

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS OF LINGUISTIC EFFECT AND MANIPULATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Research article

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**Abstract**

This article provides a multi-analysis and comparison of the concepts of linguistic effect and mind games by means of language. Those have acquired the greatest relevance in the modern digital world, i.e., the world of network communications.

Through comparing dictionary and scientific definitions, as well as a number of criteria, one may distinguish the basic similarities and differences between linguistic effect and manipulation of consciousness. One may also find a description of the key features of mind games using language, as well as the definition of the concept of speech manipulation, along with a univocal negative moral and ethical assessment of this phenomenon. The general correlation of the concepts of linguistic effect and manipulation of consciousness is also provided.

**Keywords:** linguistic effect, speech manipulation, psychological effect, semantical-linguistic analysis, psycholinguistics.

СООТНОШЕНИЕ ПОНЯТИЙ РЕЧЕВОГО ВОЗДЕЙСТВИЯ И МАНИПУЛИРОВАНИЯ СОЗНАНИЕМ

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

В данной статье проводится многосторонний анализ и сопоставление понятий речевого воздействия и манипулирования сознанием с помощью языка, получивших наибольшую актуальность в современном цифровом мире, мире сетевых коммуникаций.

Посредством сопоставления словарных и научных дефиниций, а также целого ряда критериев выявляются основные черты сходства и черты различия речевого воздействия и манипуляции сознанием, описываются ключевые признаки манипуляции сознанием с помощью языка, выводится определение понятия речевой манипуляции, дается однозначная негативная морально-этическая оценка данного явления, определяется общее соотношение понятий речевого воздействия и манипулирования сознанием.

**Ключевые слова:** речевое воздействие, речевая манипуляция, психологическое воздействие, семантико-лингвистический анализ, психолингвистика.

**Introduction**

In studies on the problems of linguistic effect and manipulation of consciousness by means of language, the authors often use these concepts as synonyms, thereby mixing two fundamentally different phenomena. Specifically, there is a lack of generally accepted points of view on the terminological name of the effecting processes, as well as the absence of their moral and ethical assessment.

We believe that a clear demarcation for concepts of linguistic effect and speech manipulation should be provided.

**Discussion**

First, let us refer to the conventional interpretation of the "manipulation" concept in various Russian language dictionaries, including some specific ones:

1. A new Russian language explanatory word-formative dictionary [3] and a Dictionary of the Russian language by S.I. Ozhegov [8, P. 329] provide similar definitions, the keywords of which are: "dexterity", "focus", "trick", "gambit", "fraud", "complex technique".

2. The definition of the Soviet encyclopedic dictionary presents a concept in very sociological and socio-psychological aspects as "a system of methods of ideological and spiritual-psychological effect" for the purpose of changing the worldview [12, P. 765].

3. The Dictionary of foreign words [11, P. 293] updates the following meanings: namely "management", "distraction from things that should be subtle".

4. The definition of the sociological dictionary [9] primarily provide for such markers as "effect" ("by various means"), "imposition" (ideas, values, forms of behavior), "misrepresentation".

5. The vocabulary entry of the Unabridged psychological dictionary [7, P. 247-248] especially focuses on the concept of manipulation as a "communicative effect" causing "behavior that is desirable (beneficial) for the subject effected". It should also be noted here that the concept emphasizes that "it is not assumed that it (the effect — N.B.) does not necessarily have to be unprofitable for the object of effect" (e.g.: a call for help, the influence of the seller and advertising on the buyer, political propaganda, education, etc.).

6. There is also "an introduction of delusive presentations" mentioned in the concept of the Political glossary [10].

One may also find definitions of speech manipulation in the works of various researchers dealing with manipulation of consciousness issues. Thus, a psychologist E.L. Dotsenko defines manipulation as "a kind of unilateral psychological effect, the skillful execution of which leads to the subtle excitement of another person's intentions that do not match with its actual desires" [2, P. 59]. V.P. Sheinov [14, P. 4] and a publicist, S.G.Kara-Murza [5, P. 16] are in full support of this idea. A.Y. Gorcheva defines manipulation as "violence that is committed subtly, anonymously, while invading the spiritual and psychological world of a person, by embracing both conscious and unconscious layers of personality" [1, P. 91].

Based on the above-mentioned vocabulary definitions and concepts provided by researchers of the phenomenon of mind games, one may give the following definition of that phenomenon: **manipulation** is a complex and specific dexterity requiring technique (or system of techniques) of unilateral communicative effect of an ideological and spiritual-psychological nature, the skillful and disguised execution of which by the addresser (subject) leads to hidden excitement in the addressee (object) of intentions that do not match its actual desires when the complete illusion of independent decisions-making, while causing the desired behavior of the addresser for the purpose of introducing false presentations, changing the worldview, stereotypes of thinking and the imposition of particular values.

