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THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Summary. The article explores the role of metaphor as a cognitive-discursive mechanism of influence in contemporary English-language political discourse. Political communication is viewed not merely as a means of conveying information, but as an instrument for shaping public attitudes, evaluations, and interpretative frameworks through language. Particular attention is paid to metaphor as one of the most effective tools for conceptualizing complex and abstract socio-political phenomena by projecting them onto more concrete and familiar domains of experience.

Drawing on the theoretical foundations of classical rhetoric, cognitive linguistics, and critical discourse analysis, the study examines metaphor as a key mechanism of meaning construction and persuasion in political speech. The analysis demonstrates that metaphor integrates cognitive, emotional, and evaluative components, thereby influencing both rational interpretation and emotional response of the mass addressee.

Based on an analysis of public speeches by leading political figures, the research identifies the main metaphorical models characteristic of contemporary political discourse, including economic, religious, militaristic, and migration-related metaphors. These models are shown to perform specific pragmatic functions, such as legitimizing political decisions, constructing images of threat or stability, mobilizing public support, and manipulating public opinion. Special emphasis is placed on militaristic and migration metaphors, which are frequently employed to create polarized representations of social reality and intensify ideological confrontation.

The findings confirm that political metaphor functions not as a decorative stylistic device, but as a powerful cognitive and communicative instrument that reflects cultural values, ideological orientations, and social power relations. The article also outlines prospects for further research, including comparative and multimodal approaches to the study of political metaphor in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Key words: political discourse, metaphor, cognitive linguistics, persuasive strategies, metaphorical models, political communication, public speech.

In contemporary linguistics, political discourse is viewed as a complex communicative phenomenon aimed not only at informing but at shaping evaluations, attitudes, and patterns of behavior of the mass addressee. One of the most effective linguistic means of realizing this influence is metaphor, which enables the interpretation of political reality through conceptual structures already familiar and accessible to the audience [1]. Owing to its ability to integrate cognitive, emotional, and evaluative components, metaphor plays a key role in understanding political events, actors and strategies.

Problem Statement. In the contemporary context of the intensive development of political communication and the growing role of media discourse, the issue of studying linguistic mechanisms of influence on mass consciousness has become particularly relevant. Political discourse increasingly functions not only as a means of transmitting information but also as an instrument for shaping social representations, evaluations and the models for interpreting socio-political reality. In this context, metaphor occupies a central position as a universal cognitive-discursive tool that enables the understanding of complex and abstract political phenomena through more concrete and accessible conceptual domains [2].

Despite the substantial body of research devoted to political metaphor, the issue of its functioning as an instrument of purposeful influence and persuasion in contemporary political discourse remains insufficiently systematized. In particular, further investigation is needed into the interaction among cognitive, pragmatic and sociocultural factors in the metaphorical conceptualization of political reality, as well as into the role of metaphorical models in the construction of political images and strategies of influence on the addressee.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications on the Topic. The issue of metaphor in political discourse is widely represented in both foreign and domestic scholarly research. Within the classical rhetorical tradition initiated by Aristotle, metaphor was regarded as an effective means of persuasion and explanation. The contemporary stage of studying political metaphor is primarily associated with the development of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis.

In the works of foreign scholars (G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, D. Vertessen, P. Chilton, R. Wodak), metaphor is understood as a cognitive-discursive mechanism for conceptualizing political reality, contributing to the formation of ideologies, strategies of influence, and interpretations of socio-political events [2].

In Ukrainian linguistics, research on political metaphor is focused on identifying its national and cultural specificity, pragmatic potential, and role in shaping the image of a political leader. In the works of O. Kosmeda, O. Selivanova, A. Martynyuk, K. Kusko, and others, we can see the following interpretation of the metaphor – examined as a means of linguistic influence and as a reflection of societal value orientations in the context of political transformations [3].

The relevance of such research is further underscored by the growing role of public communication, media, and symbolic forms of influence on social consciousness, in which figurative language increasingly serves to simplify complex socio-political pro-

cesses, legitimize political actions, and construct desired interpretations of reality. This allows metaphor to be regarded not merely as a stylistic device of linguistic embellishment, but as a powerful mechanism of conceptualization and persuasion [4]. Thus, the foregoing clearly outlines **the aim of this article**, which is to provide a comprehensive analysis of metaphor as a cognitive-discursive mechanism of influence in contemporary English-language political discourse, in particular to clarify its role in the formation of political images and the interpretation of socio-political reality, as well as to identify the main metaphorical models (economics, religion, militaristic sphere, migration) used in public speeches of political leaders for the purposes of persuasion and manipulation of the mass addressee.

