

Manipulation and Power: Pragmatic Markers in Political Discourse

Abstract: The political discourse is characterized by high degree of pragmatism. When communicating some political challenges to their electorate, politicians use various manipulative social practices to evoke the desirable response. The study presents the analysis of the discursive events of the same subject matter from Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's political activities as Prime Ministers. Special attention has been given to the pragmatic markers that comprise a functional class of linguistic items which are significant for the organization and structuring of discourse. The descriptive method in researching the pragmatic markers reveals the interaction between power which, in this paper, is seen as manipulation, and discourse, which is considered to be the representation of this institutional power. The study is intended to prove that in a social context such an interaction, when skillfully exercised, leads to forming the positive image of the politician as well as it makes the social agents, his/her electorate, do what they are expected to do or think what they are wanted to think.

Introduction

In the last half of the twentieth century, some linguists drew focus toward discourse analysis as a powerful means of societal communication. In his "The Archeology of Knowledge", Michel Foucault initiated the discussion on how the "things said" might change the course of the events supposing that there is a profound relationship between power and knowledge, and together, he thought, they can be used as a form of social control through societal institutions. Using Foucault's viewpoint that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected and organized according to a certain number of procedures, the role of which is "to avert its power", we see discourse as a social construct that transmits and produces power. As Foucault puts it, each society has its regime of truth, and this truth is created by those who have the power and means of communication (Foucault 1972).

This paper is purposed to demonstrate that in the wake of the new world crisis, a far-sighted leader can obtain more power skillfully cultivating his/her image by using a thoroughly presupposed rhetoric. For this, his/her discursive self-expression may contribute to constructing their individual political reality that actually can mean power. The interrelation between power which we consider as the ability to manipulate by people's minds, and discourse, which is seen as a breeding ground to represent this institutional power, seems to be of prospective value for studying. Special emphasis is given to the analysis of the pragmatic markers that comprise the linguistic items which are significant for the organization and structuring of politicians' discourses. The pragmatic markers used by the British former Prime Ministers are viewed as the language means that can intensify the manipulative potential of their political power and contribute to influencing the audience's attitudes to the expressed ideas, as well as they secure facilitating the processes of pragmatic tenets these politicians want to be shared by their devotees.

Methodology

With all the variety of the ways of presenting the information, the main communicative functions of any communicative act are to inform, explain, persuade and cause a counter reaction. The fundamental

purpose of political communication – to manipulate an addressee's physical and intellectual activity – determines its pragmatics. A politician's challenge to affect the audience is employed through various strategies and tactics. In common terms, pragmatics studies the utterances trying to explain what someone meant by saying something on a particular occasion. This occasion serves as the discourse context that influences the audience's interpretation of that utterance. As such, the research conducts employing critical discourse analysis approach in two ways: on the one hand, the discursive act as a minimal unit that has its specific importance as a system of actions, communicative plans and strategies is taken into consideration; and on the other hand, the communicative act on the level of the utterance linguistic forms that possess some functions is considered in the aspect of the used pragmatic markers which intensify the utterance's purpose.

As the data for the research, five discursive events of the same subject matter from Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's political activities have been selected. Thereafter, this paper presents the analysis of the Prime Minister's election victory speech, the first speech as Prime Minister, the speech on the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the speech at the Conservative Party Annual Conference, and the final speech as Prime Minister.

Our research agenda lies in the task not to analyze Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's political discourses themselves but to study their speeches in the system of discourse interactions as the evidence of foisting these leaders' political interests on others.