Based on that concept, one may distinguish the following key features of manipulation:

1. Manipulation is a complex and specific dexterity requiring technique in implementation or (generally) a set of various techniques based on knowledge of psychology.

2. Manipulation is a unilateral effect directed from the addresser (subject) to the addressee (object) in such a way that the addressee has no clue about the effect action.

3. Manipulation is rather a spiritual and **psychological** effect, but not physical violence. When manipulating, the effect is on the mental organization of the human personality: namely stereotypes, values and an individual worldview.

4. Manipulation is a **subtle influence** at which the addresser acquires a number of particular unilateral advantages. Specifically, not only the action of effecting the addressee is concealed (disguised), but also the intentions of the addresser to effect somehow, along with the action of acquiring benefits by the addresser.

5. Manipulation is a subtle excitation of the addressee's intentions that do not match its actual desires and intentions. Specifically, it does not assume a direct deception, but precisely such actions as a result of which the addressee changes intentions (desires, assessment and interpretation of events, etc.) to other ones that are of a benefit to the addresser.

6. Manipulation is an **illusion of independent choice**, decision-making, interpretation of events and related assessment.

7. Manipulation is the formation of behavior **desirable (beneficial) to the addresser**, thus manipulation serves exclusively the interests of the addresser.

8. Manipulation is the introduction and imposition of **false presentations**. The targets of manipulative effect are generally the stereotypes of thinking, life meanings, and values; therefore, the manipulative effect causes a "shift" in the direction required for the manipulator in terms of perception of the world, the objects and situations, and related assessment.

9. Manipulation perceives the addressee as a **thing**, an obedient tool, an item, which in itself is immoral.

Notwithstanding the fact that the concept of manipulation has a quite clear interpretation and is distinguished by a disapproving and negative tinge, not all researchers expressly interpret it, by mixing with other definitions and concepts, and giving ambiguous assessments.

Thus, in the article provided for in an Unabridged psychological dictionary they assume that manipulation is not always unprofitable for the addressee, evidenced by relevant examples: a call for help, the effect of the seller and advertising on the buyer, political propaganda, education, etc. In his textbook, V.S. Komarovskiy (eds) claims that the concept of manipulation "also has a positive meaning which is constructive and aimed at achieving goals in the interests of the people and the state" [13, P. 35]. L.Y. Ivanov suggests that manipulation can become a "way of survival" for journalists: "... there are also examples of manipulation in the name of the public good and freedom of expression" [4, P. 43]. A psychologist E.L. Dotsenko notes that "manipulation can also be executed in the interests of the manipulated one (at least partially). E.g., to make someone else quit smoking, drinking, etc.", when "manipulation is considered preferable to physical altercation or direct enforcement" [2, P. 53, 66].

We believe that such a mixing of concepts may cause a psychological justification of manipulative effect, as well as an elimination of the disapproving and negative tinge of the meaning of this definition, notwithstanding the fact that, by the above-mentioned key features, manipulation is quite clearly different from other definitions and concepts which that phenomenon is associated with:

1. **Manipulation is not a deception** (information hiding and concealment). Some scientists (including S.G. Kara-Murza) claim that the concealment and hiding (distortion) of information is considered a mandatory feature of manipulation. However, a deception and information hiding may not be considered a mandatory feature of manipulation. Some manipulative techniques involve a "game of sincerity", as a result of which the information is interpreted by the object of manipulation in the way required by the manipulator.

2. **Manipulation is not an education** (influence), since the object of manipulation is treated as a thing, an item, or something **inanimate**. Specifically, the manipulator generally appeals to the low and dark levels of the human psyche: "Let this victory of the union of the manipulator with the base hypostasis of a human be temporary and even short-term. It is quite enough for the purpose of manipulation, it is important to achieve the desired action, and let the human mind and conscience repent later on" [5, P. 77-78]. An education (even though in a subtle form) itself pursues quite noble aims and is considered as a long-term effect.

4. **Manipulation is not management**, since it is executed in a subtle way. Sure, manipulation involves a management of the object, but "the quality of being manipulated is not set by technology, but by the intention of the author: namely to achieve one-way benefits, as well as to impose its own aim on the addressee, etc." [2, P. 173].

5. **Manipulation is not a ritual**, since a ritual is always conventional. E.g., "A woman in love can play a very subtle game to awaken the respondent sentiments <...> of a man who has conquered her imagination. <...> It is a ritual of love relations, the specific image of which is prescribed by each culture" [5, P. 17].

