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## SOSIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

## СОЦІОЛІНГВІСТИЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

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In recent decades, in the direction of studying political discourse, one can come across many and diverse scientific studies. But the intensive development of mass communications requires a more thorough and comprehensive coverage of this phenomenon. This need actualizes the study of political communication in the sociolinguistic aspect. The article based on the descriptive method analyzes the properties and distinctive features, the unique possibilities of political communication. Materials and scientific findings of this article may be useful for sociologists, political scientists, as well as for linguists of the modern generation.

**Key words:** communication, sociolinguistics, political communication, political discourse, speech act.

Останніми десятиліттями з'явилося багато різноаспектних наукових досліджень щодо політичного дискурсу. Але інтенсивний розвиток засобів масових комунікацій потребує більш ретельного і всебічного висвітлення даного феномена. Така потреба актуалізує вивчення політичної комунікації в соціолінгвістичному аспекті. У статті описовим методом аналізуються властивості, характерні риси й унікальні можливості політичної комунікації. Матеріали і наукові висновки даної статті можуть бути корисними для соціологів, політологів, а також для лінгвістів сучасного покоління.

**Ключові слова:** комунікація, соціолінгвістика, політична комунікація, політичний дискурс, мовленнєвий акт.

В последние десятилетия появилось множество разноаспектных научных исследований политического дискурса. Но интенсивное развитие средств массовых коммуникаций требует более тщательного и всестороннего освещения данного феномена. Эта потребность актуализирует изучение политической коммуникации в социолингвистическом аспекте. В статье при помощи описательного метода анализируются свойства, отличительные черты, уникальные возможности политической коммуникации. Материалы и научные выводы данной статьи могут быть полезными для социологов, политологов, а также для лингвистов современного поколения.

**Ключевые слова:** коммуникация, социолингвистика, политическая коммуникация, политический дискурс, речевой акт.

Politics is a multi-valued phenomenon of social life. The notion of political communication appeared in the early twentieth century. And till now the notion of political communication relates to the interdisciplinary debatable issues. This is connected to the different approaches of this phenomenon. In one case, political is called that communication, which is associated with political problems [4].

With this approach, political communication refers to the type of speech communication the subject of which is politicians (political actors) or journalists who write about politics [20]. This disagreement around this concept determines the relevance of the analysis of political communication from a sociolinguistic point of view. The goal of our study is to identify the general characteristic properties of political communication by analysis in the sociolinguistic aspect, which is the scientific novelty of the article.

**History of the study of political communication.** The first experiments on the analysis of political communication were carried out on propaganda materials of the World War I. Noam Chomsky considers the propaganda action of the Woodrow Wilson administration, elected in 1916 under the slogan “World without a victory” as the academic example [2, p. 7]. The established state propaganda committee called the “Krill Commission” for six months successfully transformed pacifically minded people into a hysterically militarized population, eager to destroy everything German and save the world.

More importantly, the Krill Commission developed the basic propaganda techniques used to control public opinion to this day. Chomsky and other scientists have shown that the main task of the PR industry workers was “to control the public mind”. Their methods finally set at the end of the 1930s, when an activation of the trade union movement threatened to return true democracy to the masses. At that time, large corporations united with government PR experts to develop more convincing methods than the beating trade union organizers or the dispersing strike participants.

Such acts of open violence promoted the society rallying against the administration. “The Mogauk Valley Recipe” (first used in the 30s against striking workers in a steel mill in the Mogauk River valley, in

Pennsylvania) was the first notable attempt to apply a more subtle form of persuasion. Instead of directly attacking union leaders, the corporations decided to influence public opinion through the media.

By their own definition, this “scientific method of fighting strikes” was a conceptual campaign that reduced the whole range of questions about workers’ rights to a single, extremely understandable idea: “the strikers harm us all, they destroy American harmony”. This simple propaganda recipe was to equate trade union activities with something bad, especially to undermining the unity of the country and anti-American (communist) activities. At the same time, the really urgent issues were ignored (wage level, working conditions, the right to organize trade unions), and the whole problem was reduced to a headline over the photo crashing into the memory: “To strike is not American” (the slogan method was tested for the first time) [2].

