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PHONETIC MEANS TO INFLUENCE THE LISTENER USED IN BRITISH PUBLIC SPEECH
ЗВУКОВЫЕ СРЕДСТВА ВОЗДЕЙСТВИЯ В БРИТАНСКОЙ ПУБЛИЧНОЙ РЕЧИ

Abstract
The paper deals with the issue of influencing the listener when delivering public speech. Special attention is paid to the phonetic means of affecting the public used in British political discourse. Also the problem of meaning-sound correlation of lexical units is touched upon. The phonetic experiment of British political discourse revealed the phonaesthetic characteristics of lexical units and helped compile the matrix of phonaesthetic syllabic and segmental features of this type of discourse.

Аннотация
Статья посвящена проблемам речевого воздействия в британской политической речи и его реализации на фонетическом уровне. Рассматривается вопрос о соотнесении значения и звуковой оболочки лексических единиц. По результатам проведённого экспериментально-фонетического исследования выявлены и проанализированы фоноэстетические критерии слов в британском политическом дискурсе, также составлена матрица фоноэстетически привлекательных слоговых и сегментных маркеров данного типа дискурса.

Keywords: oral speech, public speech, British political discourse, phonaesthetics, segmental features of discourse.

Ключевые слова: устная речь, публичная речь, британский политический дискурс, фоноэстетика, сегментные характеристики дискурса.

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1. Introduction

One of the potent means of social power is undoubtedly the language. All the global languages act as tools to coordinate combined human activity. In this way any speech act is a peculiar form to influence its recipient. There are some fields of activity where speech effect is practiced most often and plays a very

important role. One of them is politics. Communication in this area is generally implemented within the political institutions and is characterized by certain social rules, rituals, as well as formulas and standards related to language and speech.

The major function of political communication, as well as any kind of speech activity is to influence, to make an impact. Speech effect involves changing the behavior of the recipient, his emotional state, views or attitudes. Speech is a means to achieve any non speech aims such as persuading recipients in performing certain actions or changing their political views [Плахотная, 2011, p. 123]. Thus, the purpose of speech effect in political discourse is a certain organization of recipients' activity which may result in a change of political views.

To fulfill all the tasks of influence and related communicative effect there is a wide range of means – linguistic and extralinguistic. The major, well-studied mechanisms of influence are abundant. These factors are able to impact the shaping of values, attitudes, motivation to take action. For example, the speaker's sex, the timbre of his / her voice, speaking rate, the color of clothing or the surrounding interior; age, social status, image; corporate characteristics (reputation, reliability, etc.) [Чернявская, 2006, p. 17].

Among the important linguistic levels that help politicians in reaching their communicative aims are rhetoric, stylistic, lexical, semantic, and of course phonetic including both prosodic and segmental ones.

Verbal effect takes place with the direct participation of linguistic units, that have the potential pragmatic sense. All the language levels, either individually or combined, have a high potential to identify different meanings and bring them to the forefront.

Concerning lexical-semantic and grammatical levels, it is worth mentioning those units with positive connotation or evaluation in their semantics: e.g, *progress, democracy, tolerance, liberty; remarkable, common, unifying, effectively,* etc. Intensification of positive meaning is promoted by adverbs, adjectives, and emphatic constructions: e.g. *fairly, even-handedly, much, key, surest, far beyond, what is more,* etc. [Филатова, 2004, p. 44].

In the speech of politicians the impact function is also realized by a mix of functional styles, when, for example, the elements of conversational style are inserted into political style. Introducing conversational formulas into public speech reaches a rhetoric purpose to create the impression of more casual speech, and thus, enables the speaker to get closer to the mass audience, to build trust and credibility. Moreover, this conversational element is almost always well-thought-out, deliberate and intended [Филатова, 2004, p. 44].

