

## **Linguistic instruments employed in political discourses. Manipulation tools or expressions of human universal behaviour?**

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*The present paper aims at answering to a very intriguing question concerning the importance of language in the world of politics. Starting from the Aristotle's idea that we are all political animals, able to use language to pursue our own ends (Chilton 2004), the paper uses the techniques of Critical Discourse Analysis, in order to explore the ways in which politicians use language as a manipulation strategy. Although we tend to interpret the linguistic tools used by the politicians in their speeches as manipulation tools, we cannot ignore the fact that everyone of us uses, even in everyday communication, words for achieving specific goals. This is, in fact, the ultimate goal of communication. But is this also the case of the political speeches? What makes the difference? "What does the use of language in contexts we call 'political' tell us about humans in general?" (Chilton 2004, xi).*

Keywords: *political discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Romanian language*

### **1. Introduction**

Being an important branch of Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)<sup>2</sup> highlights the relation between ways of talking and ways of thinking, focusing on "the traces of cultural and ideological meaning in spoken and written texts" (O'Halloran 2005, 1946). It is also important to mention that CDA "treats discourse as a social practice and analyses the influences of social, political and cultural contexts on discourse". This is the reason why CDA "is particularly suitable for investigating why the participants say what they say, and how they say it, and what underlying intentions are there in the statements they make" (Mwiinga 2015,

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<sup>2</sup> According to Van Dijk (2006, 360), "A discourse analytical approach is warranted because most manipulation (...) takes place by text and talk. Secondly, those being manipulated are human beings, and this typically occurs through the manipulation of their 'minds', so that a cognitive account is also able to shed light on the processes of manipulation. Thirdly, manipulation is a form of talk-in-interaction, and since it implies power and power abuse, a social approach is also important".

20). These techniques explore the smaller details of lexical and grammatical choices in language, and allow us to reveal how language can be used to persuade or to manipulate in ways that would not necessarily be detectable on a casual reading or listening. According to Fairclough (1995), CDA refers to the use of an ensemble of techniques for the study of textual practices and language use as social and cultural practices. It is a type of discourse research which primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, produced and resisted by text and talk in social and political context. CDA focuses on the relationship between power and discourse (Mwiinga 2015, 17).

Therefore, in this article, I examine the hidden power structures and the manipulative strategies that political discourses reflect, and do so following and combining some of Van Dijk's models (1977, 1993, 2001, 2004, 2006). More precisely, the analysis focuses on a few political speeches<sup>3</sup>/interventions of a Romanian woman politician (Roberta Anastase, henceforth RA), in different Parliamentary debates<sup>4</sup> taken into the Chamber of Deputies, during 2013 and 2014. The objectives of the study were to:

- (i) analyse the rhetorical structure of the speeches used by members of Parliament as they presented their arguments during the parliamentary debates
- (ii) examine the manipulative effects of the political speeches
- (iii) make a clear distinction between manipulative and persuasive discursive strategies.

Anticipating the results of the analysis, I shall give an answer to the title question: although we all use linguistic tools as strategies of persuasion in our interactions, the politicians enrich them in their political discourses with another function, changing them into 'tools of speech manipulation' (TSM) (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 325). The rest of the article brings evidence to support this hypothesis.

## 2. Previous research on political discourse

I start with the assumption that "political activity does not exist without the use of language", and that "the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language"

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<sup>3</sup> In this paper, the term 'political speech' is used as "as a form of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 66), i.e. as dialogically-oriented, by means of which a political actor delivers speeches in public settings" (Săftoiu and Toader 2018, 22).

<sup>4</sup> The formal structure of the debate session is in such a way that there is a presiding officer of the Chamber of Deputies and the other Members of Parliament from various portfolios. There is also a secretary of the meeting (one person or the administrative office), which writes down all the interventions and this allows us to have access to their speeches.

(Chilton 2004, 6). Moreover, even the political actors recognise the fundamental role of language, and they are aware of its power to argue in favour of their political ideologies and goals or to persuade the people.

A brief literature survey convinced us that the topic of the political discourse has been considered of prime importance by many skilled linguists and discourse analysts: Geis 1987; Wilson 1990; Zupnik 1994; Chilton 1985, 1988, 2004; Isaksen 2011; Vanderbeck and Johnson 2011; Fridkin and Kenney 2011, among others. In addition, there are many linguistic studies that focus on the analysis of the linguistic techniques used to attain specific objectives: Edelman 1977; Bolinger 1980; Fairclough 1989; Arnold 1993; Thomans and Wareing 1999; Van Dijk 1977, 1993, 2001, 2004, 2006; Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015.

