

*Yemelyanova O. V.,**Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,  
Associate Professor of the Department of Germanic Philology  
Sumy State University**Smolianinova V. A.,**Bachelor's student of the Department of Germanic Philology  
Sumy State University*

## LINGUOPRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE COMPETITIVE DEBATE

**Summary.** The article considers the linguopragmatic peculiarities of the competitive debate genre. It is determined that the competitive debate as a type of discourse possesses certain features, that distinguish it from other types of public speaking, and plays a significant role in developing of the oratory and speech writing skills. The competitive debate is a competition in which teams of several people discuss a certain topic and, according to the court's decision, the team that chooses the most effective argumentation for its position becomes the winner. World Schools Debate format is one of the popular formats of debate used for educational purposes in order to develop the skills of speech writing and presenting and the ability to quickly analyse the opponent's speech and use it building one's own discourse.

The characteristic features of the competitive debate in World Schools Debate format are described, namely: universality of the given topic, freedom of its interpretation and choice of the argumentation, universal terminology, emotive vocabulary, low level of speech formality. The problem of interpretation of the topic and its role in speech writing is analysed. The factors influencing the formation of argumentation strategy are listed. The role of the position of the opponents in the argumentation is explained and it is noted, that while the Proposition party is rather free in building their own argumentation line, the Opposition mostly relies on the information given by the Proposition. It is mentioned, that the choice of demonstrative examples can directly influence the attraction of the audience. The lack of influence of the speaker's social status, gender, or background and, therefore, low level of speech formality are explained. The different methods, used for manipulation of the audience's opinion are analysed and it is noted, that the use of various expressive means and emotionally marked vocabulary can strengthen speaker's position in the eyes of the audience. The role of clichés, shortened forms and other stylistically marked lexical means is described.

**Key words:** communicative discourse, debate, World Schools Debate format, linguopragmatic features, oratory, speech writing.

**Formulation of the problem.** In today's world, the most valuable thing is information, and communication is one of its main sources. One of the popular types of communication is discourse, the various manifestations of which are the objects of many studies of various sciences: linguistics, philology, sociology, psychology, etc. In general, discourse is perceived as a process of forming a relevant accurate opinion, based on the analysis

and reinterpretation of the general available information. One of the popular types of discourse is debate.

Debate, as a way of conveying information, is recognized as a popular and effective form of discourse nowadays. As a type of public discourse, debate is an exoteric discourse (that aims to persuade a third party to take the side of the speaker), which is delivered orally and contains various verbal and non-verbal means of communication [1, p. 186]. During the debate, the participant must prepare their own speech using all the means of oratory, choose an effective and relevant argumentation for it, listen to the given questions and, after analysing them, give proper answers that should satisfy the interest of the questioner and support participant's position. In addition, after one's own speech, the participant must listen to the opponent's speech and formulate one's own questions. Participating in debates helps to learn to analyse the provided information quickly, extracting the most important pieces from it, correctly formulate one's own discourse and questions, and influence the audience with the help of oratory.

In addition to studying successful strategies for building one's own discourse and argumentation, one should be aware of typical features of the competitive debate genre, in order to study its patterns deeply. Linguopragmatic features of different types of speech communication of different nature were already analysed by linguists (Kondratenko N. V. [2], Kosenko Y. V. [3]), as well as debate genre in particular (Didukh O. O. [4], Bohatyrova Y. V. [1]). With the existence of thorough guides to speech writing and oratory (B. Gibson [5], Cambridge Union Society [6]), scholars can investigate the peculiarities of different types of debate, their role in the influence on the audience and impact on the personal development (Boyarsky N. F. [7]).

The **topicality** of the work is that despite the number of works focused on analysis of debates as a genre of discourse, a diversified study of the linguopragmatic features of the genre of competitive debate in the World Schools Debate format on the example of a specific debate session has not been held so far. This study will demonstrate the results of the content analysis of theses and arguments of each of the teams, the linguistic features of the given texts, and the extralinguistic parameters of the performances. The **aim** of the study is to analyse the linguistic and pragmatic features of the competitive debate.

The **subject matter** of the study is text of the competitive debate, specifically the final round of NSDA (National Speech & Debate Association) Nationals 2022, on the given topic "This House believes that housing is a guaranteed right" [8]. The **objec-**

tive of the research is the linguistic and pragmatic features of competitive debate.

