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Когнитивные аспекты фрейма-сценария «дискредитация» в политическом дискурсе
(на материале американских президентских дебатов 2012 г.)

Cognitive aspects of frame-scenario "discreditation" in political discourse (on material of US presidential debates 2012)

Аннотация

Статья посвящена когнитивному исследованию фрейма-сценария «дискредитация» в политическом дискурсе. Материалом послужила речь Барака Обамы в финальных президентских дебатах 22 октября 2012 г. Результаты показывают, что фрейм-сценарий «дискредитация» можно рассматривать как серию компонентов: стимул – одобрение – критика – одобрение – заключение. Концептуальный анализ двух главных компонентов – одобрение и критика – позволяет выделить в них доминирующие значения.

Abstract

The article is devoted to a cognitive analysis of the frame-scenario "discreditation" in the political discourse. The material taken is Barack Obama's speech in the final US presidential debates on October 22, 2012. As seen from the results, the frame-scenario «discreditation» can be viewed as a series of components. There are five of them: stimulus – approval – criticism – approval - conclusion. Due to conceptual analysis of the two main components, i.e. approval and criticism, it is possible to find out their dominant meanings.

Ключевые слова: политический дискурс, фрейм-сценарий, когнитивная лингвистика, концепт, дискредитация.

The present research of the frame-scenario "discreditation" is connected with the human cognition study, discourse modeling and the current cognitive approach to the language.

Contemporary linguistics studies language from the point of view of 2 main approaches developed by the linguist Elena Kubraykova and extended by other scientist, i.e. the communicative (discursive) approach and the cognitive approach. The communicative (discursive) approach lays stress on the communicative function of the language and the context influencing communication (Rozhkova, 2003). The basis of the cognitive approach is the idea of the system of knowledge about the world (conceptual world view) underlying the language as the system of signs (Golovanova, 2011). Conceptual world view is formed in the human conscience in the process of communication and cognition, its basic elements being concepts – meaningful units of knowledge (Golovanova, 2011).

When discourse analysis is meant one may refer to the cognitive approach together with the pragmatic one being a combination of two parts – description of knowledge units determining the choice of language forms and study of discourse in terms of speech acts, linguistic and extralinguistic features (Tsurikova, 2006). Specific pragmatic features of political speech let a number of scientists (V.Gavrilova, T.Yudina, A.Chudinov) specify it as a separate type of discourse – political discourse aimed at formation of social opinion by means of social processes evaluation. (Aivazova, 2011). One of the main features of the political discourse (and its genre political debates) is discreditation being one of the types of conflict interaction by which the speaker gives a negative characteristic of actions or character trades of another person aimed at creation of a negative image of this person (Lisikhina, 2009).

As previously stated the basis of the cognitive approach to language study is the idea of conceptual world view with its basic elements - concepts. "Concept" is a mental unit realized in the language (Golovanova, 2011). A multicomponent concept being a set of information is called "a frame" by the scientist Nikolay Boldyrev and a dynamic frame being a sequence of scenes – "a scenario". The term "frame-scenario" developed by Marvin Minsky is close to the terms above mentioned. According to Marvin Minsky, "frame-scenario" is a typical structure for some event, action, notion, etc. that includes characteristic components of the said event, action, or notion. The only principal difference between the frame-scenario and the scenario is the fact that the frame-scenario is closely connected to the context of a specific situation. Russian linguists characterize the frame-scenario as a group of procedures typical of some object or action characteristic of a specific separate situation (Ivanova, Artyomova, 2005). Foreign linguists

R.Shank and R.Abelson also associate frame-scenarios with a specific situation (Shank, Abelson, 1977).

Analysis of the frame-scenario "discreditation" studied in this article puts a focus on Obama's speech in the final presidential debates on October 22, 2012 dedicated to the foreign US policy. Obama discredits Mitt Romney who stood for presidential office from the Republicans.

Analysis of the presidential debates shows the following componental structure of the frame-scenario "discreditation": 1. Stimulus; 2. Approval; 3. Criticism; 4. Approval; 5. Conclusion.

The first component "stimulus" is a factor causing a reaction. The driving force for Barack Obama's discreditation is the words or ideas of Mitt Romney. For instance, during discussion of Iranian question Obama's dicreditation is caused by the Romney's characteristic of Obama's actions as "not as strong as it needed to be" and even "weak":

Romney: I think from the very beginning, one of the challenges we've had with Iran is that they have looked at this administration, and felt that the administration was not strong as it needed to be. I think they saw weakness where they had expected to find American strength.

