

## Linguistic and Cognitive Features of English-Language Political Discourse

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### Abstract

The relevance of the study lies in the fact that pluralism, dialogism, and a new model of political communication have forced a change in the way power communicates with society. Nudity, formulaic newspeak has been replaced by expressive texts subordinated to the function of persuasion. Nevertheless, there are many publications in the scientific literature describing the shortcomings of contemporary English-language political messages. Political discourse has been accused of vulgarity, banality, and arbitrary presentation of reality, bias, use of templates and stereotypes, excessive aggressiveness and incorrectness. There are various forms of public discourse characteristic of democracy, which are characterised by certain constant features. Political discourse has its characteristics. Each political environment develops certain kinds of communication under the influence of relevant experiences. Discourse is one of those concepts in the social sciences characterised by exceptional terminological confusion. This is because it is an area of interest of different methodological sciences. Based on English-language studies of the phenomenon, the term is also the result of a clash of linguistic traditions with a more recent English-language understanding. Discourse analysis becomes an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of the linguistic and cognitive aspects, consisting in studying language in isolation from practical human experience and trying to find internal structures and dependencies in a language only in a theoretical dimension, on imagined examples. Its axioms include language as a holistic system integrated with the speaker's knowledge of the world and society. This system has to be described in linguistic, cognitive, and social terms, together with the conditions in which the speaker uses it during the discourse. The practical significance lies in identifying the linguistic and cognitive features of English-language political discourse.

**Keywords:** publicity, cognitive features, linguistic aspect, mass media, text

### 1. Introduction

The communicative process of political discourse is initiated as an outcome of the recipient's perception of the material form of the message, which is the starting point for its further interpretation. The text appears, which in communicative grammar is understood as a formal unit perceived by the person communicating the material components of the message, which they consider meaningful and required for further interpretation. It is assumed that the text is a unique and materially immutable phenomenon that emerges in communicative space and initiates processes of message interpretation. Hence, the text does not convey the meaning of the message, but only shows possible directions of its interpretation (Alkooheji & Sinha, 2017). The outcome of the English-language political interpretation process is not determined by the formal form of the text, although, this form remains unchanged. An innovative approach to the basic concepts of discourse analysis is a property of some texts and a necessary feature of every text.

The process of interpretation triggered by the perception of the transmitted content is dynamic and subjective, as each subject has different resources appropriate to this interpretation of information and pursues different communicative goals, which is a clear reference to constructivism in the natural context. The person's state of consciousness is not quite an individual phenomenon, because forms of political discourse are a component of the interactive communicative competence of native speakers (Francis, 2006; Yermukhanova et al., 2019).

Linguistically, it is assumed that despite the subjective perception of messages, it can be predicted that the recipient at

certain stages of interpretation will go through certain, standard references common to most speakers of a given language, and their further subjective development of interpretation will not contradict these norms (Terletska, 2021; Maričić et al., 2019). It's about standard, systemic interpretation, which is a generalised scheme of message analysis by a virtual recipient, consisting of the construction of basic, interacting, semantic components. Once the process of political text interpretation begins, the area of research is shifted to the discourse domain (Zholashieva et al., 2022). It is assumed that the discourse contains components that exist prior to the interpretation of a given text, and can even predict the emergence of the text.

The process of interpretation can be very complex, and in some cases, it can take much longer than the act of communicating, or it can be incomplete. Political discourse is rightly presented as a complex conglomerate of different interpretive texts on separate resources of communicative competencies. From a linguistic perspective, political discourse is seen within the framework of public communication. This sphere includes public disputes and debates, parliamentary speeches, TV and radio discussions, press texts and other sociologically relevant messages appearing in English-language mass media (Toktagazin et al., 2016; Yelubay et al., 2022).

