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# Linguistic approaches and modern communication technologies in political discourses in Europe and the USA (contrastive aspect)

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*Nataliia Shkvorchenko* \*  
*Irina Cherniaieva* \*\*  
*Nataliya Petlyuchenko* \*\*\*

## Abstract

In this study, we analyze the political discourse of the United States and Europe in terms of linguistic approaches. Among the methods we use are systemic, structural, functional, content analysis, discourse analysis and thesaurus method. Its application took place within the theory of discourse. The study found that the main difference between the political discourses of Europe and the United States are the forms and means of communication, the formats of their distribution and the massive indicators of inclusion of the population (recipient of political discourse) in the communicative interaction. The difference is also the centralization and the levels at which the discourse develops. For example, the focus of political rhetoric on the institution of the U.S. presidency makes the presidential speech a reflection of public opinion. This is not typical of European countries, as pluralism of opinion is widespread there, communication takes place at local, regional, national, and supranational level. In addition, the European identity is in the process of being deeded. However, both discourses have in common the commitment to the values of democracy, but they manifest themselves differently.

**Keywords:** political discourse; political communication; communication technologies; linguistic approaches; comparative politics.

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\* Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Romano-Germanic Philology and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages, International Humanitarian University, Odesa, Ukraine. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7146-7244>. Email: [nshkvorchenko@gmail.com](mailto:nshkvorchenko@gmail.com)

\*\* Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Vice-Rector for Scientific and Pedagogical, Organizational and Educational Work and International Relations of the Odesa National Music Academy named after A. V. Nezhdanova, Ukraine. Vicerector. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0703-4548>. Email: [irina.cherniaieva@gmail.com](mailto:irina.cherniaieva@gmail.com)

\*\*\* Doctor of Philology, Professor, Head of the Department of Foreign Languages of the Odesa National Music Academy named after A. V. Nezhdanova, Ukraine. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8089-2947>. Email: [natalja.petljutschenko@onua.edu.ua](mailto:natalja.petljutschenko@onua.edu.ua)

## Enfoques lingüísticos y tecnologías modernas de la comunicación en los discursos políticos en Europa y EE. UU (Aspecto comparativo)

### Resumen

En este estudio, analizamos el discurso político de Estados Unidos y Europa en términos de enfoques lingüísticos. Entre los métodos que utilizamos se encuentran el sistémico, estructural, funcional, análisis de contenido, análisis del discurso y método de tesaurus. Su aplicación tuvo lugar dentro de la teoría del discurso. El estudio encontró que la principal diferencia entre los discursos políticos de Europa y Estados Unidos son las formas y medios de comunicación, los formatos de su distribución y los indicadores masivos de inclusión de la población (receptora del discurso político) en la interacción comunicativa. La diferencia es también la centralización y los niveles en los que se desarrolla el discurso. Por ejemplo, el enfoque de la retórica política en la institución de la presidencia de Estados Unidos hace que el discurso presidencial sea un reflejo de la opinión pública. Esto no es típico de los países europeos, ya que el pluralismo de opinión está muy extendido allí, la comunicación tiene lugar a nivel local, regional, nacional y supranacional. Además, la identidad europea está en proceso de formación. Sin embargo, ambos discursos tienen en común el compromiso con los valores de la democracia, pero se manifiestan de manera diferente.

**Palabras clave:** discurso político; comunicación política; tecnologías de la comunicación; enfoques lingüísticos; política comparada.

### Introduction

Language exists and influences us from two positions. First, it is a social entity and at the same time contributes to social organization. It performs a number of functions. In particular, among them: identification, aesthetic function, nominative, cultural, etc. Political discourse analysis today is a promising area of research. The very concept of discourse has Latin origins (from latin *discursus* - "conversation", "talk"). Today, it refers to any phenomenon of speech reality that has features, functions, and structure (Pavlutska, 2008). In turn, such a field of research as text linguistics analyzes language in its practical dimension based on the laws inherent in any text (Ozadovska, 2004).

