Reality in the kite runner english language essay

The Linguistic Manipulation: A Powerful Instrument for the Construction of the Version ofReality in The Kite Runner

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research was to analyse the linguistic manipulation in the novel, TheKite Runner, according to the agenda of Critical Discourse Analysis. The research made it clear howthe author manipulated the text in favour of his objectives. The researcher employed Huckin'sanalytic tools of CDA for the text interpretation of the said novel. It was analyzed how the socialrelations, identity, knowledge, and power were constructed through the use of linguistic devices in thetext of the novel. The results of the present research revealed that the writer used specific linguisticdevices to influence the readers to make them accept ideological message contained in the text. Heused the text of the novel as a tool of propaganda in order to support the Western Agenda inAfghanistan. He employed linguistic manipulation as a powerful instrument for the construction ofhis version of reality. This study is an effort to unfold power relations, dominance, oppression, repression, and marginalization in The Kite Runner. It will help the readers in decoding the textmanipulation by applying CDA. Keywords: The Kite Runner, text interpretation, CDA, power relations, propaganda, critical thinking

1. Introduction:

In the present research, the text of Khaled Hosseini's novel, The Kite Runner, was interpretedaccording to the agenda of Critical Discourse Analysis. This novel had the foremost impact onmillions of people across America and

abroad. The present research attempted to unravel the powerbehind the text of the novel. It was explored what exactly Khaled Hosseini said to the readers. Forthis purpose, I analyzed why The Kite Runner attracted so powerfully the American readers. Iexamined the social and political context in which the text of the novel was produced (Fairclough, 1

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1995a) keeping in view the current issues of the time, like Islamic fundamentalism and Taliban. Itwas investigated how the writer employed text manipulation as an instrument of propaganda toillustrate the atrocities of the Taliban. The Kite Runner received numerous positive and negative reviews (Al-Sudeary, 2007; Edwards, 2009; Lidyawati, 2010; Luckhardt, 2010). However, linguistic analysis of the text of the novelwas the area which was yet to be explored. I analysed the linguistic manipulation which the writerused to materialize his objectives. He employed certain linguistic devices which played a vital role inexchanging ideas between the writer and the reader in natural communication. These devices weredesigned to control the ebb and flow of knowledge, belief, narration, and assertion during bothplanned and unplanned discourse. Instead of employing conventional tools of stylistics andpragmatics (Widdowson, 1975; Iwamoto, 2002), the linguistic analysis of the text of the novel wasconducted with reference to

CDA (Huckin, 1997). In the present research, by using analytic tools ofCDA, it was made visible the way in which the novel and its discourse shaped the mind of the reader. It was analyzed how the choice of specific linguistic structures influenced the readers and made themreceive ideological message (Guerin, 2007) conveyed in the text of The Kite Runner. The focus of the present study was on how social relations, identity, knowledge, and power wereconstructed through text manipulation in The Kite Runner. By using Huckin's (1997) analytic tools ofCDA, it was analysed how the writer of the novel influenced the cognitive structure of the readers(Van Dijk, 2006). For the text interpretation, the insight was sought from the works of major CriticalDiscourse Analysts (Fairclough, 1992, 1995a, 1995b; Wodak, 2006; Van Dijk, 1993; Lakoffand Johnson, 1980). Most of prominent critical discourse analysts believe that CDA should not beconsidered only a theory. It is an electric approach for the data analysis. It revealed the techniqueswhich the writer used to influence cognitive structure of the readers. For text analysis, the chiefassumption of Critical Discourse Analysis that makes the approach different from that of others is thatit decodes not only propositional meaning of the text but also its ideological assumptions. The writer2

