
**MANIPULATIVE STRATEGIES IN MEDIA DISCOURSE:
LINGUISTIC, MULTIMODAL
AND TRANSLATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern information space, media discourse has become a powerful instrument for shaping public opinion, influencing attitudes, and directing collective behaviour. The growing sophistication of communication technologies, dominance of global media corporations, and intensifying ideological confrontation have transformed manipulation into a systemic and often imperceptible component of media communication. Manipulative influence operates through subtle linguistic and cognitive mechanisms – lexical choices, framing, presuppositions, evaluative and emotive language, and multimodal cues – that frequently remain unnoticed by the target audience yet strongly affect their perception and interpretation of information.

The relevance of this study lies in the increasing role of media in constructing social reality and shaping ideological narratives in the globalized digital environment. Media discourse today functions not only as a means of information exchange but also as a tool for managing public consciousness through linguistic and cognitive manipulation. The rapid dissemination of content via social networks and multimedia platforms enhances the effectiveness of such strategies, influencing audiences both consciously and subconsciously.

Translation further amplifies the significance of studying manipulation in media discourse. Translators, as cultural mediators, must recognize and adequately reproduce manipulative elements embedded in source texts. Misinterpretation or distortion of these elements may alter the communicative intent, ideological message, or emotional tone, ultimately shaping the target audience's perception.

In the context of ongoing information wars, political propaganda, and ideological polarization, identifying manipulative strategies becomes crucial for linguists, translators, and media professionals.

The aim of this study is to identify and systematize the main manipulative strategies employed in contemporary media discourse through the analysis of linguistic and multimodal means of their implementing in authentic media texts, and develop translation-oriented recommendations for detecting, interpreting, and reproducing manipulative elements in cross-cultural media communication.

To achieve this aim, the article addresses the following tasks: 1) to examine the theoretical foundations of manipulation in media discourse from the perspectives of discourse studies, cognitive linguistics, and translation studies; 2) to systematize the main manipulative strategies employed in contemporary media communication through the analysis of linguistic, pragmatic, cognitive, and multimodal means of implementing manipulative influence in authentic media texts; 3) to develop methodological translation-oriented recommendations for detecting, interpreting, and reproducing manipulative elements in cross-linguistic media communication.

The object of this research is manipulative strategies in media discourse as a means of communicative and ideological influence in modern information space, particularly in its linguistic and cognitive manifestations.

The subject of the research is the types of manipulative strategies in media discourse (linguistic, cognitive, emotional, sociocultural, ideological) and the means of their manifestations in cross-cultural communication.

The empirical material includes a corpus of authentic English and Ukrainian media texts collected from news portals, analytical articles, online magazines, and social media publications representing various genres of political, economic, and socio-cultural discourse. The sources encompass both international and Ukrainian media outlets, such as *The Economist*, *BBC News*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Ukrainska Pravda*, and *NV.ua*. The selected texts contain explicit and implicit examples of manipulative influence, which serve as the basis for identifying, classifying, and analysing linguistic, cognitive, and ideological strategies, as well as for examining their transformation in translation.

The methodology of the study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates methods of critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and translation studies. The research employs descriptive, comparative, and contextual analysis, as well as elements of pragmatic-linguistic and semantic interpretation, to identify and classify manipulative strategies and to examine their functioning and translation in authentic media texts. It aims to demonstrate how manipulation functions as a multifaceted communicative phenomenon that requires translators and researchers to recognize its implicit structures and ideological underpinnings to ensure ethically and pragmatically responsible translation.

1. Theoretical background of manipulative influence

Historically, the phenomenon of manipulation in discourse traces its roots to classical rhetoric, where philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero explored persuasion as an essential component of communication. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (4th century BCE) established the triad of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* as foundational elements of persuasive influence, laying the groundwork for understanding how language can be used to shape belief and emotion. During the Enlightenment and early modern periods, thinkers like Francis Bacon and John Locke emphasized the moral and epistemological dimensions of persuasion, distinguishing rational argumentation from deceitful manipulation. In the 20th century, the rise of mass media, propaganda studies, and political communication brought new attention to manipulation as a sociolinguistic and psychological phenomenon, particularly in the works of Harold D. Lasswell¹, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky², and Teun A. van Dijk³, who linked language, ideology, and power. Their research develops the idea that mass media function as systems of ideological control, shaping discourse and public perception, which is central to discussions of manipulation in political communication.

Teun A. van Dijk, in his journal article *Discourse and Manipulation*, highly influential for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), argues that manipulation is not just persuasion, but a form of illegitimate power abuse carried out through discourse. Van Dijk's article explains how language is used to manipulate people's minds, beliefs, and actions, how manipulation operates as a discursive strategy of power that shapes people's minds through language, reinforcing social inequality while appearing legitimate. As noted by van Dijk, manipulation in discourse constitutes a form of social power abuse, where language functions as an instrument for controlling the mental models and opinions of recipients. In essence, manipulation operates as a covert form of persuasion, achieved through deliberate lexical selection, semantic nuances, and contextual framing. It typically benefits powerful groups (politicians, media, institutions) and works against the interests of less powerful groups.

Maya Khemlani David⁴ observes that rhetorical devices play a crucial role in maintaining political influence by shaping perceptions of truth and

¹ Lasswell H. D. *Propaganda technique in the World War*. New York : Peter Smith, 1927. 256 p.

² Herman E. S., Chomsky N. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London : The Bodley Head, 2008. 582 p.

³ van Dijk T. A. *Discourse and manipulation*. *Discourse & Society*. SAGE Publications. London : Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, 2006. Vol 17(2). P. 359–383.

⁴ David M. K. *Language, power and manipulation: The use of rhetoric in maintaining political influence*. *Frontiers of Language and Teaching*, 2014. Vol. 5(1). P. 64–170.

legitimacy through discourse. David examines how political actors use language strategically to gain, reinforce, and legitimize power and shows that language is not just a tool for communication but a mechanism of control. Political leaders use linguistic choices, such as wording, framing, and tone, to present themselves as legitimate and persuasive while marginalizing opposing. The article demonstrates that political influence is deeply tied to linguistic practice. Rhetoric is not decorative, it is functional and often manipulative, serving as a key tool for maintaining power structures in society. At its core, the paper argues that political language is rarely neutral: it is carefully constructed to influence public perception, shape ideology, and maintain authority.

Manipulative strategies today represent a complex system of linguistic, cognitive, and multimodal techniques aimed at influencing the audience's thinking, emotions, and behavioural choices, often without their conscious realization. Such strategies are particularly widespread in media discourse – including news reporting, political speeches, and social media communication – where the struggle for attention, persuasion, and emotional engagement is especially pronounced. Media texts thus serve as powerful instruments for constructing social reality, with manipulation shaping public consciousness, reinforcing stereotypes, and promoting specific ideologies or values⁵. This influence becomes most visible during periods of social or political instability, when public opinion becomes a primary object of strategic control.

A number of researchers have contributed to the investigation of media manipulation from various perspectives: Teun A. van Dijk⁶ explored ideological and discourse control mechanisms. Norman Fairclough⁷ studied critical discourse and power relations reaffirming the role of language as a social practice that shapes and is shaped by power relations. His work, as a cornerstone of CDA, focuses on how language functions as a form of social practice and how it is deeply intertwined with power relations, ideology, and social change. Fairclough analyses how text, discourse practice, and social practice normalize power imbalances and ideologies. Fairclough argues that discourse (language in use) is not neutral. It both reflects and shapes power structures in society, especially in politics, media, and institutions.

⁵ Kenzhekanova K., Zhanabekova, M. & Konyrbekova T. Manipulation in political discourse of mass media. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 2015. Vol. 6(4). P. 325–332.

⁶ van Dijk T. A. Discourse and manipulation. *Discourse & Society*. SAGE Publications. London : Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, 2006. Vol 17(2). P. 359–383.

⁷ Fairclough N. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London and New York : Longman Group Limited, 2013. 608 p.