The discursive act as a means of manipulation

Doing a good job for a politician means to accomplish specific political aims and goals, making or influencing political decisions, what actually is gathering majority support. These processes need the integration of political texts into social contexts in different communicative events like cabinet meetings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews, bureaucratic practices, official events and so on. Political discourse is essentially defined contextually, "in terms of special events or practices of which the aims, goals or functions are maybe not exclusively but at least primarily political" (Dijk 1997, 15). As such, when it is analyzed, its analysts have to trench upon the sphere of social sciences because this genre of discourse touches upon other groups, like institutions or citizens, as soon as they appear to be involved in political events. Having this in mind, scholars undertake different approaches to the analysis of the political discourse. Many, like P. Chilton (Chilton 2003), T.A. van Dijk (Dijk 2006), R. Fowler (Fowler 1979), R. Hodge and G. Kress (Hodge & Kress 1979), see political discourse as an instrument of power and ideological control, when others focus more on studying political communication and its rhetoric (Gruber 1993; Hudson 1978). But all the researchers convincingly assume a link between language, politics, social culture, and social cognition in political discourse representation, and "this excludes the talk of politicians outside of political contexts, and includes the discourse of all other groups, institutions or citizens as soon as they participate in political events" (Dijk 1997, 15). This assumption leads us to Critical Discourse Analysis approach where language is seen as a critical factor in embodying particular power. Following out the CDA tenets supposing that the language of a politician seems as a critical factor as the embodiment of particular power, this study does not limit the political discourse to the study of political texts as far as a text itself in a political context serves as a powerful means to produce particular ideology.

The discursive representation of manipulation in the British former Prime Ministers' discourse

Our investigations in the preceding chapter make us focus on the fundamental link between language, politics and social cognition in political discourse representation. As the groups of people involved in it rely on some shared beliefs rather than on their individual opinions, they willingly take part in a political event and, presumably, they are ready to be manipulated. As van Dijk proves, "both meanings and forms of political discourse variously derive from event models, or from general political representations" (van Dijk 2008, 183), the power of a politician in such an occasion, his/her moral superiority are governed by manipulative discourse convention the representation of which is practiced in a discursive act.

In this chapter a discursive manipulative act is explored by means of a social-cognitive approach by van Dijk (van Dijk 2008) when the manipulative meaning making is formed in social and political interaction. The following constituents to study the data are included into the scheme for the analysis:

- 1) emphasizing the politician's authority (i.e. superiority);
- 2) focusing on common beliefs (i.e. ideologies);
- 3) discrediting alternative views (i.e. beliefs);
- 4) appealing to the emotions (i.e. shared experience).

Thus, having the above mentioned constituents in mind, we will bring into focus the discursive events of sitting Prime Ministers of the UK: Prime Minister Boris Johnson (PM BJ), whose term started on 24 July 2019, and ended on 6 September 2022, and Prime Minister Liz Truss (PM LT) who served as PM from 6 September to 25 October 2022, in order to uncover the manipulative nature implied in their speeches.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson

In 2008 at his cameo appearance on *EastEnders* to the Conservative Party Boris Johnson remarked: "My speaking style was criticized by no less an authority than Arnold Schwarzenegger. It was a low moment, my friends, to have my rhetorical skills denounced by a monosyllabic Austrian cyborg". Since then, after so many years in politics, the critics have to work harder as Johnson's oratory style has come to a higher level. Many media outlets' and linguistic analysts' opinions when it comes to Boris Johnson's discourse, can be summarized by the following statement: "His loquaciousness is a key to his success in setting himself apart as a politician, but as he takes on the job of Prime Minister of the UK, it's quite possible it could also prove to be his downfall' and his speeches 'are certainly entertaining'" (Greer 2019). His speeches are always provocative, and he "has long spun political gold from his magniloquent tongue, using what some linguists and observers say bombastic language, esoteric vocabulary, occasional crudity and episodes of bumbling bluster" (Greer 2019).

Emphasizing the politician's authority (i.e. superiority)

Whatever the event is, Boris Johnson arrives at it projecting his individualism and confidence in moving beyond the ideas of 'leveling up' and finding a way towards setting out his plans. No doubt that these plans are governed by the Conservatives and inseparable from the party's political principles. But still the leader is intent on proving his individual role in providing the party ideas. He is switching back and forth between the pronouns 'I' and 'we' when keeping mentioning some prominent achievements, events and ideas having been his PM's initiatives and their results.

