

**OFFICIAL POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF UKRAINE IN THE BEGINNING  
OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**Abstract:** The way we perceive language is the basis of our socio-cultural development. Political discourse is highly ideological and the ideology varies from country to country. The voice of the President, his speech is crucial for the development of the country and the speech of the President is highly influenced by the social background and circumstance.

**Key words:** political discourse, presidential discourse, ideology, power, manipulation.

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**УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ОФІЦІЙНИЙ ПОЛІТИЧНИЙ ДИСКУРС НА  
ПОЧАТКУ 21-ГО СТОЛІТТЯ**

**Анотація:** те, як ми відчуваємо мову, є основою нашого соціокультурного розвитку. Політичний дискурс дуже ідеологічний, і ідеологія різних країн відрізняється. Голос президента і його мова дуже важливі для розвитку країни, і мова президента піддається високому впливу за певних соціальних умов і обставин.

**Ключові слова:** політичний дискурс, президентський дискурс, ідеологія, влада, маніпуляція.

## УКРАИНСКИЙ ОФИЦИАЛЬНЫЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДИСКУРС В НАЧАЛЕ 21-ГО ВЕКА

**Аннотация:** то, как мы чувствуем язык, является основой нашего социокультурного развития. Политический дискурс очень идеологичен, и идеология разных стран отличается. Голос президента и его речь крайне важны для развития страны, и речь президента поддается высокому влиянию при определенных социальных условиях и обстоятельствах.

**Ключевые слова:** политический дискурс, президентский дискурс, идеология, власть, манипуляция.

Political discourse is a fascinating field for research both for those who deal with political studies and linguistics. This branch appeared in the convergence point of two sciences, yet is relevant for both. Its relevance for politics is obvious, its relevance for linguistics is less obvious, still is even more crucial. The most important tool for a politician is language. With the help of language he or she can manipulate the conscience of the electorate; can control the crowd; can obtain power. Politicians who mastered the proper language benefited greatly from the communication with their citizens. F.D.R. (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) was the first who used radio as means to influence society. His voice became an integral part of every household in the USA in the end 1930ies; his discourse led the Americans through difficult times; offered them a new deal; managed to communicate attractive designs [2]. The study of political discourse, like that of other areas of discourse analysis, covers a broad range of subject matter, and draws on a wide range of analytic methods. Perhaps more than with other areas of discourse, however, one needs at the outset to consider the reflexive and potentially ambiguous nature of the term *political discourse*. The term is suggestive of at least two possibilities: first, a discourse which is itself

political; and second, an analysis of political discourse as simply an example discourse type, without explicit reference to political content or political context. But things may be even more confusing. Given that on some definitions almost all discourse may be considered political, then all *analyses* of discourse are potentially political, and, therefore, on one level, *all* discourse analysis is political discourse [7]. These days when one looks at the scientific literature on political discourse, especially on political linguistics, one can notice there is an extensive research on implications, vagueness, and deception in the speech of politicians, though only few works deal with hedging and ideologies.

One of the strategies of rhetoric is hedging. In simple words hedging is introducing a term or a structure into the utterance, thus diminishing the value of the utterance [4]. We argue that spontaneous speech of a politician is bound to contain the instances of hedging. When the speech is not written, when a politician is faced with a loaded question that might demonstrate the drawbacks of his line in politics, he is doomed “to hedge”. Among hedging techniques one can find propositional hedges, indirect speech acts, impersonal pronouns, modal verbs, modal adjectives, negation, reversal tags, is-clauses, conditional clauses, etc [4].

We also argue that the identity of a politician is realized in the context of his or her ideological, cultural and language background.

The importance of political discourse analysis as well as the establishment of a true political discourse is extremely important for any country, especially for young states from post-soviet bloc. According to Fairclough (1989) the term refers to “the whole process of interaction of which a text is just a part” [3].

Discourse analysis is an extremely large field with a great many directions, and it is worth stating that Foucauldian understanding of discursive analysis will be taken as the basic approach in the current research; this approach implies the concept of power coming prior to language: the power relations are reflected in the language. Most importantly, this approach allows a researcher, among others advantages, to see the difference between the rhetoric and practice of policy.

