

Linguistic Means of Manipulation in English Fiction: B. Shaw's Works

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Abstract—This article summarizes studies identifying linguistic means of implementing manipulative influence in English fiction. The article discusses various scientific views on the essence and main characteristics of manipulation, the levels of analysis of linguistic means of manipulation, the methods of speech influence that are used in linguistic manipulation, and the types of manipulation. The authors consider linguostylistic means of manipulative influence. The article presents the results of an empirical study of linguistic means of manipulative influence at the lexical and syntactical levels as exemplified by the classic plays by B. Shaw. It is concluded that the above-mentioned verbal means are pragmatically conditioned and have a high manipulative potential. Having emotive and associative semantics, they attract the attention of the addressee, create positive imagery, and stimulate emotional-associative reactions.

Index Terms—metaphor, epithet, euphemism, antithesis, rhetorical question

I. INTRODUCTION

Even though a lot of research has been concerned with artistic discourse in recent years, the study of its features remains relevant. In the course of discursive practice, the speaker's thoughts are expressed and a new reality is constructed (Monin et al., 2022; Shiryayeva, 2007). This understanding determines the ability of artistic discourse to influence human consciousness (Monin et al., 2023). In this case, influence is imposed in a hidden form, against the will of the object of influence (Kotovchikhina et al., 2022). One of its methods is linguistic manipulation (Nurgali et al., 2022).

Linguistic manipulation is regarded as one of the most effective types of influence in artistic discourse due to the fact that artistic discourse is emotional and represents a symbolic struggle carried out using language (Azharbekova et al., 2020; Baisarina et al., 2022).

Until now, the means of linguistic influence in artistic discourse have either not been part of an independent study or have been considered indirectly. The issues stated in the article are relevant due to the need for further research into language manipulation (Guendouz & Al-Shuaibi, 2022), i.e. many aspects of its implementation are still insufficiently studied (Korotaeva & Kapustina, 2022). Thus, linguistic manipulations are often used by fictional characters in classic English literature but they have not become the subject of a special linguistic study.

Recently, linguistic literature has been paying increasing attention to the definition of manipulation. According to Kopnina (2007), the concept of manipulation does not have a clear interpretation as there is no single and generally accepted definition for linguistics and other sciences, and the vagueness of the term makes it difficult to determine the essence of the phenomenon. Under the most generalized and reasoned approach, verbal manipulation is a targeted impact on the recipient to change their behavior in the interests of the manipulator (Kopnina, 2007).

Manipulation has the following main characteristics: manipulation is not felt by the object of the impact; influence not only on the conscious (mind) but also on the unconscious (instincts, emotions) that is not amenable to arbitrary control; managing one's attitude to objects and phenomena of the surrounding world in the manner chosen by the manipulator; achievement of secret and selfish goals at the expense of the object of manipulation; deliberate distortion of real facts (disinformation, etc.), the creation of illusions and myths, etc. (Sheinov, 2001); negative intentionality to the addresser; hidden nature of the impact; destructive impact on an individual and society as a whole; destructiveness; ethical unacceptability (Kara-Murza, 2009).

Scholars most often start from the analysis of speech material: there are examples of unscrupulous argumentation in the chosen array of texts, which are described and regarded as manipulation techniques. If the described technique is

found in the speech of any new speaker, it is concluded that they are manipulating (Bykova, 1999). It is necessary to distinguish between the objective function of manipulation and one's desire to manipulate the addressee, which is subjectively inherent in the addresser. In this regard, there are three levels of analyzing means of manipulation.

1. Speech level. It embraces cognitive linguistics, linguopragmatics, sociolinguistics, and other areas that study the speech potential of phonetics, syntax, vocabulary, etc. At the same time, language has a powerful interpretive and manipulative potential since the possibility of using language as a means of secret influence is inherent in the very structure of the speech system (Belyaeva, 2008; Nikitina, 2006; Zimnyaya, 2001).

Linguists mainly focus on specific verbal means of manipulative influence, including the replacement of neutral concepts with emotional-evaluative ones, metaphors, quotations, etc. (Zimnyaya, 2001).

