



# Pragmatic Aspect of English Fake News Discourse

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the pragmatic aspect of English fake news discourse as a communicative phenomenon aimed at disseminating false or misleading information to influence public opinion and shape specific outcomes. The English fake news discourse is characterized by fabricated or distorted facts, provocative headlines, and an emotional manipulation strategy designed to elicit targeted responses from readers. The study examines vital typological features, including sensationalist headlines, parameters of authorship and source, lack of facts and verified information, emotionally charged language, thematic eclecticism, and manipulative strategy implementation. Through these elements, fake news discourse fosters distrust within society and exploits its functional specificity to present itself as legitimate news while embedding disinformation. The article delves into this discourse's tactical aspects, particularly its manipulative strategy. The research focuses on core tactics in fake news discourse, which include the tactic of emotional appeal, the tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative, the tactic of redirecting blame to others, the tactic of referencing authority, the tactic of indirect criticism, the tactic of providing inaccurate information, the tactic of hinting, the tactic of threats, and the tactic involving black humor. Each tactic is strategically chosen to exert a psychological impact, aiming to alter readers' perceptions and beliefs. The specific linguistic and stylistic means and devices that enhance the effectiveness of manipulation and influence within these tactics are revealed and analyzed.

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## **1. Introduction.**

The modern world is grappling with an “information pandemic” characterized by the rapid and overwhelming spread of information, including fake news, facilitated by advancements in network technologies and social media. This proliferation of fake news poses a significant threat to democratic processes, as disinformation can influence elections, undermine freedom of speech, and disrupt other fundamental aspects of democracy. Post-truth politics is closely linked to the complexities of human perception of social reality, which is inherently marked by ambiguity in understanding the essence and significance of events. This ambiguity enables fake media texts to fulfill a critical function: shaping public opinion and influencing the structure of the social order. Such influence is realized through the retransmission of fabricated facts and their subsequent impact on collective thinking and belief systems. The functional specificity of fake news is accompanied by various linguistic means of expression, including lexical, semantic, and stylistic markers. A notable emphasis is placed on using expressive means and devices designed to capture attention and forge an emotional connection with the audience. Furthermore, there is a discernible shift in the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of media texts, manifested through the communicative intentions of their authors, which aim to achieve specific interactive goals with the reader. This aspect is particularly significant in understanding the specificities of fake news within contemporary publications, which employ diverse communication tactics and strategies to realize the objectives.

A substantial body of research focuses on analyzing media discourse and examining various pragmatic phenomena, particularly those related to disseminating fake news and disinformation. Thus, N. Liutianska (2014) investigates mass media discourse’s typological and structural features, while Yu. Omelchuk (2018) explores the cognitive and pragmatic parameters of English-language media. Studies also elucidate the concept of fake news and its defining characteristics (Grieve & Woodfield, 2023; Hnezdilova, 2007), as well as the language means of information distortion in media discourse (Kushnirov, 2021; Rybachok, 2020). However, it is noteworthy that these researchers often address the linguistic means of representing fake news in media discourse, indicating a need for a more in-depth exploration of this critical aspect. The relevance of this study arises from the necessity to comprehend the



concept of fake news and its multifaceted definitions. Investigating fake news discourse as a distinct genre within English media discourse is essential. The influence of fake news on shaping opinions, beliefs, and overall public consciousness has illuminated its creators' profound capacity for manipulation. Acknowledging the significant impact that fake news can exert on individuals and society highlights the necessity of examining its linguistic and pragmatic dimensions within English media discourse. Such an analysis enables a deeper understanding of the strategies employed in disseminating fake news and their implications for communication and public perception.

## 2. Literature Review.

The methodological framework of this study is grounded in research from the fields of linguistics and media studies. The exploration of the fake news phenomenon is based on the works of Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Lim & Richard Ling (2018), A. Gelfert (2018), M. Kitsa (2017), I. Mudra (2016), Yu. Omelchuk (2018). Additionally, the communicative and pragmatic dimensions of fake news are analyzed in the works of T. van Dijk (2006), S. Rybachok (2020), J. Grieve, and G. Woodfield (2023). The term fake news has evolved within journalism and mass communication studies. As a researcher in the Ukrainian scientific community, I have defined the concept of fake news. I. Mudra (2016). She points out that fake news is a specially created news item, event, or journalistic material that contains false or distorted information aimed at discrediting a particular person or group of people in the eyes of the audience. The concept of fake news is also associated with information warfare, and I. Mudra formulates several tasks that fake news performs; it causes aggression and provocations in response, misinforms the audience, creates doubts about specific issues and positions, activates attention and intimidates readers (Mudra, 2016, p. 185). This definition provides a detailed characterization of fake news and emphasizes its negative impact on the audience's perception of information. Fake news is seen as a means of manipulating public opinion and shaping negative attitudes toward specific individuals or groups. Foreign researchers have also contributed significantly to the definition of fake news. Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling (2018), in their article "Fake News: A Typology of Scholarly Definitions", offer a structured approach to defining the term, examining its multifaceted aspects. Their approach



defines fake news as information messages based on fictitious, false data created for commercial purposes. They identify two main reasons for creating fake content: ideological and financial. The ideological motivation pertains to utilizing fake news to manage public consciousness and shape desired societal beliefs and attitudes. Fake news can significantly influence public opinion and political ideologies in this context.

Conversely, financial motivation arises from the high “virality” associated with fake news, which provokes strong reactions on social media, generates outrage, fosters discussion, and is frequently shared by users (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2018). This phenomenon results in substantial viewership, creating profitable opportunities for advertisers and content creators. Consequently, financial incentives play a critical role in spreading fake news. This analysis emphasizes the necessity of considering diverse motivations and aspects of fake news within its definitional framework and empirical research. The authors of the article “A Study of Fake News” define fake news as information that is fabricated and imitates media content in form but does not meet the goals and intentions of traditional media (Lazer et al., 2018). This definition highlights a central feature of fake news: its primary objective is to deceive and engage readers, leading them to accept false or manipulated information as credible. The authors underscore that fake news employs pseudo-journalistic techniques and lacks the fundamental journalistic values of objectivity and credibility typically associated with conventional media. In their study for UNESCO, S. Ireton and J. Posetti (2018) call the term “fake news” an oxymoron and point out that it contradicts the very nature of news. In their understanding, news is a priori verified information intended to inform the public in the public interest. According to scholars, anything that does not meet these standards cannot be called news (Ireton & Posetti, 2018). Thus, they argue that the term does not have a direct or general meaning, and they define everything that falls under the conditional category of “fake news” as disinformation.

The author of the annual Digital News Report and a prominent researcher at the Reuters Institute, Nic Newman, with Richard Fletcher, Kirsten Eddy, Craig T. Robertson, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2022), thoroughly researches and analyses the phenomenon of fake news, emphasizing its potential threat to the democratic order around the world. From his point of

view, the term “fake news” has become a comprehensive concept that combines many aspects and phenomena, including biased and partisan journalism, a form of information outreach where journalists try to influence public opinion and form political views. Misleading online advertising: This aspect includes false advertising that may be aimed at misinforming the public via the Internet. Deliberately fabricated stories: This means creating and disseminating stories that are precisely manufactured to spread false information through social media (Newman et al., 2022). Fake news is gradually becoming a natural form of journalism, and this thesis has sound reasoning. Modern fake news is carefully crafted, so it is not easy to distinguish it from real news. The information in fake news often looks authentic, appears like reality, and evokes a familiar reaction from readers, listeners, or viewers.