### **3. Manipulation – definition and strategies**

#### **3.1. The concept of manipulation**

During the last decades, the concept of ‘manipulation’ has been defined from various perspectives, by psychologists, sociologists, linguists, and even by political scientists. Most of them agree with Troshina (1990), who sees manipulation mainly as an “impact on the person with the purpose to induce him to make something (to give information, to make an act, to change the behaviour) unconsciously or contrary to his own desire, opinion and intention”. Taking one step further, Veretenkina (1999) defines speech manipulation as “a type of language influence used for the hidden introduction of purpose, desire, intention, relations or attitudes which don’t coincide with those available for the addressee into his mentality” (*apud* Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 325).

Van Dijk was one of the researchers most interested in the concept of ‘manipulation’, and he proposes in 2006 a “triangulated approach: a form of social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction”. From a social point of view, manipulation can be defined as “illegitimate domination confirming social inequality”. Cognitively, manipulation represents a mind control and “involves the interference with processes of understanding, the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies”. Discursively, this concept “generally involves the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse, such as emphasizing Our good things, and emphasizing Their bad things” (Van Dijk 2006, 359). Although the author says that the three aspects should not be separated, in this article I will deal only with the third part of this approach, namely with the discursive aspect of manipulation.

In short, when the linguistic tools are consciously used in somebody's speech to cause some emotional reaction, to impose a certain point of view or to attract the audience (for his own future benefits), we are definitely talking about speech manipulation. Obviously, I am talking here about group manipulation (RA is a member of a dominant collectivity, i.e. the political Opposition from Romania), and, "in order to be able to manipulate many others through text and talk, one needs to have access to some form of public discourse, such as parliamentary debates, news, [...], and so on" (Van Dijk 2006, 362).

### 3.2. Manipulation vs. persuasion

Before delving into the above-mentioned topic, it is pertinent to make an effort to get clear in our minds the sense in which the word 'manipulation' is used in this study, since different people have different notions of the term or use it as a synonym of 'persuasion'.

We know for a fact that a great deal of the human behaviour can be expressed by the linguistic instruments that one employs in everyday communication. By using this simple, but powerful instrument, we convey a certain type of message to the receiver: informative, instructive, questioning, probing or even persuasive, i.e. hoping to influence him towards a desired behaviour or attitude. The manipulative effect of these linguistic tools appears when the speaker attempts to get more, and he/she purposely abuses of his/her power. Moreover, "manipulation implies the exercise of a form of *illegitimate* influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated" (Van Dijk 2006, 360).

Basically, the manipulation and the persuasion strategies are pretty much the same, and we can not talk about discursive tools used only in manipulation. "The same discourse structures are used in persuasion, information, education and other legitimate forms of communication, as well as in various forms of dissent" (Van Dijk 2006, 375). This is why the researcher considers to be very important the analysis of the social and cognitive contexts of any discourse<sup>5</sup>, and he develops/formulates three constraints that help us identify the manipulation (and to distinguish between persuasion and manipulation):

- "the dominant position of the manipulator (power and power abuse)
- the lack of relevant knowledge of the recipients

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<sup>5</sup> "How a text may influence readers will vary from one reader to another depending on their beliefs and approaches towards different issues in life and depending on how each reader may interpret and comprehend a particular text" (Wadi and Ahmed 2015, 21).

- the likely consequences of the acts of manipulation are in the interest of the dominant group and against the best interests of the dominated group, thus contributing to (illegitimate) social inequality” (Van Dijk 2006, 374).

In addition, Van Dijk (2006, 363) stresses the negative consequences of manipulation, and he characterizes it “as an illegitimate<sup>6</sup> social practice because it violates general social rules or norms”<sup>7</sup> (Van Dijk 2006, 363-364).

All these three constraints and repercussions were identified in the analysis of RA’s political speeches and this supports my intuition that manipulation one of the hidden purposes of political discourse in general. My intention is to prove that in the political speeches investigated, the manipulation is not necessarily directed to the other MPs, but to the citizens in general, as we all know that these parliamentary debates are recorded (officially written down or televised). As a Romanian citizen, when I read these speeches, I feel the manipulative intentions, because I understand the hidden purpose of this politician, which struggles to construct a negative face of the ruling party (of the members of the Government), while praising her Liberal Party. The personal interests are obvious, and her ultimate goal is to manipulate people in order to obtain votes in the future elections.

