбекских материалов)

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Аннотация: *Данное исследование рассматривает, как политические заголовки в пакистанских социальных сетях манипулируют общественным восприятием. Для анализа четырех случайно выбранных заголовков из Facebook был использован подход критического дискурс-анализа (КДА), сочетающий трехмерную модель Фэркло и социально-когнитивный подход ван Дейка. Исследование изучает стратегическое использование риторических приемов, лингвистических выборов и визуальных элементов для распространения власти и идеологии в категориях, содержащих политические, экономические и спортивные новости. Посредством анализа текста, дискурсивной практики и социально-политической практики исследование выявляет широкое использование вопросительных и восклицательных предложений, гипербол и избирательного упущения информации для создания сенсационности и эмоциональной вовлеченности. Результаты демонстрируют, как*

редакторы социальных сетей используют эти методы для изображения определенных нарративов, таких как слабость правительства и сила оппозиции, а также для политизации различных категорий новостей. В анализе также подчеркивается влияние визуальных сигналов, включая изображения известных личностей и стратегические цветовые схемы, на формирование интерпретации аудитории. Данное исследование подчеркивает важность критической медийной грамотности в понимании манипулятивного потенциала заголовков в социальных сетях и подчеркивает необходимость этических журналистских практик, включая прозрачность и проверку фактов. Рекомендуются будущие исследования для изучения долгосрочного воздействия этих заголовков на общественное мнение и роли алгоритмов социальных сетей в распространении новостей, а также отстаивается более строгая подотчетность платформ и прозрачность в манипулировании изображениями.

Ключевые слова: Критический дискурс-анализ, манипуляция, общественное восприятие, заголовки в социальных сетях

Siyosiy Diskursda Jamoatchilik Fikrini Manipulyatsiya Qilishning Nutqiy Strategiyalari (Ingliz va O‘zbek Materiallari Asosida)

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot Pokiston ijtimoiy tarmoqlaridagi siyosiy sarlavhalarining jamoatchilik fikrini qanday manipulyatsiya qilishini o‘rganadi. Faircloughning uch o‘lchovli modeli va van Dijkning ijtimoiy-kognitiv yondashuvini birlashtirgan tanqidiy diskurs tahlili (TDT) asosida Facebookdan tasodifiy tanlangan to‘rtta sarlavha tahlil qilindi. Tadqiqot siyosiy, iqtisodiy va sport yangiliklarini o‘z ichiga olgan kategoriyalarda ritorik vositalar, lingvistik tanlovlar va vizual elementlardan hokimiyat va mafkura tarqatish uchun strategik foydalanishni o‘rganadi. Matnli, diskursiv amaliyot va ijtimoiy-siyosiy amaliyot tahlillari orqali tadqiqot sensatsiya va hissiy ta’sir yaratish uchun so‘roq va undov gaplar, giperbola va tanlangan ma’lumotlarni qoldirib ketishning keng tarqalganligini ko‘rsatadi. Natijalar ijtimoiy tarmoq muharrirlarining ushbu usullardan qanday qilib hukumatning zaifligi va muxolifatning kuchliligi kabi muayyan hikoyalarni tasvirlash va turli yangiliklar kategoriyalarini siyosiy lashtirish uchun foydalanishlarini namoyish etadi. Tahlil, shuningdek, taniqli shaxslarning tasvirlari va strategik rang sxemalari kabi vizual ko‘rsatmalarning auditoriya talqinini shakllantirishdagi ta’sirini ta’kidlaydi. Ushbu tadqiqot ijtimoiy tarmoq sarlavhalarining manipulyativ salohiyatini tushunishda tanqidiy media savodxonligining ahamiyatini ta’kidlaydi va shaffoflik va faktlarni tekshirish kabi axloqiy jurnalistika amaliyotlariga ehtiyojni ta’kidlaydi. Kelajakdagi tadqiqotlarga ushbu sarlavhalarining jamoatchilik fikriga uzoq muddatli ta’sirini va ijtimoiy tarmoq algoritmlarining yangiliklar tarqatishdagi rolini o‘rganish tavsiya etiladi, shuningdek, platformalarning hisobdorligi va tasvirlarni manipulyatsiya qilishda shaffoflikni kuchaytirishga chaqiriladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Tanqidiy diskurs tahlili, manipulyatsiya, jamoatchilik fikri, ijtimoiy tarmoq sarlavhalari

