

# The power of synergy in discourse: Exploring persuasive language in English mass media

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary English-language media discourse exerts a powerful influence over public opinion and attitudes, necessitating an exploration into the nuanced mechanisms of persuasive communication. This study examines the concept of synergistic pragmatic effects, focusing on how the combination of diverse language structures influences the efficacy of persuasive verbal interaction. Using a corpus of British and American newspaper articles and opinion essays, this research adopts a robust functional-linguistic approach. It applies both qualitative and quantitative analyses to dissect language techniques such as metaphor, irony, humor, emotionally charged lexemes, hyperbole, interdiscursive references, and rhetorical questions. The findings highlight the transformative power of expertly utilized synergies in achieving communicative goals and refining message interpretation. The interaction of varied language structures provokes particular cognitive and emotional reactions in audiences, shaping their perception of the presented information. This insight is crucial for discourse producers aiming to resonate with their target audience. Additionally, a heightened awareness of these synergies can make recipients less vulnerable to subtle speech manipulation. The practical implications of this research are most salient in the domain of teaching English as a foreign language for cross-cultural professional communication. By melding elements of functional-linguistic analysis, critical thinking, media literacy, and language proficiency, learners can better identify and counteract speech manipulation in media texts. This study augments the current literature on language's role in media communication, underscoring the need for continued research into the interplay between language, discourse, and persuasion in media.

**Keywords:** Cooperative effect, English mass media discourse, functional linguistics, persuasive texts, synergy

**First Received:**

26 April 2023

**Revised:**

19 June 2023

**Accepted:**

1 September 2023

**Final Proof Received:**

27 September 2023

**Published:**

30 September 2023

## How to cite (in APA style):

Khramchenko, D. S. (2023). The power of synergy in discourse: Exploring persuasive language in English mass media. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(2), 368-379. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v13i2.63068>

## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, effective intercultural communication is of paramount especially for professionals in business and intercultural relations. A comprehensive understanding of the English language, encompassing its pragmatics and semantics, is crucial for navigating various social and professional contexts (McConachy, 2022). This necessitates an educational approach that emphasizes functional-linguistic analysis, enabling learners to grasp the intricate semantic landscape of discourse and the complex web of functional

relationships and connections that arise between speech elements in the process of joint creation of the impactful pragmatic effect (Mao, 2021).

By honing these skills, future intercultural communication professionals will be adept at deciphering the nuances of English language communication, accurately interpreting expressions, and identifying potential manipulative techniques employed by adversaries. The study of speech manipulation and its pragmatic effects has been extensively researched by linguists specializing in functional linguistics, pragmatics, rhetoric,

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linguosynergetics, and cross-cultural communication (Ferrara et al., 2020; Kabakov & Aguilar-Cruz, 2021; Kharkovskaya & Leonovich, 2020; Khlopotunov, 2020; Ren, 2022).

Incorporating diverse functional-linguistic and linguistic-stylistic analysis methods into English language instruction for oral and written communication not only offers students a vivid illustration of the intricate relationships among various discursive elements but also cultivates critical skills vital for professional competence. These skills include the ability to discern strategies and objectives of speech influence employed by English speakers and effectively utilize diverse linguistic resources to achieve desired pragmatic outcomes (Zhang & Papi, 2021). Contemporary British and American periodicals, with their wide-ranging thematic repertoire spanning from socio-political articles and economic analyses to cultural reviews, serve as valuable resources for engaging students and providing compelling examples of persuasive written discourse in mass media.

Moreover, examining the cooperative effect of persuasive rhetoric from the perspective of delving into the underlying discourse mechanisms of English manipulative communication and refining foreign language teaching approaches is highly relevant. By gaining a profound understanding of persuasive rhetoric mechanisms, educators can devise more effective methods for teaching English as a foreign language, equipping their students with the confidence and proficiency to communicate in diverse social and professional environments (Zhang et al., 2020). Comprehending the synergies of the functional-pragmatic discursive space is instrumental in fostering the skills necessary for accurately perceiving and neutralizing speech manipulation techniques in both oral and written communication.

In the field of linguistics, the study of speech manipulation and persuasion has been extensively conducted within the contexts of language ideologies, political discourse, and propaganda. These practices are recognized as means of constructing and maintaining power relations, reinforcing social hierarchies, and influencing public opinion (Aldridge & Luchjenbroers, 2007; Bektashev, 2020; Fairclough, 1989; Ferrara et al., 2020; Gao, 2020; Jasim & Mustafa, 2020; Khlopotunov, 2020; Ljubičić & Vukasović, 2023; Polyakova et al., 2020). Speech manipulation, traditionally criticized in socio-political discourse and journalism, has gained popularity due to objectively observable changes in the communication landscape. Kopnina (2007) defines speech manipulation as the skillful use of language resources to covertly influence the cognitive and behavioral activities of the addressee. Van Dijk (2006) adds that manipulation involves communicative practices through which the

manipulator exercises control over others, often against their will and contrary to their interests. Manipulation can be associated with illegitimate domination, mind control, and ideological discourse that emphasizes strengths and weaknesses (Van Dijk, 2006).