### **3. Aim and Objectives.**

**This article** seeks to elucidate the pragmatic features of English fake news discourse, particularly emphasizing the strategies and tactics utilized.

#### **Objectives:**

- to clarify the definition of English fake news discourse to enhance clarity and specificity;
- to ascertain the position of English fake news discourse within the broader framework of media discourse genres and to characterize its distinctive typological features;
- to delineate the strategy and tactics employed in constructing fake news discourse;
- to analyze the implementation of manipulative strategies and tactics, focusing on their effects on public consciousness as conveyed in fake news texts.

The research material for this study consists of a corpus of English fake news articles selected through sampling from various online resources and news sites, including The Onion, The News Thump, and Wired.

### **4. Methodology.**

#### **4.1. Criteria for Selecting a Corpus of Texts to Analyze Manipulative Tactics.**

The criterion of the chronological range was applied in the corpus selection, with articles published in 2017 (The Florida Times-Union, 2017), 2022 (Business Insider, 2022; Huffington Post, 2022), and 2023 (News Thump, 2023; SpaceXMania, 2023; The Onion, 2023; Wired, 2023). This timeframe captures relevant events, offering insight into the media’s active use of



manipulative tactics. The updated data facilitates the identification of current trends, particularly in using emotional appeal, humor, and other manipulation techniques. Another criterion is the subject matter of the texts. The corpus encompasses various topics, including political events, social phenomena, and environmental issues, enabling an examination of how manipulative tactics manifest across various contexts. For example, an article about the use of Viagra by the Navy SEALs (Business Insider, 2022) explores the manipulation of medical facts to generate sensationalism, while a satirical piece on Jaws (The Onion, 2023) highlights the use of sarcasm and humor as manipulative tools. Illustrative sources form another key criterion. To construct the corpus, we selected articles from news outlets that provide authoritative and insider information, often accompanied by sharp commentary (Business Insider, 2022; The Florida Times-Union, 2017) and satirical publications (The Onion, 2023; News Thump, 2023). This approach allows for comparing manipulative tactics across different media genres: informational and satirical. The genre diversity of the corpus includes articles reflecting satire (The Onion, 2023; News Thump, 2023), where language means conveying exaggeration, implication, and black humor are prevalent. Sensational news outlets (e.g., Business Insider, 2022; Huffington Post, 2022) employ emotional appeal and references to authority to capture readers' attention. At the same time, political commentary (The Florida Times-Union, 2017) incorporates indirect criticism and blame-shifting. From the standpoint of content relevance to the research objective, all the articles feature distinct instances of manipulative tactics. Regarding representativeness, the selected articles reflect a broad spectrum of media discourse, ranging from official sources to satirical publications. This allows for an investigation of the influence of different information presentation formats on the effectiveness of manipulative tactics.

#### **4.2. Research Methods.**

Throughout the study, we employ *content analysis* (Krippendorff, 2004) to identify textual markers that signal the use of specific tactics (hints, appeals to authority, or threats). *Discourse analysis* (Dijk, 1985) was also utilized to explore the typological characteristics of English fake news discourse. *A pragmatic approach* (Grice, 1975; Sperber & Wilson, 1995) was used to identify the tactics within the broader manipulative strategy. The following pragmatic criteria



were employed to identify manipulative tactics within the *manipulative strategy*: Intentionality, which focuses on the author’s intentions, particularly the attempt to evoke an emotional reaction (a tactic of emotional appeal); reinforcing the credibility of the facts presented (a tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative) or divert attention from the main issue (redirecting blame to others tactic). The following criterion is contextuality, which analyzes the texts’ socio-political, cultural, and genre aspects. For instance, in the articles from satirical publications (The Onion, 2023; News Thump, 2023), the context determines tactics such as hinting and black humor, often based on subtle, hidden criticism.

The criterion of the Pragmatic Effect is concerned with the focus on the audience’s reaction. Tactics that induce *fear* (a tactic of threat), *laughter* (a tactic of black humor), or *distrust of the opponent* (a tactic of indirect criticism) were evaluated based on their ability to influence the audience’s attitude toward the presented information. The chosen corpus of articles offers a variety of contexts and genre forms, allowing for a comprehensive study of manipulative tactics in fake news discourse. The selection criteria ensured that the material aligned with the research objectives and that the analysis methods were employed to guarantee the scientific validity of the results.

### **5. Typological Characteristics of English Fake News Discourse.**

The media discourse functions as a hierarchical continuum of texts, composed of smaller structural and semantic units that integrate into larger wholes (Liutianska, 2014, p. 136). This structure positions media discourse as a complex genre system encompassing various information formats. Within media discourse, fake news discourse functions as a subgenre that includes diverse forms such as headlines, reports, interviews, and analyses, each affecting audience perception and interaction with other media content. English fake news discourse is a verbal and textual communication system focused on the English audio-visual environment, characterized by disseminating disinformation and manipulative or false information messages. The specificity of fake news discourse is that it attempts to replace facts and events with “alternative facts” that may be fictitious or distorted. This discourse is determined by the instability of the information environment and the violation of the objectivity and reliability principles characteristic of the media sphere.



The status of English fake news discourse within this genre system highlights its role in shaping the modern information space. Fake news discourse relies on imitating formal news elements – such as logical text structure, thematic relevance, and content length – while diverging significantly at the content level by often lacking factual accuracy. The reliance on unverified sources and, at times, absurd justifications create a marked dissonance between its form, which encourages audiences to perceive it as credible news, and its content, which may be satirical, silly, or factually inaccurate (Rybachok, 2020, p. 122). This dissonance undermines trust in media and complicates audiences’ ability to discern genuine information.

In our study, we have identified the typological features of English fake news discourse. The primary typological feature of this discourse is its **sensationalism**, which “refers to the crafting of information that appears highly impressive, shocking, or emotionally charged to maximize audience attention” (Fetzer, 2004, p. 239). Fake news often employs sensational headlines to draw readers in and boost viewership. These headlines incorporate capital letters, exclamation marks, multiple punctuation marks, and other emphasis-enhancing techniques. Sensational content includes elements of clickbait – headlines or descriptions engineered to intrigue the reader and encourage link-clicking, even if the actual content is only loosely related. The primary goal of clickbait is to drive click-throughs or interactions, often without delivering substantive or relevant content, prioritizing attention-grabbing appeal even at the risk of disappointing the reader with incongruent or insubstantial content.

Another defining feature of English fake news discourse is **the parameter of authorship and source**. In assessing the reliability and objectivity of information within media discourse, the presence or absence of authorship attribution and identifiable sources plays a pivotal role. Authorship attribution is crucial, as it establishes the accountability and the expertise of the individual presenting the information. In English fake news discourse, authorship is often unclear or entirely omitted, which can shift responsibility away from the content originator and obscure the credibility of the information presented. While established journalists may occasionally produce content lacking authorship, this is typically in satire or entertainment rather than deception. The tendency to reference implicit or fabricated sources in fake news discourse imbues the content with an artificial veneer of authority. This strategy





often involves citing fictitious individuals, organizations, or so-called experts to create an illusion of credibility.

