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STRATEGIES OF MANIPULATIVE RHETORIC IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BUSINESS MEDIA DISCOURSE¹

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Abstract. The aim of the study is to identify manipulative strategies implemented through the use of collocations, clichés, idioms, and set phrases in the English-language business media discourse. A quantitative analysis of samples collected from publications in “The Economist” was conducted. The research hypothesis proposes that manipulative strategies in the English-language business discourse are realized through the deliberate choice of collocations, clichés, idioms, and set phrases, which serve as tools for shaping public opinion. The study identified five manipulative strategies. It was established that manipulation through imagery-based expressions is the most frequently employed strategy, while evaluative assessments of factual content and manipulation by criticism are less frequent. The least utilized strategies are manipulation through antithesis and generalization, manipulation via vague or euphemistic language constructions. The research confirmed that collocations, clichés, idioms, and set phrases are extensively used in the English-language business media discourse to implement manipulative strategies, and several strategies may be joined within a single utterance. The findings may have scientific implications, particularly for scholars and professionals in media and business communication.

Key words: manipulative rhetoric, business media discourse, collocation, cliché, idiom, set phrase, lexical-semantic analysis.

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СТРАТЕГИИ МАНИПУЛЯТИВНОЙ РИТОРИКИ В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОМ ДЕЛОВОМ МЕДИАДИСКУРСЕ¹

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Аннотация. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении манипулятивных стратегий, которые в англоязычном деловом медиадискурсе реализуются через использование устойчивых выражений, клише, идиом и коллокаций. Проведен количественный анализ примеров, извлеченных из публикаций в деловом издании «The Economist». Гипотеза исследования состоит в том, что в англоязычном бизнес-дискурсе манипулятивные стратегии воплощаются через целенаправленное употребление устойчивых выражений, клише, идиом и коллокаций, которые служат инструментами управления общественным мнением. В результате анализа текстового материала установлены пять стратегий манипуляции. Обнаружено, что наиболее востребована из них манипуляция посредством образных выражений, менее частотны оценка фактического содержания и манипуляция через критику, наименее востребованы манипуляция посредством антитезы и обобщения и манипуляция через неопределенные или эвфемистические языковые конструкции. Исследование подтвердило, что устойчивые выражения, клише, идиомы и коллокации широко используются в англоязычном деловом медиадискурсе для реализации манипулятивных стратегий, при этом отдельные стратегии могут комбинироваться в рамках одного высказывания. Полученные результаты имеют универсальную значимость, особенно важны они для специалистов в области медиа и деловой коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: манипулятивная риторика, деловой медиадискурс, словосочетание, клише, идиома, устойчивое выражение, лексико-семантический анализ.

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Introduction

The lexical-semantic analysis of collocations, set phrases, clichés, and idioms as a means of manipulation has gained certain interest among linguists. While studies have explored manipulative rhetoric in political discourse, marketing and general media, there remains a significant gap concerning the specific mechanisms of manipulation administered in business media discourse. This study bridges this gap through a lexical-semantic exploration of manipulative expressions within business-oriented articles. The importance of this study emerges from its ability to identify linguistic means of manipulation in business media discourse.

The study implies that the strategic deployment of collocations, clichés, idioms, and set phrases in business media discourse is a critical linguistic tool for manipulation. Such manipulative rhetoric influences corporate reputations, investor confidence, and market trends through its pervasive presence in texts.

The primary aim of the study is to identify and inspect the manipulative strategies registered in business media discourse through the use of collocations, clichés, idioms, and set phrases. The wider implications of this study have to do with the role of language in corporate communication, media literacy, and public perception management.

The study intends to address the following research question: How are collocations, clichés,

idioms, and set phrases employed in the English-language business media discourse to realize specific manipulative strategies?