**Presentation of the main research material.** Competitive debate is a competition in which teams of several people, usually students, discuss a certain topic and, according to the court's decision, the team that chooses the best argumentation for its position becomes the winner [9]. Debates are a complex type of speech that requires a certain level of professionalism from the speaker not only when preparing and presenting his own material, but also when interacting with the opponent, simultaneously analysing his speech, formulating counterarguments and, in general, the ability to navigate the real situation. Among the features of debate on the example of the World School Debate format, there are both those that are characteristic of the debate genre in general, and those that are due to the peculiarities of the format.

The World School Debating format is a combination of British Parliamentary and Australasian debates. Two teams participate in a debate, the Affirmation or Proposition team and the Denial or Opposition team, each of which has three speakers. Speakers of the teams give their speeches in turn, which last 8 minutes, and at the end, the leader of each team sums up for 4 minutes, based on the conclusions that were made after the analysis of the previous speeches. Then the judges choose the winner depending on which team's performance was more complete, illustrative and logical. This debate format can be considered one of the most convenient to use in the learning process, since it is not formalised and it provides more opportunities for improvisation and the development of critical thinking. At the same time, tight deadlines and lack of time for prolonged reflection keep the participants at the edge and train their ability to analyse information in a critical situation. [7, p. 43]

**Relevance to the topic of the debate.** While being relevant to the given topic, the speaker's speech must be based on their own interpretation of the topic. In case of competitive debates, more universal and vague topics are on the agenda, which oblige participants not to create a specific solution to the problem, with precise calculations, an action plan, and an analysis of possible consequences, but rather a reasoning on the topic, considering the problem from different points of view and formulating its possible theoretical solutions.

The main topic of these debates was the statement "This House believes that housing is a guaranteed right." The Proposition interpreted it as a call to action, and built their argument around the analysis of the issue of homelessness and the demand of making housing, at the highest level, the right guaranteed for all people. They supported their arguments by listing the advantages of accepting the demand and taking actions in order to fulfil it and presenting negative consequences of demand's rejection. The Opposition focused their interpretation on the idea that the given statement is a fact, which is not reflected in reality. They built their argumentation line on the number of real examples, that prove the inconsistency of this statement according to the situation in the world, and their main thesis was that the idea "a verbally guaranteed right to housing will solve all problems" not only does not work in the real world, but also can be harmful.

Thus, it is clear that the same statement can be interpreted in different ways. After analysing the positions of the parties and the differences in their interpretations, one might think that they are not opposing each other, but rather discoursing at different levels of perception of the problem. However, because this type of debate is not expected to produce one clear decision, the parties are not limited

in the freedom of their interpretations, reasonings and conclusions; and all that matters for the victory of one side or another is the clarity and persuasiveness of the argumentation and its presentation.

**Argumentation strategy.** There are many factors that can influence the choice of argumentation strategy of one's speech, for example, positions of the opponents, limited speaking time, the given topic, social status or gender of the speakers, etc.

The positions of the opponents define not only their interpretation of the topic, but also the priority of choosing various types of argumentation strategy. Due to the primacy of presenting new information, the Proposition usually addresses an explicit addressee, for example, opponents or listeners in the audience, which requires using a cooperative strategy that involves a clear gradual clarification of position, an attempt at conviction, and a call for decision-making. Thus, the Proposition party tends to use direct arguments. This can be seen in the following passage:

*"The thesis of this argument is that housing is fundamentally a human right and we therefore believe that it is a guaranteed one. ... Why then does something being a human right necessarily mean that we think it should be a guaranteed one? We think this is fairly straightforward. Firstly given we have just marked housing as a human right, which means this house believes that every human should pragmatically have access to a home; there is no other way to facilitate that than by guaranteeing it. Secondly, we would say that on a basic definitional level a human right is largely synonymous with the guaranteed one at the point at which they each describe a set of standards and protections applicable to all humans simply because of their existence as humans. What are the impacts here? The principal mechanization operates on a higher plane a priori to the practical. That is to say: it doesn't matter what you end up believing about the pragmatic feasibility of this motion, the declaration of housing as a guaranteed right is principally good in and of itself" [8].*

This passage can be seen as an example of the use of a successful argumentation model in short form. The first sentence describes the current situation, followed by a question containing the idea proposed by the speaker, which they will further prove by listing several statements. The passage ends with conclusion that repeats the idea expressed at the beginning, this time in the affirmative form [6, p. 6].

