Linguacultural Categories of Institutional and Media Communication in English  
(Based on the Research of Prosodic, Socio-Cultural and Communicative Characteristics of English Political Discourse)

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Abstract:  
The article looks into prosodic and communicative differences of political discourse in British and American variants of English. These differences derive from pragmatic and linguacultural features of institutional and media communication. The article also dwells on specific features of British and American communicative style in political public speaking. Certain attention is given to prosodic features of political discourse and their connection with pragmatic and linguacultural peculiarities of political communication. On the basis of the data resulted from the prosodic and content analysis, we came to conclusion that communicative and prosodic style of political discourse often depends on communicative situation and reveals itself in specific melodic patterns, phrasal accents, prosodic marking of communicatively meaningful elements of the utterance.

Keywords: discourse analyses, political speech, prosody, linguacultural analyses, discourse pragmatics, prosodic categories, communicative style

I. INTRODUCTION

It’s been generally accepted that the language plays a leading role in the process of construction of political reality. Exactly in the language of political discourse anyone can find the reflection of the whole political universe presented as it is and as it is seen by the society. As it was once correctly stated, the language of politics influences every one of us; it is something in which everyone is
involved and exactly something about which everyone has their own presumptions (Wilson, 1990; Stubbs, 1990; Dijk, 2003).

In our modern reality no one doubts that present-day politicians use different rhetoric skills to create a special vision of political reality that would allow them to transform and “wrap” the existing world around their fingers. As many researchers of political discourse noted, these rhetoric skills and the ability to “see through” them help any politician shape the world that they share with the whole humanity (V. Dijk, 2000; Wilson, 1990; Sheigal, 2004; Edelman, 1985; Bell, 1975; Blackledge, 2010).

For a long time, it has been believed that the language of politics should be studied from one important aspect – its ability to form political beliefs of the society and then influence this society. This fact, proved by numerous researches (Wilson, 1990; Fairclugh, 1987; Ivygina et al., 2019; Tsvetkova et al., 2019; Gabidullina et al., 2019), seems to be undoubtful. The world of modern politics and the development of political linguistics require new methods and approaches to political discourse analysis. Modern politicians, as Wilson points out, sophisticatedly create for us such cognitive reality which is not just rich in coded messages but which allows strong linguistic manipulation. (Wilson, 1990). Behind linguistic patterns hide cognitive structures (concepts, background knowledge, beliefs, hopes, frames, etc.) and it means that political discourse research inevitably leads to the research of consciousness of those who either create the text or perform it. Such ideas were highlighted in the works of N. Fairclough (1989-2003), V. Dijk (1990-200), P. Bourdieu (1991), Wodak (2004), Wilson (1990), etc.

It’s obviously clear that nowadays politicians use linguistic system to their own advantage and the task of modern researchers is not to prove this fact – numerous researches in the field of political linguistics gave conclusive evidence to that already – but to attract attention of the scientific and linguistic community to the importance of all the levels of linguistic system in the production of pragmatically balanced political discourse.

Modern studies of political communication presuppose deep analysis of different linguistic units that function at different levels of the linguistic system: phraseology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary. Now the subject of research is wider and includes textual units of higher level, such as composition of political discourse or its stylistic peculiarities (Lakoff, 2003; Wodak, 2004; Dunmire, 2009; Hodges, 2011; Akim et al., 2019).

For the present, the place of prosodic means in the system of political communication is under active consideration (Crystal, 2000; Gussenhoven, 2004; Ladd, 1980; Weiss, 2005; Duez, 1991; Lavern and Trugdill, 1979, etc). Specialists study the interaction between linguistic and prosodic levels, concentrating their attention on the role of prosodic means in structuring and perceiving pragmatically wholesome political texts. Thus, Russian researcher Belichenko (1990) studies the role and place of prosody in the system of speech influence means; Daniela Braga and Maria Aldina Marques (2004) describe pragmatics and prosodic features of political debates; Alexiyevets (2017) speculates on the role of prosody to form the viewpoint in political discourse; Weiss in his essay “Prosodic Elements of a Political Speech and its Effects on Listeners” presents five studies of five political speeches and insists on the fact that prosodic features are able to convey linguistic information.