One of the first direct uses of the “communication” notion in a political context dates back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: F. Ratzel says that “in political terms the transferring information is the most important of all communication services” [6, p. 34]. The political communication as the transfer of information between communicators for the certain purpose of political influence with the help of speech, gestures, as well as images and other symbols fixed on materials of language carriers, has arisen and developed together with human society.

Endowed with power people have long shown an interest in what we call now political communication, and realized that their success in the field of managing people depends on their ability rightly and appropriately to have political verbal and non-verbal dialogue with opponents, allies and society in whole. Researchers note the use of symbolic ceremonies, architectural structures designed to glorify those in power. To provide a deeper effect on the mind of non-elite masses, “the brainwashing tactic” was used. In the peace period, a softer, sparing effect was exercised, having similarities with modern methods of propaganda and agitation, advertising and PR. One of the ways to control the effectuation of political communication was various forms of censorship, which could be official, could take the form of pressure by public opinion, and could be self-censorship.

**The notion of “political communication”.** The occurrence of the term “political communication” is associated with the development of the political process in Europe and the United States after World War II. Appearing in this conceptual field of investigation, political communication have emerged as an independent scientific field, formed at the intersection of social and political sciences, political communicativistics. The formation of a new field of political knowledge was caused by the democratization of political processes in the world in the second half of the XX century, the development of cybernetic theory and the general theory of systems, as well as the emergence and rapid growth of new communication systems and information technologies.

The notion of “political communication” goes back to the general scientific term communication, which has been thoroughly developed in the theory of speech communication and linguistic pragmatics. This term is quite actively used in scientific practice along with others built on the same language model: intercultural communication, business communication, mass communication, etc. It is noteworthy that the theory of communication that emerged in the twenties of the last century was formed on the basis of studying political phenomena (in particular, political propaganda), however, historically primarily reflected in the field of cybernetics and semiology, focused its attention on the movement of information between interacting parties. That is why the first basic communicative schemes turned to be cybernetic models (H. Wiener, K. Shannon, B. Weaver).

It is not surprising that even now the work of political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists (specialists filling the formal cybernetic model with “human” content) often represent an application of the aforementioned schemes, and political communication is considered as the realization of mass communication processes. The theory of political communication actively operates with the categorical apparatus of the general theory of systems. One of the central notions in this field of knowledge is the notion of a system of active elements, or more briefly, simply a system, which is formulated as follows: a system is a set of related acting elements, have taken in unity with a set of relationships, or connections between them and constituting a single whole. In this case, the set of relationships, connections between the existing elements of the system (and all the various isomorphic transformations of these relations) is called the *structure* of the system. It should be emphasized that usually referred to as subsystems the systems of a lower hierarchy can act as the operating elements of the system, the way each of which acts as

a single and relatively isolated whole is determined by its own structure.

The structure of the system itself and its subsystems changes: over time, individual connections between elements may weaken and break, new connections may appear, including elements that were not previously part of the system. In a generalized plan of subsystem, acting elements and structure-forming relations between them are considered as components of the system.

Political science actively uses the mentioned terms, adapting them to the categorical-conceptual space of the discipline. The political system is understood as a concrete historical form of interaction between the persons of politics and the organization of relations between them, powerfully ordering, shaping and enclosing political activity in society within certain limits.

Accordingly, in this terminological field, political communication shows the process of transferring political information, its movement both within the political system between its elements and subsystems, and between the authorities and society. The application of the mentioned Wiener postulates to the political sphere outlines political communication as the creation, sending, receiving and processing of information that have a significant impact on politics. Moreover, the impact can be carried out directly (meeting, address of the President) or indirectly (stereotypes and phobias, formed under the influence of political information), its results can be appeared immediately or after some time. Possible communicators may be political figures, media workers, representatives of interest groups or individuals who are not related to any organizations – in this regard, their belonging to a particular social group or institution does not have decisive importance (for more about political communication actors, see below). It is fundamentally important that the information produces a significant political effect, affecting the mind, beliefs and behavior of individuals, groups, institutions and whole communities, as well as the environment in which they exist.

Nowadays, society acquires most of the political information not from its own experience, but through political communication, which allows not only receiving relevant political information, but also compiling and analyzing past human experience and predicts the future, which becomes possible only through the transfer of messages. K. Burke believes that most of the reality surrounding us is formed verbally (we mean “described, interpreted”) and only a very small part of the real world is known cognized directly, empirically, and the complete picture of reality takes its shape because of a system of symbols

[1]. That is why the interpretation of most political phenomena, such as, for example, “democracy” or “justice”, depends entirely on verbal symbols, since they have no empirical basis.

