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Inaugural Speech as a Tool of Forming Speech Portrait of the President

Dilyara B. Garifullina

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Lyutsiya G. Khismatullina

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Alsu Yu. Giniyatullina

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Milausha R. Garaeva

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Alfiya A. Gimadeeva

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Abstract--- The paper deals with the inaugural speeches of Vladimir Putin (2018) and Donald Trump (2017) and is aimed at analyzing the role of verbal means in forming the speech portraits of political leaders. The article is of urgent interest as it demonstrates the speech portraits of country leaders in relation to national identity, mentality and socio-political course of the country. By means of comparative content analysis we looked for grammatical, lexical and stylistic elements peculiar to a specific linguistic persona while comparing the speeches of the presidents as well as we attempted to determine the specific national backgrounds of political discourse. Thus, each president's inauguration context model is mostly characterized by a different set of linguistic means. The paper findings may be useful for researchers who deal with interdisciplinary studies, political and cognitive linguistics, political discourse and communication analysis.

Keywords---comparative analysis, inaugural address, linguistic personality, linguistics, political discourse, speech portrait.

Introduction

Political discourse

Political linguistics is one of the most challenging fields of modern linguistic studies which focuses on:

- Lingvomental portrait of political world, that is mental fields, political concepts, disvalues and values, stereotypes in political discourse.
- Political communication and related to its political discourse, tactics and strategies in political communication, genres of political speech, political text.

Thus, the core notion in modern political linguistic studies is political discourse which comprises all speech acts used in political discussions as well as rules of public policy. [Van Dijk \(1997\)](#), one of the leading scholars in this field, states that discourse plays a pivotal role in the exercise of power. It expresses social cognition and may thus 'manage the minds' of other groups and their members. It affects the public at large, when a political actor in a political context attempts to prompt or influence social action through persuasion. Parshina also points out that a political text aims at linguistic manipulation, which is achieved with the help of linguistic means. The idea is supported by another scholar Baigunakova, who states that political discourse is a specific type of political communication characterized by a high degree of manipulating the minds of people. In this regard, it is significant to study and reveal the key mechanisms of political communication which includes the most effective means of linguistic influence of politics on public ([Little & Seehaus, 1988](#); [Bohm & Russell, 1985](#)).

In our study, we focus on political discourse in real domain, offered by Sheigal, the founder of semiotic approach to political discourse, when a speaker and a listener take on particular roles as a result of which speech acts affected by linguistic and extralinguistic factors appear. Therefore, we can say that in different social environments political discourses there are different lingvocultural elements as each country has its own language, history and traditions, specific mentality and model of political communication. Every political figure is put into this lingvocultural frame ([Biria & Mohammadi, 2012](#); [Božinović, 1967](#)).

Presidential discourse

The presidential discourse being a special kind of political communication, acts as a verbal form of manifestation of power, a means of influencing a large audience not only throughout the country, but also on the world stage [8: 446]. It is a complex set of presidential speech statements, which manifests the nature of objective reality in the form of the basic ideas of its time, which allows describing the mental world of society in a certain historical period. Despite the fact that the presidential discourse is being studied within the framework of political discourse, the feature that distinct it from political discourse is that this genre is strongly influenced by the president's linguistic personality ([Davis, 2007](#); [Dewaele & Furnham, 2000](#)).

The concept of the linguistic personality of president is of particular interest, since president actively influences the public consciousness and president is constantly discussed in the media. Moreover, the specificity of linguistic personality of president lies in the fact that their “speech portrait” can be formed not only by president, but also by the “commentators” in the person of representatives of society, journalists and opponents. In the study, we share the point of view of O.V. Spiridovsky, who considers the linguistic personality of the president from the perspective of value, cognitive and behavioral aspects (Wang & Chen, 2020; Levitan & Medvedeva, 2014).

According to the scholar, the value-based aspect of the linguistic personality allows to identify the values that the leader of the country adheres to, establishing their belonging to a particular ethnic group, culture, historical era, etc. The cognitive aspect involves the transition to modeling the structures of participants' consciousness in political communication, where the key role is given to the conceptual space of the presidential discourse. The behavioral aspect encompasses communication strategies and motives, verbal and non-verbal methods of manipulation, individual style and creativity with social determinism, as well as the genre preferences of the state leader (Xu, 2004; Fetzer & Weizman, 2006).

Inaugural speech

The inaugural speech plays a significant role in shaping the president's linguistic personality, during which the country's leader does not only voice ideological priorities and main guidelines for the future, but also positions himself as a person and as a leader within the country's public and political space. If in the history of the USA this ceremony began with [Washington \(1789\)](#), in Russia the first inaugural speech was given. In the history of the US presidency, 58 inaugural addresses have been given, compared to five in Russian history; therefore, for Russian political communication, this genre is a new, emerging type of discourse.