The relationship between language, manipulation, power, and ideology is extensively studied, particularly in political discourse and rhetoric. While scholars sometimes differentiate between manipulation and persuasion, it is important to note that the distinction is not absolute and is often overlooked in the literature. Manipulation is characterized by a speaker's "negative" intention that remains concealed from the interlocutor, creating obscured layers of linguistic content with persuasive characteristics (Mulović, 2022). Zhdanko (2022) explores the growing interest in linguistic research on speech manipulation, which encompasses verbal and non-verbal elements, such as emotions, intentions, and values. The emergence of new techniques for manipulating speech is particularly evident in political, advertising, media, and religious contexts.

Pragmatics and psycholinguistics recognize that language not only conveys information but also affects interlocutors, regulating their social, interpersonal, mental states, and behaviors. This type of linguistic manipulation aims to influence individual and/or collective consciousness and behavior through various linguistic means (Chigasheva et al., 2023; Malyuga & Aleksandrova, 2022; Moiseeva, 2020; Reisach, 2021; Thiru, 2022; Wabeen, 2022). Gasparyan (2022) highlights that linguistic manipulation distorts objective reality and creates an illusory subjective reality through the intentional use of regular linguistic patterns, emphasizing positive information and concealing negative meanings. The use of linguistic manipulation in political, advertising, and media discourse has a significant impact on individuals and society.

Understanding the persuasive power of language in mass media discourse requires examining the cooperative synergistic effect of various functional-pragmatic elements. Pravikova (2018) emphasizes the strategic construction of a unique "semiotic world" to influence cognitive attitudes and guide interlocutors towards adopting specific viewpoints. The study of cooperative synergistic effects in persuasive rhetoric involves analyzing verbal and non-verbal elements, including emotions, intentions, and values, and their impact on the audience's minds.

In summary, the examination of speech manipulation and persuasion constitutes a critical domain of inquiry, encompassing a diverse array of linguistic strategies, underlying intentions, and the intricate social settings in which they operate. Concurrently, the introduction of innovative

approaches promises to provide further insights into the functional-pragmatic mechanisms that underlie persuasion within discourse. For instance, understanding the cooperative synergistic effect of persuasive rhetoric in mass media discourse can potentially uncover the persuasive power of language and its impact on cognitive and behavioral activities. The phenomenon of synergistic effects within the realm of linguistics has garnered considerable attention in the field of functional linguistics and linguosynergetics (Alefirenko et al., 2021; Belozerova, 2021; Kozlovsky, 2023). Specifically, it has been a focal point within the branch that delves into the systemic examination of functional-semantic self-optimization in discourse, known as functional linguosynergetics (Cherkunova et al., 2022; Khramchenko & Radyuk, 2023; Malakhova, 2022). Nevertheless, the investigation into synergistic effects pertaining to persuasive pragmatic impact, particularly within the context of English-language mass media, remains an area that requires further scholarly exploration.

Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the role of synergistic pragmatic effects in contemporary English-language media discourse and their impact on persuasive communication. The research questions that the paper pursues to answer are as follows: (1) How do different language structures interact synergistically in English-language media discourse? (2) What is the influence of synergistic language effects on the effectiveness of persuasive communication in media discourse? (3) How can an understanding of language synergies in media discourse enhance both the production and interpretation of messages? (4) What practical implications can be drawn from the study's findings for teaching English as a foreign language in the context of cross-cultural professional communication?

## **METHOD**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the role of synergistic pragmatic effects in modern English-language media discourse and their impact on persuasive communication. This choice is motivated by the need to provide a multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon under examination. The research procedure involved several stages and data collection techniques, providing a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

The empirical material selected for this study includes a diverse range of 350 texts, including online articles, news reports, opinion pieces, and other relevant texts from major British and American media outlets – The Economist, The Guardian, The New York Times, Newsweek, The

Sunday Independent, The Atlantic. All these publications have their own unique style and voice, and they use language in different ways to engage and persuade their readers (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2021). The choice of the texts is justified by the natural need of millions of professionals from various fields to access and stay updated with the global information field (Kamalipour, 2019). The topic of each article and the country of the publication did not serve as criteria for selection. Furthermore, these texts often contain explicit or implicit evaluative components (Houston, 2023), which provide an excellent opportunity to explore the persuasive rhetorical strategies employed by authors to achieve specific pragmatic effects. The major criterion for the inclusion of a media text into the corpus has been conspicuous deviation of the language from the stylistic neutrality, resulting in the use of expressive language means and devices which generate the second semantic plane of discourse signaling of implicatures and intellectual play with the audience.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis: Functional-Linguistic Analysis**

Functional-linguistic analysis is an analytical framework employed in linguistics to delve into the intricate interplay between language form and function within a given discourse. It operates on the premise that language is not merely a static structure, but a dynamic tool used to fulfill communicative goals and convey meaning. This approach goes beyond traditional linguistic analysis by emphasizing the functional aspects of language, focusing on how linguistic elements serve specific functions in discourse to achieve pragmatic effects (Abdelrahim, 2021; Saragih & Saragih, 2021; Svetnosova, 2022).