Theoretical background

Media manipulation has been the subject of extensive research, particularly in political, entertainment, and cultural media studies [Akopova, 2013; Mohamadi, Weisi, 2023; Mialkovska et al., 2024; Grishechko, 2024]. These contexts often operationalize overt techniques of ideological persuasion, making manipulation more visible to audiences. In contrast, business media presents another style where manipulation is subtler and more specialized. Business media not only informs but also exerts significant influence over corporate reputations, investor confidence, and market trends. To that end, it employs multifaceted strategies to forge perceptions without appearing overtly biased. These rhetorical tools control consumer behavior, steer investor decisions, and alter the discourse through strategic messaging.

The foundations of media manipulation lie in both linguistic and extralinguistic grounds, which together predetermine the way audiences perceive and process information. Linguistically, manipulation is characterized by the selective representation of reality through a carefully chosen lexicon, including techniques like partial synonymy, deliberate ambiguity, and implicitness. These linguistic strategies enable media outlets to

influence readers' consciousness by framing issues in ways that lead to specific interpretations. Extralinguistically, manipulation involves social, semiotic, psychological, ethnocultural, and cognitive factors that affect the way media messages are received and understood. In the context of business media, these factors contribute to shaping corporate narratives that resonate with different audience segments, creating a dual-layered manipulation that operates on both linguistic and contextual levels [Minaeva, 2023].

How frequently phrases are used is a crucial component of manipulative rhetoric. Frequently occurring terms typically have more manipulative power because repeated exposure fosters the development of audience consensus regarding the meanings and uses of the terms [Nazemian, Shadman, 2023]. To influence readers' perceptions in a way that supports the media outlet's agenda, for example, the collocation "*run a campaign*" is readily understood by the majority of them. But in order to fully communicate their meaning, less common phrases need more contextual support, which, depending on how they are used in discourse, can either lessen or increase their manipulative potential. In order to influence readers' perceptions and encourage specific business and consumer behaviors, this study looks at how business media deliberately employs both common and uncommon phrases.

Also crucial to manipulative language effectiveness are the cultural and social contexts in which it is employed. The manipulative potential of phrases that are strongly ingrained in particular cultural or social contexts may be limited because they may not be entirely understandable or convincing to outsiders [Akopova, 2013]. For instance, some colloquialisms or slang may have a strong cultural resonance for people from that background, but not for others. But, because they can cut through linguistic and cultural barriers, expressions that are commonly understood by a wide range of social and cultural groups typically carry greater manipulative potential [Hedayat, Aghagolzadeh, Shirvan, 2023].

The formality of the context in which manipulative phrases are used can also testify their efficiency [Malyuga, 2023]. Conversely, phrases that might be useful in casual conversations might not be as suitable in formal contexts. In business or professional settings, for example, colloquialisms

can result in a style clash that affects the audience by making the message seem more approachable or grounded [Mohamadi, Weisi, 2023].

Lastly, the importance of selective information presentation and strategic framing in media manipulation has long been highlighted by scholars. In business media, these tactics are employed to draw readers to particular points of view or to advance particular corporate agendas [Grishechko, 2024]. Using emotional appeals, leaving out important details, or using strong language are all common strategies for influencing audience perceptions. To support their claims of being the leading voices in their fields, businesses usually rely on statistical information, marketing research, and expert opinions [Mialkowska et al., 2024]. In order to demonstrate how manipulative rhetoric works in the business sector, this study will look at how these strategies specifically operate in the English language business media discourse.

Material and methods

This study systematically analyzed the manipulative rhetoric within business-themed articles from the digital newspaper, *The Economist*. This involved several systematic steps.

Random sampling. A total of 25 articles from the Business and Opinion sections were randomly selected to include both objective news and opinion pieces, which are particularly rich in manipulative rhetoric.

Phrase identification. Each article was examined to identify a broad range of phrases – collocations, set phrases, clichés, and idioms – with potential manipulative impact. From this examination, 190 examples were selected for further analysis.

Categorization. A detailed analytical framework was then developed, categorizing the phrases based on their lexical-semantic and functional characteristics within the context. This approach enabled a thorough analysis of the phrases and understanding of how these phrases operate within the context of business discourse.