#### **4. Romanian political discourse – the analysis**

##### **4.1. Contextual analysis**

My analysis starts with the very important idea of context. I can not consider the political interventions excerpted for the investigation unless I analyse first the institutional setting of these political debates. Without getting any deeper into the contextual theory, in order to contextualize the political interventions analysed here, I follow the context model described by Van Dijk (1977, 368), and complete his schema with the corresponding categories:

- Overall domain: Politics

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<sup>6</sup> “We define as illegitimate all forms of interaction, communication or other social practices that are only in the interests of one party, and against the best interests of the recipients. We assumed that manipulation is illegitimate because it violates the human or social rights of those who are manipulated, but it is not easy to formulate the exact norms or values that are violated here” (Van Dijk 2006, 363).

<sup>7</sup> “Manipulation is illegitimate in a democratic society, because it (re)produces, or may reproduce, inequality: it is in the best interests of powerful groups and speakers, and hurts the interests of less powerful groups and speakers. This means that the definition is not based on the intentions of the manipulators, nor on the more or less conscious awareness of manipulation by the recipients, but in terms of its societal consequences” (Van Dijk 2006, 363-364).

- Global action: the MPs are/should be engaged in legislation
- Setting: place – Romanian Parliament (the Chamber of Deputies), time – 2013, 2014
- Current action: interventions/speeches as as part of some parliamentary debates
- Participants: RA, the presiding officer, other deputies, the press
  - Communicative roles: Speakers, Recipients;
  - Interactional role: Opponent of Government;
  - Social/political role/identity: MP, Liberal, woman, Romanian
- Goals: attack government, defend their party programme, discredit the Prime Minister, manipulate the audience (the other politicians, but mostly the citizens)
- Knowledge:
  - general: social and financial issues;
  - political: on legislation, policies, etc.

#### 4.2. The analysis of the manipulation strategies

We all know from experience that when a person has a carpentry *job* to be performed, he directly or indirectly seeks a set of carpentry *tools* to perform the job. And, in general, we may say that *jobs seek tools* (Zipf 1949, 8). As concerns the politicians, the most appropriate tools (means) for doing their jobs, and for accomplishing their goals are the linguistic ones, as they are constantly addressing to the people and they need to find the most suitable words to express their intentions. This paper is an attempt to provide some background knowledge on the manipulative devices used by the Romanian politicians to persuade their audience towards the political aims of a certain political party. I provide examples from one politician interventions, but I am sure that she is an exponent of all the Romanian politicians, who use their power and position in order to influence other politicians or the citizens into accepting their ideas/ideologies.

##### 4.2.1. Lexical manipulative tools

Lexical means of speech manipulation constitute the most extensive and frequently used area of tools in the political discourse. The analysis begins with the study of the vocabulary as a set of tools, as I believe that “the study of words gives us a key to an understanding of the entire speech process, while the study of the entire speech process offers a key to an understanding of the personality and of the entire field of biosocial dynamics” (Zipf 1949, 19). I treat the speech process as the

expression of a speaker who did the acting – that is, who manipulated the elements of vocabulary in order to achieve some specific goals.

*i) The Us-Them polarization*

Polarized views of positive ‘Us’ versus negative ‘Them’ representation between members of the Opposition (especially the members of the Liberal Democratic Party) on the one hand, and those of the ruling party, on the other, were identified in the interventions of RA. Examine the following fragment of one political intervention from a parliamentary debate concerning the project law of the retirement benefits of the citizens.

(1) **Extract 1**

Dragi colegi, aş începe prin a spune că și eu și, bineînțeles, în numele Grupului parlamentar al PDL, **suntem bucuroși că, din punct de vedere economic, România astăzi își permite** să aplice Legea pensiilor **promovată de Partidul Democrat Liberal**.

*Dear colleagues, I will start by saying that I, and, of course, the Liberal Democratic Party **are glad that the Romanian economy can afford** today to apply the retirement law that was **promoted by the Liberal Democratic Party**.*

RA begins her speech with an ironical observation, expressing her personal (as well as her party’s) enthusiasm about the fact that the Romanian economy can afford to apply the retirement law promoted by her party (The Liberal Democratic Party). I consider this observation to be ironic because that was a dissimulated enthusiasm, as they all (all the MPs, but also the Romanian people) know very well that the economical situation can not afford that law. This is a specific move in the overall strategy of positive self-presentation, by showing interest and respect for the retired persons, as well as highlighting the fact that this law was promoted by her party. On the other side, the negative other-presentation is cleverly delineated using the compassion for the retired persons, and the false fear of them being deceived by this law that promised more retirement money.

