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SYSTEMIC ORGANISATION OF CLIMATE RHETORIC IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The business reputation of a politician is often associated with his skill in public speaking. The relevance of the article relies on the fact that the communicative repertoire used by a public person becomes his hallmark and allows to effectively build professional interaction. The article explores the pragmalinguistic features of forming the image of a politician in modern political discourse. It describes the speech portrait of Donald Trump through the prism of the linguistic personality components, identifies the characteristic features of their speech, compares them from the point of view of the climate agenda, highlights the dynamics of their positions and their verbalization for the period of 2011-2021. The most frequent communicative strategies in the climate rhetoric turned out to be those for increasing influence, appeal to authority, persuasion, refutation and support. They have been applied in the framework of "opponent of environmental protection", "partial supporter", "supporter of the fight against climate change" microroles.

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1. Introduction

Constructive communication aimed at mutually beneficial interaction of both individuals and political institutions and states underlies the further prosperity of society and the preservation of peace. The study of the role of certain topics, methods of presenting information in shaping the image of a politician is also relevant because it allows him to gain the support of the audience and thereby fulfill practical tasks related to the exercise of power. As Pereverzev and Kozhemyakin (2008, p. 75) states, modern political linguistics considers the fact of the existence of power as a performative act, power is exercised in discourse and without "voicing" / "pronunciation" does not exist. In this vein, political discourse denotes the very fact of political life, it is a form of the existence of politics, the implementation of political will.

The subject of research in this article is the means of verbalization of climate rhetoric in the speeches of US political leaders. Climate change and its economic consequences have been on the agenda for many years, however, the last decade has been marked by particularly intensive actions towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions, the search for measures to transform production and the introduction of new environmentally friendly technologies which is reflected in linguistic studies of this type of discourse (Forte, 2021; Forchtner & Özvatan, 2022; Plastina, 2022; Sakellari, 2022; Toivonen, 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

The object of the study is the issue of forming a speech portrait by verbal means, taking into account the intentionality of communication in the political environment (Kharkovskaya et al., 2020; Popova, 2016; Sokolova & Stanislavskaya, 2020; Zagorovskaya, 2013).

Political discourse is carried out in a specific situation and has specific pragmalinguistic features (Murashova, 2021). In pragmalinguistics, the main principle of communicative action is the achievement of specific useful practical consequences (Khramchenko, 2019; Malyuga et al., 2019; Malyuga & Madinyan, 2021). The discourse practice of politics is carried out within a certain context and chronotope in correlation with the specific life orientations and goals of its participants.

Political discourse is characterised by diversity in the selection and use of linguistic means, simultaneous accessibility and complexity in understanding the special terms used, the use of many grammatical forms and combinations of vocabulary, the lack of uniformity of texts in their construction, a special vocabulary of politics, semantic connections between individual political concepts, basic abstractions and metaphors, typical contexts of word usage and construction of judgments (Kuzmin, 2011).

The language of political discourse pursues the main goal of politics - the struggle for power - it uses linguistic, cognitive and communicative tools (Ponomarenko et al., 2020). It should not be forgotten that the political language is not only the prerogative of officials, it is open to every language community. Manipulation in political discourse is verbal and non-verbal messages, unconscious by the author, which create opinions and form stereotypes of behavior through a linguistic image. An example of such an image can be called an assessment on the basis of the "positive-negative" principle. Manipulation includes not only an imperious element, but also involves an element of abuse of discursive power – dominance. Manipulations in political discourse are often carried out due to "distortion of the meaning of words due to ideological, evaluative, modality, fluidity of semantics and pragmatics of the word,

variability of denonative and connonative meanings of the same linguistic signs under the influence of social, cultural and other factors" (Zheltukhina, 2000, p. 78). Thus, the language in the discourse of politics is a means of influence, all the tools of which are used to detect the priority of values and the prevalence of the emotional component over the rational one.

2. Problem Statement

Compared to other countries, the topic of environmental protection and climate change emerged early in the United States. In the late 1980s and early 1990s security already played a role at the very beginning of the political debate on climate change, and contributed to bringing climate change first and foremost on the political agenda (Kholopov, 2021).

Manipulative verbal means most frequently call for the following actions: 1) they designate a threat, which requires 2) the use of an emergency action or special measures, and 3) a significant audience that accepts this designation.

