LINGUO-COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF MANIPULATION IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Within the scope of the article the key properties and functions of political discourse are presented, the directions and tendencies in the field of this type of discourse with a specific metaphorical metalanguage are reflected. The paper demonstrates the results of a thematic analysis of the political discourse in the light of the prevailing stereotypes and stable blocks. Recognition and overcoming of linguistic technologies of manipulativeness and conflicts are necessary in linguistic didactics as part of discourse analysis, practical course of a foreign language and in a number of other disciplines. The obtained results of linguistic and cognitive analysis show that the description of the properties and tasks of political discourse will avoid the manipulation of public opinion of the world community.

Keywords: Political discourse. Political metaphor. Manipulative vocabulary. Tolerance. Post-truth politics.

ASPECTOS LINGUOCOGNITIVOS DA MANIPULAÇÃO NO DISCURSO POLÍTICO

ASPECTOS LINGUO-COGNITIVOS DE LA MANIPULACIÓN EN EL DISCURSO POLÍTICO

RESUMO

No âmbito do artigo são apresentadas as principais propriedades e funções do discurso político, refletindo-se os rumos e tendências no campo deste tipo de discurso com uma metalínguagem metafórica específica. O artigo mostra os resultados de uma análise temática do discurso político à luz dos estereótipos e blocos estáveis vigentes. O reconhecimento e a superação das tecnologias linguísticas de manipulatividade e conflitos são necessários na didática linguística como parte da análise do discurso, curso prático de uma língua estrangeira e em uma série de outras disciplinas. Os resultados obtidos da análise linguística e cognitiva mostram que a descrição das propriedades e tarefas do discurso político evitará a manipulação da opinião pública da comunidade mundial.


RESUMEN

En el ámbito del artículo se presentan las propiedades y funciones clave del discurso político, se reflejan las direcciones y tendencias en el campo de este tipo de discurso con un metalenguaje metafórico específico. El artículo muestra los resultados de un análisis temático del discurso político a la luz de los estereotipos y bloques estables imperantes. El reconocimiento y la superación de las tecnologías lingüísticas de manipulatividad y conflictos son necesarios en la didáctica lingüística como parte del análisis del discurso, curso práctico de una lengua extranjera y en una serie de otras disciplinas. Los resultados obtenidos del análisis lingüístico y cognitivo muestran que la descripción de las propiedades y tareas del discurso político evitará la manipulación de la opinión pública de la comunidad mundial.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the problem
Heightening the interest in political discourse in recent years has been caused by the emergence of new concepts, marking the beginning of a new period of mass consciousness, when politics becomes growth-truth politics. With this background the most important task of modern humanities is a comprehensive understanding of new tendencies in political culture, generalization and integration into the structure of relevant research. In connection with the linguistic approach to the subject of analysis, at least three areas of study of political discourse can be traced:

1) the study of political discourse as an extralinguistic phenomenon, where political, social and cultural characteristics subordinate linguistic ones (T. Van Dijk, R. Wodak, E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, N. Fairclough, etc.);

2) the study of political discourse from the point of view of its functional semantic and syntactic component with an emphasis on the rhetorical functions of the language of politics (E. R. Pedro, R. Skollon);

3) the study of political discourse as a linguo-cognitive phenomenon (research in the field of concepts such as post-truth, bubbles, etc.).

However, it is already becoming clear that the relationship between political discourse and society cannot be adequately described not only without combining linguistic and cognitive approaches, but also without involving the other interdisciplinary research.

Urgency of the problem
In connection with the above, the study of the properties and functions of political course is relevant, for it is aimed at identifying the linguo-cognitive component of the discourse. Each new turn in the historical development of the state leads to a linguistic restructuring, creates its own lexical and phraseological niche, based on conceptual metaphors and symbols. The relevance of studying political discourse, considering its linguistic content, makes it possible to build up a well-knit balanced picture of how the world is reflected in it and what new metaphors this world “deserves”. For example, the emergence of the concept of post-truth and its accompanying words mean a transition to a new and novel stage of development of public consciousness, indicating the growth of the influence of ideology and propaganda, and the devaluation of truth. A constant and profound analysis of Russian and worldwide trends in the field of political discourse will help to reduce the general manipulation of public opinion.