Frequency assessment. Additionally, a quantitative method was applied to assess the frequency and prevalence of manipulative mechanisms in business media discourse.

In examining the factors that affect the manipulative potential of lexical units, we

conducted a lexical-semantic analysis of collocations, terminological collocations, set phrases, clichés, and idioms from the standpoint of manipulative rhetoric within business media discourse. The criteria used to identify manipulative rhetoric involved a combination of indicative markers of manipulation, such as linguistic mechanisms, functional characteristics and manipulative intent.

The study has revealed five manipulative strategies: 1) manipulation through imagery-based expressions (47.3%, $n = 90$); 2) evaluative assessment of factual content (25.3%, $n = 48$); 3) manipulation by criticism (20%, $n = 38$); 4) manipulation through antithesis and generalization (4.2%, $n = 8$); 5) manipulation through vague or euphemistic language (3.2%, $n = 6$). To illustrate how these manipulative strategies function, the study will consider a set of representative examples.

Results

1. Manipulation through imagery-based expressions

In this study, manipulation through imagery-based expressions emerged as the most prevalent strategy, occurring at a substantial rate of 47.3% within the sample analyzed ($n = 90$). This high percentage indicates that figurative language is a predominant tactic employed to shape public perception.

(1) Sometimes it is more important to make a decision than to **excavate** everyone's **point of view**. Reaching consensus is vital on a jury but less necessary in a corporate hierarchy (How to benefit..., 2024).

The phrase *to excavate a point of view* features a metaphorical application of the verb *to excavate*, which is typically associated with the act of digging up, as in archaeological contexts where it describes unearthing ancient relics. When used to refer to the process of trying to understand someone's perspective, this verb effectively illustrates the significant effort and duration necessary for such an exploration. This emphasizes and legitimizes the speaker's intent to proceed with decisions without additional discussion.

(2) **In a nutshell**, as Mr Zuckerberg grows older, he appears to have learned from his mistakes (Musk v Zuckerberg..., 2024).

In a nutshell is an idiomatic expression, which is used to talk of a topic or situation in a summarizing manner. The phrase derives from the concept of condensing information to fit within the small space of a nut, suggesting that the summarized content is compact and easily comprehensible. Originating in the 19th century, this expression remains prevalent in various settings, from informal chats to formal presentations and written discourse.

(3) One reason miners are reluctant to **loosen the purse-strings** is that they are still trying to win back the confidence of investors (Why the world's mining companies..., 2024).

The phrase *to loosen the purse-strings* signifies an increase in spending or making funds more accessible, in contrast to *tighten the purse-strings*, which indicates cutting back on expenses or limiting financial access. This idiom in way of metaphorical application refers to the physical action of loosening or tightening a purse's strings to regulate the money within. It is often found in conversations about financial decisions, budgeting, and spending habits and illustrates financial management practices.

(4) Though his Tesla shareholding at the time meant he would become \$10bn richer every time Tesla's value jumped by \$50bn, that wasn't enough. Tesla's board (many of whom the judge ruled were too chummy with Mr Musk to be independent) convinced shareholders that an extra incentive was needed to **keep his nose to the grindstone**: namely, the biggest payout in the history of public markets (Musk v Zuckerberg..., 2024).

The expression *keep the nose to the grindstone* stems from the metaphorical image of sharpening a tool by pressing it firmly against a grindstone. The idiom symbolizes working hard and consistently, staying focused solely on the task at hand. It conveys perseverance and self-sacrifice required for success, often used manipulatively in business contexts to assure shareholders that with adequate funding, diligent work the success will proceed without disruption. The phrase can describe someone already engaged in hard work or act as a directive to maintain or commence rigorous efforts.

Thus, imagery-based expressions serve as a powerful tool in media discourse for embedding complex ideas into more relatable and vivid contexts.

