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Pejorative Lexis as a Component of a Politician's Self-presentation

There exists considerable quantity of literature, which states that a language can influence politics and it really does. For instance, M. Edelman states that “a political language is political reality, a language is an integral element of political stage – it is not only a tool to describe the events, but it is a part of events, which greatly impacts on the formation of their significance, contributing to the formation of the political roles, which is admitted by politicians and society in general”.¹

As a matter of fact, politics is a speech activity, where a language is used to inform the others about political problems and persuade in the necessity of taking actions as to these problems. The interest to political discourse research has been shown by the representatives of different professions and scientific disciplines, among them are journalists, politologists, philosophers, sociologists, specialists in communication theory and also linguists. The works of F. Batsevych, T. A. van Dijk, V. Dem'iakova, O. Sheigal research the political discourse.

At the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that pejorative lexis, taking into account its etymology, semantics, contextual component, still remains an inexhaustible resource for further research not only in linguistics domain, but also in sociology, psychology, which constitutes **the rationale** of this research.

¹ Edelman M. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* / M. Edelman. – Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1964. – 164 p.

The object of the paper is the strategy of a politician's self-presentation in the framework of the political discourse of the USA; **the subject** is pejorative lexis and its place in the political discourse of the USA as an element of image modelling of a politician.

The aim of the given research is to prove the effectiveness of politicians' self-presentation due to pejoratively coloured lexis.

One of the most important functions of political discourse, which differentiate it from general language context, is considered to be a persuasion function. The function of political discourse is to persuade the addressees – the citizens of a community – in the necessity of politically correct actions and evaluations. In other words, the aim of political discourse is not to describe, but to convince, having induced the addressee's intentions; to give grounds for belief and to rouse to action, which is, first of all, to vote for this or that candidate.

Thus, self-advertising of a politician is a key component of a political speech and political discourse in general. The self-presentation presupposes the presentation of a speech subject in a certain light, the attraction of an interlocutor on your side and manipulation, showing the attitude to the surrounding world using the value system inherent to the speech subject.² A politician forms his/her own image in such a way. In such case, we speak not only about external characteristics, but about language model behavior; one can distinguish two ways of image forming while analyzing the oral messages and interviews of politicians: on one hand the author addresses his/her speech to a recipient (political opponent or any other addressee) using correspondent lexical and stylistic, grammatical and stylistic material in order to attract listener's attention and present the necessary information and on the other hand a politician chooses for himself/herself a certain role, puts on a "political mask", which he/she must comply with it further and which becomes the very attractant of audience's and voters' attention. In either case, the choice of communicative strategy is carried out.

² Issers O.S. Communicative strategies, stereotypes and tactics of Russian speech / O.S. Issers. – M. : Izd-vo "KomKniga", 2006. – 288 p.

Trump: If Russia and the United States got along well and went after ISIS, that would be good. He has no respect for her. He has no respect for our president. And I'll tell you what, we're in very serious trouble because we have a country with tremendous numbers of nuclear warheads, 1,800, by the way, where they expanded and we didn't — 1800 nuclear warheads, and she's playing chicken. Look —

Clinton: Well, that's because he'd rather have a puppet as president.

Trump: No puppet, no puppet.

Clinton: And it's pretty clear —

*Trump: You're the puppet.*³

In the abovementioned example, D. Trump, a presidential contender at that time, shows factual knowledge and political consciousness in his monologue appealing to precision data (*1800 nuclear warheads*), historical facts (*ISIS*). In such a way, the addresser tries to gain maximum recipient's trust, as he is a knowledgeable politician striving for adjusting existing conflicts (*if Russia and the United States got along well and went after ISIS, that would be good*) and for improving the political climate in the country. Thus, the usage of lexical units with positive evaluative connotation (*good, well*) and the statement of existing threats using lexical units having a sense of danger, war, death (*very serious trouble, warheads*) in their denotative component help to achieve the set aim to attract the attention of audience, voters. Such an abrupt shift from positive to negative cannot be ignored, it will surely cause certain emotions and speech emotivity always attracts attention, because arguments must influence not only logically, but also emotionally. Only in that case they will be forceful.⁴

³ Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's final presidential debate 20 October 2016 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode : <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/10/19/13336894/third-presidential-debate-live-transcript-clinton-trump>. – (29.10.2016).