In contrast, verifiable references to reliable sources are essential in substantiating the accuracy and credibility of information. The absence of such references raises concerns regarding the objectivity of the discourse but also casts doubt on its overall reliability. Moreover, English fake news discourse needs a balanced representation of sources. Incorporating diverse perspectives on specific events or phenomena contributes to a nuanced understanding of the subject and mitigates the risk of presenting a one-dimensional viewpoint. Ensuring source balance is, therefore, essential to maintaining objectivity and promoting a well-rounded expression of information. A defining trait of fake news discourse is ***the lack of facts and verified information***, often omitting or skewing facts to sustain a particular narrative. Frequently, fake news employs the “inverted pyramid” structure, which strategically positions key (yet unverified) information at the beginning to maximize its effect on the audience. This structure, coupled with a “5W” approach (who, what, when, why, where), enhances the impression of thorough reporting while concealing the subjective or unreliable nature of the content. ***Emotionally charged language*** and ***stylistically distinctive vocabulary*** are also typical. The discourse of fake news emphasizes metaphorization and stylistically marked vocabulary.

At the same time, lexical and grammatical means of influence at the semiotic level are employed to intentionally distort information to achieve specific communicative goals (Omelchuk, 2018, p. 148). Using synonyms and euphemisms allows for the adaptation of specific terms to the audience. Metaphors and clichés assist in creating associations based on previously known and understood images. ***Thematic eclecticism*** – recycling similar themes to shape audience worldviews – is prevalent in English fake news discourse. English fake news discourse encompasses various forms of disinformation, including false information, manipulations, fabricated events, altered photographs, videos, and many other types of deception.

## 6. Provocative Headlines as a Factor in Shaping Audience Perception in Fake News Discourse.

Fake news frequently creates emotional impressions and captures the audience's attention. Such narratives carefully select headlines and incorporate visual elements to foster an illusion of authenticity, even when the information presented is false. Authors of fake news leverage fragmented cognitive processes to engage readers and propagate manipulated or unverified information. This dynamic interplay contributes to the dissemination of disinformation, increasing the audience's vulnerability to manipulation. The tendency to highlight unverified and absurd news in contemporary media reveals distinctive psychological traits among readers and information consumers. Provocative headlines, characterized by a "wow effect", aim to attract consumer attention, leading audiences to engage with content that seems both absurd and unbelievable. For example, the headline "*Aspiring Navy SEALs are using Viagra to self-medicate when they start coughing up blood during qualifying drills. They say it works – but at a price*" (Business Insider, 2022). presents an unexpected combination of elements that elicits surprise and a range of emotional responses, particularly within a military context. Another striking example, "*Aliens Among Us: Top Government Officials Confirm Extraterrestrial Dinner Parties!*" (Business Insider, 2022), generates the impression of extraordinary information purportedly from credible sources, piquing curiosity and prompting readers to seek more details about these outlandish claims. Similarly, the headline "*Breaking News: World Leaders Reveal Secret Society Where Decisions are Made in Pillow Forts!*" (Business Insider, 2022) while appearing absurd at first glance, effectively leaves readers with unanswered questions, inspiring further inquiry into the article.

Additionally, the phrase "*Revolutionizing Romance: Scientists Unveil Love Potion Perfume, Sales Soar!*" (Business Insider, 2022) employs the scientific term *Love Potion*, rendering the headline appealing and intriguing for those interested in unconventional news. Finally, "*World's Richest Pets: Billionaire Hamsters and Trust Fund Kittens Take Over Wall Street!*" (Business Insider, 2022) draws attention through its playful references to animals and wealth, eliciting humorous associations among readers. This sensationalist approach to structuring news, which evokes a "wow effect", has a detrimental influence on individuals and



society. Fake news, devoid of factual foundations, infiltrates the media landscape through a facade of objectivity, thereby fostering an illusion of legitimacy. Recognizing these deceptive informational constructs proves challenging due to their sophisticated imitation of objectivity, undermining consumers' cognitive responsibility and critical thinking abilities.

It is important to note that some individuals or organizations may profit from creating and disseminating fake news. Advertisers may pay for views, providing an incentive to produce attractive yet manipulative content. For instance, a headline like *“Breaking News: Exclusive Interview with Bigfoot Reveals He Loves Brand XYZ's Energy Drinks!”* (Huffington Post, 2022) exemplifies an attempt to capture attention through a fictitious interview with a mythical creature, potentially generating hype and boosting sales of energy drinks. Similarly, *“Royal Family Endorses Magical Weight Loss Pill: Lose 10 Pounds Overnight!”* (Huffington Post, 2022) leverages the appeal of the royal family to promote weight loss pills, thereby creating a false sense of authority that attracts individuals seeking quick results. Furthermore, fake news can be employed for political purposes, such as discrediting opponents, electoral manipulation, and posing threats to national security. For example, the headline *“OOPS! Far-Right German Party Gives Out Gummy Bears With X-Rated Flaw”* (Huffington Post, 2022) encompasses various elements to capture the reader's attention. The emotionally charged exclamation “OOPS!” suggests an unpredictable or adverse incident. *Far-Right German Party* indicates the party's political orientation, which may provoke controversy and outrage among certain demographic groups. The assertion *Gives Out Gummy Bears With X-Rated Flaw* introduces a sensational aspect, implying the presence of inappropriate substances in the free gummy bears, which often appeals to sensationalist interests. In the context of fake news, the function of informing is compromised, as the primary objective shifts from providing information to influencing public opinion or eliciting specific emotional responses. Fake news frequently contains false or distorted information intended to deceive the public.

### **7. Characterization of Manipulative Strategy and Tactics in Fake News Discourse.**

The distinctive characteristic of fake news lies in its ability to amalgamate information that incorporates both authentic facts and inaccuracies or falsehoods. This complexity hampers the

process of information comprehension for interactants of media discourse, making them more susceptible to influence and manipulation by the creators of such content. As a result, the genre-specific attributes of fake news create specific conditions that enable the application of manipulative strategies. It is important to note that the nature of manipulation has a dual effect. Alongside the overt message, the manipulator conveys a “coded” signal to the recipient. This hidden influence is based on the “tacit knowledge” possessed by the addressee and their ability to create mental images that affect their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The essence of manipulation lies in the fact that the manipulator, in pursuing their objectives, implicitly seeks to induce in the recipient (an individual or community being manipulated) intentions that do not align with their actual desires. Manipulation is characterized by a dual objective: an implicit and an explicit one. The explicit goal benefits the recipient, while the implicit one serves the interests of the manipulator. The recipient must remain unaware of the manipulator's hidden goal. The manipulator conceals their true aim because (1) this aim reveals the manipulator's intentions; (2) the recipient may disagree with such an aim; and (3) explicitly formulating this aim requires significant effort from the manipulator for its realization and may not always be achievable in each context.

