

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Manipulative Ideological Discursive Strategies in Boris Johnson's Speech on Brexit

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الخلاصة

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل الخطاب النقدي للاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية التلاعبية في الخطاب السياسي لرئيس الوزراء البريطاني الحالي بوريس جونسون فيما يتعلق بمفاوضات خروج بريطانيا من الاتحاد الأوروبي (Brexit). تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد الأثر الفكري للمتكلم السياسي في التلاعب الخطابية في نقل المعلومات والحقائق للمتلقي و تحديد الاستراتيجيات الأيديولوجية المستخدمة في هذا التلاعب من أجل التأثير على أعضاء البرلمان البريطاني، وتهدف أيضا إلى الكشف عن تأثير التلاعب الخطابية في الاستقطاب الأيديولوجي لتحقيق الأهداف السياسية. توصلت الدراسة إلى ان الخطاب التلاعبية موجه أيديولوجيا من خلال استخدام استراتيجيات معينة كان ابرزها المبالغة، انتقاء المفردات، العرض الإيجابي للذات بالإضافة إلى لعبة الأرقام وكل هذه الاستراتيجيات تركزت على إظهار الفرق بين طرفين مختلفين يتجسدان باستخدام (نحن/هم).

الكلمات الدالة: النقد، تحليل الخطاب، الأيديولوجيات، التلاعب، الاستقطاب، الاستراتيجيات

Abstract

This paper conducts a critical discourse analysis of manipulative ideological discursive strategies in the speech of Boris Johnson, the current Prime Minister of United Kingdom, concerning Brexit negotiations presented in UK House of Commons on October 19, 2019. The major aims of this paper are: (1) Identifying the impact of the respective ideology of the political speaker in discursively manipulating information and facts dissemination to the audience; (2) Figuring out the ideological discursive strategies utilized to manipulate the members of parliament in the House of Commons; (3) Pinpointing the manipulative role of the polarized ideology in the social representation of Us/Them categorization or what is referred to as in-group/ out-group membership. The findings show that manipulation is ideologically oriented and that the strategies of 'hyperbole' with the percentage, the strategy of 'lexicalization' with the percentage, and the strategies of 'positive self-presentation' and 'number game' with the percentage are the most frequently utilized ones in the representation of Us/Them categorization in manipulating a political speech.

Keywords: Critical; discourse analysis; ideologies; manipulation; polarization; strategies

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1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) investigates the way power, ideology and manipulation appear in discourse as well as the way such notions result in creating as well as maintaining social inequality, power abuse, and domination. The ideological functions and the power relations in discourse are usually opaque or hidden to the audience (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). CDA aims to make these hidden aspects of language visible. A text or speech reflects the writer's or the speaker's ideology and his/her perception of the world. The focus of CDA, in this case, is on the employment of particular linguistic elements in discourse as this helps in figuring out and giving clues about social issues in which such linguistic structures are intentionally utilized to express certain political ideologies. In addition to reflecting the perception of the world, text and talk have the potential to control people's minds. This means that discourse may have an influential role in affecting people's actions through manipulation to achieve certain political goals. The power which leads to mind control can have its intended ways that are liable to be affiliated with laws, rules, norms, and habits where such power is reproduced accordingly. Deploying particular linguistic structures in political speeches is resorted to by politicians to impose their ideology on others to naturalize and neutralize their ideologies to make them as if they were part of the knowledge-base of their audience.

In his article "Discourse and Manipulation" van Dijk (2006a: 359) highlights the necessity of paying special attention to several crucial notions in CDA as they imply discursive power abuse. One of these notions is manipulation. He argues the absence of a systematic theory concerning the structures and processes involved in manipulation. This matter results in a problematic case that reflects the need for understanding the complicated process of manipulation, penetrating it, having insight about it, and becoming aware of such a phenomenon.

2. Definitions of Manipulation

Manipulation, as defined by van Dijk (ibid), is a complex phenomenon that incorporates social power abuse, cognitive mind control, and discursive interaction. The manipulator attempts to control other people to the best of his interests which are mostly

political ones. This type of power is a form of manipulative domination, which entails practicing an illegitimate influence and reproduction of ideology through discourse.