Study of the problem
Within the confines of various cognitive-linguistic schools of studying political discourse, the following areas can be distinguished:

- the study of the phenomenon of manipulativeness as a language strategy aimed at controlling society; the theory of conflict political discourse;
- the study of the theory of reflection as a dynamic side of discursive formations; thematic analysis of political discourse in the light of prevailing stereotypes and stable blocs;
- axiological analysis as a value component of a political discourse and ideological analysis as a study of value-loaded semantic structures;
- the theory of intent analysis as a study of connotative meaning in relation to the aspect of the situational nature of the text (MAKSIMOV, 2004).

As a positive trend, one can mention the multi-vector nature of the studies of Russian authors, and the specificity and narrow focus of the suggested theoretical concepts. At the same time, the authors find it difficult to determine the content of the term “political discourse” due to the multidimensional nature of research. It is hoped that in the near future there will be theoretical and practical studies aimed at generalizing this type of
discourse. Below are the properties of modern political discourse:

1. the virtuality of the political sphere of activity and the construction of a specific political picture of the world;
2. the existence of alternative sources of information (in a democratic society);
3. a competitive struggle for domination in the information space and media confrontation as the state of the modern information environment;
4. fast updating of information content;
5. the division of society into “us” and “strangers”; the functioning of this cognitive opposition everywhere shows its universal and manipulative nature;
6. in connection with the growing influence of ideology and propaganda, political technologies with framing pro-truth (struggle for truth) and post-truth (policy of post-truth) are used to form public opinion.

These properties of political discourse are directly related to its functions:

- communicative and contact-determinative;
- teleological (the formation in the society of thoughts and assessments necessary for the author of the discourse);
- informative and educational, guiding in the field of social and political opinions;
- ideological and interpretive in the form of political propaganda or persuasion (the interpretation of events and phenomena in the right direction);
- the function of socialization (orientation of the addressee to the needs of a certain layer of society);
- diagnostic and heuristic (foreseeing the socio-political situation in a region / country / world);
- integration (striving to increase the number of supporters);
- controlling (checking the feedback for the recipient’s loyalty);
- motivation of the addressee to socially active actions.

Hypothesis

Revealing a modern linguo-cognitive and teleological constituent part of political discourse implies linguistic restructuring, creates a new symbolic, metaphorical and lexical-phraseological thesaurus reflecting the most important political tasks of the era. So, the analysis of political discourse at the beginning of the 21st century in Russia has revealed its specific features: the nationally-oriented discourse in the person of the collective subject of power “the Kremlin” has been appealing to the concept of a “strong state”. The description of the types, properties, functions and tasks of modern political discourse, as well as its metalanguage, will help to avoid manipulating the public opinion of the world community.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the study of political discourse, the linguistic method of discourse analysis was used (semantic and comparative analysis of texts and component analysis of key terms, frequency analysis of the occurrence of key concepts in political texts). When using these methods, we relied on advances in systems of organization and representation of conceptual and linguistic knowledge. The emergence of new terms and other content of existing conceptual spheres are considered by us as a marker of changes in political processes and tendencies.

The comparative analysis of the properties and functions of modern political discourses made it possible to identify and classify the main types and functions of speech manipulation in political discourse. In addition, we used the cognitive analysis of the political text with the aim to study the conceptual system of a person who acts as a subject and an object of politics, which fundamentally distinguishes this method from the discourse of analysis.
RESEARCH RESULTS

Let us dwell upon the main task in the context of this article – upon the problem of manipulation in political discourse. So, manipulation, depending on the tasks of the addressee of the message, is realized both through concealment and distortion of information, full or partial falsification of facts, and such simple means as special case of text (choice of font and font selection means, use of punctuation marks, underline and discharge). In order for the manipulation to be successful, the manipulated person is to lose the ability to think critically.

