

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

## Practical Steps to Overcome Verbal Manipulation within Intercultural Foreign Language Education

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### Abstract

The article reports on the study of verbal manipulation realized in mass-media discourse as a specific case of intercultural communication. It deals with the preparation of a new generation of intercultural communicants with new skills, ready to interact in the situation of manipulative influence realized by a partner of intercultural communication. The authors give some practical steps that can be implemented into a coursebook of teaching intercultural communication or media-communication in foreign-language university. The following idea is illustrated in the work: overcoming verbal manipulation within mass-media discourse can be achieved by transforming manipulative communicative strategy of foreign-language partner into conventional one by intercultural communicant. Formation of conventional (sub)competence identified by the authors in intercultural communicative competence can be realized within specific steps of communicative strategy of convention: 1) Identification of verbal manipulation; 2) Interpretation of verbal manipulation; 3) Comprehension of own position within manipulative influence; 4) Introspection of communicative behavior while intercultural communication in the situation of verbal manipulation.

*Keywords:* Conventional (sub)competence, intercultural communicative competence, verbal manipulation.

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### Introduction

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At present, intercultural approach as a dominant of modern paradigm in FLT plays a crucial role and establishes the methodological basis for scientific research in modern linguadidactics (Griffith et al., 2016; Baroudi, 2017; Tareva, 2017; Flyantikova & Cherkes, 2019). Intercultural dialogue is defined as “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse worldviews and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other” (Council of Europe, 2008, section 3.1). Thus, at the time of all-round globalization the question of dealing with verbal manipulation within intercultural communication is considered as one of the main scientific fields due to its destructive effect that endangers interaction of communicative partners (Goncharova & Levina, 2020). In this regard, new methods of teaching intercultural communication are being searched for the effectiveness in training students to overcome verbal manipulation while intercultural dialogue.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

In the process of teaching foreign language intercultural communication, the ability to interact effectively with intercultural communicant is developed. Trusting the findings, it is mass-media discourse which comes closest to mediate interculturally processed verbal manipulation. Thus, intercultural foreign language education faces the issue of destructive effect of verbal manipulation realized in mass-media discourse. Therefore, the article gives some practical steps to form a new ability to overcome verbal manipulation in the course of intercultural communication that can be implemented into a coursebook aimed at teaching intercultural communication or media-communication in foreign-language university. The ultimate goal is to represent the teaching procedure with certain activities, specially created for the above stated purpose.

### **Literature review**

A body of research on intercultural communication reached consistent findings in the following studies: intercultural communication (Peeters, 2013; Cranmer, 2015); integrating culture into EFL teaching (Allo, 2018; Ahmed, 2019 & al.), intercultural communicative competence of students as an essential part of their professional, social and personal development (Cetinavci, 2012; Tareva & Budnik, 2013; Galante, 2015;

Wilberschied, 2015; Meshcheryakova et al., 2016; Bryxina & Polyakov, 2020; Budnik et al., 2020), development of cross-cultural communication competence in the course of modular technology (Kazantseva et al., 2020), a student as an object of intercultural foreign-language education and his ability to communicate on the intercultural level (Yazykova, 2009; Tareva & Budnik, 2013; Collier, 2015); principles of teaching foreign language (Brown, 2014); basics of intercultural communication (Romanowski, 2017; Chong, 2020; Martin & Nakayama, 2021). The aspects of teaching intercultural communication are implemented into the textbooks aimed at teaching students to interact effectively with foreign-language partners (Grushevitskaya & al., 2003; Taratuhina & al., 2016).

Thus, the tendency to use the “soft power” (Nye, 2017; Tareva & Tarev, 2017), manipulative influence realized through a set of the means of verbal manipulation (communicative strategies and tactics) (Ardianto, 2016; Amin, 2017; Kárpáti, 2017; Levina, 2018, 2019; Mullan & Beal, 2013) highlights a compelling reason to adopt the phenomenon of verbal manipulation into the system of teaching intercultural communication.

The study raised the following questions:

- 1) What is known about the role of verbal manipulation in intercultural communication and is it considered in present-day linguadidactics?
- 2) How can a problem of verbal manipulation be implemented in the framework of interculturally-oriented foreign language teaching?
- 3) How teaching to overcome verbal manipulation can be operated in activities in ELT classroom and what activities these should be?

In this regard, we can formulate a problem: how can a problem-forming phenomenon of verbal manipulation be integrated into a practical course of intercultural teaching of foreign languages to be overcome.