The distinguishing feature of functional-linguistic analysis is its emphasis on function over form. It prioritizes understanding how language is used to achieve specific communicative goals. This approach bridges pragmatics (the study of language use in context) and semantics (the study of meaning in language) by examining how linguistic elements contribute to both meaning and pragmatic effects. Functional-linguistic analysis is not confined to linguistics alone; it often draws from insights in discourse analysis, rhetoric, linguosynergetics, and communication studies to provide a holistic understanding of language in use.

The collected material was subjected to functional-linguistic analysis, aimed at identifying and interpreting the complex network of functional relationships and meanings within the discourse. This approach provides an excellent opportunity to understand the communicative intentions of the text and the ways in which language is used to achieve those intentions. In particular, the functional-linguistic approach focuses on the study of the

language functions and structures within the text and their relationship to the communicative context.

The operational process of the undertaken functional-linguistic analysis of the empirical material comprises the following stages:

1. Identifying functional elements: The first step involves identifying linguistic elements within the media text that serve specific functions. These elements include words, phrases, grammatical structures, and discourse markers.
2. Contextual analysis: Functional-linguistic analysis pays keen attention to the context in which these elements are used. This context encompasses both the immediate linguistic context, such as surrounding words and phrases, and the broader communicative context, including the communicative purpose of the discourse.
3. Functional classification: Once linguistic elements are identified, they are classified based on their functions. For instance, certain words or phrases may serve to assert facts, express opinions, elicit responses, convey emotions, impact the intellectual and/ or volitional spheres of the recipients.
4. Pragmatic effects: The analysis then explores how these functional elements interact to create specific pragmatic effects. This includes examining how linguistic choices influence the readers' understanding, emotions, and interpretations.
5. Patterns and strategies: Functional-linguistic analysis also investigates recurring patterns and strategies employed in the discourse. For example, it may identify rhetorical patterns of metaphor usage, rhetorical questions, or lexical choices that consistently contribute to the discourse's persuasive or manipulative qualities.
6. Comparative analysis: In some cases, functional-linguistic analysis involves comparative analysis, where linguistic elements and their functions are compared across different texts to highlight variations and commonalities.

The research methodology of this study involved a detailed examination of the language features and techniques used in the selected empirical material, e.g., metaphor, irony, humor, emotionally charged lexemes, hyperbole, interdiscursive references, and rhetorical questions. These devices were analyzed to identify the most common patterns and strategies used to achieve specific pragmatic effects with a special focus on persuasion. This analysis included a study of the language structures, i.e., grammatical constructions, lexical choices, phonetic properties, and discourse

markers, as well as the rhetorical strategies, such as argumentation, persuasion, and manipulation.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

To complement the functional-linguistic approach, the data obtained from the analysis were subjected to a comprehensive statistical analysis. This approach aimed to identify the most common language patterns and techniques used in the studied texts, as well as their frequency of occurrence (Podesva & Sharma, 2013). The statistical analysis provided a quantitative perspective on the data, which allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the language patterns and their significance in the studied discourse.

The statistical analysis involved a variety of methods, including frequency analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis. These methods were used to identify and measure the frequency of language means, such as alliteration, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, and informal language, as well as the frequency of specific words and phrases.

A comprehensive statistical analysis was performed on the data obtained from the functional-linguistic analysis. The first step in the statistical analysis was to identify the most common language means of persuasion used in the empirical material. This was achieved through a frequency analysis, which involved counting the number of times each language means occurred in the texts. This provided an overview of the language means of persuasion used in the texts and allowed for a comparison of their relative frequencies.

The second step was to conduct a descriptive analysis of the language means. This involved calculating descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, and mode of the frequency distribution. This provided a more detailed understanding of the distribution of persuasive language means in the texts.