From a pragmatic perspective, communicative action in mass media texts is intended to impact the addressee. This influence is typically realized through the consistent use of strategies and tactics that shape the author’s communicative intentions. In this framework, the concept of “*strategy*” is defined as a broader term, referring to plans designed to achieve a communication goal (Wodak, 2011), while “*tactics*” are viewed as specific methods and techniques employed to achieve communicative goals (Boboshko, 2013). A high level of psychological impact characterizes fake news discourse. It attracts the audience’s attention through carefully thought-out strategies that enhance its effectiveness. Manipulation is a communicative and interactional practice in which a manipulator exercises control over others, usually against their will or best interests (Dijk, 2006). A manipulative strategy is defined as a systematic approach that is aimed at forming ideas or beliefs favorable to the author of the message by imposing a certain way of thinking, emotional state, or behavior, often without the addressee being aware of this influence, through the selection and implementation of the most

effective means for achieving communicative goals within a specific context. The key tactics representing the manipulative strategy in the analyzed fake news discourse are emotional appeal, justification for the truthfulness of the narrative, redirecting blame to others, referencing authority, employing indirect criticism, providing inaccurate information, making hints, issuing threats, and utilizing black humor. **Emotional appeal** involves eliciting a response by invoking feelings like *fear*, *compassion*, *admiration*, or *indignation*. This strengthens the persuasiveness of the message and ensures the influence on the thoughts and behavior of the audience to enhance the connection with the audience and creates conditions for increasing the credibility of the message. In fake news discourse, this tactic is used to manipulate public opinion or create erroneous perceptions, as emotional responses often interfere with critical reflection on the information obtained. **The tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative** enhances the credibility of information by simulating real events, emotions, or personal involvement. This approach relies on specific details that make recipients perceive the information stemming from genuine personal experience, fostering trust in the message source. Commonly employed across media discourse genres –it aims to amplify the message’s impact on the audience. **Redirecting blame to others** involves shifting responsibility for certain events, actions, or consequences to third-party actors or groups. It is used to divert attention from the real source of a problem, justify one’s actions, or create a negative attitude toward opponents. **Referencing authority tactic** involves appealing to the opinions or statements of respected individuals or institutions to lend additional credibility to the statements. It is utilized to convince the audience of the validity of information based on the reputation or authority of the sources. **The tactic of indirect criticism** presupposes expressing dissatisfaction through generalizations or indirect statements. This tactic aims to convey criticism or an unpleasant opinion without open confrontation, avoiding direct conflict and making the criticism less obvious to the audience. **The tactic of providing inaccurate information** involves presenting facts that are partially incorrect, distorted, or incomplete. This may involve deliberately leaving out important information, changing the context, or using manipulative language to create an impression without providing clear and accurate facts. The main goal of this tactic is to

manipulate the audience's perception, steering their thoughts in the desired direction without directly misleading them. **The tactic of hinting** aims to convey a certain idea, criticism, or information without expressing it outright to avoid confrontation or overemphasis on a complex or sensitive issue. Hints allow the communicator to influence the thoughts or emotions of the audience while leaving space for interpretation and reducing the risk of a negative response. **The tactic of threats** lies in using unpleasant or undesirable consequences to compel someone to act or alter their behavior, typically by evoking fear or exerting pressure. A threat may be either overt or subtle, to manipulate the individual into compliance, altering their stance, or making decisions driven by the fear of potential consequences. **The black humor tactic** uses humor based on serious, tragic, or taboo topics to reduce the seriousness of a situation or to express criticism through an ironic or sarcastic approach. Such humor can be shocking, but it aims to surprise or provoke the audience by violating social or moral norms to achieve a desired effect or convey a critical message.

### 8. Realization of Manipulative Tactics in the English Fake News Discourse.

Let us analyze the manipulative effect achieved through specific tactical choices within the English fake news discourse. **The tactic of emotional appeal** is aimed at evoking strong emotional reactions in recipients to amplify the impact of a message. It relies on literary devices (irony, allusion, hyperbole) and metaphorical or symbolic elements that resonate with emotions. Within the analyzed material, this tactic is manifested through stylistic devices such as sarcasm, satire, and rhetorical exclamatory utterance. The author employs a sarcastic tone and humor to critique the perception of great white sharks as “bloodthirsty killers” following the release of the film *Jaws*. The author deliberately distorts the stereotypical representation of great white sharks, portraying them as friendly domestic pets and emphasizing their likability. “Back in the '50s and '60s, you could not go to a pet shop without seeing a little boy or girl begging their parents to let them take home a great white, but *Jaws* changed all of that” (The Onion. Experts Blame “Jaws”, 2023). In this fragment, the author sarcastically indicates that in the past, children were so confident in the safety and appeal of great white sharks as pets that the film *Jaws* altered their perspective, conveyed through a sarcastic tone. “The reality is these are cuddly – and let us just say it, flat-out cute – pets who love nuzzling with children” (The

Onion. Experts Blame “Jaws”, 2023). Here, the author employs sarcasm by highlighting great white sharks’ “*cuddly*” and “*cute*” nature, ironically distorting the stereotypical perception of them as dangerous. “*The horrific opening swim scene in Jaws essentially undid all of those warm and caring associations*” (The Onion. Experts Blame “Jaws”, 2023). The author uses sarcasm to describe the opening scene of the film *Jaws* as “horrific”, which undermines all previous “warm and caring” associations. Another striking example utilizes hyperbole and expressive vocabulary to create a sense of extraordinary threat and to compel readers to feel fear and outrage about the world around them: “*Humanity on the Brink!: This is it, folks! The world is teetering on the edge of the abyss, and there's no turning back. The horrors we face are beyond comprehension. Are we doomed to be the architects of our destruction? It's time to wake up and face the nightmarish reality we've created*” (The Onion. Experts Blame “Jaws”, 2023). In this excerpt, various linguistic means are employed: the address *folks*, emotive vocabulary for emphases such as *brink*, *horror*, *doomed*, *nightmarish reality*, emphasis with *beyond comprehension*, and rhetorical questioning.

***The tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative*** is employed to create the impression of authenticity and personal experience. This tactic primarily captures the readers’ attention, fosters an emotional connection with the information, and enhances its impact. In this article, the author references personal experience to construct an emotionally resonant narrative: “*I WAS STANDING at the precipice, a middle-aged woman, yearning for a new beginning and trying to reinvent my life*” (Wired, 2023). Here, the author draws upon her experiences and feelings, describing her midlife crisis and desire for change. “*I still had so much I wanted to do in life – dreams waiting to be fulfilled*” (Wired, 2023) – this reference to the author's dreams and aspirations creates a sense of shared experience with readers who may harbor similar desires. “*I purchased a new planner and carefully recorded my aspirations: writing success in the form of a book deal, a better-paying job to support me along the way, and the captivating love story I'd always yearned for*” (Wired, 2023), the author provides specific examples of her ambitions and desires, generating greater interest in her story. These excerpts aid the author in strengthening the narrative, making it more personal and persuasive, and engaging readers, as many individuals can identify with similar feelings and aspirations.

Notable linguistic features include the frequent use of personal and possessive pronouns, emotive vocabulary, a tendency to employ the past tense, and various insertions.

**The tactic of redirecting blame to others** is employed in fake news discourse to reflect personal or collective problems conditionally and to emphasize the responsibility of other individuals or groups concerning global social crises. This tactic can effectively manipulate the audience, diverting attention from the natural causes and intensifying accusations against other subjects. Successful examples of this tactic can be found in the following excerpts: *“Global Warming Crisis Escalates: It’s All Your Fault: ‘As temperatures continue to rise and glaciers melt, some people want to blame industries and governments for climate change. But let’s get real. It’s your fault for using air conditioning and driving a car. How dare you enjoy the comfort of modern life while pointing fingers at others?’”* (Business Insider, 2022). This tactic is utilized to absolve industry and government of responsibility for global warming by pointing to individual consumers as the primary culprits.

Another example is an excerpt that directs blame for the economic crisis toward the younger generation, attempting to divert attention from possible systemic issues: *“Economic Downturn: Blame the Millennials: The economy is struggling, and some experts claim it’s due to a lack of innovation and financial mismanagement by older generations. But let’s not forget who’s really to blame here. Millennials and their avocado toast addiction. They are the reason we can’t have nice things!”* (Business Insider, 2022). From the provided examples, it can be noted that the linguistic means expressing this tactic include frequent use of pronouns, overly emotive vocabulary, rhetorical questions, and colloquial language.