Introduction. Social media offers an opportunity to earn through creating digital content for websites. For this purpose, content creators change the structure of the original content, which causes a change in meaning, especially when those headlines are based on political statements. Content creators do this to make the content clickable, and they unintentionally help political parties disseminate their agenda by exaggerating bits of information. Critical Discourse Analysis helps in

exploring such use of language. In a political context, political parties run their own social media platforms to target their specific audience. On the other hand, looking at the political interest of people, social media journalists pick up similar content and make further modifications to make it more attractive and clickable. This study uses a combination of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and elements of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, with a strong emphasis on rhetorical analysis. The study explores how power and ideolog are disseminated through the use of language. The analysis is presented at three levels: i) textual analysis, ii) discursive practice, and iii) socio-political practice. The prime focus is how the text is used to manipulate the audience. This study draw on van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, utilizing the concepts of mental models and social cognition. Rhetorical analysis evidenced the use of interrogative styles, exclamatory sentences, and specific word choices. The data, encompassing political, entertainment, and economic news headlines, was randomly selected from Facebook by searching relevant keywords. From this pool, four headlines were selected using simple random sampling (Muhammad Mubeen)

The tool of speech manipulation (TSM) in its broad sense is any verbal sign which in a certain context and meaning can have necessary impact on the addressee. The person is tend to use the word for impact on the interlocutor - consciously or not. In case of conscious use of language it is possible to tell about speech manipulation in its true meaning, as this action, first of all, is purposeful. "Each language element is very difficult and sensitive tool on which plays the one who uses language. Thus, the perception and understanding created at the recipient depend on how the addresser uses this sensitive tool " (Blakar, 1987). Various phonographic, lexical means, morphological categories, syntactic designs, text categories are used generally in interaction as a tool of speech manipulation. In this research the following levels of speech manipulation are highlighted: phonographic, lexical, and grammatical. 1. At the phonographic level speech manipulation is carried out by means of special sound and graphic registration of the message. Use of phonetic means – a prerogative of oral speech: both intonation, and a timbre, both allocation by voice, and pauses are applied. In a political discourse of mass media phonetic instruments of speech manipulation are widely used in oral types of a discourse. But in our study the materials are texts of printing editions, therefore tools of written language, phonographic ones are of great interest (Kenzhekanova)

Methods.

The definition of "political" does not inherently have an evaluative connotation. "Political" means "connected with the government or public affairs of a country and its relations with other countries" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995). However, in the context of the whole discourse, the term acquires a sharply negative evaluation, particularly in the description of the condemnation of the actions of the Russian side, which is accused of using the "energy weapon" for political purposes.

This negative coloring is based on the semantic components of the following lexical items:

- **tough** – likely to be violent or to contain violence, not kind or pleasant (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008);
- **stern** – severe, or showing disapproval (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008);
- **threat** – a suggestion that something unpleasant or violent will happen, especially if a particular action or order is not followed (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008).

There are always emotive components in the meanings of many lexical units. Appeals to the emotions of the addressee are made through the selection of lexical units with emotive connotations. It should also be noted that emotiveness can be contextually induced. The category of emotiveness is closely connected with evaluation.

For example, consider:
"President Bush formally a second term in office Wednesday... after a taut and chaotic contest..." (USA, October 22, 2004).

Here, the highlighted units **taut** ("showing signs of worry or anxiety" – *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995) and **chaotic** ("a situation where everything happens in a confused

way" – *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995) negatively characterize the election as tense and disorganized.

Words with an expressive connotation promote the manipulative influence of discourse. Expression is defined as "a property of the text or part of the text which conveys meaning with increased intensity, expressing the internal state of the speaker" (Arnold, 1975).