Johnson's longest speech at the Conservative Party Annual Conference in Manchester in October 2021 has the biggest number of the utterances that emphasize his mission to 'level up' the UK, which he described as "one of the most imbalanced societies and lop-sided economies of all the richer countries" (3). The biggest number in exempla can be explained not only by the speech timeline, but mainly by the pragmatic intention of Prime Minister Johnson to show his fellow party members that he's still a powerful and capable Tory.

(...) I'll tell you what leveling up is. A few years ago, they started a school not far from the Olympic Park. A new school anyone could send their kids to in an area that for decades has been one of the most disadvantaged in London. That school is Brampton Manor Academy, and it now sends more kids to Oxbridge than Eton. If you want proof of what I mean by unleashing potential and by leveling up, look at Brampton Manor. We can do it. (3).

Obviously the study of the first constituent proves that Boris Johnson, being in a position of power, wants to prioritize the domains of 'his politics' emphasizing on his PM's superiority in such issues as Brexit, adversarial relationship with EU, battling against COVID, the National Health System reforming and social welfare improvement. Whether PM Johnson's achievements and failures do good or bad for the UK's stability and development remains to be seen, but it is Boris Johnson's commitment to fight for his future in the British establishment that is clearly manifested as it was stated in his first speech as Prime Minister: "We (implied I, Boris Johnson) in this government will work flat out to give this country the leadership it deserves" (1).

Focusing on common beliefs (i.e. ideology)

This constituent is based on the assumption that the agents of the communication, both the speaker and the audience, have the same knowledge about political realities and the shared common 'public opinion' on them. In this case manipulation by guiding a strategically built communication is by and large possible. Like that, in his election victory speech Johnson appeals to his votership as to "*one-nation Conservatives for the first time*" and keeps mentioning the party's (=his) policy promises:

(...) *And we will deliver a long-term NHS budget enshrined in law, 650 million pounds extra every week, health secretary. And all the other priorities that you, the people of this country, voted for. Record spending on schools, an Australian-style points-based immigration system, more police, how many? Colossal new investments in infrastructure, in science, using our incredible technological advantages to make this country the cleanest, greenest on earth with the most far-reaching environmental programme. And you the people of this country voted to be carbon neutral in this election. You voted to be carbon neutral by 2050 and we will do it. You also voted to be Corbyn neutral by Christmas by the way and we'll do that too* (1).

In his first speech as PM he focuses more on his domestic policy promises, the main of which was improving the broken social care system. By this, he assures both his supporters within the party and his voters that as PM he is aimed not only at completing the job of leaving the EU but also will deal with many internal problems. In such a way, new PM tries to neutralize the ones that are less enthusiastic about Brexit and to spirit the rejoined voters. He uses anaphoric repetition of the structure '*My job is*' to emphasize on his premiership in providing people with the needed public goods.

(...) *My job is to serve you, the people because if there is one point we politicians need to remember it is that the people are our bosses. My job is to make your streets safer - and we are going to begin with another 20,000 police on the streets and we start recruiting forthwith. My job is to make sure you don't*

have to wait 3 weeks to see your GP and we start work this week with 20 new hospital upgrades, and ensuring that money for the NHS really does get to the front line. *My job is to protect you or your parents or grandparents from the fear of having to sell your home to pay for the costs of care* (2).

As the targeted audience at the Conservative Party Annual Conference in Manchester in 2021 was Boris Johnson's fellow party members, he appeals to the ideals that are robust for the majority of them: *one-nation conservatism, Thatcherism, and traditionalist conservatives*. So, mentioning their outstanding fellow member Margaret Thatcher, her PM's iron-style, and social care values is quite an often-used tactic in Johnson's discourse. "Citing the former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is usually a guaranteed way at Conservative conference to get a rip-roaring round of applause" (Allegretti 2021), and Boris Johnson reached for that as he tried to defend raising national insurance to pay for getting through the NHS backlog and social care.