At the lexical level, three groups of linguistic manipulation tools are distinguished – lexical-syntactic, lexical-semantic and lexical-pragmatic. The first group includes tools for linguistic manipulation, which are determined by special relationship of linguistic signs with each other. This includes changes in phraseologistic units, cliches or proverbs to give the effect of surprise. The second group includes manipulation tools based on the relationship between the word and the subject-conceptual content expressed by this word. This group includes evaluative words, metaphors and metonyms, generalizations of meaning, ambiguity and others. The last group of tools for linguistic manipulation at the lexical level is based on a pragmatic aspect.

It includes expressive-emotional evaluation and connotations. This group includes words with a special connotation, indirect nominations (euphemisms, dysphemisms, labels, mellioratives and pejoratives, nicknames) (Sternin, 2001, p.147). So, generalization involves generalizing information. This technique is realized through the introduction of such words and expression: the majority, all, as it has been a good many times, etc. The mechanism of action of generalization is simple: it makes the recipient believe that the opinion expressed by the manipulator is authoritative and trustworthy.

It is imperative for the manipulator to define himself/herself in the “friend-or-foe” relationship (according to the principle of the binary opposition “plus-minus”, when “own” is opposed to “alien” (Koveshnikova, 2014: 394). To establish such relationships, it is necessary to show the audience that the addressee belongs to the same social group and is “us” (for example, the frequent use of the pronoun “we”). The technique “one’s own gang”, used to convince the audience that the agitator is a “man of the people” and gets onto the hopes of ordinary people, allows the agitator to attract a large audience to his/her side. The use of jargon can also help establish these relations. In this case, the speaker or writer shows a special attitude towards the group and its values (respect for or disregard of), identifies himself/herself as “one of them.” Reliance on pseudo-statistics is also an effective means of manipulative influence and is actively used in political communication.

Euphemisms have great manipulative potential, using which the writer is able to change the audience’s perception of events if it does not have a sufficiently developed critical thinking. For example, in the phrase “расскажу, немного уже женщина” (as who should say, a woman already well on in life) the reflexive “так” (as who should say) takes on the function of euphemizing the utterance. Euphemisms have a social-psychological implication, expressed in the reluctance to call it what it is and the desire to hide the facts of reality. A distinctive feature of this technique is that often the reader cannot quickly single out and recognize a word veiled in a euphemism in the flow of information. The recipient of information gets an image of the real world improved by euphemisms, which is not real.

With the fake news diffusion, political discourse is constantly replenished with words that define modern realities. Neologisms find their niche, occurring in the form of buzz words (vogue words) and euphemisms. For example, the appearance of the word “хлопок” (bang) instead of “взрыв”(explosion), “каникулы” (vacation) instead of “карантин” (isolation period), “отрицательный рост” (negative growth) instead of “снижение” (decline), “запыление” (smoke condition) instead of “пожар” (fire), “подтопление” (minor flooding) instead of “потоп” (waterflood), “редакторская политика” (editorial lines) instead of “цензура” (censorship), etc. – this is not the whole list of using Newspeak. Among lexical means with a manipulative potential, the use of sophisticated vocabulary is distinguished, i.e. not understandable to a wide variety of people. In this case, new words with the elements of borrowing are constructed. For example, the word “жидоконование” (Jew-Freemasonry), a favorite word by the state media, is used to poison country’s mind against the “aggressive West”.

At the grammatical level, the means of linguistic manipulation are realized via the features of syntax and morphology. Thus, the passive voice, articles, and verb tenses have a manipulative potential. For example, using the passive voice, the manipulator can remove certain subjective elements of the message from the focus of the recipient’s attention, stimulating their interest in the information he / she needs. Inversion, communicative type of the sentence, ellipsis, parallel constructions, repetition, parallelism, gradation, rhetorical questions are among the syntactic means. So, repetition as a means of emotional delivery is involved in evoking readers’ or listeners’ associations and stereotypes necessary for the manipulator, parallelism—in the rhythmic selection of
the most significant elements of the text, gradation—in the intensification of expressiveness of the text.