The analysis of the material shows that the speeches of the Proposition speakers demonstrate a tendency to break down arguments into separate theses and gradually present opinions. Although words such as "firstly... secondly..." (with their variations, such as "first, second layer...") and connecting subjunctive constructions (such as "at the point at which..."), demarcate separate theses, the constant repetition of the words "human, right" and usage of emphasising questions contribute to the integrity consistency of the thought. Confidence in one's position is demonstrated by the use of modal words such as *should* and illocutionary phrases such as "we believe that...".

The Opposition party's speech, on the contrary, because of its "answering" nature, is based mostly on the information, given by the Proposition, with constant references to its speakers, consisting of giving the analysis of stated points and proposing their counterarguments. This can be seen in the following passage:

*"First of all, look at our burden which is really important that there isn't much interaction with the idea that they have to show it in the status quo not some moral absolute called a moral society.*

*They have to answer a very key question: how do we determine what this moral society looks like? All they say is that a certain individual would know what is moral and therefore the entire society knows what's moral. But without any grounding or semblance from the real world we never know what it means to be moral in the first place. Here's how that's crucial for your ballot. That means that we have to ground their conception of a moral society from at least some idea of the real world" [8].*

In their speech, Opposition usually uses indirect argumentation strategy, firstly presenting their antithesis that is centred not on providing direct supporting points to their idea, but interpreting and refuting Proposition's argumentation by introduction of side questions. Then they suggest their action plan on how the given information will be used and what material will be presented next in order to meet the inconsistency of the Proposition thesis, in this particular case it will include providing more real life examples. Generally, presenting its analysis of the Proposition's points and recognizing its strengths, Opposition party tries to convince the audience in the inconsistency of the Proposition's speech by drawing attention to side question, this way preparing the ground for its own counterargumentation, built on the different interpretation or complete refutation of the Proposition's thesis.

One of the main debate features is limited speaking time, which directly influences the choice of argumentation strategy or expressive means. For example, when speakers tend to use the classical structure of argumentation, which begins with the main conclusion, proceeds with the logical sequence of arguments and examples, and ends with the repetition of the main idea, given in the beginning, this approach adds clarity and consistency to speech.

The given topic influences argumentation in a special way. It has impact on the choice of active vocabulary, whether it is universal or professional, which in turn affects the choice of argumentation strategy. The speaker must decide, whether more profound clarification of the problem details is needed, with descriptive examples and complex theoretical discourse, or it is better to focus on the emotional impact on the audience through appealing to morality or common sense by using simple terms and constructions, but with strong positive or negative connotations.

Examples are a significant part of argumentation strategy, which can play the crucial role in attracting audience. The variety of examples' types is immeasurable; they can be based on anything connected to the topic [5, p. 6]. In this particular debate, parties use different types of examples. The Proposition operates parts of the legislative framework (about the declaration of housing as a guaranteed right) and different universal statements, based usually on statistics or believes (about general problems that unhousing leads to, such as increase of crime level, domestic violence, reduced life quality, etc.). The Opposition on the contrary, tends to give specific examples of certain cases, from large-scale, in which a big number of people are involved (the Ukrainian refugee crises and Soviet mass deportations) to relatively small and insignificant, but very detailed ones, aimed at arousing sympathy from the audience (life stories of ordinary people, who suffered due to lack of housing).

**Linguopragmatic properties.** The lexical component of the debate usually depends on the area that the debate covers; the topic of debate directly influences the choice of terminology [4, p. 82]. Due to the publicistic nature of the debate itself and usually exoteric and understandable topic, chosen vocabulary is rather simple and universal, and most of the terms featured in

discussion are introduced by the first speaker and then constantly repeated by others. About the special terminology, since the topic covers the legislation sphere and the housing problem in particular, the vocabulary includes some basic terms, such as human right, guaranteed right, policy, housing right, etc. Speech is also characterized by widespread use of clichés, typical for the debate genre, such as *"the key issue here is"*, *"on our side of the house"*, *"we are so proud to propose"*, *"thus do not allow our opponents to uphold a side of the house"*, etc.