In PM's final speech Johnson's manipulative tactics are directed on persistent mentioning of his main 'battlefields', the ones where he wants to be remembered as the key agent, as The Guardian wrote in its review: "...From the COVID vaccine rollout to his stance against Russia, outgoing PM was keen to cement his legacy..." and "...Like Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminator giving a thumbs up as he slides into molten steel, Johnson painted a bright picture of the country he is leaving behind" (Grierson 2022). Even after having had *the Partygate scandal*, he took to "repeating the vaccine mantra" (Grierson 2022) to maintain attention to the COVID vaccine programme in the UK as his success story.

(...) The people who got Brexit done, the people who delivered the fastest vaccine rollout in Europe – and never forget 70% of the entire population got a dose within six months, faster than any comparable country (3).

Initiating a range of economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance to Ukraine when doing Prime Minister's duty, Boris Johnson made the resistance to Russia his personal credo: it used to be his strong record in office as well as it is a positive feature of his human spirit. Throwing in his support for Ukraine both individually and institutionally, inveighing to impose additional sanctions on Russia and Belarus, he uses the universal truth about the good and the evil when, in his discourse, he keeps realizing the persuasive tactic that is based on every individual's intention to live in peace, not at war.

(...) And if Putin thinks he can succeed by blackmailing or bullying the British people then he is utterly deluded (4).

(...) We are joined in our outrage by friends and allies around the world. We will work with them – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine is restored because this act of wanton and reckless aggression is an attack not just on Ukraine. It is an attack on democracy and freedom in East Europe and around the world. This crisis is about the right of a free, sovereign independent European people to choose their own future and that is a right that the UK will always defend (5).

Relying on the quantity of the examples that prove the manipulative meaning making based on common ideological beliefs in PM Boris Johnson's political interaction, it is found that all the four speeches have very little of the constituent use (actually, two examples each). Not to say that about Boris Johnson's speech at the Conservative Party Annual Conference in Manchester in 2021. It shows the largest number of the constituent use (13 respectively), and it may stand for the fact that the more the targeted audience is politically aware, the better the speaker's skill to manipulate its public opinion must be.

Discrediting alternative views (i.e. beliefs)

The tactic of discrediting political opponents is one of the often used ones in the political discourse as the ideological polarization is a quick way to show the contrast and bring your positive deeds to front. Notwithstanding his personal levels of popularity, Boris Johnson takes advantage of the growing disdain for his ideological opponents and uses every opportunity to clearly position certain opponents or their policies as unconventional. He imposes this way of communication on his audience quite often, and the manipulative aspect of such discursive acts manifests his desire to set his agendas in which his political position seems far-reaching.

Going back to PM Johnson's speech at the Conservative Party Annual Conference in Manchester, it tallies nine illustrations of discrediting alternative views. Of course, for this precious audience that perfectly well realizes the political challenges of the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson has to keep highlighting his victories. He does that quite skillfully using exaggerated metaphors, allusions, prop words, periphrases and sometimes the language he uses may seem abusive. In his first lines of his Annual Conference speech, Johnson refers to his rally opponent *Jeremy Corbyn* and calls him "corduroy communist cosmonaut" sending him "into orbit where he belongs" meaning the last election:

(...) And the first time since so many of you worked to defy the skeptics by winning councils and communities that Conservatives have never won in before, such as Hartlepool. And in fact, it's the first time since the general election of 2019, when we finally sent that corduroy communist cosmonaut into orbit, where he belongs (3).

From such a perspective, PM Boris Johnson demonstrates himself as a radical politician and a fierce fighter for his party's ideas and plans. The politician skillfully hides the complex processes of his individual opposition exposing the drawbacks and failures of his rivals and generates his own narrative to influence the minds of his political cohort.