It is not always easy to distinguish manipulation from persuasion. Van Dijk (ibid: 361) demonstrates that the borderline between manipulation and legitimate persuasion is fuzzy and context-dependent. The interlocutors are free to believe and act as they choose in the case of legitimate persuasion. They have the necessary information and knowledge that help them in doing so. As a result, the arguments of the persuader can either be accepted or refused by the interlocutors. The situation is different when it comes to manipulation; the role of the interlocutors is a more passive one. Unlike persuasion, no sufficient information or knowledge is available to the interlocutors to resist manipulation, and consequently, they become victims of it. The important criteria of manipulation start from the fact that people are being acted upon against their interests, and that manipulation is in the best interests of the manipulator. Wittingly used by the speaker (manipulator), manipulation is a communicative and interactional practice that is oriented towards influencing the behaviour, desire, belief, and emotions of others to his self-interests arriving at certain favourable goals. Manipulation plays an important role in many fields of people's life especially in advertising, religion, and politics (Blass, 2005: 169).

For Buller and Burgoon (1994: 196), manipulation cannot happen accidentally. It is intentional. Otherwise, a particular message that is unintentionally misleading falls under the types of mistakes, gaffes, and the like. This means that an individual who aims to influence people and make them believe and do what he wants them to do can fulfill his target through particular strategies such as attestation and manifesting proof or testimony in the encountered communication. According to Handelman (2009: 4-5), manipulation is directed towards creating a certain impact to influence the target (hearer) to act in a way that under normal conditions he (hearer) would probably resist to do so because things move against his intentions and interests. He (ibid) refers to the point which states that manipulation may include the indirect exercise of an illegitimate influence employing discourse through making others do things that are in the interest of the speaker. In his attempt to define manipulation, Blass (2005: 170) prefers Puzynina's (1992) definition paraphrased in Galasinski (2000) as an attempt to influence the target in such a way that his behaviour/action serves to attain the goals of the manipulator, who uses no force but acts in a way that makes the target unable to know the goal of the manipulator's actions.

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Wodak (2001: 88) argues that in a manipulative situation what is most negative is that the hearers cannot understand and comprehend the real motives and intentions behind the manipulator's words as well as the consequences of the aims and plans expressed by the manipulator. Wodak's emphasis here is not only on the hearer's inability to know the manipulator's intentions but also on the social consequences that may be (re)produced accordingly.

3. Manipulation and Critical Discourse Analysis

One of the crucial notions of CDA is manipulation. To approach manipulation, critical discourse analysts generally take an ideological approach. Their focus is on political manipulation between groups and their members. Therefore, the analysis in the present paper is based on investigating the ideological discursive strategies utilized in the speech.

Many linguists have criticized the traditional descriptive view of discourse. The claim that critical linguists put forward is based on the idea that ideology is linguistically mediated. They argue that by substituting one word for another a new thought could be determined.

Fowler et al. (1979: 186) argue that speakers are capable of manipulating listeners through the language they use:

X manipulates Y through language, and X pulls the wool over Y's eyes through language. But these processes tend to be unconscious for most speech community, for much of the time. If they were not, they would not work.

4. Manipulative Strategies in Discourse

Discourse is a social use of language in a particular social context. It contributes to the construction of social reality. Van Dijk (2006b: 372) indicates that the manipulative discourse is controlled by dominant political, bureaucratic, media, academic or corporate elites. His idea purports that there are certain contextual factors(constraints) that control the manipulative discourse such as the ones concerning participants, their roles, their relations and their typical actions and cognitions (knowledge, goals). However, discourse structures

are not alike in terms of their efficiency in influencing the minds of recipients for the benefit of the speaker or writer. The biased use of a strategy which is in the interest of the speaker or writer to the detriment of others is termed by van Dijk's (2003) 'positive self-presentation' and 'negative other-presentation'. This typical strategy can be utilized through the structures of various levels of discourse as illustrated by van Dijk (2006a: 373):

