

ARTICLE

## Speech Manipulation in Motivational Business Lectures

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to investigate manipulative strategies in public business media discourse. Relevance of this issue is predetermined by the linguopragmatic potential of public business speech. It is necessary to recognise and counteract manipulative techniques which leads to the need for linguistic research into manipulative tactics and most vulnerable targets of manipulation. On the basis of a collection of business lectures, 295 speeches were selected by continuous sampling to analyse persuasive manipulation strategies in the sphere of public business speech. The main research method was functional-pragmatic analysis which helped to reveal manipulative effects and covert intentions of public business media discourse. The paper makes a contribution to pragmatic studies of verbal manipulation and highlights specific manipulative traits of public business lectures: different degrees of preparation of the audience and the presenter, expectation as an important cognitive factor, and applying manipulation models (gradation model, background model, evaluative model, and indirect model). In addition, the concept of business media discourse is analysed and the levers of manipulative influence in motivational discourse are identified (emotions, cognitive sphere, social instincts). The authors conclude that simplification and stereotyping underly the manipulative potential of motivational public speeches. Practical significance of the study is determined by the fact that it helps to identify the speech means used to carry out manipulative influence. The study bridges the gap in the analysis of manipulative means of emergent hybrid genres of business discourse and lays grounds for theoretical analysis of strategies to counter verbal manipulation.

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## 1. Introduction

When teaching a foreign language today, special emphasis is placed on its use as a tool for effective speech interaction<sup>[1]</sup>. Practitioners have repeatedly emphasized that having mastered a certain set of knowledge in the field of grammar and vocabulary, sometimes students may be unable to advantageously present themselves and put forward their arguments in public<sup>[2, 3]</sup>. Despite the fact that business English courses pay quite a lot of attention to the lexical-stylistic and structural components of public speech, the skills of influencing the audience, maintaining attention, and establishing contact with listeners can be demonstrated by the speaker based only on the personal qualities of the speaker and his communicative experience<sup>[4]</sup>. Thus, there is a need to enrich the communicative repertoire with relevant speech techniques, strategies and tactics of public speaking<sup>[5, 6]</sup>.

The research questions of the study are:

- What specific models of manipulation underlie public business media discourse?
- What levers of manipulation are peculiar to motivational business lectures?

### 1.1. Literature Review

Speech manipulation has been an object of research in psychology, communication studies, sociolinguistics and pragmalinguistics. The overview or recent publications allows to look at manipulative rhetoric in diverse contexts highlighting its instrumental role in actualisation of political, educational, and business discourses.

Political discourse has been a vast sphere to study manipulative tactics of speech influence. Rahro and Jebelli<sup>[7]</sup> basing on critical discourse analysis method study the election debates between E. Raisi and A. Hemmati during 2021 presidential election. Comparing two speakers, they conclude that Raisi resorted to positive language unlike Hemmati who relied on negative irony. This difference of communicative strategies results in concealed influence aimed at forming public opinion and demonstrating events in a favourable or

distorted light.

As Biriş and Drămnescu<sup>[8]</sup> note, manipulative language impacts public behaviour. Their study of election speeches in Romania demonstrates using manipulative techniques to the benefit of the candidate and direct voters' behaviour. This research goes in line with the results presented by David<sup>[9]</sup> examining persuasive rhetoric of political communication, highlighting ideological potential of language.

Manipulative rhetoric studies embrace issues of racism and discrimination in political discourse. Saul<sup>[10]</sup> has analysed so-called "dogwhistles" and "figleaves" which promote the spread of racism and falsehoods. Carrying out critical discourse analysis he concludes that racist discourse is frequently normalised which raises ethical concerns about societal impacts of speech manipulation.

Pragmatic studies of manipulative discourse proceed in the work of Polyakova et al.<sup>[11]</sup> analysing such strategies as referential manipulation and argumentative manipulation. Taking American political discourse as empirical material the authors single out identification formulas, subjectivity, epistemic words, reference to authority, consent of recipient as tactics aiming to influence the audience and make a decision beneficial to the politician.