Appealing to the emotions (i.e. shared experience)

Emotions enable people to feel empathy and remain true to their most deeply held values and attitudes. They can stir people up in the most difficult times or change the routine behavior to abandon your habitual commitments. The most emotional experiences keep the central importance in memory, evaluation, judgment, and action.

Hardly any doubts exist on the opinion that Johnson's both verbal and non-verbal styles of communication are indeed highly impressive. The audience of the discursive events under analysis is highly receptive, as PM Johnson is surrounded by his adamant supporters and reliable allies, so the most pervasive common-sense notion of all his speeches is appealing to the audience's feelings as if to the real actors of the political events. What events in the current life of Great Britain can evoke a deep response? Obviously, the fight on Brexit and the after COVID-19 distress are the two long-run adjustments under PM Johnson's leadership. So, in all the analyzed speeches this or that reference to these two events can be found:

(...) You've been paying attention. Because this election means that getting Brexit done is now the irrefutable, irresistible, unarguable decision of the British people (1).

(...) When this country was sick, our NHS was the nurse. Frontline healthcare workers battled against a new disease, selflessly risking their lives, sacrificing their lives. And it is right that this party – that has looked after the NHS for most of its history – should be the one to rise to the challenge (3).

In his speech to his Conservative party fellows, Johnson wants to be praised for his actions in the light of COVID and he effectively demonstrates his responsibility illustrating it numerically for to deepen the efficacy and play on the audience's apprehension. PM Johnson even recalls his own personal experience being hospitalised with Covid in March 2020. In such a way Johnson wants to show that he had an emotional connection with everyone who had survived COVID. While doing that he resorts to a very expressive metaphor 'a hole' that in his imagination is the enemy to have been defeated and that have also been his personal fight.

(...) When I was lying in St. Thomas' Hospital last year, I looked bleakly out of my window at a hole in the ground between the ICU and another much older Victorian section. And amid the rubble of brick, they seemed to be digging a hole for someone or something, or indeed someone, possibly me. But the NHS saved me and our wonderful nurses pulled my chestnuts out of that Tartarian pit. And I went back on a visit the other day, and I saw that the hole had been filled in with three or four gleaming stories of a new pediatrics unit. And there you have a metaphor my friends for how we must build back better now. We have a huge hole in the public finances. We spent 407 billion pounds on COVID support and our debt now stands at over 2 trillion pounds. And waiting lists will almost certainly go up before they come down (4).

Using the shared difficulties of the British society in the worst days of COVID period, playing with the negative aspects of the EU and speculating about the inner problems, Boris Johnson thoroughly selects the topics in his discourse showing off his leadership, positioning his 'self' in specific political processes and making enthusiastic assumptions for the future of Great Britain.

Immediately after the Russian Federation attacked Ukraine on 24 February 2022, PM Boris Johnson addressed the British nation. He was unusually calm and less emotional, he sounded firm and confident. In his first lines he certifies all the British people that their country is strong enough to counter any aggression and to share the Ukrainian battle for independence:

The PM has vowed to hit Russia with a 'massive' package of sanctions designed to "*hobble*" Moscow's economy after Vladimir Putin's "*vast invasion*" of Ukraine "*by land, sea and air*" to define "*the clear mission*" of the UK and its allies as the victorious one.

(...) Diplomatically, politically, economically and – eventually – militarily, this hideous and barbaric venture of Vladimir Putin must end in failure (5).

Sharp, non-metaphorical epithets, reference to all public domains and mentioning the allies around make every common person in the alarm time believe: I am not alone, the truth will triumph and my government will defend me and my home. "We", said the Prime Minister Johnson, "– and the world – cannot allow that freedom just to be snuffed out. We cannot and will not just look away" (5).