### **Data Interpretation and Findings**

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses were synthesized to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of the persuasive language means and their functional-pragmatic cooperation observed in the English discourse of mass media. The interpretation of the data involved identifying patterns, themes, and tendencies in the use of language synergies. The findings were then discussed in relation to their influence on persuasive communication and the production and interpretation of messages in media discourse. The combination of functional-linguistic analysis and statistical analysis provided a unique perspective on the data, which helped to reveal the underlying mechanisms of persuasive rhetoric in the English language of the press, as well as the practical implications of the research findings, particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign

language for cross-cultural professional communication.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

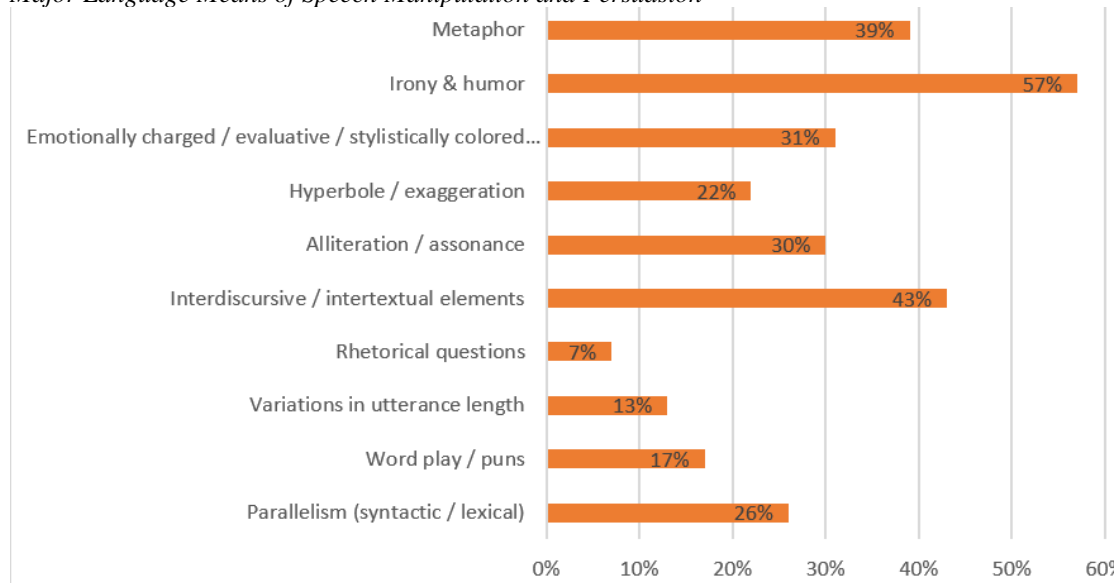
The realization of hidden intentions through verbal representation varies depending on the specific functional characteristics of different discursive types. For instance, in English business discourse official documents that adhere to a “classical” dry restrained business style primarily convey factual information, thus imposing strict linguistic form requirements to align with the expressed intention. Any deviation from the pragmatic-semantic balance of external and internal discourse structure, leading to ambiguity or diverse implicatures, is minimized or disallowed (Kharkovskaya & Leonovich, 2020). In communicative spheres with a more democratized interaction regime and a wide range of expressive language means, the share of speech manipulation in the functional load of discursive elements noticeably increases. This characteristic is prominent in contemporary English mass media discourse.

The perception of information by the addressee can be programmed to a certain extent, not only by selecting special lexical expressions but also by structuring the data in such a way as to emphasize and reinforce favorable information to the maximum extent possible, while pushing undesirable information to the periphery of the semantic system

of the text or disguising it. Thus, even the transmission of undistorted facts can generate a certain effect of pragmatic impact on the recipient. Even though overt speech manipulation of the reader’s mind is not allowed in idealized journalism in general and in the most respectable and influential British and American publications in particular, the functional-pragmatic evolution of English mass media discourse and the dynamics of existing communicative norms lead to the popularization of non-standard verbal techniques in newspaper and magazine texts, opening up broad opportunities for rhetorical persuasive impact.

As revealed by the statistical analysis of empirical data, the most commonly employed linguistic devices for creating persuasive manipulative effects include metaphor, irony, humor, emotionally charged lexemes, hyperbole, alliteration and assonance, interdiscursive and intertextual references, rhetorical questions, and variation in utterance length (Figure 1). These rhetorical techniques based on the intensification of expressiveness and delivering important messages indirectly and implicitly are employed in mass media discourse to elicit desired cognitive and emotional responses from the audience, influencing their perception of the conveyed information. This highlights the significance of pragmatic language choices in shaping the persuasive impact of English media discourse.

