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SPEECH BEHAVIOUR IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN (POLITICAL AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH PORTRAIT OF DMITRY MEDVEDEV)

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Abstract

The analysis of the texts of speeches performed within the framework of election campaign discourse in Russia shows that the selection of language tools is determined by speakers' intentions and anticipated impact which will be embodied in person's real political action, i.e. voting. It is intentional, reflects the pragmatic attitude of the speaker – the impact on the consciousness of the mass addressee, control over them, and the direction of their actions. All the speeches and articles produced by Dmitry Medvedev within election campaign have been analysed. The methods applied demonstrate where language tool choices have been made in order to communicate and pass on certain views. Research prospects are associated with the study of the specific features of certain types of political discourse, with a detailed description of its genres, as well as the prediction of the speech behaviour of speech subjects as representatives of a certain type of political discourse.

1. Introduction

Politics is a power acquired and maintained by instruments provided by the language that is spoken by politicians and the people they address their speech. The language works to express their power, describe their political views, support their political opinions and convince the audience of the necessity of certain political actions.

The article discusses linguistic features of verbal or speech behavior of Dmitry Medvedev as a key subject of the Russian presidential election discourse. He uses certain linguistic and rhetorical techniques and means designed to control the streams of information he broadcasted, which are able to attract or distract the addressee's attention, influence their existing evaluations, attitudes and assumptions, in other words, the ones that are considered to possess a potential to manipulate. Public speech, oral and written, is the main tool for the struggle for power, therefore, the ability to effectively use language is necessary to build an image of a successful politician who can attract a potential voter, which is especially important during periods of increased social and political activity of citizens, which include election campaign periods.

2. Problem Statement

The present article embodies a part of a complex study of election campaign political discourse texts performed by Dmitry Medvedev. Born in 1965 in the Soviet Russia, he studied law at the Leningrad State University (presently Saint Petersburg State University). After graduation, he continued his studies at civil law chair where he later lectured for several years. In 1999, he started his career in the central government of Russia as deputy head of the presidential staff consequently developing a position among officeholders closest to President Vladimir Putin. Between 2012 and 2020, Dmitry Medvedev served as Prime Minister of Russia. In the period between 2008 and 2012 he held the position of President of Russia. He resigned at the same time with the rest of his government in January 2020 to give way to President Putin's amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. On the day of resignation, he was appointed Deputy Chair of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.

As a participant of his only election campaign as the candidate from the parties "United Russia", "Fair Russia", "Civil Power", "Agrarian Party of Russia", Dmitry Medvedev demonstrated a high level of rhetorical literacy. The particularities of the discourse of this politician have been of interest not only for political scientists, but also for language research (Gavrilova, 2011; Laurynas, 2008).

Prior to the start of the election campaign, Dmitry Medvedev refused from participating in debates and publishing campaign materials in print media on the free of charge basis allowed by law for candidates. He informed of his decision not to interrupt his duties as Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation. His preferences have not undergone any considerable change ever since, and the corpus of texts performed by him comprises mostly transcripts of working meetings, as well as interviews given to and published in quality national press.

3. Research Questions

The research represented by this paper intended to answer the following questions:

3.1. What theoretical foundations do political and electoral discourse studies have in modern linguistic science?

3.2. What language tools can be identified as one's potential of manipulative impact on human consciousness in the American and Russian presidential election discourse?

3.3. What are the linguistic and extralinguistic features characteristic of the main actors of presidential election campaign discourse of the chosen period?

3.4. In what ways can the features of the use of linguistic means of manipulative influence in the discourses of various candidates during the presidential election campaigns of 2007-2008. in Russia and the USA be compared?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to distinguish and describe the language means which not only function within the framework of the individual discourse of Dmitry Medvedev as a runner for presidency but can have a modifying effect on public consciousness.

5. Research Methods

The aim of the conducted research required the application of certain methods. The most appropriate tools were suggested by a discursive approach, where a language-focused simulation of a politician's verbal image resulted from their language behaviour was described and characterized with a particular attention to its main features – philosophical, pragmatic, communicative, and stylistic ones studied individually. When taken into consideration and analysed, all the distinguished features unescapably shift to extralinguistic areas, where the speech is regarded from the positions of social and cultural studies. The discursive approach has an ample tool set to concentrate on, as Sedov (2007) puts it, the task to find out the reasons for the appearance of certain features of speech behaviour in a person's speech portrait. It provides cultural and social explanations of the motives of the politician's discourse. The most important features of political texts are not likely to be sufficiently analysed without social and cultural, sometimes historic backgrounds. According to van Dijk (2001), discourse is a complex communicative phenomenon which includes, along with text, extralinguistic factors (e.g. trivia knowledge of the world, opinions, purposes, etc.), and they are necessary to understand this text.