Political speech is almost always of public nature. Public speech requires certain training effort and preliminary planning that is originally performed in writing form. Effective political speech in public is unimaginable without a prepared text including both general features and details. There is a complex combination of verbal and nonverbal means. The speaker finalizes the speech only when he / she pronounces it. Political speech demands expressiveness, audibility, clarity, focus, and more importantly, compliance with the standard language [Мельникова, 1999, p. 59].

Sometimes while planning a speech politicians and speechwriters address the means of sound symbolism and phonaesthetics to make their statements more expressive and pleasant-sounding [Мельникова, 1999, p. 59].

Particular sounds can correlate with a specific emotional value. Excessive use of some sounds make them shape stable association with a particular emotional aspect – this is what is called sound symbolism. Words with «soft» sounds such as lateral approximant /l/, nasals /m/ and /n/ and long vowels or diphthongs, reinforced by a gentle polysyllabic rhythm, are interpreted as «nicer» than words with hard sounds such as velar plosives /g/ and /k/, short vowels and an abrupt rhythm. Words beginning with fl-, such as *fly, flee, flow, flimsy, flicker,* and *fluid*, are often suggestive of lightness and quickness. There are also many words in English that begin with gl- and refer to brightness (such as *gleam, glisten, glory, glint, and glitter*) [Crystal, 2009].

The expressive properties of sound are studied by phonaesthetics. It is a subject that is still in its infancy, but its potential for explaining what we feel about words is enormous. What makes words sound pleasant? Is there anything about their phonetics that makes them so attractive? Which sound do listeners like most?

Thereupon a very interesting research dealing with phonaesthetic properties of words and sounds was carried out by professor David Crystal. Having analyzed the distribution of sounds in different words that had been considered pleasant / unpleasant-sounding in the course of preliminary selection professor D. Crystal presented the list of vowels and consonants and the frequency of their occurrence. This profile enables the analyst to see at a glance which sounds are used, and how often, and which sounds are not used at all [Crystal, 1995].

The consonants clearly divide into 2 types (see Tables 1, 2 in the Appendix): high frequency and low frequency ones. Just 8 items account for 73% of all consonants: /l/ is top, with 59 instances, followed by /m/ (40), /s/ (35), /n/ (33), /r/ (29), /k/ (28), /t/ (26) and /d/ (24).

Of the 172 vowels, the unstressed vowel /ə/ is commonest (61), showing that words of more than one syllable are preferred. Of the 114 words, only 25 are monosyllabic, in fact; the largest category (45) are the words of three or more syllables. Of these, 29 (65%) have the primary stress on the first syllable.

Thus, according to prof. D. Crystal [Crystal, 2007, p. 169] it would seem that a word that has the following characteristics is likely to be perceived as beautiful (see Appendix, Table 3):

1) it contains at least one lateral approximant (/l/);

2) it contains a nasal sound, especially /m/;

3) it contains other inherently long sounds, such as /r/ and /s/, and sometimes /k/, /t/, /d/.

4) it consists of 2 or 3 syllables (3+ syllable pattern is more preferable);

5) the vowels and consonants vary from syllable to syllable, as in melody;

6) it has the first stressed syllable;

7) it has 3 or more different manners of articulation.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Current study

The current study attempts to define pleasant-sounding words and sounds in the speech of British politicians, to jot down the sound effects that strike a listener as being particularly important and influential following prof. D. Crystal's matrix of criteria. The task is to notice which sounds and sound patterns are frequently used and whether their sound frames coincide with their meanings and speakers' messages.

2.2. Material and corpus

The speech samples present the official statements of British Prime Ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron. They were taken from the free website http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ and the official website of British government www.pm.gov.uk in mp3 format and then converted into wav format. The speeches of the Prime Ministers follow the pronunciation standard of British English and cover political topics. The total duration of audio speeches was 2 hours. The speeches were provided with scripts that were used to rank all the words there according to the frequency of their occurrence. 50 most frequent words (25 from each of the two speakers) were picked out, arranged alphabetically and recorded into text file (the words are listed in Table 4 in the Appendix). They were segmented using PRAAT [Boersma, Weenink, 2014] together with the neighboring words and recorded into wav files that formed the corpus for the perceptual study.