Presentation of the Main Material. The ability of metaphor to influence the addressee, first noted in antiquity by Aristotle and subsequently emphasized by numerous contemporary scholars, facilitates a structured perception of reality and simplifies the process of understanding experience through the comparison of different phenomena [5, p. 35]. Owing to this capacity, metaphorical transfer is widely employed to interpret complex and abstract concepts by appealing to more concrete and readily comprehensible images.

In political speech, the explanatory function of metaphor is closely intertwined with its persuasive potential. Political communication relies on a system of metaphorical models that reflect a society's cultural codes and mental characteristics. As a component of rhetorical strategy, metaphor is oriented toward influencing the addressee's consciousness by activating the audience's capacity to remember and interpret what is heard. In political discourse, this is manifested in the use of both conventional and original metaphors intended to reduce tension, elicit emotional responses or direct recipients' attention in a desired direction. The repeated use of lexicalized, so-called "dead," conventional, or deliberately constructed metaphors serves as a mechanism for transitioning from traditional speech patterns to new ways of conceptualizing political reality.

In foreign linguistics, the features of metaphor functioning in political communication have been actively studied since the mid-twentieth century, while the ideas underlying modern approaches to discourse analysis have addressed the problem of political metaphor within the frameworks of rhetoric and pragmatics [6].

Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is understood as a phenomenon in which a word denoting one class of objects or phenomena is used to characterize or name an object belonging to another class. From the perspective of the interpretive model of cognition, particular importance is attached to studies of metaphorical interpretation of the world in an individual's linguistic worldview, including that of a political leader who, through vivid metaphors, shapes public consciousness and transforms national perceptions of reality [7].

According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphorization is based on the process of interaction between the knowledge structures of two conceptual domains – the source domain and the target domain. The source domain is more familiar, concrete, and closely connected with immediate physical or spatial experience [1, p. 20].

The researchers point to the possibility and necessity of combining substitutional, interactionist, and syntactic approaches to the analysis of political metaphor. These approaches do not exclude one another but rather represent different perspectives on the same phenomenon, each with its own strengths and limitations. For

instance, an analysis of Dutch political discourse has demonstrated a correlation between metaphor frequency and periods of social crisis [8]. According to some scholars, metaphor should be viewed not so much as a purely cognitive phenomenon as a social one. Above all, it is interpreted as a reflection of implicit categorization structures shared by particular social groups, which significantly influence the construction of social reality.

Metaphorical models, functioning as linguistic means of influence and manipulation and contributing to image construction in politics, constitute an important mechanism of linguistic impact on the mass addressee.

Our study of metaphor in English-language political discourse has identified political images that can be actualized within the following groups: "*economics*," "*religion*," "*militaristic sphere*," and "*migration*".

Economics.

Processes of globalization and economic integration are closely connected with the argumentative strategies of political actors, since the pragmatic potential of metaphor directly affects the cognitive and interpretive activity of the addressee, a key communicative goal of political discourse.

According to contemporary scholarly approaches, abstract concepts are understood through metaphorical models that project concrete, physically experienced domains into abstract, non-physical spheres. In this context, economic notions conceptualized through metaphor facilitate a clearer understanding of political processes. Such conventional metaphorical expressions as employees are human capital, the inflows of foreign capital, equity indexes fall, and the rebound in stocks have gradually become integrated into the conceptual system of language users and have turned into part of their everyday way of thinking.

One of the most widespread patterns is the mechanistic metaphorical model, within which the economy is interpreted as a complex system or mechanism that functions through the interaction of its individual components. For example: The American economy is operating well above capacity. This type of metaphorical conceptualization enables the transfer of knowledge about the functioning of technical objects to the understanding of complex economic processes. Particularly illustrative in this respect is Donald Trump's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where the World Trade Organization was represented as a vehicle that enabled China's rapid economic growth: "The World Trade Organization's been very unfair to the United States for many, many years, and without it, China wouldn't be China. China wouldn't be where it is right now. That was the vehicle that they used, and I give them great credit, and I also don't give the people that were in my position great credit because, frankly, they let that all happen, but the vehicle was the World Trade Organization" [9].