Political discourse is an element of public discourse. It consists of statements made by people belonging to the power elite regarding their political roles and functions. Political discourse includes statements made by politicians within their assigned roles in political institutions (Berkimbaev et al., 2013). For example, in parliament, in sessions of political bodies of different levels, in party meetings, and meetings of deputies or councillors with the population, at campaign rallies, gatherings, and international political institutions. One of the characteristics of political discourse is the coverage of political topics and their expression in the media.

Parliament is one of the key elements of the political system. The parliamentary system is characterised by political pluralism. In a broad sense, the principle of political pluralism refers to the multiplicity of lifestyles and value systems preferred by individuals in a given society. In a system of political pluralism, social groups that reflect certain value systems must be represented in parliament. They determine the structure and principles of political parties, their record-keeping, the principles of funding, and how party objectives or activities are declared. Each statement should be treated as the implementation of a certain plan, the assumption of which is to achieve a chosen goal. Interlocutors achieve it by using available linguistic and extralinguistic resources (Ibragim et al., 2020).

The aim of the study is to examine the linguistic and cognitive features of English-language political discourse.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The methodological basis of the research was formed by the following approaches to the study of this topic: cognitive, linguistic, annunciative analysis.

The cognitive method considers a common expression used to classify and merge the works that emphasise the importance of elements of knowledge, ideas, perceptions or social beliefs in the development of political discourse. The notion of the cognitive has the significant interest of shifting the view and hypotheses on aspects of public action that so far seem to have been ignored by approaches inspired by Marxism and the sociology of organisations. Rather than seeing the political aspect as an institution whose action is determined by the influence of the social structure and, in particular, class conflict, the notion of the cognitive tends to show that certain processes develop socialisation mechanisms that can lead to a coherent and normative set that fills English-language political discourse.

A significant contribution of cognitive elements in linguistic semantics consists in the prototypical categorisation model introduced for the analysis of meaning, especially of words. Some attempted applications have also been made in phonology, morphology, syntax, text linguistics, and speech act theory.

The linguistic approach points to a continuum between sentence and discourse. It should be seen as a tool designed to guide the understanding of communicative exchanges that are discursive in nature. It is a coding tool common to information relating to the propositional semantics and pragmatic discursive coherence of the political context. The bulk of grammatical coding is deployed in the discursive pragmatics area, thereby signalling the coherence of information conveyed in its situational, inter-phrase and cultural context.

It becomes obvious that a textual grammar based on the naive notion that there is a criterion of textuality comparable to that of sentence grammar is doomed to formulate rules that will be defective at the slightest possibility. However, this does not prevent from considering operations performed by subjects to calculate the coherence of a sequence of statements, since coherence must be present. Hence the evolution of text grammars towards models called procedural, which must describe the computations performed by interpreters to determine the coherence of a sequence.

The discourse opposition does not separate the linguistic phenomena that fall within the sentence and those that are subject to the text but rather seeks to highlight the different properties, phrase, and textual, of the same linguistic structure.

Annunciative analysis is partly based on syntactic and semantic studies, and seeks to highlight the speaker's presence in

his speech and to characterise his attitude in political English discourse. It is based on the relation of the units to each other in the discourse, their syntagmatic relations: subjectivity is carried by the units, they are deployed in context and use a separate dynamic.

The methodology consists of an exhaustive analysis of statements and all the elements that can mark the speaker's subjectivity: expressive elements, subjective lexicon, language levels. It is also important to consider at this level the phenomena of negation and modalisation, which allow characterising how the speaker perceives a statement. At the syntactic level, it was first noted that the personal pronoun "I" is the most frequent actualiser, syntactic subject, and a privileged feature. Linking it with other first-person pronoun forms, it is possible to stress that the latter is also the most frequent within syntactic object and dative case functions. The analysis focuses mainly on structuring interactions by means of an interactive structure through speech.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Most linguistic studies of political discourse focus on speeches delivered by political elites. This situation is due to a limited understanding of the concept of political discourse, which recognises the potential diversity of political facets, ranging from professional politicians to concerned citizens. To have a political impact, any speech must actually perform a political action and be tied to a well-defined communicative context. As a result, in order to operationalise the concept of "political discourse", it should be restricted to the discourse of professional elements created in an institutional context. Cognitive metaphor is often used in political discourse, as a suggestive means of expressing meaning and announcing evaluations, that is, as a tool of persuasion to shape the views, opinions, and behaviour of recipients in terms of the interests of the actor of a particular political party or social group. This role is best performed by metaphors with a simple syntactic structure, strongly conventional, and using stereotypical content in their carrier (Chilton & Schaffner, 2011). In its description, the formative mechanism emphasises the special status of the metaphorical predicate, which is suggested by the sender of the statement and independently produced by the recipient using the connotation of the carrier of the metaphor. The evaluation expressed in this way is not subject to outright denial and is therefore highly persuasive.