Berger & Luckmann (1967), Dreher (2016) were among the first to talk about the possibility of language structures to influence the formation of power structures. They analyzed the extent to which what we call the real

world can be socially constructed and what factors influence it. In particular, they point to the possibility of social mobilization under the influence of political factors with the use of communication technologies.

In this study, we attempted to analyze the political discourses of the United States and Europe as the world's leading democratic leaders based on linguistic approaches and the use of modern communication technologies.

## 1. Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Many publications in domestic (Arbeláez-Campillo *et al.*, 2020; Sarani and Dehshiri, 2019) and foreign journals are devoted to the issues of discourse in general and political discourse in particular. The definition of discourse, according to van Dijk (2006a), has become widespread in academia. Consequently, discourse should be understood as a text in context – suitable data for empirical analysis (critical discourse analysis). According to Fairclough (1995), discourse is a broader concept than the text, because it covers the circumstances of speech, the intentions of the speaker, the expectations of the addressee / recipient / client, their relationship with the addressee; includes environment, context, style of speech.

As van Dijk (2006b) points out, political elites are aware of the methods and means of struggle used in political discourse and are ready to defend their positions by tarnishing the reputation of their opponents. In his view, the characterization of discourse as political requires the presence of such parties as politicians and recipients (van Dijk, 1997). Interesting, from his point of view, is the position, according to which it is not necessary to use an incomplete informative picture and figurative, veiled expressions to convince the public of an already legitimized policy strategy. At the same time, the legitimation of controversial views is most often carried out through hints, omissions, and sometimes even double-meaning jokes (van Dijk, 2006a). Fairclough (1995) points out that for such hidden intentions to become part of political discourse, they must acquire ideological features. The ideology, in this case, is the social reality that exists in the minds of a group of people who share common ideals, values, and, most importantly, beliefs (van Dijk, 1998). According to van Dijk (1993), political discourse is a reflection of the social reality in which the concepts of power and dominance prevail. To establish this connection, political actors can use the polarization “we” against “them” to emphasize their strengths and weaknesses opponents.

In her work, Kovaleva (2020) conducted a study of the views of Ukrainian and foreign linguists on the concept, typology, types, functions of political discourse. Accordingly, it is possible to give the following precedents regarding the definition of political discourse from the point of view of different researchers. For example, Serazhim (2002) points out that political

discourse is a text conditioned by a situation of political communication. A similar definition was proposed by Arutyunova (1990), who believes that immersion in communication is a discourse. According to Kondratenko (2007), political discourse should be understood as a communicative act of interaction between participants in political communication. From the point of view of Sheigal (2000), discourse is a sign formation that in the real dimension has verbal and nonverbal features of expression, and in the virtual has extralinguistic. Kryvyi (2001) notes that political discourse is a coherent text expressed through verbal and nonverbal means, immersed in an extralinguistic environment. Moreover, Vashchuk (2007) adds that it also has its pragmatic expression or orientation. Slavova (2012) guides the factors of traditionalism and established practice of discourse in politics and public communication. Kasiyan (2014) agrees with it and adds that political discourse should be considered as a socio-political phenomenon. According to Kovaleva herself (2020), political discourse is a communicative event, the components of which are the text (in written or oral form), the social context, and the addressee. Extralinguistic features play a significant role in the nature of political discourse. For example, the status of the speaker, the situation of the speech, style, means of communication, time and place of the event, purpose, and goals of communication, expectations of the audience, etc. Technology allows political discourse to manifest itself directly or indirectly, at the time of communication (public speaking, face-to-face communication with voters) or on television, video, audio, etc. The use of social networks in political discourse (conducting polls, posts, reposts, links, likes, etc.) has made it more widespread and efficient.

