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## COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SPEECHES

*In the paper an attempt is made to study political texts from the point of view of their modelling within the framework of cognitive linguistics. The idea was put forward by T. van Dijk, who together with the study of context or the communicative event or communicative situation with its various constituents, put emphasis also on the study of cognitive properties of participants, such as opinions, beliefs, values, knowledge. These all taken together provide the formation of a general social model.*

**Key words:** *cognitive linguistics, contextual information, cognitive model, linguistic properties of participants, political texts*

The relationship between political discourse and political cognition presupposes on the one hand uniqueness of the utterance of a politician, on the other, socially shared knowledge of a political party. In these, both two aspects of discourse processing should be regarded as a complicated task based on the principle of political cognition. In other words, political cognition serves as an essential theoretical part between the personal and the collective aspects of politics and political discourse.

In order to understand political discourse we also need to examine political cognition of participants. In this respect, it is important to elaborate a complex framework, a theoretical basis on which the architecture of the social mind is placed.

Cognitive theory associates different types of mental representations in political discourse. Hidden mental representations tend to help the ordinary people of any nationality to understand political communication, specific political actions, and behaviour on this interconnected political planet.

Cognitive analysis of political speeches reveals theoretical background in them. Mainly based on patterned structures of political behaviour they reveal that it is not only *the situation* which is valid for the politician but also the mental representations of communicative behaviour used by many generations of politicians.

The study of political cognition focuses on the study of an abstract mental category called memory. A division is usually made between Short Term Memory (STM) also called Working Memory and Long Term Memory (LTM). Long Term Memory is subdivided into Episodic Memory which stores individual experiences that result from processing understanding in Short Term Memory and Semantic Memory. It stores more general, abstract and socially shared information. Information stored in Long Term Memory is constituted by a common ground of

sociocultural beliefs, knowledge and opinions; it enhances mutual understanding and communication.

Besides socially shared beliefs people may have personal experience and knowledge represented in their Episodic Memory. Human mind through personal experiences, subjective interpretation of events creates mental models which may be seen as the basis of the meaning of discourse /Dijk, 1989: 68/.

In order to illustrate the theoretical background of political cognition, let's take an example of political discourse, fragments of Ronald Reagan's speech held at a joint session of the Houses of Parliament. His speech is devoted to the current political situation in the world shadowed by the existence of the so-called "Evil Empire".

This is how he starts his speech.

*We're approaching the end of a bloody century plagued by a terrible political invention – totalitarianism. Optimism comes less easily today, not because democracy is less vigorous, but because democracy's enemies have refined their instruments of repression. Yet optimism is in order because day by day democracy is proving itself to be a not at all fragile flower. From Stettin on the Baltic to Varna on the Black Sea, the regimes planted by totalitarianism have had more than thirty years to establish their legitimacy. But none – not one regime – has yet been able to risk free elections. Regimes planted by bayonets do not take root.*

President Reagan starts his speech creating his image of the current political situation in the USSR and former democratic countries; he tries to construct his own personal model of the situation which he evaluatively defines as *the end of the bloody century*. Apart of his broader model, there are more specific models of particular events, for example, sentences about regimes implemented in democratic countries demonstrate the interpretation of his own opinions. (*Democracy is proving itself to be a not at all fragile flower. Regimes planted by bayonets do not take root*).

The process of creating one's own model is based on shared social and political beliefs. It was common knowledge for most capitalist countries to consider the Soviet Union and democratic countries as countries completely devoid of democratic institutions. To be more precise just from the beginning of his speech we immediately feel the contrast between US and Them. This contrast is shown in the number of evaluative words which describe the political system President Reagan represents. They are – optimism, democracy, flower, legitimacy. The opposing system is characterized by the word – combinations (totalitarianism, a terrible political invention, the instrument of repression). President Reagan's personal attitude towards this phenomenon is supported by basic ideologies existing in the 1980s . Ideologies as a crucial part of social cognition signify the level of mental abstraction shared and generalized by group members. The essence of democratic ideology is to defend the rights and obligations of ordinary people, each person no matter what class he belongs to must have the right to have a voice, to be

able to vote and to be able to express his own idea. President Reagan speaking about totalitarian system demonstrates a kind of positive self-presentation of himself and the country he represents.