(2) Evident, evident că e un lucru salutar faptul că această indexare apare, că această lege se aplică. Dar e corect, *ca inițiatori ai acestei legi*, să vă spunem că din calculele noastre această indexare ar trebui să aibă loc cu 6%, (...) considerăm că ea trebuie aplicată așa cum a fost ea gândită, și acest lucru va duce la o creștere a pensiilor mai mare. Și n-aș vrea să fie supărări din punctul de vedere al faptului că **încercăm să explicăm** filozofia care a stat la baza acestei legi.

*Obviously, obviously, it is a good thing that this indexation appears, that this law is applied. But, **as initiators of this law**, it is fair to say that, as far as we have budgeted, this indexation should be with 6% (...) we consider that it should be applied as it was planned, and this thing will get to a bigger increase of the retirement financial benefits. And, I would not want to cause any displeasure by **trying to explain** the philosophy on which this law was grounded.*

She also insinuates that the members of the Government (especially the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour) misunderstood some of the parts of this law, but she is ready to explain and to help them understand better the project. The manipulative effect here consists of suggesting and transmitting to the citizens the fact that the Government is not capable of promoting and applying a retirement law, while her party would have been capable.

- (3) În același timp, credem că ar exista resursa financiară, dacă e să luăm în considerare anumite creșteri ale aparatului bugetar care au avut loc în ultima perioadă. **Poate, dacă ne gândim la lucrul acesta și vă gândiți și dumneavoastră, veți susține amendamentele pe care noi le-am depus la această ordonanță de urgență. Vedeți, nu o spunem cu rea-voință și, repet încă o dată, ne dorim din tot sufletul ca această lege să fie aplicată, dar nici nu vrem ca pensionarii să fie păcăliți.**

*At the same time, we believe that there will be the financial resources, if we take into consideration certain increases of the budget registered lately. **Maybe, if we all think about this aspect**, you will support the amendments that we submitted to this emergency ordinance. You see, **we are not saying this with malevolence**, but, again, **we wish from the bottom of the heart** that this law be applied, and, at the same time, we don't want that the elderly persons be deceived.*

In the following sentences, RA also insists that she/we/they is/are confident in the applicability of this law, which is also a strategic move of positive self-presentation. In addition to the rational arguments, she is finally presenting her emotional side, saying that they “wish from the bottom of the heart” that this law will be applied.

- (4) **Extract 2**

**Incapacitatea** de transpunere în legislația națională a directivelor europene reprezintă încă un examen picat de guvernul lui Victor Ponta, **un guvern incompetent**, cu un premier subordonat baronilor locali. Victor Ponta și miniștrii cabinetului său trebuie să înțeleagă, măcar acum, pe ultima sută de



metri, că a governa o țară nu este un joc de copii. **România are nevoie de politici coerente** și o mai mare responsabilitate a actului de guvernare.

*The incapacity of introducing the european commands into the national legislation outlines another failed exam of the Victor Ponta Government, a **misgovernment**, with a Prime Minister subordinated to the local powerful wealthy persons. At least now, in the final moment, Victor Ponta and the members of the Government must understand that governing one country is not a children's game. **Romania needs coherent politics** and a bigger responsibility of the governing process.*

In this intervention, RA directly attacks the members of the Government by calling them *incompetent*, and by accusing the Prime Minister of being subordinated to the local powerful wealthy persons. The speaker uses negative other-presentation and exaggerates the gravity of the situation by using many negative words and by comparing the governing process with a children's game. In the end of her speech, she highlights the need of coherent politics and a bigger responsibility of the governing process, statement that implies both negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation. The manipulation here is obvious: this statement is directly addressed to the Romanian people, that should be aware of the incapacity (i.e. the weaknesses) of the ruling party and should consider her Liberal party (for the next elections) as being more competent and more responsible.

Although this examples obviously do not present all the relevant strategies of manipulative discourse, we see that even in these few lines many aspects of manipulation are evident:

- a) Ideological polarization: Us/Liberals vs Them/Dictatorships; nationalism: support for the retired people, concern for the national security;
- b) Positive self-presentation by moral superiority: allowing debate, respect for other opinions, struggling for democracy and for taking the best decisions for the citizens;
- c) Emphasizing the qualities of her political party, despite the ruling party;
- d) Discrediting the members of the Government and the Prime Minister, as being opportunistic, corrupt, and incapable of a proper governing process;
- e) Emotionalizing the arguments (passionate beliefs).