## 1. Methodology

We applied a systematic method to demonstrate the interaction of communicative elements such as verbal, nonverbal, and extralinguistic factors and their importance in shaping the concept of discourse in general and political discourse in particular. Its use can be found in sections on political discourse in the United States and Europe, specifically in places where elements of political discourse are discussed.

Moreover, we used the structural method to show the construction of discourse. For example, it is explained that political discourse consists of the addressee, speech (written or oral text), the context in which it is immersed, ways and means of communicative interaction (communicative act), other factors of extralinguistic nature.

Further, the authors practiced the functional method to demonstrate the role of political discourse in public communication, the role of mass media in shaping and maintaining political discourse, the functions of

political discourse, such as power struggles, information, communication with voters, ideological function, value orientation, agitation (propaganda), image function, etc.

Besides, discourse analysis and content analysis are utilized to analyze quantitative characteristics, language tools, linguistic techniques in political discourse, in particular, the 46th President of the United States – Joseph Biden.

The researchers managed the thesaurus method to focus on definitions of linguistic units. For example, its use can be seen in the sections devoted to researchers' views on the concept of discourse, political discourse, and on the role of metaphors and their use in political discourse.

The methods we used for the research were applied in the framework of discourse theory.

## **2. Results and Discussion**

### **The limits of the study. What is political discourse?**

The author of the theory of discourse is considered to be Benveniste (1966, 1971). From his point of view, discourse should be understood not only as impersonal, objectively existing linguistic material, but also as a communicative situation where there is a speaker and the addressee, and communication itself is carried out through active actions of the speaker using linguistic means. Discourse can also be seen as an act of communication in the course of its interaction with the context. In a narrow sense, discourse focuses on the analysis of linguistic communication.

The lens of research on political discourse includes texts of speeches, interviews, statements of politicians, political experts, programs of political parties, publications in the media, materials of specialized political science publications. Political discourse belongs to the institutional form of communication (Shegal, 2004). It is status-oriented and is divided into representatives of institutions and clients. The client of political communication is a mass "consumer". Political discourse is not isolated and is intertwined with other types of discourses, such as legal, scientific, artistic, etc. Peculiarities of political discourse that form its structure are institutionality, the predominance of values over facts, semantic uncertainty, ideological polysemy, fideism, and esotericism (Akinchyts, 2007). According to some researchers, political discourse tends to authoritarianism and distancing itself from the masses (Shegal, 2004). However, current research on populism in politics shows that the main element of communication between such politicians is the formation of the

image of “their man”, closeness to the people, and, conversely, distancing and criticism of government institutions and professional politicians with experience in government (Protsenko, 2018). Political discourse is the object of study in various fields of knowledge. For example, political science is interested in the influence of discourse on the political process, philologists are interested in it as a living text. A popular area of research is political philology, which explores the relationship of discourse with the concepts of power, influence, authority. Sheigal (2004) notes that it is not easy to unambiguously distinguish political discourse from others because there are points of intersection with other types. For example, if a political figure creates a publication in the media or writes a scientific monograph, the question of the limits of discourse arises (Akinchyts, 2007). In this sense, categorization can be carried out based on the direction of speech or by meeting the criteria inherent in political discourse. For example, when it comes to values, national identification, etc. In addition, there is a view that political discourse covers all ways of communication of political figures, that is, if the party to the communicative act is a politician, it is likely to speak of political discourse because politics is always public (Akinchyts, 2007).

The history of oral political discourse has been studied since ancient Greek times (Averintsev, 1996). A significant element of it was oratory: clarity of speech, relevance to the topic, the importance of time and place, the perfection of form, persuasiveness, and naturalness. The oral form of discourse is personal. Behind this is the individuality of the speaker, as well as the specific language tools he uses. These can be both verbal, nonverbal, and extralinguistic techniques. The main feature of written political discourse is the formal reproduction, fixation on material media.