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chooses specific linguistic structures to influence the readers in order to make them receive theideological message conveyed in the text. Sheyholislamic (2001) thinks that text is not arbitrary. It ispurposeful whether the choices are conscious or unconscious. Fairclough (1995a) argues that peopleexert power through conversation. Foucault (1989) considers power as a prevalent force whichestablishes symmetrical relationships. It prevails over the entire society and is not controlled by anyparticular group. But, contrary to this, Fairclough (1995a) believes in the relationship of power asasymmetrical, unequal, and empowering. It belongs to a particular group or class. Van Dijk (2006) thinks that CDA analysts must have a clear socio-political position. Their works arebased on political criticism of those who are responsible for the production of ascendency and socialinequalities. They discuss elite groups who are in power, ordain social inequalities and injustices. They continue and legitimize them. On the basis of his interdisciplinary attitude, he labels hismethodology as socio-cognitive discourse analysis. Wodak (2006) considers written and spokenlanguage as a form of social behaviour. She acknowledges the intricacy of the relationship betweenlanguage and society. Zhao (2011) says that CDA not only describes and explains texts but also helpsto root out a particular kind of delusion. He believes that texts, as elements of social events, bringabout changes in the society. Guerin (2007) also realizes the importance of social context for thestudy of linguistic devices. He favours the ways to integrate linguistic and social analysis. The present study will not only develop an awareness of forms of language but also explore a widerrange of language uses in our

daily lives. It provides an analytical way of learning about Afghanhistory and culture in the context of story. In the present research, Huckin's (1997) analytic tools ofCDA were used for the text interpretation of the novel, The Kite Runner. I selected Huckin's (1997)analytic tools for text analysis because they provide a framework of text analysis according to theagenda of CDA. Moreover, they provide data which was used both at macro level to reveal the ' bigpicture' of asymmetrical power relationship and at micro level to analyze the role of the linguistic3

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devices in the novel. In this research, the data collected from the detailed analysis of the text of thesaid novel, were used to answer the following research questions of the present research: 1. Does the writer use the text of the novel as a tool of propaganda? 2. Does the writer maneuver the facts for the propagation of the Western angle of interpretationof the situation in Afghanistan in the novel? 3. How do the dominant forces construct versions of reality in favour of their interests in thenovel? 4. What are the levels of power relationship in The Kite Runner? 5. What are the objectives of the writer in representing ethnicity in the novel, The Kite Runner.? This study will help in developing critical thinking of the readers by enabling them to decode textmanipulation. The findings of this study provide the CDA

practitioners with an insight to textanalysis. It will benefit them to analyze their existing problems and tackle with them in order tointroduce the way for better way of teaching CDA. This research is also an attempt to highlight thescope of Critical Discourse Analysis for the text analysis of fiction. It helps to know how CDAtechniques can assist in the formulation of appropriate strategies for reading. This research invitesresearchers to explore new horizons of text analysis by using agenda of CDA. It motivates relatedresearches, for instance, applying CDA to the texts of poetry, drama and fiction.

2. Methodology

In the present research, I attempted to disclose the strategy which the writer used to manipulate thetext of the novel, The Kite Runner, in favour of his objectives. The research problem is to investigatehow the writer employed the linguistic devices to influence the opinion of the readers of the saidnovel. In the present research, Huckin's (1997) analytic tools of CDA were used for the text interpretation ofthe novel, The Kite Runner. The text analysis was conducted at three levels: the text as a whole, a4

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sentence, and a word. The salient features of the procedure of the present research are mentioned asunder: 2. 1 The text as a whole1213141516171819202122232425262728293031323334353637383940414243444546474814. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. The genre of the text under analysis was analyzed in order to observe that the text of thenovel conforms to its type or the author has included features of other genres to fulfill hisown purposes. This genre-orientation helped to know how to manipulate a genre and howto go beyond its normal boundaries to produce special effects. Framing of text production was analyzed. It was evaluated how the content of the text hasbeen presented and what sort of perspective (angle, slant) the writer has taken. The techniques of foregrounding and backgrounding were analyzed to explore how theyhave been used to emphasize or de-emphasize certain concepts in the text under analysis. The technique of omission was analyzed to explore how the writer has used to keepcertain things completely out of a text. If the writer does not discuss some particularpoint, it often will not even enter the reader's mind. Thus, it is not subjected to reader'sscrutiny. The technique of presupposition was analyzed to explore how the writer has used tomanipulate readers. Ideas are presented in such a way as to be accepted withoutquestioning. Another form of presuppositions is insinuations. It is used in the comments of asuggestive nature and not directly indicated by the writer. 49505152535455565758596902. 2 Sentence Level AnalysisAfter the analysis of the genre and framing of the text, the research proceeded to the sentencelevel as mentioned under: 5