**The tactic of providing inaccurate information** in fake news to achieve a somewhat comedic effect can be illustrated by the following example: *“After an audit by the White House budget office, President Trump ordered that Michelle Obama be sent a bill for everything she should have paid for by herself but used government money instead. The bill, which totals eleven billion dollars, is more than the Obama family will likely be able to afford in their lifetime”* (The Florida Times-Union, 2017). In this fake news item, there is no reference to a primary source that would substantiate the statistical claims, and the manipulation of figures



merely creates an effect of intrigue and captures attention. Linguistic features in this example include parenthetical constructions, illogical statements, irony, and paradox.

**Referencing authority** enhances the reader's trust; typically, this tactic produces humor by highlighting actions or achievements that do not align with the individual's high social status or title. For instance, in the following excerpt, the name and authority of Dr. Masters are utilized to confer significance and credibility to his claims about the existence of aliens, leveraging his scientific qualifications and experience: *"Dr. Richard Masters, a distinguished astrophysicist with decades of research at NASA, has made an astonishing revelation. His groundbreaking work in extraterrestrial studies has concluded that aliens have been living among us. Dr. Masters' scholarly expertise in astrophysics and his impeccable track record lend unparalleled credibility to his claims"* (Huffington Post, 2022). This excerpt employs various linguistic devices, such as subordinate constructions: *Dr. Richard Masters, a distinguished astrophysicist with decades of research at NASA*, proper names *Dr. Richard Masters*, scientific terminology: *astrophysicist, extraterrestrial studies, NASA*, and positive evaluative expressions: *distinguished, groundbreaking, scholarly expertise, impeccable track record*. **Indirect criticism** influences the audience and implicitly expresses criticism through suggestive means. A few examples demonstrate this tactic: *"Can you believe some people actually think this is a good idea? It's almost like they don't care about the consequences"* (Huffington Post, 2022). Numerous demonstrative pronouns and emotional vocabulary are used. The author seeks to express disagreement with a particular idea or action without directly naming it, instead creating the impression that the supporters of this idea do not understand the possible consequences. There is an implicit expression of disappointment towards those who ignore environmental issues, noting that they have "their priorities": *"You'd think that some individuals would care more about the environment, but I guess they have their priorities"* (Huffington Post, 2022). The linguistic features include demonstrative pronouns, emotive vocabulary, and a clear marker of uncertainty from the author.

**The tactic of hinting** at fake news discourse generates further confusion, uncertainty, and opportunities for interpretation. Here are a few examples: *"As he introduced the new budget plan, he assured everyone that it was a 'bold and innovative step forward', leaving the*

*audience wondering whether 'bold' meant 'risky' and 'innovative' meant 'untested'". In terms of linguistic features, this excerpt contains numerous euphemisms and interjections. The speaker's statements may carry subtle criticism. In the following example, the author hints at a potential encounter with extraterrestrials, thus maintaining a degree of intrigue for the readers: "Mysterious lights in the sky over a small town raise questions". This sentence reveals implicit elements, such as "Prominent politician denies any involvement in scandalous allegations". The use of the term *scandalous allegations* suggests a potential connection of the politician to the claims while simultaneously allowing him the opportunity to dismiss the accusations. The euphemisms serve to avoid direct accusation, instead constructing ironic and critical images that reinforce the sarcastic connotation: "Those are the witches we're hunting, and yes, they are pretty boring witches, but we keep finding them" (News Thump. Fake, 2023), the euphemism *witches* is used to refer to individuals who have committed administrative violations, but in a satirical context that emphasizes their insignificance compared to serious crimes.*

**The tactic of threats** in fake news creates tension, panic, and fear among readers. In the article "*China aims to be zero-carbon by 2060 and zero-Uyghur by 2030*", there are sentences that illustrate this tactic. For instance, As Xi told reporters, "*Over the coming decades, our carbon emissions will disappear and never be heard from again, just like our ethnic and religious minorities*" (News Thump. Fake, 2023). This sentence combines the public statement of the Chinese president regarding the cessation of carbon emissions with a reference to the repression of ethnic and religious minorities. The phrase, *just like our ethnic and religious minorities*, emphasizes the analogy between measures aimed at reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and policies concerning minority groups. Another example reads, "*Almost as lovely as the Xinjiang region will be once we remove all the people who have been living there for thousands of years*" (News Thump. Fake, 2023). It contains a sarcastic and ironic allusion to mass repression in the Xinjiang region. *Once we finish removing all the people, the phrase serves as a direct threat and indicates the forcible displacement of the region's inhabitants, undoubtedly affecting the emotional state of readers.*

Additionally, the statement, *“If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping down carbon emissions – forever!”* (News Thump, 2023), employs metaphor to depict the perpetual suppression of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, conveying the idea of unchecked and authoritarian control over emissions, creating a stark association with a repressive regime. Lastly, *“President Xi’s announcement was greeted by a noise which at first was believed to be applause, but turned out to be truncheons hitting the heads of Hong Kong democracy campaigners”* (News Thump. Fake, 2023) employs a sarcastic tone that vividly manifests the tactic of threats. The linguistic means of representing this tactic include conditional sentences, address forms, exclamatory sentences, adverbs of time, future tense verbs, metaphors, and expressive vocabulary.

**The tactic involving black humor** is well-known in journalism and is utilized to create content that blends sharp wit with offensive or provocative themes. It can prompt readers or viewers to reflect or even elicit laughter despite the seriousness or sensitivity of the subject matter. This humor often relies on irony, sarcasm, sharp wit, and mockery. The media text *“Fake witch hunt’ successfully indicts yet another witch”* (News Thump. Fake, 2023) exemplifies fake and humorous discourse. The headline is ironic and contentious, conveying the absurdity of a fabricated situation that does not reflect actual events or circumstances. Within the text, the author employs black humor and ironic commentary to mock the accusations of “witchcraft” historically directed at society. The news discusses the federal government conducting a *fake witch hunt* and successfully indicting another *witch*, namely Donald Trump: *“What a witch hunt it has been”* and *“Donald Trump is technically right; this was a witch hunt, but only if you think of ‘witches’ as being real, and as people who have no magic powers whatsoever except to ignore the laws they created completely”* (News Thump. Fake, 2023).

Here, the author ridicules Trump’s accusations, portraying them as absurd and unfounded through humor and irony. Implicit means (hidden meanings) are employed to convey irony. The author suggests that the so-called *witches* (political opponents) violate the laws. Furthermore, the author implies that the accusations against Trump regarding conspiracy and obstruction of justice are as ludicrous as historical accusations of witchcraft, which lack any

grounding, involving individuals who possess no magical abilities and commit mundane crimes. Language, characteristic of this tactic, includes conditional sentences, rhetorical questions, a plethora of implicit phrases, metaphors, satire, irony, sarcasm, and expressive vocabulary.