2. Evaluative assessment of factual content

In the analyzed corpus of business media discourse, evaluative assessment of factual content manifests in 25.3% of instances ($n = 48$). This significant occurrence exposes the role of evaluative language in shaping readers' interpretations and judgments by embedding subjective assessments within the presentation of factual information. Evaluative assessments influence perception by assigning value or quality to information, thereby framing it in a light that supports the narrative or agenda of the media outlet.

(5) One **thorny issue** is access to the ancestral lands of indigenous populations. In America the majority of resources – 97% of nickel, 89% of copper and 79% of lithium – is either on Native American reservations or within 35 miles (56km) of them (Why the world's mining companies..., 2024).

The cliché *thorny issue* refers to a complex and potentially contentious topic. This phrase, frequently employed in research or negotiation contexts, brings to the fore the challenges and complications inherent in such discussions. As a well-established cliché, it retains evaluative quality and invokes images of prickly roses or a crown of thorns, thereby enhancing its manipulative impact through vivid associations.

(6) In business terms, even then Mr Musk **had the upper hand**. He was the richest man on Earth. Tesla's market value, though falling, was higher than Meta's (Musk v Zuckerberg..., 2024).

The expression *have the upper hand* describes holding a dominant position or advantage over others. It is believed to have originated from American children selecting baseball team players, where the child with the *upper hand* in a physical gesture gained the initial advantage. The expression is versatile, used across various scenarios – from negotiations to competitions – highlighting an advantageous position in conflicts or strategic interactions.

(7) Joe Feldman, an analyst at Telsey Advisory Group, a research firm, argues that the membership model creates a **virtuous circle**. The more members the company has, the greater its buying power, leading to better deals with suppliers, most of which are then passed on to its members (Why Costco is so loved..., 2024).

The collocation *virtuous circle* subtly influences the emotional tone of the audience. Combining *virtuous*, suggesting moral excellence, with *circle*, indicating a continuous loop, the term describes a self-perpetuating cycle where positive outcomes lead to further benefits. This concept is widely applied in fields like economics, psychology, and sociology to illustrate how initial minor advantages can escalate into substantial gains.

Evaluative assessment of factual content is particularly pivotal in areas where the media seeks to guide public opinion or investor sentiment, effectively molding the audience's responses to information through the inclusion of value-laden descriptors. The prevalence of this strategy testifies to its effectiveness in directing the narrative flow and engaging the audience emotionally, thereby making the discourse not only informative but also persuasive. This evaluative method serves as an efficient tool in the arsenal of business media, facilitating a more engaged and controlled reception of the presented facts while maintaining the veneer of objectivity.

3. Manipulation by criticism

In the sample studied, 20% of instances ($n = 38$) revealed the use of criticism as a common tactic in business media to disparage or discredit various subjects, ideas, or entities and influence public opinion. It focuses on perceived flaws or raising doubts, and so aligns with agendas or viewpoints, which helps to steer audience reactions toward skepticism or disapproval. The use of critical language thus shapes the narrative, guiding it through negation and faultfinding.

(8) In their bid to win over American shoppers the duo are spending so lavishly on digital ads that their **footprints show up** in big tech companies' earnings (How worried should Amazon..., 2024).

The expression *footprints show up* vividly depicts the significant influence that the actions of two competing companies have on Amazon's earnings. This expression falls under the category

of “manipulation by criticism” because of its derisive tone. When paired with the phrase *spending so lavishly*, it creates an ironic effect to convey a negative connotation.

(9) In September it rolled out an **end-to-end supply-chain service** in which it picks up goods from merchants’ factories and ships them to customers, **mirroring** what its Chinese rivals do (How worried should Amazon..., 2024).

In this case, the author uses the phrase *end-to-end supply-chain service*, with *end-to-end* implying a complete and seamless operation. The term *mirroring* is used to imply that this approach has been copied from competitors, which adds a critical undertone. This choice of words adds to clarity and understanding, despite the subtle critique embedded within.