Discursive political analysis is in search of a new theoretical breath. For their part, cognitive sciences have integrated questions of context and culture, and are now drawing on intellectual history, which now recognises the place given to mental activity in the modelling of language production. The encounter seems inevitable, and on the still narrow and new ground that this articulation forms, some studies attempt to explain the cognitive dimension in the discursive dimension and vice versa. Today several directions are emerging and among them the articulation of discourse and cognition, which includes the phenomenology of perception and social cognition in the political dimension (Judd & Downing, 1990).

Discourse analysis is undergoing a cognitive turn based on a re-examination of the question of context in the disciplines of textual discourse. The appeal to these cognitions forces a rethinking of the notion of context, which can provide new elements and perspectives on this complex reality. The use of metaphors carrying different evaluative connotations but originating from the same semantic area, and the inventive witty transformation of the carrier of the metaphor, practised with a purpose to divert attention from the evaluative content conveyed in the same way, can serve as a component to neutralise evaluation in political discourse. Playful operations, often carried out with metaphors, enhance the persuasive power of politicians' statements in their own right.

The area of "discourse and cognition" is represented by the theory of "mental models", which is a weak version of cognition within a social and cognitive approach to political discourse, inspired by approaches to social cognition based on theoretical choices about the nature of mind and the definition of context as the material environment (Kolyeva et al., 2021). This view is based on the idea of external cognition within an extra-linguistic paradigm. Thus, the analysis of political discourse considers the concept of context as a continuum between the internal and the external: context integrates environmental data, which at the same time is constituted by the internal framework of a particular material environment.

Therefore, linguistic and discursive tools contribute cognitively to discourse and should be considered in methodological theories of discourse analysis. The discourse of the "cognitive turn" is somewhat stereotypical, but it allows to name a set of elements that draw on a call for cognitive data to rethink the functioning of texts and speech. This call includes the question of the nature and functioning of context. From a linguistic perspective, the aim of political English-language discourse is precisely to define mental scope and to identify forms of language that are at the same time products and configurations. The choice of referents in a cognitive context almost inevitably leads to a weak version of cognition, weak in relation to the chosen object of the linguistic order (Li et al., 2022).

Unlike discourse or interaction, contexts in the political dimension are usually not observable at all, whether traditionally defined as situational, social constraints or as mental constructions. For the record, text and conversation are observable only in a very specific sense of public accessibility, assuming a shared knowledge of the participants, because obviously grammatical and other discursive structures, including semantic ones, cannot be seen directly. Contexts become

observable only through their implications for discourse or, conversely, through the impact of discourse on different situations. In this approach, cognition is an explanatory hypothesis, quite powerful in its principle, but weak in its implementation, and in its methodological possibilities: without the observable, it does not allow for a possible description of cognitive processes, forms or contents, mental and linguistic, which are interconnected with each other. The joint of English-language political discourse and cognition proposed here is the result of a theoretical reflection based on cognitive semantics and the connections between cognitive structures and discursive products in terms of linguistic forms rather than informational content.