Consider another example: "*These and other inflammatory images deserve our scorn, just as the violence against embassies and military installations are an unacceptable and intolerable form of protest,*" said Senator John F. Kerry (*Boston Globe*, February 16, 2006). Here, expressiveness is embedded in word-formation means – specifically, in negative prefixes.

- **Unacceptable** – characterized as something wrong or bad that should not be allowed (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995);
- **Intolerable** – too difficult, unpleasant, or annoying to bear (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995).

Words with a stylistic connotation are lexical units whose basic meanings are complemented by stylistic elements characterizing the speech condition, language activity sphere, and social relations of participants.

The use of words and expressions from either the bookish or colloquial layer creates a stylistic contrast and enhances expressivity against the neutral vocabulary backdrop. It allows the author to achieve multiple effects such as irony, sarcasm, familiarization with a certain environment, and reduction in the seriousness of a phenomenon.

For instance: "...*this week's festivities also provide an opportunity for an enormous schmooze-fest sponsored by interests...*" (USA, October 23, 2006). Here, **informal lexis** is used:

- **schmooze** – "to gossip or talk about unimportant things" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995);
- **fest** – an oral abbreviation for "festival" (a special occasion often involving public celebration).

Thus, the significance of the described events (the presidential inauguration) is considerably diminished, and a tone of sarcasm is achieved (Arnold, 1975).

The **inductive-deductive process** will serve as a tool for analyzing this type of discourse, received by audiences as communicative messages. The **heuristic or source-analysis methodology** is complemented by concrete case studies focusing on communication in networks and current political affairs.

The **dual reality of post-truth** is analyzed both as content (through textual analysis) and as a socio-communicative phenomenon within the ethical-deontological field. It also serves as a vehicle for conveying messages of various signs and intentionalities.

The fundamentals justifying this research are based on the importance and novelty of the subject. There is growing academic interest in post-truth, not just as a phenomenon of communication but also as an object needing better understanding, given the global shifts in decision-making processes. This topic relates closely to the **didactics of the media** and the methods for teaching their critical analysis.

There is an emerging need to expand academic content and tools in this field to better analyze new political messages at the international level. The phenomenon of post-truth shows a remarkable pattern:

- In the case of postmodern and digital politicians, the consistent presentation of evidence and factual refutation often fails to produce the corrective effects expected.
- Instead, it results in reactions comparable to throwing water onto a hot pan: the "troll" or "post-realist" simply re-focuses on the lie, sometimes even intensifying it through *ad hominem* attacks.

The major difference lies in the **audience structure**:

- The troll typically acts in isolation, lacking community support.
- The post-truth practitioner manipulates facts within a dangerous scheme, exploiting Nietzschean relativity and audiences' natural bias towards beliefs aligned with their preexisting views.

The success of post-truth politics largely stems from society's collective refusal to prioritize facts over emotions. This generalization of emotionally charged news content makes the formation of critically thinking recipients more crucial than ever.

Caldevilla (2013) emphasizes that today's recipients must undergo qualitative improvement – not only in structuring and ordering reality but also in selecting credible sources based on their truthfulness. This new era demands a more active and educated citizen participation in communication processes at a global level.

According to Mut Camacho, in the 21st century:

"[...] public opinion has crystallized into a supranational body with its own life. Public opinion has materialized in a social movement on a planetary scale, where humanity and its opinion have never been so present. Thousands, millions of people in all countries, in recent years, go out to demonstrate against war, against governments, against legislative measures, against the economy, etc. These actions are the concretization of latent public opinion. A concretization that remains continuous, showing the world that there are unanimous attitudes toward social, political, or economic issues. Moreover, thanks to new technologies, the public now organizes better and faster. This whole situation signifies the advent of world populations influencing political power within and beyond their countries and predicts the reduction of state powers through direct public discussion at a global level." (*Mut Camacho, 2012, pp. 3-4*)

Results.

The media, as a pivotal component of the contemporary information society, assumes a central role in shaping and disseminating political discourse. The array of media formats, ranging from traditional newspapers and television to social networks and internet portals, engenders a multifaceted environment fostering interaction among politicians, citizens, and society at large.