The idea was further developed by E. Kozhina, who writes that "speech, text, utterance in their procedural aspect and in conjunction with extralinguistic background" is what discourse actually is; even though the language has been fixed in texts, it represents a considerably common people's practice with a generalized subject of utterance. Discourse is also characterized by the fact that it does not have any distinct boundaries, which results from the fact that it is "process-like and intertextual, also it represents the result of constant human transforming activity" (as cited in Dubrovskaya, 2016, p. 10).

Along with that, the research benefits from the tools provided by complex linguistic description with its observation, generalization, interpretation and classification of linguistic facts. Stylistics on case-to-case basis, linguistics and rhetoric, comparison, language and speech distribution, and extralinguistic information were included to provide better understanding of reasons for utterances' creation and their expected impact.

The materials analysed within the framework of the research, as well as the social and communicative situation where and when it was created, the aims and findings determine the fact that this research belongs to the field of political linguistics. This interdisciplinary branch of science shares some characteristics with Political Communication science while preserving a stronger linguistic attitude. Political linguistics itself forms two approaches to the analysis of political discourse. A renowned contributor to this areas, Sheigal (2004) describes the descriptive approach for the needs of political linguistics as one which roots in "the classical methodology of rhetorical analysis of public speaking represented by the works of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. In modern linguistics, one aspect of the descriptive approach is related to the study of the linguistic behaviour of politicians, linguistic means, rhetorical devices and manipulative strategies used by politicians in order to persuade" (p. 16). The method of critical discourse analysis "would mean that critical-political discourse analysis deals especially with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance. In particular such an analysis deals with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political inequality that results from such domination (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993).

The approaches of general stylistic and cultural-speech analysis, semantic and pragmatic interpretation have also contributed to ample analysis of the research materials.

6. Findings

The texts of speeches given by Dmitry Medvedev are characterized by a predominance of first-person plural sentences, and even within the framework of one speech, the addressee cannot always clearly determine the type of "we" used ("I and those present", "I and President Vladimir Putin", "I and the government "," I and all citizens of the country "):

But we remember what the President said: we must bring the average life expectancy to 75 years.

We understand that if children die in maternity hospitals, if thousands of people, tens of thousands of people die on the roads, healthy men are poisoned by surrogates, and if people with heart diseases do not receive timely medical attention, this is our fault. And we must remember this in our daily activities (Medvedev, 2008a).

Rather a vague semantics gives way to manipulation with the recipient's consciousness: the potential voter gets the impression that, first, the speaker identifies himself with them, shares their worries and problems, and second, that he is included in solving important tasks for the state along with a higher place in the social hierarchy by the sender, third, avoiding the first person singular "I", the politician shows a certain amount of modesty, emphasizes that he does not work alone, which stresses, on the one hand, the presence of a well-coordinated team, but on the other hand, limits his personal responsibility in a particular

matter. In general, the provision proposed by communication impresses the addressee and makes them ready to act in a convenient way for the addressee.

Within the framework of the 2008 election campaign discourse, he shows a proficiency in working with students: he skilfully adapts to each audience, each listener. This is manifested, for example, in the selection of appropriate appeals. So, at the meeting with representatives of the Taman division and when working with an audience dominated by older students, he uses the appeal "comrades", ignoring the Soviet/leftist semantic load:

Dear comrades! <...> (Giving a signal to the beginning of the conversation - E.B.) Please. Please, comrades (Medvedev, 2008f).

Dear comrades, dear colleagues! (Medvedev, 2008h)

In his speech, the distance between the speaker and the addressee is reduced by vocabulary of lower registers:

Regarding what Natalya Yurievna said: the transition of our former "tenters" - those who trade - is already in different conditions. But under this it is necessary to "cling" to territorial funds and funds of municipalities (Medvedev, 2008e).

Speaking about the prospects for the development of higher education in Russia, he uses vocabulary which is mostly characteristic of teenagers and young adults:

Here is what our young colleague Sergey Georgievich said about regional training centers and the graduation of specialists who "embrace" several areas with their knowledge. An absolutely positive thing (Medvedev, 2008e).

The use of lexical units of this kind contributes to the self-presentation of the politician as not a senior person but rather a peer involved in the youth environment, familiar with the processes taking place in it, as well as expanding the circle of his supporters at the expense of a younger audience - those who can be directly affected by the reform of higher education.

The use of foreign vocabulary serves the same purpose. For example, the actualization of the "Challenge" concept, which is more characteristic of the English-language tradition:

Anyway, if a person does not want to retrain, he will continue to do what he is used to, so this is the challenge to which every person in his/her life should find an answer (Medvedev, 2008e).