The authors of this essay, following some of their own research of political discourse (2003-2019),
have the courage and evidence to claim that modern political communication should be seen as a special communicative process of national, goal-oriented and spiritual character and in the realization of its communicative and conceptual patterns one of the key roles should be given to prosody.

II. MATERIAL

In this essay political communication is analyzed against the background of linguacultural approach and with methods of applied pragmatics (Ericson, 1985; Green, 2001, etc), prosodic typology (Hirst and Di Cristo, 2004; Jun, 2006; Gussenhoven, 2004; Crystal and Davy, 1969) and political linguistics (Dijk, 2000; Braga, 2004; Wodak, 2004; Fairclough, 2003, etc.). The Corpus of the study includes political texts and their audio versions (samples of British and American political rhetoric) represented by two styles of political communication: institutional and media discourse. The material was chosen according to the principle of the “unity” i.e. the samples of political communication possess the unity of the socio-cultural context and thus could be compared at linguistic level. Therefore, we got the following:

– the analyzed material is arranged according to the style and subject matter;

– all the informants belong to one social level and have equal social statuses;

– there was equal number of informants in British and American samples.

Consequently, modern political discourse is represented by:

– institutional political discourse: political debates of American Senators devoted to the Healthcare Reform in the USA (Rare Saturday Session, C-Span 2-Wendsday, Weekend session – December 2009) and debates in British Parliament devoted to the resignation of Labour Party leader and one of the ministers (Hazel Blears, MP) and to those problems that arouse because of that;

– media political discourse: political shows devoted to the Healthcare System in the USA «BBC World News. America» and «Hard Talk». The shows were broadcast by BBC channel and leading political analysts of BBC channel, journalists, representatives of healthcare system of the USA and Britain, senators and political people from the USA took part in it.

Total time: debates – 147 minutes and shows – 150 minutes. The prosodic analysis was done with the program Speech Analyzer, v. 3.0.1.

III. INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In this section of our essay we dwell on the peculiarities and specific characteristics of the two types of political discourse: institutional discourse and media discourse.

So, let us start with the idea that any discourse is seen as a reflection of a certain mentality and ideology and thus it is socially shaped and produces certain (usually planned) social effect. Following the works of Bourdieu (1991) and Foucault (2002) under the “institutional discourse” we understand a powerful rhetoric that is realized in social institutions. Any social institute establishes its own discursive practice with unique features that differ this discourse from the others, such as: sustainable system of status relations inside the institute, implementation of power by means of
imposing certain vision, values and role-models. (Bourdieu, 1991).

One of the main peculiarities of institutional discourse is its “ready-made form”, i.e. such discourse is almost always prepared and written beforehand. More often than not, politicians themselves are involved in the creation and choice of every word or syntactic construction to achieve maximal linguistic influence on the listeners. The second feature of the institutional discourse is based on the type of relations between the participants of the communication who not only oppose each other in rhetoric battles but also are in cooperation imposing on the society certain vision of the modern world. In fact, such cooperation symbolizes their belonging to one game and this, in its turn, is an evidence to the fact that even the most vigorous rivals are in agreement in regards to certain notions, ideas and issues that construct the very core of the institutional discourse. (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 1997; Thibault, 2003, etc.). Institutional discourse has a rigorous structure with maximum speech restrictions, fixed interchange of communicative roles and not strong dependence on the context.

That is why we insist on the idea that the debates in the USA Senate and the British Parliament can be viewed as a special type of political communication – institutional political discourse. It is the debates in Parliament and Senate that vividly reflect social reality where the relations of power construct and restrict the flow of institutional discourse. It is the form of “social speaking practice” which reflects political reality and at the same time preserves communicative distance between the participants. This communicative distance is based on communicative status of the speakers and is revealed in their communicative roles.