Economic metaphors are also actively employed in the contemporary political discourse of President Joe Biden. Thus, in a joint statement with the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, Giorgia Meloni (July 27, 2023). In order to emphasize the dynamics of bilateral economic relations, he uses the verb *fueled*, highlighting the intensity and scale of trade growth: "Today, we're going to talk about our deepening economic connections, which fueled more than \$100 billion in trade last year. In my view, there's no reason why that can't increase" [10].

Similarly, the metaphorical use of the phrase *supply chains* conveys the idea of stability and resilience in economic develop-

ment, which has become particularly salient in the post-pandemic period.

In general, economic metaphors highlight both real and hypothetical aspects of socio-economic phenomena by establishing a particular perspective for their interpretation. Understanding the world through the prism of metaphor can be a factor in cognitive progress, influencing the formation, transformation, and adjustment of the addressee's perceptions, attitudes, and actions.

Religion.

In political discourse, a considerable number of metaphors related to religion and religious concepts can be observed, which highlight various aspects of religious symbolism, for example: "May God bless you, and may He watch over the United States of America" (George Bush). The use of religious metaphors by American presidents reinforces their authority in a society where power serves as a key social reference point.

The group of religiously marked metaphors also includes Donald Trump's statement devoted to the death of the African American George Floyd: "Hopefully George is looking down (from Heaven) and saying there's a great thing here that's happening for our country. It's a great day for him, it's a great day for everybody. It's a great day for equality." The metaphorical expression "look down" conveys the idea of the deceased person's soul observing events from a transcendental realm, thereby intensifying the emotional impact of the statement. Such argumentation increases the addressee's receptivity by creating an illusion of moral approval of real-world actions on the part of a symbolically personified figure of the deceased.

Military.

In political discourse, metaphors drawn from the military sphere are actively employed to interpret and address socially significant problems, in which abstract social phenomena or political opponents are conceptualized as enemies in a real armed confrontation. Such metaphors may be used not only in the context of foreign policy but also within domestic political discourse. Metaphors from the military sphere serve as powerful rhetorical resources that can exert substantial influence on internal political processes.

Archetypes of war and related metaphorical images regularly appear in inaugural and other public speeches of U.S. presidents, a tendency also обусловлена the importance of the military-industrial complex to the American economy and the electoral appeal of military themes. In such statements, militaristic metaphors portray the leader as a defender of the nation, capable of confronting any "enemy," regardless of its real or symbolic nature, for example: "It is a weapon [moral courage of free men and women] that we as Americans do have".

«With the leadership of your Democratic members of Congress, we passed the Inflation Reduction Act – although a few Republicans did support it – the largest investment to combat the climate ever, ever, anywhere in the world. All of \$368 billion». In his speech of July 20, 2023, Joe Biden proposes achieving victory over climate change by metaphorically employing the phrase to combat climate change forever [11].

Migration.

The use of metaphors in migration discourse has recently attracted close attention in many contemporary linguistic studies, since population migration, which is widespread across the world today, constitutes not only a complex social phenomenon but, above all, a political, economic, and cultural process.

The issue of immigration and immigrants is particularly acute in the modern world; therefore, political discourse cannot remain indifferent to it. As Charlotte Taylor notes, a large number of metaphors in which migrants function as the target domain are almost exclusively related to immigration rather than emigration and are thus closely connected with the conceptual frameworks of the country in which the "out-group" resides or to which it migrates [8]. The overwhelming majority of examples demonstrate that metaphor is used to construct a negative representation of migrants, depicting them as invaders, criminals, animals, a burden, or pollutants.

One of the most widespread conceptual metaphors in anti-immigrant discourse is the image of migration as a flow, particularly in the expression floods of immigrants. This representation forms part of the broader conceptual model of migration as a natural disaster. Within this metaphorical framework, immigrants are portrayed as an uncontrollable flood or a massive movement of water that advances in waves and penetrates the territory of the state, causing destruction. This imagery is conveyed through expressions such as floods, waves, a stream, flowing into the country, and destroying it.

