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VLADIMIR PUTIN'S PHRASEOLOGY: THEMATIC ASPECT

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Abstract: *The article deals with the linguistic identity of a politician on the material of V.V. Putin's statements. The politician's discourse is studied based on the interpretative analysis of phraseology. Linguistic data verbalize the thematic component of strategies and tactics of speech influence utilized by the politician under consideration. The linguocognitive approach that includes the complex parameters of a politician's speech is the basis for identifying essential features of a linguistic identity. The politician's discourse is studied based on the interpretational analysis of an utterance. A hypothesis is put forward that the semantics of phraseological units with a thematic component reflects the attitude of any linguistic culture towards fundamental concepts of being and thinking, and the means of political verbalization can be considered as elements of a nation's self-identification. The authors see the prospects of the study in developing new synergetic cognitive and communicative approaches to studying phraseology with a thematic component.*

Keywords: *linguistic identity, institutional discourse, phraseology, strategy and tactics of speech influence, communicative behavior.*

INTRODUCTION

Political activity in its verbal aspect is based primarily on using pre-existing communicative units: schemes, patterns and clichés associated with the features of linguistic thinking in the field of phraseological preferences. Linguistic thinking is projected onto political activity which is associated with mythological beliefs of each national and cultural community through the conventionality of semantics (Alefirenko, 2008; Ogneva, 2014; Amatov et al., 2015). Mythologization is a universal way of cognizing, organizing and categorizing reality. The phenomenon encompasses all levels of social and individual practices. At the same time, the political myth is a particular state of consciousness, a specific thought paradigm that produces an individual's system of ideas about the culture of institutional communication. In linguistics of recent decades, the use of an ethnocentric approach to the analysis of linguistic data has become increasingly relevant. The comprehension of linguistic semantics through a system of concepts and categories of objectively existing objects and phenomena comes to the foreground. A way to study human behavior is to study discourse (Karasik, 2002; Olyanich, 2007; Chernyavskaya, 2006). Phraseological units are the most efficient means of expressing a person's attitude to the world around them. This is an attitude of active interaction with the environment, a desire to adapt the world to one's needs, a "targeted transformation of the environment according to one's values" (Novitskaya, 2007, p. 102).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

An integral part of a politician's speech profile is the phraseological component of an utterance. In the political arena, V.V. Putin is a figure whose speech is rich in expressive phraseological units of indirect-derivative nomination (Sheigal, 2000). The expressions with the semantic structure featuring an emotive component are typical of the individual style of the head of the Russian government. The politician is predicted to leave a mark in history in part due to his figurative expressions that become aphorisms due to their clear expressiveness. The thematic corpus of political phraseology is a layer of linguistic material, structured depending on the priorities of the domestic political and international situation which must be taken into account by both the leader and the citizens of the country (Sedykh et al., 2020). The collected empirical material made it possible to identify several key thematic groups of utterances, including phraseological units, presented in Putin's political discourse (we considered mainly the period as the prime minister). Thus, based on the phraseological usage in the collected empirical material, we identified the following main thematic groups of utterances with stable phraseological complexes of the head of the Russian government:

1. The economic policy of Russia;
2. The trade in natural resources;
3. The government's social policy aimed at improving the living standards of the population;
4. The stances of the Russian Federation in terms of international relations;
5. The national interests of Russia, patriotic tendencies, the unacceptability of forms of terrorism and extremism;
6. The evaluation of the global economic and political situation;
7. Sport, culture, environmental protection.

METHODS

When choosing a means of implementing the semantic structure of an utterance, in other words, the semantic and pragmatic format of their political text, a political leader is not free from the genre determination of such a task. Here we mean the ethnocultural determination of the choice of linguistic means (Astafurova, 2008; Sedykh, Buzinova, 2019). At the same time, taking into account the individual style specifics of the author's discourse seems to be an extremely important point in the process of cognitive-communicative analysis, based on which the nuclear features of a political leader's linguistic identity can be identified. The description of the specific nature of semantically interpreting text structure is within the competence of linguistics, and text interpretation is based on identifying the meanings that are embedded in the text because it is written in the national language (Slobin, 2006; Kharchenko, 2008). In other words, objective linguistic analysis precedes the identification of ethnocentric/individual elements in the structure of the phraseological discourse.