This research is nothing but a humble attempt to investigate the ideologies contained in presidential discourse of Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014. According to Teun A. van Dijk when one attempts at such a research one should keep in mind that the approach of the analysis might be a multidisciplinary one as one may be dealing with a) political cognition; b) discourse structure; and, of course, c) socio-political context, in which such cognitions and discourses have their meanings and functions [6; 84-86]. As far as this problem is extremely wide and complex, we might address only very few of its issues.

The most influential figure on the political arena of Ukraine is an incumbent president. The president should be in constant cooperation with his or her office and people. If the president fails to communicate the proper vision, he may well diminish his office. The president also risks diminishing his office by losing sight of what is important, and by failing to sustain the expectations of the supporters in the beginning of the term. Presidential discourse should be aimed at the citizens of the given country. And taking into account the time of trials in Ukraine in 2014 the importance of the presidential discourse is enormous, so is important an attempt to decipher ideological traits implied in the presidential discourse of President Poroshenko. In this article we will analyze two most significant speeches of the president: the inaugural address and the address to joint sessions of the US Congress.

In his inauguration address the newly elected President Petro Poroshenko *“stressed on the importance of securing the sovereignty of the country and emphasized the permanent direction toward the EU integration of Ukraine”* [1]. It is worth noting that all Presidents of Ukraine (with the only exception of the fourth President Viktor Yanukovich) most often mentioned Ukraine in their inaugural addresses. The fifth President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko says: *“The return of Ukraine to its natural, European state was dreamt of throughout many generations”* [1], then he goes with: *“The country became different. The people became different.”* [1], as well as *“I am asking to commemorate those who fell for the will and independence of Ukraine in a moment of silence”* [1].

The inaugural address in question, the one of President Poroshenko's can be internally divided into the following parts: a) Addressing the whole nation, stressing Ukraine's citizens' belonging to the European Community; b) Acknowledging the Revolution of Dignity and time of change as well the difficult challenges the country will face; pointing out the crisis of the past; c) Outlining the plan to restore peace in the region; insisting on the importance of the dialogue; d) Specific address to the people from regions suffering from the military aggression; e) Mentioning his predecessor; f) Promises to the nation; outlining the things, which must be done in the future in economics, legal system, judicial system, legislative system, etc.; outlining his vision for the development of the country; g) The solution lies not solely with the Government, Parliament and the Presidents, the solution lies with the people as well.

At this point we are making an attempt of interpreting the ideological aspect of President Poroshenko's inaugural address to have a possibility to link the inaugural discourse with the socio-cultural situation in Ukraine in 2014 and to understand the covert ideology of his political discourse. Deep understanding of the region where you come from is crucial for both one's personal development and one's development as a citizen. The Ukrainian conflict, being called a hybrid war in media discourse, has recently become one of the most discussed issues on the international political arena. In President Poroshenko's Address to the US Congress there are several ideological points mentioned, and one of them is allusion to what once John Kennedy said in West Berlin in 1963; that was one of the most eloquent speeches on the world stage – "Ich bin ein Berliner". In his speech in front of the US Congress President Poroshenko interpreted Kennedy's words and said: "I am the Crimean Tatar" [5]. This quote represents the strength of the word and the ability of a politician to influence the public. In Kennedy's opinion these words could draw people's attention to the hottest spot in the Cold War. The survival of West Berlin, surrounded by eastern communist ideology was crucial for the West. Kennedy feared another potential conflict with nuclear involvement may be sparked by Berlin. Khrushchev was intending to sign a Treaty with East Germany restricting Western access to West Berlin, thus Kennedy had to react. His speech had its effect and

