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INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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«KLAD” journal admits for publication various types of articles: original research, review articles, short reports or essays, reflections, case studies, methodologies and cases in english; containing the results of fundamental and applied research in the field of philosophy and identity, history of kazakhstan, pedagogy, linguistics and methods of teaching languages, translation, and tourism.

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PART 02

KAZGUU LIBERAL ARTS DIGEST

RESEARCH
PAPERS





PECULIARITIES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This paper's aim is to conduct the linguistic analysis of political discourse. The material for the analysis is chosen to be the 2020 Presidential Debates between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Linguistic analysis of such type of political discourse text seems to not have been conducted in a great number, so this research adds to the knowledge on political linguistic aspects. Based on the theoretical framework, metaphors, metonymies, and pronouns were identified as special features of political discourse, and were respectively analyzed in this paper in the chosen material. The research applied mixed approach; features were analyzed according to the respective ways of analysis, classified accordingly: metaphors – according to metaphorical concepts, metonymies – according to metaphorical concepts, and pronouns – only considering personal pronouns, according to their person and referential domain; and tied to the context to explain their role. The results showed that the leading feature is singular first person personal pronoun “I”, which helps opponents defend their position. Among the other features, it has been noted that the main concept of metaphors is Argument is War, deriving the associations from the area of war in order to make statements stronger. Metonymies seem to be rich in the concept of Institution for the People Responsible, which also makes up for the more strong and precise speech.

I INTRODUCTION

The recurrent paper is aimed at conducting the analysis of linguistic peculiarities of political discourse. Utterances in political field often possess a great amount of power, and the speech is delivered through language, so the analysis of the use of linguistic features would be necessary for defining the means that help evoke the power of the speech. Many discourse and linguistic analyses have been conducted on the topic of political speech, however, most of them concern such utterances as inauguration speeches, or other kinds of speech delivered for a certain occasion by a politician. These are, as could be clear, monologues, and those may show just one side of the political discourse. On the other hand, the power of this type of discourse may often be seen in political debates, moreover, there might not be sufficient

number of analyses of linguistic features of political debates. Many of the works existing on the topic of analysis of debates provide a more extralinguistic content, linking the use of certain features to the style and purely psychological purpose. For conducting the analysis, first the works of scholars and researchers on this topic will be taken as a theoretical base. For this particular paper, the material will be chosen among the political debates, respectively, in order to build upon the existing knowledge of the linguistic means in the discourse of politics in relation to their contextual role in the speech. The features will be analyzed in respect to the methodic incidental to each of them. After the presentation of the results, each element will be discussed according to their function in the text. Before embarking on the research of the subject of the paper, it might be fair to briefly go through the theoretical ground of it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

First of all, it should be necessary to consider the background of the political discourse. We will see how the latter was brought to the stage becoming a grand branch of communication in a political social setting. The concept of political speech has been present for centuries now. Political discourse likely originates from an ancient Roman and Greek cultures during the 5th century BC, particularly rising in the city of Athens. This was not only a form of verbal art, but also the means of defending one's beliefs, especially as democratic policy developed more. Thus, some famous ancient sorcerers and politicians taught respective public speaking techniques (Medjedoub, 2017). With the evolution of linguistic studies over time, researchers of the period of cognitive linguistics had been examining the cognitive constraint of language (Chilton, 2004).

THE DEFINITION OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND THE CONCERN OF IT

Continuing with defining political discourse itself and the overall intent of this type of discourse. Firstly, we need to determine the notion of "discourse" per se, so it is easier to provide an understanding of discourse of political kind. The former is not that clear, as it is quite a broad notion. Otherwise, following the more compact description of the term offered by Van Dijk (n.d.a), we can define it as the use of language considering the social context of the communication. Proceeding with determining the discourse of politics, as, again, Van Dijk (n.d.b) suggests, its idea is put as the communicative act of political figures, who are presented as actors. Similarly, Karasik (2000) includes political discourse in the types of institutional discourse, which deals with communication

concerning certain social positions and extent of power (Kenzhekanova, 2015). When it comes to the aim intrinsic to political discourse, a famous scholar, George Orwell, pointed out the political potential and power of language in his work by using the words: "using political speech or writing... in defense of indefensible" (Orwell, 1969, as cited in Wilson, 2015, p. 777). This would mean a sort of blurred and sometimes misleading, though persuasive delivery of a text. Political discourse, in this sense, relies on the concept of a "theatrical play" where the individuals act in the public, representing certain stance as their "role" and defending it.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND THE CLASSIFICATION