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1. Topicalization: It is a sort of foregrounding at the sentence level. This type of analysis wasconducted to reveal the objective of the writer's decision to put something in the topicposition. This linguistic device is employed to make readers notice certain pieces ofinformation as more important than others. 2. Deletion or omission of agents: The focus is on the victims and not on those guilty of thecrime. Agent-deletion takes place most often through the use of passive verbs andnominalization. 3. Presupposition: Presupposition was analyzed at the sentence level. 2. 3 Words and Phrases Level Analysis1. Connotations: Critical discourse analysis of the text was conducted on the level ofindividual words to analyze certain connotations that they carry with themselves. 2. Register: This type of analysis was conducted to reveal the text's level of formality orinformality. It also points out its degree of technicality and its subject field. 3. The quantitative methodology of Corpus linguistics was used as a supplement todetermine the frequencies of certain lexical items.

3. DISCUSSION

In the present research, the text of the novel, The Kite Runner, was analyzed, at macro and microlevel, by using Huckin's (1997) analytic tools of CDA. The analysis was conducted on three levels: the text as a whole, a

sentence, and a word. In this research, the data collected from the detailedanalysis of linguistic devices of the text of the said novel, were used to answer the research questionsof the present research. 3. 1 Text Manipulation and Linguistic DevicesCritical discourse analysis (CDA) is an effective approach for the study of the text. It studies languageas a form of social practice and explores the ways how social and political domination are visible in6

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the text (Fairclough, 1989). The author, Khaled Hosseini, employed the linguistic devices as apowerful tool to manipulate the text in favour of his objectives. His effective use of linguistic devicesacted as a catalyst to stimulate the reader's emotions and curiosity about ethnicity. It is notable that the main readers of The Kite Runner are not the Afghans. The novel clicks sopowerfully with American readers. It pays particular attention to the ' hot topics' such as extremism, fundamentalism, Taliban, and women's rights in Afghanistan. The writer introduces his readers withlife in Afghanistan by explaining some basic facts with a particular tilt of mind. After analysis, it hasbeen found that the writer of the novel, Khaled Hosseini,

uses the linguistic devices of foregrounding, backgrounding, presupposition and omission to frame the contents of the text in favour of hisobjectives. He uses the characters of Baba, Amir, Ali and Hassan to frame economic, ethnic, andreligious divisions in Afghanistan. Baba and Amir, for example, are rich and live in a large house, while Ali and Hassan are poor and live in a small quarter on Baba's property. Baba and Amir are bothphysically fit, but Ali and Hassan both suffer from problems of physical deformation. Furthermore, Baba and Amir represent the Pashtun population, whereas Ali and Hassan represent Hazara minoritywho are the victim of racism in Afghanistan. Like most Pashtuns, Baba and Amir represent SunniMuslim, while Ali and Hassan, like most Hazaras represent Shia Muslim. The Kite Runner deals with the issue of ethnic discrimination in Afghanistan. There is a particularexample of the relationship between Pashtuns and Hazaras. The writer presents another frame ofdivision between Islamic fundamentalists, like Amir's teacher, Mullah Fatiullah Khan, and liberalAfghans like Baba. Baba's words, in Chapter 3, predict the future takeover of Afghanistan by theorthodox fundamentalists, the Taliban. Baba says: " God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into theirhands." The writer uses extremely harsh words for Mullah Fatiullah Khan and those like him anddeclares them " self-righteous monkeys" (p. 17). The writer uses the first-person point of view in the novel. He makes readers feel as though they areexperiencing narrator's personal feeling and thoughts about certain people or particular scenes. For7