In the framework of sociolinguistic approach, manipulation also relies on identity construction. Approach proposed by Ädel et al.<sup>[12]</sup> focuses on persuasive functions of a touristic website. The authors stress that pronoun "you" is frequently used to construct identity and build rapport with prospective visitors. The study demonstrates how verbal manipulation influence recipients' behaviour and perception. Seven persuasive functions are distinguished: specifying identities, constructing expert guide, building rapport, anticipating reader reactions, personifying destination, presenting options, imaging scenarios.

Psycholinguistic approach to the study of manipulation underlies the work of Truba et al.<sup>[13]</sup>. The article emphasizes the dynamics of suggestion in digital educational discourse. By integrating insights from psychology, linguistics and communication studies, they argue that teachers apply special linguistic strategies to form opinions, attitudes and beliefs

in social media: suggestion, manipulation, attraction, and fascination.

Thus, current research into speech manipulation concentrates on linguistic-pragmatic dimensions of speech influence, psychological approach to assessing the change of human perception and, consequently, modification of behaviour, and sociolinguistic approach to manipulation as regulation of mass consciousness.

The present study relies on pragmalinguistic approach to analysis language phenomena<sup>[5, 14]</sup> and aims to bridge the gap in existing research by providing a universal classification of manipulative models in public business media discourse.

## 1.2. Theoretical Background

As literature overview shows, the sphere of business media has not yet been extensively studied as a realm of manipulative rhetoric. This can be explained by the fact that a public business lecture belongs to a hybrid genre of business mass communication.

### 1.2.1. Business Media Discourse

Unlike business negotiations, meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence, business media discourse involves a wide audience interested in business topics. The concept of business media discourse has been touched upon slightly in linguistic studies<sup>[15]</sup> (but has not yet taken shape as a term<sup>[16]</sup>).

TED lectures were chosen as a valuable resource of pragmatically loaded public business speech. As Tran and Ngueng<sup>[17]</sup> note, they demonstrate mobilization of all verbal repertoire coupled with non-verbal tools and serve as models for efficient public speaking performance.

The communicative functions employed by TED speakers play a crucial role in influencing audiences. Ryan and Dimas<sup>[18]</sup> identify heuristic and interactional functions as the most common among lecturers.

Nisa et al.<sup>[19]</sup> carried out a linguistic analysis of technical and non-technical language in TED revealing that presenters use a variety of tactics to convey complex ideas. Language diversity is of paramount importance in public speaking and specialists can benefit from analysing motivational business lectures to improve their persuasive potential.

The structuralist understanding of discourse as a social

practice is widely known<sup>[20]</sup>; business media discourse thus represents social practice related to specific entrepreneurial activity, for example, business media discourse of quality press is frequently studied on the material of Business Week, Fortune, Forbes Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Entrepreneur, Fast Company etc see<sup>[1, 15, 21–23]</sup>.

Corporate media discourse is determined by the company's activities in the media space, aimed at creating and strengthening its image. It can be targeted at various consumer segments, forming a corporate culture and value system<sup>[24]</sup>. Current works on business media discourse have been conducted in the field of lexicology of business media discourse<sup>[25]</sup>, functioning of economic vocabulary in media discourse<sup>[26]</sup>, a classification of a stable system of terms has been constructed<sup>[14, 27]</sup>. but the issues of manipulative properties of business media discourse subtypes have been understudied.

Within the framework of cognitive science, the concept of business is considered as one of the key media concepts that purposefully model the picture of the world and are aimed at managing mass consciousness. The associative field of the concept "business" is influenced by socio-economic factors. Conceptualization of the media space is aimed at creating certain meanings that do not reflect, but form a picture of the world<sup>[28]</sup>.

Also, within the framework of the semantic approach, business media discourse is defined as a set of meanings that are actualised in the field of entrepreneurial activity and managerial career<sup>[29, 30]</sup>.