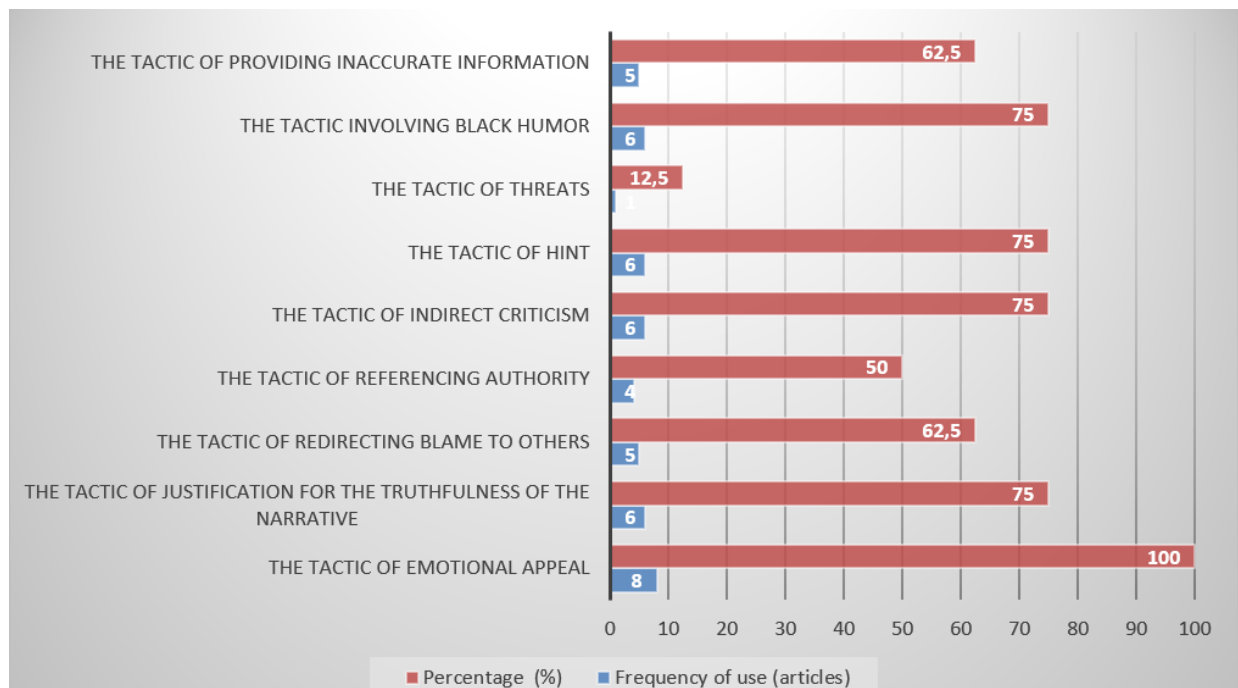


Figure 1. **Distribution of Manipulative Tactics in the English Fake News Discourse**

**Figure 1** illustrates the frequency and percentage of manipulative tactics used in the English fake news discourse, as analyzed across selected articles. Each tactic is represented by a bar, with red bars indicating the percentage of use and blue bars showing the frequency of occurrence in the analyzed articles. Thus, the tactic of emotional appeal is represented in 100% of the analyzed articles, making it the most frequently employed manipulative tactic in the English fake news discourse. The tactics of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative, indirect criticism, hinting, and black humor are equally prevalent, each appearing in 75% of the articles. The tactic of redirecting blame to others and providing inaccurate information was

identified in 62.5% of the articles. Referencing authority is slightly less common, appearing in 50% of the articles, and is often used to lend credibility to claims through references to authoritative figures or institutions. Finally, the tactic of threats is the least frequent, identified in only 12,5% of the texts. This reflects its more specific and situational usage, often aiming to elicit fear or highlight potential consequences dramatically.

Thus, manipulative tactics are crucial in English fake news discourse. They help achieve specific objectives by distorting information and influencing readers’ perceptions. The manipulative strategy is grounded in psychological and rhetorical techniques for manipulating thought and persuading audiences.

Table 1

**Manipulative Tactics**

TACTICS	LANGUAGE MEANS	EXAMPLES
<b>The tactic of emotional appeal</b>	hyperbole allusion irony metaphor humor	“Back in the ’50s and ’60s, you couldn’t go to a pet shop without seeing a little boy or girl begging their parents to let them take home a great white, but Jaws changed all of that” (The Onion, 2023).
<b>The tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative</b>	personal and possessive pronouns, emotive vocabulary, a tendency to employ the past tense, and parenthetical clauses	“I WAS STANDING at the precipice, a middle-aged woman, yearning for a new beginning and trying to reinvent my life” (Wired, 2023).
<b>The tactic of redirecting blame to others</b>	use of pronouns, emotive vocabulary, rhetorical questions, and colloquial language	“It’s All Your Fault: ‘As temperatures continue to rise and glaciers melt, some people want to blame industries and governments for climate change. But let’s get real. It’s your fault for using air conditioning and driving a car. How dare you enjoy the comfort of modern life while pointing fingers at others?’” (Business Insider, 2022).
<b>The tactic of providing inaccurate information</b>	parenthetical constructions, illogical statements, irony, and paradox.	“After an audit by the White House budget office, President Trump ordered that Michelle Obama be sent a bill for everything she should have paid for by herself but used government money instead. The bill, which totals eleven billion dollars, is more than the Obama family will likely be able to afford in their lifetime” (The Florida Times-Union, 2017).
<b>Referencing authority</b>	subordinate constructions, scientific terminology, positive evaluative expressions	“Dr. Richard Masters, a distinguished astrophysicist with decades of research at NASA, has made an astonishing revelation. His groundbreaking work in extraterrestrial studies has led to the conclusion that aliens have been



		<i>living among us. Dr. Masters' scholarly expertise in astrophysics and his impeccable track record lend unparalleled credibility to his claims" (Huffington Post, 2022).</i>
<b>The tactic of indirect criticism</b>	<i>demonstrative pronouns and emotive vocabulary</i>	<i>"Can you believe some people actually think this is a good idea? It's almost like they don't care about the consequences" (Huffington Post, 2022).</i>
<b>The tactic of hinting</b>	<i>euphemisms and interjections</i>	<i>"Those are the witches we're hunting, and yes, they are pretty boring witches, but we keep finding them" (News Thump. Fake, 2023).</i>
<b>The tactic of threats</b>	<i>conditional sentences, address forms, exclamatory sentences, adverbs of time, future tense verbs, metaphors, and expressive vocabulary.</i>	<i>"China aims to be zero-carbon by 2060 and zero-Uyghur by 2030" there are sentences that illustrate this tactic. For instance, As Xi told reporters, "Over the coming decades, our carbon emissions will disappear and never be heard from again, just like our ethnic and religious minorities" (News Thump. China aims, 2023).</i>
<b>The tactic involving black humor</b>	<i>conditional sentences, rhetorical questions, metaphors, satire, irony, sarcasm, and expressive vocabulary.</i>	<i>"Fake witch hunt' successfully indicts yet another witch" (News Thump. Fake, 2023).</i>

### 9. Case Study: Simultaneous Use of Multiple Tactics in the English Fake News Discourse.

The SpaceXMania article *"Just in: Beyoncé Faces Nearly \$10 Billion Loss Following 'Black National Anthem' Performance at NFL"* (SpaceXMania, 2023) provides a platform for analyzing manipulative tactics in the English fake news discourse. The headline alone exemplifies multiple manipulative tactics. Firstly, it employs the tactic of emotional appeal and the tactic of **hinting** at **sensationalism**, designed to provoke curiosity by presenting shocking or controversial content. Secondly, the article adopts the **tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative**, mimicking the format of reputable media sources. It fosters the illusion that the information is credible and grounded in expert analysis, effectively shaping the reader's perception of its importance and truth, even if the claims are baseless.

