

---

---

# СТИЛІСТИКА ТА ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ ТЕКСТУ

Отримано: 15 січня 2020 року

Прорецензовано: 23 січня 2020 року

Прийнято до друку: 29 січня 2020 року

e-mail: anya.burtnyk@gmail.com

martha24@ukr.net

DOI: 10.25264/2519-2558-2020-9(77)-172-175

Burtnyk A. R., Karp M. A. Lexico-semantic stylistic devices in political speeches by Bill Clinton. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія»: серія «Філологія»*. Острог: Вид-во НаУОА, 2020. Вип. 9(77). С. 172–175.

---

УДК: 81'37:81'42:32:808.51

**Anna R. Burtnyk,**  
*4th year student of Philology Department of Applied Linguistics  
Institute of Computer Science and Information Technology  
Lviv Polytechnic National University*

**Marta A. Karp,**  
*Ph. D. in Philology,  
Assistant Professor of Department of Applied Linguistics,  
Institute of Computer Science and Information Technology  
Lviv Polytechnic National University*

## LEXICO-SEMANTIC STYLISTIC DEVICES IN POLITICAL SPEECHES BY BILL CLINTON

*The research deals with the study of stylistic and lexical peculiarities of political speeches of American ex-president Bill Clinton. Special attention is given to the individual characteristics of the language of the orator. The novelty of the study concerns detailed analysis, classification and comparison of lexico-semantic stylistic devices based on the speeches of B. Clinton. The object of the research deals with political speeches of B. Clinton including the first inaugural speech (January 20, 1993), farewell address (January 18, 2001), speech on Democratic National Convention (July 26, 2016). The information obtained through the analysis of political speeches helps to trace the influence of the words of a politician used in one context or another in order to establish power, influence and control of the people, as well as to understand the goals and intentions of a politician. The subject of the study describes lexico-semantic stylistic devices of the speeches. The practical value of the work highlights the ability to detect and interpret the use of linguistic means in political speeches. In the paper the main features of B. Clinton's political speeches and their influence on people's opinion have been revealed.*

**Key words:** lexico-semantic groups, political discourse, political speeches, stylistic devices, syntactic models.

**Буртнік Анна Романівна,**  
*студентка 4-го курсу спеціальності 035 «Філологія» кафедри прикладної лінгвістики  
Інститут комп'ютерних наук та інформаційних технологій  
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»*

**Карп Марта Андріївна,**  
*кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри прикладної лінгвістики  
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»*

## ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧНІ ТА СТИЛІСТИЧНІ ЗАСОБИ У ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ПРОМОВАХ БІЛЛА КЛІНТОНА

*Дослідження стосується вивчення стилістичних та лексичних особливостей політичних виступів Білла Клінтона. Особлива увага приділена індивідуальним особливостям мовця. Новизною дослідження є детальний аналіз, систематизація, класифікація та порівняння лексичних та стилістичних засобів у політичних промовах Білла Клінтона. У праці застосовано три методи дослідження: теоретичний, синтетичний та метод порівняльного аналізу. Практична цінність статті полягає у вмінні виявляти та чітко тлумачити використання мовних засобів у політичних промовах. У статті розкрито основні риси та засоби, які використовуються в політичних промовах Б. Клінтона та їх вплив на думку людей.*

**Ключові слова:** лексико-семантичні групи, політичний дискурс, політичні промови, синтаксичні моделі, стилістичні засоби.

**Problem statement.** From time immemorial people needed a leader. They always needed a person whom they can listen to. It is laid down in the human nature that there must be number one who can cope with the task of universal peace and tranquility. Nowadays politicians are said to be such leaders, moreover, famous political speeches encourage people to think – some believe in them, others do not. In any case, what we hear make us react in different ways [8, p. 9–10].

**Review of recent research studies and published works on this topic.** Itemised and advanced political discourse analysis first of all gives direct knowledge into desultory political practices, for example, bureau gatherings, parliamentary discussions, laws, bureaucratic reports, party purposeful publicity, media meetings or dissents by resistance groups and associations [4, p. 162–165].

These political demonstrations, occasions and procedures need description and analysis in their own right. We need to know how they are composed, organised and communicated, and what sorts of conceivable impacts they may have on the political perceptions of general society on the loose [1, p. 14–15].