A rhetorical question has a significant manipulative potential which does not require an answer, for it already contains it in itself. Such a device as “referring to an unattributed source”, “reference link to authority” or “introducing an expert” is used in situations where the author of the message, for some reason, does not intend to be responsible for the information provided. This device can be realized through the replacement of an active construction with a passive one, the use of indefinite-personal and generalized-personal sentences, or through the use of expressions such as “существует мнение” (there is a view), “как стало известно” (as it turned out), “по мнению британских ученых” (British scientists contend), “по данным осведомленных кругов” (according to informed opinion), “как выяснилось” (it emerged that), etc. Such constructions are called “indefinite reference index” (DODSENKO, 1997, p.79).

It is worth adding such a manipulative technique as “creating a fallacious logic.” It is often used in the media and political discourse generally as the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships necessary and beneficial to the manipulator and is realized through introductory words and constructions, for example, “из этого вытекает” (out comes), “отсюда следует” (hereof it follows), “это связано с” (this has everything to do with), “таким образом” (From there), “значит” (it means), “это очевидно” (it is obvious), etc. The devices of linguistic manipulation can be described in more detail based on the violation of the laws of formal logic:

- false analogy—the author’s incorrect inference about a phenomenon through its similarity to another phenomenon;
- substitution of cause by effect is widely used in political media due to the fact that often the mass audience is not able to objectively assess the existing political situation and is inclined to simplify cause-and-effect relationships;
- inference without the necessary justification is often used by politicians in debates;
- defamation—the diffusion of truthful, as well as false information, discredit the dignity, honor and reputation of an individual or nation in order to form a misconception about the phenomenon or a negative reaction of the audience to any event, beneficial to the manipulator, (SLADKOVA, 2005: 17).

Another classification includes the following methods of manipulating public opinion:

- “Labeling”—attrbution of a negative meaning to an idea, forcing the audience to immediately reject it.
- “Recommendation”—attrbution of approval or condemnation of an idea to an authoritative and respected person (writer, scientist, etc.). Thanks to this, the audience begins to perceive the idea beneficial to the manipulator.
- “Mapping”—a technique based on the transfer of the popularity and prestige of an idea or personality to the promoted idea. As a result of using this device, the audience begins to support the idea that is beneficial to the manipulator.
- “Fake news” is a technique based on direct falsification or distortion of facts of reality in order to discredit any idea or person.
- “Brilliant mediocrity” is a technique based on the manipulation of eternal truths, but at the same time, abstract or difficult for the layman. The result is unconditional acceptance by the audience of any idea.
- “Sitting carriage”—a technique based on the suggestion to the recipient of the idea that all members of the group accept the author’s idea. The recipient turns on “herding instinct”, and he/she accepts the promoted idea. This technique is the achievement of the desired response via indoctrination that the idea is generally accepted and reasonable (ZACHARY, 2014).

Based on interdisciplinary research in psycholinguistics, psychology, advertising and rhetoric, N. A. Pomyrylanu singles out methods of manipulative persuasion, methods of manipulative influence and sophism (tools of incorrect argumentation). The author refers to disinformation, defamation, suppression of facts, arbitrary interpretation of information, special pleading, the use of equivocal language to the first group. To the second group of devices the linguist refers to the ones that, in one way or another, draw on the emotional component:
giving excessive expressiveness and shades of sensationalism to a message, adjusting to the recipient’s psyche, using vocabulary with the connotation necessary for the manipulator. Sophisms comprehend unsubstantiated or insufficiently substantiated judgments, the substantiation of which is only seeming (POMYRYLANU, 2011, p.77). Thus, the linguist in his classification combines the logical-rhetorical, psycholinguistic and psychological aspects. Consequently, affective words are emotional-evaluative words capable of psyching out mass consciousness and producing feelings (hatred, pride, patriotism, fear, etc.), by charging the text with the emotions necessary for the manipulator.

Austrian sociolinguist K. Sorrig mentions a number of devices that help to achieve the goal desired for the manipulator: pun, persuasion, citation for better argumentation of a position, the use of linguistic forms that differ from usual ones. Verbal manipulation means are used to convert an object of manipulation to the point of view required for the author. One of the most common techniques is labeling. In the political discourse of the media, the labels of current usage are political terms, official or colloquial names of parties and movements, names of politicians according to their behavior and actions.

