

**Manipulativity as an object of transdisciplinary humanities knowledge**

**M.T. Shakenova**

M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University  
[maigul\\_79@mail.ru](mailto:maigul_79@mail.ru)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1329-4939>

**G. Zh. Khussainova**

M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University  
[sola\\_cor@mail.ru](mailto:sola_cor@mail.ru)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1269-2887>

**S. E. Kaldygozova**

M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University

**Abstract**

This scientific article presents a content analysis of modern research in the field of manipulation as one of the current topics of the humanitarian scientific paradigm. Manipulativity as a multifaceted phenomenon attracts the attention of researchers from various disciplines, from psychology and sociology to political science, media communication and linguistics. The aim of the article is to bring together different approaches and research into a single transdisciplinary body of knowledge on manipulation.

The authors analyze different aspects of manipulability, including psychological, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects, especially using the example of media discourse, where manipulation is a key element in politics and media in the modern information age.

The focus is on the influence of media manipulation on public opinion, mood, beliefs and values. The article discusses manipulative strategies, tactics and linguistic means of implementing them in media discourse.

This article also emphasizes the importance of educating and developing critical thinking as a means to counter manipulative strategies and the relevance of studying manipulativity in the humanities. The authors believe that a general transdisciplinary study will contribute to a deeper understanding of manipulative behavior and help to develop strategies to effectively counter this phenomenon in modern society.

**Keywords:** manipulativity, transdisciplinarity, hidden nature of influence, manipulator, manipulated, manipulative strategies.



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## 1. Introduction

Manipulativeness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has a significant impact on human behavior, interaction and decision-making in modern society. In everyday life, we regularly encounter situations in which manipulative strategies are used to achieve various goals, whether in the area of personal relationships, politics, the media or business. Manipulative techniques include methods such as deception, psychological influence, manipulation of information and many others. These strategies can be used for noble purposes as well as for personal gain or to manipulate other people's opinions.

The study of manipulability is important to the humanities for several reasons. First, it allows us to better understand the mechanisms of human behavior and interaction in society. Second, analyzing manipulateness helps to more effectively protect a person from unwanted influences and interference by manipulators. Thirdly, the study of manipulative skills contributes to the development of critical thinking and the improvement of information analysis skills.

The aim of this study is to consider manipulation as a transdisciplinary object of knowledge in the humanities and to conduct a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of this phenomenon. We want to analyze the theoretical foundations, the psychological aspects, the socio-cultural influences and the role of manipulation in modern education and in society as a whole. We hope that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of manipulation and to the creation of tools for more effective analysis and counteraction.

## 2. Literary review

In the modern humanities, there are quite a large number of studies dealing with the topics of manipulation and manipulative discourse. We have conducted a content analysis of studies of the most popular works of foreign and domestic scholars on the topic of media discourse and manipulation.

The analysis of manipulateness is a multidimensional study, and there are a number of theoretical approaches that offer different perspectives for the study of this phenomenon. What unites all these studies is that they understand manipulation as a multi-layered, multidimensional phenomenon and simultaneously consider one of its facets, for example, as a particular psychological, socio-political, cognitive-pragmatic and linguistic phenomenon, i.e. one of the components of this multidimensional phenomenon is the focus of the researchers' attention, but at the same time the implicit (tacit) nature of the effects is also emphasized.

A number of works examine political, economic and cultural factors that influence the emergence of media discourse. Manipulation can be viewed in the context of socio-cultural norms and structures.

This approach shows how manipulative strategies can vary according to cultural characteristics and social factors. *Discourse and Power* by Teun A. van Dijk examines how language and discourse are used to build and maintain power in political and socio-cultural contexts. One of the leading and widely used methods for studying manipulation and manipulateness in anthropological linguistics is the critical discourse analysis developed by the foreign researcher T.A. Van Dijk.

According to this method, certain ideologems implicitly expressed in language and necessary for power structures to influence and control society have been studied on the basis of political discourse material. The fact of abuse of power is also emphasized in the understanding of manipulation from the perspective of political science, where the concept of political manipulation is developed. This is understood as the implicit influencing of the political views and beliefs of members of society for the purpose of an unconscious choice, perceived as their own choice, of behaviors that do not coincide with their interests (T.A. van Dijk 2006:356).

The phenomenon of manipulation T.A. Van Dijk looks at it from the perspective of a triangulation framework that brings together discursive, cognitive and social aspects. In other words, manipulation is possible through discourse by involving cognition and thought to influence and control society (T.A. van Dijk 2006:378).