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example, when Amir attends the inaugural ceremony of his father's orphanage, he says that he" wished they'd all died along with their parents" (p. 19), and this personal emotion clearly reveals hisstrong desire for his father's love and attention. The reader is made to feel that his thoughts areflowing directly through the characters brain. It seems that the character and the reader are thinking inthe same direction. The first-person point of view deeply connects the emotions of the characters andthe readers. In contrast, the third-person point of view lets the writer keep distance and achieve somemeasure of objectivity. Another effective linguistic device that the author employs in the novel is the usage of Farsi words(Huckin, 1997). Throughout the entire novel, Farsi is woven in the plot naturally, especially inconversations. For example, Amir calls his father " Baba (12) or Baba Jan (18)" instead of " dad" or" father," but the reader is able to interpret these words by context. The words such as " Inshallah" (36)or " Naan" (29) have also been used. It appears more natural to use Farsi in conversation. It enhancesinformal level of the text (Huckin, 1997). This technique provides a realistic aspect. Furthermore, most of the events occur in a foreign country where English is not the characters' native language. Therefore, using Farsi in conversation seems more natural. As a result, this device gives the readera much more vivid experience, as though the reader has participated

in the scenes and met thecharacters themselves. In his novel, the writer has employed the linguistic device of omission or deletion in order to presentcertain characters with a particular objective of representing ethnicity. The writer has framed thecharacter of Assef as an embodiment of evil by eliminating every positive trait of a human being. Heis the main ' Antagonist' of the novel. Ironically, he has been presented as a mixed product- his fatheris Afghan and his mother is German. It seems very awkward that an individual of mixed origin hasbeen presented as an advocate of Pashtun dominance over the Hazara. As a teenager, Assef is a bullyand Amir describes him as a ' sociopath'. As a child, he commits the heinous action of raping Hassan8

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and he gives Amir a biography of ' Adolf Hitler' as a birthday present. As an adult, he joins theTaliban and has become like his ideal, Adolf Hitler. He feels pleasure in murdering innocent peoplein the name of purity and supremacy. The writer presents Assef as a chain of heinous crimes. Heraped Hassan in childhood, and he is now raping and degrading Hassan's son. 3. 2 A tool of propagandaPropaganda means to spread ideas or rumors to favour or

disfavour a person or group of people. Inthe novel, The Kite Runner, the writer paints a vivid picture of the Taliban as violent bodiesresponsible for all the wrongs in Afghanis. Assef appears in pre-Taliban times as a symbol of evil andthen emerges as a leading Talib. Before the regime of the Taliban, Assef commits the crime of rape, and as a leader of the Taliban, compels Sohrab to dance to music for his enjoyment but the Taliban has banned dancing and listeningto music. Amir criticizes by saying, " I guessed music wasn't sinful as long as it played to Talibanears." The writer shows that the Taliban's oppression of the Hazaras and the Shiites is not new. It is agreatly intensified outcome of long-held discrimination. The writer frames the characters of theTaliban and the Hazara in order to point out the nature of their power relationship as asymmetrical, unequal and empowering (Fairclough, 1995b). The writer depicts one-dimensional characterization of the Taliban as stereotyped characters. Hepresents them as inhumane and tyrannical. The novel has been written with the technique of first-person viewpoint. Amir is the narrator for 24 chapters, while Rahim Khan narrates the events of thepast in only one chapter, chapter 16. Both narrators can express only their own personal experiences, and both paint a terrible picture of atrocities of Taliban. Decades later, Hassan's rape is echoed bySohrab's rape symbolically. One of the most striking references is of the stoning at Ghazi Stadium. This event also symbolizes the devastation of Afghanistan as a whole, like the rapes of Hassan and9