1. Overall interaction strategies
 - a. Positive self-presentation
 - b. Negative other-presentation
2. Macro speech act implying Our 'good' acts and Their 'bad' acts, e.g. accusation, defense
3. Semantic macrostructures: topic selection
 - a. (De-) emphasize negative/positive topics about Us/Them
4. Local speech acts implementing and sustaining the global ones, e.g. statements that prove accusations.
5. Local meanings Our/Their positive/negative actions
 - a. Give many/few details
 - b. Be general/specific
 - c. Be vague/precise
 - d. Be explicit/implicit
6. Lexicon: Select positive words for Us, negative words for Them
7. Local syntax
 - a. Active vs. passive sentences, nominalizations: (de)emphasize Our/Their positive/negative agency, responsibility
8. Rhetorical figures of speech
 - a. Hyperboles vs. euphemisms for positive/negative meanings
 - b. Metonymies and metaphors emphasizing Our/Their positive/negative properties
9. Expressions: sounds and visuals
 - a. Emphasize (loud, etc.; large, bold, etc.) positive/negative meanings
 - b. Order (first, last: top, bottom, etc.) positive/negative meanings

Van Dijk's approach is a social-political one. The manipulative strategies he mentions in this approach are in affiliation with the overall manipulative strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation.

5. Ideological Discursive Strategies

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Ideology is a very important notion in the critical study of manipulation in political speeches. This importance lies in analyzing the ways by which ideologies can manifest themselves in discourse. Van Dijk (2002, 2003, and 2006b) lists some categories of ideological analysis or ideological discursive strategies politicians utilize in their speech (discourse) to manipulate their audience and achieve their political goals. The following strategies are identified in the speech under study:

1. **Authority:** different authorities are the result of different ideologies. Mentioning an authority means supporting a particular claim.
2. **Evidentiality:** forms of evidentiality and authority figures can exist through claims or points of view to justify and legitimate political action.
3. **Hyperbole:** the use of semantic rhetorical devices to exaggerate a particular meaning such as using metaphors as in the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.
4. **Polarization:** dividing people in in-group (self/us) and out-group (others/them).
5. **National Self-glorification:** glorifying or praising a speaker's country norms and values, such as hospitality, democracy, and human rights for the sake of showing or creating positive self-representation.
6. **Number-Game:** using numbers and statistics to boost an argument to sound credible.
7. **Consensus:** creating agreement and solidarity such as focusing on national interests to stand against a particular threat facing one's country.
8. **Illustration:** providing examples and illustrations as a manipulative strategy to positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.
9. **Positive self-presentation:** the speaker's emphasis on the positive features of his group or country.
10. **Negative other-presentation:** categorizing people into divisions of in-groups and out-groups similar to creating a distinction between good and bad which is mostly not value-free but ideologically oriented towards manipulating the listeners.
11. **Lexicalization:** an overall ideological strategy for negative other-representation by utilizing the semantic features of particular words.

12. **Actor description:** the idea that the description of certain actors is determined by our ideologies. Thus, actors can be classified into 'in-group' and 'out-group' members. For 'in-group' members, a neutral or positive way is used whereas for 'out-group' ones a negative way are used.
13. **Implication:** the implicit aspects of discourse. Such implicitness is the result of pragmatic contextual factors. The inference of the implicit information can be arrived at through recipients' attitudes, knowledge, and mental models.
14. **Presupposition:** it means presupposing the truth when it is not established.

6. The Analysis

The following is the analysis of the manipulative ideological strategies Johnson, the current Prime Minister of UK, utilizes in his speech to manipulate the members of parliament in the House of Commons. Johnson intends to have his negotiations of delivering Brexit succeed in hitting the targets of his political views and interests. The speech is taken from the internet, particularly, from the British Political Speech and the Political Speech Archive (UKPOL) websites. It consists of 82 sentences. The numbers in brackets at the end of the chosen examples refer to the line numbers in the speech text.

The following is a representation of the ideological discursive strategies identified in the speech.