#### *ii) Deictic units/lexical items*

Very closely correlated to the Us-Them polarization is the use of deictic pronouns, having an impact both on the lexical and on the pragmatic level. These deictic units are "tools of speech manipulation" (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 325) that help us "to update components of a situation of the speech and

components of the denotative statement”. The first person plural pronoun “we”, the pronoun of “solidarity” is used in RA’s speeches “as an appeal to the audience, and as method of demagogy” (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 327).

- (5) Pentru că **noi** am promovat această lege, trebuie să punctăm, în schimb, un lucru care poate nu a fost îndeajuns explicat, anume acela că la baza calculării punctului de pensie **noi** am pus 2 indicatori.  
*Because **we** are the promoters of this law, **we** need to emphasize a thing that maybe wasn't explained enough, i.e. the idea that **we** proposed two economic indicators for the calculation of the retirements benefits.*

RA uses this pronoun in her intention to express solidarity, on the one hand, with the other members of her Liberal Democratic Party (as in the previous example), in order to put forward a strategic positive us-presentation, and, on the other hand, solidarity with the Romanian citizens, becoming in this way “the voice of the nation” and provoking patriotism (as in the following example):

- (6) **Noi** am constatat că permanent crește suma alocată pentru asistența acordată, pentru ajutoarele de șomaj, dar niciodată pentru măsurile active.  
***We** noticed that there is a permanent increase of the amount allotted to the social services, to the unemployment benefits, but never for the active measures.*

Taking one step further, RA also assumes a solidarity with the European Union, whose member – Romania – should follow its laws and recommendations. The manipulation is skilfully constructed, as it is implied that not only the politicians from the Opposition noticed the *problems* of the ruling Government, but also the EU, that is undoubtedly objective and has every right to disapprove and correct them. Again, the Romanian citizens should know this situation and RA *feels the need to be the messenger*.

- (7) Această lipsă de reacție este nepermisă pentru guvernul unui stat membru al Uniunii Europene, cu atât mai mult cu cât recomandările valabile la nivel internațional, cât și schema națională subliniază necesitatea ca imunizarea să fie făcută în maternități, în primele 24 de ore de la naștere.  
*This lack of reaction/concern can not be allowed for the Government of a EU member, considering both the international recommendations, and the national outline that highlight the need for the vaccination to be taken into the maternity hospital, during the first 24 hours from the birth.*

*iii) Words with ideological connotation*

In her interventions, RA also uses many words with an ideological connotation that clearly have a manipulative feature. For example, words like *economy, education, health care, labour law* (the unemployment, the retirement), *the justice system, social* and *national security*, etc. are peculiar to the political speeches, and can achieve a positive effect on the audience. According to Mwiinga, Van Dijk (2001) “contends that when the focus is on politicians, at least two ideologies are expressed in their text and talk: firstly, professional ideologies that underlie their functioning as politicians and secondly, the socio-political ideologies they adhere to as members of political parties or social groups” (2015, 26).

*iv) Words with stylistic connotation*

Words with a stylistic connotation are lexical units, the basic meaning of which is complemented by stylistic elements that characterize the condition of speech, the sphere of language activity, the social relations of participants, etc. (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 328). Emphasizing the weaknesses and the imperfections of the Prime Minister or of the ruling party, RA uses education-related terms, such as *performanță* ‘performance’, *examen* ‘exam’, *corigent* ‘person who has to resit an exam’, and creates a stylistic effect, while achieving irony, or even sarcasm:

- (8) a. Degradarea învățământului românesc – singura performanță a ministrului Pricopie  
*The breakdown of the Romanian educational system – the only accomplishment of the Minister Pricopie*
- b. Incapacitatea de transpunere în legislația națională a directivelor europene reprezintă încă un examen picat de guvernul lui Victor Ponta  
 The incapacity of introducing the European commands into the national legislation outlines another failed exam of the Victor Ponta Government
- c. actualul Executiv este corigent la două materii importante  
*The current Government has failed two main subjects*

In addition, the use of the words and expressions that belong to the **colloquial layer** – such as *bâlbâială* ‘stuttering’ and *a fi la cheremul cuiva* ‘be at smb’s beck and call’ – creates stylistic contrast and increases expressivity of the text on the background of the dominance of neutral and formal vocabulary of the message.

- (9) Bâlbâiala celor doi miniștri a rămas fără ecou în îndepărtatul Israel, locul de refugiu și pace sufletească al domnului Ponta, care, epuizat emoțional după anunțul făcut vineri pe Facebook a considerat că merită o mini vacanță.