Khrushchev didn't sign the Treaty. Comparing himself with the Crimean Tatars President Poroshenko hopes to accomplish same results Kennedy once did. According to President Kennedy West Berlin was a symbol of freedom and democracy in the world threatened by the Cold War. According to President Poroshenko the Crimean Tatars are the symbol of freedom and struggle against military aggression, thus, acknowledging he is one of them he demonstrates to the whole international community that the official Kyiv remembers and supports the Crimean Tatars, who preferred to stay on the occupied territories and fight for their land and for their rights. In his speech President Poroshenko yet another time stresses that the whole Ukrainian nation supports the Crimean Tatars. To achieve his goals he uses a number of symbols one of which is Maidan. In the past year the word "Maidan" became known to a great many people in the whole world and for the majority it became symbolic as well. These days "Maidan" is a symbol of fight for human rights, for independence and democracy. President Poroshenko turns to Maidan in his speech several times, he says: "The victory gained on the Independence Square in Kyiv, now known to the whole world as Maidan was a victory against police brutality, harassment by the state-controlled media, violence, and intimidation. There is nothing more impressive than seeing hundreds of thousands of peaceful people forcing out a violent dictator, and changing the course of history." [5]. He states the peacefulness of protest as an opposition to kind of governmental reaction the protestors faced, and he continues his speech with another symbol of fight for freedom in Ukraine – the Heavenly Hundred. With the commemoration of the Heavenly Hundred who are pain of Ukraine President Poroshenko finishes the first part of his address with these words: "*The stand-off on the Maidan lasted three months. It culminated on February 20th and 21st – when over 100 protesters were shot by snipers. We call them the "Heavenly Hundred". We revere them as true national heroes. We applaud their heroism!*" [5]. It is very symbolically to finish the first part with the commemoration of the Heavenly Hundred, as far as they were only the first victims, not the final one, as everyone thought those days.

Going back to the inaugural address it's worth mentioning that President Poroshenko in his speech also mentions grand Ukrainian narrative and emphasizes the necessity of joining the forces and avoiding the mistakes of the past. He states: *Volodymyr Vynnychenko fought against Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, Symon Petliura fought against Pavlo Skoropadskyi. And Nestor Makhno fought against all. Constant quarrels and conflicts among the prominent Ukrainians resulted in the loss of our independence. Conclusions should be done not only with old archives, but also with recent events. We must not repeat old mistakes and have to ensure coordinated work of the President, the Parliament and the Cabinet.*" [1].

However, what is implied is that all three active and mighty political players should reconcile in the face of greater problems and challenges that country faces. He reaches to the past and to the heroes of the past and prompts everyone to learn from the past and never repeat it again. Not only heroic past is important, future is even more important. In his speech in front of the joint session of the US Congress President Poroshenko talks about freedom: *"I will focus on one thing that is at the core of Ukraine's existence today: freedom. There are moments in history when freedom is more than just a political concept. At those moments, freedom becomes the ultimate choice, which defines who you are – as a person and as a nation."* (5) When he says that, he implies that the Ukrainian society has arrived at the point of no return; that Ukraine has incorporated European/Western/democratic values and is going to exercise them. He talks about difficult, yet historic times and introduces and commemorates the heroes of grand Ukrainian narrative: *"The people of Ukraine stood up to the corrupt regime of Yakukovych...The defenders of freedom were willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of a better future. What is even more amazing, they won. Armed with only sticks and shields, they attacked the special police and chased them away."*

And the last, but not the least, is the use of the rule of three, which is also quite vivid in the speech of President Poroshenko.: *"The country has **changed**. People have **changed**. The time of inevitable positive **changes** has come"* or *"To implement them, we need first of all **peace, security and unity**."* or *"For **unemployment**, for*

*poverty and for refugees.*” [1]. The same technique is largely used by other leaders, especially American presidents, e.g. Barak Obama.

To draw the conclusion, the overall theme for President Poroshenko’s official speeches can be summarized as the need to learn from the past and remember who we are. President Poroshenko uses language as a powerful tool to communicate his ideas not only to the Ukrainian society but to international community as well. The result is in line with Fairclough’s notions of ideology residing in text and that “ideology invests language in various ways at various levels” and that ideology is both “property of structures and of events”.

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