Research by David Freelon and Caroline Wells (Freelon, D., Wells, C.) examines fake news as a form of political communication. The authors convincingly argue that fake news is an effective means to achieve various political goals, such as influencing public opinion, destabilizing political processes and undermining trust in state institutions (Freelon, D., Wells, C. 2020).

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In the field of media theory and communication, the work of Marshall McLuhan is interesting. McLuhan argued that the media do not simply transport information, but are themselves messages that profoundly influence our consciousness and culture. He used the term “zombification” to describe a state in which people are so exposed to the media that they lose the ability to critically analyze information. He warned that the media could create passive consumers of information who are unable to ask questions or analyze what is being offered to them (Marshall McLuhan, 2003)

The article by Egelhofer and Lecheler (Egelhofer J. L., Lecheler S.) states that disinformation should be viewed as a two-dimensional phenomenon. They define disinformation as “a genre of pseudo-journalistic disinformation that is intentionally created to mislead the public” They also argue that the term "disinformation" is often used as a political weapon to discredit news organizations (Egelhofer J. L., Lecheler S.,2019/43(2)).

Context plays an important role in the perception of manipulation, as D. Maillat and others point out in their work in the field of cognitive pragmatics. They understand manipulation as a definitively constructed context, which in each case presupposes the choice of a single statement favorable to the manipulator among all alternatives. These alternative presuppositions within a manipulatively constructed context are blocked in the reader's mind (Maillat, D., 2013:59:190-199).

L. de Saussure states that the manipulator uses both mental operations such as drawing conclusions and checking information for objectivity and reliability as well as emotions for successful manipulation (L. de Saussure, 2005). Emotions play an important role in manipulative processes. Manipulators can actively use emotional influence to evoke certain feelings in the victim, such as guilt, fear or pity. These emotional reactions can make a person more susceptible to manipulative strategies. In their article, Martel, C., Pennycook, G. and Rand, D. G. examine the relationship between emotional trust and belief in fake news.

They argue that people who rely more on emotions when processing information are more likely to believe fake news (Martel, C., Pennycook, G., Rand, D. G. 2020).

One of the most important approaches to the study of manipulation is based on psychology. Manipulativeness is a phenomenon that is inextricably linked to psychological processes and the effects on the human psyche. In this analysis, the focus of research is on understanding the mechanisms of manipulative behavior, including the manipulators' motivation, their psychological characteristics and the effects on the victims. From the point of view of the psychological aspect, the work of Dotsenko E.V. is of great interest. Revealing the psychology of manipulation as a certain psychological influence, he pointed to its implicit (hidden) nature of the influence, in which the manipulated believes that he has come to conclusions beneficial to the manipulator on his own. The researcher also noted that manipulation is characterized by the intention to gain only on the part of the manipulator, who plays on the "weaknesses", pain points of the addressee, using his sphere of the unconscious, taking into account his advantages and influences through the manipulator's skillful use of techniques and technologies of manipulative influence.

As a result, the manipulated person (otherwise the victim) perceives the presented information as real and as his own belief (Dotsenko E.V., 1997). For example, manipulateness relies on various psychological mechanisms, which can range from the manipulation of information to the manipulation of feelings. One of the key mechanisms is the manipulation of trust. Manipulators can use the trust a person has in them to instill false beliefs in them or take control of their decisions.

In most cases, manipulation is considered as a hidden speech influence, for example, in the works of Sternina I.A. is described as an influence that occurs "unconsciously or contrary to his own intention" of the listener (Sternin, I. A., 2012). It is very important to study the linguistic side of manipulation, that is, those linguistic means that the manipulator uses during speech influence. Thus, in the works of Bykova O.N. (Bykova O.N., 1999:18) considers manipulative language tools in specific discursive practices: in the spheres of politics, media, advertising, etc. Modern studies describe which mechanisms are most popular in certain practices. In politics, manipulation can include the use of disinformation, creating images of candidates, and manipulating public opinion. In the media, manipulative techniques can range from sensationalist headlines to cherry-picking of viewpoints. In advertising, manipulation can

manifest itself in the creation of artificial needs and direct psychological manipulation of the consumer. Thus, researchers T.S. Vasilenko, Belova E.V. et al. describe the role of manipulative language (prosodic and lexico-grammatical means) in radio texts (Vasilenko, T.S., Belova, E.V., Shevarshinova E.I.,2019:1(10). Kopnina G.A. classified rhetorical and stylistic manipulative linguistic means (Kopnina G.A.,2012). Gornostaeva Yu.A. studied verbal markers of polarized political discourse (Gornostaeva, Yu.A. ,2018:191). Kazakov A.A. identified 15 parameters for measuring manipulative media text (Kazakov, A.A. 2018). Summarizing these works, it can be noted that they are all based on a linguistic approach, which focuses on the linguistic elements of media discourse (choice of words, phrases, syntactic structure and stylistic devices) and on the analysis of linguistic strategies used to manipulate the audience.