6. **Manipulation is not violence**, since violence is always committed openly. It should be noted that manipulation is **aggressive**, but not in its form, but in terms of **the aims** pursued by the author of the manipulation.

5. **Manipulation is not a dialogue (dispute, argue)**. Manipulation always remains a one-way effect, therefore the addressee is initially deprived of the opportunity to openly defend its point of view, and sometimes even form it.

6. **Manipulation is not a persuasion**, since manipulative techniques are not aimed at strengthening argumentation, but at replacing thereof. In this case, argumentation is replaced by suggestion.

So, since manipulation has a number of specific key features and is perceived expressly as a negative, destructive process, for other processes that have, for instance, **constructive aims**, one should choose other definitions that do not have such a clear negative tinge, perceived either positively or neutrally: e.g., *education, influence, effect*, etc.

### **Conclusion**

Following the clear definition of the *manipulation* term, the identification of its key features and correlating with other concepts, one should emphasize the **negative nature** of this phenomenon, as well as provide it with an **expressly negative ethical and moral assessment**. Notwithstanding the fact that the matter of the ethical and moral side of manipulation is resolved by various authors differently, including being left at the mercy of individual choice and human conscience, together with the researcher G.A. Kopnina we should disagree with such an approach, since it generally removes an issue of manipulation in the moral and ethical aspect, which is unacceptable.

According to its key features, the manipulation of consciousness is considered an extremely negative, ethically unacceptable and morally corrupting phenomenon that changes the general and individual perception of both values and the worldview. One should know the mechanisms and techniques of mind games to protect against manipulative intrusion into our consciousness.

Thus, we have defined the *manipulation* term and its key features. But since the concepts of linguistic effect and speech manipulation overlap, one should define the similarities and differences of those phenomena. All the comparable features are given in the Table 1 for convenience:

Table 1 - The correlation between the concepts of linguistic effect and manipulation of consciousness

<b>Linguistic effect</b>	<b>Speech manipulation</b>
1. It is immanent of speech.	1. It is transcendent of speech.
2. It has the purpose of effect.	2. It has the purpose of effect.
3. A set of linguistic techniques.	3. A set of linguistic techniques requiring specific dexterity for implementation.
4. Counting on a particular reaction of the addressee.	4. Counting on a particular reaction of the addressee.
5. A one-way psychological effect (respondent effect on the part of the addressee remains possible).	5. A one-way psychological effect (respondent effect on the part of the addressee is completely impossible).
6. An effect is unconscious and imperceptible; unconscious and perceptible.	6. An effect on the part of the addresser is conscious, on the part of the addressee — imperceptible.
7. An effect action and intentions of the addresser are not subtle.	7. An effect action and intentions of the addresser are subtle.
8. The addressee is perceived as active.	8. The addressee is perceived as an object of influence, a thing, an obedient tool.
9. The addresser does not acquire benefits.	9. The addresser acquires a number of particular one-way benefits.
10. An effect is executed in the interests of the addresser and/or of the addressee.	10. An effect is executed exclusively in the interests of the addresser.
11. The addresser openly affects the intentions of the addressee to change those.	11. The addresser is willing to subtly excite the addressee's intentions that do not match existing desires and intentions.
12. The addressee can choose independently, make decisions, as well as interpret events and assess them.	12. The addresser creates an illusion of independent choice, decision-making, interpretation of events and their assessment by the addressee.
13. An effect to inform the addressee.	13. An effect to introduce illusory representations.
14. The deception (hiding and distortion of information) is unacceptable.	14. The deception (hiding and distortion) is acceptable.
15. Argumentation gain.	15. Replacing argumentation with suggestion, irony, etc.
16. Appealing to low and dark levels is impossible.	16. Appealing to low and dark levels of the psyche.
17. Constructive aims.	17. Destructive aims.
18. It is not considered violence or aggression	18. It is indirectly aggressive (not in form, but in terms of the aims pursued by the addresser).
19. The term has a neutral tinge.	19. The term has a disapproval or negativity tinge.

Thus, **the common features** of linguistic effect and speech manipulation are as follows: setting for an effect and its one-wayness (partially), the set of linguistic techniques used, counting on a particular reaction of the addressee. The concepts of linguistic effect and speech manipulation differ according to other features. It should be also noted that the defined features where those two concepts overlap are the most general and basic. Differences according to other features suggest that we are having two different phenomena.

Thus, the following conclusion can be drawn: linguistic effect and speech manipulation are correlated as **inclusion**, while overlapping in the most general features and differing in particular ones. Consequently, **any manipulation of consciousness is considered a linguistic effect, but not every linguistic effect is aimed at manipulation of consciousness with the addressee.**

### **Конфликт интересов**

Не указан.

### **Рецензия**

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

### **Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

### **Review**

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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