When we consider politics, we consider it mainly regarding the struggle for power so as to verify specific ideas and interests and set them in motion. In this procedure, language plays a significant role. Any political activity is prepared, controlled and affected by language [6, p. 201].

**Formulation of the research problem and the material of the study.** The novelty of this study covers detailed analysis, classification and comparison of lexical and stylistic devices based on the speeches of Bill Clinton. In solving these tasks such research methods have been applied as theoretical, which involves the synthesis and analysis of scientific literature for the theoretical basis of the study; the method of comparative analysis for comparing lexical and stylistic devices used in speeches; the method of synthetic analysis serves to study the totality of elements that forms the system.

One of the main functions of the language is the function of communication. Using eloquence, a person is able to express his/her thoughts, give information to others, and even influence them. A person can be influenced in different ways: with help of mood, desire, preferences, reasons, gestures, actions. People are influenced by political eloquence when it is broadly broadcast in the media, for example in newspapers, on radio and television [7, p. 16].

There are certain factors using which a person can improve his/her oratory skills including psychological, linguistic, technical, pedagogical (didactic), logical ones. Technical and linguistic factors are used for information transmission. They may both strengthen and weaken information or help to interpret a piece of information. It is necessary to understand that the audience is different and depending on it an orator needs to be able to speak correctly in order to avoid misunderstandings [5, p. 10–13].

In the modern world the high level of the speech culture is an integral part of any profession. Successful public performance is impossible without deep knowledge, experience and competence, as daily activities of politicians are connected with communication in which interpersonal contacts take place. Ignorance of the principles of public performances limits the impact on public opinion. Responsibilities of politicians require both high professional competence and mastering new methods of speech communication [7, p. 45–62].

**The main research material with full justification of scientific results.** For our research, we have chosen three speeches by Bill Clinton: the first inaugural speech (January 20, 1993); farewell address (January 18, 2001); speech on the Democratic National Convention (July 26, 2016).

Exploring Bill Clinton's speeches, we have analysed the **vocabulary** that he often used. It can be divided into the corresponding separate groups: general political terminology, general economic terminology, idioms, legal terms (see Fig. 1). In total 158 lexical units have been analysed. Political terms are 39% of all analysed units including: 1) general words (*the world's oldest democracy, political process, power, communities, to go into politics, to change parties, declare America's independence,*); 2) official names (*Oval Office, Vice President Gore, to my Cabinet Secretaries, Government, Walter Mondale's subcommittee, Pentagon Commission, National Guard, Armed Services Committee, Almighty*); 3) special political terms (*politics appropriate, took the oath, opposition to the Vietnam War, bipartisan*).

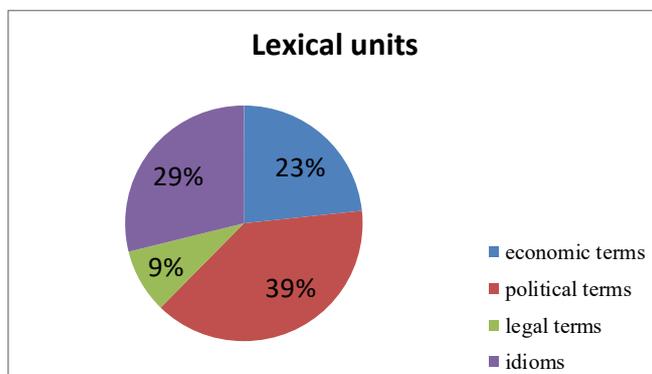


Fig. 1. Lexical units in speeches by Bill Clinton

Among the political terminology we have distinguished the following **syntactic models**: Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, singular: *National Guard, entangling alliance*; Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, plural: *civil rights, political issues*; Noun in the Nominative Case + Noun-prepositional construction: *forces of freedom, my days of service, forces of integration*; Noun in the Nominative Case + Adjective + Noun in Genitive Case: *era of great American renewal; President of the United States*; Verb + Noun: *declare independence, reinvent America*. It is noticeable that political terms often contain adjectives. It improves the emotional understanding of the expression: *world's oldest democracy, greater prosperity*.