(10) Shein is reportedly **poaching** supply-chain **specialists** from Amazon (How worried should Amazon..., 2024).

The collocation *to poach specialists* falls under manipulation by criticism. The term *to poach* carries significant negative implications, traditionally associated with illegal hunting on another’s land or unethically appropriating ideas or resources from others. By employing this collocation, the author sharply criticizes the actions of the company *Shein*, likening them to unlawful hunting.

(11) It indicates he wants the company’s shareholders to have even less protection from his capriciousness than usual. If anyone should get into the ring and **hammer some sense into him**, it is them (Musk v Zuckerberg..., 2024).

The phrase *to hammer some sense into someone* means to instill an idea or concept forcefully and repetitively. The word *hammer* is used metaphorically here, evoking the physical act of striking repeatedly with a hammer to underscore the intensity of making a point. This study further highlights how words like *hammer* can elicit varied interpretations based on context. In scenarios involving controversial actions, like those attributed to Elon Musk in this context, such phrases enrich the narrative and achieve manipulation by accentuating criticism through robust semantic processing.

Thus, manipulation by criticism as a tactic involves the selective presentation of negative

aspects, exaggerated shortcomings, or biased critiques that may not necessarily represent a balanced view but are framed to leave a lasting impression on the reader. For example, focusing disproportionately on the setbacks of a competitor or the challenges facing an industry can skew consumer sentiment or investor confidence. The use of this technique reveals its dual function: to influence public opinion directly through the content of the criticism and to indirectly promote or protect alternative interests by discrediting the subject at hand. Leveraging of this form of manipulation not only impacts immediate perception but also creates a broader climate of distrust or caution, which can be instrumental in competitive business environments.

4. Manipulation through antithesis and generalization

Manipulation through antithesis and generalization is evidenced in 4.2% of the instances ($n = 8$) within the sample, indicating its selective but impactful use in business media discourse. This lower frequency reflects a specialized application where contrasting ideas or broad, sweeping statements are employed to simplify complex issues and sharpen distinctions in ways that guide audience interpretation. Such manipulative techniques are particularly effective in polarizing topics, facilitating quick judgments, or enhancing memorability through stark contrasts and overgeneralizations.

In an article titled “How to benefit from the conversations you have at work”, we observe three notable collocations: *to voice disagreements*, *share information* and *hoard information*:

(12) Bosses provide a clear sense of where they want the firm to go; employees feel able to **voice disagreements**; colleagues **share information** rather than **hoarding** it. But being a good communicator is too often conflated with one particular skill: speaking persuasively (How to benefit..., 2024).

This verb *to voice* is noted for its linguistic economy and expressiveness, as it encapsulates a complex message with a negative connotation in a single lexeme. Paired with *disagreements*, it presents a bold assertion, often contrary to a typical work environment where expressing dissent may be discouraged. This collocation

introduces an emotional dynamic and resonates with many readers. Additionally, the collocations *share information* and *hoard information* are employed. While individually straightforward, together they form an antithesis, creating polar impressions in the reader's mind and enhancing the statement's pragmatic effect.

Another example can be found in the article "Can Giorgia Meloni reinvigorate Italia SpA?" which uses the terminological set phrase *corporate behemoths* to describe large, influential corporations:

(13) The bill's advocates argue it would remove a big obstacle to the creation of **corporate behemoths** – Italy's **shallow** capital markets. Critics warn it may have the opposite effect (Can Giorgia Meloni..., 2024).

The term *beheemoth* suggests a creature of enormous size and strength, underscoring the vast influence and dominance of these companies in the business landscape. The term paints corporations not just as inanimate entities but as living, influential beings. The juxtaposition of this phrase with *shallow*, referring to Italy's capital markets, creates a stark contrast and manipulatively influences the reader's perception.

This form of manipulation leverages the rhetorical power of dichotomy and the cognitive ease of general statements to shape public discourse. Although less prevalent, the use of this technique is a testament to its utility in crafting narratives that are easy to digest and resonate strongly with the public's pre-existing biases, thus reinforcing or challenging societal norms and expectations in a profound way.