Political discourse is a kind of argumentative practice (Akinchyts, 2007). The main difference from other such practices is the appeal of political discourse to the values of recipients / clients. Propaganda stands out in a special kind of belief in political discourse as a means of manipulating people’s minds with various kinds of information and language (Sharapanovska, 2016). Appeal to the addressee’s value orientation is used through concepts such as equality, justice, freedom, democracy, etc. In this case, the evaluation characteristic can be both positive and have negative connotations, depending on the goal set by the speaker.

The purpose of argumentation in political discourse is the formation of the value orientation of the addressees (Akinchyts, 2007). Usually, persuasion is achieved through the comparison of antonymous units. Most often, politicians can hear comparisons of the achievements of their administration and their predecessors. In addition, a frequent technique is the use of comparative vocabulary in the context of record achievements: “one of the first”, “has no analogs in the world”, “for the first time in history”, etc.

## Features of political discourse of the United States

The United States is characterized by the stability of democratic institutions. At one time, Fomenko (1998) noted that in the formation of political discourse in the United States, the activities of public administration, speeches of presidents, communication with society are carefully thought out, their goal is to create a positive image of the state, strengthen faith in democracy and democratic institutions. The media play a significant role in this. The researcher described social factors as conscious, synchronous, microsocal, and positive. Extralinguistic factors such as ideology, propaganda, mass communication, the feminist movement, and the struggle of ethnic minorities for their rights are also important in American political discourse (ibid). It is also characterized by the expansion of terminology due to derivatives of word-forming bases or established phrases. The formation of nouns, adjectives, and verbs based on the names of politicians is common. For example, “Reaganomics”, “Bushism”, “Trumpism”, etc.

The axiological nature of American political discourse is shaped by value tokens. They elicit a positive cognitive response in recipients. Public communication needs to adhere to political correctness. For example, ethno-social discourse on minorities and women requires special adherence to ethical standards. Political correctness, as noted by Morris (2001), refers to intentional correction of speech to avoid ambiguous and negative reactions of recipients. Speech techniques that are most often used by public figures to suggest recipients are repetition, contrast and opposition, metaphorization, creating a positive evaluation perspective to cover their own activities and negative - for the activities of opponents (Fomenko, 1998). Presidential discourse is formed on the basis of one's own achievements. The use of personal pronouns such as “we”, “they”, “our”, etc., is a means of creating an appropriate cognitive effect in the minds of recipients of political discourse (Proctor, Lily, & Su, 2011). In turn, this can serve as a basis for consolidation with some social groups in opposition to others. The issue of consolidation in political discourse becomes especially relevant during elections. During this period, a politician needs to demonstrate identification with a group of people whose interests he seeks to defend. At the same time, it is advantageous for both candidates, who usually find themselves in a race for office, to clearly distinguish between them, separate political programs with their own characteristics, so that voters can clearly distinguish the policies of one candidate from another and choose their own.

B Metaphors play an essential role in the communication of public figures and their potential voters (Musolff, 2004). For communication to be successful and metaphors to be clear to their recipients, it is necessary that there is a correspondence between what the addressee wanted to say and the consciousness, knowledge, experience of the recipients. Ideally, if

communication between them is successful, the aspirations and expectations of the politician and his support groups are exactly the same. Metaphors, in public discourse, can be analyzed using the methods of content analysis, intent analysis, semantic and stylistic methods. For example, in his speech on November 8, 2020, then President-elect Biden used the metaphors of unity, equality, and freedom for US citizens (Rahayu, Suastini, & Jayantini, 2021; Siregar, 2021). Later, in his inaugural address, the President used metaphors for the unity and reconstruction of America. For example, the metaphor of the United States as a guide to freedom of speech for the whole world was heard. Repetitions are also used: “much to do, much to heal, much to restore”, паралелізми: “listen to one another again, hear one another, see one another. Show respect to one another” (Biden, 2021).