General economic vocabulary takes the second place (29%). It contains the largest number of lexical units: *strong economy, incomes are rising, sales tax, low-income* [10]. Among the economic terminology, we have distinguished the following syntactic models: Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, singular: *sales pitch, increasing inequality*; Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, plural: *business failures, stagnant wages*; Noun in the Nominative Case + Noun-prepositional relation: *reins of leadership, the cost of living*; Noun in the Nominative Case + Adjective + Noun in Genitive Case: *record of fiscal responsibility*. Compound economic terms are often used in B. Clinton's speeches: *investment, commerce, tax exemptions, larger investments, accountability, high homeownership*.

Legal terms cover the smallest amount. Many of them are used in the everyday language: *law library, civil rights, social justice, liberal, private citizens, public service*. For example, *She was already involved in the law school's legal services project, and she*

was influenced by Marian Wright Edelman [9]. Words of general notions are used to denote human rights and freedoms or to indicate the scope of proceedings: *crime, law enforcement, organised crime and narcotrafficking, criminal rights, law abiding citizens, civil rights movement*. We have distinguished such basic syntactic models of legal terminology as Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, singular: *social justice*; Adjective + Noun in Nominative Case, plural: *civil rights*.

In speeches listeners often deal with expressions which meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words. They are so-called **idioms**. The idioms are persistent expressions which mean one concept and are indivisible. The use of idioms helps to make the language of the speaker more eloquent and versatile. Bill Clinton uses them to reveal a national colouring and express supplication, submission, or humility [3, p. 895]: *There I was in a trance just staring out the window trying not to cry, and there was Hillary on her hands and knees desperately looking for one more drawer to put that liner paper* [9].

Overall, in his speeches Bill Clinton uses various vocabulary: general political and economic terminology, legal terms and idioms. Politicians must be aware of the fact that it is necessary to speak a language that is understandable for voters. That is why in the B. Clinton's speeches there are words of everyday vocabulary, parasite words, even idioms that make speeches more emotional. In the speeches B. Clinton uses various **stylistic devices** to convince the audience.

**Alliteration** is a figure of speech in which the same sound repeats at the beginning of two or more words. Alliterative words are subsequent or close to each other in the text. Similar sounding word usage concentrates on a specific segment of content. Alliterative sounds make rhythm and mood and can have specific undertones [5, p. 110]. For instance, reiteration of the "m": *And I thank the millions of men and women whose steadfastness and sacrifice triumphed over depression, fascism, and communism*; "w" and "s": *Today, a generation raised in the shadows of the Cold War assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom but threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues*. The alliteration *though we march to the music of our time, our mission is timeless* motivates the audience to keep up with the time and take crucial steps. By enumerating aspects and using alliterations *increasing inequality, deep divisions* B. Clinton employs an asyndeton to arouse the reader's interest [9].

**Assonance** deals with repetition of vowels. Speakers use it for the same reasons as alliteration. It can affect the tone, rhythm, and mood of the speech [5, p. 110]: *We were happy for her, but sad for us to see her go* [10].

**Antithesis** is an opposite opinion or a contrary [5, p. 104]. In the speeches B. Clinton uses it to demonstrate that Americans have the ability to dominate over the venomous ideologies: *sacrifice triumphed over depression, fascism, and communism*. The phrase *"our friend and not our enemy"* is used to make a contrast [11].

**Metaphor** is a great device to help listeners to understand the content [5, p. 103]. For example, in the sentence *Today, a generation raised in the shadows of the Cold War assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom but threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues* returns us to the war in America that ended long time ago, but its effects still show themselves. Metaphor *sunshine of freedom* is used to show that everything bad ended and now is better time. Instead of its shadow, the sun raised and disposed the shadow so that people were illuminated [11]. In the sentence *When George Washington first took the oath I have just sworn to uphold, news travelled slowly across the land by horseback and across the ocean by boat* we have observed the deeper meaning – i.e. at the time of George Washington's news did not spread so quickly, but now technology has secret power [11].

**Parallelism** means using elements in sentences that are grammatically similar or identical in structure, sound, meaning. It adds effectiveness, and balance to the text [3]. In Bill Clinton's first inaugural speech it is used to underline the achievements of America: *Working together, America has done well. Our economy is breaking records with more than 22 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, the highest homeownership ever, the longest expansion in history. Our families and communities are stronger* [10].

