

## Abstract

This work deals with the issue of manipulative questions in online discourse using the example of conspiracy theorist QAnon operating on imageboards like 4chan and 8chan. Its main goals were to outline Q's narrative style of discourse, present question creation patterns, combine them into sequences, and discuss the manipulative techniques included in these questions. The work is also accompanied by a description of the sources of this discourse and its cultural and social references and borrowings. The complex theoretical apparatus of the paper was formed on the basis of linguistic considerations of questions and Critical Discourse Analysis as seen by Teun Van Dijk, and supplemented by detailed considerations of manipulation and questions from sociology, social psychology and philosophy of language.

The present work is divided into eight chapters, plus the introduction and conclusions at the end of the work. The definitional issues surrounding the topic of persuasion and manipulation, along with the theories and concepts that go along with them, are thoroughly covered in the first chapter. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of research on manipulation, in addition to linguistic approaches, it also mentions definitional considerations from, among others, the philosophy of language, psychology, sociology, rhetoric, and ethics. It also includes a description of the theoretical approach to linguistic manipulation provided by Teun Van Dijk, one of the most important theoretical foundations of the work referred to in the analysis. The first subsection captures the issue of manipulation in terms of definitions, differentiating it from related concepts such as persuasion, lying, and deception. In addition, it lists the linguistic elements that may indicate a text's persuasive or manipulative nature. The second section briefly discusses the issue of linguistic impression management, which is developed in the third and fourth sections, which discuss the rhetorical elements used in persuasive and manipulative communication, as well as the elements of ideological discourse related to manipulation, pointed out by Teun Van Dijk in the theoretical framework of his socio-cognitive understanding of discourse analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings related to ethics, truth and fortune considerations associated with linguistic manipulation, after which an overview of manipulation theories in the humanities and social sciences, particularly psychology, that complement the cognitive component of Van Dijk's approach is presented. The following section deals with contextual considerations related to the sociocognitive elements of discourse, after which the basic assumptions related to its ideological dimension are listed. Finally, the last section in this chapter outlines the

assumptions of a concept that originated in anthropology and sociology but was early adapted to the needs of linguistics, including in cognitive approaches, which is helpful in discourse analysis, i.e. the importance of linguistic framing and framing in communication, which seems to be particularly relevant to considerations of linguistic manipulation.

The second chapter, on the internet as a space for manipulation, begins with an overview of the tools and phenomena associated with this medium, which not only enables the manipulation defined in the previous chapter but also enhances it and provides complementary means to achieve the desired effects in manipulation on a mass scale as well. The section that follows deals with the role of memes in manipulation, as reflected, among other things, in the concept of memetic warfare, which is vital because imageboard communities are highly influential in the creation and spread of memes, which they see as an essential part of their communication with each other and with the rest of the internet. Section three in Chapter two mentions the importance of Alex Jones, the world's most prominent conspiracy theorist, for promoting the Q message in its early stages. Then, section four introduces another internet conspiracy theory that Jones promoted, which became the essential component of the Q's narrative, i.e., Pizzagate.

Q drew not only on conspiracy theories and figures from online fringe culture but also on numerous sources and texts from popular culture, deftly diversifying the message into at least two separate, broadly defined social groups, i.e., users who regularly used imageboards already and incoming audiences with people who became familiar with their message through other media as it became popular. They are listed in detail in Chapter four, which closes with a section on the social aspect, i.e., a discussion of the QAnon movement and the celebrities who supported it.

The fifth chapter is a theoretical recognition of questions in linguistic concepts in syntactic, semantic and pragmatic approaches. Then, based on these findings, a general approach to interrogatives in linguistics, necessary for data collection, appears, after which the phonetic and phonological features of questions that complement the argument are described. Finally, the last part of this chapter discusses the role of questions in conversation analysis, which is highly relevant as it relates directly to data analysis in the work.

Representing a kind of extension of Chapter five, Chapter six is a discussion of the, unfortunately, only tentatively outlined approach to manipulative questions in linguistics and related fields of research. This discussion, together with the previous chapter, forms the primary analytical basis for the work.

Chapter seven is a review of the methods and materials used in the work, which first describes the research objectives and research questions, then presents the type of data, the method of preparing the corpus, and its features, followed by a presentation of the method, for which critical discourse analysis was chosen as, in the opinion of the present author, the most legitimate linguistic approach to analysing this type of material and taking into account the contextual considerations described earlier. The chapter concludes with a description of the medium in which Q's communication with his audience took place, understood generally as the internet, but more specifically as imageboards.

The final chapter contains an analysis of the manipulative questions identified during coding and linked into interpretive patterns. They represent some types of questions identified in chapters five and six, but especially the larger interpretive units or fragments of the discourse of several to a dozen sentences in length, in which the questions played the central role. Some discourse elements discussed in earlier sections of the work were mentioned when necessary for analytical purposes.

The entire work closes with conclusions, including a discussion of the research questions, considerations on the possibilities of further study of the type of discourse discussed in the work and its relevance in the broader social context, as well as more general considerations about the phenomenon in question as a whole.

**Keywords:** manipulative questions, conspiracy theories, Critical Discourse Analysis, internet discourse, political discourse