The second component is "approval" of its own Obama's policy and description of its existing or future achievements. This component may be absent and the first component may be followed by the third one. "Approval" may also be on the fourth place preceded by the component "criticism". An example for "approval":

Obama: And the world needs a strong America, and it is stronger now than when I came into office. Because we ended the war in Iraq, we were able to refocus our attention on not only the terrorist threat, but also beginning a transition process in Afghanistan. It also allowed us to refocus on alliances and relationships that had been neglected for a decade. And, Governor Romney, our alliances have never been stronger, in Asia, in Europe, in Africa, with Israel, where we have unprecedented military and intelligence cooperation, including dealing with the Iranian threat. But what we also have been able to do is position ourselves so we can start rebuilding America, and that's what my plan does.

The next component is the "criticism" of Romney's ideas or actions which creates his negative image and brings him moral harm. This can be achieved by various means. On the lexical level the usage of lexical units with explicit negative or ironic meaning is characteristic:

Obama: So what we need to do with respect to the Middle East is strong, steady leadership, not <u>wrong and reckless leadership</u> that is all over the map. And unfortunately, that's the kind of opinions that you've offered throughout this campaign…

On the grammatical level negative constructions in relation to Romney's plans are habitual:

Obama: ...and <u>it is not</u> a recipe for American strength, or keeping America safe over the long haul.

Obama: And that certainly <u>would not help</u> us in the Middle East.

Obama: Now, it is absolutely true that we <u>cannot just meet</u> these challenges military.

On the stylistic level Obama resorts to various means like syntactical parallel constructions. For example:

Obama: But what we also have been able to do is position ourselves so we can start rebuilding America, <u>and that's what my plan does</u>. <u>Making sure that we're</u> bringing manufacturing back to our shores so that we're creating jobs here, as we've done with the auto industry, not rewarding companies that are shipping jobs overseas. <u>Making sure that we've</u> got the best education system in the world, including retraining our workers for the jobs of tomorrow. ...Unfortunately, <u>Governor Romney's plan doesn't do it</u>.

Antithesis is also often used by Barack Obama and is based on opposition *I/we* and *you*:

Obama: <u>We</u> also had to make sure that Moammar Gadhafi didn't stay there…But when it came time to making sure that Gadhafi did not stay in power, that he was captured, Governor, <u>your</u> suggestion was that this was mission creep, that this was mission muddle.

The fourth component is the same as the second one and has been described above.

The fifth component is a "conclusion" stating invalidity of Romney's ideas and correctness and propriety of the same of Obama:

Obama: Over the last four years we've made real progress digging our way out of policies that gave us two prolonged wars, record deficits and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And Governor Romney wants to take us back to those policies, a foreign policy that's wrong and reckless, economic policies that won't create jobs, won't reduce our deficit, but will make sure that folks at the very top don't have to play by the same rules that you do.

I will fight for your families and I will work every single day to make sure that America continues to be the greatest nation on earth.

The "criticism" and "approval" are the key components of the investigated frame-scenario. The conceptual analysis of the elements of these components was carried out within the framework of this article. The conceptual analysis is the concept study based on the analysis of dictionary and contextual meanings of language units (Golovanova, 2011). Analysis of dictionary meanings of the concept "criticism" allows singling out the following meanings: evaluation, mistake, contradiction, negative opinion, shortage.

Analysis of contextual meanings singles out the meanings "irony" and "contrast" (realized by antithesis) in addition to the above mentioned. The meaning "irony" is expressly seen in the following example that gives a negative picture of Romney's intelligence:

Obama: But I think Governor Romney maybe hasn't spent enough time looking at how our military works. You mentioned the Navy, for example, and that we have fewer ships than we did in 1916. Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets, because the nature of our military's changed. We have these things called aircraft carriers, where planes land on them. We have these ships that go underwater, nuclear submarines.

Analysis of the dictionary meanings of the concept "approval" separates the meaning "finding good and correct". Due to analysis of the contextual meanings of the concept "approval" the following meaning can be singled out: public, social. Obama tends to show his proximity to US citizens which is expressed, for instance, in the usage of the plural pronoun *we* instead of single *I*.

In conclusion, five components were singled out during the analysis of the frame-scenario "discreditation", and the conceptual analysis of its main components – "criticism" and "approval" – was carried out. It should be noted that "criticism" is expressed on the lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels through the usage of various means demonstrated in the article. The presence of antonymous components "criticism" and "approval" in the frame-scenario "discreditation" allows deeper realization of the pragmatic function, i.e. negative characteristic of actions or character trades of another person aimed at creation of a negative image of this person.

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