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3456789101112131415161718192021222324252627282930313233343536 37383940414243444546474849505152535455565758 5960Sohrab. Another very fierce event is Amir's fight with Assef. In chapter 21, the reference of ' MullahNasruddin' is to laugh at plans of the Taliban. The writer, with the help of linguistic devices, manipulates the text of the novel for the Propagation ofthe Western angle of the Afghan issue. It is an effort to influence the readers and to justify theWestern Agenda of international commitment in Afghanistan. In the last scene of the novel, Sohrab'sfaint smile is an indication that he is secure and happy with his new guardians (Van Dijk, 2005, 2006). The writer also uses powerful and multi-layered imagery with rich meanings. For example, Sohrabhits Assef with slingshot fire. It is an appropriate image that shows the triumph of the weak anddepressed over the high and mighty. In Chapter eleven, after the arrival of Amir and Baba in America, Amir explains that Baba loved ' theidea of America' very much. He believes that the only valuable countries are America, Israel andBritain. Even though his support of Israel drew allegations of his being anti-Islam from otherAfghanis." There are only three real men in this world, Amir," he'd say. He'd count them off on his fingers: America the brash savior, Britain, and Israel. " The rest of them--" he used to wave his hand and makea phht sound "--they're like gossiping old women" (Ch. 11). In chapter 21, the writer presents a vivid picture of fundamentalism, extremism and intolerance of theTaliban. Amir attended a soccer match at Ghazi Stadium. There was entirely different scene. Thelush green playing field had now turned into

barren field with two deep holes behind the goalpost. The Taliban walked up and down the lanes. They whipped anyone who made too much noise. Duringhalftime, Amir knew the shocking reason for the two deep holes in the ground. They were to be thegraves of two accused adulterers. They would be stoned in front of thousands of the people. A Talibannounced to the crowd that the ' will of Allah and the word of the Prophet Muhammad' said death by10

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stoning was a just punishment for adulterers. As Amir listened to this distortion of Islam, he recallsthe words of Baba: " God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into their hands." The writer makes the point that the Taliban are responsible for social inequalities and injustices. Theycontinue and legitimize them in the name of Islam (Van Dijk, 2005). The writer has tried to establish the idea that the United States is an escape route from all of theproblems. He feels that the United States is like an outlet from injustice, cruelty and ethnicity. Hisattitude is negative throughout the whole story and uses the escape of Amir and Baba to America as asymbol of change and a rout of emancipation. The writer is trying to justify that only America canplay role in the line of changing, amending and removing

inequalities from the Afghan society (VanDijk, 2006). The writer very skillfully talks about dominant American culture in the country. Amir and Hassanlike the Western movies, American actors, especially John Wayne and Charles Bronson. They watchmovies dubbed into Farsi. The boys spend their money on imported snacks like rosewater ice creamand pistachios. Baba drives a black Ford Mustang, which is the same car that the actor SteveMcQueen has used in the American movie " Bullitt." On the other side, Assef never speaks of thesethings. He talks about purity of Afghanistan. Assef and others like him demand not only ethnic puritybut also cultural purity. The purpose is domination of a pure Pashtun people and culture inAfghanistan. As a consequence, the influence of American culture in Afghanistan will be eliminated, almost entirely, during the period that Amir calls the end of Afghanistan. 3. 3. Versions of Reality & Power RelationshipIn the novel, The Kite Runner, power, dominance, inequality, bias sources have been initiated, maintained and reproduced. (Van Dijk, 2006). Much of the text of The Kite Runner can be explainedthrough CDA. One of the best examples of Oppression, repression, marginalization (Luke, 1997) is11

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the passage on pages 76 to 77. The power struggle in this passage is established onmany levels. The Assef's domination of Hassan is the most obvious level. There are, however, numerous instances of a power relationship in the passage, e. g., between Amir and Hassan, betweenthe Mullah and the sheep and between Amir and himself. The writer compares the facial expressionof Hassan to that of a lamb in " saw the resignation in. It was a look I had seen before. It was the lookof the lamb" (p. 76). The same symbol of lamb is later explained, through Amir's flashback as aceremonial sacrifice made on Eid Al-Adha. This use of metaphors and symbolism makes thelanguage effective and admirable (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Hassan is entirely powerless againstAssef. There is another example of the power struggle between Amir and Hassan. Amir is constantlystruggling for his father's love. He feels that Hassan is standing in his way. In the end of the passage, Amir says:" I actually aspired to cowardice, because the real reason I was running, was that Asseff was right. Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay towin Baba. Was it a fair price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it:" He was just a Hazara, was not he?"(p. 77)It is clear that Baba's love is a form of power and Amir is willing to gain this power at any cost evenby losing his friend. 3. 4 Objectives of the writerThe writer of the novel, Khalid Husseini, indirectly describes his objective of writing the novel, TheKite Runner, in chapter 19, through the mouth of Wahid: " tell the rest of the world what the Talibanare doing to [Afghanistan.]." Reference to sexual violence against a member of one ethnic group- the Hazara- at the thematicposition of the novel indicates the objective of the writer to highlight

the frame of ethnicity in thevery beginning of the novel. Foregrounding of ethnicity shows ethnic orientation of the text. 12