Political phraseology dominates a leader's linguistic thinking, imposing clichés and phraseological units-euphemisms on them. As one of its versions, the linguistic identity of a politician can be modeled in this epistemological aspect since the personality type under consideration cannot be investigated without considering the arsenal of individual thematic phraseology. At the same time, native speakers are not always familiar with all the parameters of the phraseological usage and associative meanings may escape them (Sedov, 2000; Maslova, 2004; Ter-Minasova, 2008). Moreover, phraseological units in a political leader's speech stimulate emotional rather than the logical perception of the utterance. From a characterological perspective, quantitative and qualitative indicators of the phraseological density of a politician's speech can form an empirical framework for linguistic identification of their personality (Grachev, 2004; Bolotnova, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Let us consider each thematic group to analyze and identify the basic principles of Putin's positioning on the designated topics and phraseological manifestations of the politician's linguistic identity.

1. The economic policy of Russia

"Timber processing, then. *It does not take an expert* to export round timber, this is true" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d);

"Minimize or rather *nullify* all transit risks, the expansion of infrastructure is the key" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d);

"Not to *stir up or bring down the market*, Vnesheconombank has begun to gradually, without attracting attention (now we can talk about it) sell the stock on the market" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d);

"It is believed that with an increase in government spending, we increase inflation and create a *vicious circle* that does not allow the economy to overcome the crisis or stagnates it" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d);

"And there is power coal where the profitability is much lower. And this is all *included in the tariff*, this is a constant component" (Electronic periodical "Vedomosti", n.d.);

"Why do we need any accidents, any new catastrophes? Everything should *carry on as usual*" (Radio SPUTNIK, n.d.);

"And so, they believed that there was no point in *setting everything aside*, rather it was necessary to invest in the development of the country" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Such roads that need investment are *a dime a dozen*" (Radio SPUTNIK, n.d.).

In the above utterances, phraseological units implement the following semes: "easy profit", "high demand", "risk reduction", "market stability" and "reasonable risk". The connotative component is formed around the conceptual field of "market relations". The main problems of the state are in the lack of opportunities for economic development, which is reflected in the semantics of phraseological units of these statements. The set expressions *to be included in the tariff, a vicious circle, a dime a dozen* include an element of conservatism in their meaning, indicate hopelessness, passiveness. One should recall that the policy of reasonable risk has become Putin's "signature move" in the highest echelons of power from the very beginning of the politician's career. It was due to this type of strategy that Putin once took votes from the main contenders of the election race.

2. The trade in resources: natural gas and petroleum products

"And, most importantly, with all these innovations we must not forget about the key thing: "the oil industry", fuel and energy complex as a whole is a *goose that lays golden eggs*. It would be simply unreasonable, unwise and unacceptable to kill that goose. It will not happen, do not worry" (Presidential Executive Office, n.d.);

"And one cannot *skim the cream off* the oil and gas industry entirely and inject it into the economy!" (Kommersant, n.d.);

"I will not talk about the past, although it is clear that by receiving energy resources from Russia *at bargain prices*, without any exaggeration, we can say that we subsidized the economies of many republics of the former Soviet Union, including Belarus, with billions of dollars" (Komsomolskaya Pravda, n.d.);

"Today we are implementing a project that I have already spoken about and which has *caused such a stir* – the Nord Stream project, for the supply of our gas to our consumers" (Government of the Russian Federation, n.d.);

"I keep hearing the same thesis about the need to ensure independence from Russian gas supplies. I always have a counter-question: "Why?" We have a good proverb: *the best is the enemy of the good*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Nothing that would hide the truth about the crime itself, nothing that would hide the truth about the mechanisms of this crime is *locked behind seven seals*" (Putin: Russia has nothing to hide about the crimes in Katyn, n.d);

"I believe that one of the reasons is that not all participants in the negotiation process were able to find the right tone for conducting these negotiations. One should never drive a situation to a standstill" (Presidential Executive Office, n.d.).

In the above utterances of the prime minister, with the help of set verbal complexes, the semes "sources of income", "ways of doing trade", "pragmatics of trade" and "interests of the country" are actualized. The connotational macro component is actualized in the context of calls for a civilized trade in resources, considering the economic interests of Russia. The semantics of phraseological units fits into the semantics of Putin's latest statements on attracting foreign investment into the Russian economy. At the same time, "experts believe this task can be carried out but warn that the interest of

Western business may be limited to the oil and gas sector of Russia which will further reinforce the raw-materials orientation of the Russian economy" (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, n.d.).

3. The government's social policy aimed at improving the living standards of the population

In this block, we will consider the examples reflecting Putin's views regarding the problems of the state's internal social policy and their solutions.