Thus, theoretical prerequisites have been formed for the study of various subtypes of business media discourse as a separate institutional type. In this work, we limited our investigation to the genre of a public business lecture.

### 1.2.2. Genres of Public Business Speech

Linguistic research stresses that the factor of feedback, establishment of mutual understanding and effective communication is extremely important nowadays<sup>[24, 27, 29]</sup>. The classical understanding of communication as the transmission of a signal from the sender to the receiver has been expanded and includes external factors (noise), background information (interests and goals of communicators), and finally, an important component of communication is its final result – the assessment of effectiveness. This ambiguous parameter is not always easy to measure, but the presence

or absence of influence can be manifested in a change in behavior, the adoption of specific decisions that are beneficial to the manipulator, and the formation of public opinion.

The purpose of public communication is primarily conveying information to a wide range of listeners. A distinctive feature of a public business lecture is the status of the speaker as a recognised authority in his professional field, the public nature of his activities. However, in conditions of intense information load, it is not only what is communicated to the audience that matters, but also how it is communicated. Composition of the speech, non-verbal components, and the style of communication are individual for each speaker.

As for the typology of public speaking, it is necessary to mention the genre diversity, which differs depending on the purpose of the speech. At the moment, linguists distinguish the following types of public business speeches.

An educational lecture is aimed at an academic audience of 60 to 120 minutes. An educational lecture has a scientific nature, a clear structure, and is accompanied by a brief discussion or a block of questions and answers. The speech features of the lecture are special terminology, the presence of borrowings, complex syntactic constructions, official business style, communication is mainly monological.

Discussion is similar to the above-mentioned register, but includes interaction between the speaker and the audience, can be actualised in the form of an interview and lasts from half an hour or more. Distinctive speech tactics can be the tactics of allocating, distributing, seizing the initiative, interrupting. The regulatory role is assigned to the facilitator of the discussion.

A public report has a limited time frame, a clear structure and is presented in an official business style. The purpose of the public report is to present the results of a project to the audience. A similar genre can be found in commerce, economics, politics and other professional fields. The style is close to written speech and is distinguished by unambiguity and clarity.

A message or a brief report can be present in various business situations, such as a meeting speech, a press conference, an elevator pitch, an interview presentation, and many others. This genre is distinguished by succinct wording, the abundance (often positively) of connotated evaluative vocabulary, conciseness and limited time<sup>[30]</sup>.

In addition, according to their purpose, public speeches

are divided into protocol, persuasive, entertaining and informational ones. According to the classification of Y.A. Volkova and N.N. Panchenko<sup>[31]</sup>, political speeches, conference speeches, graduation speeches, sports speeches, inspirational, career speeches, speeches about personal development, leadership speeches are distinguished.

At the intersection of public speaking and business lectures, one can distinguish such a genre as «TED talks» educational lecture. The distinctive feature of such a lecture is the duration of about twenty minutes, which is considered sufficient to establish contact with the audience and convey the essence of the idea in a language understandable to ordinary listeners. The use of “plain” language to promote scientific, technical and other complex concepts can also be seen as manipulative in nature. Resorting to simplification, the speaker makes the success story more accessible to the average person, evokes a feeling of inspiration and motivation. “Spoon-fed”, structured and seasoned with humor and real-life recipes, such lectures become a powerful incentive to influence the consciousness of the audience.

As a rule, the speaker’s speech is prepared and clearly planned, has a high degree of semantic load and belongs to science-popular discourse. At the same time, the audience, on the contrary, is not prepared in a professional sense, has different levels of background knowledge, and expects simple answers to complex questions<sup>[32]</sup>. An important element of the lectures of the TED genre is the expectation of the listener, the credence given to the event and the expert. These facts provide the basis for manipulative influence.

Enhancement of business rhetoric skills is vital in interpersonal communication. Manipulative means are also common in other registers of business media discourse involving mass communication. Due to this fact the audience should learn to interpret business speech and text and recognize the impact by assessing its functional and pragmatic properties.

