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The «power» concept in public speeches of American presidents: Semantics, syntagmatics and pragmatics

Abstract

The idea of power is crucial in political communication in general, and in American political communication, in particular. The article presents the analysis of the «power» concept as the key concept embodied in political discourse. Public speeches of two American presidents – Barack Obama and Donald Trump – over the time period from 2004 to 2019 were chosen as the material for this study. The analysis of the speeches from the viewpoints of lexical-semantic variants of the word *power*, its typical colligational (morpho-syntactic) and collocational (lexico-phraseological) peculiarities against the background of communicative strategies and tactics employed enabled to identify and describe the characteristic patterns of verbalizing the «power» concept. As a result, it was discovered that Obama's discourse was characterized by integrative, informational and agonal strategies while Trump employed agonal and integrative strategies in his speeches. In the three meanings of the lexeme – 'authority, possession of control', 'strength, force', 'country, influential people', – invariant and variable morphological, syntactic, lexical, phraseological patterns were found. Among the invariant patterns, there was the use of the vocabulary representing American values and a number of tropes.

Keywords: political discourse, verbalizing the «power» concept, communicative strategies and tactics, invariant and variable patterns.

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