Emphasizing the importance of political communication, researchers use vivid metaphors, comparing the above phenomenon with the “nervous system of government” (C. Doich) or its importance – with the role of blood circulation of the human body (J. Cottre). M. Grachev defines political communication as the “source of vitality” or “mother milk” of the policy, “because political communication is a necessary substance that binds different parts of society together and allows them to function as a single whole” [6, p. 35]. Summarizing the theoretical research in this area, the Western analysts identify the three scientific areas that interpret the political communication as a form of mass communication.

W. Lippman’s followers form the first group, who assert the virtually unlimited power of the media in formation and manipulating public opinion. The second direction focuses on the concept of “party support” and makes the effectiveness of mass propaganda in dependent on the composition of the audience and its party settings (B. Birelson, H. Gode, P. Lazarsfeld). Theoretical developments of the third direction are connected with the study of methods of informational influence on voters, with the analysis of information resources and technologies, and also taking into account the changes in the information environment in considering communication processes (D. Butler, D. Stokes) [3].

We notice that through the term “social communication” the general scientific concept of “communication” is narrowed down to the terminological combination of “political communication” and is described by the same three characteristics marked for general communication, at the same time specifying each of the significant characteristics of the phenomenon. Analyzing these phenomenon blighty political scientists’ judgments will help us determine it more accurately. M. Goncharov gives the definition of political communication in political science: “the term” political communication “should describe the circulation of information in the sphere of political activity, that is, any messages, texts that affect relations between classes, nations and states” [7, p. 55].

The author believes that the information itself can be diverse, but emphasizes, first of all, the sender of the message is political institutions or acting on their behalf and form them, secondly, that the broadcast information should influence on accepting the political decisions. It is noteworthy that in the first Russian encyclopedic dictionary on political science the term

“political communication” was absent, although the term “mass communication”, to which a special lexicographic article is devoted, was interpreted exclusively in a political context [14, p. 164–165]. However, in the short dictionary “Basics of Political Science”, published in the same year, a rather capacious definition of political communication is given, which names the main components of this phenomenon. And although the term is given in the plural, it has little effect on the essence of the definition: “Political communication is a concept that reflects the process of interaction between political persons through the exchange of information and direct communication, as well as the means and methods of this spiritual interaction” [12, p. 54].

The definition of the “Political Science Dictionary” emphasizes the functional orientation of political and communication processes: “Political communication (from lat. *communicatio*) is the process of transferring political information, which structures political activity and gives it new meaning, shapes public opinion and political socialization of citizens according to their needs and interests” [13, p. 183]. Political communication and the reference dictionary “Foreign Political Science” interpreted it similarly. A similar definition is presented in the two-volume “Political Encyclopedia”, where political communication is understood as “<...> the exchange of information between persons of political life, as well as between the state and citizens”, which “can passes on formal (for example, in the media) and informal (“backstage” negotiations) levels” [8, p. 197]. Considerable attention is paid to the mass character of political communication, which in the modern world “is increasingly turning from a subordinate element of politics into its creator” and, “being an important source of political socialization, <...> contributes to mastering political knowledge, settings, values and forms of political participation” [10, p. 172–173].

Another approach evaluates the importance of the information component of political communication and regards it as a functional property of one of the components of the political system of society, its special subsystem, “which establishes connections between the institutions of the political system. The importance of this subsystem is great, because people are known to be able to evaluate actions, including political ones, only with a certain amount of knowledge and information” [11, p. 84–85].

In the V. Usacheva’s work “Political communication in the conditions of the new Russia” under political communication we must understand “<...> a continuous exchange of political meanings between individuals and between the main political forces of

society with the aim of reaching agreement and a constant process of transmitting political information through which political texts circulate between various elements of the political system” [17].

On the whole, accepting this definition, we nevertheless believe that the thesis on goal setting (“reaching an agreement”) does not exhaust the entire palette of intentional purposes of communicants, not so far as the communicants’ intentions are realized not only in the area of constructive decisions.