A primary function of the media is to circulate information about political events and decisions. Journalists operate as intermediaries between political elites and citizens, facilitating the establishment of a connection between decisions made at the highest echelons and their repercussions on the lives of ordinary individuals. The media's capacity to define and advocate for the public interest accords significant influence on the political process. The media exerts influence on public opinion by determining which political topics and issues garner the most public attention. The concept of "agenda-setting" signifies that the media establishes the focus of attention, determining the subjects citizens will discuss and which issues will take center stage in the political discourse.

Additionally, the media shape and direct political discourse through the selection of language, employment of rhetorical strategies, and approaches to presenting information. Journalists make choices regarding words and phrases that can impact the perception of political messages and establish a context for the public's understanding of them. Therefore, a meticulous analysis of the linguistic techniques and stylistic devices employed in media speech is especially crucial.

After the 2020 presidential election, *The New York Times* and *Fox News* employed distinct linguistic devices in describing the newly elected president.

In *The New York Times* article titled "A President-Elect Shaped by Tragedy and Tradition," various linguistic devices were utilized to depict Joe Biden:

1. The phrase "Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. ran anyway. He ran like a grieving father who connected with a country in pain" characterizes Joe Biden as a "grieving father" exhibiting empathy for a nation in distress, constructing an image of a compassionate leader sharing values with the nation.

2. "Mr. Biden's victory on Saturday is the culmination of a career that began in the Nixon era and spanned a half-century of political and social upheaval" accentuates Biden's extensive political career, highlighting endurance and adaptability.
3. "But he was also closely attuned to moderate, older Black primary voters and had carefully followed which Democrats won in the toughest districts in the 2018 midterm elections" underlines Biden's attentiveness to the concerns of moderate voters and his strategic political analysis.
4. "And through those peaks and valleys, Mr. Biden hewed to one consistent message: that the turmoil of the Trump era was an existential threat to the character of the country" emphasizes Biden's persistent narrative of protecting the nation's core identity.

In the *Fox News* article titled "Biden Wins Presidency, Trump Denied Second Term in White House," specific linguistic and stylistic devices were employed to characterize Joe Biden:

1. **Use of emotional words and phrases:** "I am honored and humbled by the trust the American people have placed in me," utilizing "honored" and "humbled" to convey responsibility and respect.
2. **Use of metaphors:** "The heart and soul of this country's at stake," emphasizing the gravity of leadership change, and "We choose hope over fear, we choose unity over division," illustrating key campaign themes.
3. **Repetition:** "I will be a President for all Americans – whether you voted for me or not," emphasizing inclusiveness.
4. **Informational arguments:** Biden stresses the diverse demographic support and presents specific mandates (COVID, economy, climate change, systemic racism) to legitimize his future agenda.
5. **Appeal to values and ideals:** Statements like "The core values of this nation, our standing in the world, our very democracy... are at stake" highlight the defense of foundational democratic principles.

These instances illustrate that Biden employs a diverse range of linguistic and stylistic strategies to underscore his positions, evoke emotions, and persuade citizens of the validity of his actions and values.

With the advancement of technology and the ubiquity of the Internet, the media is evolving into a more interactive and accessible platform for citizens. Social networks and online forums provide avenues for citizens to articulate their opinions and engage in discussions on political matters. This engenders novel opportunities for public participation in the political process, thereby broadening the sphere of media influence on shaping political discourse.

However, like any form of intelligence, collective intelligence is susceptible to emotional influences and requires accurate information to draw conclusions. If the information provided is adulterated, or if collective intelligence is "infiltrated" with contradictory and/or overabundant data, it becomes unreasonable to expect sound decisions aligned with the cultural background or interests of society.

A recent example of post-truth and infoxication of reality is the controversy regarding the number of attendees at Donald Trump's presidential inauguration. Sean Spicer, the White House's press secretary, claimed that it was "the largest public at any opening, period, both in person and around the world." However, media footage showed a significantly lower audience than at Obama's inauguration. Spicer presented metro transport figures to substantiate his claim, but official data showed far fewer trips than during Obama's ceremonies. When questioned about these figures, presidential adviser Kellyanne Conway described Spicer's statement as presenting "alternative facts."