Polarization

Polarization here can be shown in the different ideological stances of the Prime Minister's group and the group of those who are on the opposite side:

- (1) *And I do hope for the purposes of a meaningful vote that we will indeed be allowed to have a meaningful vote this evening.* (14)
- (2) *And during those years, friendships have been strained, families divided and the attention of this House consumed by a single issue that has at times felt incapable of resolution.* (20)
- (3) *So those who agree, like me that Brexit must be delivered and who – like me – prefer to avoid a no-deal outcome, must abandon the delusion that this House can delay again.* (121)

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Positive Self-Presentation

To ideologically manipulate the MPs, Johnson utilizes the strategy of positive self-presentation as in:

(4) *Then it follows logically that with part of our hearts, with half our hearts, we feel something else, a sense of love and respect for European culture and civilisation of which we are a part; a desire to cooperate with our friends and partners in everything, creatively, artistically, intellectually. (50)*

(5) *Let us come together as democrats behind this deal, the one proposition that fulfills the verdict of the majority but which also allows us to bring together the two halves of our hearts, to bring together the two halves of our nation.(234)*

(6) *And Mr. Speaker, I do not wish this to be the project of any one Government or any one party but rather the endeavour of the United Kingdom as a whole.(154)*

Number Game

The strategy of the number game is deployed by Johnson in his speech to further influence his audience. The number game strategy is used in the following example to show the long period of not gathering together on a Saturday:

(7) *Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by echoing what you've just said, my gratitude to all members of the House for assembling on a Saturday for the first time in 37 years and indeed to all members of the House of Commons staff who have worked to make this possible. (1)*

The numbers in the following example refer to the referendum results of Brexit at which 52% of UK people voted to leave the EU whereas 48% voted against:

(8) *Let's speak now both for the 52 and the 48.(238)*

National Self Glorification

This strategy aims to create positive self-presentation by glorifying Jonson's national sovereignty:

(9) *This agreement provides for a real Brexit, taking back control of our borders, laws, money, farming, fisheries, and trade, amounting to the greatest single restoration of national sovereignty in Parliamentary history. (93)*

(10) *And our first decision, on which I believe there will be unanimity is that in any future trade negotiations with any country our National Health Service will not be on the table. (194)*

Evidentiality

The Prime Minister uses some facts to support his attitude and increase the impact of manipulation such as telling the House of Commons that this is not the first deal:

(11) *The House will need no reminding that this is the second deal and the fourth vote, three and half years after the nation voted for Brexit. (18)*

(12) *Article 4 of the Protocol states: “Northern Ireland is part of the customs territory of the United Kingdom”.(102)*

(13) *Above all, we and our European friends have preserved the letter and the spirit of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement¹ and upheld the long-standing areas of co-operation between the UK and Ireland, including the Common Travel Area. (111)*

(14) *And as I told the House on 3rd October, in order to prevent a regulatory border on the island of Ireland we proposed a regulatory zone covering all goods, including agrifood, eliminating any need for associated checks along the border. (115)*

Consensus

To manipulate the MPs, Johnson utilizes the strategy of consensus to create agreement and solidarity with his ideology and increase the feeling of togetherness:

(15) *Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by echoing what you’ve just said, my gratitude to all members of the House for assembling on a Saturday for the first time in 37 years and indeed to all members of the House of Commons staff who have worked to make this possible.(1)*

¹ The Good Friday Agreement is a pair of agreements signed on 10 April 1998 that ended most of the violence of the troubles, a political conflict in Northern Ireland that had been ongoing since the 1960s. The agreement also created a number of institutions between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (Wikipedia).

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- (16) *Let us come together as democrats behind this deal, the one proposition that fulfills the verdict of the majority but which also allows us to bring together the two halves of our hearts, to bring together the two halves of our nation.*(234)

Illustration

Providing examples and illustrations is a manipulative strategy for positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The illustrations deployed are intended to make a distinction between in-group members and out-group members. This strategy also serves as an intellectual manipulation to influence the mental models in the memory of the audience since it is easier for people to remember concrete related examples:

- (17) *For example, free from the Common Agricultural Policy, we will have a far simpler system where we will reward farmers for improving our environment and animal welfare many of whose provisions are impossible under the current arrangements, instead of just paying them for their acreage.* (181)

- (18) *And free from the Common Fisheries Policy, we can ensure sustainable yields based on the latest science, not outdated methods of setting quotas.* (186)

Authority

To strengthen his claims and the adopted ideological stance, the Prime Minister refers to an important opportunity that can be taken by the House of Commons as an authority:

- (19) *Today this House has an historic opportunity to show the same breadth of vision as our European neighbours.*(88)
- (20) *Only this Parliament can make this new relationship the work of the nation.*(157)

Implication

Repeating the word 'Parliament' in the following examples is meant to share the responsibility among the Members of the Parliament. This implicates that Johnson tries to influence the Members' cognition by indirectly conveying the idea that although he is the

Prime Minister he is not the only one responsible for the new relationship with their neighbours.