The abovementioned framework will be beneficial to support our study of manipulative potential of business media discourse by providing grounds for functional and pragmatic analysis.

## 2. Materials and Methods

As linguistic material, 295 video recordings of TED speeches for the period from January 1, 2020 to June 1, 2024

were chosen using the continuous sampling method. At the next stage, we used the methods of transcription, annotation, keywords extraction, after which we compiled a nomenclature of communicative strategies and principles underlying their application using the method of functional analysis.

The age of the lecturers ranged from 18 to 55 years. 162 speakers out of 295 were women (54%), the rest were men (46%). All lecturers were recognised experts in their professional field, distinguished by the novelty of the proposed business solutions and the innovativeness of the enterprises they managed.

The pragmatic aspects of business discourse have been examined through a method known as functional pragmatic analysis<sup>[3]</sup>. This method involves several steps. First, it requires identifying the main statement of the communicative block, the pragmatic goal of the speech that serves as the focal point of meaning, and the functional relationships between statements. Following this, the overall trends in the structural-semantic organisation of the discourse are analysed, along with identifying general speech strategies and specific communicative tactics. Moreover, the method involves analysing the stages and logic of argumentation, describing the role of verbal tools in stabilizing the functional properties, intentions of the speakers and “noise” factors as the discourse moves forward to the conclusion. Additionally, presuppositions and implicated meanings of the discourse are identified. Ultimately, the findings are synthesized into a functional-pragmatic model of the discourse.

### 3. Results

Functional-pragmatic analysis of motivational business lectures allowed to single out the following manipulative models.

#### 3.1. Background Model of Manipulation

One of manipulative models is a background model of manipulation exploiting non-evident communicative tactics.

For example, analyzing Riley Csernica’s TED talks entitled “Zero equals one: creating a business from nothing,” one can detect the manipulative tactic of failed expectations. The audience was expecting a speech by a young woman entrepreneur sharing the secrets of starting a successful business. Riley begins the monologue with the words “I hate

lipstick,” followed by a short pause. The speaker allows the audience to relate what they heard to the expected information and evaluate their reaction. In the mind of the listener, a short-term conflict arises between such everyday concept and traditional ideas about the components of business success.

What follows is a widespread storytelling technique in which a personal story or anecdote told first allows the stranger to close the distance between himself and the audience and create an atmosphere of trust. The speaker uses self-irony.

“It’s not my style. So, when I decided to put it on March 15th 2012 people knew I was up to something”<sup>[33]</sup>.

The ambiguous title of the lecture also adds to communicative expectations: “Zero equals one: creating a business from nothing.” Starting with a controversial statement, the author hints at the amazing nature of the birth of a new business: it can be created from nothing, from scratch. The speaker skillfully creates a conflict between the proposition from the title and the beginning of the narrative.

This technique again demonstrates that the process of speech influence is a bidirectional process, that a “communicative event” occurs in the close interaction of the communicative situation, the intentions of the addressee and the recipient, their cognitive plans and expectations<sup>[3]</sup>. Assessment of the effectiveness of speech influence also occurs synchronously and can be adjusted both by prepared speech moves and by improvisation, depending on the communication skills of the speaker.

#### 3.2. Gradation Model of Manipulation

The speeches studied provided a large number of examples in which triple constructions were used. These constructions intend to demonstrate growing intensity of development, price growth, recession etc. Sometimes examples of backward gradation were observed.

The lecture of Patrick Forth discusses the role of disruptive technologies in business<sup>[34]</sup>.

“And then there’s data of course the data explosion by the year 2020 the amount of data that we create and store will go up. Twofold so adolescent it may be but it’s a pretty impressive digital ecosystem but why is it driving disruption?”<sup>[34]</sup>.

The communicative purpose of the speech is to eliminate the fear of changes in the business sphere. The main

communicative strategies are informing, contrast, argumentation. These strategies are implemented by the tactics of irony, metaphorisation (changing the clock speed), opposition (linear – exponential), exemplification (Go back to the mid 2000s, Think about take up), repetition (it’s changing, it took), and the tactic of implicit conclusions.