Prime Minister Liz Truss

In a series of the Conservative Party leaders Mary Elizabeth Truss will be remembered as the shortest-serving prime minister in the history of the United Kingdom: on her fiftieth day in office, on 25 October 2022, she stepped down amid a government crisis. Before the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union in 2016, Liz Truss wrote an article for The Sun in which she warned that Brexit would be "a triple tragedy – more rules, more forms and more delays when selling to the EU" (Quinn 2022). But not long after that, her rebirth as a Brexit ultra gave her a chance to be included into the list of Boris Johnson's loyal supporters and that opened the door to her leadership race. She was kept being posed in comparisons to Margaret Thatcher and her campaign included the announcement of a proposed

package of tax cuts amounting to about £30bn. So, in September 2022 Liz Truss won the ruling Conservative Party's leadership contest and became Britain's new prime minister after replacing Boris Johnson.

Emphasizing the politician's authority (i.e. superiority)

The beginning of PM Truss's election victory speech was full of gratitude and acknowledgement, first of all, to the Conservative Party Committee, the policy chairman, then to her family, friends, political colleagues, and, at the end, to her fellow candidate, Rishi Sunak. The political forerunner, Boris Johnson, "our outgoing leader", as she called him, was thanked the last. This speech was scarce of examples of Truss's personal authority as the new leader kept posing herself as a part of "*our great Conservative party, the greatest political party on Earth*". The only emphasis, or just a mention, to her role in the party can be heard in the following statement: "*And as your party leader, I intend to deliver what we promised those voters right across our great country*" (6) followed by the future PM's favourite word 'deliver', being repeatedly mentioned with some obscure promises:

(...) My friends, we need to show that *we will deliver* over the next two years. *I will deliver* a bold plan to cut taxes and grow our economy. *I will deliver* on the energy crisis, dealing with people's energy bills, but also dealing with the long term issues we have on energy supply. And *I will deliver* on the National Health Service.

The same presentations of herself as just a member of "a great team" are being observed in all Truss's speeches under analysis – even at the Annual Party Conference, which is considered to the main political stage to promote ambitions, her speech was short on new ideas or policies.

Trying to be hidden behind the pronouns 'we' and 'our', generously rewarding her party and colleagues with praising epithets, repeating such generally used phrases as '*I know, I remember, I can't afford...*', the only challenge in her first speech as PM "This is our vital mission to ensure opportunity and prosperity for all people and future generations. I am determined to deliver" (8), Liz Truss chose such a manipulative tactics that gives her some space not to bear her personal responsibility for the decisions that are to be made and for the political actions that are to be done under her leadership in a difficult time for the British economy. Even her statement on the day of her election victory "I have three priorities for our economy: growth, growth and growth", inspired little confidence in her firm leadership as PM, and some of her fellow members, and many of the British voters, saw her as a leader without a plan.

Moreover, it seemed that many observers see the difference between PM Truss's emphasis on positioning herself as the self-styled heiress to Margaret Thatcher and the political actions she declares like she will not be there to "hand out subsidies" and does not view the economy through "the prism of redistribution" (8).

So, whatever be the tone of the PM, it's too weak to manipulate her superiority in political power and even her fellow party members suspect that little trust had Liz Truss in her own self.

Focusing on common beliefs (i.e. ideologies)

Having taken on leadership of the Conservative Party in the grip of an economic, social, energy and political crisis, Liz Truss focused on few, but main promises that she proposed both to her party fellows and her voters: fewer taxes, less government, less Europe. These new PM's propositions relate to dome her future action regarding Britain and its economy and, consequently, the life of common Britons. So, the target domains as '*country, economy and person*' are often found in her speeches when she tries

to place emphasis on the ideological pillars of her party and point out their utmost importance. For instance, at the Annual Party Conference Liz Truss started her speech praising the deeds of Tory mayors – *Andy Street of Birmingham and Ben Houchen of Teesside* – to make the evident conclusion for every Tory member: “This is what modern Conservatism looks like” (8):

(...) My friends, this is what a city with a Tory Mayor looks like – it’s positive, it’s enterprising, it’s successful. And Andy Street is a human dynamo, delivering for the people of Birmingham. And our Teesside Mayor Ben Houchen is also delivering new jobs and investment (8).

