WUT 2020
10th International Conference "Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects"

A VIEW ON POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE LIGHT OF MULTIMODALITY

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Abstract

The authors of this article study the concept of political discourse and its multimodality, determine the dominant types of the relationship between the verbal and visual channels of information transfer within the framework of a multimodal metaphor in media. The political discourse is multimodal as it simultaneously interacts with various semiotic systems that transmit information. Multimodal discourse is studied implementing two approaches: the study of correlation of different semiotic codes of the multimodal discourse, focused on monomodal semiotic codes and the interaction of information of various modalities during multimodal communication. We focus on the study of multimodality, presented in political cartoons posted on the Twitter online platform. Social media discourse is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon, one of the manifestations of which has become the social media. A multimodal metaphor is a metaphor in which the source domain and the target domain are represented by different modes. The analysis of the political cartoon explicating the phenomena of migration and terrorism has led to the conclusion that most often in the variety of polycode texts, the complimentary and interpretative forms of correlation of the graphic and verbal channels are used. The types of presuppositions are extralinguistic, political, logical and linguistic with logical presupposition being the obligatory one. The effectiveness of political discourse depends on the successful combination of verbal and non-verbal components. The research proves the key role of the visual component for understanding the multimodal metaphor in political discourse.

Keywords: Political discourse, multimodality, multimodal discourse, media discourse, multimodal metaphor.

1. Introduction

Political discourse is a type of institutional discourse which is actively studied by scholars. In the first place, it is a popular object of study for linguists and there has lately appeared a separate branch of linguistics – political linguistics. In its scope researchers present different views on the nature of political discourse, form various approaches and apply different methods of linguistic analysis to political discourse. The sphere of politics is quite wide, it includes the participants, the verbal language, the actions, the mentality, the nonverbal aspects, the context etc. Nowadays with the development of the Internet and fast pace of globalization we can observe certain changes in the structural peculiarities of political genres and linguistic means of presenting information. Political communication is at the intersection of political discourse and media discourse. Accessibility, immediate exchange of ideas contribute to the popularization of social media in the Internet. Mass media have a great influence on speech and performance of politicians and there appear new rules and even new genres. However, some researchers are emphasizing the need for reconceptualising existing, long-standing theories such as the idea of the public, dialogue and the public interest, as well as new configurations of ideas such as network theory and institutional theory (Valentini & Edwards, 2019).

One of the intense features can be called the turn to multimodality. Back in the 19th century a famous linguist, semiotician and an inspirer of structural linguistics, F. de Saussure used to say that language is a system of signs (De Saussure, 2016), and now scholars study the semiotic field of political discourse with its numerous signs and codes.The main aspects of multimodality are studies of verbal, non-verbal, mixed verbal-non-verbal, gestures and the creation of models of verbal, non-verbal, mixed behavior. Multimodality consists in the formation of meanings using various semiotic means–modes (writing, speech, image) – relevant socio-cultural conventions. Multimodality is understood as a description of general laws and rules of interaction in a communicative act of verbal and non-verbal signs, the combination of various information presentation codes (Kress, 2011).

Social media discourse is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon, one of the manifestations of which has become the social media. Multimodality is the multichannel influence on the world outlook of people, achieved through a combination of visual and verbal modes, presented in political cartoon posted on the Twitter online platform. Social networks, which go beyond the scope of everyday communication and entertainment, have become a powerful mechanism of socio-political influence on people's minds. Many challenges around the socially acute problems are communicative, related to persuading audiences of both the seriousness of the issues and the viability of proposed solutions (Valentini & Edwards, 2019). Current political events are always reflected in the language and metaphorized in the minds of the audience. In this study we turn to the study of multimodality through a multimodal metaphor. A multimodal metaphor is a metaphor in which the source domain and the target domain are represented by different modes. The analysis of the political cartoon explicating the phenomena of migration and terrorism has led to the conclusion that most often in the variety of polycode texts, the complimentary and interpretative forms of correlation of the graphic and verbal channels are used.

For the complex study of political discourse it is important to apply different approaches to multimodal metaphorization in the linguistic and sociological meaning. It is also necessary to combine analyses of verbal and non-verbal means.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of defining political discourse is central as it influences the further methods of its analysis. In general terms when a speech formation refers to the sphere of politics – either its addressant, addressee or contents – we can speak of a political discourse (Sheigal, 2000). It is sometimes divided into real and virtual (Sheigal, 2000). The idea of the virtual discourse is close to how we understand the global text in text interpretation. Itisparadigmaticinitsnature.