From linguacultural aspect institutional political discourse is aimed at constructing unique global picture of political world that is thrust upon people and is recognized by the people. “Discourse game” that is being played by politicians gives politicians the possibility to create public opinion and to impose their own global picture on the audience in the course of their performance. Nowadays political communication is in the process of transformation into a new contextual model of political discourse dependent on mass culture requirements and on specialized channel for communication: television. In this essay we call this type of political communication – media political discourse. This type of discourse is characterized by high level of interactivity and immediacy. It should be noted as well that media communication is the type of communication with sociolinguistic constituent. As Allan Bell puts it, media create a language that is open to public and is reproduced by the public; the language of media is the source of information about linguistic change, linguistic interaction and language development (Bell, 1994).

The influence of media discourse on people and their styles of life is enormous. Media discourse is one of the main means to shape the reality and understanding of the world. Media discourse and state powers are very closely connected as modern media fully reflect political ideas. Media discourse is the area where journalists discuss political ideas and thus supply the society with the constant flow of information. So, continuous contact with the media provides a special understanding of the world, including a linguistic perspective (Talbot, 2007).

Modern means of analysis and possibilities for research allow for deep and diverse research of different features that characterize national political culture as a whole. What we are talking about is the comparison between prosodic characteristics of different types of political communication that is realized in different communicative situations.
IV. PROSODY

Following the latest studies in the area of prosodic typology and prosodic structure of the utterance (Ladd, 1996-2001; Sun-Ah Jun, 2004; Gussenhoven, 2004; etc.) in our research we worked with such linguacultural prosodic categories in both types of the discourse as syllable, foot and intonation phrase.

At the level of a syllable we took measurements of the average length of a syllable (ALS) and determined the direction of melodic tones on stressed syllables. At the level of foot, we measured the length of the foot in ms (milliseconds), determined the direction of the tone on the foot and collected F0 data. The analysis of intonation phrases was conducted in several stages. The first stage included the measurements of intonation phrase (hereafter IP) length, F0 and the range of F0. Also, at this stage we measured pauses that separated IPs. Those pauses were divided into two groups: non-final pauses (those that separated IPs inside the utterances) and final pauses (those that separated final IP of one utterance from the initial IP of the following utterance). At the second stage we allocated non-final IPs, final IPs and stereotype IPs or clichés, the analysis of the latter included the correlation of melodic structures, data on Fo variables, Fo range and average length of a syllable in a phrase. While interpreting the results of the measurements we took into conclusion pragmatic characteristics of the discourse, e.g. communicative roles of the participants or emotional context of the situation.

Now let us have a closer look at the results that we got after the analysis of institutional and media political discourse.

Linguacultural Prosodic Category “Syllable”

As the received data show in British institutional political discourse ASL of a stressed syllable is 161ms and the syllables are characterized by falling tones. Usually the tone is of narrow range 3(semitones) and Fo variables are not high: on average Fomax = 167Hz and Fomin = 129Hz. It should also be noted here that the level of the tone is a bit lower on each of the following stressed syllable. In some cases, we noted the widening of the rage of the stressed syllable up to 9 semitones and the increase of Fomax up to 242Hz. Usually it was noted in IPs with high level of expressiveness and such phrases were pronounced by middle-aged MPs (not older than 45 years). In such phrases there was also registered rising movement of the tone on a stressed syllable with further cadence on the unstressed syllables. The maximum range of such tones reached 7 semitones. In the American variant the ALS in institutional discourse reached 140 ms. But in this case, there were registered two tones: rising tone and level tone. Both tones are of narrow range and have practically equal Fomax variables: 170Hz and 176 Hz respectively.

