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Concerning linguo-stylistic features of political discourse (With references to speeches of politicians from English-speaking countries)

Abstract

The present paper aims to identify and rank lexical and stylistic devices according to their frequency of occurrence and compare their functioning patterns in modern English political discourse. The subjects were 6 top British and American politicians. Continuous sampling was used to select the devices from their speeches delivered in 2021–2022. Semantic identification and contextual analysis were used for further data processing. It was found that idioms, metaphors and colloquialisms were the most frequent. Epithets, historical references, special terms, reiterations and parallel constructions occurred much less often, and the least frequent were alliteration, borrowings, quotations from the Bible and similes. Other devices occurred only once or twice. Most of them were common for British and American while others were typically British or typically American. Another finding was the use of a mixture of elements from various styles which might be a technique that helps to build bridges from political discourse to other discourses reflecting the existence of a common pool created for effective interaction of politicians with their electorate.

Keywords: linguo-stylistic features, stylistic devices, political discourse, idioms, metaphors

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Лингвостилистические особенности политического дискурса (на материале выступлений политиков англоязычных стран)

Аннотация

В настоящей статье ставится задача выявить и ранжировать лексические и стилистические приёмы по частоте их употребления, а также сравнить модели их функционирования в современном английском политическом дискурсе. Материалом для исследования послужили выступления шести ведущих британских и американских политиков за период 2021–2022 гг. Единицы для анализа отбирались из материала методом сплошной выборки. Для дальнейшей обработки данных использовались семантическая идентификация и контекстуальный анализ. В результате выявлено, что наиболее частотными были фразеологизмы, метафоры

и коллоквиализмы. Значительно реже встречались эпитеты, исторические отсылки, специальные термины, повторы и параллельные конструкции, реже всего встречались аллитерации, заимствования, цитаты из Библии и сравнения. Другие приёмы были единичными. Большинство из них являются общими для британцев и американцев, в то время как некоторые были типично британскими или типично американскими. Было также обнаружено использование смешения элементов разных стилей, что может быть приёмом, помогающим политическому дискурсу находится в тесном контакте с другими видами дискурса, что отражает наличие общего поля, созданного для эффективного взаимодействия политиков со своим электоратом.

Ключевые слова: лингвостилистические особенности, стилистические приёмы, политический дискурс, идиомы, метафоры

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1. Introduction

There are different approaches to singling out sublanguages and styles (see [Skrebnev, 2003, p. 167–170] giving their brief overview). According to Skrebnev, there are several style classes: four singled out by [Arnold, 1981], five with ten subdivisions proposed by [Galperin, 1981], two styles with five subdivisions described by [Kuznets, Skrebnev, 1960], five style classes identified by [Morokhovskiy, 1984], etc. In this article, we use the division proposed by [Galperin, 1981]. Within this division, political discourse belongs to the publicistic style, particularly to its subdivision called Oratory and Speeches [Galperin, 1981, p. 287]. Since the main aim of the publicistic style is to exert a constant and deep influence on public opinion, to convince those who are being addressed that they are told the truth, both logical argumentation and emotional appeal are employed [Galperin, 1981, p. 287; Arnold, 1981, p. 295].

Political discourse has been of special importance since it is instrumental in vital issues of well-being of all humankind. However, political discourse is in a state of flux giving a way to various definitions, numerous methods and approaches to its study. This is also a field where the minutest features and changes are of special interest because they reflect not only purely linguistic issues but also encompass those of many other fields.

Regardless of language, modern political discourse is characterized by certain universal features at the same time showing language-specific patterns. In addition to these, it exhibits, at least to some extent, the personality of a certain politician whose background, political party affiliation, ambitions and some other factors determine stylistic features of their political speech samples. Following the anthropocentric approach in modern linguistics, we believe that the text cannot be studied outside the person who produced it reflecting his/her picture of the world, the mental activity dynamics, personal ways of presenting ideas in a particular linguistic form.

Nowadays, English is a global language spoken and understood not only by native speakers living in the most developed and powerful countries with centuries-old political traditions. It is also used by a significant part of the population of our planet for who English is not a native tongue and whose politicians use it as one of the World Englishes in negotiations. From this angle, political discourse of politicians from the USA and the UK is of a particular interest as a source of important information concerning political situation in these powerful states and in the whole world and as a model to follow as far as this sphere of using English professionally is concerned.