Most often, in his speech, Joe Biden used the pronouns we, our, us to emphasize unity with the American people, thus speaking on his behalf and in his honor. Words such as unity, one nation, together, join forces, all Americans were used to support this idea. According to some researchers, this speech served more to express their own ideological position than to convey the message (Masalova, 2021). The speeches of American presidents usually include 11 topics, including political succession, the role of the President as a defender of the Constitution, national unity, support for the people, civic duty, the American mission, God, basic policy principles, cooperation with Congress. Joe Biden’s inaugural speech performs a persuasive (persuasive) function, carefully selecting vocabulary and influencing the emotional and value spheres of the recipients’ consciousness (Ananko, 2021; Masalova, 2021).

The institution of the US presidency tends to be the embodiment of public opinion in the country. The President is expected to respond to current and future challenges.

Legitimization (from the Latin “legitimus” - legitimate) is a component of any political discourse. It comes from the Latin “lex / legis”, i.e., law / agreement. The semantics of “justification” is used concerning legitimization outside of legal jargon. For example, if in political discourse we use the semantic construction “if they do one thing, then there will be responsibility - and it will be fair”, then there is a legitimization of the use of coercion under certain initial conditions based on values, in this case - on the principle justice and the inevitability of punishment. Examples from personal experience can also be used as a method of legitimization. For example, “I have been convinced by my own experience”, “my life experience tells me”, “I know it because I was there”, “at my age”, “I have witnessed it”, etc. A separate category of research on political discourse in the United States is the legitimization of racism, for example, when accusing a victim of discrimination based on skin color or ethnicity (Reyes, 2011).

A crucial aspect of the public activities of political figures in the United States is the issue of representation. The formation of political discourse in this aspect is through the creation of an appropriate image, which is a reflection of the interests of the audience on the one hand and the desire to meet these requirements on the part of the political actor. Thus, these two vectors meet and are embodied in its image, through which units of information are transmitted, which are certain messages for the audience. For example, recent discourse analysis shows that the main messages of US President Joe Biden's 46th President are are slogans of American reconstruction ("build back better"), consolidation, reunification ("together"), and recovery ("heal") (Ananko, 2021; Masalova, 2021; Siregar, 2021).

Communication on Twitter is mostly asynchronous, which means that political discourse can sometimes get carried away by discussing a tweet or other post a long time ago. For example, this is typical of the election period, when controversial tweets of political opponents become a tool to combat them (Kruikemeier, 2014; Masroor, Khan, Aib, & Ali, 2019). The use of political discourse analysis in social networks is a promising area of research for new forms of communication between public administration and the general public ("mass reader") (Bouvier, 2015).

The main thing for American politicians on Twitter is to form a clear and concise message, respond quickly to news, productive feedback from voters, attract as many supporters as possible, spread their influence, and maintain an attractive image (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Hwang, 2013; Schneiker, 2019).

### **Political discourse in European countries**

When it comes to the political discourse of the European Union, several problems arise. For example, how to form public communication when we are dealing with a supranational entity that has long since ceased to be a regional economic partnership organization? The problem of forming a single European identity is even deeper because the EU consists of countries with different cultures, economies, and national components. The question arises, how should political discourse be formed for communication to contribute to the goals of European integration and be successful? To whom should lexical devices be addressed? Which of them should be applied and find an emotional and value response in the EU?

It is no secret that discourse theory develops based on linguistics, which uses the achievements of cognitive sciences. In this sense, cognitive-discourse analysis can be applied to the political discourse of European countries (Shcholokova, 2014). The study of concepts encoded in language makes it possible to study them using the tools of cognitive linguistics

(Maslova, 2008). In this regard, it is possible to identify key concepts in the political discourse of European countries. These include: regionalization, supranationality, intergovernmentalism, Europeanization, European identity, etc. (Shchokolokova, 2014). Shchokolokova (2014) uses terms such as deepening and widening concerning the European integration public debate.