(21) *Only this Parliament can make this new relationship the work of the nation.*

(157)

(22) *And so Parliament should be at the heart of decision-making as we develop our approach. (159)*

Johnson strengthens manipulation by using implication as in the use of ‘our friends can begin which has been too long delayed’. This implicates that the process of leaving the EU is at the hands of the House of Commons. It also implicates that this new relationship should not be delayed and that those who do not stand with the government in these negotiations oppose and hate the UK as a whole:

(23) *And as soon as this House allows the process of extracting ourselves from the EU to be completed, the exciting enterprise of building our new relationship with our friends can begin which has been too long delayed. (150)*

(24) *And Mr. Speaker, I do not wish this to be the project of any one Government or anyone party but rather the endeavour of the United Kingdom as a whole. (154)*

Presupposition

Saying that he does not want this project of Brexit to be of anyone government presupposes that there were past projects and resolutions which do not represent UK as a united country:

(25) *And Mr. Speaker, I do not wish this to be the project of any one Government or any one party but rather the endeavour of the United Kingdom as a whole. (154)*

(26) *But I hope Mr. Speaker that this is the moment when we can finally achieve that resolution and reconcile the instincts that compete within us. (23)*

Actor Description

Johnson urges the Parliament to deliver Brexit deal and support it as one democratic nation where all the MPs are supposed to be in-group members. He refers to the past period when the action of MPs has not been positive:

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(27) *And I acknowledge that in the past we have not always acted in that spirit.*
(161)

(28) *Now is the time Mr. Speaker to get this thing done, and I say to all members let us come together as democrats to end this debilitating feud.* (231)

Negative Other-Presentation

This strategy is based on presenting the negative characteristics and consequences of those who are 'out-group' member:

(29) *And during those years, friendships have been strained, families divided and the attention of this House consumed by a single issue that has at times felt incapable of resolution.* (20)

(30) *And it is our continent. And it is precisely because we are capable of feeling both things at once – sceptical about the modes of EU integration as we are but passionate and enthusiastic about Europe – that the whole experience of the last few years has been so difficult for this country and so divisive.* (59)

Lexicalization

To negatively present others, Johnson uses certain lexical items:

(31) *A sense of our shared destiny and a deep understanding of the eternal need – especially after the horrors of the last century – for Britain to stand as one of the guarantors of peace and democracy in our continent.* (55)

(32) *It removes the backstop which would have held us against our will in the Customs Union and much of the Single Market.* (97)

The following table illustrates the frequency and percentage of the various discursive strategies deployed by Johnson.

Table (1) The Frequency and Percentage of the Discursive Strategies deployed by Johnson

No.	Type of Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
12	Hyperbole	14	17.28
14	Lexicalization	9	11.11
2	Positive Self-Presentation	8	9.88
3	Number Game	8	9.88
1	Polarization	6	7.41
5	Evidentiality	6	7.41
7	Illustration	5	6.17
6	Consensus	4	4.94
10	Presupposition	4	4.94
11	Actor Description	4	4.94
13	Negative Other-Presentation	4	4.94
4	National Self-Glorification	3	3.70
8	Authority	3	3.70
9	Implication	3	3.70
	Total	81	100%

The table above tells us that the strategy of ‘hyperbole’ with the percentage (17.28 %) has the highest frequency. The strategies of ‘national self-glorification’, ‘authority’ and ‘implication’ with the percentage (3.70%) have the lowest frequencies. The high frequency of hyperbole reflects Johnson's utilization of manipulating the MPs minds by selecting hyperbolic expressions to present his government positively and those who stand against Brexit deal negatively. He also tries to assert the legitimacy of his newly attained position as a Prime Minister and to reproduce his dominant ideology which testifies power abuse.

The second high frequency is that of ‘lexicalization’ with the percentage (11.11%) which is attributed to the overall general strategy of ‘US’/ ‘THEM’ which can exist through claims, facts, and points of view to justify and legitimate Johnson and his government’s

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political action. The following figure clarifies the ideological discursive strategies in Johnson's speech.