In the Ukrainian media context, I. M. Golopych & I. V. Chernova⁸ present a comprehensive analysis of linguistic manipulation strategies in Ukrainian media discourse during the period of 2022–2025 in the context of the full-scale war. Within the cognitive-pragmatic framework, it is revealed that strategic manipulation of language plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and constructing war narratives. The authors highlight that manipulative strategies are realized through cognitive and pragmatic mechanisms exploiting the interaction between linguistic form, contextual framing, and recipient interpretation.

Similarly, O. Dmytruk⁹ defines manipulation as a hidden, intentional influence on the audience, where the communicator shapes opinions without the reader's full awareness. In English-language media, manipulation manifests through lexical and syntactic choices that subtly shift evaluative meaning and ideological perspective. The author identifies and systematizes major strategies used in English-language media and explores how these strategies guide interpretation, limit alternative viewpoints, and create desired cognitive and emotional responses in readers. The work situates manipulation within pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media linguistics.

Iryna Halamay & Uliana Drohomiretska¹⁰ examined manipulative techniques in news translation and showed how translation of news can become a tool of manipulation, especially in political and media discourse. The authors argue that translation is never completely neutral: when news is translated, it is inevitably modified, adapted, and sometimes deliberately distorted, which can influence how audiences perceive events. Even accurate translation alters meaning slightly due to differences in connotations and cultural context. Translation and manipulation are seen as closely related processes, because both involve changing a text to fit a purpose.

Overall, manipulative influence in modern media texts constitutes a multifaceted communicative system designed to shape audience perception and interpretation through linguistic, psychological, and semiotic means. Operating across interrelated levels – lexical, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, cognitive, and visual – media manipulation integrates linguistic and psychological impact into a coherent strategy of influence. Scholars commonly distinguish several

⁸ Голопич І. М., Чернова І. В. Мовні стратегії маніпуляції в українському медійному дискурсі: когнітивний та прагматичний аспекти. *Вчені записки ТНУ імені В. І. Вернадського. Серія : Філологія. Журналістика*. 2025. Том 36(75), № 4. Частина 1. С. 13–18. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2710-4656/2025.4.1/03>.

⁹ Дмитрук О. Маніпулятивні стратегії в сучасній англomовній комунікації (на матеріалі текстів друкованих та Інтернет-видань 2000–2005 рр.) : дисертація на здобуття наукового ступеня кандидата філологічних наук. Київський національний університет Тараса Шевченка. Київ, 2006. 229 с.

¹⁰ Halamay I., Drohomiretska U. Manipulations in news translation. *Young Scientist*. 2022. № 1(101). P. 87–90. <https://doi.org/10.32839/2304-5809/2022-1-101-19>.

major types of manipulative strategies: lexical-semantic, syntactic-structural, rhetorical-stylistic, cognitive-psychological, and ideological-pragmatic. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate that manipulation is not a random or isolated phenomenon but a systematically organized mode of influencing public consciousness.

However, despite the growing body of research, the issue of systematic classification of manipulative strategies across linguistic, cognitive, and ideological dimensions, especially in the context of translation, remains insufficiently developed. As media communication continues to evolve – integrating multimodal formats, accelerated information flows, and increasingly sophisticated persuasive techniques – the mechanisms of manipulation likewise become more complex and subtler. This shift necessitates a closer examination of the concrete linguistic and cognitive tools that underpin manipulative influence in contemporary media discourse. Accordingly, the following section outlines the key types and means of manipulative strategies in media, providing a structured framework for understanding how these mechanisms operate at different communicative levels.

2. Types and means of manipulative strategies in media discourse

Given the multifaceted nature of manipulative influence in contemporary media communication, it becomes essential to move from a general understanding of its historical and theoretical foundations toward a more detailed examination of the specific mechanisms through which manipulation is realized.

While the types of manipulation describe what is targeted – language, cognition, emotion, culture, or ideology – the linguistic, cognitive and multimodal means (techniques) reveal how these manipulations are implemented at the textual and multimodal levels. These techniques shape how information is perceived, framed, and emotionally processed by audiences, often without their explicit awareness. Therefore, a systematic classification of manipulative strategies is required to clarify the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and multimodal means by which media discourse constructs persuasive and ideologically charged messages. The following section provides an overview of the major types and means of manipulative strategies in media.

2.1. Linguistic manipulation

Linguistic manipulation functions through the deliberate selection and organization of language units – lexical, grammatical, and stylistic choices that subtly influence how information is received and interpreted. It represents one of the most pervasive and effective means of shaping audience perception in contemporary media discourse, as it operates within the very structure of

language and thus often remains unnoticed by the recipient. Through carefully chosen words, syntactic constructions, and stylistic nuances, journalists and communicators can frame reality, conceal or emphasize responsibility, and evoke particular emotional or evaluative reactions.

A common technique is **lexical substitution**, where specific lexical items are used to alter the emotional colouring of a message. Lexical manipulation is one of the most direct and effective ways to influence audience perception. It operates through deliberate word choice, where connotation, emotional charge, and evaluative potential shape attitudes without overt persuasion. Even when the factual content remains unchanged, the emotional and ideological framing can be entirely transformed through lexical substitution. For example, euphemisms, such as *enhanced interrogation techniques* instead of *torture*, soften the negative impact of violent actions by reframing them through technical, institutionally sanctioned language.

Euphemisms soften or obscure unpleasant realities, creating a sense of detachment or neutrality. For instance, the term *collateral damage* instead of *civilian deaths* disguises the human suffering caused by military operations, presenting violence as a technical or strategic issue rather than a moral tragedy. Similarly, *job reallocation* instead of *mass layoffs* rebrands economic hardship as an administrative adjustment, reducing emotional resistance to the event. These expressions sanitize discourse and desensitize audiences to ethical implications. In media discourse, euphemisms are not random softeners; they tend to cluster into functional groups that serve specific communicative and often manipulative purposes. Grouping them helps reveal how language shapes perception rather than merely reflects reality.

In media discourse, the following groups of euphemisms can be distinguished:

- **political-institutional euphemisms** used by governments, officials, and journalists to frame policies or actions more favourably: *collateral damage* ‘civilian deaths’, *enhanced interrogation* ‘torture’, *military operation* ‘war / invasion’;

- **economic-corporate euphemisms**, common in business news, financial reporting, and corporate communication to obscure negative consequences and maintain investor/public confidence: *downsizing / restructuring* ‘layoff’, *negative growth* ‘economic decline’, *cost optimization* ‘budget cuts affecting people’;

- **conflict and crisis euphemisms**, typical of war reporting, emergencies, and geopolitical news to downplay violence and reduce emotional impact: *neutralize a target* ‘kill’, *security incident* ‘attack’, *tensions* ‘armed conflict’;

- **scandal and wrongdoing euphemisms** used in reporting on corruption, crime, or controversial behaviour to mitigate blame and protect reputations:

inappropriate conduct ‘harassment / abuse’, *misstatement* ‘lie’, *irregularities* ‘fraud’.

Such lexical substitution renders the act more impersonal and procedural, distancing it from its moral and physical cruelty. As a result, the brutality of the practice becomes obscured beneath bureaucratic terminology, allowing the speaker to legitimize or rationalize ethically questionable behaviour while minimizing public outrage. Most traditional studies treat euphemisms as lexical-semantic phenomena (substitution of unpleasant terms). However, in media discourse, euphemisms function not merely as politeness devices but as strategic tools of representation that shape public cognition and legitimize particular interpretations of reality.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, euphemisms are closely tied to what George Lakoff describes as *framing*: lexical choices activate particular cognitive schemas that guide interpretation. Similarly, Teun A. van Dijk emphasizes that these substitutions are not neutral; they reflect ideological positioning and power relations, shaping how audiences perceive responsibility, agency, and morality. Reducing the perceived severity of events, concealing truth or minimizing harm, euphemisms in media discourse influence interpretation, not just meaning. The real power of euphemisms in media discourse lies in their *pragmatic functions* (mitigation, framing, distancing) and *discursive strategies* (manipulation, ideology, agenda-setting).