2. Discourse level. Many works on linguistics note that some discourses have recently been increasing their manipulative influence (Vasilev, 2013). When studying the methods of argumentation, it is necessary to determine all types of discourse based on their predominant orientation towards rational or emotional methods of influence. These are as follows:

1) Types of discourse focused on suggestion (political, advertising, etc.). There is a wide range of methods of influence since the subject in question requires a one-sided and biased attitude. Bias is practically not masked and understandable to the audience. These types of discourse are usually referred to as manipulative (Vinogradova, 2010).

2) Types of discourse focused on persuasion (judicial, managerial, etc.). They must comply with more stringent requirements: those techniques that fit into the advertising framework are unacceptable, and more subtle and less intrusive techniques are used instead (Ozyumenko, 2017).

3) Types of discourse focused on evidence (scientific, legislative, etc.). The range of permissible means of influence is much narrower since argumentation is built in strict accordance with the laws and principles of logic and appeals to the truth. It is believed that manipulation techniques cannot be used in such types of discourse (Metakova, 2006).

3. Rhetorical level. The research object is not language units and functions, but the real utterances of certain people. Their main characteristic is the task implemented by the addresser (Ostroushko, 2002). In this regard, the mere presence of assessments, antitheses, metaphors, quotations, and other units of language that have a manipulative potential does not indicate that the speaker is manipulating. Such a conclusion can only be made if it is established that these units are involved in the distortion of the addressee's picture of the world (since the addresser intends to distort this picture of the world) (Chikileva, 2005).

Thus, the first two levels are responsible for what is in language and reveal what can be called objective manipulation. Subjective manipulation refers to the third level (it depends only on the quality of the speaker's speech). Hence, a contradiction arises that characterizes manipulation as an object of linguistic research. On the one hand, the main function of suggestion-based discourses is to mislead the addressee when it comes to social practice. On this basis, any statement within the framework of politics or advertising can be regarded as manipulative, even if the author had open intentions (Sukhareva, 2008).

There is no doubt that all viewpoints on manipulation as an object of linguistic research have the right to exist, develop and refine the theory of influence. However, one should insist on a strict distinction between these opinions. For example, the establishment of linguopragmatic features and the main speech functions of manipulation in political discourse (Chizh, 2012) do not prove that the addresser manipulates public opinion using quotes from the Bible or Shakespeare. According to Lobas (2015) and Prigarina (2013), this classification at the rhetorical level requires to establish methods of deliberate reality distortion by the speaker, while quoting popular texts might be due to their desire to present common values, to be better understood by the audience, etc., which is acceptable and legal, especially in discourses of suggestion, and therefore cannot be viewed as manipulation.

According to Bizyukov (2012), the methods of speech influence that are used in linguistic manipulation are very diverse: from the deliberate distortion of reality by assigning untypical connotations to keywords to subtle and virtuoso wordplay, creating the desired impression with the help of speech expressiveness, i.e. tropes, stylistic (rhetorical) figures, etc.

Vladimirova (2011) mentions image manipulation (the creation of real or fictional figures by the manipulator to influence the recipient's imagination), conventional manipulation (associated with the use of certain norms, rules, rituals, etc., which direct the addressee's behavior according to generally accepted patterns), operational-objective manipulation (due to inertia, force of habit, etc.), exploitation (the intention to suggest to the addressee that the responsibility for what is happening lies with them) and spiritual manipulation (reliance on life values that have formed semantic attitudes of a person).

Grintsova (2014) believes that there were several speech levels of manipulative influence: 1) the manipulation of information: default, selection, overexposure, distortion, reversal, construction, fragmentation, the moment of information supply, and limited information supply; 2) the paralogical level through certain techniques, i.e. are conscious and purposeful deviations from the laws and rules of formal logic; 3) the linguostylistic level through stylistic devices that can apply to all language levels (phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and lexico-syntactical).

Considering the specifics of a literary text, the main levels to be studied in this article will be lexical and lexico-syntactical. According to Shagbanova (2020), linguistic means of implementing manipulative influence include a

metaphor, comparison, epithet, and euphemism at the lexical level and antithesis, repetition, and rhetorical question at the lexical-syntactical level.