“Well, I think there are two reasons. The first one is it’s changing the clock speed, it’s changing the clock speed from linear to exponential. It’s changing the speed of take up of new businesses. It’s changing the speed of innovation. Think about take up. Think about the time it takes for a new business to acquire 50 million customers.” (Ibid.)

This business talk is distinguished by the absence of direct calls for specific actions, there is practically no imperative mood in the speech. But the cognitive ability to infer meaning allows to build a gradational manipulative model: thesis – opposition – argumentation of the thesis – conclusions (inferred by the listeners on their own).

The speaker argues his position with examples from business practice.

“Go back to the mid 2000s and now. It took Facebook 3 years and 8 months fast forward to take up the instant messaging app WhatsApp. It took them 15 months fast forward again to take up the popular mobile game Angry Birds. It took Angry Birds 15 days, so the speed of take up is driving exponentially.” (Ibid.)

Gradation (3 years and 8 months - 15 months - 15 days) allows the speaker to clearly demonstrate the growing nature of changes in the business environment. A three-stage quantitative characteristic creates a sense of an inevitable accelerating tempo in the listener’s mind. A link to the cases of reputable IT giants allows P. Forth to sound more convincing.

Thus, the process of speech influence involves not only the wording of the message, but also background information – basic knowledge about the world of international business, correlation of the arguments heard with one’s own observations and, under the influence of the structure of this public speech, persuasion.

### **3.3. Indirect Model of Manipulation (Exemplification)**

The indirect model of manipulative rhetoric is used when the speaker substantiates his arguments by various persuasive means - resorting to statistics, personal and pro-

fessional experience, expert opinions. In this model, the tactics of rhetorical question and advance parry (before you say no...) are used, as well as exemplifications, references, parenthetical insertions.

“The other reason it’s disruptive is because there are many, many other technologies that are being built, which if on a standalone basis may not be disruptive. But when you hook them up to that digital ecosystem they become profoundly disruptive”<sup>[34]</sup>.

In the second part of his business lecture, Patrick Forth explains the nature of disruptive changes in business. Realising the indirect model he uses the tactic of exemplification, it is actualised by the following means: introductory constructions (The other reason), collocations and phrasal verbs (hook them up), evaluatively colored tokens (a world apart from the CAD systems in the meaning of “unattainable”, immovable object in the meaning of “obsolete technologies”), repetitions (very, very), the intensifying auxiliary verb do (really does drive), opposition (open-source innovation - proprietary systems).

“Think about 3D printing as an example. The technology for 3D printing has been around for several years, but when you connect it up to that digital ecosystem it suddenly becomes very, very disruptive. First of all, you have access to all of that open-source innovation, everyone else’s files, then you also have software that is really easy to use, very interoperable and a world apart from the CAD systems, the proprietary systems, that Engineers have used. And then lastly of course you can print the objects to the remote locations where the demand exists. So, if you have a mine that has stopped production because they need a spare part you can print that spare part in the location to get that mine working again.” (Ibid.)

The tactic of exemplification is also implemented by the imperative mood of the verb (take ... as an example). The scheme of argumentation has a branched structure. The main thesis is supported by an example. The next two examples are related to the future potential application of cloud technologies in 3D printing. The final statement sums up and repeats the thesis once again (So, I think ... really).

“In the future we’ll be printing body parts that we’ll be able to print in the location where the individual whose life is at risk exists. So, I think this digital ecosystem really does drive disruption and it spells a world of real opportunity

until we consider the immovable object (the inability of large organizations to change)” (Ibid.)

### 3.4. Evaluative Model of Manipulation and Flexibility of the Structure of a Business Speech

Evaluative model of business rhetoric exploits the stereotyping nature of judgements. A person speaking publicly applies the tactic of assessment to various business procedures and phenomena, behaviour of business stakeholders. Positive connotations can be peculiar to different parts of speech. Moreover, opposition expressed lexically and syntactically, serves as an evaluative tool in public speech.