The position of the speaker in political discourse is usually identified within a context of speech. The context may account for the setting, the audience, and, most importantly, the overall end goal of the text. All of the above makes up for the foundation of the preliminary preparation of the speech, which presents a tight connection between the cognitive and linguistic constraints of speech. When classifying those into two groups by their functions, we will have extralinguistic and linguistic aspects characteristic of political discourse. The former are, in any way, expressed through the linguistic means. They also can be almost effortlessly spot on the intuitive level, so we will not stop here too much. However, the extralinguistic peculiarities are obviously worth mentioning as they contain the essence of the speech. The main aspects, according to Kenzhekanova (2015) and Polyakova et. al (2019), seem to be as follows:

- Competitiveness (act of competing with one another);
- Aggression (asserting dominance);
- Ideology (voicing and defending a certain stance);
- Theatricality (the fact of acting for

the public).

Concerning the pathway through which the abovementioned is rendered, Kulo (2009) and Alduhaim (2019) suggest these linguistic means that we are also going to use:

- Metaphors (linguistic means that majorly hold symbolic meaning in conjunct to certain associations; transference of a meaning);
- Metonymies (replacement of an idea with another word that it is linked to, showing contiguity);
- Pronouns (linguistic elements used to replace the name of a subject; personal pronouns);

These are the specific features of political discourse that constitute the major part of the communication in politics and serve as means of affecting the masses. The information provided above gives enough insights into the stylistic constraints of political speech, and might come in hand as the basis for further analysis. This is, of course, provided that the procedures comply with the purpose of the paper.

METHODOLOGY

The research on the subject of identifying position and purpose of certain features of a discourse seems to require particular steps, which are described below:

CHOICE OF SOURCES

Sources, as the guidance for developing the path of analysis part of the research, need to comply with certain criteria. This is so that we can be more confident that the theoretical guide is applicable in this paper. The criteria were as follows:

- Reliability
- Relatively up-to-date sources (referring to articles and theses)
- Relevance

The sources that were used comply with the points as they were derived from reliable databases and most are written by credible authors who have the knowledge and experience in the field. The majority of

the works date no older than the early 00s. Moreover, the sources obviously had to be relevant to the topic of the paper, that is, political discourse features analysis, and everything included in it. Thus, some contain both theoretical and practical analysis. This helps understand the procedure of discourse features analysis more and be in clear terms with the subject.

ANALYSIS MATERIAL

As for the material for the linguistic analysis, it could be clear that it would be better to have a speech delivered by politicians orally. For this reason, political debates were chosen. In the debates, the participants are asked certain questions and are expected to answer them thoroughly. In order to receive a more complex view on the political discourse features, two analysis materials have been selected. To be more precise, the 2020 presidential debates of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. This type of political speech would have a bit more suitable due to its quite assertive nature. As one of the characteristic features of political discourse is competitiveness, and the speech presume this sort of setting, there is likely more material to analyze in this sort of extralinguistic context.

CHOICE OF APPROACH AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

As the sources analysis suggests, it is clear that a certain approach to the work must be applied. In this particular paper, where there is a need not only to single out certain linguistic elements, but to also sort them out accordingly, mixed approach to the analysis was used. The term suggests that throughout the analysis process, the data was sorted according to both the frequency and meaning aspects.

First of all, it was obviously necessary to carefully read the material. Based on the information the sources provide, the linguistic elements of political discourse were spotted.

The context of the text was taken into account in order to provide the closest possible aim of usage of this particular unit.

For instance, metaphors were defined in the text by the criteria suggested by Pragglejaz Group (2007) in their work on Metaphor Identification Procedure. They were then analyzed according to the metaphorical concepts, as suggested by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1991).

Metonymies, as types of metaphors, were identified and classified based on the, again, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) system of conceptual metonymies. In order to spot metonymies, the elements had to be analyzed on the subject of conceptual relation of the object presented in the sentence and the context of speech.