In contrast, *dysphemisms* perform the opposite function, intensifying negativity by emphasizing the undesirable aspects of a phenomenon. For example, referring to a government as a regime implies authoritarianism and illegitimacy, framing the same political entity as oppressive rather than lawful or describing opposing combatants as *terrorists* instead of *fighters* significantly reshapes public perception by attributing ideological extremism and moral depravity to the group. Similarly, calling environmental activists eco-extremists instead of environmental advocates delegitimizes their cause and diminishes public sympathy. This dysphemistic label delegitimizes their actions, amplifies fear, and justifies harsher military or political responses. Through this strategic lexical substitution, a complex geopolitical actor is reframed as an absolute threat, thereby intensifying hostility and narrowing the range of acceptable interpretations.

Several patterns can be identified, as illustrated by the following examples:

- ***delegitimizing political actors***: *regime* vs. *government* (implies authoritarianism as *the Assad regime*, *the Putin regime*); *strongman* vs. *leader* (suggests illegitimate, coercive rule); *cronies* vs. *associates* (frames networks as corrupt);
- ***criminalizing or pathologizing groups***: *thugs*, *mob*, *gang* vs. *protesters* (constructs civil unrest as criminal violence); *rioters* vs. *demonstrators*

(foregrounds disorder rather than political grievance); *extremists, fanatics* vs. *activists* (attributes irrationality and danger);

– ***dehumanization in conflict reporting***: *targets neutralized* vs. *people killed* (reduces human agency and suffering); *collateral damage* can function dysphemistically when reframed as *civilian casualties caused by reckless strikes*; *human shields* (when overused or unverified) morally condemns one side while obscuring complexity;

– ***migration discourse***: *illegal aliens* vs. *undocumented migrants* (criminalizes identity rather than legal status); *flood, wave, invasion* of migrants (metaphorical dysphemisms evoking threat and loss of control);

– ***economic and social issues***: *handouts* vs. *social benefits* (implies undeserved dependency); *tax burden* vs. *tax contribution* (frames taxation negatively); *job-killing regulations* vs. *labour protections* (assigns blame and dramatizes impact);

– ***public health and social labelling***: *junkies* vs. *people with substance use disorders* (stigmatizes individuals); *obese people draining the system* vs. neutral medical framing (moralizes a health condition);

– ***military and security discourse***: *enemy combatants* vs. *captured individuals* (can strip legal protections); *insurgents* vs. *resistance fighters* (shifts moral alignment depending on perspective);

– ***media framing of technology and surveillance***: *spying on citizens* vs. *data collection* (heightens perceived intrusion); *propaganda machine* vs. *state media* (suggests manipulation and deceit).

From a discourse-analytic perspective, dysphemisms often activate negative presuppositions (e.g., regime presupposes illegitimacy), rely on metaphorization (flood, invasion), and function as tools of ideological positioning, aligning audiences with a particular evaluative stance. In media discourse, dysphemisms are especially productive because they compress evaluation into a single lexical choice.

Metaphors and ***metonymy*** play a crucial role in recontextualizing abstract or complex ideas through familiar imagery. When economic competition is described as a battle for markets or a currency war, it transforms financial processes into a moralized narrative of conflict, courage, and victory. This martial framing invites emotional engagement and urgency, positioning economic actors as heroes or enemies rather than market participants.

Especially common in media discourse are the following metaphors.

– ***Health and illness metaphors***, for example, when inflation is described as *eating away at household savings* or corruption as a *cancer within the system*, abstract economic or political problems are conceptualized as biological threats. This framing intensifies perceived danger and suggests that urgent intervention is necessary. Likewise, calling a financial reform a *remedy for a sick economy*

presents policymakers as doctors administering treatment, which implicitly legitimizes their authority.

– **Natural disaster metaphors** often frame environmental and social issues, for example, metaphors such as *a wave of migration*, *a flood of misinformation*, or *a storm of criticism* depict social phenomena as uncontrollable forces of nature. These metaphors reduce the sense of human agency and amplify the impression of threat or chaos, encouraging defensive or emergency-oriented responses.

– **Movement and journey metaphors** can also subtly guide interpretation. Political progress may be described as *moving forward*, reforms as *taking the country down the right path*, or diplomatic negotiations as *reaching a crossroads*. Such metaphors simplify complex processes into linear narratives with implied destinations, obstacles, and choices. This metaphoric framing encourages audiences to evaluate developments according to whether they represent progress, stagnation, or regression.

– **Moral metaphors** are another powerful tool of ideological framing. Tax avoidance may be described as *gaming the system*, protesters as *the conscience of the nation*, or certain legislation as *an attack on democracy*. These constructions move discussion from factual description into ethical evaluation, encouraging audiences to interpret actions through binaries such as fair/unfair, good/evil, or responsible/irresponsible.

– **Physical intrusion metaphors** often conceptualize cyber threats in security discourse: hackers *penetrate defences*, malware *infects networks*, and governments *build digital walls*. This metaphoric framing makes invisible technological processes easier to grasp while also importing assumptions associated with territorial defence, invasion, and protection.

– **Metaphonymy** (metaphor and metonymy) frequently personify organizations in corporate discourse. Headlines such as *Wall Street panicked*, *The White House signalled concern*, or *Silicon Valley is betting on AI* use metonymy, where institutions or places stand in for groups of people or decision-makers. This linguistic compression creates an impression of coherence and unified intent, masking internal disagreements or diversity of perspectives.

Together, these examples show that metaphor and metonymy do not merely decorate language; they shape perception and understanding by linking familiar experiential domains to unfamiliar, ideologically contested or value-laden conceptual domains such as war, health, or morality. Through these mappings, discourse can naturalize specific interpretations while obscuring alternative perspectives.

Finally, **evaluative adjectives and adverbs** such as *allegedly*, *so-called*, or *remarkably* inject subtle judgment into statements that appear objective. For

example, The so-called reformers introduced new policies casts doubt on the legitimacy of reform without explicit accusation. These lexical strategies operate through implication rather than argument, steering readers' emotions and reasoning in the desired direction while maintaining an appearance of neutrality.

Syntactic framing further enhances manipulative potential by influencing how information is hierarchically presented within a sentence. Syntax determines which elements of a message receive prominence and which are marginalized.

The placement of key information in main or subordinate clauses can significantly affect perceived importance. For example, While the government's response was delayed, substantial progress has now been achieved. The delay – potentially a critical failure – is subordinated and thus downgraded in prominence. The main clause highlights substantial progress, reframing the narrative as positive and forward-looking, guiding the reader to perceive the situation as ultimately successful. This linguistic choice renders the undesirable element almost invisible. Another example highlights this effect even more clearly: The peace talks collapsed because the opposition refused to compromise. This causal structure places direct responsibility on the opposition, presenting their refusal as the decisive factor in the failure of negotiations. Alternative framings – The peace talks collapsed after disagreements arose – could distribute responsibility more evenly. The chosen syntax narrows interpretation toward assigning blame.

In media discourse, syntactic framing illustrating, i.e. clause structure, subordination, and information order, shape interpretation and subtly guide audience perception. Consider the following examples.

– **Subordination to downplay responsibility:** *Although several civilians were injured, security forces successfully restored order.* → Civilian harm is backgrounded in a subordinate clause, while the main clause emphasizes success and control.

– **Fronting positive outcomes:** *The operation was deemed a success, even though key objectives remain unmet.* → The evaluative “success” is foregrounded; failure is relegated to a concessive clause.

– **Temporal subordination to minimize causality:** *After minor irregularities were reported, the election results were confirmed.* → The irregularities are framed as temporally prior but implicitly insignificant, while confirmation appears final.

– **Conditional framing to cast doubt:** *If any violations occurred, they did not affect the overall outcome.* → The conditional clause introduces uncertainty about the violations themselves, weakening their perceived reality.

– **Contrastive subordination to neutralize criticism:** *While critics argue the reform is ineffective, officials insist it will bring long-term benefits.* → Criticism is subordinated and contrasted with a forward-looking, authoritative claim.

– **Clause ordering to shape causality perception:** *The protest escalated after police intervened.* vs. *Police intervened after the protest escalated.* → The same events are framed differently: the first suggests police caused escalation; the second implies justified intervention.

– **Embedding controversial information:** *The minister, who has been accused of corruption, announced new reforms.* → Allegations are syntactically embedded (relative clause), making them seem secondary to the main action.