**Figure 1**  
*Major Language Means of Speech Manipulation and Persuasion*



The use of persuasive language in English mass media discourse has long been recognized as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and influencing attitudes. Metaphor, for instance, allows for the representation of abstract concepts in more concrete and relatable terms, making them easier to

grasp. Irony and humor can be used to engage the audience, evoke emotions, and convey subtle messages with a persuasive impact. Emotionally charged or stylistically marked vocabulary, such as strong positive or negative epithets, informal or slang words and phrases, can trigger emotional

responses and shape the audience's perception of the topic or issue at hand. The functional load of hyperbole, or exaggerated language, can be the creation of emphasis and leaving a lasting impression on the audience. Alliteration and assonance on the phonetic level can create rhythm and musicality in discourse, making messages more memorable. Interdiscursive and intertextual references, by providing a link to other texts or even whole other types of discourse, can draw on shared cultural background knowledge or authority to influence the audience's perception of the topic. Rhetorical questions can be used to effectively engage the readers and guide their thinking towards a desired conclusion, while variation in utterance length can create emphasis or convey urgency.

The application of functional-linguistic analysis provides a means of penetrating the complex pragmatics and semantics of discourse, allowing for the description of the mechanisms involved in the creation of impactful discursive space. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of the functional relationships and connections that arise between speech elements, shedding light on the underlying processes of meaning formation within English mass media discourse.

A good example of metaphor as one of the leading language instruments of persuasion can be found in The Economist's "Defanging the Chinese Tiger":

*To buddhist pilgrims, the Tiger Pagoda of Tanzhe Temple is a monument to a miracle. They believe that this stupa, in Beijing's pine-clad western hills, marks the tomb of a tiger so touched by a monk's piety that it abjured killing, moved into the temple grounds and lived on meatless gruel. When Chaguan saw the tomb on a recent hike, it struck him as a sadly useful metaphor. That vegetarian tiger could serve as a symbol for the strong-but-unthreatening China that America once sought as a partner, but which now seems to many in Washington like a naive dream (The Economist, 2023a).*

The author of this article employs the technique of metaphor to manipulate the reader's perception of the relationship between the US and China. The use of the image of the *vegetarian tiger*, who was once a fierce predator but changed its ways to live peacefully with the temple monks, implies that China has the potential to be a powerful and cooperative partner, but this potential is not being realized by the current leadership. By contrasting this positive image of China with the negative view of the country held by many in Washington, the author suggests that the US is missing out on an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship with China. Additionally, the use of emotive language is another speech manipulation technique used in this extract. The description of the

vegetarian tiger as a "*miracle*" and the use of phrases such as "*naive dream*" to describe the US's previous perception of China evoke strong emotions in the reader, further reinforcing the author's argument.

Based on a strategic communicative intention, the author of the media text adeptly employs a tactical combination of linguistic devices, meticulously arranged in a deliberate sequence, considering the complex interplay of functional relationships among key elements of the discourse. Such an approach results in a potent pragmatic persuasive effect, capable of reshaping the readers' perception of the described object/phenomenon, altering their emotional disposition and intentionality, and reconfiguring the categorical structure of the addressee's individual consciousness, while introducing novel categories and activating relevant frames and scenarios. Such pragmatic language choices in mass media discourse underscore the profound impact of rhetorical techniques on shaping persuasiveness in English mass media communication.

For example, in the article "Defy John Whittingdale and a Dominatrix Will Whip You into Line," which columnist Stuart Lee dedicated to criticizing British government minister John Whittingdale, the author employs a variety of linguistic resources and rhetorical techniques to discredit the minister's actions and position. Lee uses metaphors, irony, and sarcasm to create a negative impression of Whittingdale, portraying him as someone who deserves to be punished. This demonstrates how speech manipulation can be used to shape public opinion and influence the way people perceive political figures and events.

*Today, if I worked as a cartoonist for a tabloid newspaper, I could simply hand in a hurried scrawl of heaven, where Victoria Wood now plays the piano alongside Prince on guitar and John Whittingdale's political credibility on slap bass. But instead, I must write (The Guardian, 2016).*

The article begins with a rather informal passage by the author discussing the difficulty in describing the complex situation surrounding Whittingdale. The mention of recently deceased celebrities — comedian Victoria Wood and singer Prince — fits with the author's use of the lexeme "*heaven*." However, the introduction of the element *John Whittingdale's political credibility* into the discourse does not fit with the other speech components. Whittingdale's authority as a politician is not anything animate and certainly cannot participate in a "*heavenly*" concert as a musician. The combination of these functionally incompatible discourse elements generates a second pragma-semantic level in the analyzed fragment — the minister does not deserve society's trust.