Linguo-stylistic features of political discourse attract attention of numerous researchers. American and British political speeches were investigated by [Kulsum-Binder, 2017, p. 22] who

came to the conclusion that “both the American and British politicians make use of some linguistic strategies in their speeches”. In her opinion, this is more typical of American than British political speeches. Among stylistic devices used in those speeches she mentions parallelism, alliteration, contrast and metaphor. Stylistic devices in political speeches by Winston Churchill were described by [Bahrynivska, Karp, 2020]. They found “a significant amount of political, economic and military vocabulary; two types of metaphors indicating a critical situation and a tense period or indicating the call to action and the manifestation of support; numerous periphrases to describe his enemies; simile; personification; metonymy; parallel structures within the sentence; epanaphora; anaphora; modal verbs, most of which indicate the obligation; parenthetical clauses or expressions; complex sentences and imperatives” [Bahrynivska, Karp, 2020, p. 68]. It was found by [Al-Khazraji, Ameer, 2021] that among the stylistic devices used by Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, parallelism was the most frequent. From the point of view of linguistic creativity as seen by [Bergs, 2019], all the analyzed stylistic devices lie within the purview of F-creativity and even the most creative ones do not reach the level of E-creativity [Bergs, 2019]. The present paper aims to identify and rank lexical and stylistic devices according to their frequency of occurrence and compare their functioning patterns in the speeches of top American and British politicians.

2. Experiment

2.1. Material and methods

We studied the transcripts of political speeches delivered at press conferences by two British male top politicians and four American top politicians (2 males and two females) posted on Rev during the period of October 6, 2021 –January 18, 2022 (<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts>). The speakers were: 1) Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party; 2) Charles III (as Charles, Prince of Wales); 3) Joseph Robinette Biden Jr., the 46th and current president of the United States; 4) Kamala Devi Harris, current vice president of the United States; 5) Jennifer Rene Psaki, a former White House press secretary; 6) Mitchell Joseph Landrieu, an American politician who served as Mayor of New Orleans. Continuous sampling was used to select lexical and stylistic devices. The data were processed using comparative analysis and descriptive statistics. Contextual analysis was applied to identify the devices. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the material (the titles of the speech transcripts and their lengths in words). Table 2 illustrates the amount of lexical and stylistic devices and words in the idioms.

T a b l e 1. **The material characteristics**

Speech	Number of words
Joe Biden & Boris Johnson COP26 Press Conference Transcript; November 2, 2021	2652
Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript; January 18, 2022 (with Mitchell Joseph Landrieu)	9092
Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript; January 11, 2022	5037
Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript; January 6, 2022	2675
Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript; January 6, 2022	3898
Prince Charles COP26 Climate Summit Glasgow Speech Transcript; November 1, 2021	831
Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript; October 6, 2021	6534
UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript; September 22, 2021	3101

Table 2. The number of lexical and stylistic devices in the material

Speaker	Quantity of stylistic devices (words)
Joe Biden (Joe Biden & Boris Johnson COP26 Press Conference Transcript; November 2, 2021)	3 (20)
Boris Johnson (Joe Biden & Boris Johnson COP26 Press Conference Transcript; November 2, 2021)	2(14)
Jen Psaki (Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript; January 18, 2022)	3(14)
Mitchell Joseph Landrieu (Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript; January 18, 2022)	19(81)
Joe Biden (Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript; January 11, 2022)	17 (102)
Joe Biden (Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript; January 6, 2022)	15(74)
Joe Biden (Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript; January 6, 2022)	25(143)
Kamala Harris (Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript; January 6, 2022)	2(8)
Charles III (as Prince Charles COP26 Climate Summit Glasgow Speech Transcript; November 1, 2021)	8(32)
Boris Johnson (Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript; October 6, 2021)	104(617)
Boris Johnson (UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript; September 22, 2021)	42(292)

2. Results and discussion

In the material, 19 stylistic devices were identified: 1) idioms – 77 (32%); 2) metaphors – 47 (19,5%); 3) colloquialisms – 37 (15,3%); 4) epithets – 20 (8,3%); 5) cultural and historical references – 13 (5,4%); 6) special terms – 11 (4,5%); 7) reiterations – 7 (2,9 %); 8) parallel constructions – 5 (2,1%); 9) alliteration – 4 (1,6%); 10) borrowings – 4 (1,6%); 11) quotations from the Bible – 3 (1,2%); 12) simile – 3 (1,2%); 13) hyperbole – 2 (0,8%); 14) neologisms – 2 (0,8%); 15) references to cartoon characters – 2 (0,8%); 16) elliptical construction – 2 (0,8%); 17) assonance – 1 (0,4%); 18) rhetorical questions – 1 (0,4%); 19) metonymy – 1 (0,4%).