– **Final-position emphasis (end-focus):** *There were concerns raised during the negotiations about transparency.* → The most sensitive issue (“transparency”) is placed at the end, receiving emphasis but without direct attribution.

– **Concessive framing to mitigate negative evaluation:** *Even though the report identifies significant shortcomings, it concludes that the system is fundamentally sound.* → The shortcomings are acknowledged but structurally subordinated to a reassuring conclusion.

– **Inversion of expectation through clause hierarchy:** *What matters most is that progress is being made, although challenges remain.* → The main clause explicitly instructs the reader on what to prioritize.

These examples demonstrate that syntactic framing operates not only through what is said, but through how it is structurally organized. By manipulating clause hierarchy, information sequencing, and grammatical roles, media discourse can subtly prioritize, background, or obscure elements, thereby shaping interpretation without altering factual content.

Another powerful manipulative tool is **nominalization**, i.e. the transformation of verbs into nouns, which abstracts actions and obscures agency. The sentence *Mistakes were made* omits who made them, presenting failure as an impersonal occurrence rather than human error. This construction reduces accountability and weakens moral evaluation. Another example: *The escalation resulted in the neutralization of hostile elements.* Nominalizations like *escalation* and *neutralization* transform active violent acts into abstract nouns, reducing emotional resonance. The sentence structure masks the harsh reality of conflict by phrasing acts of killing in depersonalized, institutional terms. Nominalization within the sentence *The implementation of the policy led to unexpected outcomes* turns actions into abstract nouns (“implementation”), removes agency and softens evaluative force.

Similarly, **passivization** often obscures agency, transforming deliberate actions into abstract events. For example, *The law was broken* hides the

responsible party (Officials broke the law) and thus weakens the moral force of the statement. In the sentence *Civilian casualties were reported during the operation* the passive construction removes the agent responsible for causing the casualties, shifting attention away from military accountability. By omitting the subject, the sentence frames the incident as something that simply occurred rather than something intentionally inflicted, thereby reducing perceived culpability. This erasure of the responsible actor creates an illusion of inevitability or general misfortune instead of deliberate misconduct. Such grammatical distancing enables media texts to present controversial events with diminished emotional intensity and weakened ethical responsibility reporting sensitive information without assigning blame.

Rhetorical questions also guide interpretation while pretending to invite reflection. The rhetorical question *Who benefits from this chaos?* presupposes that someone indeed does, leading the audience to infer hidden motives or conspiracies. It simulates inquiry while directing thought toward a predetermined conclusion.

Parallelism and repetition reinforce ideological slogans or emotional motifs by creating rhythm and memorability. Phrases like *Strong leader, strong nation* or *Freedom, faith, family* become embedded in public consciousness through their simplicity. Repetition transforms ideological messages into cognitive habits.

Headline framing serves as one of the most influential syntactic-discursive tools in journalism. Headlines like *New Reforms Bring Relief to Millions* predefine interpretation even before the article is read, establishing a positive evaluative frame. Readers are less likely to question the content once a favourable tone has been set.

Manipulation is also achieved through **modality** and **hedging**, where statements are introduced with phrases such as *it seems that*, *experts claim*, or *it is believed that*. These forms of expression project authority or uncertainty, depending on the communicator's aim. For example, *It is believed that the reforms will benefit all citizens* implies widespread approval while concealing the source of the claim. Likewise, *Experts claim the risks are minimal* provides a semblance of credibility without verifiable evidence. Such linguistic devices help construct an illusion of objectivity and consensus, guiding the audience toward a preferred interpretation while maintaining journalistic neutrality.

At the **pragmatic level**, manipulation occurs through **interactional choices** that shape how meaning is inferred within specific communicative contexts. The same information can produce different interpretations depending on pragmatic framing, tone, and authority.

Different *speech acts* – assertives, directives, and commissives – are often used strategically to influence attitudes. For instance, a political statement such as We must act now performs both an assertion and a directive, urging collective compliance under the illusion of shared responsibility. This blends persuasion with moral obligation.

Implicature and *irony* allow speakers or writers to convey meaning indirectly, maintaining plausible deniability. For example, a journalist commenting The minister's 'transparency' is truly impressive employs irony to criticize while appearing complimentary. The implicit nature of the message shields the communicator from accusations of bias.

Authority references lend pseudo-credibility to subjective claims. Phrases like According to experts or Studies show that... introduce external validation without specifying the source or methodology. By invoking expert consensus, media texts reinforce ideological or political messages under the guise of scientific objectivity.

Quotation and *decontextualization* are common tools for manipulating perception by altering meaning through selective citation. A headline stating The minister admitted failure may omit a qualifier such as in certain administrative processes, thereby exaggerating or distorting the scope of the admission. Such tactics change interpretation while preserving the illusion of accuracy.

By implementing linguistic manipulative strategies, such as *lexical substitution*, *syntactic framing*, *nominalization*, *passivization*, *rhetorical questions*, *parallelism*, *repetition*, *headline framing*, *modality*, *hedging*, *implicature*, *irony*, *authority references*, *quotation* and *decontextualization*, media discourse demonstrates how linguistic manipulation operates through subtle yet systematic control over language form and function. Through carefully calibrated lexical choices and strategic syntactic arrangements, texts can shape the reader's emotional and cognitive responses while preserving an appearance of neutral or impartial reporting. This interplay between explicit information and implicit evaluation forms the foundation of persuasive media communication and underscores the need for heightened linguistic awareness in both translation practice and media literacy. Recognizing these mechanisms allows for a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed, mediated, and potentially distorted within the public communication sphere.

2.2. Cognitive manipulation

Cognitive manipulation operates at a deeper psychological level, targeting the mental processing mechanisms of the audience rather than their direct emotional response. It functions by activating pre-existing cognitive frames and associative networks that influence interpretation unconsciously. Through

this process, media discourse can guide readers toward particular conclusions without explicitly stating them, making cognitive manipulation one of the most persuasive forms of influence.

One of the most common cognitive strategies is **conceptual activation**, which prepares the audience to interpret subsequent information through a predetermined lens. This technique relies on the human brain's tendency to associate new information with previously activated concepts. For example, presenting a headline such as *Crime wave sweeps the city* immediately before a story about immigration subtly primes readers to associate immigrants with rising crime rates – even when the article itself never makes this claim explicitly. This illustrates how conceptual activation operates: the initial emphasis on crime introduces cues that trigger cognitive schemas related to fear, insecurity, and social threat. Once activated, these concepts influence how the audience interprets and evaluates the subsequent topic, predisposing them toward a negative reading of immigration. Consequently, the interpretation of later information becomes biased toward the pre-activated frame, demonstrating how media discourse can shape perception through strategic sequencing rather than overt argumentation.

Another widespread strategy is **conceptual alignment**, which structures information to highlight certain aspects of reality while minimizing others. The way a topic is framed determines the boundaries of discussion and shapes audience interpretation. For example, the expression tax relief emphasizes economic benefit and moral justification, while tax cut highlights loss of revenue or reduced public spending. Although both refer to the same fiscal measure, their contrasting connotations elicit opposing evaluative responses. Thus, framing determines how information is perceived, not merely what information is presented. A similar mechanism operates when a *protest* is described as a coordinated assault on public order rather than a demonstration. This use of evaluative configuration recasts civic activism as a threat, guiding readers toward a perception of danger and instability. By embedding ideological judgment within linguistic choice, such constructions shift the event from a neutral act of collective expression to an aggressive, destabilizing incident, influencing interpretation through implication rather than explicit argumentation.

Cognitive manipulation is also realized through **cognitive defaults** when implicit meanings are embedded in linguistic structures that shape understanding without explicit argumentation. A question such as *When did the president finally admit his mistake?* presupposes both that a mistake occurred and that the president was guilty, even if these claims were never proven. Likewise, in the question – *When will the opposing side stop provoking our troops?* – the presupposition is that the opposing side *is provoking* and

that provocation is continuous and intentional. This automatically positions one side as the aggressor and the other as reacting defensively, embedding ideological bias within the syntax itself. By functioning as automatically accepted background information rather than contested claims, such hidden cognitive defaults bypass critical reasoning and covertly embed ideological bias into public discourse.