The structure of a public business speech can be modified and have a flexible layout. As it is known, a functional-pragmatic system of discourse can exhibit emergent properties that are not characteristic of the initially given direction of development, but such emergent properties entail an increase in rhetorical effectiveness and power of influence.

In the following excerpt<sup>[35]</sup>, emergent properties are manifested by changing the compositional structure of the speech: the example is put in the first place to create the effect of failed expectation (I quit. That email that I have received from Sarah...), followed by an introduction of the CEO and the company.

The flexibility of building semantic connections provides mobility and the ability of speech to adapt depending on external factors, even though in this case it is prepared speech.

“I quit. That email that I have received from Sarah just three months after she had joined and she was one of our top new hires. I was shocked and I asked her why did she quit. She mentioned that she did not feel supported by her manager and she did not have visibility into how she can grow within our company. As a former CEO of 1500 people hospitality company I was losing 600 people every single year except our morale and it was costing us 1.3 million dollars every year.”<sup>[35]</sup>

To reinforce the relevance of the stated problem, Alexandra provides statistics that show the success of the measures taken to retain the workforce. The problems she faced are familiar to the audience. Negative verbs (quit, shocked, was losing), nouns (pain point), and continuous tense emphasize the intensity of the negative experience (I’m solving my own pain point).

“I’m Alexandra Copos de Prada and I’m founder and CEO of moonstar.ai. I’m solving my own pain point of engaging developing and retaining our Workforce with us for longer. Our clients and 8 000 users are seeing the impact: we have reduced employee attrition for our clients by 25 percent and we have helped them increase their sales by as much as 14 while a vast majority of our users mentioned that they feel positively connected at work.” (Ibid.)

Finally, the communicative block describing the result uses positively colored adjectives (easy, highly cost effective), verbs (invest, thrive). The lexical level, together with the syntactic, pragmatic, on the basis of logical-semantic and pragma-semantic connections between statements, makes the system of meanings move towards convincing the audience.

“So in Moonstar we’re trying to make it easy and highly cost effective for companies to invest in their Workforce. So, people like Sarah can actually thrive in your company for longer. We are building our Board of advisors and we are hiring across sales marketing and our Tech Team. So, please do come say hi we are moonstar.ai! Thank you.” (Ibid.)

Thus, changing the functional and pragmatic space from negative to positive allows to achieve a persuasive effect.

The analysis of public business lectures allowed us to outline a set of most frequent speech strategies and tactics that form models of manipulative rhetoric of business media discourse (see **Figure 1**). For example, the most frequently used tool turned out to be the tactic of positive evaluation of an action or approach (an evaluative model of manipulative rhetoric). The second most frequent tactic was the reference to an authoritative statement, opinion, statistics, facts (an indirect model of manipulative rhetoric). Speakers often use triple constructions and gradation from smaller to larger categories (a gradation model of manipulative rhetoric). In case businessmen resort to auxiliary tactics (irony, humor, failed expectation) a background model of manipulative rhetoric is used.

Communicative techniques of public speaking are aimed at a large audience and help in the realization of the speaker’s goal, namely, the competent and clear transmission of information and the involvement of recipients. Despite the above-mentioned “simplified” approach, the lecturers’ speech is not devoid of expressiveness<sup>[36]</sup>. Such communicative techniques include the use of introductory words and hints, rhetorical questions, question-and-answer blocks, the use of quotations,

metaphors, parenthetical constructions, triple constructions, inclusive language, opposition and many others.