"Now – *"some are far distant, some are dead"* – of those with whom we discussed these problems" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"This is an area where the interests of many industries intersect. As you remember, in a famous old film they said, *"Without water, you are stuck"*;

"However, the river fleet transports only about 2% of the cargo. An absolutely unacceptably small number, *a drop in the ocean*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Many of them, unfortunately, are simply *in a sorry state*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Well, as they say, *it is never too late to get what was promised* – this decision was finally made" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"For the first time, the 2003 budget will provide funds for the construction of service housing for military personnel. Previously, this was also done, then it was all *committed to oblivion*, the money was not allocated" (Entsiklopediya Remonta: Put In, n.d.);

"Of course, there are limits here too. One cannot *cross the line*. What you said really does take place" (Presidential Executive Office, n.d.);

"This will start right from the new year, from 2006. These are the issues that will not be *shelved*" (Lenta.Ru – Novosti Rossii I Mira, n.d.).

The semantics of the phraseology provided above is concentrated around the semes "hopelessness", "negligence", "fraud" and "administrative zeal". The connotations manifested by set expressions and phrases have been "mastered" by the majority of Russian society who in real life face all forms of injustice. Recently, Putin's declarations have increasingly concerned Russia's social problems: "The situation around the country varies, often people have a difficult time, many have faced difficulties. We took full responsibility for what was happening. Russia is a welfare state, and the government guarantees that we will not abandon social obligations" (Gazeta "Volga", n.d.). Solutions to internal problems in the field of social policy are proposed in the following samples of Putin's speeches abounding in phraseological units.

"And I want to wish all of us, and the state will do everything so that every person has such an opportunity – to *bring their talent to light*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Therefore, in conversations with my colleagues here in Moscow and with the governor, I really tried to promptly respond to these problems and try to help the regional authorities *set these problems in motion*" (on education reform) (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"This is a contentious question. I would like to say that not all Muscovites *live in clover*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Probably, the system of distributing these subsidized medicines is not perfect *to this day*. And I agree with you that the Ministry of Health – together with the regions, of

course – should look at what is actually happening. *Not on paper* but in real life" (Lenta.Ru – Novosti Rossii I Mira, n.d.).

In the utterances provided above, phraseological units actualize the semes "wealth", "realization of personality" and "ways of solving (pressing social issues)". The Russians' symbolic and visual thinking associated with Russia's internal troubles is historically burdened with the unrealizable connotations of a comfortable and free life. The use of phraseological units with this meaning in the political leader's speech is aimed at manipulating the public consciousness of Russian speakers who in reality are difficult to manipulate in this way (Chudinov, 2006).

4. The stances of the Russian Federation in terms of international relations

The next thematic block of examples of political discourse with phraseological units reflects the role of Russia in the international political arena and its interaction with other countries.

"You know, among our people there is one such not quite literary word – we do not know how to stand *"bow-legged"*, we stand firmly on our feet and always look into the future. This is a feature of Russia" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"I repeat: within the framework of the contracts, all this is stipulated. Gazprom agreed to this, I reiterate, *"with an open visor"* (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"We agreed to open two more *"green corridors"* – one at sea and one more for road transport – and expand the list of Turkish goods that come through this *"green corridor"* (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.).

As we can see, these statements reflect Russia's desire to gain a foothold in the group of rapidly developing countries. These ambitions are manifested in the implementation through phraseological units of such semes as "strong state" and "honest and equal cooperation". The catalyst for the connotative background is the post-imperial rhetoric and the forms of power and subordination dictated by it. Let us provide Putin's utterances in which the politician indirectly expresses dissatisfaction with the behavior of some countries in relation to Russia.

"And we cannot allow someone to *poke their nose* into our internal affairs, we cannot allow someone to be in command here except ourselves in our own country" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"I repeat: we would very much like *the truth* to be comprehensive, not *lop-sided*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Some companies, *let us not point the finger*, place orders for ice-class tankers, say, in South Korea, when similar Russian-made ships cost less" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"But if the United States does not want to supply weapons to other countries, in particular to Venezuela, then this is good for us. Let them continue to not supply. *Nature abhors a vacuum*, as they say in Russia" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"We would very much like our partners in the field of telecommunications to also agree on efficient, joint work in the markets of third countries instead of *putting a monkey wrench in each other's works*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"I do not know, in some European countries – I am just uncomfortable naming them, I do not want to *throw stones* there but these are, in fact, not even stones, but, nevertheless – several times, more than once this year, they did not just freeze but cut wages, pensions and all social benefits" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.).

The semantics of phraseological units concentrates around the semes "opposition", "independence" and "accusation". The connotative component is associated with the country's position in the international arena: Russia is one of the richest countries on the planet that does not fully realize its potential and influence in the world. In the following statements, the topic of constructive interaction with partners in the international market is reflected through phraseological units.