When considering a metaphor from the perspective of its involvement in manipulation, scholars distinguish between two types: 1) a metaphor involved in the implementation of manipulation; 2) a metaphor as a technique or tactic of manipulation (Fedoseev, 2003).

The manipulative impact of comparison depends on its type, namely: a comparison, in which the subject and object of comparison are explicitly expressed; a comparison expressed by a combination of an adjective and a substantive group; a comparison in which the right part determines the modus operandi of the verb on the left part; a comparison that compares situations (Brusenskaya & Belyaeva, 2022).

According to Znamenskaya and Bychkova (2015), the manipulative effect of epithets is to: 1) enhance the expressiveness and figurativeness of a particular work; 2) make the language more expressive; 3) enrich the content of a statement; 4) highlight a typical feature or quality of an object, phenomenon; 5) emphasize an individual feature of an object or phenomenon; 6) create a vivid idea about some object; 7) evaluate some object or phenomenon; 8) cause a certain emotional attitude to an object or phenomenon; 9) help to see the author's attitude to the surrounding world.

Euphemisms can be also used to distort information. In English, a euphemism is a neutral word that has no emotional coloring or descriptive expression that is usually used in texts to replace other words considered unacceptable or inappropriate. Such a replacement is used if the word is prohibited in society, is rude or indecent, can offend or upset someone, etc. Based on euphemization, the phenomenon of politically correct language was formed (Baskova, 2006).

Euphemisms serve as a means of rethinking the phenomena of reality and can be used not only for the sake of tact but also for speech impact on the addressee: the ambiguity created by euphemism shifts the focus from the negative aspects of reality to the neutral ones. Due to a large amount of information, it is difficult for the addressee to isolate and comprehend euphemisms in texts. Moreover, not everyone is familiar with this linguistic phenomenon, so the addressee is not aware of their manipulative impact. The very concept of a euphemism conceals its manipulative potential: due to the replacement of words and the creation of a neutral or positive connotation, the addressee's attitude to some event changes, and an association arises with something positive, although it is really about something negative (Baskova, 2006).

Being the most important stylistic figure and means of manipulation, an antithesis has been effectively used and is being used in oratory, helping to produce a deep impact on listeners. Furthermore, almost no literary work can do without it. According to linguists, an antithesis is one of the most common techniques of an abstract or intellectual style. The semantics of an antithesis consists in opposing such expressed verbal thoughts that should be somehow highlighted or emphasized in a literary text (Ryabukha & Shlopakova, 2022).

Considering an antithesis, scholars concluded that it was based on both the opposition and comparison of logically different concepts, phenomena, and images. Opposite concepts, phenomena, or images must be compared, i.e. a priori refer to one class or category of objects, and then classified according to the evaluative attribute good and bad. The antithetical meaning arises when, in the process of comparing and contrasting objects and images, their internal contradictions and assignment to various evaluative categories are revealed, while the content and orientation of any assessment (especially emotional) depends on the position of the human observer and is objectified through various speech units (Solomina, 2014).

Repetition as a stylistic means, whose specifics is the repeated use of a unit of a certain linguistic level or several levels at once, also contributes to the effect of manipulation. Repetition plays an important role in the implementation of the main functions of political discourse: persuasion and influence. The significance of repetition is associated with the effect of amplification, accentuation, and actualization arising from the repetition of any speech units (Safina, 2017).

A rhetorical question is defined in linguistics as a figure of speech that consists in giving an affirmation or denial of an interrogative form to create a stylistic effect, draw attention and increase the emotionality of a statement. A positive rhetorical question realizes a negative fact, while a negative rhetorical question expresses a positive sentiment. A statement in the form of a question and the affirmative asymmetry of formal and meaningful characteristics of an interrogative sentence are recognized as the main features of rhetoric. No informative response to a rhetorical question is a typical but not obligatory sign of rhetoric (Sedov, 2003).

The manipulative impact of a rhetorical question is that the universal truths differ in the amount of universality and include judgments, whose indisputability is explained by the objective processes of the surrounding world, universal values, social norms, and rules of behavior, as well as judgments based on subjective opinions and worldviews (Kulikova, 2017).