2.3. Subjects

10 subjects participated in the perceptual study. They were non-native English speakers (native language – Russian) with no linguistic training (5 males and 5 females), aged 20–43. All the subjects live in the Far East of Russia (8 in Blagoveshchensk, 1 male in Khabarovsk, 1 male in Vladivostok). 8 of them have university education, the other 2 were university undergraduates. Their level of English was evaluated as intermediary. None of them reported of any vision, speech or hearing disorders.

2.4. Procedure

Following the idea of professor D. Crystal on a certain phonaesthetic effect of words and sounds, the same experiment was carried out to identify whether this method works for political speeches. The list of 50 words (1 text file and 50 wav files) was given to the 10 subjects who were contacted either directly (face to face) or by e-mail. The subjects were informed in advance about the type of discourse they were going to deal with. The task was formulated in the following way: «Which of the 50 listed words seem to be phonetically attractive to you? Please follow the list in the text file and listen to the corresponding wav files to rank the words in the list 1–50, with 1 being the most attractive, 50 – the least attractive». No time limitation was given to the subjects while performing the task.

The total of 500 responses were obtained during the ranking task. The most phonetically attractive words (ranks 1–10) were picked out for further analysis following D. Crystal's method of defining phonaesthetic sounds.

3. Results and discussion

The top 10 were the following words (from the most frequent to the least frequent): *liberty, believe, values, alliance, nation, democracy, commitment, powerful, interdependence,* and *security* (see Table 5 in the Appendix).

The results of applying the matrix of 7 criteria (7 criteria across the top and candidate words down the side) enable to conclude that all the words have 2 or more syllables (4 words – 3 syllables, 3 words – 2 syllables, 2 words – 4 and 1 word – 5 syllables). As for the first syllable being stressed, only 4 words out of 10 had this characteristic. As far as the sound context, the total majority of words has at least one sound mentioned in the matrix: 9 nasals ([m], [n] – *nation, democracy, commitment, interdependence*); 5 lateral approximants ([l] – *liberty, believe, values, alliance, powerful*); 4 alveolar fricatives [s] (*alliance, democracy, security*) and 1 post-alveolar approximant [r] (*security*). The criterion of consonants and vowels variation from syllable to syllable is consistently observed. More than a half of the analyzed lexical units (6) use other high frequency consonants ([k], [t], [d], [s]). Only 3 words do not use the low frequency consonants (*alliance, democracy, commitment*). And 6 units out of 10 meet the 3+ different manner of articulation criterion (*believe, alliance, democracy, powerful, interdependence, security*).

The leader of the top 10 is the word democracy (6 out of 8 points) matching the majority of criteria, 3 words – *alliance, commitment, interdependence* score 5 out of 8. The sound of those units and their meaning complement each other to the best giving the listener not only phonaesthetic pleasure but the positive meaning as well.

On the other hand, several words in these listings have only 2 – *believe, values, nation*. These words identified by the respondents as phonaesthetically pleasant might have appeared in the list of the top 10 mainly because of their meaning rather than their phonetic shape.

4. Conclusion

An analysis of the most popular words does show some patterns, though there would certainly be differences between native English speakers and those who learn or speak it as a foreign language. In this type of analysis two kinds of criteria should not be mixed up: words that have beautiful sounds and words that have beautiful meanings. Using this approach, the list of phonetically pleasant or even «ugly» words that appear in different types of speech and discourse can be extended quite substantially. However, one should remember that it is impossible to separate sound and meaning totally. On the whole, certain pleasant-sounding words have positive meanings, or represent favored semantic domains and have the potential to influence listeners. Apparently, the sound component is of a great importance in public speech especially when it comes to politics. Awareness of

phonaesthetic properties of sounds and words can provide significant assistance to politicians in terms of speech writing and speaking on public.

