

**SCTCMG 2022**  
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of**  
**Modern Globalism»**

**AXIOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF J. BIDEN'S INAUGURAL  
SPEECH**

Veronika Viktorovna Katermina (a)\*, Olga Anatolyevna Kalashnikova (b),  
Antonina Vadimovna Samoylova (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Department of English Philology, Kuban State University, 149, Stavropolskaya str., Krasnodar, Russia,  
veronika.katermina@yandex.ru

(b) Department 107, Krasnodar Higher Military Aviation School for Pilots, 135, Dzerzhinsky str., Krasnodar, Russia,  
olga.eng@inbox.ru

(c) Department of English Philology, Kuban State University, 149, Stavropolskaya str., Krasnodar, Russia,  
antina@inbox.ru

**Abstract**

The inaugural speech is an integral part of the inauguration ceremony of a newly elected president and an important component of political culture. The text of a president's first official address as the head of state is a complex verbal formation in terms of both structure and content and can be considered as a construct of the national axiosphere. The formation of the verbal image and the prioritization of the national policy of the presidential team largely depend on its explicitness. The study analyzes verbal techniques aimed at activating the functionality of the inaugural speech, namely the transfer of an axiologically oriented intention by the speaker. The public speech aims to achieve an emotional response of recipients through the text based on a system of value meanings. In linguistic terms, the intentionality and persuasiveness of the inaugural speech are achieved through the text expressiveness due to linguistic units with a characteristic connotative component of meaning, and the functional and stylistic text design. The intertextuality of the inaugural speech is based on a high degree of metaphorization and the inclusion of axiological orientations, which are key components of the cultural and cognitive base of the national audience. Based on the analysis of the stylistic design of the speech text, a number of stylistic means was found with a predominance of syntactic level stylistic devices aimed at imprinting value orientations in the cognitive base of recipients.

2357-1330 © 2022 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Electricity, economy, industry, production, Ulyanovsk, war

## 1. Introduction

Taking the oath during the inauguration ceremony is always accompanied by the inaugural speech of a newly elected president, which is of considerable interest and attracts attention of various social groups, and the speech delivered by the elected president outlines a range of issues and values of public importance, forms a conceptual and verbal image of the politician and determines the vectors of the economic, political, and social life of the state.

According to the results of the presidential elections that took place on November 3, 2020 in the United States of America, the Democratic candidate Joseph Robinette Biden became the 46th President; his inaugural speech can be the object of philological analysis in the aspect of linguistic axiology.

A number of studies devoted to the political discourse and politicians as linguistic personalities (Alexeyev, 2021; Katermina & Gnedash, 2018; Golyanskaya & Melnik, 2019), the specifics of public speeches of political leaders (Gavrilova, 2004; Kuznetsov, 2020; Lacatus, 2020; Wilson, 2015), and the Internet space as the medium for broadcasting political content (Blitvich & Bou-Franch, 2018; Hösl, 2019; Ryabchenko et al., 2019; Wieczorek, 2020) have been published recently. The public speech of a politician is the medium with a certain value-oriented semantic value. It is based on the communicative orientation and axiological determinism. The linguistic means used by a politician in the inaugural speech are aimed at creating the maximum effect of persuasiveness, awareness of the speaker about the socio-political situation in society, significance of the chosen political course, and focus on the traditional foundations and key components of the electorate value worldview.

## 2. Problem Statement

Political discourse largely determines the way of broadcasting value orientations and creates conditions for the most explicit format for promoting value orientation, thereby forming the verbal behavior of its participants. “The axiological interpretation is aimed at revealing the “focus” of the speech on its “target” meaning ... it allows to focus ... on the underlying content through the concepts of “value attitude”, “value orientations”, “ideals”, and “creeds” (Wolf, 2002). The text with maximum explicitness has the greatest impact potential, and the inaugural speech of a newly elected president can serve as the material for the linguo-axiological study in order to identify both the priorities of national policy and the vectors of the foreign policy.

The expressive means as parts of the communicative pragma-oriented strategies contribute to the implementation of the global illocutionary function of public speaking, that is the consolidation of the national axiosphere dominants.

## 3. Research Questions

A significant number of stylistic means used in the inaugural speech, which are the object of this study, is explained by the presence of quasi-information that appeals to the general cognitive knowledge of the recipient. Linguistic means, which convey an essential characteristic, perform a nominative

function and constitute an integral text as an intentional communicative unit, are the subject of the research.