Describing difficulties in a certain sphere, the politician skillfully uses abstract nouns characterized by semantic blur:

I think that this is still a somewhat broader issue. And here purely accounting moments, organizational moments and legal moments related to the registration of acts of civil status are intertwined (Medvedev, 2008g).

The presence of a large number of homogeneous members, expressed by nouns of this type, can lead the addressee to the conclusion that the addressee is thoroughly and comprehensively familiar with the problem, and the design, which is inconvenient for formulating a question to the above, gives the addressee the impression that the speaker already knows how to solve problems.

The politician's desire to succinctly summarize his own professional and life experience, his knowledge and beliefs in a capacious speech formula that can influence the addressee, led to the appearance of one of the most frequently cited Medvedev's aphorisms:

This is the principle "freedom is better than non-freedom." These words are the quintessence of human experience (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

In order to enhance the pervasive impact on the audience, he also resorts to the resources of the expressive means of language. Semantic repetitions and stylistic figures based on this phenomenon serve to more clearly structure the text, drawing the addressee's attention to certain segments of it:

The President announced the long-term development strategy of our country, the development strategy until 2020, and it is clear that the key element of this strategy is the transition to an innovative economy (Medvedev, 2008e).

Also, one of the ways to formulate a convincing and memorable message is anadiplosis:

To achieve them, a responsible and consistent policy is needed. A policy centered on people is the future of millions of Russian families (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

Creating a construct with the verbs of the present tense in order to enhance the emotional impact of divided parceling helps the politician create the illusion of the immediate proximity of a successful future for the addressee:

Such a Russia will be a country in which citizens are proud not only of its great past, but also its present. They consider our country the best place to live in the modern world (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

Violation of the normative compatibility of lexical units, creating the effect of personification of the phenomenon, gives the addressee the impression of a reverent attitude of the politician to the state, convinces us that the speaker sincerely empathizes with events in one sphere or another:

Yes, it is not going as fast as we would like, the arrival of a business, a full-fledged business in our mechanical engineering, modern business, but it is happening. The first steps have been taken, the industry began to breathe (Medvedev, 2008e).

The method of emotional contrast, in which the opposition is not antonyms, but phrases with opposite evaluations, allows D.A. Medvedev to use meaningful and evaluative elements in speech that can actualize in the mind of the addressee convenient assessments and relationships:

You also know that for a long time in this period our industry rejected all kinds of innovations, and it was not its fault, it was its misfortune, and today our task is to take all innovative steps as quickly as possible, entering a new quality (Medvedev, 2008e).

The message, constructed by means of emotional contrast, characterized by a negative assessment part of which is enhanced by gradation, focuses on positive results, emphasizes the key role of the country's leadership in this process:

Some of these problems ten years ago seemed simply unbearable. The situation in some cases was simply critical. Today the situation is changing - not as fast as we would like, but nevertheless this is happening. And this is the result of our joint work, the efforts of all levels of government.

Another effective means of persuasive influence on the addressee are rhetorical questions requiring an unambiguous positive or negative answer:

We must answer for ourselves, what school are we creating, what kind of school of the future is it? Will our child be happy meeting with the teachers, or will he or she just be afraid of them? Will he/she be forced to stupidly cram or will they still be accustomed to think? Will the school be engaged in their

upbringing, or will everyone not give a damn about what is happening, that cigarette butts, and sometimes just syringes, are scattered in the school toilet? (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

The complication of the antithesis, the placement of one question after another with a gradual increase in emotional stress, the construction of questions on a similar structure with anaphora, greatly increase the impact on the potential voter.

He often tends to construct messages through impersonal sentences:

And at any moment, one can just say that one is acting, one is building, one is producing in violation of technological standards, and grab by the collar any of those present here, and representatives of big business. A very big problem. Here it is necessary to urgently adopt a huge number of technical regulations, and it is desirable to do this no longer at the level of laws, because we will not have time to "blot" it all at such a fast pace, but at the level of government decrees. Now this work has already begun, but still a lot remains to be done (Medvedev, 2008d, 2008i).

Impersonal constructions perform several functions in his discourse at the same time: with their help, the addressee can, without identifying the culprit(s) of the existing problem, admit its existence, which in turn can form the illusion that the addressee is aware of an objectively correct way to solve it.

Politics is also distinguished by the restrained nature of assessing the historical past of the state of Russia:

The start of Russia as an industrial power was interrupted by the First World War, then by the Revolution, after which the Soviet period began, which, in essence, can also be called a technological revolution. Yes, this revolution was specific (Medvedev, 2008e).