In the introduction, the article continues the manipulation through the **tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative**. Specific yet unverified details, such as alleged financial losses or hypothetical reactions from fans and investors, are cited: *"While many applauded her for this audacious move, others questioned its appropriateness for an NFL game. The performance sparked debate, discussion, and, most surprisingly, rumours of*



*a significant financial fallout*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). This creates a false sense of urgency and projects a veneer of reality. The article further employs numerical precision for *\$10 billion and \$3 billion loss*, adopts an official tone, and uses phrasing that imitates analytical commentary: *“In today’s fast-paced world, where social media trends can dictate stock market fluctuations and where a celebrity’s every move is scrutinised, dissected, and often blown out of proportion...”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). These elements lend unwarranted credibility to the text and encourage the reader to trust the fabricated narrative. Mentioning a specific fan base creates the illusion of real events and reactions: *“The Beyhive, Beyoncé’s dedicated fanbase, is known for its unwavering support. Post-performance, there were murmurs that a sizable portion of this fanbase was seeking refunds for their lifetime membership fees”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). The reader can believe the situation is true because real names are involved in *Beyhive*. The author also uses ***the tactic of emotional appeal*** through a sensationalized message about the *loss of \$10 billion*. This figure directly results from Beyoncé’s actions in performing the black national anthem, potentially causing surprise, outrage, or distrust. The emotional impact is also exerted through the emphasis on the song’s deep historical roots, which evokes feelings of pride or, conversely, polarization: *“Beyoncé’s decision to perform ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’ wasn’t just a musical choice; it was a profound cultural statement”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). This evokes contrasting reactions, ranging from admiration for its historical depth to outrage at its perceived inappropriateness. ***The tactic of redirecting blame to others*** employed in this article creates the impression that responsibility for exaggerated or false information rests not with the author or the publication but with external stakeholders, such as experts, analysts, fans, or even imaginary social phenomena. This approach obscures the manipulation, presenting the author as merely an intermediary relaying purported facts. Thus, the responsibility for exaggerated economic consequences is deflected onto financial experts allegedly compelled to address the situation: *“Leading financial experts found themselves addressing the ‘Beyoncé Phenomenon’”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). While some argue that celebrities wield significant influence, attributing large-scale economic shifts to a single event oversimplifies reality. The mention of *serious analysts* lends credibility to the narrative, yet it frees the author from substantiating the claim that such an event could realistically trigger such

consequences. The tactic also focuses on fans, portraying them as amplifying the event's significance through their reactions: *“The Beyhive, Beyoncé’s dedicated fanbase, is known for its unwavering support. Post-performance, there were murmurs that a sizable portion of this fanbase was seeking refunds for their lifetime membership fees”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). Here, using the lexeme *murmurs* signals that the author is merely relaying *rumours*, disclaiming any direct responsibility for the information. Further, the narrative attributes the absurd link between the performance and the stock market to hypothetical financial institutions with the alleged creation of the *“Beyoncé Barometer”*: *“The introduction of a so-called ‘Beyoncé Barometer’ on the New York Stock Exchange was a testament to the perceived economic influence of celebrities”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). While this detail appears to underscore the gravity of the situation, it is a fictional construct reinforcing the manipulation. Similarly, the economic downturn has shifted onto brands purportedly reconsidering their partnerships: *“There were whispers that several brands were reconsidering their association with the artist”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). The lexeme *whispers* hints at reputational threats to Beyoncé but avoids providing concrete evidence, relying instead on ambiguous language to imply a real risk. The article situates the story within a broader social phenomenon: *“This narrative, while seemingly implausible, offers a fascinating exploration into the intricate interplay of celebrity influence, brand value, and societal reactions”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). By framing *society* and its *reactions* as the source of exaggeration, the author appears detached from the judgments being made. This framing absolves the author of responsibility for the presented claims, creating an illusion of neutrality. Mentions of *global implications* and *brand reactions* enhance the material’s perceived credibility, making it more convincing to readers: *“However, the intricate nature of celebrity endorsements and brand collaborations suggests that such a drastic reaction from brands is unlikely based on a single event”* (SpaceXMania, 2023). At the same time, this tactic effectively diverts attention from the information’s fictional nature, shifting the reader's focus to evaluating the behavior of the subjects mentioned or analyzing the alleged consequences.

***The tactic of referencing authority*** in the article is implemented through the creation of an illusion, presenting statements as if they are based on expert opinion: *“Leading financial*



experts have posited that attributing such vast economic shifts to a single event is an oversimplification” (SpaceXMania, 2023). This phrasing mimics an analytical style, omitting specific names or sources, creating an illusion of professionalism without substantiation. It imitates the tone of serious journalism, which typically relies on credible and identifiable expert opinions. References to institutions such as the New York Stock Exchange and the metaphorical Beyoncé Barometer lend an air of economic credibility: “*The introduction of a so-called ‘Beyoncé Barometer’ on the New York Stock Exchange was a testament to the perceived economic influence of celebrities*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). These references sound like legitimate financial terminology, which may persuade readers of a supposed correlation between celebrity actions and financial markets.

Additionally, the use of impersonal terms like *many* allows the author to reference an unspecified group of ‘experts’ or ‘analysts’, avoiding the need to specify who expressed these views: “*Many have posited that while celebrities undoubtedly wield significant influence, attributing such vast economic shifts to a single event is an oversimplification*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). Similarly, the statement “*Some platforms indicated a brief dip in Beyoncé’s song streams post-performance*” (SpaceXMania, 2023) refers vaguely to unnamed “platforms” allegedly tracking changes in streaming analytics. This lack of specificity helps obscure the fictitious nature of the claims. The phrase “*The incident served as a reminder of the complex interplay between brand value, public perception, and real-world economics*” (SpaceXMania, 2023) appears to conclude with the gravitas of a marketing or economic study. Despite its fictional basis, it suggests the situation holds more profound implications. The effect of employing this tactic is to give the text credibility and analytical depth, thereby enhancing its impact on readers. Those unaccustomed to critically evaluating information sources may perceive such material as factual, particularly if it aligns with their expectations or pre-existing beliefs.

The article employs ***the tactic of indirect criticism*** to highlight the controversy surrounding Beyoncé’s actions without the author directly expressing their position. The statement “*While many applauded her for this audacious move, others questioned its appropriateness for an NFL game*” (SpaceXMania, 2023) juxtaposes praise with doubts about

the suitability of the performance. By attributing criticism to *others*, the author avoids directly taking a position, thus addressing a sensitive topic without making explicit accusations. Similarly, the sentence “*Given Beyoncé’s iconic Lemonade album, some analysts have humorously linked the two, suggesting a \$2 billion loss*” uses the adverb *humorously* to cast doubt on the seriousness of the claim without outright denying it, leaving criticism implied rather than stated. In another example, “*However, the intricate nature of celebrity endorsements and brand collaborations suggests that such a drastic reaction from brands is unlikely to be based on a single event*”, the author subtly questions the credibility of claims about the economic consequences, drawing attention to the complex dynamics of the advertising industry. This veiled criticism keeps readers in suspense, encouraging them to seek confirmation or refutation of the indirect critiques.