2.1. The problem of specifying political discourse

Reaching the power is the main aim of political communication, that is why it is highly intentional, aggressive and manipulative. In many cases, we observe strategic manipulation when politicians distort information, operate alternative facts and produce completely false messages. They can be examples of post-truth communication which has become a problem in contemporary political discourse (Novikova, 2019). In the era of post-truth politics the form of an utterance is more significant than the real facts. That is why evasion and manipulation are the focus of scientific interest in the matter of the linguistic means of realization. It is also a question of ethics and law in politics, which is especially critical and far-reaching because of the media making it global.

Political protocol and rules of verbal and written genres explain the conventionality of political discourse. Each time there is a certain communicative situation, the discourse has a certain form, organization, conditions, aims, means and contents. Political discourse operates some set cultural schemes which demonstrate how our cognition works and represent our shared knowledge. However, our cognitive patterns are not the reproductions of those schemes. (Strandell, 2017). Such "schemas" are formed through a complicated and ongoing process which is never finite. They develop and change from one instance of communication to the other.

There can be distinguished other systematic characteristics of political discourse: informativity, authoritativeness, theatricality, detachment and evaluativity (Sukhanov, 2018). Researchers also talk about close connection of poetry and politics: politicians use poetical practices in their speeches to make them brighter and more powerful (Baranov & Severskaya, 2016).

Political discourse has a peculiar target orientation. In most instances in addition to a journalist or a politician political speech will always be addressed to one more participant. In this respect public perception is always a matter of concern. Politicians thoroughly assess this factor and continue building up their communicative strategies with consideration to public opinion being an inevitable part of political discourse.

2.2. The problem of multimodal analysis

Multimodal discourse is studied implementing two approaches: the study of correlation of different semiotic codes of the multimodal discourse, focused on monomodal semiotic codes and the interaction of information of various modalities during multimodal communication.

The effectiveness of discourse depends on the successful combination of verbal and non-verbal components. Interaction in communication of different sign systems (verbal and non-verbal) leads to the

complication of its semantic organization. Non-verbal components could be considered in relation to the verbal component, their separate study may lead to an incorrect interpretation of the statement. Understanding of information occurs through various systems and channels that can produce meaning and interact. Political communication is not represented by one sign system but is a specific form of symbiotic interaction.

Analysis can also be subdivided into different levels of research. There can be distinguished the following levels of complex multimodality. Microlevel represents the division into separate codes and subcodes, revealing semiotic potentials and resources which are included in an integrated communicative process of any signs system. Mesolevel represents specific inter- and intracode processes of transcription, interaction of microlevel elements, supplementary potentials of meaning and the way they modify the general sense of communication. Macrolevel embraces a lot bigger objects, such as a single genre or a discourse (Klemm, Perrin, & Michel, 2016).

In this article we view metaphor as an instrument of learning something new or adjusting the given knowledge about a certain fragment of our environment. The Dutch linguist Charles Forceville (2016) had a big impact in the theory of multimodal metaphorization processes. His findings describe the way a metaphor structures the concepts by means of various modes. According to his understanding, a multimodal metaphor is a metaphor where the purpose and the source are represented by entirely or predominantly different modes (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009, p. 143).From the perspective of the theory of multimodality, a language is only one of the instruments generating the meaning. Due to this fact, all modes are the integral components of one sphere of application and are perceived as a unified source of generating new meanings by the members of a particular social group in a particular moment (Kress, 2011, p. 38).

3. Research Questions

Political discourse is institutional and refers to the sphere of politics as a direct political action rather than intermediated communication about a random political topic. The research questions touch upon the distinctive features of political discourse which precondition its multimodal character.

The main research questions can be formulated as follows:

- What are the approaches to the study of political discourse?

- How can we define political discourse from the perspective of cognitive studies, discourse analysis and theory of communication?

- What are the main principles of political communication?

- What comes under the term multimodality?

- What are the views on the multimodal nature of political discourse?

- What is the role of metaphorical representation in political discourse?