5. Manipulation through vague or euphemistic language

At 3.2% occurrence rate ($n = 6$) within the sample, manipulation through vague or euphemistic language represents an important aspect of business media discourse. This relatively low percentage indicates a precise and situational deployment of this strategy, reserved for contexts where ambiguity or softening might serve strategic communicative goals. Euphemistic and vague terms are used to mitigate the impact of potentially negative information, to obscure realities that might provoke controversy or resistance, or to paint challenges and setbacks in a less dire light.

(14) That is a problem. Decarbonising the global economy will require 6.5bn tonnes of metal between now and 2050, according to the Energy Transitions Commission, a **think-tank** (Why the world's mining companies..., 2024).

The term *think tank* is commonly used to describe a research institute or organization focused on solving complex problems or strategizing future developments across various domains such as military, political, or social issues. Originally coined in 1905 as a humorous slang term for "brain", its meaning has evolved to predominantly denote a research institute. The author employs *think tank* to introduce a lighter, more playful tone to discussions of intellectual work and research, adding a subtle humorous nuance to the concept. This usage of the idiom may be considered manipulative, falling under the category of "amoeba words", because its denotative meaning might not be immediately clear to all audiences.

(15) Mr Zuckerberg's "volte face" started in 2022 when shareholders recoiled at the way he was blowing their money (and his) on **moonshot projects** like the metaverse, just as Meta's core business was slowing. Instead of ignoring them, he listened (Musk v Zuckerberg..., 2024).

Similarly, the phrase *moonshot project* describes a highly ambitious and innovative initiative pursued without certainty of immediate profit or success. This term, inspired by the groundbreaking Apollo 11 lunar mission, refers to addressing significant challenges that impact millions or billions with bold, seemingly improbable solutions. The idiom *moonshot project* also exemplifies manipulation through the use of "amoeba words", as understanding of and familiarity with the term can vary greatly depending on an individual's social background and knowledge of historical events.

Thus, the use of vague language and euphemisms can significantly alter the reception of information by diluting the clarity or intensity of facts, which enables media outlets to maneuver through sensitive topics without overtly alarming their audience. For instance, referring to job cuts as *staff optimization* or economic downturns as *slow growth periods* reframes these adverse situations in terms that sound less threatening or dire. Such manipulations are not merely stylistic but serve clear strategic purposes: they help maintain corporate or political facades, cushion

the impact of unfavorable news, and guide public perception in subtle yet profound ways. This method's effectiveness lies in its ability to shape discourse without apparent manipulation, making it a sophisticated tool for managing public relations and corporate communications.

Discussion

The study has revealed distinct strategies with varying frequencies of occurrence: manipulation through imagery-based expressions (47.3%), evaluative assessment of factual content (25.3%), manipulation by criticism (20%), manipulation through antithesis and generalization (4.2%), and manipulation through vague or euphemistic language (3.2%) (see Table).

The extensive use of manipulation through imagery-based expressions, found in 47.3% of instances, resonates with the existing research emphasizing the potency of metaphors and idioms in shaping cognitive frames and emotional responses. Lakoff and Johnson [1980] in “Metaphors We Live By” have long argued that metaphors fundamentally structure our perceptions and experiences, making abstract ideas more relatable and memorable. The current findings corroborate this theory within the specific context of business media, having affirmed that metaphors are a primary instrument for simplifying complex economic concepts and making them accessible and persuasive to the audience. The high prevalence of manipulation through imagery-based expressions aligns with broader trends in media manipulation, where figurative language is employed to simplify complex concepts and emotionally engage the

audience. In business media, imagery-based expressions serve to frame abstract economic phenomena in more relatable terms, which parallels the findings of Lakoff and Johnson [1980], who argue that figurative language deeply influences how people conceptualize reality, making them a powerful tool for manipulation across all media.