Publicistic and exoteric nature of the competitive debate requires the usage of simple, but mostly emotional vocabulary, since speech is aimed not at people, familiar with the peculiarities of the subject in question, but at ordinary people, who firstly need to understand the topic, and secondly, decide, whose opinion suits them best and formulate their own attitude to the problem.

One of the specific feature of this debate format is the reduced level of speech formality, especially in terms of addressing. Social status of speakers can reflect on the speech behaviour intentionally (when the speaker consciously denotes addressee as possessing a certain social status) or unintentionally (when speaker's social status, role, group, belonging, etc. are "modulated" in speech) [3, p. 211]. Due to the fact that participants are students, young people that do not possess a high social status, no polite forms of address, such as "Mister" or "Miss", are used here. Lack of need for marking social status, together with the general standards of spoken language, is also the reason for frequent use of the shortened forms such as *"we're"*, *"I'll"*, etc. All this emphasizes the unimportance of the opponent's status for this communication and allows one to focus on formulating one's own opinion related to the context of the debate topic, rather than on maintaining a good relationship with the opponent. In addition, the discussion is characterized with rather high level of emotionality of speech, which is manifested in the use of various stylistically marked stable lexical means or just more explicitly expressed nature of connotation, for example *"we're looking to the real world, you guys are looking to hot air"*, *"to make opposition seem like the bad guy"*, etc.

In debates, speakers usually use the present tense in their speeches. It can be seen in the following passage:

*"Remember that side opposition is looking at the actual acknowledgement that there are problems in our system of guaranteeing it. Side proposition is looking to a moral world that makes their life easier by saying that one guarantee solves all of our issues. If there's any truism in this debate it comes from side proposition" [8].*

The use of the Present Simple and Continuous tenses helps to bring the speech up to date and engage the audience. Using the imperative form of the verb at the beginning of the sentence, the speaker directly addresses the audience, conditionally calling for more attention. In addition, the use of the verb "remember" itself involves certain level of manipulation, as it implies that everything that comes after it must already be a generally accepted fact in the mind of the audience.

Speaking further about the manipulation of the audience's feelings, the declarative nature of speaking has its own impact. For this, the discourse approach to analysis of such patterns comes in handy [2, p. 147]. This can be seen in the following passage:

*"Even if you don't buy that their interpretation is abusive, remember that proposition bench gets to define this house as a moral society. They agree at that point that our burden is merely*

to prove the truth of the statement that a moral society should do this kind of action. We tell you we believe in that fundamental principle. But we can make this really easy for you: if this house is a moral society, proposition merely has to prove the statement 'a moral society believes that housing is a guaranteed right'. That's the way you should be looking at the motion" [8].

In this case, the speaker openly uses the communicative strategy of self-presentation and discrediting the opponent. The entire passage is declarative, where the speaker defines his tasks for himself, promises the audience to provide answers, and directly tells the audience what it should think. The rhythm of the passage is created with the help of contradistinctions of the positions, which are highlighted by pronouns "they/we" in the beginning of the sentences, which is beneficial for strengthening the connection with the listeners, and alienation of the opposing party from the audience. Must be mentioned the tendency to the "theatricality" of the speech, for example, in the first sentence the speaker uses the informal phrase of derogative nature "if you don't buy...", thus he tries to manipulate the feelings of the audience, to make them believe that his statement is so obvious that it is hard not to understand him. Also, the speaker, in order to show confidence in his position, promises the audience "we can make this really easy for you", creating the impression that he definitely knows much more about the topic of conversation than the audience, and his opinion can be considered authoritative.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The thorough analysis of the research material shows that the genre of the competitive debate in the World Schools Debate format is characterised by the following features: universality of the given topic, from which follows the freedom of its interpretation and choice of the argumentation strategy and speech writing methods; publicistic nature, reflected in the use of simple universal terminology and emotive vocabulary in the narrative, aimed at audience not familiar with the subject; low level of speech formality due to the unimportance of social status of participants; resort to manipulation of the audience's feelings. The factors that influence the argumentation line are: the position of the speaker and the nature of speech, the reliance on the information from the opponent's speech; limited speaking time; given topic; nature of examples. Different linguistic features (such as tense, imperative forms, clichés, abbreviated forms, terminology, etc.) assist the speaker in persuading the audience.