*The **stuttering** of the two Ministers remained silent in the faraway Israel, the peaceful private retreat of mister Ponta, who, being emotionally exhausted after the Facebook message posted on Friday, rewarded himself with a short holiday.*

Other statements in which the **ironical effect** is obvious are:

- (10) a. cel mai talentat ministru al transporturilor din istoria României,  
domnul Dan Șova  
*the most gifted Minister of Transport in the history of Romania, mister Dan Șova*
- b. pictorului de autostrăzi Șova  
*Șova – the highways’ painter*
- c. Victor Ponta, șeful direct al ministrului păcălit de vulpe  
*Victor Ponta, the direct boss of the Minister tricked by the fox*

**The List of Three** is a very interesting type of repetition, which, according to David (2014, 167) “makes the ideas contained in the speech sound like common scene to the audience”. This repetition is supposed to persuade the public into accepting the ideas and the concepts that the politician tries to induce. Repetition is one of the most effective rhetoric tools to activate the mental schemata. Manipulating these schemata creates an ideology and persuades the public to willingly accept it as their own”.

- (11) Victor Ponta își dorește o țară de asistați social, o țară cu elevi fără viitor, pe scurt: o țară aflată la cheremul baronilor locali și permanent monitorizată de instituțiile europene.  
*Victor Ponta wishes for **a country** with socially dependent people, **a country** with pupils having no future, in short: **a country** that is at the local wealthy persons’ beck and call, and that is permanently monitored by the European institutions.*

#### 4.2.2. Morphosyntactic and pragmatic manipulative tools

At the morphosyntactic and pragmatic levels of language, speech manipulation is carried out by means of special tools/methods, such as passivization, topicalization, nominalization, modality, and elliptic constructions.

##### *i) Passivization*

As a morphosyntactic tool of speech manipulation, the use of passive voice is important because it leaves the responsible person (figure) “behind the screen”, even if the Agent is lexicalized. In this passive verbal structures, the emphasis is on the direct object of the active sentences, as the performer of the action is unknown or irrelevant, obvious. The manipulative effect is achieved by the intention of hiding someone behind the passive voice, and by the fact that, at a certain point, RA gives the impression that she talks about the national problems without intending to blame anyone (although everybody knows the offenders).

- (12) a. Aceleași recomandări **sunt făcute** și în cazul securității aprovizionării cu gaze naturale.

*The same recommendations **are made** also in the case of the natural gases supplies security.*

- b. Acum, sigur, votul **a fost dat**.

*Now, of course, the vote **was given**.*

- c. În orice guvern obișnuit al unui stat membru UE, contradicția celor doi miniștri **ar fi fost taxată și corijată** imediat de premier.

*In any normal Government of an EU member state, the contradiction of the two Ministers would have been **immediately punished and corrected** by the Prime Minister.*

Still, we notice that the investigated texts are quite straightforward from this point of view, not trying to hide its message behind this technique. The active voice is predominantly used to emphasize the actor’s role in the event, while the passive voice plays a more subordinate role.

##### *ii) Topicalization*

Closely related to the passivization strategy, topicalization is a syntactic movement that has a discursive/pragmatic motivation, and its stylistic effect is to emphasize the focus of information. Some of the sessions’ headlines are a very good example of this:

- (13) **Incompetența Guvernului Ponta** taxată încă o dată de Comisia Europeană  
*The incompetence of the Ponta Government – punished again by the European Commission*

In the next examples, the constituents in bold are fronted: the first example with a topicalized adjunct is typical, whereas the latter example, with a topicalized object argument, is comparatively rare.

- (14) a. **Săptămâna trecută** cu toții am asistat la o nouă dovadă de incoerență și incompetență specifică miniștrilor Guvernului  
*Last week, we all witnessed to a new proof of the Ministers' inconsistency and incompetence*
- b. **Singura politică** promovată de Guvernul PSD este aceea a creșterii numărului de șomeri  
*The only politics promoted by the Social Democratic Government is that of increasing the unemployment*

By putting these words in topic position of the sentence or clause, the politician persuades the audience, because an unusual word order allows her to select that part of the sentence which she considers as the most important or informative, and creates a perspective that influences the recipients' perceptions.