A further manifestation is **cognitive narrative distortion**, which arises from the selective sequencing of facts, the choice of perspective, and the deliberate omission of contextual details. Media narratives often shape interpretation not through overt falsehoods but through strategic arrangement and emphasis. For example, highlighting the economic damage caused by protests while omitting the protesters' motivations frames them as destructive rather than principled. Similarly, focusing on isolated incidents of crime instead of broader structural causes directs readers to assign blame to specific individuals or groups. Such selective storytelling subtly reshapes moral evaluation and public empathy by privileging certain interpretations over others.

By implementing cognitive manipulative strategies, such as *conceptual activation*, *conceptual alignment*, *cognitive defaults*, and *cognitive narrative distortion*, media discourse demonstrates how manipulation often operates not through overt persuasion, but through strategic control of perception and attention. By activating specific cognitive frames, implicit assumptions, and interpretive patterns, media texts construct a version of reality that appears objective and self-evident, even when it embodies particular ideological or political interests.

Understanding these mechanisms is essential for developing critical awareness and informed translation strategies that both preserve meaning and expose underlying manipulative intent, ensuring that the translated text maintains semantic accuracy as well as cognitive transparency for the target audience.

2.3. Emotional manipulation

Emotional manipulation functions by appealing directly to the audience's feelings, aiming to evoke affective responses that override rational or analytical judgment. Unlike cognitive manipulation, which targets interpretation through frames and associations, emotional manipulation exploits the human tendency to respond more intensely to emotionally charged stimuli than to factual or logical information. It transforms news, political messages, and advertisements into emotionally driven narratives that guide perception and decision-making through empathy, fear, anger, or pride rather than reasoned evaluation.

A key instrument of this strategy is the *emotion-driven linguistic triggers*, i.e., words and expressions intentionally selected to heighten emotional dissonance. Phrases, such as *devastating* tragedy, *innocent victims*, or *heroic rescue* possess strong connotative power, immediately engaging the reader's empathy or moral judgment. For example, describing civilians as *innocent victims* instead of simply *casualties* intensifies compassion and moral outrage, while labelling a soldier as a *heroic defender* evokes admiration and patriotic pride. Such lexical choices activate emotional and moral schemas, prompting the audience to respond affectively before they have critically assessed the information. The manipulation lies not in the facts themselves but in the evaluative colouring of language, which subtly channels emotional energy toward the desired attitude.

Another powerful strategy is *pathos-driven storytelling*, which personalizes abstract events through human experiences. Instead of presenting statistical data, media often highlight individual stories of suffering, sacrifice, or triumph, allowing audiences to emotionally identify with the protagonists. For example, coverage of a natural disaster might focus on a single family's loss to evoke compassion, even though such framing may oversimplify systemic causes or broader consequences. Similarly, instead of detailing the geopolitical origins of a conflict, a news segment focuses on a wounded child rescued from the rubble. By centering on the child's suffering, the report evokes empathy and moral urgency, steering the audience toward viewing one side as aggressors and the other as victims, regardless of the broader political complexity. By reducing complex issues to emotionally charged personal narratives, the media cultivate empathy and moral alignment with specific viewpoints.

Another frequently employed strategy involves *identity-driven persuasion*, which evokes emotions related to belonging, loyalty, and patriotism. Expressions, such as *We must stand together*, or *Our nation deserves justice*, or *They threaten our values*, foster a sense of unity – or, conversely, hostility – depending on the communicator's objectives. Similarly, phrases like true patriots will support this decision or real citizens do not remain silent appeal to collective identity by implying that dissent is unfaithful or unpatriotic. In political conflict, slogans, such as defending our homeland or protecting our people, activate national solidarity while positioning opponents as outsiders or enemies. By invoking shared identity and moral duty, such appeals create an emotional “us” versus “them” framework that discourages critical dissent and strengthens group cohesion around ideological positions.

When media discourse employs emotional manipulative strategies, such as *emotion-driven linguistic triggers*, *pathos-driven storytelling*, *multimodal persuasive cues*, and *identity-driven persuasion*, emotional manipulation prioritizes affect over analysis, constructing messages that operate through

empathy, fear, pride, or indignation rather than evidence-based reasoning. These techniques are especially powerful because emotional responses are immediate, automatic, and difficult to regulate. Once audiences are emotionally engaged, their capacity for critical evaluation diminishes, leaving them more vulnerable to persuasive influence and ideological framing. Recognizing these emotional triggers and understanding how linguistic, visual, and narrative tools interact to produce them are therefore essential for both media consumers and translators. For the translator, the challenge lies in preserving the emotional tone and communicative intent of the source text without intensifying or weakening its manipulative force, thereby maintaining a careful balance between expressive fidelity and ethical responsibility.

2.4. Sociocultural manipulation

Sociocultural manipulation functions by drawing upon shared cultural codes, values, stereotypes, and myths to legitimize ideologies, sustain group cohesion, and shape collective consciousness. Unlike purely linguistic or emotional manipulation, this type operates at the intersection of language and culture, exploiting what the audience already perceives as natural or self-evident. Through such mechanisms, media discourse connects messages to familiar cultural narratives, thereby ensuring their persuasive power and emotional resonance.

One of the most pervasive strategies is the *heroic leader framing*, in which political figures are depicted as *saviours*, *protectors*, or *fathers of the nation*. For example, state-controlled media may portray a president as the sole defender of national stability or the guardian of our people's future, presenting leadership not as an elected role but as a form of moral destiny. Similarly, wartime broadcasts may describe a commander as the unwavering shield of the homeland, elevating individual actions into symbols of national heroism. Such representations cultivate emotional loyalty by appealing to pride, gratitude, and collective identity, while implicitly discouraging dissent because questioning the leader becomes framed as disloyalty or betrayal. Through this narrative, myth-making transforms ordinary political actors into symbolic embodiments of national ideals and moral virtue, thereby shifting public perception from rational evaluation to reverential admiration.

Framing through stereotyping is another crucial tool of sociocultural manipulation. It simplifies complex social realities by assigning fixed, often reductive characteristics to specific ethnic, national, or ideological groups. For example, immigrants may be depicted as *aggressive*, *unemployed*, or *culturally incompatible*, while domestic citizens are characterized as *hardworking*, *law-abiding*, or *patriotic*. Such oppositional labelling constructs moral hierarchies

in which one group is elevated as deserving and virtuous while the other is positioned as threatening or inferior. These generalizations reduce cognitive complexity, making audiences more receptive to discriminatory or nationalist narratives. Similarly, in media coverage of international conflicts, stereotyping can portray one nation as *civilized* and *democratic* while framing another as *barbaric*, *irrational*, or *inherently aggressive*. Through such simplified contrasts, stereotyping transforms complex socio-political dynamics into emotionally charged narratives that guide public judgment suppressing critical scrutiny.

Cultural framing amplifies these effects by embedding ideological messages within symbols, idioms, and metaphors that resonate with national identity and collective memory. Phrases, such as *defenders of freedom* or *motherland under threat* evoke shared historical experiences, activating patriotic sentiment and moral alignment. By appealing to culturally familiar motifs, media texts foster emotional solidarity and provide implicit justification for political action. For example, the use of wartime metaphors, such as *battle for justice*, *frontline workers*, or *enemies of truth* during non-military events like elections, economic debates, or public health crises, positions ordinary citizens within a grand narrative of collective struggle. This narrative elevates routine civic participation to the level of heroic duty, reinforcing national unity through a sense of moral purpose while discouraging dissent by framing alternative viewpoints as threats to cultural integrity. Through such culturally saturated language, media discourse transforms political issues into symbolic conflicts, deepening emotional engagement and strengthening ideological coherence.

A particularly divisive form of sociocultural manipulation is **conflictual identity mapping**, which divides society into opposing camps – *insiders* vs. *outsiders*, *patriots* vs. *traitors*, *believers* vs. *sceptics*. This binary framing fosters polarization, conformity, and emotional alignment with one's perceived in-group. For example, political discourse that labels critics as *foreign agents*, *internal enemies*, or *enemies of the people* exploits fear and identity to delegitimize dissent and suppress alternative viewpoints. Such labels not only stigmatize opponents but also imply that disagreement with the dominant narrative constitutes a threat to national security or moral integrity. The result is a simplified moral landscape in which complex issues are reduced to absolute categories of loyalty versus betrayal, leaving little room for nuance, compromise, or democratic dialogue.