The American and foreign linguistic science has accumulated rich experience in the study of inaugural discourse. There are numerous works devoted to the genre features of presidential rhetoric, the ideological foundations of the inaugural speech, its conceptual and topic models, the basic functions and structural units of the inaugural appeal are studied; content analysis of the appeal have been conducted both for individual presidents and in comparison with others, etc. In Russian linguistics, the works of Gavrilova M.V., Sheigal E.I., Spiridovsky OV, Ilyicheva V.V., Khudyakova A. V. are worth mentioning, as well as Smekhova L.V., Patyukova R.V., Scherbak I.V., Morgun E.A., Markova O.A., Kharlamova T.V., Nesterenko E.Yu. and others.

Interest in the study of inaugural speech is fully justified. Firstly, the inaugural address is the most discussed and politically significant among other addresses of the president of the country, during which the image characteristics and oratory abilities of the state leader are most clearly manifested; secondly, it is characterized by a clear ideological construct and political symbolism; thirdly, it

verbalizes political, socio-economic, religious, moral and ethical, cultural concepts (Borris & Zecho, 2018; Keohin & Graw, 2017).

Method

The purpose of this article is the analysis of the inaugural speeches of the Russian and American presidents, the consideration of verbal means of forming a speech portrait of a political leader. The study uses a comparative method to identify common characteristics in the discourses of the two presidents and the national specifics of the inaugural discourse; a conceptual analysis method for describing basic concepts in leaders' speeches; content analysis to determine ideological and qualitative characteristics of the president's discourse; continuous sampling method for selecting illustrative material (Chikileva, 2005; Chudinov, 2008).

The body of data comprises the transcripts of the inaugural addresses of the Russian President [Putin \(2018\)](#), and the US President [Trump \(2017\)](#). Putin's speech includes 1263 words, while Trump's speech includes 1503 words. The present study deals with the words and phrases frequently used by two leaders and emphatic expressions found in their speeches.

Results

During the preparation for the inauguration ceremony, each new leader with special trepidation and caution refers to writing an inaugural speech, to choosing lexical and grammatical means and to presenting information to a large audience. Of particular importance is the introductory part (salutation) of the speech, which sets the tone for the whole solemn speech. Despite the official framework, in the welcoming part, both presidents are trying to win over the audience and show themselves as the "people's" president. In the address of V. Putin "Dear citizens of Russia! Ladies and Gentlemen! Dear friends!" changing the phrase "dear citizens" to the end of the appeal to "dear friends" reduces the distance from the audience. D. Trump first addresses the present Presidents, Chief Justice Roberts, President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama and further welcomes Americans and the rest of the planet's fellow Americans and people of the world. The lexical unit "fellow Americans" speaks about the equality and belonging of everyone and the president, himself to one society. The American president concludes his appeal with expressing his gratitude through the phrase by using the phrase: it can be regarded as gratitude for the previous work; for having voted; for coming ([Dijk, 2015](#); [Gavrilova, 2011](#); [McClay, 2017](#)).

The President of Russia clearly says why he is grateful to the citizens of Russia: "With all my heart I thank the citizens of Russia for your unity, for the belief that we can make a difference for the better. Once again I want to say thank you - thank you for the level of sincere support that you, the citizens of Russia, have given me in the presidential elections of our country ". The main part of the speech of both presidents is replete with various linguistic means that make their speech emotionally rich and expressive. Let us dwell on some of them.

The use of the pronouns “we” and “ours” in the speech of the presidents actualizes the idea of cohesion, community of people. The fact that the presidents almost do not use the personal pronoun “I” indicates the priority of the collective approach in the mentality of state leaders over the individual. The message of both presidents is service in the name of people and their prosperity, awareness of their obligations to the country that they will lead the next few years. However, it should be noted that this idea reinforces in Putin’s speech thanks to the elliptical construction of replacing the pronoun “I”: “I consider it my duty and the meaning of my whole life to do everything for Russia, for its present and future - peaceful and prosperous, for saving and continuing our great people, for prosperity in every Russian family. I assure you that the goal of my life and work will be, as before, serving people, our Fatherland”[13]. The American president uses the personal pronoun “I” once, which, combined with a hyperbole, adds to his utterance usefulness and catchiness: “I will fight for you with every breath in my body and I will never ever let you down” ([Parshina, 2007](#); [Sheigal, 2004](#); [Sukhanov, 2018](#)).

An appeal to the historical past in the address of the Russian president emphasizes continuity with the past, “healing” of past wounds and the desire to improve the quality of life. V. Putin’s words trace such qualities of the Russian people as stamina, endurance and firmness of spirit. “We know that in the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s, along with the long overdue and absolutely necessary historical changes, our Fatherland and our people faced very difficult tests. For more than a thousand-year history, Russia has repeatedly faced eras troubles and trials and has always been reborn. D. Trump’s appeal to the past of the country has a pejorative assessment and sounds like a criticism of politicians and his predecessors. The use of present perfect tense (Present Perfect) reinforces the perplexity and indignation of the country’s leader about the political course that the United States followed in previous years. The politician’s thoughts on the “decadent” state of the country are also conveyed by the synonymous tokens “depletion”, “disrepair and decay”, “dissipate”: “For many decades, we’ve subsidized the armies of other countries, while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America’s infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We’ve made other countries rich, while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country have dissipated over the horizon”.