### iii) Nominalization

*Nominalization* is another strategic tool of manipulation, that functions in a similar way to passivization. This time, there is a transformation of the motivating construction from a verb into a verbal noun. "Nominalization is a means of a depersonalization of action which is widespread in a political discourse. A semantic result of replacement of personal forms of verbs with derivative nouns is disappearance of the subject and agent of what about is told" (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 326). For example:

- (15) a. **Degradarea** învățământului românesc – singura performanță a ministrului Pricopie  
*The breakdown of the Romanian educational system – the only accomplishment of the Minister Pricopie.*
- b. actualul Executiv este corigent la două materii importante: **fiscalitate** (tratamentul fiscal discriminatoriu aplicat persoanelor fizice nerezidente care obțin venituri în România) și **securitatea** aprovizionării cu gaze naturale.

*The current Government has failed two main subjects: **the fiscal system** (the discriminating fiscal treatment of the non-resident persons which obtained earnings in Romania) and the natural gases supplies **security**.*

Here, the usage of nouns having or not having a corresponding verbs of action allows the speaker to hold back or to camouflage the subject of the action.

#### *iv) Modality*

Probably the most frequent and expressive manipulation tool is the choice of words that express different degrees of modality depending on how the politician wants to portray his own level of commitment to an idea or action. In the political speeches investigated, epistemic or deontic modality is associated at the morphosyntactic level with adverbs (16), verbs (17), and rarely with adjectives (18):

#### (16) modal adverbs

- a. **probabil** că, mă rog, nu s-a putut observa...  
***probably**, it could not be noticed...*
- b. Aici **sigur** vorbim de art. 180...  
*Here, **of course**, we talk about article 180...*
- c. **Evident, evident** că e un lucru salutar...  
***Obviously, obviously**, it is a good thing...*
- d. Dar **e corect**, ca inițiatori ai acestei legi, să vă spunem...  
*But as initiators of this law, **it is fair** to say...*

#### (17) modal verbs

- a. Dar **considerăm** că ea **trebuie** aplicată așa cum a fost ea gândită.  
*But we **think** that it **should** be applied as it was proposed.*
- b. România **are nevoie** de politici coerente.  
*Romania **needs** coherent politics.*

#### (18) modal adjectives

- a. Această lipsă de reacție este **nepermisă** pentru guvern.  
*This lack of reaction is **not allowed** for the Government.*
- b. **sunt convinsă** că și domnul prim-ministru are toată disponibilitatea să asculte opiniile tuturor grupurilor parlamentare.  
*I'm **sure** that mister Prime Minister also has the willingness to listen to all the parliamentary groups' opinions.*

On the one hand, the uncertainty modal words – such as the adverbs *poate* ‘maybe’, *probabil* ‘probably’, and the verb *a putea* ‘can’ – express the so-called *low modality* that “leaves open the possibility of negotiation” (Wadi and Ahmed 2015, 20). On the other hand, taking advantage of her authority and her high political status, RA uses *high modality* in order to emphasize her ideas. For example, she says:

- (19) Victor Ponta și miniștrii cabinetului său **trebuie să înțeleagă** (...) că a guverna o țară nu este un joc de copii  
*Victor Ponta needs to understand that the governing process is not a children’s game,*

in which the high modality ‘have to’ is used to imply that the Prime Minister has no other alternative but to understand that the governing process is something very serious, and that he is not suitable for this job – RA insinuates that she and her party would be more suitable for this, and in this way, she manipulates the people to vote for the Liberal Democratic Party. It is noteworthy here that the use of many modal words in the political speeches indicates that each politician’s “subjective assessment” of the problems/laws debated intended to involve citizens/other MPs in the “communicative context” (Khalid 2013, 461).

v) *Elliptic constructions*

Elliptic constructions are one more syntactic resource of the manipulative ability of a political speech, because they “force the reader to finish or complete sentences, and the reader becomes the coauthor of a discourse to some extent, so that accepts the point of view of the real author” (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova and Konyrbekova 2015, 330). The titles of the parliamentary meetings are very good examples:

- (20) a. Guvernul Ponta – fabrică de șomeri  
*Ponta Government – an unemployment factory*  
 b. Degradarea învățământului românesc – singura performanță a ministrului Pricopie  
*The breakdown of the Romanian educational system – the only accomplishment of the Minister Pricopie*  
 c. A doua rectificare bugetară, o nouă pomană electorală și un dezastru pentru România  
*The second budget rectification, a new electoral charity and a disaster for Romania*



#### 4.2.3. Stylistic/Rhetorical manipulative tools

The manipulative function of the figures of speech can be discovered only by analysing the whole discourse.

i) *Hyperbole* seems to be one of the politicians' favourite tropes, although it violates the Gricean Maxim of Quality by stating untrue things<sup>8</sup>. "However, the readers can restore the truth-content of a false proposition and in the meantime they will form some hypothesis about the implicit message of the hyperbole". As such, "tropes can function as a manipulative device only in a wider sense because the communicator may divert the readers' attention from the content and direct it toward the peripheral route of persuasion" (Arvay 2004, 251). All these hyperboles are skilfully used to support the opposition between Us and Them, more precisely to enhance that the Other is evil.

