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FEATURES OF USING COMPARISON (SIMILE) IN THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSES OF THE USA AND THE UK

The article is devoted to the topical issue of the functioning of the stylistic device "simile" in the political discourses of the USA and Great Britain. Following the analysis of foreign studies, the authors of this article have clarified the concept of "simile", outlining the fundamental difference between it and logical comparison. It is shown that there is no common approach to the definition of this stylistic device among scholars. It has been found that figurative comparisons differ in their structure. It is generalised that they should be differentiated into comparative clauses; comparative subordinate clauses; comparisons formed with the help of adjectives; comparisons formed with the help of proverbs and sayings; and extended comparisons. The article also outlines the main features of the political discourse of the USA and the UK, which are ideological, aggressive, theatrical, and antagonistic. According to the observation, similes in this type of discourse should be differentiated by thematic groups. It is noted that at present similes of military content have become more frequent. It is noted that the intentional aspects of using such comparisons are almost identical in both discourses. It has been proved that comparisons present in the political discourse of both countries are less frequent than other stylistic devices, such as: metaphor, epithet and others. According to the quantitative analysis, it has been found that the most commonly used comparisons in the political discourse of the USA and the UK are those, constructed with the help of conjunctions and connecting words, comparisons in the negative type of sentence and extended similes. The paper points out the debatable nature of the problem and the need for its further development.

Key words: political discourse, comparison, simile, thematic group.

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ ОБРАЗНИХ ПОРІВНЯНЬ В СУЧАСНОМУ ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ США ТА ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ

Стаття присвячена актуальній проблемі функціонування стилістичного засобу «образне порівняння» в політичних дискурсах США та Великої Британії. На основі аналізу зарубіжних праць автори дослідження уточнили поняття «образне порівняння», окресливши принципову різницю між ним та логічним порівнянням. Простежено, що серед науковців не існує спільного підходу до визначення цього стилістичного прийому. З'ясовано, що образні порівняння різняться за своєю структурою. Узагальнено, що їх слід диференціювати на порівняльні речення; порівняльні підрядні речення; порівняння, утворені за допомогою прикметників; порівняння, утворені за допомогою прислів'їв та приказок; розгорнуті порівняння. У статті також окреслені основні ознаки політичного дискурсу США та Великої Британії, яким притаманні ідеологічний характер, агресивність, театральність, антагонізм. За спостереженням образні порівняння в даному типі дискурсу слід диференціювати за тематичними групами. Зазначено, що на сучасному етапі образні порівняння воєнного змісту стали більш частотними. Зазначено, що інтенціональні аспекти використання таких порівнянь майже ідентичні в обох дискурсах. Доведено, що образні порівняння, які присутні в політичному дискурсі

обох країн є менш частотними ніж інші стилістичні засоби, такі як: метафора, епітет та інші. За допомогою кількісного аналізу з'ясовано, що за структурою в політичному дискурсі США та Великої Британії найбільш вживаними є порівняння, які побудовані за допомогою сполучників та сполучних слів, порівняння в заперечувальному типі речення та розширені образні порівняння. У роботі зазначений дискусійний характер проблеми та необхідність її подальшої розробки.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, порівняння, образне порівняння, тематична група.

Problem statement. Political discourse is currently one of the most actual discourses for many studies. Constant changes in political life draw special attention to this field of social communication. Political discourse is a reflection of the socio-political life of any country, contains elements of its culture, national and cultural values. Studies on political discourse are conducted in the paradigm of several sciences: history, social science, sociology, psychology, linguistics. In the time of military confrontation not only between our state and the aggressor country, but also between the entire democratic world and authoritarian regimes, it acquires special importance. Political debates are currently marked by sharp criticism, a dominant strategy of persuasion and manipulation. That is why politicians are increasingly resorting to more vivid expressive means, such as metaphors and simile.

The analysis of recent studies and publications. It should be pointed out that political discourse has always been the subject of attention of foreign linguists, such as: T. R. Barth, A. van Dijk, M. Foucault, Y. Habermas, as well as Ukrainian ones: N. Kondratenko, O. Oleksiivets, O. Selivanova, K. Serazhym, and others. Active searches are being continued, therefore, require new clarification and generalization. The field of studying linguistic aspects of political discourse still contains quite a large number of gaps, especially when it comes to means of expression and stylistic devices.