When analyzing pronouns, their function was identified according to the attribution to the person of pronouns, their referential domain mentioned by Fetzer & Bull (2008), and, again, context of speech, which defines the purpose of the use of the elements, depending on the main goal of the speaker.

After the linguistic units had been identified and provided a contextual use meaning, they were considered on the subject of the frequency of emergence of the elements. The latter was conducted in order to view how and how often the speakers utilize some of the linguistic features of political discourse, which one of those predominates, and in what way they help to manipulate the speech message.

The results of the above described analysis are shown in the segment below.

FINDINGS

Throughout conducting the linguistic analysis of 96 linguistic units in the text, the particular linguistic features characteristic of political discourse in the English language were derived from the text [the full list is provided in Appendix]:

Metaphors (27):

Metaphors, as one of the main linguistic elements in political speeches, appear in the debates throughout the whole text, corresponding to such conceptual models as:

Argument is War

We won the elections...

The marked word in this case helps Trump highlight him having an upper hand received with being chosen as a President. Since Presidential elections can be viewed as a war setting due to its competitive nature, the winner has the advantage of setting their own conditions. This is the case with the first question dealing with nominating the new head of the court.

The deal is that this is going to wipe out any pre-existing conditions...

In the sentence above, Biden is referring to a health policy, making an argument that it will exclude any pre-existing conditions. He makes his point quite expressively using the Argument is War metaphor, which, in this case, literally means destroy.

Time is a Limited Resource

We have plenty of time...I have a lot of time...

Time is mostly highly valued, so the use of this particular metaphor in the answer to the question on the nominee for the head of the court implies the assurance that the transition to the new administrative power will be conducted successfully in due time, with little limits to its amount. Otherwise, time cannot be owned per se.

Time is money

I get my time back?

Biden's expression here means he was given another opportunity to answer in the set number of minutes after he had been

interrupted.

Life is a Gambling Game

Now, what's at stake here is...

With this expression, Biden further refers to Trump wanting to cancel the Affordable Care Act, meaning that there is a risk for the people of losing something important because of the wrong choice of the President they might make. It is as if he is trying to point out the danger that the people's lives could be subjected to.

Significant is Big

The bigger problem that you have is that...

In this sentence, Trump is pointing out Biden's argument saying that the latter is not as significant to be paid attention to as the issue Trump provides further on. The expression is used metaphorically, as larger physical objects tend to be thought of as more important.

Ontological metaphor Activity is a Container Object

... we're in the middle of the election already...

As election is not a physical container itself, but an event, the expression holds a metaphorical meaning. Continuing the thought of the opportunity for the people to choose the nominees, Biden shows here that since the election has already started and is going to end soon, the situation has no possibility of going back and giving the opportunity for the people to vote rationally.

Argument is a Journey

He hasn't laid out anything.

Biden wanted to emphasize how Trump did not have a set of consistent steps for realizing the goal.

Ideas are Light-Sources

Do you believe for a moment what he is

telling you, in light of all the lies he's told you...

Biden, talking about Trump, tries to attack him by questioning his image in the eyes of the public. He uses in light of all the lies to say considering all the lies.

Personification

Drug prices will be coming down...

Here, when Trump means that he is going to reduce the prices on drugs, not that the prices are going to go low in a literal sense.

The State as a Person

It's China's fault.

In this case, China is viewed as the type of person who was not taking the responsibility during the case of the pandemic.

Metonymies (6)

Metonymies were classified according to the conceptual models as well as metaphors. The following contiguity models are some of those that were found among the metonymies:

Institution for People Responsible

... the Supreme Court will hear a case...

Here, the mediator likely refers to the Chief Justice as the Supreme Court, when talking about the case of Obamacare.

We have the Senate...

Trump is talking about the people who work in the institutions when beginning his point about the new Supreme Court nominee.

It is a very political thing I've spoken to Pfizer...

Trump here refers to the people who are in charge of the company, meaning he had discussed an issue with them. It also shows how the company plays a crucial role in the situation.

The Place for the Institution

...we have the White House...

Trump is talking about the people who work in the institutions when beginning his point about the new Supreme Court nominee.

... we should be providing the money the House has passed...