Thus, the researcher points out the importance of dialogue for the further development of the political movement and institutional processes in Europe. A feature of the political discourse of European countries is the different approach to European integration dialogue. Its characteristic is fluidity. This means that, depending on the conditions of the socio-economic and historical development of a particular European country, the mood in the context of European integration dialogue depends. For example, when Euroscepticism prevails in one part of Europe, the other makes every effort to overcome obstacles to European integration (Leconte, 2010). The unifying factor is that both countries are in the framework of a public European integration debate.

The political discourse of Europe is characterized by significant decentralization. At first glance, this could be called fragmentation, but the positive aspect of regional and local differences is the common European values that unite different European cultures. In addition, the supranational nature of the EU guarantees a common framework of legal regulation that brings together diverse points of view under one roof. Thus, in the context of pluralism of opinion, it is appropriate to talk about decentralization as a feature of the political discourse of European countries.

The semantic oppositions encountered by participants in the political discourse of European countries include such concepts as: independence – complex interdependency; cooperation – rivalry; the principle of unanimity – the principle of majority; state sovereignty – supranationalism; elitism – democracy; national kinship – cultural diversity; European identity – national identity; consolidation of the Union – enlargement of the Union (Smolyakov, 2010).

Vectors for the development of interaction between the national and supranational political discourse of European countries can be divided into integration and disintegration. They correspond to the concepts of Europeanization and nationalization (domestication) (Shchokolokova, 2014). According to Strezhneva (2005), Europeanization should be understood as the process of creating, disseminating, and institutionalizing formal and informal rules, procedures, political paradigms, styles, common norms, and beliefs, which are first enshrined in decision-making at the EU level and then translated into national political discourse.

Regarding the formation of the political discourse of European countries by the media, the concepts of framing are used, i.e., the formation of the agenda, a specific or a specific agenda. The main issue in this sense is the possibility of forming a pan-European media as opposed to successfully operating in the national communicative space. Indicative in this respect is the coverage of the activities of EU structures and institutions by national media. In this aspect, the discourse analysis helps to highlight the features of European integration sentiments, which are broadcast by the media concerning the above structures and institutions.

### **Conclusions**

The political discourse can be divided into its participants, such as the addressee, verbal, nonverbal, and extralinguistic components of the expression. Political discourse is institutional, consisting of subdiscourses. The media and mass communications (in particular, social networks and messengers) play a significant role in the formation and functioning of political discourse. Under the influence of this, the boundaries of political discourse are constantly moving towards other types of discourse. Political discourse is rhetorical, emotional, manipulative, dynamic, ritual, value-oriented. Its typology is influenced by the purpose and form of communication, the figures of the addressee, the sphere of functioning, the type of communicative interaction. Political discourse, in the narrow sense, comes from political institutions. It is broadly related to political issues and may come from non-professionals. The central function of political discourse is the power struggle, to which its derivative roles such as information (communication), unification, agitation (propaganda, advertising), etc. are subordinated.

The differences between the political discourses of Europe and the United States are the influence of the democratic traditions and institutions of each country, the means and ways of supporting the discourse. The institution of the US presidency has a great influence on the formation of political discourse. The President himself reflects public opinion in the country on several issues. He has hopes to address current and future challenges, adjusting political discourse. In contrast, decentralization and pluralism of decision-makers prevail in Europe. This is also reflected in the different levels of discourse: supranational (pan-European) and national. This approach does not apply to American political discourse because it already has a clear American identity. Democratic values are a unifying factor in American and European political discourses. Ways and means of supporting discourses are the same, but, due to demographic, sociological, and other reasons, popular social networks in the United States have a greater impact on political discourse than in Europe. On the European continent, social

networks tend to play an informative role in political discourse, while in the United States it is a full-fledged and massive platform for political communication, agitation, self-promotion, and debate. The goals and objectives of political actors are common to Europe and the United States and are to gain and / or retain power, spread their authority, and effectively manage and communicate (effective feedback) with citizens.

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