"And we very much hope that our European partners, including those in Brussels, will be understanding of this, and we will *find solutions*. *Solutions* can always be *found* with *good will*. I see that many of our European partners, and first of all German partners, have this *good will*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"The global community is now choosing the collective *rules of the game*, developing new rules to prevent the emergence of new imbalances and bubbles in the future" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"We must strive to ensure that such long-term contracts *play a leading role* in the market" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Some of the equipment in which Siemens is the absolute world leader, we give our German partners *with a light heart*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"And I have no doubt that this trip will benefit bilateral relations, *breathe new life* into these relations and outline new prospects" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Therefore, we *met* our long-standing partners *halfway*: we froze the decision for another year – and, most likely, it will be adopted for 2011 – on the increased duties on the export of round timber" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.).

The aforementioned phraseological components are in the semantic field "positivity". The phrasemes "good will", "rules of the game" and "to meet halfway" act as catalysts of the connotative background. There is a manifestation of the idea "to be accepted by the system as its full members, since we are motivated by the same desires", which many training companies are now adopting (Poligraf. Samara, n.d.).

5. The national interests of Russia, patriotic tendencies, the unacceptability of forms of terrorism and extremism

As one of the top Russian officials, Putin, due to his position, must defend national interests and promote patriotic traditions. The idea of unity runs through most of Putin's speeches and even the politician's party affiliation since the mentioned tendencies are embodied in the very name of the United Russia party. In the speeches, the Russian prime minister often refers to the origins of national history and culture and expresses hopes associated with a bright image of the future based on the unshakable potential of the past. Putin's speech is full of phrases that reflect pride in the country and the people. The main opposition of the political discourse "friends and foes" is explicated, where "friends", respectively, are given a positive assessment and act as a creative principle.

"I want to thank you for this work and express the hope that if we, *God forbid*, face problems of this kind, I am not giving an overall assessment of how the authorities reacted (there are many problems here) but the way ordinary emergency workers operated, the way officers operated, of course, you just need to *take off your hat* and say "thank you" <...> These are officers, you know, officers. A man betrayed his friends, comrades in arms – these are people who *lay their whole lives on the altar of the Fatherland*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"And we have always perceived the Poles as *brothers in arms* in this common struggle <...> Today we will *pay tribute* to the dead, remember them, we will say words of gratitude to the veterans <...> They truly, *without regard for their own lives*, as they say here in Russia, were defending our common future (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

The aggressive connotation is often manifested in relation to "foes".

"A man devoted his whole life to serving the Motherland, and there was some kind of punk that betrays such people. How will he live with this all his life?! How will he *look* his children *in the eyes*, this pig?! Whatever it is and no matter what 30 pieces of silver these people received, they will be *straight as a ram-rod in their throats*..." (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"You raised *one of the most bleeding*, in the literal sense of the word, *problems*. And, as you know, not only Russia but also many other countries are facing this problem (acts of terror)" (Presidential Executive Office, n.d.);

"But even such positive signals and steps did not stop the Georgian leadership from the crime that was committed a year ago. But the truth cannot be *hidden like a cat in a bag*. Therefore, it will *fight its way through*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Crimes are being committed – yes, acts of terror are being committed – yes. All this is *done from behind the scenes*, and, I repeat, I have already said this, there is no large-scale military action there" (Entsiklopediya Remonta: Put In, n.d.).

As one can see, the semantic component "patriotism" is represented by the phraseological nominations in all the utterances above. The connotational background is formed around the image-idea "friends – foes". The foundation of the creation of the image is various connotations based on the phraseology of active action: *to lay life, a bleeding problem, without regard for one's life*. One cannot but agree with S.G. Ter-Minasova that "Russia with its vast lands has always been a temptation for conquerors from all parts of the world, except perhaps the north where there is simply no one but polar bears. It is therefore not surprising that the phrases defense of the motherland, defense of the fatherland; protect the motherland/fatherland; motherland/fatherland/homeland in danger are set and regularly reproduced" (Ter-Minasova, 2007, p. 176).