## **Methodology**

The following methods have been used to conduct the research and fulfill above-mentioned tasks: the analysis of scientific articles (theory and practice of teaching intercultural communication), the publications devoted to the studied problem of verbal manipulation, media-texts (BBC NEWS, Guardian, Telegraph, etc.) devoted to the topic of the article and modelling practical steps of overcoming verbal manipulation within intercultural communication.

## Results

From the position of E.G. Tareva, “the ability to participate in the dialogue of cultures is affirmed as competence-based objective of foreign language teaching (competence-based and intercultural approaches)” (Tareva, 2017). There is no doubt that intercultural communicant should be “ready to interact with a foreigner on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of differences and peculiarities of his culture and capable of simultaneous rethinking, comprehension of his national cultural identity, being able to assess it from the point of view of a foreign communication partner” (Tareva & Tarev, 2020). Thus, the influence of mass-media that is characterized by its translation of disparity of cultures, linguistic imperialism, etc. (Goncharova & Levina, 2020) while intercultural communication determines the necessity of a learner to maneuver in the world of manipulative intervention. We arrived at understanding that verbal manipulation within intercultural communication can be defined as a communicative manipulative space in the frames of which the speaker (an intercultural partner) tends to realize one’s hidden implicit influence through manipulative communicative strategies and tactics (linguistic and extralinguistic means) to change cultural values of the listener (Levina, 2018, pp. 428-429).

At present, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is determined as “a cluster of capabilities that will become even more essential, not only to negotiate borders of many dimensions as globalization proceeds, but also to enhance the ability to maneuver one’s way in a world that changes by the minute” (Wilberschied, 2015, p.1). Therefore, from the position of the situation of manipulative influence within intercultural foreign-language education ICC is seen as the ability to interact on the intercultural level, in particular to critically comprehend the other culture, interpret differences and similarities of own and other cultures, learn the peculiarities of the other communicative behaviour (without loss of own identity) in the situations of implicit communicative influence realized by a foreign language partner.

The consideration of ICC within the situation of manipulative influence helped us identify in its competence content (linguistic, socio-linguistic, strategic, discourse, socio-cultural, social, professional and self-developmental) (van Ek, 1993; Elizarova, 2002; Dikova, 2013; Kifik, 2012) **conventional (sub)component**. It is significant that conventional (sub)competence is seen in the content of the strategic competence of ICC with its top priority for realization of communicative strategy of convention that “allows to hold a commonly accepted, agreed upon and tolerant dialogue, with the communicative space being explicit for both partners of intercultural communication” (Goncharova & Levina, 2020, pp. 181). In other words, we highlight the rationale that it is precisely convention (as a unique strategy to build rapport in human relationships) which can “fight” and overcome manipulation (as a strategy to distract, abuse that rapport). Therefore, the process of formation of conventional (sub)competence is gradually implemented

within the following steps of communicative strategy of convention: 1) Identification of verbal manipulation; 2) Interpretation of verbal manipulation; 3) Comprehension of own position within manipulative influence; 4) Introspection of communicative behavior while intercultural communication in the situation of verbal manipulation (see figure 1).

The most productive and effective way to teach intercultural communication within manipulative influence is to work with a variety of authentic mass-media texts chosen in the frames of the following criteria: modern, up-to-date texts within the topic about Russia, Russian political, economic situation, etc. and manipulative content, with the level of the English language appropriate to the students of foreign-language university, etc.

**At the initial stage of work (step 0)** – additional step to the above-mentioned steps of communicative strategy of convention) students should learn the main notions of the course (for example: verbal manipulation, communicative strategy, tactics, etc.). Firstly, they define their deficit in knowledge while discussing the questions below with their teacher. For example: “What are the features of effective communication? What does intercultural communication mean? What are the reasons for communicative failure? etc.” Secondly, they work with scientific material while reading studies in the English language / watching webinars to replenish the gaps in their knowledge. For example: “Scan this abstract from the following article “Linguistic manipulation: definition and types”. What will this article be about? Draw your own verbal manipulation mind map with new notions (from the article) in your learner’s book; follow the instructions. Find some definitions of new notions in the article; complete the table in your self-guidance book”.

**At the stage of identification of verbal manipulation (step 1)** they complete the table while identifying some main features of mass-media text to be aware of its hidden content, then try to identify manipulative strategies and tactics using the table of Instruments of verbal manipulation (for example: linguistic means (metaphor, metonymy) → strategy of manipulative accent → tactics of discredit), try to comprehend what they feel facing verbal manipulation in the texts, describe their first emotions and first reaction towards intercultural partner, etc. While performing all above-mentioned tasks students either work independently or in small / big groups to discuss their first experience of dealing with verbal manipulation.