- How can we define a multimodal metaphor, its attributes and functions?

3.1. The "code" and its place in the theory of multimodality

The current research revolves around the notion of a "code". Theory of communication defines the code as an element of a basic communication model that conveys meaning. The following communication codes are distinguished: verbal, paralinguistic and extralinguistic. Verbal code is the transferor of information through written and oral speech. The paralinguistic code includes all voice means of communicating information transmitted by a verbal code. It includes tempo, tone, intonation. The extra-linguistic/non-verbal code is represented by non-language and speech means, such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, postures, time, space, location.

When we have a number of different codes, we can talk about a polycode system which is also known as multimodality. It brings together various interconnected channels of information transference, verbal and visual in particular, and influences people's consciousness. G.Eyger and V.Yukht understand polycode systems as the ones with cases of combined natural language with a code of some other semiotic system (Valentini, 2015, p. 4068).

The terms multimodality and modality are borrowed from psychology and are used to refer to sensory channels of perception. Modality is a perceptual or psychological phenomenon associated with the perception of information (Khutyz, 2019).The use of various means and channels of transmitting information is accepted as multimodality in discourse analysis.

A symbiosis of several modalities is presented in political discourse. Multimodality of political discourse is a continuous interaction of different semiotic systems transmitting information allowing for communicative traditions of society. That is why it is necessary to study different verbal, nonverbal and mixed (verbal-nonverbal), physical components of signs communication and to create the models of verbal, nonverbal and mixed behavior.

3.2. Correlation of verbal and non-verbal elements in the balance of communication

Nowadays scholars debate the question of correlation of verbal and nonverbal elements in the process of communication. In most linguistic studies the prominence is given to the verbal channel without her channels playing the supplementary role. Some scholars believe that nonverbal elements amplify the influence on the audience.

As far as political cartoon is concerned, its integral nonverbal element is a visual code. It has a substantial potential for influencing an addressee. A cartoon with a "strict socio-critical orientation attributes distinctive features with evaluative meaning to the world around us" (Biserova & Mishlanova, 2016, p. 152). A political cartoon is one of the genres of political discourse mediated by mass media. Its verbal and nonverbal components form a visual, structural and conceptual unity. The text in captions is minimal and this strengthens the visual effect. Viewing the caricature as a type of a polycode text, we can state with certainty the dominant influence of its iconic component.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to disclose the concept of "political discourse" and its multimodal nature and to consider the characteristics of the analysis of multimodal political discourse in mass

media.In this study, we turn to the determination of the dominant types of the relationship between the verbal and visual channels of information transfer within the framework of the multimodal metaphor, and we also identify the most typical sources domains of metaphorization of such socially significant concepts as terrorism and migration represented in political cartoons.

5.   Research Methods

In this paper we study the category of multimodality implemented in political cartoons posted on the official accounts of British and American mass media on Twitter, such as @BostonGlobe, @washingtonpost, @TIME, @BBCWorld, @nytimes, @Independent, @guardian , @Telegraph and others.

We selected for analysis 250 examples of a multimodal metaphors explicated in the English-language political cartoons published from 2015 to 2019 with socially relevant metaphorization concepts such as terrorism a migration. Undoubtedly, these phenomena are always in the sphere of public attention, but the degree of their realization depends on the events taking place in the sociopolitical arena, the political decisions made and the public response to them.

The main components of the analysis of the cartoons are the verbal part (signature or comment) and the iconic part (picture, photograph).

For the analysis, we have applied the conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2008). We use conceptual metaphors to give meaning to the surrounding world. The meaning of linguistic sources is transferred to "targets", this meaning determines attitude to a target. This analysis detects the metaphorical source, the target of the source, the meaning of the source which are relevant to the target and the implication of these meanings for the target (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008).

6.   Findings

A political cartoon is an image or picture containing, in the overwhelming majority of cases, text information in the form of a caption or a comment. A political cartoon is characterized by using humorous or satirical exaggeration to interpret current social and socio-political phenomena. At the same time, the comic effect is directly dependent on the interpretation of cultural realities, in other words - background knowledge, or extra-linguistic, cultural and logical presumptions. Cartoons, being an alogical combination of verbal and iconic components, require the obligatory presence of a logical presupposition, while other presuppositions may be necessary depending on the context of the caricature, the described reality fragment and other factors.