The use of evaluative assessments (25.3%) aligns with research on media bias and framing effects, where media outlets are known to use evaluative language to influence public opinion [Malyuga, Akopova, 2021; Sobhani et al., 2023]. Assigning positive or negative attributes to factual content, media can guide audience interpretation and judgment, a practice extensively documented in political communication research [Sibul, Vetrinskaya, Grishechko, 2019] but less so in economic journalism, making this study focus particularly relevant. The evaluative assessment of factual content reflects a broader manipulation strategy often seen in media bias, where facts are framed with subjective assessments to influence reader judgment. In business media, the integration of evaluative language allows publications to steer opinion by embedding value judgments within otherwise neutral reporting.

The observed 20% incidence of manipulation by criticism in business media discourse parallels observations from research into media criticism and skepticism. Studies in media and communication suggest that negative framing can profoundly affect public perception by foregrounding the drawbacks or failures of an entity, which ultimately leads to diminished trust and credibility [Lijun, Shchetinina, 2024]. This tactic, extensively studied in the context of political

Summary of manipulative strategies in media discourse

Strategy	Quantity	Percentage, %	Impact of discourse
Manipulation through imagery-based expressions	90	47.3	Enhances relatability, simplifies complex concepts
Evaluative assessment of factual content	48	25.3	Influences perceptions by imbuing facts with values
Manipulation by criticism	38	20	Shapes opinions by pointing out flaws and drawbacks
Manipulation through antithesis and generalization	8	4.2	Clarifies choices by contrasting opposing views
Manipulation through vague or euphemistic language	6	3.2	Obscures harsh realities, softens negative impacts
<i>TOTAL</i>	190	100	–

reporting [Malyuga, Rimmer, 2021], is less frequently analyzed in economic reporting, making this finding particularly significant. In business media, criticism can be a double-edged sword: while it can inform and protect consumers and investors by pointing out potential risks, it can also unfairly bias public perception against companies, industries, or economic policies. In business media, criticism serves a dual purpose: to highlight potential risks or flaws in companies or economic policies, while also shaping public opinion in a way that could impact market behavior. This tactic is instrumental in creating distrust or skepticism.

Manipulation through antithesis and generalization, found in 4.2% of the instances, engages with cognitive processing theories that suggest simplifying complex issues into binary choices, can enhance comprehension and recall but at the cost of depth and accuracy [Grishechko, 2023]. Li's [2017] work on cognitive biases and decision heuristics illustrates how binary oppositions can lead to oversimplified thinking, which reduces the comprehension of complex issues. In business journalism, this strategy frames economic debates in a way that may expedite decision-making but can also lead to polarized public opinions. This selective simplification helps in creating clear, memorable content [Akopova, 2023] but might obscure the complexities inherent in economic issues, thus guiding public perception in a way that may not fully represent the reality of the situations presented. The use of antithesis and generalization in business media follows a broader media trend of simplifying complex issues into binary choices to facilitate audience comprehension and decision-making. This manipulation strategy leverages the cognitive ease of generalizations, a common trend in media manipulation, to reinforce biases and influence decision-making.

The use of vague or euphemistic language (3.2%) extends the findings from studies on linguistic ambiguity and its effects on perception, such as those by Pinker [2007], who discusses how indirect language can serve politeness, conceal intentions, and shift responsibility. This subtler form of manipulation influences how information is received without altering the factual basis of the content, which makes it an efficient tool for shaping public perception without overt bias [Shei, Schnell, 2024]. This aligns with studies

on corporate communication which specify how businesses use language to shape their image and manage stakeholder reactions during crises [Heath, 2020]. Manipulation through vague or euphemistic language reflects a subtle yet widespread media trend where ambiguity is used to soften the impact of potentially negative information. This aligns with broader trends in media manipulation, where euphemistic language is used to mitigate backlash or controversy.