Analysis of the inaugural speech poses the following research questions:

- i. What is the role of value orientation in political discourse in general and in the rhetorical form of a public speech in particular?
- ii. What are the communication strategies of political discourse and how to implement them?
- iii. What are the main value dominants of the axiosphere of the president's speech and the stylistic methods of their implementation?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine the axiological potential of the president's inaugural speech by identifying axiological dominants, namely the value orientations that are the components of its structural and logical composition, through the prism of linguo-stylistic analysis.

The study analyzes the expressive means used in the public speech, which affect the deep processes of human cognition, in order to make the socio-psycholinguistic assessment of the effectiveness of the manipulative-influencing speech potential of the newly elected president.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The study employed both conventional linguistic methods (continuous sampling method, descriptive method, contextual analysis) and stylistic methods as part of the functional-stylistic approach (structural-semantic method, interpretation method, pragmatic method).

The contextual analysis focused on determining the conditions of the speech act and contributing to the disclosure of the specific meaning of lexical units for transmission of axiological values.

The structural-semantic method was used to analyze the logic of the structural-semantic relations of the text and to divide the text into thematic blocks with regard to key orientations representing the structural-semantic division of the speech text.

The interpretation method was used as an analytical activity to clarify the hypothetical images constructed in the speech text and determine their communicative functions.

The pragmatic method was used to identify verbal means that embody communicative strategies and to determine motivation/impact through the inclusion of significant axiological dominants in the speech text.

#### **6. Findings**

Value orientation is one of the defining components of the communicative process. The value discourse, which includes the concept of value, the nature of evaluation as a structural basis of value, the worldview, the typology of values, and the conceptual and categorical apparatus for describing value dominants were studied by such linguists as Arutunova (1999), Karasik (2015), Serebrennikova (2011), Temirgazina (2020), and others. Value orientations as a factor determining personal motivation affect the conscious and subconscious spheres. The value or worldview component is ranked first in the list of

components that form a linguistic personality, since “language provides an initial and deep worldview, forms the linguistic image of the world and the hierarchy of spiritual ideas that underlie the formation of a national character and are realized in the linguistic dialogue communication” (Maslova, 2010, p. 43). This basic component is actively used in the rhetorical form of public speeches by political leaders, since the spread of value meanings is a characteristic feature of the speech of individuals with a certain social influence and authority. Value orientation is directly related to the language expressiveness and is aimed at generating an emotional response of recipients. “Political speeches and debates contain a variety of linguistic constructions that have emotive content or associations. It is a staple of great speakers and leaders that they arouse emotions” (Wilson, 2015, p. 57). Most speeches by political leaders are not focused on conveying factual and detailed information. This is partly due to the metaphorical representations that are central to the conceptual organization of the worldview (Lakoff, 2004). In addition, the significant expressiveness of political texts is due to pragmatic reasons, including the content complexity and detailed argumentation, which are not of interest to recipients (Wilson, 2015).

Researchers of political discourse reported structural modeling and the usage of specific communicative and axiological strategies to achieve the maximum political leverage. The type of verbal behavior based on the usage of pre-developed verbal techniques for implementation of a communicatively effective speech (the one which is aimed at achieving the communicative goal), is considered to be called a communicative-axiological strategy. These strategies are used to transmit value meanings.

Classifications of communicative strategies are diverse, but the most pragma-oriented in terms of political discourse is classification that comprises two basic blocks, namely integrative and disintegrative strategies, including the presentation, appeal, self-presentation strategies, as well as the strategy of discrediting an opponent (Bozhenkova et al., 2017). The implementation of each of these strategies implies the use of persuasive techniques, both verbal (meliorative and pejorative emotive vocabulary, stylistic devices of all language levels, self-descriptiveness based on personal experience, etc.) and non-verbal (the linguistic and cultural features and concepts of the national worldview, the speaker's credibility, the collection of information compromising an opponent/creating a positive image of the speaker, etc.). The effectiveness of communicative-axiological strategies is substantiated by the functionality of an inaugural speech implemented as part of integrative, inspirational, declarative, and performative functions. The implementation of each of these functions, as well as the linguistic embodiment of each of the strategies, is impossible without expressive linguistic means aimed at performing the global illocutionary function of public speaking, that is, the transfer of an axiologically oriented intention (Zinkovskaya et al., 2020).