R. Keyes defines the “post-truth era” as deleting the borderline between falsehood and truth, dishonor and honesty (SORRIG, 1989). Post-truth is seen as a euphemism: a statement that is not true but is situated somewhere between truth and falsehood. In this case, “to deceive” is replaced by the less categorical “to spin”, and a “person who misleads” is replaced by “a liar who is ethically challenged”. One of the key elements of the era of post-truth is the emergence of the concept “info war” (information war), which over the past two years has moved from the slang category to the active vocabulary of the official press.

At the moment, all modern European languages are going through a “neological boom”. Each burst of social and political activity leads to the adaptation of new lexical reinterpretations: metaphorical and metonymic, abbreviations, allusions, etc., that is, all those that we have mentioned above. Rumors start flying at a tremendous speed and quickly acquire a color of truth. In this regard, some analysts are eloquent on the necessity of creating an antonym “pro-truth” (fight for the truth). Let us provide an example of using neologisms in English:

“So, as Vice-President Jo Biden recently said it would be, the reset button on US relations with Russia has been pressed”.

“For the second time in his presidency, Barack Obama is eyeing the reset button in his diplomatic tool kit. With Russia it misfired. So when it comes to Iran, what are the chances of overcoming three decades of hostility” [Hard Talk].

In this connection, we can mention the increasing use of derivatives with the substantive “bubble”, for example, filter bubble. The conceptual framework of this concept comprehends nominations that semantically describe the impossibility of accepting information, points of view, contradicting their ideals and attitudes by any group of people. This applies to Internet communities, closed groups of people who, as it were, are enclosed in a separate virtual shell with their inviolate values and morals. They either staunchly resist a certain opinion that contradicts their attitudes, or keep themselves away from any informational influence.

In Russian linguo-political space, in accordance with recent sociolinguistic studies, one of the most important semantic components of political discourse is the concept “сила” (power). Having grown enormously in popularity at the beginning of this century, it has proven to be eminently productive. The development of this concept resulted in the emergence of numerous derivatives, such as “сильное государство” (powerful state), “сила нравственности” (moral power), “сила правительства” (government), “сила власти” (authority), “сила президента” (strong president), etc. Anthropomorphic metaphors with the lexeme “сила” today dominate virtually all spheres of official political activity. Thus, in the Russian political discourse, the concept “сила государственства” (powerful state) is nationally oriented and is perceived as an antithesis in relation to the semantic content of this concept in other cultures. It is a matter of common observation that in the Russian political discourse state is a subject exercising power, in Western European it is a tool used by society to exercise power.

In general, the failure to take account of the international neologisms presented above, the use of only nationally-oriented discourse in the political sphere of concepts leads to the substitution of democratization, as a key concept, with political discourse.
SUMMARY

So, in connection with the achievements in the scientific and technical sphere for the last decades, the “verbalization” of the world has been carried out especially intensively, which is naturally reflected in the rapid growth of the lexical composition of many languages of the world, the emergence of political neologisms, especially from English.

It is important to note that there are tendencies that a tolerant political culture as a respectful attitude to political manifestations that do not contradict the existing legislation will also affect these most important components of political discourse and will evaluate these most important concepts of political discourse... Obtaining maximum information about current developments in the field of political discourse and about the terms used will help counteract the manipulation of public opinion of citizens and the international community.

In conclusion, it should be noted that, in didactic terms, the formation of anti-manipulative lexical competence of students is one of the priority tasks of professional training for students(PESINA, KIVA-KHAMZINA, RUBANOVA 2019). This competence includes the students’ ability to interlanguage and intercultural tolerance, adequate use of the vocabulary of the native and target languages in situations of intercultural interaction (PESINA, SOLONCHAK 2015; PESINA, PULEKHA, TANDON, 2019). To form it, purposeful work in the process of organizing teaching not only a foreign language but also other disciplines is required.

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