The high prevalence of imagery-based expressions suggests that media outlets might opt for this strategy to enhance engagement and comprehension, yet excessive use might lead to skepticism about the media's intent and reliability. Evaluative language, while less frequent, may significantly color the reader's perception by embedding subjective value judgments within factual reporting, potentially leveling up or undermining the trustworthiness depending on the reader's alignment with the assessment. The impact of criticism and antithesis, although less frequent, can be more polarizing. These strategies, when identified by the audience, may lead to a critical assessment of the media's impartiality and objectivity, thus affecting trust. On the other hand, the subtle use of vague language, though least frequent, could either shield the audience from harsh realities, maintaining a facade of neutrality, or lead to distrust due to perceived manipulation.

Imagery-based expressions profoundly alter audience attitudes and decisions by framing business entities and their actions in a relatable or emotionally charged manner. Evaluative assessments can sway decisions by predisposing the audience towards certain choices, viewed through the lens of the media's positive or negative framing. Criticism, often sharp and pointed, directly influences opinions by diminishing or discrediting the subject. Importantly, while the role of criticism in media has been explored, its specific applications in business journalism have been less emphasized in the literature. This study exposes how criticism not only informs but also shapes consumer and investor perceptions by focusing on the negative aspects of subjects, which can influence market confidence and consumer behavior. Antithesis clarifies choices by presenting stark contrasts, simplifying decision-making processes but potentially oversimplifying complex issues. Vague language, by softening or obscuring facts, may

delay or complicate decision-making processes, as key details might be glossed over or understated. The manipulation through antithesis and generalization has been less covered in existing media studies, which often focus on more overt forms of persuasion. This study highlights how these strategies are used to frame economic debates in binary terms, simplifying complex issues into dichotomous choices, which can significantly impact public understanding and decision-making processes in economic contexts.

This study makes several novel contributions, particularly in specifying the role of vague or euphemistic language, observed in 3.2% of instances. Prior research has often concentrated on more direct forms of manipulation, such as through misinformation or overt bias. Euphemisms and vague language in business media discourse mitigate potential backlash or soften the delivery of unfavorable news, which is an aspect that has received less attention. This study's focus on these strategies within the domain of business media explains how delicate manipulations can affect public perception without overtly appearing manipulative.

Conclusion

The analysis confirmed that collocations, set phrases, clichés, and idioms are extensively leveraged in the English language business media discourse, playing an important role in the deployment of various manipulative strategies by authors. These include manipulation through imagery-based expressions (47.3%), incorporation of evaluative information into factual content (25.3%), manipulation by criticism (20%), manipulation through antithesis and generalization (4.2%), and the use of amoeba words or a system of euphemisms and semantically ambiguous words (3.2%). It was observed that two, and occasionally three, manipulation mechanisms are often employed simultaneously.

Given that a significant majority of these phrases are crafted through metaphorical transfer, this technique is crucial in establishing the manipulative potential of an expression, often combined with additional mechanisms like the introduction of evaluative content or antithesis.

The manipulative potential of these strategies significantly impacts business media discourse,

which puts a focus on the importance of context and communication frameworks. This environment is ripe for manipulation and engagement, but these linguistic elements also play a vital role in building a sense of belonging and identity within professional communities. As markers of experience and shared knowledge, collocations, set phrases, clichés, and idioms contribute to a collective professional identity. They aid in the development of professional jargon, which not only differentiates insiders from outsiders but also strengthens community ties.

For specialists in theoretical and applied linguistics, as well as linguistic pragmatics, this study provides a structured examination of how fixed expressions, such as idioms and clichés, function within manipulative business rhetoric. Practically, these findings assist linguists in identifying recurring patterns in the English language media language that reveal intentional narrative framing, supporting a refined approach to analyzing discourse structures and their impacts across both media and business communication contexts. The research also provides practical guidance for media professionals, business communicators, and policymakers by mapping out specific manipulative strategies in the English language business media. In practice, this approach promotes a more critical engagement with media content, aiding in responsible reporting and supporting transparency in corporate narratives and stakeholder communications.

NOTE

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