We present only some of the list of studied works. In general, we can note that these works provide an extensive overview of how manipulateness can manifest itself through linguistic and communicative strategies. Their research helps to understand how manipulation can be implemented through text and how language can be used to shape beliefs, influence behavior and manipulate in different sociocultural and political contexts.

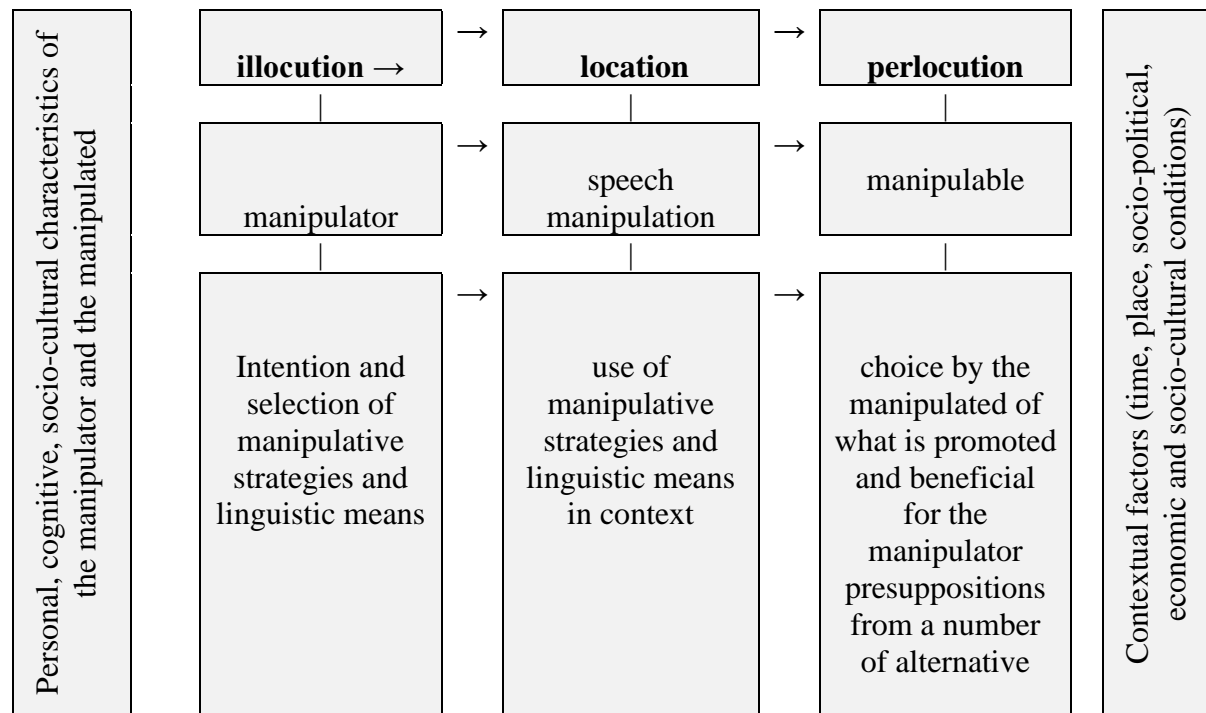
### **3. Research methods and methodology**

The research methodology is based on the scientific work of leading foreign and domestic scholars in the field of manipulation and manipulative discourse. The main research method is the review, analysis and systematization of sources. This process included a review of existing theoretical and empirical work on manipulation in various academic fields. We also applied a transdisciplinary approach manifested in the integration of different scientific disciplines, in particular the combination of knowledge from psychology, sociology, political science, media communication, linguistics and other disciplines to fully understand manipulateness. The combination and integration of data can lead to a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the subject under investigation.

### **4. Results and discussion**

Manipulateness represents a phenomenon in which linguistic means are necessary to implement manipulative strategies that have an informational and emotional impact on the audience, forming certain opinions, beliefs, emotions and moods.

Content analysis of research by leading scientists in the field of manipulation and manipulative discourse allowed us to develop a transdisciplinary concept. We presented this understanding of manipulation earlier in (Shakenova, M.T., Tashimkhanova, D.S., 2020: No. 4). (**Fig. 1**).