The data received gives the ground to claim that British institutional discourse is characterized by longer syllables (in contrast to the American discourse). The research made it clear that the length of the syllable and variables of Fomax may increase in connection with the pragmatics of the utterance and emotional state of the speaker. Specific characteristics of American institutional discourse is the presence of two types of tones on the stressed syllable whose Fo variables are higher than in British discourse but the range is as narrow.

In media political discourse in British variant stressed syllables are characterized by two tones: Rise-Fall and Falling Tone. Both tones are of narrow range (3-4 semitones) and the variables of Fomax
may reach 221Hz. What came as an unexpected fact is the length of a stressed syllable, which is longer than in institutional discourse. On average ALS is 200 ms, but may increase up to 270 ms – so we can conclude that there is a tendency to “lengthened” syllables in British media discourse.

In American variant of media discourse the syllables are much shorter – the length of a stressed syllable is 147ms on average. The main tones that are realized on the stressed syllable are rising tones of narrow range and with high variables of Fo: Fomax – 183Hz and Fomin – 166Hz.

Comparing the data received we have all the grounds to claim that the linguacultural prosodic category “syllable” in both variants of English language is characterized by rising tones of narrow range and not very high variables of Fo. In American variant of English, the variables of stressed syllables are almost equal (140 ms and 147 ms) but in British variant they are very different: 161ms in institutional discourse and 200 ms in media discourse.

The following table shows the summarized data on prosodic category “syllable” in both variants of English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable</th>
<th>Britain</th>
<th>The USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Discourse</td>
<td>Media Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction of Tone</td>
<td>1. Falling</td>
<td>1. Rising - Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Rising</td>
<td>2. Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALS</td>
<td>161ms</td>
<td>200ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fomax</td>
<td>167Hz</td>
<td>197Hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fomin</td>
<td>129Hz</td>
<td>163Hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>3 st</td>
<td>3-4 st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Linguacultural prosodic category “Foot”**

There is a certain number of periodic tonal structures that are realized on such prosodic category as foot and are sure to possess certain expressive and stylistic function. Our research proved this fact with reference to institutional discourse.

It is commonly accepted that the British foot is characterized by falling tendency in terminal tones (Hirst and Di Cristo, 2004; Crystal, 1969; Laver and Trudgill, 1979). Our results give evidence to the fact that in institutional discourse besides falling tendencies in terminal tones there is a strong tendency to rising-falling tones. This compound tone is observed on the feet of emotional or expressive phrases (Isn’t the fact… a direct challenge to his authority) or rhetoric questions (Will he be there in a week’s time?). Both tones are characterized by narrow range (4-5 semitones) and not very high variables of Fomax. The difference lies in the fact that the foot with falling tones has a
higher Fomax but the foots with Rising-Falling tones are longer. See the Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminal Tone</th>
<th>Length in ms</th>
<th>Fomax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Falling</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rising-Falling</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the American institutional political discourse proved the facts from the scientific literature and showed that the foot is characterized by Rise-Fall Tone. Our experiment revealed that this tone in American institutional discourse has two typical configurations: let us call them a “slope” and a “hill” and show them on the pictures below.

Let us summarize everything stated above. The prosodic category “foot” in both variants of English is characterized by a certain set of tonal structures which are used in accordance with expressiveness and pragmatic meaning of the utterance. To the main peculiarities of the British discourse we should refer the presence of two main tonal structures: falling tone and rising-falling tone on the foot. As for the American institutional discourse, the foot is longer here and the variables of Fo are higher. In agreement with the pragmatics and expressiveness of the utterance the foot may be characterized either by falling tones or by level tones.

The comparative analysis of the “foot” revealed some features of media discourse. Speaking about American media discourse, we must note that it is characterized by the same selection of tones as an institutional political discourse: level, falling and falling-rising with the level tone dominating. It should be noted that a foot with such tone has rather high Fo variables but very narrow range. Foots with falling tones were registered in initial and final IPs.