The given example shows that the personal opinion of a politician is based on the socially shared knowledge which is preserved in deep layers of Social Memory. Personal opinions create personal models and are stored in Episodic Memory.

Politicians expressing their personal opinions must try to be more or less in accordance with group values. In the continuation of his speech President Reagan applies to another representation of socially shared knowledge. This is how he continues his speech.

*The strength of the Solidarity movement in Poland demonstrates the truth told in an underground joke in the Soviet Union. It is that the Soviet Union would remain a one-party nation even if an opposition party were permitted because everyone would join the opposition party...*

The joke is a type of knowledge stored in Social Memory, it is of great evaluative effect in political speeches. Jokes are meant to relax the situation; at the same time, they unite the audience, making it share the same criteria of the truth. The use of this joke, with its completely different way of speech structuring, has a rather strong effect on the audience activating its political attitude and ideologies. President Reagan didn't express his own idea, but by using a kind of rhetorical trick he just made people laugh. There is no doubt that the presentation of this knowledge will be accepted by the audience as it is generally shared and will easily persuade the listeners of the importance of his ideas.

In the continuation of his speech President Reagan comments on the current situation in the USSR creating his own personal model of the Evil Empire. The language behaviour, i.e. the selection or choice of linguistic units of negative characteristics, becomes of great importance; the politician takes into account not only what is being said, but especially how it is said. Hence, his personal viewpoint is demonstrated in the following phrases:

*The mission of the USSR is to further their barbarous assault on the human spirit or to maintain the policy of denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens.*

This model undoubtedly embodies the subjective beliefs of the speaker. Detailed negative investigation is backed up by the profound analysis of the political and economic situation in the USSR. Then he adds:

*The rate of growth in the national product has been steadily declining since the fifties and is less than half of what it was then.*

*The dimensions of this failure are astounding: a country which employs one-fifth of its population in agriculture is unable to feed its own people... Overcentralized, with little or no incentives, year after year the Soviet system pours its best resources into the making of instruments of destruction.*

The mental model formed by the President of the US is rather persuasive as it is supported by facts and numbers which enhance the negative effect on the audience. The derogatory outcome is increased by the use of another rhetorical tool that is contrast.

*The decay of the Soviet experiment should come as no surprise to us. Wherever the comparisons have been made between free and closed societies – West Germany and East Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, Malaysia and Vietnam – it is the democratic countries that are prosperous and responsive to the needs of their people.*

Summing up his critical analysis of the current situation President Reagan concludes:

*And one of the simple but overwhelming facts of our time is this: of all the millions of refugees we've seen in the modern world, their flight is always away from, not toward the Communist world.*

President Reagan managed to combine his interpretation, own attitude towards the USSR with an ideological background based on socially shared knowledge. He demonstrated it focusing the attention of the audience on details of selected negative characteristics.

In this speech, President Reagan constructed his personal model of a country based on his own knowledge and experience and named it The Evil Empire. His point of view supported many countries in the 1980s, later it was generalized and constituted the basis of anti-soviet social political learning.

In most cases, the general and abstract representations of social memory are first of all derived from personal experiences represented in episodic memory.

In the continuation of his speech addressing democratic forces, he summons them to start the fight against the Soviet system but not with bombs and rockets but with the beliefs they cherish, the values they hold and with the democratic ideals to which they are dedicated to. With these words, he turns to the British for help.