The prospects of further research are seen in the comprehensive analysis of other types of debate and comparing its features in order to define their role in developing oratory and speech writing skills.

#### References:

1. Богатирьова Є.В. Політичні дебати як тип аргументативного політичного дискурсу. *Лінгвістичні студії*. Вип. 21. 2010. С. 183–187.
2. Кондратенко. Н.В. Лінгвопрагматичні аспекти дослідження політичної комунікації в українському мовознавстві. *Вісник Одеського національного університету. Філологія*. 20(2) (12). 2015. С. 144–150.
3. Косенко Ю.В. Основи теорії мовної комунікації: навч. посіб. Суми : СумДУ. 2011. 282 с.

4. Дідух О.О. Лінгвістичні особливості англійських дебатов. *Вісник Чернівецького національного педагогічного університету. Сер. : Педагогічні науки*. Вип. 111. 2013. С. 80–85.
5. Brad Gibson. A Comprehensive Look at Original Oratory. URL: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56ae81be20c64718e8bc4f84/t/56c69476859fd098298a3846/1455854711934/A+Comprehensive+Look+at+Original+Oratory.pdf> (дата звернення: 15.11.2022)
6. The Cambridge Union Society Introductory Guide to Debating. URL: <https://cambridgeuniondebating.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/wp-format-and-basic-argumentation.pdf> (дата звернення: 15.11.2022)
7. Боярский Н.Ф., Наумов С.А. Использование образовательной программы «дебаты» при обучении правам человека. Харьков : Колорит. 2011. 80 с.
8. "NSDA Nationals 2022 – World Schools Debate Final Round". URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytA7V3wXux0&ab\\_channel=BodhiSilberling](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytA7V3wXux0&ab_channel=BodhiSilberling)
9. Cambridge Dictionary. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/debate> (дата звернення: 15.11.2022).

#### Ємельянова О. В., Смолянінова В. А. Лінгвопрагматичні особливості змагальних дебатов

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто лінгвопрагматичні особливості жанру змагальних дебатов. Визначено, що змагальні дебати як різновид дискурсу мають певні особливості, які відрізняють його від інших видів публічної промови, і відіграють значну роль у розвитку ораторських та письмових навичок. Змагальні дебати – це змагання, в якому команди з кількох осіб обговорюють певну тему і за рішенням суду переможцем стає команда, яка обрала найбільш ефективну аргументацію своєї позиції. Формат World Schools Debate – один із популярних форматів дебатов, який використовується в освітніх цілях для розвитку навичок написання та презентації промов, уміння швидко аналізувати промову опонента та використовувати її для продовження побудови власного дискурсу.

Описано характерні риси змагальних дебатов у форматі World Schools Debate, а саме: універсальність заданої теми, свобода її інтерпретації та вибору аргументації, універсальна термінологія, емоційна лексика, низький рівень офіційності мовлення. Проаналізована проблема інтерпретації теми та її роль у побудові промови. Перераховано фактори, що впливають на формування стратегії аргументації. Пояснена роль позиції опонентів в аргументації та зазначено, що якщо сторона Пропозиції досить вільна у побудові власної аргументаційної лінії, то Опозиція здебільшого спирається на інформацію, надану Пропозицією. Зазначено, що вибір прикладів може безпосередньо впливати на залучення аудиторії. Пояснена відсутність впливу соціального статусу, статі, чи походження спікера й, відповідно до цього, низький рівень офіційності мовлення. Проаналізовано різні способи маніпулювання думкою аудиторії та зазначено, що використання різноманітних експресивних засобів та емоційно забарвленої лексики може зміцнити позицію спікера в очах аудиторії. Охарактеризовано роль кліше, скорочених форм та інших стилістично маркованих лексичних засобів.

**Ключові слова:** комунікативний дискурс, дебати, формат World Schools Debate, лінгвопрагматичні ознаки, ораторське мистецтво, спічрайтинг.