Different situation is observed in British media discourse. First of all, the set of tones that are realized on the foot changes. Now the leading positions are given to level and falling tones. Moreover, in this type of discourse the foot is noted for the increase in length, in the range of Fo and in Fo variables.

To crown it all, we should mention that in both types of discourse the linguacultural category “foot”
is marked by certain sets of tones that are changing depending upon the pragmatics of the utterance; by narrow Forange and average variables of Fo. In media political discourse in both variants there was registered a tendency towards the increase of the length of the foot and widening of the Fo range.

Linguacultural prosodic category “Intonation Phrase” (IP)

Intonation phrase is the largest prosodic unit of the utterance which is intonationally marked (Hirst and Di Cristo, 2004; Crystal, 1969; Gussenhoven, 2005). Analyzing IPs one should pay attention first of all to the size of the phrase and its boarders. Some experimental researches gave evidence to the importance of pragmatic aspects while portioning the discourse flow into phrases. There are some evident tendencies, for example, the tendency of the IPs to coincide with simple sentences or subordinate clauses (Hirst and Di Cristo, 2004). Comparative analysis of different languages proved that the length of IPs is extremely variable (Jun, 2006; Crystal, 1969) and its length depends on the type of a discourse and stylistic colouring of the speech (Jun, 2006; Hirst and Di Cristo, 2004; Gussenhoven, 2005).

The tables that are given below, summarize the data on Intonation Phrases that we received in the flow of our experiment.

Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IP</th>
<th>IP Average length of ms</th>
<th>ALS ms</th>
<th>Fomax</th>
<th>Fomin</th>
<th>Fo range, st</th>
<th>Pause, ms</th>
<th>Final pause ms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional discourse</td>
<td>1292</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media discourse</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IP</th>
<th>IP Average length of ms</th>
<th>ALS ms</th>
<th>Fomax</th>
<th>Fomin</th>
<th>Fo range, st</th>
<th>Pause, ms</th>
<th>Final pause ms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional discourse</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media discourse</td>
<td>1460</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the tables it becomes clear that in British variant there is a tendency to the increase of all the prosodic parameters of IP, including the length of IP and the pauses in media discourse. In American variant the tendency is opposite – all the prosodic parameters are decreasing. The IP in media discourse is characterized by shorter length, higher speed of utterance and shorter final pauses. But
the variable of Fo seem to remain unchanged.

*Stereotyped structures. Clichés*

In this essay we would like to pay special attention to stereotyped structures, that are very widely used in different types of political discourse. The whole range of such articles was described by different authors for different languages (Pike, 1945; Ladd, 1978; Crystal, 1969; Gussenhoven, 2005; Hirst, 2004). Such phrases can be easily called a “conversational ritual”. The classical examples of such phrases are the calling phrase (e.g. Jo-ohn!) or greetings (Good Morning). Such stereotyped intonational contours were called by Ladd “stylized contours” (Ladd, 1980).

We are courageous to claim that institutional political discourse possesses such stereotyped structures and here we would call them a *stylized clichés*. It is impossible to say that the number of such structures is big but those that were registered revealed the same (stereotyped) prosodic structures. This fact allows us to call these clichés – “prosodic clichés”.

To such clichés in institutional political discourse we would refer:

- *Greetings-addresses: President* in American Senate and *Speaker* in British Parliament;

- *Meaningful repetitions*: repetition of the whole phrase or its meaningful part (…the bill *would reduce* the premiums, not increase… *would reduce* the premiums);

- *Ironic Repetitions*: Ignore the American people! Make history!... *Make History?!*

Let us have a closer look to prosodic characteristics of these cliché phrases in the institutional type of political discourse.