The election of D. Trump as President of the United States in 2016 led to a significant decrease in the importance of climate change at the federal level. D. Trump immediately began attempts to dismantle the internal regulation of environmental policy (for example, the Climate Change Action Plan, the Clean Energy Plan), and in 2017 announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. These events influenced the change of climate discourse vector.

3. Research Questions

The article interprets the politician's speech portrait by the method of functional analysis. It describes the dynamics of Donald Trump's ecological rhetoric through the concepts of communicative strategy and tactics, speech portrait, linguistic personality; the distinctive features of his public performances and communicative repertoire are determined; climate discourse is understood as a dynamic system of views on a certain issue on the political agenda, which is modified under the influence of external factors.

The article answers the questions:

  i.   Is the climate discourse system static and unchanging?
  ii. How is this expressed verbally?
  iii. How is the communicative repertoire of a political leader related to his business image?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the work was to find out what communication strategies are used in the "climate rhetoric" of a political leader, as well as to clarify the role of climate discourse and its dynamics in shaping the image of a politician in general and its impact on business reputation.

5. Research Methods

The interpretation of climate discourse was carried out by selecting relevant speech samples (for the period 2011-2021) of the former American president in the press. The corpus of examples was subjected to functional analysis, including the definition of the communicative goal of the excerpt. Next, the speech means used to achieve this goal were determined. The communicative strategy and tactics were a combination of verbal and extralinguistic means included in the discourse system. According to works on functional linguosynergetics, the system of discourse is a system of its meanings, organized in accordance with the laws of open self-developing systems. It is formed by a combination of means of their speech expression, aimed at achieving a communicative goal (a zone of attraction, a "functional attractor") and possessing self-regulatory properties (Ponomarenko, 2016). Thus, the analysis of the lexical, syntactic, stylistic and pragmatic level of expression was carried out. An important property of open non-linear self-developing systems was observed – the synergism of meanings, the increment of meaning, but not the mechanical initial addition of propositions (Radyuk, 2016). Functional analysis also illustrates an important property of climate rhetoric – dynamism (Radyuk et al., 2019). Like any open system, it is subject to the influence of external factors and fluctuations leading to a new state.

6. Findings

Analyzing the climate rhetoric of the former American president, one should note the dynamics of his speech portrait. D. Trump, in his attitude to green energy and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, goes through stages of rejection, justification, and support. In accordance with these stages, it is possible to distinguish such speech micro-roles as "opponent of environmental protection", "partial support", "supporter of the fight against climate change".

Climate discourse in the abstract sense is represented as a systemic entity that functions according to the laws of self-organization. Turning to the foundations of linguosynergetics, we get the opportunity to interpret it as an open evolving non-linear system of meanings (Ponomarenko, 2018).

The speech portrait of political figures has become an object of study not only in linguistics, but also in political science, sociology and PR. So, the study of Cheung (2021), who analyzes the statements of D. Trump at various periods of his career, is of particular interest.

We have reviewed the President's speech portrait over the past decade. In 2014 D.Trump announced his disapproval of climate agenda saying that "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive." Throughout his election campaign the future president uses the strategy of condemnation and stresses how transition to green technologies can harm the country's economic development.

Thus, in an interview with the New York Times, D. Trump speaks rather evasively about the connection between climate change and the economy and hints that limiting emissions will slow down the work of corporations.

«I think there is some connectivity. There is some, something. It depends on how much. It also depends on how much it's going to cost our companies» (NYT interview, November 2016).

The tactic of evasion is characterised by fragmentary phrases and repetitions. The speaker carefully selects expressions, repeating the beginning of the sentence, which gives the impression of fuzziness, confusion (the indefinite pronoun *some*, *it depends on* instead of direct condemnation). The overall communication strategy is the mitigation strategy. On the other hand, such a way of speech expression makes it possible to avoid categoricalness and avoid sensitive issues. In the long term, in political communication, this property allows you to maneuver between different points of view in a changing global environment. Trump's 2016 speech portrait can be characterized as a "cautious opponent of climate-related economic restrictions".

The intermediate stage of climate rhetoric is characterised by the US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement. In a 2017 statement, D. Trump describes his role as a defender of the interests of ordinary Americans – workers, taxpayers.

The image of D. Trump as a politician in 2017 is based on such values as loyalty, obligations, the well-being of citizens (lexemes *solemn duty, commitments*). The president uses the tactics of creating common values (*wellbeing, fair*), flattery tactics (*great people, who I love*).