The linguistic embodiment of the intention is accompanied by emotions realized through the components of expressiveness, evaluativity and emotionality within the connotative meaning of words. In general, the range of expressive means is represented at the phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic language levels, as well as within a single text space. In real communication, in our case, when using communicative-axiological strategies in the inaugural speech of a politician, emotionally and evaluatively colored language units are used together with paralinguistic means, such as gestures, facial expressions, intonation, i.e., in both verbal and non-verbal contexts. The analysis revealed the value orientations in the inaugural address by J. Biden, which were presented with the help of persuasive techniques of a verbal-

stylistic nature within the framework of communicative-axiological strategies of presentation, self-presentation and appeal. These are as follows:

- The will of the people. “*The people – the will of the people – has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 3). The syntactic stylistic means of parallelism and epiphora emphasize the importance of this value dominant, along with the fact of its mention in the first paragraph of the inaugural speech.
- The day (the inauguration of the president). Accentuation of this event-based value as a separate dominant is possible due to a high degree of emphaticity when delivering the opening words. “*This is America’s day. This is democracy’s day. A day of history and hope, of renewal and resolve*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, pp. 2–3). There are such expressive means as prosopopoeia, that is, the attribution of features of living beings to inanimate subjects in the form of using the possessive case with the apostrophe ‘s, syntactic anaphora in the repeating grammatical construction *this is* at the beginning of the first two sentences, as well as anadiplosis in the form of a joining combination of the lexeme *day* at the end of the second and the beginning of the first sentence. The amplification used in the third sentence enhances the expressive effect emphasizing the event significance.
- Democracy. This value orientation stands out in the analysed linguo-material due to its dominant recurrent semantic-cognitive role. “*We’ve learned again that democracy is precious, democracy is fragile and, at this hour my friends, democracy has prevailed*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 4). Gradation is achieved by using parallel constructions with increasing significance of the described phenomenon due to the semantic meaning of the lexical units *precious, fragile, prevail*.
- American way. This value-significant concept requires some explanation. Based on the contextual background of the inaugural speech, the concept of *way* is understood as a socially and culturally oriented course of the historical development of the American nation, in both diachronic and synchronous perspective that reflects its specificity and emphasizes its originality. “*As we look ahead in our uniquely American way, restless, bold, optimistic, and set our sights on a nation we know we can be and must be...*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 6). In our opinion, amplification is achieved by using epithets that are atypical for political discourse but carry a significant expressive potential.
- Nation, country. The concept significance is indisputable in the context of political discourse, regardless of ethnicity. Its priority as an axiological orientation that determines the development vectors of foreign policy and the cultural code of the cognitive paradigm of ethnos can be observed in the public speaking rhetoric of this genre. Affirmation “*... set our sights on a nation we know we can be and must be...*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 6) is achieved by using modal verbs with the effect of semantic gradation from persuasively weak *can* to stronger *must*. In the example “*And I know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength, the strength of our nation...*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 7) the use of anadiplosis with the amplification effect emphasizes the axiological potential and cognitive significance of the concept of *nation* in the ethno-oriented concept sphere.

The epithet *great*, which is characterized by the presence of an expressive-intensifying component of connotative meaning, contributes to the consolidation of the value orientation of *nation* in the ethno-cognitive concept sphere of recipients and emphasizes the significance of the nation in the political arena: “*This is a great nation, we are good people*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 9).

- Unity is a value orientation which is repeated in the speech and acts as a leitmotif that determines the prospective political activity of the president. “*To overcome these challenges, to restore the soul and secure the future of America, requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy – unity. Unity*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 12). Attention of the audience to this value orientation is focused by methods of expressive syntax – ellipse and parcelling.

The importance of the unity value orientation as a component of the national-cultural axiosphere of the electorate is emphasized in the following quote: “*Uniting to fight the foes we face – anger, resentment, and hatred. Extremism, lawlessness, violence, disease, joblessness, and hopelessness. With unity we can do great things, important things*” (Blake & Scott, 2021, p. 15). In the context of the applied persuasive strategy, the phonetic and syntactic stylistic means contribute to the expressive and emotional impact. Thus, the alliteration in the syntagm *to fight the foes we face* acts as an ornamental means to emphasize and unite the most significant lexical units. The ellipse, conjunctive construction, and inversion, along with the semantic gradation of lexical units of an 'anti-value' nature, transmit the conceptual idea of national unity through verbal stimulation of the will of the recipients.

## 7. Conclusion

Value orientation is one of the defining components of the communicative process in the field of political discourse. This is especially obvious in public speeches in inaugural speeches. Value orientations play a crucial role in motivational activity; therefore, they can be considered as an ideal means for realizing the manipulative-influencing potential of the speaker's verbal behavior.

The inaugural speech illustrates a set of strategies aimed at communicatively effective performance with a high axiological potential, including the presentation, appeal and self-presentation strategies.