⁴ Culture of Russian Speech : university textbook / [S. I. Vinogradov, L. K. Graudina, E. V. Karpinskaya et al]; pod red. prof. L. K. Graudinoy i prof. E. N. Shyriaeva. – M. : Izdatelskaya gruppa NORMA – INFRA M, 1998. – 560 p.

If emotiveness is justified especially in political discourse, then absolute emotiveness can be ensured by pejorative lexical units, which are represented by words and word combinations expressing negative evaluation of something or somebody, disapproval, denouncement, irony or contempt.⁵

While functioning of absolute pejorative lexical units in the text, the context can influence the actualization of one of pejorative meanings of a lexeme or one of differential sense of a pejorative lexical unit, concretize, intensify pejorative meaning, also it can widen the application sphere of a pejorative lexical unit, weaken lexeme pejorativeness and transform it into a diminutive word.

“Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president? I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not s'posed ta say bad things, but really, folks, come on. Are we serious?!”⁶

This phrase belongs to Donald Trump and concerns an American business lady and a politician Carly Fiorina. At that time Donald Trump was a presidential contender and he was investigating the boundaries of what he could say and still preserve the popularity among the voters.

The given example shows the tendency, when a literary language word with neutral connotation acquires negative colouring. The neutral noun *face*, which has no negative meaning, acquires negative connotation in this context and denotes something vile and disgusting. The word *face* acquired negative evaluation only due to macrocontext (the context not only of one sentence, but of the whole utterance). In order to prove this statement, it is necessary to separate the sentence with the word *face* from the others. *“Look at that face!”*. Neither the word nor the whole sentence do not acquire negative connotation, it takes place only when we add the next sentence: *“Would anyone vote for that?”*, which actually demonstrates

⁵ Holod O.Ye. The peculiarities and functioning of pejorative lexis in modern English / O.Ye Holod. – Lviv : LNU, 2001. – P. 1–18.

⁶ Uchimiya E. Donald Trump insults Carly Fiorina's appearance [Electronic resource] / Ellen Uchimiya. – New York : CBS News, 2015. – Access mode : <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-insults-carly-fiorinas-appearance/>. – (09.09.2016).

the author's negative attitude towards the character and gives the word *face* negative evaluation.

Probably, such often usage of pejorative lexis testifies the poor vocabulary of a speaker and lack of self-control: such qualities are usually associated with people, who often swear. But in fact, such behavior of D. Trump is his strategy, which probably granted his victory.

The researches have shown that people, who feel free to use pejorative lexis in public, are likely to be trusted. In 2005 the Dutch psychologists found out that testimony of witnesses containing pejorative lexis were considered to be more reliable than those, which did not.⁷

In their turn, the Italian researchers studied the influence of abusive language in political campaigns, when Beppe Grillo, a comic actor and known ribald, became a political activist and led his political party to unexpected success during elections in 2013. The psychologists studied the influence of political posts in social networks and articles with obscenities and without them on the readers. They found out that people had more favourable impression and were inclined to vote for candidates, who used obscenities.⁸ Thus, many psychologists believe that the usage of pejorative lexis may make the candidates more convincing.

When we hear people swear we often believe that their words reflect their real feelings and thoughts.

“I believe that strategic bombing of selected targets in Syria is the best option” — these words are said by head; but *“We’re gonna knock the shit out of ISIS”*⁹ are said by the very heart or at least it seems so.

⁷ Grohol J. Why Do We Swear? [Electronic resource] / John Grohol. – Newburyport : Psych Central, 2009. – Access mode : <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/03/30/why-do-we-swear/>. – (30.10.2016).

⁸ Sotto M. Profanity: How Often Do People Use It and Can It Be Beneficial? [Electronic resource] / Manny Sotto. – Dallas : SixWise, 2009. – Access mode : <http://www.sixwise.com/newsletters/07/12/12/profanity-how-often-do-people-use-it-and-can-it-be-beneficial.htm>. – (13.09.2016).

⁹ Winston K. Donald Trump's speech on national security in Philadelphia [Electronic resource] / Kevin Winston. – Washington, D.C. : The Hill, 2016. – Access mode : <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/campaign/294817-transcript-of-donald-trumps-speech-on-national-security-in>. – (09.07.2016).

The research results have shown that political discourse performs a very powerful influence function. And if we take into consideration the extent to which political discourse has spread and its popularity, then the lexico-grammatical and stylistic arsenal used by the politicians transforms not only into the subject of sociological, psychological and linguistic research, but also into a driving force of speech and as a result language shifts. Thus, the issue of pejorative lexis and their place in speech is open to further research.

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