The study aims at determining linguistic means of manipulation in English fiction.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

- To review the relevant literature on language manipulation means and the features of linguostylistic means of implementing manipulative influence;
- To analyze the availability of linguistic means for manipulative influence at the lexical and syntactic levels as exemplified by English fiction.

II. METHODS

We used the following research methods in the course of the study:

- The context analysis of literary texts to study the functional specifics of words and their meanings depending on the context;
- The semantic-stylistic analysis to identify the stylistic markedness of words and expressions, i.e. evaluation, expression, and other stylistic components in the text of a literary work;
- The descriptive method for characterizing the linguistic phenomena of literary works;
- The methods of quantitative processing of linguistic means of implementing manipulative influence at the lexical and syntactical levels.

The illustrative material for the study includes classic English literary works and plays by Shaw: “Pygmalion” (Shaw, 2003b), “Heartbreak House” (Shaw, 2009a), “The Man of Destiny” (Shaw, 2009c), “Devil’s Disciple” (Shaw, 2001), “The Apple Cart” (Shaw, 2003a), “The Philanderer” (Shaw, 2004), and “John Bull’s Other Island” (Shaw, 2009b).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative results of the study are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY OF LINGUISTIC MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING MANIPULATIVE INFLUENCE AT THE LEXICAL AND SYNTACTICAL LEVELS

Linguistic means	Amount
Lexical level	
Metaphor	64
Comparison	83
Epithet	52
Euphemism	36
Total	235
Lexico-syntactical level	
Antithesis	24
Repetition	27
Rhetorical question	12
Total	63

Let us consider the use of metaphors in artistic discourse for manipulation if it is a conscious choice of the author when a metaphor is the main and only way to achieve the effect desired by the manipulator. Here is an example of the use of a metaphor at this level. Describing a sports event, Shaw could present information in such a way that readers had a certain mood or expected certain things from what they would see: *The battle ... was fought between two boy's football teams* (Shaw, 2009a).

In this case, a military metaphor was used in artistic discourse, which could also be used in any other kind of discourse. The *battle* metaphor realizes this type of metaphor. In this example, two football teams are shown as two opposing sides, like two armies in a war. The *was fought* verb indicates a war-like clash between two football teams. This resemblance to a military battle allows the author to interpret a sports event as a military one, thereby conveying an appropriate attitude to the described events by the objects of manipulation.

Next, the author used military metaphors and other types of metaphorical models and concepts, as well as other means of expression to convey an idea, mood, or attitude that would be perceived by the recipient. For example, metaphors that arose based on historical events rooted in the minds of the nation: *On that Sunday evening ... the German international experienced its Waterloo ...* (Shaw, 2004).

In addition to the information known by readers, there is also a reference to a military event that acts as a certain cultural code, simplifies the perception of information, and makes it more personal.

In this case, a metaphor has a world-modeling function, creating a certain picture of the world in the minds of the objects of manipulation and allowing the manipulator to use a wide range of expressive means to achieve their goals (Znamenskaya & Bychkova, 2015).

A comparison is another stylistic device for creating images in a literary work.

The above-mentioned material has demonstrated that comparisons have a diverse structure. In this connection, we will give examples from “Pygmalion” (Shaw, 2003b) and consider comparisons in which the subject and object of comparison are explicitly expressed, the latter acting as a predicative: *Emily was like a gorgeous, delicate china doll* (Shaw, 2003b).

In this example, the subject of comparison is the heroine, *Emily*, while the object of comparison is a *china doll*. The author did not directly indicate the characteristics of the component by which the comparison was made, and its absence allows the reader to consider this comparison individually. Due to such definitions as *gorgeous and delicate*, the reader can draw a portrait of an elegant heroine who attracts admiring glances.

On the other hand, this structural type of comparison can transfer negative emotions to the heroine: *I'm kind of an icicle* (Shaw, 2003b).