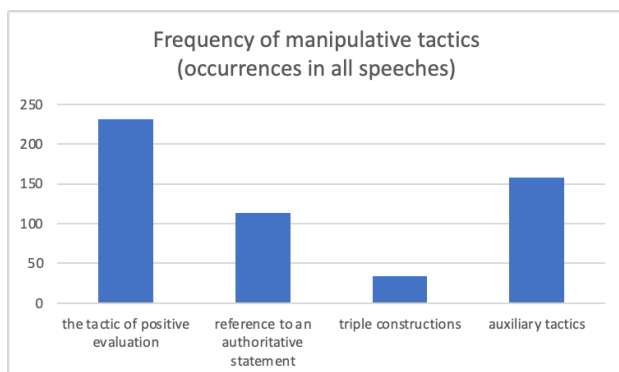


Figure 1. Frequency of manipulative tactics.

## 4. Discussion

The functional and pragmatic analysis of business media discourse indicates the existence of mechanisms through which communicative influence is carried out. In this work we have studied the means of hidden influence - manipulative strategies. They may exploit various “levers” which rely on the psychology of mass consciousness, norms, traditions and beliefs.

As defined by I.A. Sternin, manipulation aims to “influence on a person with the aim of inducing him to provide information, commit an act, change his behavior unconsciously or contrary to his own opinion or intention”<sup>[37]</sup>. Being opposed to open speech influence (directive speech acts, imperative statements), manipulative levers have a concealed nature and imply relative harm to the object of manipulation.

Another aspect highlighted by linguists is intendedness of the influence, be it prepared speech or interactive question and answer session, the general plan (speech strategy) is always defining the outcome of the conversation. According to S. Parshin, “manipulation carried out through the conscious and purposeful use of certain features of the structure and use of language”<sup>[38]</sup>. Providing that manipulation is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, scientists stress its difference from social, psychological and other types of manipulation – speech manipulation is effected by verbal means. The object of speech manipulation may lie in the field of human emotions, consciousness or social instincts.

Modern pragmatic studies rely on the three-component model of manipulation consisting of social, cognitive and

discursive dimensions<sup>[5]</sup>. Manipulation is an indispensable property of social life as social groups represent its eternal environment. Its cognitive dimension is reflected in the minds of the people as individual or collective objects of manipulation. Thirdly, manipulative influence is effected through the sign system – text, speech and discourse. Its covert implementation involves the knowledge of special techniques and knowledge, becoming a foundation for the choice of speech tactics<sup>[16, 39]</sup>.

Following the classification of prof. E.L. Dotsenko<sup>[40]</sup> we observed diverse objects of manipulation (see **Figure 2**). They constitute different proportions of the selection (occurrences in 295 speeches):

- manipulation by images, conventional manipulation (social scenarios, rules, norms) - 219 (74%)
- operational-subject manipulation (ways of behavior, structure of activity) -130 (44) %
- manipulation by inference (cognitive schemes and processes) - 97 (32%)
- exploitation of the individual (motivation, imitation of decision making) 257 (87%)
- manipulation by spirituality (revaluation of values, imitation of the search for meaning) are distinguished – 54 (18%)

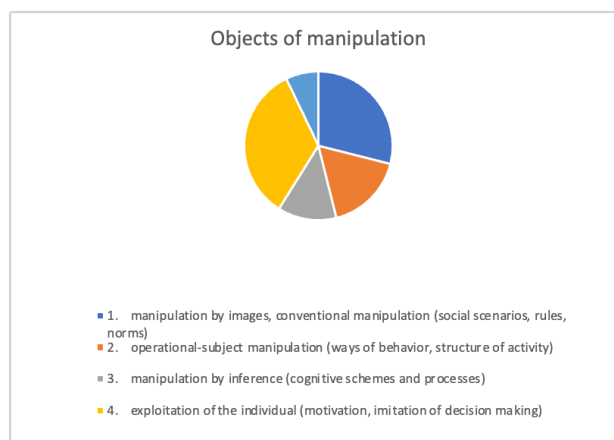


Figure 2. Objects of manipulation.

From cognitive point of view, object manipulation fall into the following: an appeal to emotions, an appeal to social attitudes, an appeal to ideas about the world<sup>[38]</sup>.