Idioms, sometimes with some modifications and variations, are increasingly used in political leaders' speeches: *“We didn't start from scratch here, of course.”* [Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript January 18], *“...with voting rights activists and others who have been working around the clock to advocate for voting rights.”* [Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript January 18], *“...put them behind the eight ball...”* [Joe Biden & Boris Johnson COP26 Press Conference Transcript], *“On the nuts and bolts...”* [Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript January 18].

A colloquial idiom used by any of the journalists present at a press conference can be picked up by a politician who is asked a question, for example the idiom *“...your old neck of the woods...”* used by Jeff is used in his answer by Mr. Landrieu. Sometimes idioms may be slightly modified by the speaker: *“...put them behind the curve...”* (Joe Biden & Boris Johnson COP26 Press Conference Transcript) (*cf. be behind the curve*).

It should be noted that some idioms specifically belong to political discourse and are used mostly in one of the two countries. For example, *“reaching across the aisle”* (used by Mr. Landrieu) is typical of American political discourse. Some others, without being confined to political discourse of a country, belong to either American or British English in general, for example, *“go south”* is mainly used in the US.

Also, an expression from a particular field of knowledge can be used in political discourse, for example, “*sunk cost*”, used by Jen Psaki, initially belonged to accounting terminology.

As already noted, a certain role in the choice of idioms is played by which version of the English language – American and British, this speech is delivered. It is known that the American and British English, having a large stock of idioms common to both of these variants (e. g. “*stand on the shoulders of...*”) have idioms inherent in each of these variants, for example “*to shoot / reach for the moon*” used by Jen Psaki, is an American idiom. Thus, the use of certain idioms is due to a set of factors: from the personality of a politician to the national characteristics of a variant of the English language. All these factors are in a complex and constant interaction.

M e t a p h o r s are the second frequent trope used in the material: “*In Fermanagh I saw the needles go in like a collective sewing machine*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*to make sure people who bake the pie get a fair slice of it as well...*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*But the NHS saved me and our wonderful nurses pulled my chestnuts out of that Tartarian pit*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript]. The latter also contains an allusion to Greek mythology.

Among the *c o l l o q u i a l i s m s*, both single words and colloquial phrases were found: “*You can say that again*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*Insulin can cost on average, it’s averaged 650 bucks a month*” [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], “*Phony partisan audits were undertaken...*” [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript], “*You think I’m kidding, man*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*I say, don’t give me that*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*but I was absolutely blown away*” [UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript], “*...if you see what I mean...*” [UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript], “*Or that I’m not focused on inflation, malarkey*” [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], “*The problems no government has had the guts to tackle before*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*Go on, try it*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*... way to fill a damn pothole...*” [Press Secretary Jen Psaki White House Press Conference Transcript January 18]. Such colloquialisms are classified as lexical devices.

However, it appears that the use of colloquialisms has its limits and its “*taboos*”. Thus, when some delicate physiological functions of humans or animals are mentioned, they are described by dint of using formal words: “*...literally defecating in the hallways...*” [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript], “*...with basic facilities where you don’t have to urinate in the bushes*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*feeding seaweed to cows to restrain their traditional signs of digestive approval*” [UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript].

It is noteworthy that one can encounter both colloquial and formal vocabulary within the same sentence: “*That’s why we sent our amazing carrier strike group to the Far East, performing maneuvers with 40 friendly countries, HMS Queen Elizabeth, as long as the entire palace of Westminster, and rather more compelling as an argument than many of the speeches made in the House of Commons, it has dozens of F-35s on board, 66,000 sausages, and not because we want to threaten anyone or be adversarial to anyone, either with the F-35s or indeed, the sausages, but because we want to stick up for the rule of law that is so vital for freedom of navigation and free trade.*” Here “*sausages*” is a colloquial word, whereas “*rather more compelling as an argument than*” and “*be adversarial to*” belong to the formal style both lexically and syntactically.