Sociocultural manipulative strategies, such as **heroic leader framing**, **framing through stereotyping**, **cultural framing**, and **conflictual identity mapping**, rely heavily on cultural context, drawing on symbolic meanings and collective memories that audiences seldom question. Because these manipulative messages are culturally encoded, they tend to be accepted intuitively rather than

subjected to critical scrutiny. As a result, sociocultural manipulation becomes especially effective in sustaining ideological conformity and reinforcing dominant worldviews over time.

Recognizing these mechanisms is essential not only for critical media literacy but also for translation practice. When translating media texts that contain culturally embedded manipulation, the translator must convey not only the explicit content but also the implicit ideological charge. Effective translation requires balancing cultural equivalence with ethical responsibility, ensuring that manipulative implications are neither amplified nor obscured but rendered transparent for the target audience.

2.5. Ideological manipulation

Ideological manipulation operates at the macro-discursive level, embedding dominant political, economic, or moral worldviews within media narratives and gradually shaping long-term public consciousness. Its mechanisms are often subtle yet deeply systemic, constructing frameworks of thought that define what is considered normal, acceptable, or “common sense”. Through linguistic, discursive, and semiotic strategies, media outlets maintain ideological dominance by influencing not only *what* people think, but *how* they think about social and political realities.

A key strategy in this process is ***priority-shaping mechanisms***, which refers to the media’s ability to influence public priorities by determining which issues receive sustained attention. By repeatedly emphasizing particular topics, such as national security, economic growth, or moral values, media outlets effectively shape what audiences perceive as urgent, relevant, or worthy of concern. For example, continuous coverage of *threats to stability* may cultivate fear and foster public support for militarized policies, while the simultaneous minimization of issues like social inequality or corruption redirects attention away from systemic problems. A similar effect occurs when news programs devote extensive airtime to political scandals while giving minimal coverage to long-term structural issues, such as healthcare, education, or environmental degradation. Over time, the public begins to view the highlighted topic as the dominant societal concern, even if empirical evidence suggests otherwise.

Another instance is the selective emphasis on crime reports during election cycles, which may create a heightened sense of insecurity and steer voters toward candidates advocating punitive policies. The increased visibility of crime amplifies its perceived prevalence, despite actual crime rates remaining stable or declining. In this way, what is excluded from the agenda becomes as significant as what is included, as silence, omission, or marginalization can distort the public’s sense of reality just as effectively as overt emphasis.

Priority-shaping thus operates not through misinformation, but through the subtle orchestration of attention and salience.

Another ideological manipulative strategy is *political PR manipulation*, which refers to the strategic presentation or distortion of information to shape public perception in a way that favours a particular actor, policy, or interpretation. Rather than relying on outright falsehoods, spin reframes existing facts to produce a desired evaluative effect. Phrases, such as *strategic withdrawal* instead of *defeat* or *collateral damage* instead of *civilian casualties*, demonstrate how carefully chosen language can neutralize negative connotations and recast events in a more favourable light. Similarly, describing mass surveillance as *data protection measures* reframes intrusive monitoring as a public good rather than a threat to civil liberties. By altering the linguistic framing, political PR manipulation shapes both emotional response and moral evaluation, transforming potential failures into signs of prudence, competence, or necessity. In this way, spin does not change the underlying reality but it changes how that reality is interpreted, remembered, and morally judged.

Selective omission and *statistical distortion* are equally powerful strategies of ideological manipulation. Selective omission involves deliberately excluding relevant facts, viewpoints, or contextual information in order to shape audience interpretation while preserving the appearance of neutrality. Statistical distortion, by contrast, manipulates numerical data through selective presentation, reframing, or misleading comparisons to create a deceptive impression of trends, risks, or policy outcomes. Media outlets may omit inconvenient evidence, downplay competing interpretations, or highlight only those figures that support a predetermined narrative. For example, citing short-term economic improvements while ignoring long-term structural consequences generates an artificially optimistic assessment of government performance. Likewise, reporting that *crime has increased by 20%* without noting that the rise reflects a change from 5 to 6 cases in a small area exaggerates the perceived severity of the problem. In both cases, the audience is presented with factually correct but contextually distorted information. Such strategies exploit public trust in factuality and apparent objectivity, guiding interpretation not through explicit argumentation but through what is omitted, minimized, or selectively emphasized. As a result, audiences accept skewed representations as balanced and comprehensive, unaware that crucial parts of the informational landscape have been strategically obscured.

Perhaps the most insidious form of ideological manipulation is *implicit ideological positioning*, which refers to the rhetorical presentation of biased, selective, or ideologically charged information in a style that appears neutral, factual, and impartial. This strategy constructs an illusion of objectivity, subtly

guiding audiences toward a predetermined interpretation without overtly signalling evaluative intent. Statements, such as *Experts agree that...* or *Studies show that...*, lend an authoritative veneer to ideological claims while concealing the interests, institutions, or selective evidence behind them. The authoritative tone masks underlying bias, encouraging audiences to accept the message as self-evident truth rather than as a contested viewpoint. For example, a commentator might claim that *the market naturally corrects itself*, presenting a neoliberal economic assumption as a neutral fact rather than an ideological position. Similarly, describing government cuts as *necessary reforms supported by economists* frames a political choice as an objective inevitability. In each case, the rhetoric presents a subjective perspective as universally validated knowledge.

This strategy is particularly effective in political commentary and economic reporting, where complex realities can be reduced to seemingly factual conclusions that align with dominant power structures. By embedding ideology within a pseudo-objective discourse, implicit ideological positioning shapes public understanding while evading scrutiny, reinforcing the very narratives it purports merely to describe.

Ideological manipulative strategies, such as ***priority-shaping mechanisms, political PR manipulation, selective omission and statistical distortion, and implicit ideological positioning***, collectively ensure that ideological perspectives are internalized as natural and self-evident rather than recognized as constructed, partial, and contestable. By embedding bias within ostensibly neutral discourse, ideological manipulation reinforces existing power hierarchies and legitimizes specific worldviews while obscuring their ideological origins. Recognizing these strategies is essential for both critical media analysis and translation studies.

Translators, in particular, must be able to identify and navigate ideological layers within source texts to avoid reproducing ideological manipulative structures unconsciously. An ethically responsible translation not only conveys the explicit message accurately but also preserves transparency about the ideological positioning embedded within it, thereby safeguarding the reader's ability to interpret critically across languages and cultural contexts.

2.6. Multimodal manipulation in audio-visual media

In the era of digital and audio-visual communication, manipulation extends beyond words into ***semiotic forms*** – images, colours, sounds, and layout – which work in synergy with language to produce powerful persuasive effects. This multimodal interplay heightens emotional involvement and directs cognitive attention.

In audio-visual media, *multimodal persuasive cues* play a decisive role in intensifying affective response. Elements, such as background music, lighting, camera angles, and colour symbolism, reinforce emotional perception beyond verbal content.

Colour symbolism is among the most immediate tools of visual manipulation. For example, dark tones and low-key lighting may suggest danger or corruption, while bright, warm hues convey safety and harmony. The use of *red* often signals danger, aggression, urgency or threat, while *blue* conveys trust, authority, and calm. *Black* is often associated with power, seriousness, or threat, whereas *white* suggests purity, neutrality, or moral legitimacy. *Green* can evoke ideas of nature, renewal, or moral responsibility, especially in environmental discourse, while *yellow* may signal caution or instability. Political campaigns frequently exploit these culturally embedded associations using *blue* to project reliability, *red* to evoke passion or strength, *black* to underscore authority, or *green* to signal ethical commitment. By activating subconscious emotional responses, colour choices shape perception long before a single word is processed.

Similarly, **sounds** function as powerful emotional triggers, shaping audience perception through music, tone, rhythm, and silence, which can intensify mood, create tension, or subtly guide interpretation of a message or event. For example, solemn background music accompanying political speeches can evoke reverence, whereas rapid, high-pitched sounds may create tension and anticipation. These multimodal cues work synergistically with linguistic choices to shape viewers' emotional state even before conscious processing occurs.