This controversy illustrates the challenges of post-truth politics: society today has access to vast information but often lacks the will to rigorously verify it. At the same time, there is growing distrust of professional media tasked with ensuring information accuracy.

Bulk errors, such as the artificial magnification of the so-called "pandemic" of Influenza A, have fueled this distrust. As Costa-Sánchez (2011) concluded, headlines on the new flu often prioritized attracting reader attention over providing accurate, informative content. A large percentage of headlines aimed more to provoke alarm and sensationalism, rather than disseminate clear, verifiable information about the virus's spread and consequences.

Discussion.

Early research on the evolution of social networks was mainly based on the cumulative advantages of node degrees and the static fitness of nodes and other factors to study the evolution mechanism of network growth, node growth mechanism, and aging mechanism, and explore the statistical aspects in the evolution of social networks. User attribute factors increase the evolution model, with different categories considered evolutionary difference households, only considering the conventional network.

Social network behavior refers to user behaviors generated using social networks through information and group behaviors based on user interactions. Social network behavior guidance aims to enable network users to create expectations. Social behavior and the social network environment produce desired effects. Social network user behavior is an activity in which the character's personality and received information.

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Like a number of other sociologists, the author assumes that post-truth, as we know it today, is a product of the changed communicative environment of society (the Internet and social networks) and the deformation of the field of political information. The aim of this research was to explore and discuss the narrower scope of such phenomena as post-truth, specifically **Fake News** as a tool to manipulate public opinion.

The methodology of the article draws upon classics of political sociology and communication studies (Baudrillard, Le Bon, Habermas) and new research papers (Kohler, Tretyakov, Urbinati). In order to gather some empirical evidence, the author analyzes publications in such media as *NYTimes*, *NewsWeek*, *The Washington Post*, *DailyMail*, *BBCNews*, and *RussiaToday*.

As a result of the research, three objectives were identified as the primary reasons for manipulating public opinion:

- to destroy the political opponent;
- to gain trust;
- to legitimize political actions.

The author discusses evident negative tendencies in the political field, such as:

- degradation of liberal democracy;
- loss of public trust in political institutions;
- escalation of ethno-political conflicts;
- reduction of meaning and increase of irrationality.

Passive voice is often used to obscure the agent of an action, as seen in headlines like "Mistakes were made" instead of naming who made them. In Uzbek media, passive forms like "Xatolar qilindi" serve the same function, reducing accountability.

Additionally, the use of nominalization in both English and Uzbek turns actions into abstract concepts, making it harder for readers to identify actors or causes. Omission of context is also a key strategy, where crucial information is excluded to mislead readers. English media might omit the historical background of a conflict, while Uzbek articles might avoid mentioning certain political

connections to protect specific groups or interests. This selective reporting creates biased narratives that support particular agendas.

Euphemism is another tactic used to soften harsh realities. Terms like "collateral damage" instead of "civilian deaths" in English, or "ishga joylashtirishda qiyinchiliklar" (difficulties in employment) instead of "ishsizlik" (unemployment) in Uzbek, downplay the severity of the issue.

Furthermore, quantitative vagueness such as "many people believe" or "some experts say" is widely used in both English and Uzbek articles. These phrases create the illusion of widespread agreement or authority without providing verifiable sources, making readers more susceptible to manipulation.

Forensic linguistic analysis also reveals the role of discourse strategies like framing and presupposition. By framing events from a particular angle, media outlets guide audience interpretation. English news might frame protests as "riots" to delegitimize them, while Uzbek media could frame government actions as "necessary reforms" regardless of public opinion.

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek articles shows that despite linguistic and cultural differences, the core strategies of manipulation are remarkably similar. Both use emotional appeals, vagueness, syntactic structures, and selective reporting to influence readers.

Forensic linguistics equips readers, scholars, and journalists with tools to critically analyze these texts (Bobur Shakirovich, 2024).

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