In American political discourse *Greetings-addresses* have tones of falling configuration of narrow range (on average 3-4 st); they are pronounced rather quickly (SLS = 107ms); have rather high variables of Fo (F\text{\textsc{max}} – 173Hz à F\text{\textsc{min}} – 111Hz) and are separated from the following utterance by extremely short pause (on average 100-130 ms.) The examples of such phrases are as following:

*Mr. president, in just four hours in the early morning...*

*Mr. president, the republic leader just a few moments ago...*

Such prosodic features and such a way of pronunciation of the phrases can be explained from pragmatisical point of view. Most likely, such phrases are just communicative clichés, certain communicative ritual that doesn’t have any particular meaning for those present.

In contrast to that, in British Parliament *greetings-addresses* with which the performance of every MP starts (*Speaker! I think the first thing that...*), constitute a separate intonation phrase which is characterized by falling-rising movement. From the following utterance it is separated by the average pause, the length of which is almost three times longer than in American variant – on average 377ms. The range is a closer to wide one (almost 7 st) and the variables of Fomin is twice as low against the American variant.

Such prosodic frame speaks for the idea that it is not just a mere ritual, but an important cultural
constituent of every performance in the Parliament. It definitely shows the respect to those who are present and to the traditions of the Parliament sessions.

So, coming to conclusion, we should notice that both political lingua-cultures (British and American) are characterized by such categories as communicative clichés that are realized in institutional political discourse: the address to the Head of the assembly. The difference in prosodic features of these communicative clichés speak for the idea that these clichés reflect the level of cultural importance they have in the Senate and the Parliament. We offer to treat it as a manifestation of prosodic culture of political discourse.

**Meaningful and ironic echoing phrases**

Meaningful and ironic echoing phrases are specific feature of an American institutional discourse. Probably, it can be explained by the fact that the communicative behavior of the senators is far more relaxed, if not to say less theatrical, than the behavior of MPs. The British Parliament can’t be called unexpressive, but they respect and follow traditions. The debates of the senators sound more like a discussion, not an argument.

Prosodically such phrases are characterized by a so-called “prosodic parallelism”. Echoing phrase has the same tonal structure as the main phrase. Mainly it is Rising-Falling movement of the tone, the range in both phrases is on average 8 semitones and the variables of Fomax and Fomin do not vary much (146 vs 137 and 87 vs 83). The configuration of tones in such phrases is almost the same but, in the echoing phrase, the level of the beginning of the tone is higher. This fact is proved by the picture given below:

![Graph of prosodic parallelism](image)

**Earn a minimum wage... earn a minimum wage.**

It should be also noted that an echoing-phrase should be separated from the main phrase by a pause, the average length of which is 1400ms, but in some cases it may reach 2113ms.

Coming back to the British political discourse, we should note that one of the linguacultural categories of the debates in British parliament which influences prosodic coloring of the speech is the distribution of communicative roles. In the debates that were analyzed the speakers were divided into two main groups: dominating orators (“attacking”) and subordinated orators (“explaining”). The speech of both groups is characterized by certain melodic configurations which match the communicative roles. Thus, in the speech of dominating orators the most common configuration is a wavy high-level scale in combination with Falling-Rising tone of an average range (7-8st) or in combination with High Fall (usually in interrogative sentences) of narrow range (6st). The average length of such phrases is 570 ms. Strange as it may seem, subordinated orators use level scale but of
low level in combination with Low Rising tone of narrow range.

The differences in prosodic characteristics mentioned above, create a certain contrast between the MPs and allow the speaker to understand the communicative roles almost immediately. It seems necessary to mention that the phrase of the subordinated orators is much longer and the pace of speech is much faster, which is supported by the figures: ALS = 277ms and the length of IP is 1400 on average.

V. CONCLUSION

Summing up everything mentioned above, we have all the grounds to claim that the prosodic culture of British and American political discourse is dependent on sociocultural and pragmatic peculiarities of institutional and media communication (communicative meanings of the utterances, the distribution of communicative roles, etc.)

We do hope that by this essay we managed to once again show that analyzing any political discourse at all levels of the linguistic system, the researcher obtains the possibility not only to describe and analyze the data that is on the surface, but to obtain a true data based on linguistic interpretation and processing.

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