The communicative goals can be achieved through persuasiveness as a category of verbal effect, which is formed due to the range of expressive means of different language levels. At the same time, the predominance of syntactic stylistic means was revealed, namely, parallel constructions, gradation, parcellation, and syntactic repetitions. In general, the speaker's communicative behavior is highly efficient due to the use of expressive means in the process of foregrounding the key components of the electorate axiosphere.

## References

- Alexeyev, A. B. (2021). Influence of Political Discourse on the Formation of the Language Personality of a Politician. *NSU Vestnik. Ser. Linguistics and Intercultural Communication*, 19(4), 151166. <https://doi.org/10.25205/1818-7935-2021-19-4-151-166>
- Arutunova, N. D. (1999). *Language and the Human World*. Languages of Russian culture.
- Blake, A., & Scott, U. (2021). *Joe Biden's Inauguration Speech Transcript*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2021/01/20/biden-inauguration-speech/>
- Blitvich, P., & Bou-Franch, P. (2018). Introduction to Analyzing Digital Discourse: New Insights and Future Directions. In: *Analysing Digital Discourse* (pp. 3–22). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327976341\\_Introduction\\_to\\_Analyzing\\_Digital\\_Discourse\\_New\\_Insights\\_and\\_Future\\_Directions](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327976341_Introduction_to_Analyzing_Digital_Discourse_New_Insights_and_Future_Directions)
- Bozhenkova, N. A., Bozhenkova, R. K., & Bozhenkova, A. M. (2017). Modern political discourse: verbal exemplification of tactical and strategic preferences. *RUDN Journal of Russian and Foreign Languages Research and Teaching*, 15(3), 255–284. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320295234\\_MODERN\\_POLITICAL\\_DISCOURSE\\_VERBAL\\_EXEMPLIFICATION\\_OF\\_TACTICAL\\_AND\\_STRATEGIC\\_PREFERENCES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320295234_MODERN_POLITICAL_DISCOURSE_VERBAL_EXEMPLIFICATION_OF_TACTICAL_AND_STRATEGIC_PREFERENCES)
- Gavrilova, M. V. (2004). *Cognitive and Rhetoric Basis of Presidential Speech*. Faculty of philology SPBGU.
- Golyanskaya, V. A. & Melnik, N. V. (2019). Strategies and tactics of political manipulation in massmedia. *Philology and Man*, 3, 29–40. <http://journal.asu.ru/pm/article/view/5517>
- Hösl, M. (2019). Semantics of the internet: A political history. *Internet Histories*, 3(3-4), 275–292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2019.1656921>
- Karasik, V. I. (2015). *Language Spiral: Values, Signs, Motives*. Paradigma.
- Katermina, V. V., & Gnedash, A. A. (2018). The Formation of Political Content in Online Space: a Structural-network and Linguodiscursive Analyses of Modern Social Movements (Based on Women's March). *Political Linguistics*, 4(70), 87–96.
- Kuznetsov, A. V. (Ed.). (2020). *Trump Phenomenon*. INION RAN.
- Lacatus, C. (2020). Populism and President Trump's approach to foreign policy: Analysis of tweets and rally speeches Politics. *Politics*, 41(1), 3147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720935380>
- Lakoff, G. (2004). *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Maslova, V. A. (2010). *Cultural Linguistics*. Akademiya.
- Ryabchenko, N. A., Gnedash, A. A., & Malysheva, O. P. (2019). Presidential campaign in the post truth era: innovative digital technologies of political content management in social networks. *Political Studies*, 2, 92106. <https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2019.02.07>
- Serebrennikova, E. F. (2011). *Linguistics and Axiology: Etnosemiometrics of Axiological Senses*. THESAURUS.
- Temirgazina, Z.K. (2020). *Linguistic Axiology: Evaluative Expressions in the Russian Language*. FLINTA.
- Wieczorek, A. E. (2020). Embedded Discourse Spaces in Narrative Reports. *Discourse Studies*, 22(2), 221–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445619893776>
- Wilson, J. (2015). *Talking with the President: Pragmatics of Presidential Language*. Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, E. M. (2002). *Functional Semantics of Evaluation*. Editorial URSS.
- Zinkovskaya, A. V., Plaksin, V. A., & Katermina, V. V. (2020). Political Persuasiveness: Usage of Metaphors in American Presidents' Speeches. EPSBS. *Dialogue of Cultures – Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding*, 95, 306311. [https://www.europeanproceedings.com/files/data/article/10043/12223/article\\_10043\\_12223\\_pdf\\_100.pdf](https://www.europeanproceedings.com/files/data/article/10043/12223/article_10043_12223_pdf_100.pdf)