To formulate a cognitive approach to the theoretical techniques of political discourse analysis, it is necessary to address the level of non-linguistic cognition, following paradigms that include linguistic cognition in all human activities in line with the constructivist approach. The hypothesis, based on the existence of external cognitive structures, has developed through a conception that suggests a kind of subjective reversibility of context: to think of mind, memory, and linguistic capacity as external, which implies a rethinking of context as internal in relation to mind and memory. This implication entails two others: to present to discursive linguistics as a field of observation the continuity between these two cognitive sources and to leave the interindividual relationship to the study of the relationship between human and non-human agents.

Cognitive attractors are a set of material and non-material elements involved in a political activity that is simultaneously presented to the perception of the subject (Anđić et al., 2021). The joint perception of several elements of the same activity draws the subject into this process. In other words, when a subject is in the presence of a significant part of a scope of activity, they are "in condition" to perform it and tend to "get to work" (Oakhill & Garnham, 1996; Shevchenko & Markova, 2019). Cognitive mechanisms are external representations of linguistic and discursive political norms and as such circulate in a cognitive system composed of human and non-human agents, and situational parameters in a broad sense. Objects are cognitive actors of discourse production who instruct speech to construct the forms and contents of the discourse.

In most definitions concerning the object of discourse analysis, the conditions of production are part of the way of comprehending it. Speech is characterised by the spheres of activity to which it belongs. If a text, distinguished primarily in terms of genre, ultimately belongs to political discourse, then it is conditioned by the presence of a particular theme in the course of its development, and a lexicon, or even an argumentative mode of organisation. Political speech can be defined as any speech, the content of which touches upon political issues, regardless of the source of the speech: whether it comes from a politician, a journalist, or an ordinary citizen.

The integral text of Barack Obama's (2021) political discourse in English can serve as an example: "My dear comrades, today is a wonderful day! The wind of change has blown on our country and our ideas of progress will spread everywhere in the world. We have all the keys to creating a new world. Tomorrow's society is free from oppression, from all kinds of oppressions. We will fight to destroy racism, we will fight to destroy sexism, we will fight to destroy homophobia and we will fight any kind of class contempt! Of course, we were used to living evenings of defeats more than triumphant mornings. But with the force of patience, we have earned the right to start over and we did and we won. We won thanks to all the militants, all the people involved in this revolution and I want to give a tribute to all these people. I think that we must always fight, at least to save us from the shame of not having tried. The doubt is about the possibility of reaching change in the world, but not on the need to try it. We need to take action and we are tomorrow".

The mass media offer specific strategies of political discourse to reach a public opinion, and this is particularly the case during moments of intense political debates, such as elections (Bakirov et al., 2021). They become particular means of creating political discourse, while at the same time imposing new rules on it. The choices made by the media are fundamental for the control of the meaning by the speaker and for its perception. The choice of medium, the type of programme and its production are important and strategic factors for politicians, and the meaning they create in this case. Its main aspect is the discourse of influence, the purpose of which is to influence another to act, to think, to believe. This idea of influence also implies that political discourse is directed at someone.

It is accepted that there is a need to persuade and reach an as wide audience as possible. This need to appeal to "public opinion" has grown with the development of mass media and has transformed contemporary political discourse. The mass media have become the voice of public opinion, and at the same time the privileged medium for conveying political ideas (Khairullayeva et al., 2022; Zhanysbayeva et al., 2021). English-language political discourse very often lends itself to discursive analysis because it is an area of meaning construction based on a certain balance between the structure aimed at creating a discourse of influence by well-defined conditions of production. The study is part of a triple perspective at the intersection of linguistics, discourse analysis, culturology, and communication to explore how these discourses and practices are shaped by social reality in all its dimensions.

At the intersection of the fields of linguistics, discourse analysis, cultural studies and communication, the political aspect examines how discourses and discursive practices are informed by the social context in its multiple dimensions. Linguistic

and cognitive approaches to it constantly overlap with questions and tools, forged in political science, for example, when it comes to understanding the conditions of production and reception of the discourse under analysis, which qualifies as “political”. This qualification, however, is by no means self-evident, since the boundary between the political and the non-political is itself an object of ongoing negotiation and confrontation in collective mobilisations in both the humanities and the social sciences (Chyzmar & Hoblyk, 2021). It can be seen in relatively broad terms as containing a position on the distribution of places in the social world.