The House here is the White House, which refers to the institution of the Executive branch in the US.

The Part for the Whole

... before she went to the bench...

The word bench here is used to refer to the job in the court by only mentioning the part of the courtroom.

Pronouns (63)

The pronouns analyzed were of personal type, classified in accordance with the referential domain of each (I, we [self-reference; inclusive-exclusive for we], you [other-reference; addressee, definite group, indefinite group]).

- I (23 times)

... and the justice I have nothing- I'm not opposed to the justice, she seems like a very fine person.

Here, Biden highlights the fact that he personally does not have anything against the justice, so to avoid the possibility of personal attacks on him further and make the argument seem more objective.

Because I want to give good healthcare.

Trump uses singular first person personal pronoun to revert the attention to himself personally, to show that the virtue of good health care for the people is his initiative.

- We [exclusive] (16 times)

We have a professor at Notre Dame...

We is used exclusively to again refer to the party and other advisers who are on the side of Trump and likely to the nominee for the court.

We [inclusive] (6 times)

Folks, do we have any idea what this clown is doing?

Biden uses plural form of first person personal pronoun inclusively here as he is referring to the public, thus, including both himself and the public while criticizing Trump.

- You [addressee] (13 times)

You got very lucky.

Other-reference pronoun towards addressee from Trump to Biden. The former is addressing Biden to point out how the latter did not succeed for his effort.

You probably play more than I do, Joe.

The second person personal pronoun is again used by Trump to refer to Biden when attacking his accusation of Trump's inactiveness.

You [definite group] - 5 times

You should go out and vote.

Biden's use of the second person personal pronoun to refer to a certain group of people, meaning, the people of America, calling upon them to vote on the election.

With the results presented above, each unit was given a short description. They are going to be discussed in the following section below, so to provide more insight into the purpose behind the use of particular features.

DISCUSSION

The political discourse linguistic features analysis of the material shows that the three main linguistic features that were aimed

to be analyzed are present in a relative abundance. The features that largely define political discourse seem to be metaphors, metonymies, and pronouns, as had been suggested by Kulo (2009) and Alduhaim (2019).

When comparing the frequency of the features, it has been found that pronouns, only taking the personal type of first and second person into account, are more prevalent. This is probably quite common especially in the debates setting as both the candidates are bound to refer to certain people, be it themselves or others, in order to convey an idea of action, for instance. Among the analyzed pronouns, the singular first person personal pronoun "I" has been found to appear much more frequent than the plural first person "we" and the second person "you" pronouns. This might possibly be due to the more ideological character of debates, where the candidates make statements carrying a certain idea, which they need to link to their own persona either as a separate individual or a representative of a certain group. This helps them create a certain image that can play an important role in the people's choice when voting, since they will have certain associations with this or that candidate's identity.

When analyzing metaphors, it has been found that the concept of Argument is War appears more often. This might be explained within the frames of one of the extralinguistic features of political discourse, which is competitiveness. Debates is in itself a competitive setting, where the participants are "fighting" for "victory". Thus, they would use much more references to the field of war, so to either make themselves seem more powerful or make the opponent's argument seem weaker, which will again turn in the speaker's favor.

When analyzing metonymies, they have not been found in such a large number overall, which might be slightly unusual for a public character of speech. The concepts, however, were not distributed nearly as

equally. The most predominating metonymic concept appeared to be Institution for the People Responsible. It could be connected to the need to mention the executive power for the sake of referring to authority, which could bring more significance to the speaker's argument. Otherwise, it might be to just save time and not having to talk about certain people working there, as the field of competence of the institution is more important.

Thus, the explanation above elaborates on the use of the linguistic features in political speech on the example of debates. This allows us to wrap up the work conducted in the following segment.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the special linguistic features of political discourse have been analyzed. Since political speech holds a great amount of power it might have been necessary to conduct the analysis to see the means by which the power is expressed, especially in relation to the setting of debates. The methods for analyzing each type of features, which are metaphors, pronouns, and metonymies, were derived from respective sources and applied accordingly. Within the frames of results it has been found that political speech, especially in the debates, is quite rich in the features of power-play, where the opponents are willingly singling themselves out and tying themselves to a higher position by using certain linguistic means.

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