Special attention should be given to the title of the article, which highlights the words "*dominatrix*"

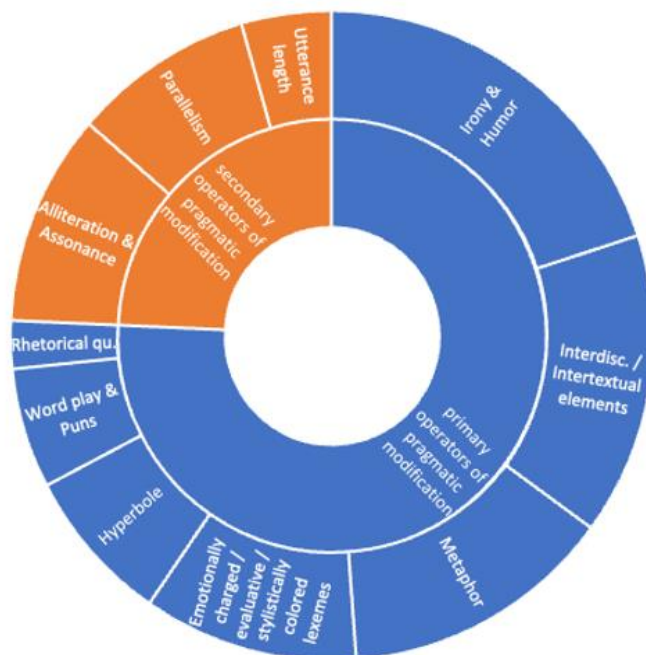
and “*whip*.” These lexemes create images in the readers’ minds that have little to do with political activities. The resulting ironic effect enhances the pragmatic impact on the newspaper’s audience, increasing the overall persuasiveness of the specific arguments presented and ensuring the maximum reception of the author’s point of view. Thus, the heterogeneous discourse elements cooperate to achieve a joint functional load, which consists of creating a persuasive pragmatic effect.

Drawing on a meticulous analysis of the functional and linguistic aspects of a carefully curated corpus of texts, the current study discerns two distinct categories of language techniques employed for speech manipulation and the intentional creation of persuasive pragmatic effects based on the similarities of their functional load and

role in achieving the communicative purposes of the text (Figure 2). The first category encompasses primary operators of pragmatic modification in English mass media discourse, which engender a new layer of meaning that necessitates readers’ decoding and interpretation. The second category entails secondary operators of pragmatic modification that evoke a heightened expressiveness in the discourse, enabling the text’s author to captivate the readers’ attention, amplify the audience’s interest, and elicit engagement. Furthermore, these secondary operators contribute to the creation of a deliberate aesthetic-positive effect, thereby endowing the reader with a sense of intellectual gratification through the artful interplay of form and content.

**Figure 2**

*Distribution of Pragmatic Modification Operators in Persuasive English Mass Media*



In The Atlantic’s “The End of Trust” the author employs secondary syntactical operators of pragmatic modification to charge the functional space of the opening fragment with persuasion and evaluative semantic components:

*Manufacturer inventories. Durable-goods orders. Nonfarm payrolls. Inflation-adjusted GDP. These are the dreary reportables that tell us how our economy is doing. And many of them look a whole lot better now than they did at their early-pandemic depths. But what if there’s another factor we’re missing? What if the data points are obscuring a deepening recession in a commodity that underpins them all? Trust. Without it, Adam Smith’s invisible hand stays in its pocket; Keynes’s “animal spirits” are muted. “Virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust,” the Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow wrote in 1972 (The Atlantic, 2021).*

By varying the length of the sentences from shorter to longer ones and back to the shortest (“Trust”) the author creates an effective framework for the semantics of the discourse as it progresses towards achieving the communicative purpose. In this highly expressive and dynamic extract which has its own rhythm unlike typical financial reports in the press, all major semantic centers are carefully accentuated for the readers to perceive and be convinced. The groundwork of important but secondary syntactic operators underpins the functionality of other, primary language means of speech manipulation, i.e., rhetorical questions and metaphors that are used to raise doubts about the state of the economy. The author begins by listing various economic indicators, such as *manufacturer inventories* and *durable-goods orders*, that appear to

show improvement from their early-pandemic lows. However, the author then introduces a rhetorical question, asking “*what if there’s another factor we’re missing?*” This question sets up the idea that there might be something more sinister going on beneath the surface of the economic data. The author then uses a metaphor to illustrate the importance of trust in the economy. It compares trust to Adam Smith’s *invisible hand* which is presented not as an economic notion but rather literally due to the discursive element “*stays in its pocket*”, and Keynes’s “*animal spirits*,” suggesting that without trust, these economic theories are ineffective. The functional synergy of these cooperating rhetorical elements gives rise to humorous pragmatics, engaging readers and making the presented arguments seem more compelling. This also serves to underscore the idea that the current economic recovery may be fragile and in danger of collapse if trust is not maintained.

The speech manipulation in this extract seeks to create a sense of doubt and unease about the state of the economy. By suggesting that there may be hidden factors at play and using ironic, even humorous metaphors against a thoroughly laid out syntactic carcass of the discourse to illustrate the fragility of the economic recovery, the author seeks to influence the reader’s perception of the economy and the need for trust in maintaining its stability. Ultimately, this extract serves as an excellent example of the power of language to shape our understanding of complex issues.