The metaphor in this work is viewed from the perspective of a cognitive approach, according to which it serves as a tool for learning a new fragment of the surrounding reality. In the case the source and donor domains are represented by different modi, the metaphor is called a multimodal one. As a genre form of a political discourse, the political cartoon has a pronounced social-critical orientation and is mediated by mass media. High importance in political cartoons is attributed to the comic effect, the key role in the understanding of which is played by background knowledge, or presuppositions - extra-linguistic, political, logical and linguistic; the logical presupposition is seen as being obligatory.

The visual code has a significant potential to influence the addressee and it is exactly this (visual) component that is an integral part of the political cartoon. The cartoon, having a clear socio-critical dimension, attributes features that have evaluative meaning to the surrounding reality. The peculiarity of the political cartoon is connected with the fact that it is one of the genre varieties of the political discourse and is mediated by means of mass media. In the political caricature, its verbal and graphic components form one visual, structural and semantic whole. The text of the signature in the caricature is minimal, which makes it possible to reinforce the effect of the visual component. When considering the cartoon as a kind of a polycode text, it is possible to speak with a rather high degree of certainty about the dominant effect of the iconic component.

6.1. The mechanism of a multimodal metaphor functioning in political cartoons

The comic effect in the cartoon directly depends on the addressee's awareness of the peculiarities of the culture within which the cartoon is created, as well as the events on the world political arena. This idea is also reflected in numerous linguistic studies. Background knowledge, or presuppositions, is a key factor in understanding the comic effect. Four types of presupposition are distinguished, which are as follows: extra-linguistic (general scientific knowledge, as well as knowledge in such areas as culture, literature, etc.); political (knowledge of current political processes in the world, political figures and parties); logical (idea of natural relations between events, the ability to establish a logical connection between the explicit meaning of a composition and implicit meaning in the mind of the participants of communication); linguistic (knowledge of linguistic reality and language peculiarities). The cartoon, being an illogical blend of verbal and iconic components, requires an obligatory presence of a logical presupposition; other presuppositions may be essential depending on the context of the cartoon, the described reality fragment, and other factors.

Terrorism can be classified as a supranational (global) concept with high social and cultural significance and dominant in people's minds due to the current geopolitical situation in the world. One of the means of explicating the image of terrorism in the political cartoon is conceptual metaphor.

Metaphorical models "are embedded in the conceptual system of the human mind, it is a kind of patterns according to which a person thinks and reflects. Thus, observation of the metaphor functioning is recognized as an important source of information on the functioning of the human mind" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, p. 387). A metaphor in a political cartoon requires obligatory background knowledge, only a combination of media texts and extra-linguistic knowledge makes it possible to interpret the metaphor correctly. Only if the source and target domains are represented by different modi, the metaphor is considered to be multimodal.

The term "multimodal," which we apply in this study, is based on "the understanding of modality adopted in psychology, neurophysiology, and computer science: modality is a type of external stimulus perceived by one of a human senses, primarily vision and hearing" (Kibrik, 2010, p. 135). Thus, a modus, in contrast to the approach generally accepted in the linguistic terminology, does not express the speaker's attitude to a judgment, but appears as one of the information channels of exerting influence on human consciousness.

Reflecting upon the relationship between the verbal and visual codes in the political cartoon, the following varieties shall be distinguished: full coincidence of the content of the image and text (parallel correlation); partial overlapping of the verbal text with the iconic information (complementary correlation); semantic discrepancy between the text and image (interpretative correlation).

It should be emphasized that in most cases when analyzing a cartoon, the visual code allows to find additional meanings in the transmitted message.

6.2. Different source domains explicating the concepts of terrorism and migration

Let us consider a series of examples of English political cartoons depicting events related to the manifestations of terrorism. One of the cartoons published on 9 July 2017 shows a pot labeled Saudi Arabia and a kettle labeled Qatar standing next to it. Steam in the form of bombs with lit wicks rises from the pot and from the kettle's nose; a cloud with the following text: "You export terrorism" comes off the pot representing the image of Saudi Arabia.