Actually, the manifestation of common beliefs in order to manipulate the Tory’s ideologies is available only in Truss’s Annual Party speech when she refers again to the common beliefs of people and vaguely promises again *‘to deliver’* in the name of people and “our great country” trying to seek the Tories’ faith in her governance hall as she was elected, first of all, as “a cutter of taxes and slasher of regulations” (“Liz Truss and the Gap between Ideology and Reality” 2022), in what she still keeps the faith.

(...) High taxes mean you feel it’s less worthwhile working that extra hour, going for a better job or setting up your own business. That, my friends, is why we are cutting taxes. We have already cut Stamp Duty, helping people on the housing ladder – especially first-time buyers. We are reversing the increase in National Insurance from next month. We are keeping corporation tax at 19%, the lowest in the G20. We are helping 31 million working people by cutting the basic rate of income tax. We need to be internationally competitive, with all our tax rates attracting the best talent (8).

More declaring slogans, few realized facts deepen the gap between Liz Truss’s ideology and a bleak reality. It looks like saying that you are all about free enterprise and economic growth is easy but delivering it is much more difficult, and this was where Truss’s political superiority was fragile.

Discrediting alternative views (i.e. beliefs)

Interestingly, in any of her speeches Liz Truss has been keen to avoid attacking her opponents. The only exception is her Conservative Party Annual Conference speech when she couldn’t escape criticizing because her party fellows expected her to do that. But PM Truss did that in her own way: she repeatedly called her opposition *“the anti-growth coalition”*, and this term could imply all political powers who oppose the Tories’ policy like Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party, militant unions, think-tanks, Brexit deniers, Extinction Rebellion and the Greenpeace climate activists. Even her followers were dissatisfied with such a frugal term for the opposing parties.

(...) Now later on in my speech my friends I am going to talk about the anti-growth coalition. But I think they arrived in the hall a bit too early, they were meant to come later on (8).

Bringing in the fact that the party leader Truss mentioned her opponents only 3 times (compared to Johnson’s 9 times!) during the conference – the main political event for the Tories – is to prove that the positioned-herself-as-a-new-iron-lady PM Truss had failed.

Conclusions

The current study brings into focus the political discourse of two Prime Ministers of the UK, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, conducting a descriptive qualitative method and a social-cognitive approach which we apply to understand the expressive force of their manipulative techniques relevant to successful persuasion. The manipulation can thrive among targeted audiences, and such discursive events seem to be the easier platforms to manipulate political power. To prove this supposition, five discursive events

of sitting Prime Ministers of the UK of the same subject-matter, which we consider as discursive manipulative acts, are chosen for the analysis. Four specific areas relevant to successful persuasion in these acts were identified: first, how the politician emphasizes superiority through his politician's authority; second, in what way he/she focuses on common beliefs to impose his/her ideology; third, the manner they try to discredit alternative views of their opponents; fourth, the degree they appeal to the emotions of the audience and use the shared experience to manipulate.

Table 3 shows the numerical composition of the constituents found in the analytic data.

Table 3. Comparative Quantitative analysis of the manipulative nature implied in Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's speeches as sitting PMs

DISCURSIVE EVENT	Speech timeline		MANIPULATIVE FORMING CONSTITUENT							
	Boris Johnson (BJ)	Liz Truss (LT)	Emphasizing the politician's authority (i.e. superiority)		Focusing on common beliefsee (i.e. ideologies)		Discrediting alternative views (i.e. beliefs)		Appealing to the emotions (i.e. shared experience)	
			BJ	LT	BJ	LT	BJ	LT	BJ	LT
PM's election victory speech	~ 7 min.	~ 7 min.	6	2	2	2	1	0	2	0
First speech as PM	~ 12 min.	~ 4 min.	5	2	4	2	3	0	2	4
PM's speech at the Conservative Party Annual Conference in Manchester	~ 40 min.	~ 35 min.	11	4	13	7	9	3	19	12
PM's final speech	~ 8 min.	~ 3 min.	5	0	4	1	0	0	1	0
PM's speech on the Russian aggression against Ukraine	~ 4 min.	~ 4 min.	1	0	2	2	1	1	7	2

A closer look at the manipulative constituents reveals that the discursive manipulation of the PMs seems to include two rather different kinds of tactics.