There are also grammatical colloquialisms. Among them, the most numerous are short forms, and one can encounter them together with full forms within a paragraph, or,

sometimes, within a sentence: “*And that’s not hyperbole*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript]. “*That’s the question they’ll answer*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*That’s why leveling up means fighting crime...*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*I’ll tell you what leveling up is*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*And if that isn’t conservatism, my friends, I don’t know what is*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript]. Colloquial questions are also possible: “*You hear me?*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*And wasn’t he brilliant, my friends?*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript].

Colloquialisms perform an important function to reduce the distance between the speaker and the listener making it easier to win the electorate.

Q u e s t i o n s addressed to the listener including rhetorical ones are frequently exploited by modern politician as an effective means to attract voters. “*What in the hell ... heck are we talking about?*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript]. Sometimes questions can be repeated as in Mr. Biden saying “*And the response was, “For how long? For how long?”*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript].

A s e p i t h e t s, adjectives with various suffixes (-able, -y, -less) as well as without them, Participle I and Participle II were used in abundance: “*...our untiring, unbeatable, unbelievable NHS*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*We have one of the most imbalanced societies and lopsided economies of all the richer countries*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*It’s not just that there’s a gap between London and the Southeast and the rest of the country, there are aching gaps within the regions themselves*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*That is not just a question of social justice, it is an appalling waste of potential*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*But it’s still a grim fact that in this country...*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*...we must end this lethal trade*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*And they love the groovy new architecture and the fashion and the music and all the rest of it*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*...this feckless youth*” [UK Boris Johnson UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript], “*...a vast testament to security of titled trust in the law*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], “*He helped to defeat a regime after all that was defined by one of the most vicious racisms the world has ever seen*” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript].

C u l t u r a l a n d h i s t o r i c a l r e f e r e n c e s included proper names such as the names of historical and cultural figures and place names as well as the references to the facts that are known to the vast majority of native speakers and bearers of the two cultures: “*The man who led and sided with all Southern bulls in the United States Senate to perpetuate segregation of this nation*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*Was able to extend the Voting Rights Act for 25 years*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*The man who led and sided with all Southern bulls in the United States Senate to perpetuate segregation of this nation*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*In her cell, next to her, was Fannie Lou Hamer, who described the beating...*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*They really do want to rewrite our national story, starting with - the Woke*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], “*...while crossing the bridge at Selma, named after the grand dragon of a Ku Klux Klan*” [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election

Integrity Speech Transcript], *“When I was lying in St. Thomas’ Hospital last year”, “I can tell you something, Margaret Thatcher would not have ignored the meteorite”, “When I stood on the steps of Downing Street...”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript]. It is quite clear that such references can be different for representatives of the USA and the UK, even though a great deal of them are shared.

References to cartoon characters, such as Kermit the Frog, Ms. Piggy and Cruella Deville, QC can be considered as a special kind of cultural and historical references, but are somewhat different from the latter because of the links with childhood and children. Psychologically, it may impact the listeners by reminding of their own childhood or their children or both: *“And when Kermit the Frog sang, “It’s not easy being green,” you remember that one?”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“He was...also unnecessarily rude to Ms. Piggy, I thought, Kermit the Frog”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“The Grinch did not steal Christmas nor any votes”* [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], *“Well, I say to Cruella Deville, QC, if you can steal a dog or a cat, then there is frankly no limit to your depravity”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript].

Since a politician in any country is expected to promptly react to current events, he/she is supposed to exploit special terms concerning the events in the most relevant areas. Thus, a number of medical terms were used during the COVID-19 pandemic: *“We have so many more tools we’re developing and continuing to develop that can contain COVID and other strains of COVID”* (Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript), *“... getting over 200 million Americans fully vaccinated”* [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript], *“Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us just how devastating a global cross border threat can be”* [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], *“a zoonotic pandemic”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript]. The terms from other crucial medical issues were also involved, e.g., *“...treatment for cancer is funded by the state and care for Alzheimer’s is not”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript] as well as from other issues like pollution and climate change: *“Putting a value on carbon, thus making carbon capture solutions more economical, is therefore absolutely critical”* [Prince Charles COP26 Climate Summit Glasgow Speech Transcript]. Such terms appear all the time, their lifespans vary depending on the situation.