Camera angles and **visual composition** also play a decisive role in shaping the viewer's perception of power dynamics. A *low-angle shot* can make a political leader appear dominant, authoritative, or even heroic – literally enlarging their presence and symbolically elevating their status. In contrast, a *high-angle shot* diminishes the subject, implying weakness, subordination, or vulnerability. *Close-ups* heighten emotional intimacy and trust, while *wide shots* can distance the viewer or emphasize isolation. News footage, political debates, and campaign videos routinely employ such visual framing techniques to influence audience judgments of credibility, strength, and emotional resonance long before the verbal message is processed.

Typography and **layout** also guide the viewer's attention and shape the hierarchy of perceived importance. Large, bold headlines foreground specific interpretations or narratives, while smaller fonts, muted colours, or peripheral placement visually downplay alternative perspectives. Type size, weight, and spatial positioning work together to signal what the audience should notice first and what can be safely ignored. In this way, visual hierarchy constructs ideological priority: what appears more prominent and visible is intuitively

perceived as more relevant, credible, and truthful, whereas what is visually marginalized becomes cognitively secondary – even before the reader engages with the actual content.

Finally, **selective montage** and **image juxtaposition** create powerful implicit associations between otherwise unrelated phenomena. For example, showing scenes of street violence immediately after footage of political protests subconsciously links civic activism with chaos or threat, even when the events have no factual connection. Similarly, pairing images of empty supermarket shelves with news about government policies constructs an unspoken causal link, encouraging viewers to infer economic mismanagement without any explicit claim. In such cases, the manipulation does not occur verbally assertion but through sequential arrangement and visual proximity, which shape emotional inference and guide interpretation at a subconscious level.

The interplay between linguistic and semiotic means of manipulation illustrates the sophistication of modern media discourse. Words, structures, and visuals do not merely transmit information – they construct interpretive realities. Euphemisms, framing devices, visual metaphors, and rhetorical structures collectively shape how audiences feel, think, and judge.

For translators, recognizing these mechanisms is essential to preserving semantic accuracy while avoiding the unintentional transfer of manipulative bias. A responsible translation should expose underlying ideological or emotional framing rather than perpetuate it. Ultimately, awareness of these manipulative strategies deepens both media literacy and translational ethics, reinforcing critical thinking in the age of mediated communication.

3. Translation-oriented framework for handling manipulative strategies in media discourse

Translating media texts requires the development and application of a systematic analytical methodology capable of identifying manipulative elements in the source text and selecting appropriate techniques to reproduce or critically mediate their intended persuasive effect in the target language. Building on insights from translation theory, media linguistics, and cognitive-pragmatic research, the present investigation adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that examines how linguistic form, cognitive impact, and pragmatic function interact within manipulative discourse.

The development of methodological recommendations for detecting and adequately reproducing manipulative elements in cross-linguistic media communication is essential for achieving both linguistic precision and ethical responsibility in translation. Because manipulative strategies are frequently encoded implicitly – through lexical choice, evaluative framing, selective

omission, or multimodal cues – translators must rely on systematic analytical tools that expose these underlying mechanisms of influence. Only by recognizing the cognitive and ideological layers embedded in the source text can translators ensure that manipulation is neither inadvertently intensified nor concealed in the target version.

Translators should adopt a two-stage approach: (1) detect manipulative cues at the linguistic, cognitive, and ideological levels; (2) interpret their communicative and cultural functions in order to retain the intended persuasive or emotional impact while ensuring semantic accuracy in translation. Ethical awareness is also a crucial component of this process: translators act not merely as linguistic mediators but as guardians of communicative integrity, responsible for maintaining balance between fidelity to the source and fairness toward the target audience.

3.1. Detection strategies

Detection strategies focus on identifying the manipulative components embedded in the source text through linguistic and contextual analyses.

Linguistic marker analysis. This stage focuses on identifying key lexical and grammatical indicators of manipulation, including loaded vocabulary (evaluative adjectives, euphemisms, dysphemisms), modality markers (*it seems, allegedly, experts claim*), and emotional intensifiers (*shocking, tragic, heroic*). Attention to these markers allows the translator to detect subtle evaluative cues and implicit authorial positioning embedded in the surface structure of the text.

Discursive framing analysis. The translator should analyse how information is ordered, highlighted, minimized, or omitted to shape interpretation, paying particular attention to techniques, such as cause-effect inversion, presuppositional framing, and headline or lead framing. This analysis reveals how structural choices guide the audience toward specific evaluations even when explicit statements appear neutral.

Contextual correlation analysis. The translator should compare the linguistic choices with the broader situational, ideological, and institutional contexts in which the discourse is produced. This analysis uncovers how specific wording aligns with strategic interests or persuasion goals, revealing manipulative elements that become visible only when language is examined in relation to its socio-political environment.

Multimodal observation analysis. In audio-visual or digital texts, the translator should analyse the interplay between verbal and visual cues including colour symbolism, camera angles, image juxtaposition, typography, or sound effects that reinforce manipulative framing. This analysis reveals

how meaning is constructed across modes, showing how visual and auditory elements amplify or subtly direct the viewer's interpretation beyond the literal verbal message.

3.2. Interpretation strategies

Interpretation strategies systematize the process of evaluating manipulative intent and determining translation priorities.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a systematic approach to uncovering ideological bias, power asymmetries, and hegemonic interests embedded within linguistic choices and discourse structures. It examines how seemingly neutral or descriptive language contributes to the legitimization of dominant viewpoints and the marginalization of alternative perspectives.

In practice, CDA involves several analytical dimensions:

- *text structure and coherence patterns*: the organization of information – what is foregrounded, backgrounded, or omitted – reveals preferred interpretations and discursive hierarchies; cohesion devices, conjunctions, and sequencing can subtly guide readers toward particular causal links or moral judgments;
- *transitivity and agency*: CDA scrutinize how grammatical constructions represent actions and assign responsibility: passive voice, nominalizations, and agent deletion can obscure accountability (*mistakes were made*), whereas active constructions can highlight blame or heroism (*the government protected citizens*);
- *lexical selection and evaluative vocabulary*: word choice carries ideological weight: euphemisms, dysphemisms, technical jargon, and emotionally loaded adjectives encode implicit attitudes and position readers toward or against certain actors or ideas;
- *intertextuality and reference to shared discourses*: CDA identifies how texts draw upon wider cultural narratives, stereotypes, or authoritative voices (*experts say, as tradition teaches*) to construct legitimacy or naturalize ideological assumptions.

Through these layers of analysis, CDA reveals how discourse not only reflects social power but actively produces, maintains, and normalizes it. For translators, Critical Discourse Analysis is crucial for identifying ideological pressure points within the source text and ensuring that these are neither unintentionally amplified nor concealed during translation.

Cognitive Frame Analysis examines how manipulative meaning is constructed by activating conceptual frames, associative networks, and mental models that guide audience interpretation. Cognitive frames function as pre-existing knowledge structures, rooted in culture, ideology, and

experience, that shape how individuals perceive events, evaluate actors, and infer causality.

Cognitive Frame Analysis investigates the following dimensions:

- *conceptual associations and semantic networks*: words and phrases trigger clusters of related concepts; for example, terms such as *threat*, *security*, or *invasion* activate a danger frame that predisposes readers to interpret subsequent information through fear and urgency; manipulative discourse leverages these associations to influence evaluative judgments;

- *metaphorical mapping*: conceptual metaphors structure understanding by mapping one domain onto another: POLITICS IS WAR, THE NATION IS A FAMILY, DISEASE IS ENEMY. Such metaphors simplify complexity and frame issues in emotionally charged ways, describing, for example, political opponents as *attacking* or *infecting* society activates conflict or contamination frames;

- *narrative schemas and storyline templates*: many media texts rely on familiar narrative patterns: heroes vs. villains, crisis vs. resolution, saviour figures, or moral decay narratives; these schemas orient interpretation by positioning actors within predetermined moral roles, thereby reducing the need for explicit persuasion;

- *culturally embedded frames and collective memory*: frames rooted in national history, folklore, religion, or shared trauma carry strong emotional resonance: references to *defending the motherland* or *protecting traditional values* activate deeply embedded identity frames that shape attitudes without requiring explicit argument;

- *implicit cognitive defaults*: texts often rely on unspoken assumptions about “normality”, “necessity”, or “common sense”; these defaults guide inference, making certain interpretations appear self-evident while marginalizing dissenting perspectives.