*Here among you is the cradle of self-government, the Mother of Parliaments. Here is the enduring greatness of the British contribution to mankind, the great civilized ideas: individual liberty, representative government, and the rule of law under God.*

President Reagan explicitly claims that he has a great admiration for Britain, as compared with the negative image of the Soviet Union. But we must admit that the statement he made was not a rhetorical tool, it was a kind of general knowledge socially shared and undisputed. To enhance its positive effect, he brings up the following comparison:

*I've often wondered about the shyness of some of us in the West about standing for these ideals that have done so much to ease the plight of man and the hardships of our imperfect world. This reluctance to use those vast resources at our command reminds me of the elderly lady whose home was bombed in the blitz. As the rescuers moved about, they found a bottle of brandy she'd stored behind the staircase, which*

*was all that was left standing. And since she was barely conscious, one of the workers pulled the cork to give her a taste of it. She came around immediately and said, "Here now – there now, put it back. That's for emergencies."*

The image of this shy elderly lady has a kind of psychological effect on the audience. You feel as if you are not speaking about powerful countries. The passage has positive reference to ordinary people, you become fond of them, as they need help and protection.

But to strengthen the impression of his speech and to make people follow his ideas, President Reagan has to sound optimistic. So he says:

*Well, the emergency is upon us. Let us be shy no longer. Let us go to our strength.... Let us now begin a major effort to secure the best – a crusade for freedom that will engage the faith and fortitude of the next generation. For the sake of peace and justice, let us move toward a world in which all people are at last free to determine their own destiny.*

Summarizing the process of discourse production we may conclude that President Reagan managed to create the political model of The Evil Empire. If the audience reads or listens to many similar discourses of politicians and have no competing alternative information, such models may be generalized to socially shared, abstract representations about the Soviet Union.

On our part, if we agreed with him, we would accept his models as essentially true or correct. If not we may construct alternative models of the situation, depending again and our personal knowledge of the current situation as well as on socially shared, group knowledge and evaluation.

It is not the context itself that relates to discourse, but the models the participants construct while talking. Dijk's framework seeks to show how knowledge of politics is stored in short-term memory and long-term memory, the latter being subdivided in personal (episodic) and social (semantic) memory. Short – term memory deals with ongoing processes of discourse production and understanding, that characterized scripts and frames.

Long-term knowledge is stored as social information about ideas, values and personal experience of these. Knowledge stored in long-term memory is spoken frequently of as schemata, but it is useful to treat schemata as a general category that characterizes scripts and frames. Both scripts and frames can be usefully thought of as mental representations stored in long-term memory. Scripts are defined as procedural knowledge, (parliamentary debate). Frames are related to the conceptualization of situation types.

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**Ա. ՍԻՄՈՆՅԱՆ – Քաղաքական տեքստերի վերլուծությունը ճանաչողական լեզվաբանության տեսանկյունից.** – Հոդվածում քննարկվում է քաղաքական տեքստերի մոդելավորման հայեցակերպը ճանաչողական լեզվաբանության տեսանկյունից: Այս գաղափարը պատկանում է վան Դեյքին: Վերջինս տեքստը դիտարկում է որպես ճանաչողական մոդել, որն իր մեջ է ներառում հեղինակին վերաբերող տեքստային և համատեքստային տեղեկատվություն, ինչպես նաև տվյալ անձի նպատակները, կարծիքները, գիտելիքներն ու գնահատականները, որոնք միասին ստեղծում են մեկ ընդհանուր սոցիալական մոդել:

**Բանալի բառեր.** ճանաչողական լեզվաբանություն, համատեքստային տեղեկատվություն, տեքստերի մոդելավորման հայեցակերպ, քաղաքական տեքստեր

**А. СИМОНЯН – Когнитивный анализ политических речей.** – В настоящем исследовании предпринимается попытка в рамках когнитивной лингвистики рассмотреть политические тексты с точки зрения их моделирования. Данная идея была заимствована у Т. ван Дейка, рассматривающего текст как когнитивную модель, включающую текстуальную и контекстуальную информацию, а также характеристики языковой личности, с учетом его целей, мнений, оценок, знаний о мире, которые вместе взятые обеспечивают создание единой, общей, социальной модели.

**Ключевые слова:** когнитивная лингвистика, контекстуальная информация, когнитивная модель, характеристика языковой личности, политические тексты