In his study expanding the concept of “political communication” F. Sharkov notes that special communication situations or actions (elections, referendums, etc.) can also be referred to political communications [19, p. 125]. In our opinion, some researchers unlawfully narrow the meaning of the term, referring only the process of the election campaign and the elections to political communication and defining politicians and voters as the main communication actors. In particular, a number of authors believe that the system of political communications is an unification of four main components [15].

First of all, it is the environment, which is interpreted fairly widely and includes objects and events of social reality. The research representation of the environment is very multi-faceted: it forms the communicative process, communicative motives for communication are drawn upon it, in a certain way interpreting events and realities, it is changed. The second component is the politician himself, who can be not only the source of the message, but also an informational cause for communication. Considering this feature of political communication, one speaks of the “two-layer” political message: (1) the actual information about the event, i.e. the subjective view of this policy on the situation, facts, events; (2) information about the source of information itself, i.e. ideological position, moral and ethical characteristics of a politician. The latter component largely forms a politician’s image. The possible channels of information transfer, or communicators, in other words, all possible ways of transferring information from the politician to the audience (meetings, interviews, personal meetings, etc.) is considered to be the third element. The fourth element is the audience, which decodes information in accordance with the established system of values, knowledge, stereotypes, cultural and historical filters.

The result of this processing is the public image of the politician, which is formed by the voter and determines his attitude to this policy. However, despite the sufficient logicity and consistency of the proposed scheme, it seems legitimate to extend the content of the term “political communication” to all situations where the components of the socio-political system

become participants, and socially significant events and meanings become the cause of it; while elections are considered only as a form of objectification / realization of the political process. This allows modern researchers to say that “<...> political communication is the basis of politics. It is characterized by communicative processes between politicians and members of society, between politicians and voters. The foundations of a modern democratic system are inconceivable without political communication. The management of election campaigning is one of the forms of political communication”.

#### **The main features of political communication.**

From functional point of view, being a complex phenomenon, political communication combines universal, social and proper political features [9, p. 7]. The first level of features is found in both animate and inanimate nature and reflects the nature of information interactions (as we have already seen, this fact lies on the basis of the cybernetic models of communication). General social properties introduce the human factor into the communication model and establish the interdependence of establishing communicative contact with the communicators themselves and the communicative product (text). Actually the political features of political communication are associated with the specifics of the transmitted / received information, the specifics of political actors [16, p. 5–18], the possibility of meaningful contact on the base of political group and personal interests. A more complete, though not exhaustive statement looks like the definition about the essence of political communication which constitutes information exchange, namely the purposeful transfer and selective reception of information that is exchanged (collected, stored, processed, distributed and used) between representatives of parties transmitting and receiving information (individuals, social groups, organizations) in the process of social-public activity [7, p. 141–143].

Investigating the political discourse A. Chudinov notes that political communication along with information always carries an evaluation of the considered realities. The author explains this by saying that the main goal of political communication is to persuade the addressee and encourage him to take political action. The leading means of this motivation is the evaluation of subjects of political activity, political institutions, situations and actions [18, p. 59]. Thus, the author notes that one of the main features of political communication is an obvious and hidden evaluation, standardization and expressiveness, aggressiveness and tolerance. On the one hand, political communication obeyed to the general communication laws. It also has a specific conditionality of its

political basis, which is its subject matter. All types of political communication joined into the general communication formula.

**Conclusions.** Following the above logic, we consider political communication as a special case of informational contact with the three main stages of information interaction: the precommunicative phase is the readiness phase for communication and the engendering the information; communicative phase – the phase of broadcasting and receiving information, i.e. contact; post-communicative phase – the appearance of a meaningful response of the addressee and the movement of secondary information to the initiator of communication.

Extended in time political communication can be considered as a communicative component of a political process, without which this process itself seems impossible.

Verbal realization of political communication is carried out with the help of natural language and is poured into a huge array of texts accompanying the political process.

Consequently, studying the textual material engendered in the framework of political communication, we are able to analyze the linguistic component of the general political process and observe certain correlations between the course of political life in society and the linguistic mechanisms involved in the reflection of political reality. This approach makes it possible to talk about the cyclical nature of political communication: the presence of feedback, or the post-communicative phase, allows you to close the communicative circle and initiate a new communicative turn with information corrected in accordance with the received response.

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