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APPENDIX

T a b l e 1. **Distribution of consonants in phonaesthetic words**

Phonaesthetic words	N / % of all segments (625)	% of all consonants (377)
l	59/9.44	15.65
m	40/6	10.61
s	35/40	9.28
n	33/5.60	8.75
r	29/5.28	7.69
k	28/4.64	7.43
t	26/4.16	6.90
d	24/3.84	6.37
f	12/1.92	3.18
b	11/1.76	2.92
p	10/1.60	2.65
v	8/1.28	2.12
ŋ	8/1.28	2.12
w	8/1.28	2.12
g	7/1.12	1.86
z	7/1.12	1.86
ʃ	7/1.12	1.86
h	6/0.96	1.59
ʧ	5/0.80	1.33
ʤ	5/0.80	1.33
j	5/0.80	1.33
θ	3/0.48	0.80
ʒ	1/0.16	0.26
ð	0	0

T a b l e 2. **Distribution of vowels in phonaesthetic words**

Phonaesthetic words	**N/% of all segments (625)**	**% of all vowels (248)**
ə	61/9.76	24.60
ɪ	49/7.84	19.76
æ	24/3.84	9.68
e	14/2.24	5.65
iː	14/2.24	5.65
aɪ	13/2.08	5.24
əʊ	13/2.08	5.24
ʌ	12/1.92	4.84
ɒ	10/1.60	4.03
eɪ	8/1.28	3.23
uː	7/1.12	2.82
ɔː	7/1.12	2.82
aː	7/1.12	2.82
ɜː	4/0.64	1.61
ɪə	2/0.32	0.81
aɪə	1/0.16	0.40
aʊ	1/0.16	0.40
ʊə	1/0.16	0.40

Table 3. **Matrix of criteria (D.Crystal)**

	3+ sylls	Stress on the 1st syll	Uses /m/	Uses /l/	Uses of other high freq Cs	No use of low freq Cs	3+ diff manner of artic	Only short Vs	Front> Centre/ Back	Low> Mid/ High
Tremulous	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Alyssum	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Alumnus	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Ramelon	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Drematol	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pimlico	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-
Wapping	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+
Phlegmatic	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-
Flatulent	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
Gripe	-	n.a.	-	-	+	-	-	-	n.a.	n.a.
Jazz	-	n.a.	-	-	-	-	-	+	n.a.	n.a.
Tart	-	n.a.	-	-	+	+	-	-	n.a.	n.a.
Zoo	-	n.a.	-	-	-	-	-	-	n.a.	n.a.
n.a.= not applicable										

Table 4. **Ranking task**

Rank (1-50)	**Word**	**Rank (1-50)**	**Word**
	Achieve		Incredible
	Agenda		Interdependence
	Agreement		International
	Alliance		Issue
	Believe		Justice
	Catastrophe		Liberty
	Celebration		Military
	Challenges		Modern
	Change		Nation
	Common		Partners
	Commitment		Poverty
	Community		Powerful
	Considerable		Priorities
	Control		Progress
	Courage		Prosperity
	Crisis		Remarkable
	Danger		Security
	Democracy		Strategy
	Development		Struggle
	Effective		Territory
	Fight		Terrorism
	Freedom		Tolerance
	Global		Unifying
	Government		Unite
	Guarantee		Values

T a b l e 5. **A matrix of criteria (current study)**

	3+ syllables	Stress on the 1st syllable	Uses [m]/[n]	Uses [l]	Use of other high frequency Cs ([r], [s]; [k], [t], [d])	No use of low frequency Cs	3+ different manner of articulation	Only short vowels	Total
Liberty	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	4
Believe	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	2
Values	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	2
Alliance	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	5
Nation	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	2
Democracy	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	**6**
Commitment	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	5
Powerful	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	4
Interdepen-dence	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	5
Security	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	3