Reiterations were often combined with alliterations (more often) and assonance (rarely): *“Good morning. Good morning, everybody. Good morning, everyone”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“And the response was, “For how long? For how long?”* [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], *“Americans are moving up to better jobs with better pay with better benefits”* [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], *“It has hit record after record after record”* [Joe Biden December Jobs Report Speech Transcript], *“jabs, jabs, jabs become jobs, jobs, jobs”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“Build back burger, I say”* (Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript), *“in a full and free and fair election”* [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript].

The following two sentences exemplify the use of parallel and elliptical constructions: respectively, *“We held hearings. We debated. We voted”* [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript] and *“Simple as that”* [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript].

The use of borrowings was limited to modest 1,6% probably in order to boost the feeling of patriotism (compare to the average of 25% in Russian female socio-political discourse [Protsukovich, Ivanashko, Yu. P. (2023)], e.g., *“I’ll tell you something else, that*

housing in the right place and at an affordable price will add massively, not just to your general joie de vivre, but to your productivity” [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“Sellotaped, spectacled sans-culottes, or the skipper of a cruise liner that’s been captured by Somali pirates, desperately trying to negotiate a change of course, and then changing his mind”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript]. Sometimes loan words that were used were provided with a translation into English by the speaker himself: *“And terrifying isn’t quite right as a translation for danos. What Sophocles really means is that humanity is awesome”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript].

Quotations from the Bible should be set apart from other quotations taking into account the exceptional significance of the former and their importance for both American and British worldview [Boichuk, 2016, p. 34, 40]: *“In the words of scripture, to remind us to hate evil, love good and establish justice in the gate”* [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], *“When the Bible teaches us to feed the hungry and give water to the thirsty”* [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript]. Such quotations are meant to go straight to the hearts of Christians in both countries.

Similes, are characterized by the same frequency as quotations from the Bible, e.g., *“...the ice floes, dissolving like ice in your martini here in New York...”* [Joe Biden Speech on Anniversary of January 6 Capitol Attack Transcript].

For some devices, 1–2 occurrences were identified. These include hyperbole, e.g. *“You’ve heard me say it a million times”* [Boris Johnson UK Conservative Party Conference 2021 Speech Transcript], *“They stop time”* [Joe Biden, Kamala Harris Voting Rights & Election Integrity Speech Transcript], references to cartoon characters, elliptical construction, assonance (the examples of the three were given above), metonymy, e.g. *“When this country was sick, our NHS was the nurse”* and some others. Among the rare ones there are neologisms whose excessive use can make it difficult for the majority to understand a politician: *“Living proof that we, you all represent the most jiving, hip, happening and generally funkapolitan party in the world”* [Prince Charles COP26 Climate Summit Glasgow Speech Transcript].

3. Conclusion

This study was aimed at identifying the spectrum of stylistic devices that appeared in the speeches delivered by modern American and British politicians and ranking them according to the frequency of their occurrence. The results show a clear preference for idioms (32%). Other common stylistic devices were metaphors (19,5%), colloquialisms (15,3%) and epithets (8,3%). Cultural and historical references together with special terms accounted for 5,4% and 4,5% correspondingly. Reiterations and parallel constructions occurred twice less often. The least common were alliteration, borrowings, quotations from the Bible and similes whose occurrence varied between 1,6–1,2 percent. Such means as hyperbole, neologisms, references to cartoon characters, elliptical construction, assonance, rhetorical questions and metonymy appeared only twice or just once.

Political discourse bears a vivid imprint of the personality of a politician delivering a speech or answering journalists’ questions. Such factors as origin, education, belonging to a particular party, nationality and others affect the choice and use of lexical and stylistic means.

Naturally, political discourse is extremely receptive to current events within the nation and in the world dictating the choice of certain stylistic devices, especially the choice of vocabulary.

The spectrum of the means identified shows that modern political discourse not only allows but often uses a mixture of elements of various styles: from colloquial to literary styles up to quoting the Bible. Such a technique builds bridges from political discourse to other discourses reflecting the existence of a common pool created for effective interaction of politicians with their electorate.

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