**Figure 1. Concept of manipulateness**

Manipulateness includes the following components:

- 1) the process of manipulation, understood as hidden speech influence;
- 2) this speech influence includes three acts: 1 - illocution (intentions of the manipulator - the choice of manipulative strategies and linguistic means), 2 - locution (the very act of using linguistic means in the text, 3 - perlocution (the actual act of influence):
- 3) An arsenal of linguistic means, the choice of which depends on manipulative strategies and tactics in a certain discursive practice;
- 3) The main participants in this process: the manipulator and the manipulated with their personal, cognitive, socio-cultural characteristics.
- 4) Contextual factors (time, place, socio-political, economic and socio-cultural conditions).

This process is successful for the manipulator when the manipulated, depending on the context and clues (linguistic techniques of manipulative tactics and strategies), perceives a presupposition or emotional attitude that is beneficial to the manipulator from a number of possible ones as his own belief.

Let's consider an example of the implementation of one of the strategies in manipulative media discourse. One of the most frequently used strategies in manipulative discourse is the strategy of discrediting, which is characterized by various tactics, such as “analysis-minus”, accusation, intensification of emotions, condemnation, etc. For example, a manipulator, having the intention to instill a negative image of a subject, object, the phenomenon or process described in his publication carefully selects from a huge arsenal of manipulative means those that will

allow him to implement the tactics of accusation. Thus, one of the powerful manipulative means of accusation tactics is the active and even excessive use of words with a negative tonality. *An analysis of the corpus of media texts we collected revealed that the following words with negative semantics are most often used in the texts (top 20): problem - 585, war - 337, against - 259, threat - 176, conflict - 164, violation - 159, sanction - 138, Taliban - 135, violence - 130, crime - 121, negative - 114, crisis - 106, terrorism - 98, deficit - 92, death - 89, addiction - 86, corruption - 85, die - 83, fine - 77, victim - 73.* Let's give examples. **Fraudsters** carry out various transactions, and bank account owners do not even know about it. [https://www.inform.kz/ru/moshenniki-snyali-10-mln-tenge-s-depozita-kostanayki\\_a3992416](https://www.inform.kz/ru/moshenniki-snyali-10-mln-tenge-s-depozita-kostanayki_a3992416) (“**Fraudsters** withdrew 10 million tenge from *Kostanayka’s* deposit”, 10/19/2022); “**Security threat: Kazakhstan is on the verge of a demographic catastrophe**” <https://www.caravan.kz/gazeta/ugroza-bezopasnosti-kazakhstan-okazalsya-na-poroge-demograficheskoy-katastrofy-862903/> (07/21/2022); **A crack in education.** How many schools can be built with **bribery** money? <https://orda.kz/inicziativa-tokaeva-stroitelstvo-shkol-eto-kompensaciya-za-ukradennoe-budushhee/> (09/06/2022). The same role is played by evaluative phraseological units, which also have a negative connotation: *Youth meetings where the new generation like Seliger were **brainwashed** did not in any way affect the desire to leave the right Russia for the wrong West.* <https://rezonans.asia/televidenie-aktiviziruet-biologicheskie-instinkty/> (Television activates biological instincts.//Resonance.06.09.21), *An informed person is a strong person, that’s why everyone is trying to “**clue his brains.**”* <https://rezonans.asia/propaganda-vchera-i-segodnya-2/> (Propaganda yesterday and today, or why propaganda often defeats the truth.//Resonans.25.08.21). It should be noted that a description of the entire arsenal of manipulative linguistic means is not the object of research in this article; we have only given as an example only two linguistic means (words and phraseological units with negative semantics) for the implementation of one manipulative tactic (accusation). Our other studies describe various linguistic mechanisms of manipulative tools in media discourse through the use of corpus analysis methods.

Thus, this transdisciplinary concept of manipulability combines such approaches as linguistic, cognitive-discursive, sociocultural, psychological and contextual approaches. Such integration of methodological approaches will make it possible to more deeply understand the mechanisms of manipulation in various discursive practices, including media manipulation.

## 5. Conclusions

Manipulativeness plays a significant role in modern society. Its impact is felt in politics, economics, socio-cultural spheres, and it can have a profound impact on the life and decisions of society. This study examined various aspects of manipulateness: psychological, social, cultural, cognitive-discursive, linguistic and contextual. The multidimensionality of the concept of manipulateness once again emphasizes the importance of its study within the framework of related humanities, which will make it possible to understand the mechanisms of this phenomenon and contribute to the development of critical thinking and ethical awareness among the population, its protection against manipulative influences. Further research in the field of manipulation could be aimed at deeper understanding of the specific mechanisms of manipulation, as well as the development of effective methods to counter manipulative strategies and promote media literacy.

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