**Polysyndeton** is the use of conjunctions close together for stylistic effect [3]. B. Clinton applies to it to stress that he intends to do much work for the citizens of America to minimise poverty: *Thirty-five million Americans have used the family leave law; 8 million have moved off welfare; crime is at a 25-year low* [10].

B. Clinton uses **chiasmus** *our challenges are fearsome, so are our strengths* to stress that Americans carry the quality of being courageous [11]. He also uses a **simile** *she had a childhood that made mine look like a piece of cake* to stress that someone's childhood was difficult [10].

Overall, the use of lexical and stylistic devices helps the listener understand the emotion of the speaker and imagery of the idea being conveyed. Stylistic devices give an additional or supplementary meaning, idea, or feeling [2].

**Conclusions and perspectives of the study.** Researching the issue of political discourse, we have come to the conclusion that the main mean of transmitting information and impact on the audience is language. Therefore, important factor of a good speaker includes his/her voice in the whole set of its capabilities and properties. In order to perform in public, an orator has to know the variety of language, its emotional influence, expressiveness, accuracy, logic of diversity. The speech of the speaker should adorn stylistic figures such as alliteration, assonance, inversion, parallelism, personification, and lexical means (comparison, synonyms, epithets, metaphors, hyperbole etc.).

Having analysed the speeches of Bill Clinton, the former President of the United States, it has been established that the politician uses a large number of political, economic terms, idioms and a few legal words. The used vocabulary is largely neutral, as it performs a nominative function. It refers to certain phenomena, processes in the field of politics, economics and jurisprudence.

In total, 158 lexical units have been identified: 62 political terms (39%); 45 economic terms (29%); 37 idioms (23%); 14 legal terms (9%). The most repetitive syntactic models are Adjective + Noun in the Nominative Case, singular; Adjective + Noun in the Nominative Case, plural; Noun in the Nominative Case + Noun-prepositional construction.

The results of the paper can be used to distinguish the basic principles of a successful political speech. The prospects for further research are due to the fact that the analysis is needed for the study of linguistic discourses to identify the role of lexico-semantic stylistic devices in political speeches.

To sum up, a political speech is more than an opportunity to parade leaders' charisma. In a country where most people live without access to digital platforms, speeches are the best way to engage them directly.

**References:**

1. Dijk T. What is Political Discourse Analysis? *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*. 1997. P. 52.
2. Dvornyk N. Stylistic devices of political speeches (based on Barack Obama's Political Appeals). URL: <https://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua/bitstream/123456789/30752/1/Dvornuk.pdf>.
3. Holvei T. Words that come through time. The most influential speeches in the history of mankind that have changed our world. 2018. 480 p.
4. Kirvalidze N., Samidze N. Political discourse as a subject of interdisciplinary studies. *Journal of Teaching and Education*. 2016. P. 161–170.
5. Osypova N. P., Vodnik V. D., Klimova H. P. Oratory: Tutorial for law specialty students of higher education institutions. Kharkiv: Odissei, 2006. 144 p.
6. Schaffner C. Editorial: Political Speeches and Discourse Analysis. *Journal Current Issues in Language and Society*, 3. 2010. 182 p.
7. Stets V. A., Stets I. I., Kostiuhyk M. Yu. Basics of oratory. Ternopil: Ekonomichna dumka, 1998. 60 p.
8. Zhuchkova E. V., Baklanova N. Y. Structural and lexical peculiarities of political speeches (Margaret Thatchers and Ronald Reagans speeches case study). *Molodoi uchenyi. Mezhdunarodnyi nauchnyi zhurnal*. P. 894–896.
9. Bill Clinton's Farewell Address. 2001. URL: [https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Bill\\_Clinton%27s\\_Farewell\\_Address](https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Bill_Clinton%27s_Farewell_Address).
10. Bill Clinton's Speech at the Democratic Convention. 2016. URL: <http://time.com/4425599/dnc-bill-clinton-speech-transcript-video>.
11. President Bill Clinton's first inauguration speech. 2017. URL: <https://www.aol.com/amp/2017/01/19/president-bill-clintons-first-inauguration-speech-full-text>.