In the curated and comprehensively analyzed corpus of empirical data, it has been observed that speech manipulation and the persuasive effects thereof are predominantly achieved through the intentional utilization of two or more language manipulation means by the author (73% of studied texts). These means serve to shape the evaluative nature of the discourse, actively influencing the readers’ perception and impacting their emotional, volitional, and intellectual responses. Notably, a prominent area of contemporary linguistic inquiry is the investigation of the functional-pragmatic space of discourse, wherein the interplay among its elements generates novel semantic and pragmatic structures. This inquiry is conducted within the broader context of the semantic system of the discourse, the overall language system as an accessible inventory for speech production, the characteristics of the extralinguistic situation, and the consciousness of the communicants, and is known as functional linguosynergetics.

The cooperative nature of pragmatic impact is one of the actively studied topics within the framework of synergistic investigations in functional linguistics (Alefirenko et al., 2021; Belozeroва, 2021; Khrumchenko & Radyuk, 2023; Kozlovsky, 2023; Malakhova, 2022). The concept of “synergy,” which refers to the harmonious

integration of energies, is fittingly employed to describe the amalgamation of functional potentials from diverse elements within mass media discourse. These elements encompass various components of the sound field, such as phonetics and prosodic organization, as well as specific lexical content and syntactic structure. Additionally, semantic-pragmatic components of the functional space formed at different levels of discourse, contextual environment, and extralinguistic phenomena are also encompassed within this concept of synergy.

The nonlinearity of mass media discourse, which allows for the cooperative pragmatic effect and ultimate modification as well as multiplication of the functional load of various discursive means, becomes evident through the multidirectional interaction of all elements, contrasting with the linearity observed in visual and auditory text perception. This interaction gives rise to a nonlinear synergistic effect, which can be encapsulated by the expression “two plus two equals five.” This phrase highlights the essence of synergy as the overall meaning of a text does not equate to the linear sum of its individual components’ meanings.

Research in the field of synergistic studies of language and speech endeavors to elucidate the intricate dynamics between linguistic and non-linguistic factors that influence human communication. This multidisciplinary approach delves into the interplay between the form and content of discourse utterances and the wider social and cultural milieu in which they are generated and interpreted. It acknowledges that language is not solely a means of transmitting information, but also a social practice that mirrors and perpetuates cultural norms, values, and power dynamics. By examining the synergistic relationship between language and its social context, researchers aim to gain deeper insights into the complexities of human communication and its societal implications.

The study of pragmatic impact seeks to understand how speakers use language to achieve their communicative goals, such as persuading, informing, and/or entertaining their audience. This involves analyzing the various linguistic and non-linguistic cues that speakers use to convey meaning, including intonation, facial expressions, gestures, and context. By examining the ways in which these cues interact and combine to create persuasive pragmatic effects, researchers can gain insight into the complex dynamics of manipulative communication.

The study of the cooperative nature of pragmatic impact in synergistic studies of language and speech represents an important avenue for advancing our understanding of how language is used in English mass media discourse and how it not only reflects but also shapes ideas, social and cultural norms, and power relations in the minds of native English speakers.



In the article “Secession, Season One Recap” the author resorts to various language devices employed all at once to manipulate the readers’ perception and influence their attitudes towards the Scottish National Party and its new leader:

*Who needs HBO when you can watch the SNP melt down? A vicious battle to take the place of an all-powerful Scottish leader has turned “Succession” into must-watch television. The fight to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) had the same plot line and the same mix of underwhelming pretenders and fratricidal ambition. The successor in the real-life drama is now known. Humza Yousaf, previously the health secretary, this week became the new head of the SNP and Scotland’s first minister (see Britain section). But the party he leads suddenly seems as dysfunctional as Waystar Royco (The Economist, 2023b).*

In the opening fragment of the article, the author uses the rhetorical question “*Who needs HBO when you can watch the SNP melt down?*” to imply that the events surrounding the SNP leadership contest are more entertaining and dramatic than any fictional television show. This hyperbolic language aims to engage the reader and create a sense of excitement and anticipation.

One of the central elements of the persuasive rhetoric is the metaphor comparing the SNP to Waystar Royco, the fictional media conglomerate in the TV show “Succession.” By linking the SNP to a dysfunctional and corrupt fictional corporation, the author seeks to portray the party in a negative light and discredit its new leader. Interdiscursive elements “*plot line*”, “*drama*”, “*must-watch television*”, and “*HBO*” aren’t typical of a traditional report on current political events and belong to the semantic field of television series and premium cable TV, bringing about parallels in the readers’ minds with morally ambivalent and ethically questionable characters of the show to suggest a subtle ironic comparison between the SNP leadership battle and the protagonists of “Succession”. The phrase “*vicious battle*” describing the SNP leadership contest implies that the process was characterized by aggression and hostility. This use of emotive language creates a negative impression of the SNP and its members. Discourse elements “*underwhelming pretenders*” and “*fratricidal ambition*” both activate the audience’s background knowledge of the show’s plot and increase the expressiveness of the journalist’s intended commentary.