There are specific spheres which frequently become a “lever” of manipulation, especially in motivational business lectures. A better image of reality (e.g., starting up a



business), the customary values structure (e.g., being independent), stereotyped scripts of behaviour are used as targets of manipulation<sup>[38]</sup>.

Functional and pragmatic analysis of 295 samples of motivational business lectures allowed to specify the following manipulation levers (see **Figure 3**):

- reputation manipulation – 191 (45%),
- manipulative accentuation - 113 (26%),
- manipulation by stereotypes – 74 (17%),
- manipulation of implicit meanings – 53 (12%).



**Figure 3.** Levers of manipulation.

At the same time, bearing in mind that speech manipulation largely depends on its cognitive component, we should stress that cognitive mechanisms also provide grounds for manipulation in motivational business lectures. R. Chialdini stresses that with the current information load the majority of people is prone to the so-called simplified perception approach<sup>[41]</sup>. Clip thinking, narrowing of attention make the recipient more vulnerable to manipulation. As attention can be focused only on a small amount of all the variety of available information, listeners have to “make decisions automatically, taking into account only one component”<sup>[41]</sup>.

Incorrect decisions, made on the basis of individual cues, are made in favour of the manipulator. The reaction is mechanical as the recipient does not expect any deceit.

The following stereotyped scripts of behaviour are connected with the simplified approach<sup>[41–44]</sup>:

- a friendly person acts in my interests (the principle of benevolence),
- do what everyone else does (the principle of social proof),
- return what the other gave you (the principle of reciprocity),

- it is necessary to absolutely obey authority (the principle of authority)
- actions must correspond to previously made decisions and obligations (the principle of consistency and obligation),
- if the product is in short supply, I need it (the scarcity principle) et al.

Relying on the results above, business practitioners will be able to improve their communicative repertoire both in interpersonal communication and in monologue public speeches. TED motivational lectures can become a stimulus for the development of entrepreneurship, but the use of manipulative techniques calls into question the ethical issues of speech influence. Business, being a purely pragmatic sphere of human activity, is manipulative by nature. The verbal side of influence allows the audience to make an informed choice – to borrow the experience of experts, study the example of best practices or try to avoid other people’s mistakes. However, awareness of the manipulative nature of influence can lead to rejection, opposition or conflict. How the listener can get away from speech influence and how to react to manipulation can be the topic of further research in this area.

## 5. Conclusions

The purpose of the article was to analyse manipulative business speeches from the point of view of functional pragmatics. We received answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of the work. Models of manipulative rhetoric were identified: (gradation model, background model, evaluative model, and indirect model). The study was carried out on the material of a hybrid genre of business media discourse – motivational business lectures, which made it possible to identify new objects and levers of manipulation. The pragmatic potential of other genres of business discourse has already been studied in detail, but motivational business lectures have become a new object of research. Combining an instructive nature, information intensity, and brevity, a motivational business lecture can become a source of misconception, concealment of information or coverage of facts in a way favorable to the speaker.

The levers of manipulative influence were described, such as conventional manipulation, operational manipulation, inference, and individual manipulation. The most common

lever of manipulative influence turned out to be conventional manipulation, which calls for compliance with social norms and rules. Objects of influence were also considered in the course of functional analysis of speeches, and manipulation of reputation became the most visible way to substantiate the veracity of the speaker's evidence. The most frequent was the tactic of positive evaluation, designed to win over the audience and inspire confidence in the speaker's arguments.

Limitations on the applicability of the results may be caused by the varied nature of professional activities of businessmen.

Thus, the research conducted can become the basis for further study of related topics, e.g., patterns of functioning of the English-language business discourse in various occupations, and the development of ways to resist manipulative influence.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.R. and U.I.Z.O.; methodology, A.R.; formal analysis, A.R.; investigation, A.R. and U.I.Z.O.; writing—original draft preparation, A.R. and U.I.Z.O.; writing—review and editing A.R. and U.I.Z.O.; visualization, U.I.Z.O. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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