The object of comparison is based on the image of an icicle characterized by a high degree of uncertainty: the icicle can be associated both with a spring drop and with the coldness of human relations (alienation). To interpret the comparison, it is necessary to consider a wider context: the heroine had high hopes for a business meeting, which melted away like an icicle under the spring sun.

The next type of comparison is a structure expressed by a combination of an adjective and a substantive group. For example: *Inside I feel as light as a bubble* (Shaw, 2003b).

This comparison, including such an explicit characteristic as *a light*, emphasizes the state of the heroine: she feels as light, carefree, and weightless as a soap bubble; she managed to look at her life in a new way, to lighten the burden of meaningless experiences.

Let us consider the use of comparisons in which the right part determines the mode of action with the verb of the left part, for example, *Suze comes rushing up, like a puppy* (Shaw, 2003b).

The author compared the girl with a puppy, thereby emphasizing the joyful and enthusiastic state of the heroine. In combination with the *rush* verb, this comparison acquires a dynamic movement and activity.

The use of a stylistic device for comparing a situation is exemplified by the following statement: *A good surgeon knows when his knife touches a nerve; a good critic knows the same with his pen* (Shaw, 2009c).

The author compared a *good surgeon* and a *good critic*, as well as such nouns as *a knife* and *a pen*.

Thus, the use of comparisons by Shaw reveals his attitude to reality.

The next subject of analysis is epithets. Let us give an example from "Pygmalion" (Shaw, 2003b) that follows the adventures of Henry Higgins, Professor of Phonetics, who decides to bring the flower girl Eliza to his home and teach her good English and social manners, although he is well aware that this plan might fail.

HIGGINS (brusquely, recognizing her with unconcealed disappointment, and at once, baby like, making an intolerable grievance of it). ... (To the girl) Be off with you: I don't want you (Shaw, 2003b).

The professor's reluctance to deal with the flower girl is emphasized by the epiphora based on the repetition of *you*, while such emotive epithets as *unconcealed* and *intolerable* convey the hero's dislike for Eliza. The day before she created an unpleasant incident for him when passers-by mistook the professor for an informer.

The emotive epithet *frightfully interesting* intensifies the statements and shows the degree of Higgins' enthusiasm for realizing his plan to transform a human being. Higgins believes that he has every right to independently make changes in human nature:

HIGGINS... But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human... (Shaw, 2003b).

Phrasal epithets are almost always speech epithets created for a given context. Indeed, the writer creates a phrasal epithet when there is a need to accurately define a feature for which there is no special word. Unlike simple and complex epithets expressed by simple and complex adjectives, as well as epithets expressed by adverbs, phrasal epithets are always positioned before the noun they belong to:

She has a nobly modeled neck, short at the back and low between her shoulders in front (Shaw, 2003b).

The *modeled* epithet is enhanced by the *nobly* neologism, and such definitions as *short* and *low* indicate a descriptive phrase.

The expressive function of epithets becomes most tangible in those cases when epithets line up in a synonymous row and each member of the row introduces its unique stylistic connotation of meaning.

The *hot* and *bright* adjectives, which would be normal logical definitions for *fire*, become synesthetic epithets, defining *thunder*, whose semantics allows only the definition of a sound: *On the left was the hot bright thunder of the fire* (Shaw, 2009a).

Speaking of euphemisms, the gradual connection is manifested in the varying degree of the features of the described phenomenon. This gradation can be embedded directly in the semantics of lexical units: *We never rush, we hasten* (Shaw, 2001).

Sometimes the understanding of euphemistic renaming relies on certain background knowledge: *She was not like other girls, so tall and skinny. She was a real woman of classic proportions* (Shaw, 2003b).

The meaning of this euphemism is based on the inferential knowledge that plumpness had been considered an important component of female attractiveness until the beginning of the 20th century. The *classic* nomination contributes to a positive assessment of the statement as a whole.

The main morphological means of forming euphemisms are the use of articles, modal verbs, conditional mood, and passive voice, for example, *It was not his mistake; it was just a mistake* (Shaw, 2009b).

In the given example, the euphemistic effect is based on the indefinite article, which allows not to associate the phenomenon with any specific person.