Various adverbs and adjectives in D. Trump’s speech contribute to the active verbalization of traditional American values like freedom, love for the homeland and the ideas of a strong national state: “We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity. When America is united, America is totally unstoppable. Possessive Case «God’s people» is used in the speech to show the religious concept and is aimed at creating unity among the audience «The bible tells us how good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity». At the lexical-stylistic level, the emotionality of the utterance is achieved in the inaugural speech by using words that verbalize the sensible meanings that are relevant to the audience in order to form the desired cognitive images in the audience’s mind. The lexical and stylistic features of the language can enhance the speaker’s impact on the audience, and both presidents widely use it.

The speech is a representation of America as a great, powerful state D. Trump has achieved it by using parallel constructions and repetitions: "Together, we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And yes, together we will make America great again". Repeating the verb in the future helps to inspire hope for a promising future and prosperity for a people dominated by concepts such as well-being, unity and security. The anaphoric repetitive unit "America", "American" reinforces the feelings of patriotism and the president's sense of duty to help his people: "From this day forward, it's going to be only America first, America first. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work, rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor. We will follow two simple rules; buy American and hire American".

Putin's speech is also replete with parallel constructions and repetition: "But history does not forgive only one thing: indifference and inconsistency, enervation and complacency, especially today, at a critical stage, at a turning point, in an era of rapid changes around the world". Changes in value orientations in recent years; the need to form a healthy and safe society and strengthening the country's democratic course are verbalized with the help of gradation: "A new quality of life, well-being, security, human health - that's what's important today, that's at the center of our politics. It is in the harmonious unity of a free citizen, responsible civil society and a strong, efficient, democratic state that I see a solid foundation for the development of Russia".

Trump focuses on changing political course with the antithesis: "Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. And while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land". The presence of vivid metaphors in the president's address demonstrates concern about American society, experiencing an industrial crisis, suffering from a low level of education and the rise of crime: "mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge; and the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential".

In the Russian language, the metaphor "dense guard and bureaucratic carrion" emphasize the president's negative attitude towards the bureaucracy, which hinders the development and improvement of modern Russian society: "such a breakthrough rejects injustice, inertia, dense guard and bureaucratic carrion - all that fetters people prevents them from fully opening up". However, a comparison with the phoenix bird demonstrates dynamism in the development of the Russian state and generates to a belief in changes for the better: "for more than a thousand-year history, Russia has more than once faced the embroilment with times and trials and has always revived like a phoenix bird". The use of stable phrases "gathering will into a fist", "shouldering complex tasks" emphasizes the feasibility of the intended goals; that, all this is achieved by free citizens of Russia.

The concluding part of both presidents' inaugural speeches sounds quite modest and is a logical ending to the whole speech. So, the American president focuses on the future prosperity of the country. D. Trump shows that he hands over the power to the people, his idea is clear, from now on Americans will make decisions by themselves, and every act will be made for Americans first, and only after that help to other countries will be provided. Further on, he thanks American nation and as is customary addresses to the God «God bless you. And God bless America!». V. Putin concludes with an appeal to the people for cooperation, participation of everyone in building the future of the country and promise to do his best to make Russia a successful country. «we are a powerful team and let love for Motherland, all best qualities that there are in people inspire everyone of us to search and self-develop for personal success, for our families, inspire common intense work for the prosperity of our native country. We will achieve success! I believe it will happen! I will do my best for it».

Summary

A brief analysis of the inaugural speeches of the presidents of Russia and the United States demonstrates the effectiveness and performativity of various verbal means. Each of the politicians operates with a nationally marked set of lexical, grammatical and stylistic elements that serve as a way of presenting the principles and perspective visions of the leader regarding the country's domestic and foreign policy. In their addresses, both presidents touch upon the themes of the historical past, praise of their country, projections on a prosperous future and pressing problems. The key elements of Vladimir Putin's appeal are "revived and successful Russia", "a new stage of national development", "perfect economy", "capable state", "and breakthrough". In the speech of D. Trump, the key words are the phrases "to rebuild our country", "prosperity and strength", "friendship and unity", "a new vision", "America first", "freedom". Despite the general ideological and thematic constants, the heads of state differently see ways to achieve their goals in changing the political course of the country. So, D. Trump promises to wipe terrorism off the global map and eradicate the injustice to the Americans that existed before the day he was elected president of the country. Vladimir Putin calls for harmonious unity of free citizens, dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries, and, above all, the solution of priority tasks of the socio-economic and technological development of Russia.

Conclusion

A linguistic analysis of the inaugural address allows one to scrutinize thoroughly the genre characteristics of the presidential discourse and the discourse of the president. The inaugural address is a reflection of the political era, linguistic and national-specific features. As a rule, this is a speech carefully prepared, thought out in detail and focused on a specific listener speech. It is in the inaugural speech that the state leader appears as a strong linguistic personality, a model of national ideology, an orator demonstrating models of speech behavior with a certain style of thinking and expression, as well as the values of national culture.

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