The complexity of the problem of studying comparisons is largely explained by the complexity and ambiguity of this concept, which is the subject of study in various scientific fields. Philosophy, Psychology, Aesthetics, Art history, Literary studies, Linguistic stylistics, Didactics and other sciences operate with the concepts of “image” and “artistic image” in accordance with their specifics. Active studies of figurative meaning in modern linguistics were carried out by V. B. Goldberg, V. I. Karasyk, Z. D. Popova, M. Ya. Rosenfeld and others. Scientific researches, related to this problem, were conducted in interdisciplinary sciences, such as: Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics and others (Z. I. Fridman, I. M. Gorelov, A. A. Zalevska,), which expanded understanding figurative meaning and contributed to the exposure to new aspects of this phenomenon.

Despite a thorough study of simile in the scientific literature, the specifics of this stylistic technique are still not sufficiently covered in the practical way and require their further development, in particular in political speeches.

Therefore, the study of the specifics of the use of simile in English-language political discourse will add a lot to the overall picture of the study of modern political discourse, namely, one of its genres “political speech”.

So, this study is **aimed** at outlining the characteristic features of the use of simile in the political speech of English-speaking politicians, based on the analysis of comparative constructions in their political speeches.

The objectives of the study:

- to investigate the concept of simile in various studies and formulate its generalized definition;
- to outline the peculiarities of English-speaking political discourses;
- to differentiate similes in the contemporary political discourses of the USA and the UK.

Presentation of the material. It is known that comparison is one of the main methods of cognition in general. Everything is learned by means of comparison. Comparison reveals the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of objects, classifies, organizes and evaluates the content of being and cognition. Without comparison, cognition of the world seems impossible. Comparison is used in any sphere of life and is a research method in any science.

The stylistic device of “simile” is one of the most common tropes that have existed since Homer, and it is no wonder that rhetoricians have paid much attention to it. Tropes are understood as “words used in a figurative sense to create an image” (Sviatovets, 2011). The word “trope” comes from the Greek *tropos*, which means “a turn, a reversal”. Acting as tropes, ordinary words can gain great imaginative power.

In the scholars’ studies, comparison has not found a generally accepted definition. Some of them believe that comparison, which highlights and characterizes certain properties of an object by comparing it with another object or phenomenon, has a number of linguistic features that show varying degrees of stability and invariance. They consider simile to be the most significant stylistic device of the non-tropic type. A trope, in their opinion, is the use of a lexical unit associated with the realization of a stylistic function, rather than a particular meaning considered at the level of the language system, regardless of the contextual and situational conditions of its functioning. However, not every realization of a stylistic function is tropic. All comparisons can be divided into several types according to their structure:

- comparative clauses;
- comparative subordinate clauses;
- comparisons formed with the help of adjectives;
- comparisons formed with the help of proverbs and sayings;
- extended comparisons.

In English linguistics, there are two different concepts: simile and comparison. V. H. Nikonova and R. I. Lutsenko call simile a figurative comparison, i.e. a phenomenon that has formal, structural and semantic varieties. A comparison, or subject-logical comparison, is a phenomenon that does not have clearly defined criteria or classes. (Nikonova, Lutsenko, 2019)

They admit, that according to the type of comparative modality, there is a difference between logical and figurative comparisons, traditionally distinguishing them on the basis of comparative-quantitative and sensory-figurative indicators. A lot of other scholars note, that unlike simile, comparison compares similar phenomena, but is not a linguistic stylistic device. So, it is necessary to distinguish simile as a stylistic device containing figurative meaning from a simple logical comparison, when two objects or phenomena belonging to the same group of objects are compared.

There are three main components to a comparison:

- 1) the subject or phenomenon being compared;
- 2) the object with which the subject or phenomenon is compared;

3) the basis of comparison and the feature or quality that is common to two completely different objects or phenomena (basis).

Simile gives the statement clarity, special associativity, makes it colourful, reveals the speaker's attitude to what is said (Sviatovets, 2011). In a simile, the separation of subject meanings is important, which largely proves the difference between this means of expression and metaphor. The simile clearly shows the current connection of images that were previously incomparable.