To understand the ideological and social orientation of this cartoon, one needs to have background knowledge about the current political events. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, as well as several other states, announced that they had terminated any diplomatic relations with Qatar accusing Qatar of supporting several terrorist groups. The cartoon ridicules such statements, indicating that Saudi Arabia itself is an even more serious source of terrorism than Qatar (the image shows steam in the form of bombs from a pot is much more impressive than the steam from the kettle). The present example illustrates the complementary correlation where the iconic information partially overlaps the verbal component providing it with some additional meanings and details.

Thus, in this multimodal metaphor, the country that is the supplier of terrorism (target domain) is depicted as a household utensil, a cooking utensil particularly, and the manifestations of terrorism, i.e. terrorist acts, which can also be considered as the target domain, are portrayed in the form of steam generated in the process of cooking or boiling liquids. The source domain is the process of cooking food.

The most typical areas of conceptual metaphorization of terrorism and migration in the English-language political cartoon are "man", "natural phenomena" and "mechanism". Thus, migrants are metaphorically compared with a child requiring care, investing financial and moral efforts (visualizing the image of Europe as an adult with infants in the arms, symbolizing migrants from the Middle East and North Africa). Another widely represented model, "Migrants are a natural phenomenon", highlights the uncontrollability and possible unpredictable consequences of this phenomenon. One of the cartoons depicts migrants as a flow of people heading towards the rock, symbolizing the values and institutions of the American society, as the inscription on the rock reads "Danger to the American values and institutions". A mechanistic metaphor is also a frequent occurrence in which images of a sea vessel (ship, boat), an airplane and industrial equipment are often used. One striking example is the image of an industrial plant consisting of many elements into which raw materials are loaded (with the inscription "Global action against terrorism"), at the exit of the plant we can see droplets falling into the container with the inscription "Net result" (final result). In this case the idea of futility of efforts aimed at improving the current situation, disproportion between the funds spent and the achieved result is emphasized.

From the point of view of the type of interrelation between the verbal and visual code, the following variants of connection are observed: parallel correlation (full coincidence of the content of the picture and text), complimentary correlation (partial overlapping of the iconic text information) and interpretive correlation (relative substantive inconsistency of the text and image).

The analysis of the political caricature explicating the phenomena of migration and terrorism allowed us to conclude that the most frequently used types of correlation between graphic and verbal channels in this variety of polycode texts are complimentary and interpretive.

The study of the type of interrelation between the verbal and visual modi of explicating the multimodal metaphor in the political cartoon as a polycode text with a pronounced socio-critical focus allows to draw a conclusion about the prevalence of the significance of the iconic component, which in most cases allows you to see additional meanings in the transmitted message.

7. Conclusion

The political discourse is multimodal – it simultaneously interacts with various semiotic systems that transmit information taking into account the communicative traditions of the society.

7.1. The increased interest in the study of multimodality

The increased interest in the study of multimodality is associated with the expansion of boundaries of textualiy. A multimodal text is one which is encoded by semantically heterogeneous means: verbal and non-verbal. Multimodal understanding of information is interdependent, i.e. all communication components are interpreted collectively and recursively and meanings are constantly processed and modified. In addition to the language, which is central code, non-verbal components play an important role in the process of transmitting and perceiving information. The audiovisual component is the trigger for the recipient to fully receive the transmitted information. Communicative processes are based on the complex interaction of various sign systems, i.e. multimodalities, therefore, language communication is multimodal in nature.

7.2. The visual component of the multimodal metaphor

The visual component of the multimodal metaphor used in the political cartoon to verbalize the concepts under consideration helps to strengthen, expand or make specific the implied and not explicitly expressed meaning. The dominant types of correlation of verbal and visual codes are partial overlapping of text with iconic information and contextual incoherence of text and image. Political cartoon, being a kind of polycode text, consists of signs of two semiotic systems, namely verbal and iconic.

The visual component of multimodal metaphor used in the political cartoons to verbalize the image of terrorism enhances the implied and not explicitly expressed meaning. Most often, the correlation of verbal and visual codes is realized through the almost complete coincidence of the content of the text and the image or partial overlapping of the text with iconic information. The study confirms the key role of the visual component in understanding the multimodal metaphor. The most frequent types of correlation of verbal and visual codes include parallel and complementary correlation.

For a comprehensive study of political discourse, it is necessary to use different ways of consideration of multimodality, in its linguistic and sociological understanding, combining the analysis of verbal and non-verbal means used to transmit information.

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