**The tactic of hinting** further shapes the reader’s perception by suggesting that specific ideas are real or significant, even when exaggerated or fictional: “*The alleged refunds totalled a staggering \$1 billion*” (SpaceXMania, 2023) uses the word *alleged* to hint that the claim may be unfounded, yet still encourages readers to imagine the possibility of such a large-scale event. Similarly, “*The introduction of a so-called ‘Beyoncé Barometer’ on the New York Stock Exchange was a testament to the perceived economic influence of celebrities*” (SpaceXMania, 2023), which acknowledges that the barometer is unofficial. However, its purported discussion in financial circles fosters the idea that celebrity actions significantly influence markets, even warranting specialized analysis. The article exemplifies the manipulation of numbers to generate sensationalism, a hallmark of **tactics involving inaccurate information** in media narratives. Thus, the statement “*Some platforms indicated a brief dip in Beyoncé’s song streams post-performance*” suggests a significant impact but lacks evidence. The claim of a *\$4 billion loss* appears exaggerated when considered against the economics of streaming, where fractional earnings per stream make such a figure unrealistic. This manipulation amplifies the perception of impact despite the implausibility of the loss. An example of **the black humor tactic** is evident in the phrase, “*Lemonade stands across the globe reportedly witnessed a sharp decline in sales*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). This statement humorously implies that Beyoncé’s album “*Lemonade*” influenced global lemonade sales, an implausible idea. While it



adds a comedic element, this tactic risks misleading readers by presenting frivolous claims within an informal commentary framework, blurring the distinction between humour and factual analysis.

The article also employs combinations of manipulative tactics within sentences to amplify their impact. For example, it merges **emotional appeal** with **references to authority** in the statement: “*The Beyhive, Beyoncé’s dedicated fanbase, is known for its unwavering support. Post-performance, there were murmurs that a sizable portion of this fanbase sought refunds for their lifetime membership fees. The alleged refunds amounted to a staggering \$1 billion*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). This combination leverages the credibility of Beyoncé’s fanbase to create a sense of seriousness, while the large-scale mention of \$1 billion fosters the impression of a significant issue. Readers are drawn to the situation as weighty due to the reference to an organized group with substantial social and cultural influence.

Another example is the blend of **black humor** and **tactic of hinting**, as seen in the statement: “*Lemonade stands across the globe reportedly witnessed a sharp decline in sales*”, paired with the mention of “*\$10 billion in losses*” (SpaceXMania, 2023). Here, the absurdity of the humor contrasts with the severity of the financial claim, creating a dual manipulation effect. Readers are entertained by the irony of the humor while simultaneously alarmed by the reference to immense monetary losses, making the narrative both engaging and misleading.

The article case study demonstrates how the simultaneous use of manipulative tactics can shape readers’ perceptions, obscuring the boundary between analysis and exaggeration and leaving readers oblivious to the factual basis. This blend heightens the story's impact while distorting its credibility.

### **10. Enhancing Media Literacy to Address Fake News.**

Due to its resemblance to real news and the natural reaction it elicits, fake news can influence public beliefs, preferences, and behaviors, creating an illusion of truthfulness. This phenomenon is especially relevant in modern media realities. It requires attention from academics, journalists, and citizens alike to develop strategies for identifying and preventing the spread of fake news, as some fake news may be fully or partially accurate. The perception of news can vary depending on an individual's views and attitude toward the information. It is



important to recognize that in this context, the definition of fake news may not always reflect objective reality. Instead, it must account for the individual context of perception, further complicating our understanding and efforts to combat this phenomenon.

Effective fighting against fake news requires various measures and a comprehensive approach focusing on media literacy. The challenge lies in the general population's lack of adequate media literacy, as most people cannot always distinguish between reliable sources and fake news. The main difficulty arises from the absence of clear definitions and guidelines on recognizing fake news and the insufficient dissemination of information from the expert community regarding the consequences of spreading false messages.

To address this issue, joint action is needed from leading media outlets and the state. An important step would be to develop and implement effective media education campaigns that teach the public how to recognize false information and respond appropriately. Another crucial aspect is the collaboration between experts and the media to create and disseminate high-quality materials on fake news. This could include fact-checking, publishing evidence and refutations, and strengthening professional journalistic standards.

### **11. Concluding Remarks.**

English fake news discourse is a communicative phenomenon characterized by disseminating and utilizing false, misleading information across various media platforms. Its goal is to influence public opinion, create a manipulative impression, or achieve specific objectives. This type of discourse is often marked by fabricated or distorted facts, provocative headlines, and emotional manipulation strategies to elicit the desired effect among readers.

The typological features of English fake news discourse manifest in forming and spreading false information across different genres and formats. Sensational headlines, emotional weight, the presence of fabricated or distorted facts, and the use of provocative elements – including scandalous details, controversial claims, rapid dissemination, authorship parameters, and sources—constitute the main typological characteristics of this discourse. Fake news represents an extraordinarily significant aspect of the modern information environment. Depending on its functional specificity and semantic load, it can take various forms and directions. Fake news is often employed to manipulate public opinion, create conflictual sentiments within society,



undermine trust in informational sources, or generate profit through increased traffic to specific websites. The functional specificity of fake news lies in its attempt to present itself as authentic news while disseminating disinformation.

The pragmatic aspect of English fake news discourse lies in its ability to create and disseminate false information through various communication channels and strategies. Using headlines, imagery, overall style, and psychological impact, fake news can attract attention and provoke responses from readers. However, the core strength of English fake news discourse is rooted in its strategic and tactical dimensions. This may involve discrediting opponents, manipulating public opinion, or fostering societal chaos and distrust. The primary strategy employed by fake news authors is manipulative, expressed through carefully selected tactics and techniques to influence the audience to achieve a specific result or reaction. The primary tactics that represent the manipulative strategy are the tactic of emotional appeal, the tactic of justification for the truthfulness of the narrative, the tactic of redirecting blame to others, the tactic of referencing authority, the tactic of indirect criticism, the tactic of providing inaccurate information, the tactic of hinting, the tactic of threats, and the tactic involving black humor. The tactic of emotional appeal aims to elicit specific emotions in the target audience, such as fear, guilt, sympathy, or hope. Referencing authority involves using the name or position of an authoritative figure to underscore the importance of the message or idea presented. Redirecting blame to others allows authors to deflect responsibility for specific situations or issues, altering the perception of events. Instead of directly expressing negative sentiments or opinions, manipulators may employ subtle criticism that, while less conspicuous, still influences others. Another tactic involves presenting information that may be distorted or incomplete, making it more amenable to achieving personal goals. Manipulators may use implicit signals to guide readers toward specific actions or decisions. Hints and dark humor are used in manipulative strategies to entertain and distract attention from objective facts or refutations. The above tactics are realized through the language means represented by emotive vocabulary, parenthetical constructions, conditional sentences, exclamatory sentences, rhetorical questions, metaphors, and literary devices of satire and humor. Implementing verbal tactics within the manipulative strategy psychologically impacts readers, aiming to alter their attitudes



and beliefs while misleading them. This approach effectively shapes readers' perception of information and significantly influences their cognitive processing of fake news.

The article “Just in: Beyoncé Faces Nearly \$10 Billion in Damages After Performing the ‘Black National Anthem’ in the NFL” is a vivid example of the simultaneous use of a variety of tactics: emotional appeal, justification for the truthfulness of the narrative, redirecting blame to others, referencing authority, indirect criticism, providing inaccurate information, hint, black humor. Imitating elements of professional journalism creates the illusion of credibility while avoiding responsibility for the content. This case study highlights how fake news discourse successfully exploits stylistic sophistication to manipulate public opinion. The current study emphasizes the importance of critical media literacy in counteracting the complex and sophisticated methods of information manipulation in today’s media landscape.

**Future research prospects** lie in exploring fake news discourse’s verbal and nonverbal characteristics, focusing on cross-cultural context and interdisciplinary approaches. Analyzing similar tactics across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts may uncover unique cultural elements specific to English fake news discourse. Moreover, attention to non-verbal components – such as imagery, page design, and typography – could reveal how visual and structural elements contribute to the manipulative impact of fake news discourse.

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