There is a point of view, that any linguistic unit can acquire an unexpected emotional or expressive colouring in language, all that is needed is the appropriate context, situation or tone. However, in every language there are such means for which the function of conveying these meanings (emotionality, expressiveness) is the leading one.

Despite the thorough study of simile in scientific researches, it currently remains insufficiently studied in theory and practice. This is due to the fact that simile is a complex and diverse concept, understood as the basis for all means of expressiveness of a language, from which other tropes are formed (for example, metaphor, parallelism, metonymy, hyperbole, etc.) and used in different contexts.

One of them is a political discourse. The basis of political discourse is a continuous dialogue duel between the ruling party and the opposition, in which opponents occasionally attack each other, held the defence, repel blows and go on the offensive. The following features are specific characteristics of political discourse: 1) antagonistic ability; 2) aggressiveness; 3) ideological character; 4) theatricality.

In English dictionaries, the word "aggression" is defined as aggressive or hostile feelings, behaviour or attitude. The thesaurus list of this word is one of the most numerous: antagonism, attack, belligerence, aggressiveness, destructiveness, encroachment, hostility, clash, invasion, injury, provocation, pugnacity, raid, etc.

If we consider linguistic aggression within the framework of political communication, it should be noted that here the dominant aggression is directed at a specific political figure who is not represented in the communication situation, i.e. criticism of a political opponent from behind, when communicating with a third party or mass audience in public speeches, interviews or political discussions. Verbal aggression is represented by specific speech acts. When highlighting speech acts of aggression, it should be noted that they are all a demonstration of political power and are aimed at lowering the status of the addressee.

The ideological character is a system of social ideas, group knowledge, beliefs and opinions based on group values, norms and interests. This feature brings political discourse closer to military discourse. War, as it is known, is the continuation of politics by other means. The sphere of this interaction includes such genres as: military doctrine, military-political agreement, ultimatum, peace negotiations, i.e. genres that provide the ideology and course of war from the point of view of the warring parties.

And finally, theatricality is related to the fact that one of the parties of communication – the people – plays the role of an observer rather than a direct addressee, who perceives current political events as a kind of play staged for them with a fascinating plot and an unpredictable ending. Politicians, when communicating with each other and with journalists, are constantly aware of the "audience" and intentionally or unintentionally act or "work for the audience".

According to our analysis similes, used in the political discourses of the USA and the UK can be distributed into the following topic groups.

Economic Similes: *"The national debt is like a ticking time bomb, ready to explode at any moment."*

Military Similes: *"Our defense budget is as robust as a fortress, ensuring the safety of our nation."*

Healthcare Similes: *"The healthcare system is like a patient on life support, in need of urgent attention and reform."*

Environmental Similes: *"Climate change is as real as the air we breathe, affecting every aspect of our lives."*

Education Similes: *"Investing in education is like planting seeds for the future, nurturing the growth of a knowledgeable society."*

Legal Similes: *"The rule of law is like a sturdy foundation, ensuring the stability of our democratic system."*

Social Justice Similes: *"Equality is as essential as the air we breathe, a fundamental right for all citizens."*

Infrastructure Similes: *"Fixing our crumbling infrastructure is like repairing the backbone of our nation, supporting progress and development."*

Foreign Policy Similes: *"Diplomacy is like a delicate dance, where every step must be carefully considered to maintain international harmony."*

Leadership Similes: *"A strong leader is like a compass, providing direction and stability in times of uncertainty."*

Political Campaign Similes: *"Running a political campaign is like navigating a turbulent river, with unexpected twists and turns at every corner."*

These examples are illustrative, and similes in political discourse can cover a wide range of topics. The choice of similes often depends on the speaker's intent and the message they aim to convey to their audience.

As it has already been mentioned, the current political discourse is focused on the topic of war and confrontation. In the context of war in the political discourse of the USA, similes might be employed to emphasize various aspects. Here are some examples:

"The political battlefield is like a chessboard, where every move is strategic and calculated, with each player maneuvering their pieces in a high-stakes game."