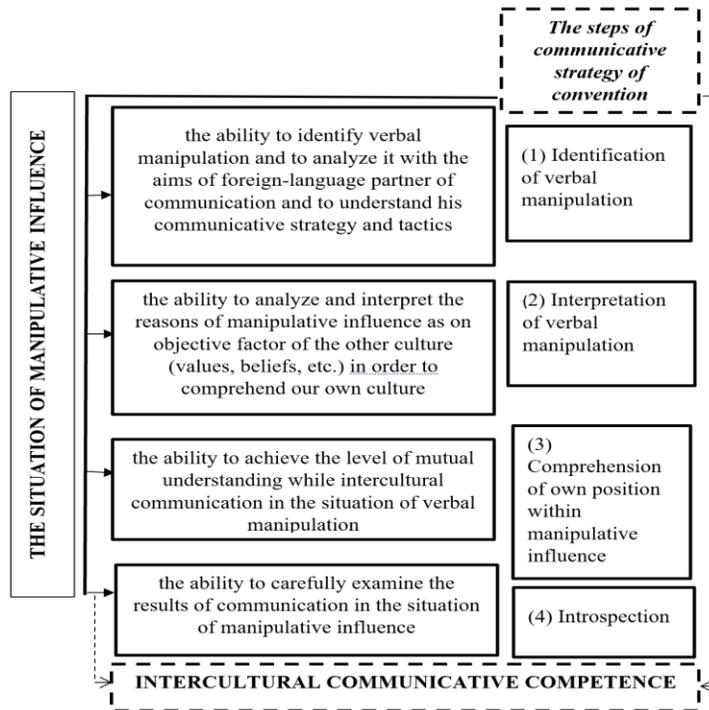


Figure 1. Descriptors of conventional (sub)competence in the context of the steps of realization of communicative strategy of convention

At the next stage of **interpretation of verbal manipulation (step 2)** learners try to decode pragmatic aims and motives of their partner and comprehend him / her while hypothetically taking his / her place in the situation of intercultural manipulative communication. It is significant that step 2 includes the case-study to immerse into the situation of intercultural communication. For example: “Answer the following questions: Does being manipulated depend on one’s right interpretation? What are the factors that affect your being manipulated? Can you think of what false manipulation means? Join your partner and brainstorm these issues. Watch the video “Why does body language tell us about the Trump-Putin G20 meeting?” Make sure you get the message from the video; share your vision with your partner so as to decide on the main idea the video provides. Watch the video again if it is necessary and discuss with your partner the questions below:

- 1) What are the speaker’s goals? What this video is made for? For whom?
- 2) What are the speaker’s reasons and motives?
- 3) What are the differences in the body language of Trump and Putin? Do they have anything in

common (concerning their body language)? Why?

- 4) How does their body language influence the audience?
- 5) How does the speaker's own opinion (concerning Trump and Putin's body language) influence your attitude towards the USA / Russia / political representatives of both countries? What makes you think so?
- 6) Have you got any negative feelings after watching this video? Why? Comment on your answer.
- 7) Do you feel / think being manipulated somehow? What is it?

Decide if the case of verbal manipulation is present and identify linguistic / extralinguistic means to help identify verbal manipulation. Identify manipulative strategies and tactics; complete the table of Verbal Manipulation Identification in your self-guidance book. Share your ideas with your partner; make sure you both arrive at the same vision. Join another pair (work in groups of four) and discuss the questions below:

- 1) What is a cultural value / belief? How does it influence somebody's attitude towards your culture / nation?
- 2) What is a national cultural stereotype? Why do national cultural stereotypes have any destructive effect on the process of intercultural communication?
- 3) What should we consider while intercultural communication?
- 4) Is there any chance the text under study can be misinterpreted due to wrong understanding or stereotypes? Precise your ideas.

Do some additional reading to make sure you know enough about the values and beliefs of American and Russian cultures (distribute roles between your partners for everyone to get one's individual loan of study). Share your insights after reading within your small group. Revisit the video and find proofs for your insights (look for cultural values the message you derive from it could be conditioned by). Make a pause and decide if your feelings about the video have changed due to better understanding of the speaker's motives; take notes in your self-guidance book. Summarize in what way and for what reason your perception and reaction to the video have changed; share this within the whole group.

Reflect on your text's perception in the frames of your personal attitude towards the speaker; take notes in your self-guidance book.

Then on the basis of the above-mentioned case students create their own ones, exchange with another group and discuss to identify and interpret verbal manipulation.