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Khaled Hosseini uses the linguistic device of deletion/omission for the depiction of certaincharacters in order to influence the mind of the readers. By doing so, he makes the readers see aparticular reality through the glasses of the writer. From beginning to the end, the writer frames andpresents an entirely negative, heinous and cruel picture of the Taliban. In chapter 3, the writer begins to develop the negative impression of Mullah, Taliban and Islamicconvictions. He makes extensive use of foreshadowing in The Kite Runner. For instance Baba'sstatement, which anticipates the Taliban's takeover decades later: " God help us all if Afghanistan everfalls into their hands (Ch. 3)." In chapter 16 & 17, the writer also uses some incidents of abuses ofwomen to paint the distorted image of the Taliban. The Taliban has enforced strict rules of dress formen and women Soccer players have to wear pants, and loud cheering is not allowed at games. However, worst of all is the fierceness that the Taliban show in the general population. The hidden objective of the writer is to paint a distorted picture of Afghan culture by maneuveringfacts and highlighting the ethnic tensions between

the Pashtun and the Hazara. By rescuing Sohrab, the writer tries to justify American task to rescue the oppressed people of Afghanistan (Fairclough, 1995a). Another objective of the writer is to make the readers acknowledge the American supremacy in theworld. In chapter 21, the writer tries to establish American supremacy of technology and culture. Before going to bed, Farid tells stories about fighting the Soviets, while Amir tells Farid aboutAmerican services, such as being able to enjoy over five hundred television channels. Foregrounding of ethnicity shows ethnic orientation of the text. The writer maneuvers the facts inorder to establish that the Pashtun majority of the Taliban hate the Hazara population. Thus, theTaliban massacred many Hazaras. They burned down their schools and houses. Assef praises thePashtun history and relates it to that of the Nazis in Germany. This is an example of the use oflinguistic device of presupposition (Huckin, 1997) by referring a remarkably accurate historical13

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3456789101112131415161718192021222324252627282930313233343536 3738394041424344454647484950515253545556575859 60observation that the writer points out on several occasions. Khalid Hosseini is a remarkable writerand knows how to influence the reader by the ethos and make him accept a particular ideology.

4. Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to identify the role of the linguistic devices in the constructionof the version of reality in The Kite Runner. The detailed analysis of the text of the novel, both at themacro level and the micro level, revealed that the linguistic devices played significant role inlinguistic manipulation of the said novel. The writer manipulated the text for the construction ofreality to materialize political objectives of supporting Western Agenda in Afghanistan. He used thelinguistic devices of foregrounding, backgrounding, presupposition and omission to frame thecontents of the text in favour of his objectives. These linguistic devices proved an influentialinstrument to touch the cognitive structure of the reader. The writer maneuvered the facts for thepropagation of the Western angle of interpretation of situation in Afghanistan. By way of a subtlemanipulation of language, he successfully wielded great influence on the preconceptions, beliefs, andideologies of the readers. The results of this study indicate that behind the apparent text of The KiteRunner, there is a careful use of linguistic devices. They are certainly the product of priorconsideration and thoughtful discourse elaboration. The writer used the language of the novel as a typical instrument of persuasion. He employed theappropriate linguistic devices according to the specific requirements of each communicative situationfor the achievement of personal objectives. With the help of a subtle manipulation of language, hecaused the readers to accept false claims as true assumptions. He persuaded them to favour policiescontrary to their interests. Linguistic manipulation is, thus, a valuable tool in politics. It is a vitalelement in securing the public support which is

essential not only to legitimize political policies, butalso to materialize

implied political objective in democratic systems. The effective use of

linguistic14

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devices is a key factor in accomplishing personal and public objectives and

succeeding in publicdebates and negotiations.