In Barack Obama's speeches, immigration is conceptualized differently: immigrants are presented not as a burden or a threat, but as bearers of potential and a source of social renewal. Emphasizing their emotional state and social vulnerability, the president portrays migrants as people with "limitless possibilities," capable of reshaping the nation's future rather than remaining "trapped" in the past: "For more than 200 years, our tradition of welcoming immigrants from around the world has given us a tremendous advantage over other nations. It's kept us youthful, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. It has shaped our character as a people with limitless possibilities – people not trapped by our past, but able to remake ourselves as we choose" [12].

Summarizing, it should be noted that metaphors associated with the concept of "migration" perform a number of significant social functions. They may serve as a means of dehumanizing the Other (in particular, refugees and migrants), as an instrument for legitimizing or delegitimizing both verbal and physical actions, including hate speech and hate crimes, and for eliciting strong emotional responses such as fear, anger, or emotional desensitization of the audience. Political speeches in the media, aimed at influencing the addressee, often seek to impose particular interpretations and political positions. Such messages employ emotionally marked information, sympathetic or condemnatory, calm or aggressive, neutral or conflict-oriented, depending on the speaker's communicative intentions. When addressing the issue of migration, politicians frequently appeal to recipients' emotions, activating feelings of fear, duty, and other moral attitudes to shape a desired worldview.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The results of the study confirm that metaphor functions as one of the leading cognitive-discursive mechanisms in contemporary English-language political discourse, providing not only an explanation of complex socio-political phenomena but also an effective means of influencing the consciousness of the mass addressee. Metaphorical models play an important role in shaping political images, interpreting events, and constructing evaluative ideological frameworks that guide the perception of political reality.

The analysis identified groups of metaphors characteristic of English-language political discourse, in particular those related to economics, religion, the military sphere, and migration.

It has been demonstrated that each of these metaphorical models realizes specific pragmatic functions, from mobilization and the legitimization of political decisions to emotional influence and the manipulation of public opinion. Special attention is drawn to militaristic and migration metaphors, which are often used to construct images of threat or an “enemy” and may intensify social tension and societal polarization.

Prospects for further research include expanding the corpus of analyzed material, particularly by including multimodal texts of political communication (visual and audiovisual materials), and conducting comparative studies of political metaphors across different languages and cultural contexts. Further investigation into the dynamics of metaphorical models during periods of socio-political crisis also appears promising, as it may contribute to a deeper understanding of mechanisms of linguistic influence and to enhancing critical engagement with political discourse.

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Олейнікова Г. Роль метафори в сучасному політичному дискурсі

Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню ролі метафори як когнітивно-дискурсивного механізму впливу в сучасному англomовному політичному дискурсі. Політична комунікація розглядається не лише як засіб передавання інформації, а передусім як інструмент формування суспільних установок, оцінок і інтерпретаційних рамок за допомогою мовних засобів. Особливу увагу приділено метафорі як одному з найефективніших способів концептуалізації складних і абстрактних соціально-політичних явищ шляхом проєкції їх на більш конкретні та знайомі явища.

Спираючись на теоретичні засади класичної риторики, когнітивної лінгвістики та критичного дискурс-аналізу, у статті розглядається метафора як ключовий механізм смислотворення й переконання в політичному мовленні. Показано, що метафора поєднує когнітивні, емоційні та оцінні компоненти, впливаючи як на раціональне осмислення, так і на емоційну реакцію масового адресата.

На основі аналізу публічних виступів провідних політичних діячів виокремлено основні групи метафоричних моделей, характерні для сучасного політичного дискурсу, зокрема економічні, релігійні, мілітаристські та міграційні метафори. Доведено, що ці моделі виконують специфічні прагматичні функції, зокрема легітимацію політичних рішень, конструювання образів загрози або стабільності, мобілізацію суспільної підтримки та маніпулювання громадською думкою. Особливу увагу приділено мілітаристським і міграційним метафорам, які часто використовуються для поляризації соціальної реальності та загострення ідеологічного протистояння.

Отримані результати підтверджують, що політична метафора функціонує не як стилістичний засіб прикрашання мовлення, а як потужний когнітивний і комунікативний інструмент, що відображає культурні цінності, ідеологічні орієнтири та владні відносини в суспільстві. У статті також окреслено перспективи подальших досліджень, зокрема в зіставному та мультимодальному вивченні політичної метафори в різних мовних і культурних контекстах.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, метафора, когнітивна лінгвістика, стратегії переконання, метафоричні моделі, політична комунікація, публічне мовлення.

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