6. The evaluation of the global economic and political situation

"And if today the new United States Secretary of Defense announces to us here that the United States will not *hide* these extra charges either in warehouses, either "*under the pillow*" or "*under the covers*", I invite everyone to stand up and cheer for it" (Vesti.Ru, n.d.);

"He is a decent man, I know that he may be *thrown under the bus* today in the United States for everything that is done both in the international arena and domestically" (Vesti.Ru, n.d.);

"After all, as you know, Russia within the Soviet Union, being *behind the Iron Curtain*, developed and *was left to its own devices*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"If you come out without having the right, you will get *hit in the head with a club*... Criticize the authorities. Here in London, they have identified a place. Where it is not allowed, they beat you on the head with a club" (Vladimir Putin: I give you my word of honor, 2010);

"In my opening remarks, I have already said that the Customs Union has been in effect since January 1. And if we are talking about the second stage, then in principle it is

the same, only, as in some areas we say, this is "wider and deeper", integration will occur for more positions" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.).

The semantics of the utterances provided above and phraseological units are grouped around the semes "defamation" and "aggression". The explicitly expressed grounds for the semantics of aggression create phrasemes denoting specific signs (actions) for each object or idea: *hit the head with a club, be left to one's own devices, throw under the bus*, etc.

The connotative background is formed based on the individual's subjective ideas about the realities of modern international politics which include: US expansion, the Olympic Games in Sochi, European monetary policy and the Customs Union. All these realities have different semantic parameters for professional politicians and ordinary people (Ukhnaeva et al., 2020). For politicians, this is an inevitability that must be reckoned with, for an ordinary person – new problems that only ruin their life. That is why Putin uses the "juicy" phraseological fund of the Russian language to draw the attention of the layman to the aforementioned realities.

7. Sport, culture and environmental protection

"When you watch how they perform, Paralympians, sometimes you simply *fall speechless*" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"Football has *breathed a spark of life* into the young and the old. <...> We want to do everything *in the best possible way* to ensure both convenience and safety for our guests (from *the proper way*)" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"We just have to add a few more stadiums to this and there will be a *full, complete picture* that we need to host the World Championship" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"We will not *shut ourselves up in a shell* and *ponder something about ourselves*, we will be *in close contact* with the entire football world – both directly and through FIFA" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"I think we will *make a "gem" there*, I would really like that" (Mikhail Vladimirovich Mishustin, n.d.);

"There are many problems here, and in the problems of Lake Baikal – now it will be appropriate to use what I will say – all the problems of ecological safety and nature conservation both in our country and abroad *are reflected like in a drop of water*".

Sport and ecology are among the most relevant topics of the modern world, and this includes the 2014 Olympic Games that are topical for Russia. As one can see, the semantics of the phraseological units of the utterances provided above are organized around the central seme "healthy lifestyle". The active functioning of set expressions of this topic is due to the fact that phraseological nominations create a wide field for the formation of figurative structures that positively and emotionally reflect the corresponding topic using units of different stylistic registers: *to fall speechless, to breathe a spark of life, to ponder about something, to make a gem, reflected like in a drop of water*. These multi-style linguistic units are catalysts of connotative meanings associated with thematic complexes of national and cultural realities of Russia.

CONCLUSION

Thus, when considering language as a dynamic semiotic system, the structure of a phraseological sign forms a multidimensional substance. At the level of discourse, the most important aspect of the functioning of the phraseological nomination is the interpretation mode as a stage of decoding the sign-message associated with the institutional format of communication and the features of the national linguistic worldview. Politics and the linguistic worldview correlate, first of all, at the level of the nominative fund of the national language. Often it is the uniqueness of the phraseological nomination that constitutes the arsenal of linguistic means characteristic of any nation, in which the spirit of the people is reflected. The thematic potential of phraseological units within Putin's linguistic identity is distinguished by specific parameters of implementation in terms of reflecting the linguistic and linguocultural phenomena of the Russian-speaking linguistic community. The prime minister's phraseology is full of ideological content. In the political context, phraseological elements acquire additional ideological meanings and contribute to the formation of the image of a "Russian conservative". The paroemic and phraseological potential of the Russian language (often with elements of a religious vocabulary) is widely used in Putin's speech, which indicates the politician's clear positioning in the ranks of the national majority of Russia. The topic of the prime minister's political discourse is built around the following aspects: the Russian economy, trade, social policy to improve the living standards of the population, the international format of relations, Russia's national interests (terrorism, extremism), the foreign policy and foreign economic situation, leisure and ecology. In the prime minister's verbal phraseological manifestations on these points, the utterances feature a clear axiological component. It is reasonable to outline the prospects for further study of the political leader's phraseology, in particular, in the field of corpus and gender linguistics, as well as comparative linguistic personology. Based on a contrasting analysis of the communicative behavior of political elite representatives from various nations, it seems possible to single out additional linguo-semiotic parameters of the linguistic identity of the type under consideration.

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