By tracing how such frames are activated and reinforced, Cognitive Frame Analysis reveals the conceptual architecture of manipulative discourse: not just what is said, but how meaning is mentally structured for the audience. For translators, Cognitive Frame Analysis is indispensable: it exposes ideological and cultural presuppositions that may not be directly translatable and helps ensure that cognitive framing is neither exaggerated nor erased in the target text.

Comparative Microanalysis involves a meticulous sentence-by-sentence or clause-level comparison between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) to identify subtle shifts in tone, emphasis, presupposition, and ideological alignment that may occur during translation. Unlike broader textual analysis, Comparative Microanalysis focuses on micro-level linguistic choices: lexical items, grammatical structures, modality markers,

evaluative adjectives, and the distribution of information across clauses. It examines several key dimensions:

- *shift in evaluative tone*: translators may inadvertently intensify or weaken evaluative markers: for example, an ST term like *concern* translated as *anxiety* increases emotional charge, while translating *crisis* as *difficulty* softens its impact; microanalysis detects such tonal divergences;
- *changes in emphasis and focus*: word order, thematic structure, and information placement may subtly reframe the message; emphasizing different elements in the TT can alter which actors appear responsible or prominent; for example, shifting from active to passive voice may obscure agency;
- *presupposition transfer or transformation*: certain presuppositions encoded in the ST (via definite descriptions, implicative verbs, or temporal markers) may be unintentionally lost or introduced in the TT, reshaping the ideological reading; microanalysis identifies whether unspoken assumptions have been preserved;
- *ideological realignment*: lexical or structural choices may inadvertently move the TT closer to or further from a particular ideological stance; for example, translating *fighters* as *terrorists* dramatically shifts ideological framing; translating *occupation* as *presence* does the same in the opposite direction;
- *consistency of manipulative devices across languages*: euphemisms, dysphemisms, hedging, metaphorical framing, and rhetorical intensifiers often function differently in different linguistic systems; microanalysis ensures that such manipulative devices are rendered transparently rather than exaggerated or neutralized.

Through this precise level of examination, Comparative Microanalysis helps ensure that manipulation is neither unintentionally amplified, which may heighten bias, nor unintentionally erased, which may obscure important pragmatic meanings. The Comparative Microanalysis supports ethical and accurate translation, preserving both the communicative intent and ideological transparency of the original text.

Functional-Pragmatic Analysis evaluates the communicative purpose and pragmatic force of manipulative devices in the source text (ST) – whether they aim to inform, persuade, legitimize, discredit, or emotionally charge the audience – and determines how these functions should be mirrored, moderated, or explicitly signposted in the target text (TT). Functional-Pragmatic Assessment emphasizes *why* a manipulative element is used and *how* its intended effect can be ethically preserved or critically mediated in translation. Key analytical dimensions include:

- *identification of communicative intention*: manipulative devices rarely serve a single purpose: euphemisms, for example, may simultaneously legitimize

policy and minimize emotional reaction, while dysphemisms often discredit opponents and intensify negative sentiment; the translator must determine which pragmatic function is dominant to preserve the strategic intent;

- *assessment of illocutionary force*: manipulative discourse often carries implicit speech acts, such as accusation, justification, reassurance, or condemnation; for example, a phrase like *The government had no choice but to act* performs justification while masking alternatives; identifying these functions helps maintain pragmatic equivalence across languages;

- *audience positioning and intended response*: manipulative rhetoric positions the audience in specific ideological roles, such as victims needing protection, loyal members of an in-group, or rational observers persuaded by “expert opinion”; the TT must reflect this positioning without intensifying or neutralizing its effect;

- *cultural and contextual adjustments*: certain manipulative devices rely on culturally specific connotations, politeness norms, or rhetorical traditions; for example, appeals to national unity or destiny may require cultural adaptation in translation to maintain pragmatic impact without imposing unintended ideological tones;

- *ethical mediation of manipulative effects*: Functional-Pragmatic Analysis acknowledges that translators should avoid unintentionally reinforcing harmful or deceptive manipulation; instead, they may introduce pragmatic transparency, for example, by choosing neutral equivalents or by avoiding overly loaded markers that the ST did not contain; the goal is to maintain communicative function while not increasing manipulative potential.

Through Functional-Pragmatic Analysis, the translator evaluates how manipulative strategies operate at the pragmatic level and makes informed decisions about whether to replicate, attenuate, or contextualize such devices in the TT. Functional-Pragmatic Analysis ensures not only fidelity to the ST but also ethical responsibility, enabling readers to approach translated media discourse with informed critical awareness.

CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrates that manipulation in contemporary media discourse is a complex and multidimensional communicative phenomenon realized through interconnected linguistic, cognitive, emotional, sociocultural, ideological, and multimodal strategies. Media manipulation does not rely solely on explicit persuasion but frequently operates through implicit framing, evaluative lexical choices, syntactic structuring, presuppositions, metaphorical modelling, emotional triggers, visual symbolism, sound effects, and layout organization.

The research systematizes the principal types of manipulative strategies and identifies their dominant linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic markers. It shows that linguistic manipulation is implemented through euphemization, dysphemization, metaphorization, nominalization, passivization, syntactic framing, modality, and decontextualization; cognitive manipulation functions through framing, presupposition, conceptual activation, and selective narrative construction; emotional manipulation exploits affective triggers and identity-based appeals; sociocultural and ideological manipulation rely on stereotypes, myth-making, agenda-setting, selective omission, and normalization of dominant discourses. Multimodal manipulation intensifies persuasive impact by combining verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources.

The study also establishes that translation of manipulative media texts constitutes a particularly sensitive area of intercultural communication. Translators must recognize implicit ideological positioning, preserve the communicative and emotional effects of source texts, and avoid unintentional amplification or neutralization of manipulative meaning. A translation-oriented analytical framework based on linguistic marker analysis, critical discourse analysis, cognitive frame analysis, comparative microanalysis, and functional-pragmatic assessment is proposed as an effective tool for detecting and reproducing manipulative elements responsibly.

Overall, the findings contribute to media linguistics, discourse studies, and translation theory by offering an integrated interdisciplinary model for analysing manipulation in modern media communication and enhancing critical media literacy and translational ethics.

SUMMARY

The article investigates manipulative strategies in contemporary media discourse from linguistic, cognitive, pragmatic, multimodal, and translational perspectives. The relevance of the study is determined by growing influence of digital media, political polarization, and increasing sophistication of persuasive technologies shaping public opinion and ideological perception.

The aim of the study is to identify and systematize major manipulative strategies employed in contemporary media discourse, analyse their linguistic and multimodal realization, and develop translation-oriented recommendations for detecting and adequately reproducing manipulative elements in cross-cultural communication. The research is based on an interdisciplinary methodology integrating critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and translation studies. The empirical material includes authentic English and Ukrainian media texts from news portals, analytical articles, online magazines, and social media platforms.

The study classifies manipulative strategies into linguistic, cognitive, emotional, sociocultural, ideological, and multimodal types. It identifies their dominant realization mechanisms, including lexical substitution, euphemization, dysphemization, metaphorization, framing, presupposition, nominalization, passivization, rhetorical questioning, agenda-setting, stereotyping, selective omission, visual symbolism, sound design, and image sequencing.

Particular attention is paid to translator challenges in detecting hidden manipulation and preserving pragmatic and ideological meaning in translation. A translation-oriented framework is proposed, including linguistic marker analysis, discourse framing analysis, cognitive frame analysis, comparative microanalysis, and functional-pragmatic assessment.

The findings demonstrate that manipulation in media discourse represents a systematic mechanism of shaping perception through integrated verbal and non-verbal means. The results may be useful for linguists, translators, media analysts, and scholars interested in discourse manipulation, media literacy, and ethical translation practices.

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