In general, legal education and many years of experience in public service have greatly influenced the politician whose style with a certain degree of confidence may be described as official-business, with such characteristic features as the rare use of emotionally expressive speech means, the formal organization of a text message, the use of cliché expressions, passive voice, and impersonal sentences:

It is also necessary to take a number of steps. The first one. All administrative procedures should be fixed <...> Second. It is necessary to fundamentally change <...> Third. A significant part of the functions performed by state bodies should be transferred <...> Fourth. Simultaneously with the reduction of the obviously excessive number of civil servants, it is advisable <...> Fifth. It is necessary to radically improve the quality of company management <...> (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

A well-structured message helps presidential candidate D.A. Medvedev appear before the audience as a highly educated, responsible politician, whose clear speech testifies to his firm convictions and clear views on a better future for his country, and a priori acquires a characterization of objectivity for the addressee.

The key concepts of the election campaign D.A. Medvedev's are "Development", "Stability", "Efficiency", which can be verbalized in the texts he realized in various ways.

As part of the election campaign, Medvedev is updating the concept of "Development":

Today we have a very important issue on the agenda of our district meeting - the issue of improving the quality of life and the quality of social services for pensioners (Medvedev, 2008g).

Work to ensure that new laws are adequate to the state of Russian society. And also - to our long-term plans. So that they were innovative, that is, they were designed for modernization (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

Such a frequency of its actualization testifies to its undoubted importance for the speaker: in this way he emphasizes the positive changes in the economic, social and political spheres of the Russian state, implicitly testifying to the successful work of the government, the chairman of which at the time of the implementation of these texts was the addressee. The constant mention of the continuous improvement of various spheres in society allows us to inspire the addressee with the feeling that their life can change for the better if they support the addressee, who acts as the keeper of the tradition of the development of the Russian state.

The following concept, "Stability", in the studied texts of the pre-election political discourse is intended to create in the recipient's mind an image of a state resistant to negative external and internal influences, all of which systems operate continuously, without failures:

We need a stable financial system that will not allow depreciation of citizens' savings and that has sufficient resources to meet demand from enterprises implementing a wide variety of projects - from opening a restaurant to building a power plant (Medvedev, 2008b, 2008c).

It is quite understandable that the addressee will perceive the speaker, from whom the messages actualizing this concept come, as a kind of guarantor of the orderly, uninterrupted operation of the state machine.

In the framework of the election discourse, the statement of D.A. Medvedev about the achievement of positive results as a consequence of the country's leadership's work is reported to the addressee in terms of the semantic field of the concept of "Efficiency":

Our main task is to implement those positive trends that have been outlined, and to do this in the most effective way (Medvedev, 2008g).

The experiment that was conducted brought certain results. So far, modest, but this is only the beginning. Because last year 298 apartments were allocated (Medvedev, 2008f).

Today, due to its active functioning in political discourse, the concept of "Efficiency" has outlined a semantic shift from the ratio of results to resources spent towards the ratio of results to goals. Thus, in reports that the country's leadership has solved the tasks assigned to it, it automatically defines it for the addressee as effective, able to make the right decisions and work fruitfully, and the potential lies in modifying the picture of the world of the present and future in the mind of the addressee in a more positive direction. The concept of "Efficiency" is an integral part of the image of D.A. Medvedev, representing himself to the addressee as an experienced civil servant, leader, whose success in government has been proven and allows him to take a stronger position in relation to his opponents in the election race:

I believe that everything that has been done in Russia over the past eight years has benefited the country. Of course, there are problems, but the positive changes are obvious, it is stupid to argue with that. Therefore, I do not need to confirm in verbal battles the superiority over those who have never been at the helm of the state machine and whose programs are obviously outdated and have no chance of implementation (Medvedev, 2008d).

7. Conclusion

The fundamental for Dmitry Medvedev's electoral discourse concepts of "Development", "Stability", and "Efficiency" are extremely vague semantic complexes that almost completely lose their restrictions when connecting with one or another reality, acquiring features of a conceptual metaphor. While maintaining a positive emotional-expressive appraisal, they turn into powerful manipulation tools. Building themselves in the recipient's mind in a series of interconnected concepts, they are able to form the following chain of stability – effectiveness, development, development, prosperity, in which trust and support of the existing political system of the state and its leaders guarantee the functioning of the system as a whole and provide the addressee a key final link for them. At the same time, with a certain degree of certainty, it can be said that the actualizers of these concepts operating in the political discourse are characterized by positive emotional coloring, which not only inspires in general, but is mostly intended to bolster the belief in the rightness of the choice and develop a free voting sensation for each addressee.

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