The language devices employed in the extract intensify each other’s pragmatic impact and serve to manipulate the reader’s perception and influence their attitudes towards the SNP and its new leader, thus fulfilling their common functional-pragmatic load and the communicative purpose of the whole text. By using hyperbolic language, metaphors, rhetorical questions, irony, and emotive language,

the author seeks to synergistically portray the SNP in a negative light and create a sense of drama and excitement for the reader.

Let’s consider one more article “Men, Beware of That Bulging Belly,” published in The Sunday Independent, which highlights the harmful effects of male beer alcoholism.

*THERE it is – bulging out in all its glory. It probably took years to grow – round, soft – and probably brings some measure of pride.*

*Well – you shouldn’t be so proud of your beer bellies, gents, they could be a precursor to other serious illnesses.*

*According to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), men are more likely than women to drink excessively. Excessive drinking is associated with significant increases in short-term risks to health and safety, and the risk increases as the amount of drinking increases (The Sunday Independent, 2017).*

The author creates a multi-layered complex functional-pragmatic field through the synergy of different levels of language techniques and tools: alliteration (*bulging, all, glory, probably; grow, round, brings, pride; be, beer, bellies*), the hyperbolic expression “*in all its glory*,” ironic-conversational lexeme “*gents*,” imitation of informal communication with readers (“*there it is*,” “*well*,” “*gents*”), intentional isolation of adjectives with a clearly positive connotation (“*round*,” “*soft*”) in the context of describing an unhealthy situation, and repeated nomination of key words such as “*to drink/drinking*,” “*risk*,” and “*increases*.” The cooperative nature of the interaction between the discursive elements generates the author’s desired pragmatic effect of disapproval and condemnation of the phenomenon being described.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of synergistic pragmatic effects in modern English-language media discourse has been shown to be a fundamental property that relates to the success of persuasive communication. The functional-linguistic analysis of the empirical material reveals that the effective use of synergies among different levels of language structures can facilitate the accomplishment of the communicative goals of discourse producers, promoting the interpretation and reception of messages by discourse recipients. The examination of the language techniques and means of metaphor, irony, humor, emotionally charged and stylistically colored lexemes, hyperbole, alliteration and assonance, interdiscursive and intertextual references, rhetorical questions, and variation in utterance length can help create a powerful persuasive effect of pragmatic impact that has the ability to influence readers’ attitudes and behavior, elicit desired cognitive and emotional responses from the audience, influencing their perception of the conveyed information. The

functional-linguistic approach used in this study provides a means of penetrating the complex pragmatics and semantics of discourse, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the functional relationships and connections that arise between discourse elements. This sheds light on the underlying processes of meaning formation within English mass media discourse, with functional-pragmatic synergy being an effective discursive mechanism of persuasive impact.

The research findings provide evidence that the concept of synergy in media discourse is an essential aspect of professional competence for both media producers and recipients. Media producers who possess a deep understanding of the synergistic properties of language can create effective and compelling messages that resonate with their target audience. In contrast, media recipients who are aware of the role of synergies and cooperative pragmatic effects in media discourse can better understand and interpret the messages they receive, making them less susceptible to speech manipulation.

The undertaken research has a potential for practical application to the process of teaching English as a foreign language to future specialists in cross-cultural professional communication. Showing students how to recognize speech manipulation in English-language mass media texts requires a multifaceted approach that includes general understanding of modern English rhetorical devices, critical thinking skills, media literacy, and language proficiency. By providing EFL students with authentic media texts, guiding them to critically analyze the language used in these texts with elements of simplified functional-linguistic analysis, and helping them identify persuasive language means one can enhance their competency in recognizing and adequately reacting to speech manipulation. It is also helpful to encourage students to question the intent behind the language used in English mass media. Mastering the concept of synergy in the context of persuasion is a crucial step to detecting bias or manipulation in media texts. Further, asking students to analyze media texts from their own countries or cultures, compare media coverage from different sources or countries, or create their own media texts that reflect different perspectives or viewpoints exploiting the functional load synergy of several manipulative language means will help them understand the relevance and impact of media manipulation in their daily lives.

The findings of this study suggest that the use of synergistic cooperative effects in media discourse is an important area of study for discourse analysts and linguists. Further research in this area can help deepen our understanding of how different language structures interact with one another in English media discourse and how these interactions influence the effectiveness of persuasive communication. As

such, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of language in media communication and underscores the need for continued research in this area to achieve a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language, discourse, and persuasion in particular genres and forms of mass media.

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