- (21) a. Aflați **într-o goană nebună după putere și imagine**, Ponta ignoră problemele reale cu care se confruntă sistemul sanitar  
*Being in a crazy fever after power and image, Ponta ignores the real problems of the Romanian health care system*
- b. Privatizarea CFR Marfă este **cel mai răsunător eșec al actualei guvernări**.  
*The private ownership of CFR Marfă is the the most outstanding failure of the ruling Government*
- c. **În fața dezastrului produs în învățământ**, îi solicit public lui Victor Ponta să îl demită pe Remus Pricopie.  
*In front of the educational system's disaster, I openly demand Victor Ponta to dismiss Remus Pricopie.*

ii) *Similes and metaphor* are also quite popular in a political debate. So, using this manipulative tool, RA compares the Government with *o fabrică de șomeri* 'an unemployment factory', the Minister of Transport – Șova – is metaphorically called *pictor de autostrăzi* 'the highways' painter', and *primarii* 'the mayers' are *principalii pionii ai strategilor lui Victor Ponta* 'the most important pawns of VP's strategies'. In another allegorical statement, RA remarks:

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<sup>8</sup> The Gricean Maxim of Quality: "A referring expression must be an accurate description of the intended referent" (Grice 1975, 65).

- (22) Inconștiența și nepăsarea cu care premierul tratează acest subiect nu ar trebui să ne surprindă, un astfel de **comportament fiind deja marcă înregistrată** a guvernării PSD.

*The unconsciousness and the insensitivity of the Prime Minister in dealing this subject shouldn't be a surprise, **this type of behaviour being already a brand name** of the Social Democratic Government.*

iii) *Litotes*

A lesser known figure of speech – litotes – is employed also in a manipulative way, as RA continues the positive self-presentation of her party and the negative other-presentation of the ruling politicians. Here, by downplaying the Prime Minister or by enhancing the seriousness of the matter, she chases to gain the audience's favour:

- (23) a. Sistemul sanitar românesc se confruntă, din nou, cu o criză acută de vaccinuri, problemă care **pare să nu-l îngrijoreze prea mult** pe Victor Ponta.

*The Romanian health care system is dealing again with a severe crisis of shots, but this problem **doesn't seem to worry too much** Victor Ponta.*

- b. a guverna o țară **nu este un joc** de copii  
*governing a country **is not a children's game***

## 5. Conclusions

In this article, I have taken the CDA approach to an account of political speech manipulation. I started with the assumption that every political discourse aims at influencing the target audience, which in this case is represented by the other politicians participating to the debate (members of the Parliament), but also by the people in general, as everybody realizes/knows that all the parliamentary debates are (over)heard by the media.

Firstly, in order to distinguish between manipulation and persuasion, I defined manipulation and highlighted its socially negative and illegitimate characteristics, as well as the three constraints proposed by Van Dijk. Secondly, the analysis of the political speeches started with a contextual diagnosis, as I consider the institutional setting and the whole context to have a primary significance. The

central part of the article is the critical analysis of the speech manipulation strategies, focusing on the usual polarized structures of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, expressing ideological conflict. In addition, I noticed that these tools are present at all levels of language: lexical (words with ideological or stylistic connotations, deictic terms), morphosyntactic and pragmatic (such as passivization, topicalization, nominalization, modality, and elliptic constructions), but there are also stylistic tools (tropes). As expected, the widest layer of speech means of manipulation is presented at the lexical level, but these tools of different levels interact with each other, which allows to achieve much more effective impact on the audience.

The findings reveal that, with a few exceptions, the information given in the political interventions of RA is oriented towards portraying the negative face of the members of the ruling party, which is a clear way of discrediting its credibility and seriousness that might influence the citizens for the future elections. The investigated examples perfectly demonstrate how manipulation became high-frequency phenomena in the Romanian parliamentary debates, which could be very well interpreted as struggles for power.

In conclusion, speech manipulation within a political discourse of a member of the Romanian Parliament is a multidimensional phenomenon. After analysing the disursive/communicative dimension of manipulation, a future work will need to provide more detail about the other two aspects from Van Dijk's *triangulated approach*: the cognitive and the social aspects of manipulation.

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