*On these issues and so many more, we're following through on **our commitments**. And I don't want anything to get in our way. I am fighting every day for the **great people** of this country. Therefore, in order to fulfill **my solemn duty** to protect America and its citizens, the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord — (applause) — thank you, thank you — but begin negotiations to reenter either the Paris Accord or a really entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its **taxpayers**... As President, I can put no other consideration before the **wellbeing** of American citizens. The Paris Climate Accord is simply the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the **exclusive benefit** of other countries, leaving American workers — **who I love** — and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production* (Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord, 2017).

Interestingly enough in 2018, the speech portrait is changing due to external factors – attention to this issue is growing in the international press and in the global economy as a whole. Having inadvertently called climate change a fake in an interview with Fox News 2014, D. Trump subsequently has to repeatedly "find excuses" for his words.

«I don't think there's a hoax. I do think there's probably a difference. But I don't know that it's man-made... I don't wanna give trillions and trillions of dollars.» (CBS interview, October 2018)

In an interview on the CBS channel, D. Trump resorts to the communicative tactic of partial disagreement. The first part of the statement contains a refutation of the previous statement, and the second explains his opinion.

«Climate change is very important to me. I've done many environmental impact statements in my life, and I believe very strongly in very, very crystal clear clean water and clean air». (December 2019)

In January 2020, D. Trump declares that this topic is serious and should not be the subject of jokes.

«Nothing's a hoax about that. It's a very serious subject... I want the cleanest air, I want the cleanest water. The environment is very important to me. I also want jobs. I don't want to close up our industry because somebody said you have to go with wind» (Cheung, 2021).

A series of excusatory statements about the "hoax" form a kind of subsystem of Trump's entire climate discourse. This subsystem is characterised by the presence of a communicative goal – to refute the thesis that "the threat of climate change is a hoax". At the same time, it is characterised by a certain tone, set by individual communicative steps:

- emphasis put on negation constructions (*I don't think, Nothing's a hoax, I don't want*). negations create an image of a politician who is inconsistent in his judgments;
- repetitions. Moreover, the repetition of the obvious properties of natural objects creates an ironic tone taken in response to journalists' criticism (*very, very crystal clear clean water and clean air, the cleanest air, the cleanest water*);
- inconsistency of statements. Allowing oneself to joke about the far-fetchedness of the climate problem, the further statement that this is a serious problem (*It's a very serious subject ...*) creates mistrust among the audience and creates ground for criticism;
- predominance of short, syntactically unextended statements, simple sentences.

Thus, the pragma-semantic system of meanings (the theses announced by D. Trump) is undergoing dynamic changes. Under the influence of public opinion, the vector of the evolution of meanings is shifting towards support for environmental protection measures. By the final stage of the development of the system, however, the speaker still allows to make a limitation (*I also want jobs*), although this does not affect the final result. The last statements on this topic, as we see, repeat the original proposition:

«I'm an environmentalist. I am. I want the cleanest water on the planet. I want the cleanest air anywhere» (Cheung, 2021).

The president uses ring composition, placing the most important information at the beginning and end of the utterance. Repetitions of personal pronouns, parallel syntactic constructions, the use of superlatives of adjectives - rhetorical devices are as simple as possible and clearly remembered by the audience.

7. Conclusion

Summarising the analysis of the politician's discourse, we note that D. Trump's speech portrait is made up of communicative strategies for increasing influence, appeals to authority, persuasion, refutation, support, etc. The speech of the American president is generally emotional, figurative and expressive, while such qualities as inconsistency, illogicality, loss of the thread of reasoning often make it difficult to perceive his speech. D. Trump tends to express his views directly, create an atmosphere of community with the audience, for which colloquial expressions, interjections and repetitions, imperative mood, simple sentences are used. As for the climate discourse, the communicative strategies of argumentation and refutation turned out to be the most frequent.

Climate change rhetoric is effected in the framework of such microroles as "opponent of environmental protection", "partial supporter", "supporter of the fight against climate change".

The empirical material demonstrated that the systemic functional connections provide the logic for the evolution of politicians' reasoning on the scale of one statement and the given topic as a whole (Radyuk et al., 2016). It is curious that the discourse evolved in the direction opposite to that originally set, which indicates the synergistic nature of the semantic system of discourse. The functional perspective of discourse develops evolutionarily, from the initial state to a new level of order under the guidance of a functional attractor - the goal of communication – creation of a favourable political image.

Acknowledgments

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