Boris Johnson: PM Johnson keeps skillfully taking to the accentuation of his personal activities in the Conservative party's policy, showing superiority; rather often he negatively evaluates his opponents, sometimes, in an offensive way; he involves emotional appeals, providing details of his arguments and emphasizing their power. These findings prove a big impact on the audience in regards towards the messages that are to be taken into accounts by public, as well as they help the politician to make half-truths, falsehoods or vagueness unnoticeable. Boris Johnson's discourse is characterized by metaphorical and hyperbolical utterances that undoubtedly switch the audience into the perceptive mode of the thing uttered. Johnson's discursive domains, his personal 'I', '*British people*' ('*the will of the people*') and

'Brexit' are the areas of focus, giving the Conservative Party a side place. Many commentators have noted carelessness with the facts he mentions and lack of care for the truth he publicizes, but still his appeals cause response and popularity within the part of the British society. Apparent is in the fact that the more supportive the targeted audience, the bigger the response is. We consider not less important the following two issues: having Winston Churchill as his role model and having had his highly-paid career in journalism before entering politics make every of Boris Johnson's speeches "A master class in getting people to eat out of his hand without knowing what they are eating" (Allegretti 2021).

Liz Truss: The comparative duration of Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's speeches shows the approximate equality of three speeches, but the first and the final Truss's speeches as PM are much shorter than the ones of Boris Johnson's. This fact seems to be important as the success of these discursive events totally lays on the two manipulative strategies – emphasizing the politician's authority and focusing on common ideological beliefs – the ones that PM Truss was not good at, as the figures of Table 3 show. When Truss became the Prime Minister, she was blamed for not having a clear-cut plan for the tenure of the prime-minister, and it was clear not only for her opponents, but also for some of her party fellows that her main campaign message "*the tax-cutting pledge*" as well as her resistance to any contrary views on the problem could cause her Cabinet immediate problems. Although, in her first speech as PM she talked about her "*three early priorities*" as Prime Minister to "*pursue*", those priorities were just general catchwords and had rather vague prospects to have been pursued ("Liz Truss and the Gap between Ideology and Reality" 2022; Singh 2023).

The statistic data of Table 3 show that quite emotional was Liz Truss's Party Conference speech in which she took to emotionalizing her arguments seemingly having more credibility among the Tory membership but the arguments could hardly be called irrefutable proofs of her superiority in the Party. PM Truss's target domains are '*country*', '*economy*' and '*world*', that often go with the combination of the process of '*building*', '*creating*' and '*delivering*' like the ways she would like to improve the current state of the British society, seem weak challenges to follow as the speaker tends to use the pronoun '*we*' as if shifting off the responsibility for the upcoming results. PM Truss's discourse is characterized by very scarce figurative language, little positive self-presentation and rather rare and mild accusations of her opponents make the analyzed discursive events as losing battles.

Those who chose the path of political life are doomed to lead a non-stop struggle for power to gain attention, to persuade the audience and to fight against the opponents. Following Aristotle's two general types of persuasive proofs as '*artistic*' and '*non-artistic*', we admit that the scope of the present study leaves gaps as for manipulation and power, regarding the psychological effects of manipulation and non-verbal tools of Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's communication. But it is glaringly obvious that PM Boris Johnson belongs to the first type of Aristotle's classification while Liz Truss goes to the second. And another question to be solved arises: which is better for manipulation in power: to be emotionally stable or extravert-assertive? Or the answer lies in the strict result of living up to one's promises?

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Supporting data

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