At the lexico-syntactical level, we should start with the analysis of an antithesis. Shaw used it throughout "Pygmalion" since the hero's perception is based on conflicting means of nomination. The role of *professor* and *preacher* has a positive assessment. On the contrary, such lexemes as *brute*, *tyrant*, and *bully* have negative connotations (Shaw, 2003b).

In the following example, the author touched upon the topic of marriage. The *man* and *woman* nouns are opposed to each other. In addition, such phrases as *window open* and *window shut* are in antithetical relationships:

Marriage is an alliance entered into by a man who cannot sleep with the window shut, and a woman who cannot sleep with the window open (Shaw, 2003b).

In the following example, such phrases as *never making mistakes* and *never making the same one* defining success are opposed by using the *but* conjunction.

Success does not consist in never making mistakes but in never making the same one a second time (Shaw, 2003b).

Repetitions as a means of manipulation have different manifestations. Firstly, they are realized in tautological repetitions that arise from the repeated use of the same speech units, i.e. morphemes, words, phrases, or sentences (repetitions in form).

Here is a brilliant example of a pun based on repetition: *That getting next to Nature certainly got next to me (Shaw, 2003b).*

The following abstract from “Pygmalion” also contains a repetition-based pun: *I notice that you do not notice me (Shaw, 2003b).*

Eliza’s speech is full of unnecessary repetitions that not only create a comic effect but also show the girl in a certain light. In this case, special markers can be used that show the beginning of each repetition (in other words, that is to say, I repeat, I cannot but repeat, etc.).

Thus, the author uses this stylistic device to clarify and expand the meaning of sentences, as well as to create emotional reinforcement.

As a rule, a rhetorical question contains the most objective universal truth regarding objective effectiveness and physical phenomena that exist independently of the will, desire, and worldview of a person. The subjectivity of such statements is expressed by the fact that they are given through the person’s perception of life. Their objectivity is expressed by the fact that the stated judgment is a global observation of humankind and not an expression of the personal opinion of the speaker: *Can... flattery soothe the dull cold car of death? (Shaw, 2004).*

Rhetorical questions often express universal truths based on universal human values, human relationships, attitudes towards life and death, love and hate, wisdom, etc.; they are undeniable: *Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Shaw, 2009b).*

Rhetorical questions reveal philosophical reasoning, containing an attempt to comprehend what is happening around, to find the meaning of life, they combine the universal laws of being and the subjective position of the speaker: *Canst thou by searching find God (Shaw, 2004).*

The universal truth represented by a rhetorical question can be a judgment based on the norms, values, social attitudes and laws of a particular community. Such statements are more subjective and might not be undeniable for a representative of another community: *Who dies if England live? (Shaw, 2009a).*

The indisputability of such judgments for all members of a particular community elevates them to the rank of universal truths within that community.

The rhetoric of a rhetorical question is free from context even if it represents a widespread, informationally complete, and autosemantic statement: *I did not worry about him anymore, because who was going to believe him? (Shaw, 2001).* Their rhetorical nature is based on the completeness of information containing the argumentation of the implied rhetorical question.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the above-mentioned linguistic means of manipulative influence are pragmatically conditioned and have a high manipulative potential. Having emotive and associative semantics, they attract the attention of the addressee (reader, theatrical spectator), create positive imagery, and stimulate emotional-associative reactions. The redundancy or insufficiency of linguistic means, as well as the deviation from the neutral model of a sentence, indicates the inclusion of the subjective element in the statement and creates certain speech tension. The growing use of stylistically colored means highlights a zone of linguistic tension and, consequently, the possibility of manipulation, which manifests itself in the speech utterances of fictional characters.

In light of the foregoing, linguistic manipulation as a subject of linguistic research is a complex phenomenon. It has several distinctive features to implement its tasks within the framework of discourse, i.e. the formation of a certain public opinion. Being a hidden impact, language manipulation has the goal of controlling the opinion and behavior of a wide audience. Its effectiveness depends on whether readers perceive its program of action. To achieve its goal, the subject of language manipulation uses language tools (language manipulation tools), whose systemic use creates language manipulation technologies that allow one to achieve the goals and objectives set.

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