"The debates leading up to the election were as fierce as a military confrontation, with candidates launching verbal missiles at each other, leaving no room for compromise."

"Political alliances can be as fragile as a house of cards, easily collapsing under the weight of conflicting interests and ambitions." (Large., Sisk, 2006)

"In the war of words, politicians deploy rhetoric like a seasoned general deploys troops, aiming to capture the hearts and minds of the electorate." (Graziano, Dalton, 2023)

These similes use war-related topic to illustrate the intensity, strategy, and dynamics, involved in political discourse in the USA. In a major speech on the war in Ukraine, U.S. President J. Biden has said that the conflict is a clear test for democracies around the world, and he portrayed the Ukrainian resistance against Russian forces as part of a "great battle for freedom." (Biden, 2023).

Earlier on March 26 while visiting Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw, J. Biden called Putin a "butcher" and in his speech referred to him as a tyrant. (Biden, 2023). J. Biden spoke at a community college about 10 miles from Valley Forge National Historical Park, where George Washington mobilized troops during the Revolutionary War to fight for democracy 250 years ago. The president of

the USA, in Valley Forge speech, hits Trump hard *as threat to democracy*. The President delivered his first campaign speech of this election year, attempting to define the 2024 presidential race as *a battle for the future of American democracy* and portrayed former president Donald Trump as its chief antagonist.

“Trump is trying to steal history the same way he tried to steal the election,” (Baiden, 2023)

Being the first and probably the last opponent to J.Baiden D.Trump expressed sympathy for Jan. 6 rioters, calling their imprisonment *“one of the saddest things in the history of our country.”* Trump describes riot defendants as *“political prisoners”* or *“hostages.”* (Baiden, 2023).

Boris Jonson, a former Prime-minister of the UK, in his speech, when he came to Ukraine, in particular said about V. Putin; *“.. just as he fatally underestimated Ukraine, he also underestimated the price the world was willing to pay to support Ukraine..”* (Jonson, 2022)

“...as I leave office... let me say that I am now like one of those booster rockets that has fulfilled its function..” (Jonson, 2022)

“...and like Cincinnatus I am returning to my plough..” (Jonson, 2022).

Current Prime-minister of the UK Rishi Sunak mentioned in his speech during the conference of NATO : *“500 days of barbarity, of innocent people being murdered in their homes, of children being killed, abducted, and used as human shields.”* (Sunak, 2023).

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP gave a speech at the National Army Museum, London, on Russia’s illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

“Likewise Russian special forces, who have made and promoted their own macho videos openly mocking western armies for being inclusive of minorities and women, were resoundingly defeated by Ukrainian militia forces, often incorporating minorities and women”.

“Russian soldiers’ futile use of pine logs as makeshift protection on logistical trucks and attaching overhead ‘cope cages’ to their tanks, it’s nothing short of tragic.”

“Shame on those who seek to use the suffering of ordinary Russians as a launchpad for their own imperial ambitions”. (Wallace, 2022).

In terms of this study we have differentiated similes, used by politicians of the USA and the UK according to the structure.

Quantitative analysis of the simile structure in the USA and the UK political speeches

Criteria	Political discourse of the USA		Political discourse of the UK	
	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
Two items or phenomena that belong to the same group of items are compared	17	26, 5%	20	28,5%
Simile based on using conjunctions and connecting words	30	46,8%	35	50%
Simile in negative sentences in which one subject is contrasted with another.	7	10,9%	6	8,5%
Extended simile	10	15,6%	9	12,8%

Conclusion. All things considered, similes are one of the characteristic features of political speeches and oral public speaking. They have both universal and national and cultural peculiarities of functioning. It is proved that similes of both the USA and the UK political discourse are not numerous in comparison with other stylistic means, such as metaphor, epithet, etc. However, in the analyzed political speeches, they are considered as innovations and currently are being used more often than before. As a result of the statistical analysis, the intentional aspects of the use of similes are almost identical in both discourses. However, at the present time more and more similes are related to the topic of war and confrontation.

Further prospects for the study lie both in the development of related problems concerning the use of simile in political discourses of other countries and in studies on the use of other stylistic means inherent in this type of discourse.

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