**At the step 3 (comprehension of own position within manipulative influence)** potential intercultural communicants tend to comprehend their own position within manipulative influence in order to overcome verbal manipulation while real situation of intercultural communication by establishing conventional relationships instead of manipulative ones. For example: “Read the text. Identify the case of manipulation, if any exist. Join your partner and brainstorm possible cultural motives (values, stereotypes, intentions) which lie behind the case (add any new features of the speaker to your bubble network). Pose a question (see the Model first) to the imaginary speaker to uncover those motives behind verbal manipulation. Let your question get answered by your speech partner. Reflect on your work in your self-guidance book. Model: What’s the idea of democracy the British stand upon? Does Russia have a reputation of being a “proper” democratic state? Why not? What is their concern about Russian democracy motivated by?”

It is necessary to perform a game as simulation of intercultural manipulative communication aimed at motivating students to comprehend their ability and readiness to interact with intercultural communicant within manipulative influence. For example: “Read the following information (situation description / roles / additional materials). Get ready to perform your roles making your characters “real” (try to add character, some peculiarities to their image). Role-play the situation. Situation: an improvised talk-show room. The topic under discussion is the cyber-attacks in the USA organized by the Russian students. The talk-show is to debate the issue and the problem within so as to finally arrive at some conclusion, common for everyone to reflect on intercultural communication”. Students get their own role-cards and follow the instructions. Finally, learners discuss their role while intercultural communication and within manipulative influence.

**At the step 4 (introspection of communicative behavior)** it is advisable to perform introspection work of students’ communicative behavior within all tasks to project their future intercultural manipulative-free communication. Final tasks are aimed at generalization and individual analysis of their perception of the situation of manipulative influence. Students demonstrate their ability to effectively communicate within verbal manipulation by their work with a mass-media text. They need to perform all above-mentioned steps individually. For example: “Work individually to be prepared for the further work with the text below; answer the following questions: What responsibilities have you got for effective intercultural communication? Are you a passive victim of your own illusions / other cultural national views? Are there any factors that can affect you being manipulated? What emotions towards the speaker do you still find difficult to put up with? Reflect on your speaker’s perception. What are your answers? Do you feel free from any effect of verbal manipulation? Read the following article “Sochi 2014: the costliest Olympics yet

but where has all the money gone?” using the link ([www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2013/oct/09/sochi-2014-olympics-money-corruption](http://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2013/oct/09/sochi-2014-olympics-money-corruption)). Identify hidden information of the message; decide if the case of verbal manipulation is present and identify linguistic / extralinguistic means that are used for verbal manipulation realization. Identify the speaker’s personality: the speaker’s features, values, beliefs. How has your speaker’s perception changed within the course. Do some additional reading to make sure you know enough about the Americans’ attitude to corruption. How can you change your attitude towards verbal manipulation and towards the way you “see” intercultural partner in the situation of verbal manipulation? Summarize in what way and for what reason your perception / reaction to verbal manipulation has changed”.

### **Discussions**

The situation of manipulative influence within intercultural communication defines readiness of a student to be flexible, capable of adapting to new conditions of understanding his own culture and culture of his foreign-language partner. This is such a personality that intercultural foreign-language education should prepare. In this regard this education faces new challenge: updating coursebooks of intercultural communication given educational priorities to identification, interpretation and comprehension of manipulative content of the messages of foreign-language partners. The above-mentioned procedure of teaching intercultural foreign language communication in the situation of manipulative influence can be implemented into a textbook of teaching intercultural communication or teaching media-communication within verbal manipulation.

### **Conclusion**

The presented procedure and activities to tackle the problem of verbal manipulation in a foreign language classroom share finding from a longitudinal study and are a part of an ongoing piece of research.

At present, studying intercultural communication in the situation of verbal manipulation means to allow foreign-language students to form conventional (sub)competence as a subcomponent of intercultural communicative competence. It is precisely conventional communicative competence which aims to help learners overcome the problem of verbal manipulation in the global communication of today’s world. In the context of modern geopolitical situation the formation of above-mentioned competence is considered to be as a strategic mission to create a personality of intercultural communicant to effectively interact within any non-dialogue (manipulative) situations. We rest on the rationale that to form conventional (sub)competence four core steps are to be taken: to be aware of the main notions of the course, to identify,

to interpret verbal manipulation, to comprehend own position within manipulative influence and be ready to reflect on one's own communicative behaviour aimed at neutralizing verbal manipulation through convention. Being aware of verbal manipulation, potential communicant utilizes a particular communicative strategy of convention to overcome verbal manipulation and harmonize intercultural communication.

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