The speech of politician and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson (2021) can serve as an example: "I know that millions of people across this country have made extraordinary sacrifices over the last 18 months, adding that he recognised their “anguish” at being unable to mourn relatives and live their lives normally. I know the rage they feel with me and with the Government I lead, when they think that in Downing Street itself the rules are not being properly followed by the people who make the rules".

Hence, any discourse is embedded in a particular framework of action that defines the social identities, goals, and social roles of the partners in the language exchange. This framework includes a set of constraints that determine the discursive behaviour of the partners (Gulmira et al., 2022; Chung et al., 2021).

Political discourse has no meaning outside of action and that in action the exercise of power is played out for the political actor. Consequently, discourse theory understands the relationship between action and power. Speech and action are two components of social exchange that have their own autonomy. It is from their combination that the meaning of linguistic exchange is born.

The facts of language are essential facts of communication that have a double dimension. The so-called “external” dimension, is that the actors involved have psychological and social attributes that are a priori independent of their linguistic behaviour since their identity and their intentionality are linked to the experience of a chain of facts and events in the world (Sherban et al., 2020). The so-called “internal” dimension possesses basically linguistic attributes, which can relate to psychological and social aspects, but this time as speech entities. It is through their linguistic realisations that subjects discover the identity and purpose of influence (Ortynskyy et al., 2018).

Not only is the same political lexicon and the same expressions found in the mouths of almost all members of the political class, but this vocabulary is daily “seeping in” through the intensive spread of the mass media in most social and political circles. There is a strong homogenisation of the general social and political lexicon, and an intensive penetration of terms into an increasing number of social spheres in a broad sense. It is within this framework that the project of influence of the communicating subject emerges. This person transitions to a discursive setting in which they combine goals imposed on them by situational constraints and aims corresponding to their communicative project according to the way they represent the interlocutor (Amangeldiyeva et al., 2020).

The interpreting subject of the metaphor, for their part, constructs the meaning of the message they receive by combining the data of the situational framework they need to know and those they perceive in the production of the political discourse as specific to the communicating subject. Such positioning is the result of combining the constraints of the framework, which relates to the speaker's vision of the social world, knowledge and value systems. This impact on the other through reliance on the visions of the world and values that circulate in society joins the problem of the communicative act, provided that it is understood in linguistic terms. This act, which is communication, as a result of a linguistic exchange, occurs due to the effects and transformations produced by linguistic facts.

The speech of Canadian politician Justin Trudeau (2021) is a similar example of political discourse: “Thank you, my friends! You are sending us back to work with a clear mandate to get Canada through this pandemic, and to the brighter days ahead, and my friends, that's exactly what we are ready to do. There are still votes to be counted. But what we've seen tonight is that millions of Canadians have chosen a progressive plan. Some have talked about division, but that's not what I see. That's not what I've seen these past weeks, across the country. I see Canadians, standing together. Together, in your determination to end this pandemic. Together for real climate action, for \$10-a-day child care, for homes that are... for middle-class families. For our shared journey on the path of reconciliation. As Canadians, you've elected parliamentarians to deliver on all of this, and our team, our government, is ready”.

The political language of cognitive metaphor suggests rigidity and determinism. Other images tend to make the linguistic structure in a mechanistic and political way. Metaphor affects the very structure of thinking. This is evidenced by recent advances in cognitive linguistics, where it underpins thought processes and concepts (Botalova et al., 2016). Metaphor allows arriving at sensitive concepts, to create conceptual synaesthesia that engages all senses and influences decision-making, giving political discourse a sensibility. The choice of the right metaphors is fundamental as it affects identity, not just the verb.