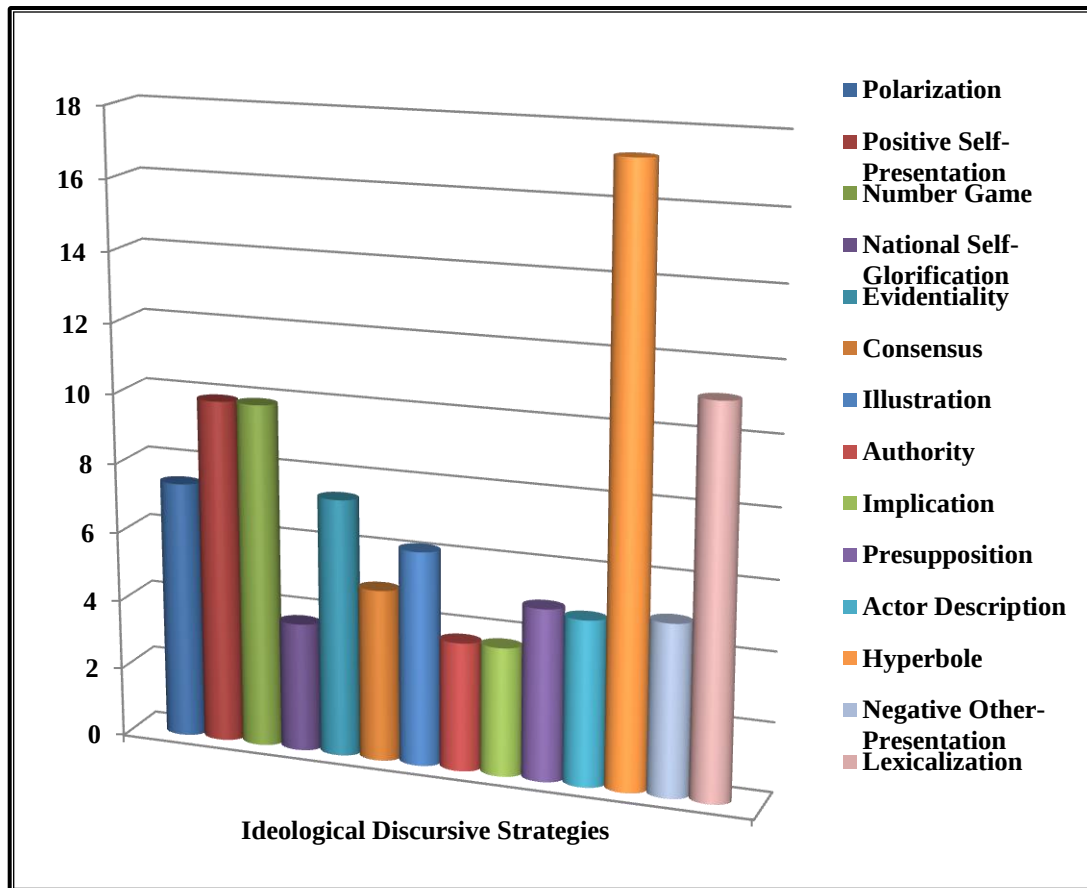


Figure (1) Ideological Discursive Strategies in Johnson's Speech

7. Conclusions

The conclusions arrived at can be summed up as follows:

1. Manipulation is ideologically oriented, in other words, the respective ideology of the political speaker has its impact in discursively manipulating information and facts dissemination to the audience

2. The ideological discursive strategies used by Johnson emphasize one's power and superiority, discredit one's opponents, provide details of the facts, omit or blur information, and appeal to emotion. They can be regarded as moves of the overall general strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The strategies of hyperbole, lexicalization, positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, and polarization are the most frequently used ones in the analysed manipulative political speech of Johnson in manipulating MPs in the House of Commons as far as Brexit deal is concerned.
3. The polarized ideology has a manipulative role in the social representation of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Us/Them categorization) or what is referred to as in-group/ out-group membership.
4. In manipulating Members of Parliament by controlling their actions, Johnson has resorted to shape or change their minds, beliefs, knowledge, and opinions. The various strategies used by him are intended to cognitively and discursively reflect on receivers. Being the leader of the dominant party as well as Prime Minister, he manipulates the audience by using his political power and domination abusively to reproduce or maintain inequality.

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