The construction of discourse has a strategic sense of action, i.e., there are clearly defined aim and development paths, as

well as opposites or obstacles that may pose threats on the playing field. The creation of an adversary in political discourse is so repetitive that it is undoubtedly controversial and evokes different emotions in the recipients of the message. Those who take part in political discourse are not only limited to communicating or speaking impartially about a particular situation but are also committed to a position if they are directly attached to a particular position. In general, the interest of persuasion is not directed towards a political enemy but instead appeals to its supporters and allies. Similarly, it seeks to enable those who are undecided to participate in its cause. In this type of discourse, the recipient can make decisions and take positions on past events. This occurs in traditional interpretations of reports made by managers that evaluate the performance of leaders (Lau et al., 1991; Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Korsunskaja et al., 2022).

Political discourse focuses on demonstrating the adoption of decisive and necessary measures to improve governance. Consequently, it is a kind of oratory that appeals to sufficiently supportive elements and needs to be tested as more than convincing, in addition to making sure that it is done correctly. The genre includes pre-election and parliamentary speeches, which are used in a context where a group of people decide on a transcendent and future issue, such as the adoption of a law or appointing someone to public office (Fussell & Krauss, 1992). Such discourse almost always develops by demonstrating for or against the decision to be made. The speaker defends what he or she considers useful or harmful.

A characteristic element of argumentative discourse is that the argumentation used is often inductive, going from the particular to the general (Sakibayev & Sakibayeva, 2016). Political discourse faces as many questions as there are problems or needs as they arise. An important linguistic feature is a coherence, an attribute through which statements in a text are correctly linked lexically and grammatically. The attributes texture that makes up the single semantic product of the verbal one, as such, function globally in the communicative situation in which it is correctly embedded.

The linguistic conceptualisation of the English political language takes place in a double movement of semantics between the universal and the particular, on more or less abstract levels. Discursive conceptualisation occurs in a double movement of semantics between the social norm and individual specificity of knowledge, with knowledge here understood as a set of shared belief systems (Clark, 1996; Lodge & McGraw, 1995).

#### 4. Conclusions

The conducted corpus analysis revealed both common and different conceptual features, which are conditioned by the cultural and historical peculiarities of the formation and development of the nation, as well as the individual

Hence, English-language political discourses are directly effective tools in determining either the style of governance of a society or a factor of persuasion in decision-making processes in every historical period. Political figures create different arguments to convey their thoughts to their interlocutors through certain methods. These arguments are embedded in discourses and point to a specific aim or intention. Moving from the intrafrastic allows considering the rules governing the elements of the sentence, including the aspect of the statement through which sentences as structures slip to the statement as the speaker's intended concrete realisation and involving all the elements of the situation necessary to anchor the actualisation of the statement, linking political discourse to what happens when one goes beyond the sentence.

In the linguistic field, statement and cognitive approaches consider figures in political discourse and give meaning to the terminological shift illustrated by the competing denominations of "rhetorical figures", "style figures", and "discourse figures", which aim to evaluate more precisely the interaction between figures and context. There is a long tradition of linguistic research on political discourse, but little attention has been paid to what is understood by the concept of political discourse itself. The results of the analysis reveal a real difference between the relevant structures of English-language discourse, which allows for a better understanding of what a political genre and its textual registers might represent. Politicians all over the world use different methods when creating their discourses and try to create a powerful tool with multiple references and grounds. Many elements are used to enhance the effect of discourses.

Discourse, in all its forms, is central to research and discussion in the linguistic sciences. In fact, the needs for linguistic structure imply a choice of speech adapted to the purposes, and the type of audience. In the context of cognitive language, however, two main problems arise, in particular the problem of discourse characteristics recognition and the problem of the analytical tool. Pragmatic order corresponds to the function of the practice of the order in which words are conveyed and the appropriateness of the information provided.

It is accepted that establishing coherence is a central aspect of understanding speech. Consequently, processing the meaning of political discourse involves reconstructing the coherence relations that unite the individual utterances expressed in the text into a larger whole.

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