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EVALUATION AS A MEANS OF PERSUASION IN ENGLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

ABSTRACT

The main goal of political discourse is to influence people and its main communicative strategy can be defined as the strategy of persuasion which involves such substrategies as manipulation, argumentation and evaluation. Evaluation / appraisal is an important part of the strategy of persuasion and is mainly connected with the affective domain. It includes such categories as attitude consisting of feelings, judgements and appreciations, as well as engagement and graduation. The research has shown that in English political discourse emotional evaluations and appraisals, both positive and negative, explicit and implicit, prevail over logical ones. Influenced by the basic semantic opposition of political discourse "we – they" and reflecting the relevant stance of the speaker, different types of evaluative statements tend to provoke in the audience feelings similar to those of the speaker, shape listeners' perception, reinforce or change their cognition and opinion, predetermine their emotional reactions and actions.

Key words: *evaluation, persuasion, manipulation, argumentation, political discourse.*

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РЕЗЮМЕ
ОЦЕНКА КАК СРЕДСТВО ПЕРСУАЗИВНОСТИ В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОМ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

Основной целью политического дискурса является влияние на людей, и его основную коммуникативную стратегию можно определить как стратегию персуазивности, которая включает в себя такие субстратегии, как манипуляция, аргументация и оценка. Оценка является важной частью персуазивной стратегии и в основном связана с аффективной сферой. Оценка включает такие категории как отношение, в том числе чувства (аффект), суждения и оценку (характеристику), а также вовлеченность и силу высказывания. Исследование показало, что в английском политическом дискурсе эмоциональные оценки, как положительные, так и отрицательные, явные и имплицитные, преобладают над логическими. Отражая базовую семантическую оппозицию политического дискурса "мы – они" и соответствующую позицию говорящего, различные виды оценочных высказываний имеют цель вызывать у аудитории чувства, сходные с чувствами говорящего, воздействовать на восприятие и мнение слушателей, предопределить их эмоциональные реакции и соответствующие действия.

Ключевые слова: оценка, персуазия, манипуляция, аргументация, политический дискурс.

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ
ԳՆԱՀԱՏՈՒՄԸ ՈՐՊԵՍ ՀԱՄՈԶՄԱՆ ՄԻՋՈՑ ԱՆԳԼԱԼԵԶՈՒ ՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆ ԽՈՍՈՒՅԹՈՒՄ

Քաղաքական խոսույթի հիմնական նպատակը մարդկանց վրա ազդելն է, և դրա հիմնական հաղորդակցական ռազմավարությունը կարող է սահմանվել որպես պերսուագիվ ռազմավարություն, որը ներառում է այնպիսի ենթառազմավարություններ, ինչպիսիք են մանիպուլյացիան, փաստարկումը և գնահատումը: Գնահատումը պերսուագիվ ռազմավարության կարևոր մասն է և հիմնականում կապված է հուզական ոլորտի հետ: Այն ներառում է այնպիսի կատեգորիաներ, ինչպիսիք են վերաբերմունքը, այդ թվում

qqացմունքներ, դատողություն և գնահատում (բնութագրում), ինչպես նաև ներգրավվածությունն ու արտահայտման ուժը։ Ուսումնասիրությունը ցույց է տվել, որ անգլալեզու քաղաքական խոսույթում հուզական գնահատականները` ինչպես դրական, այնպես էլ բացասական, բացահայտ կամ անուղղակի, գերակշռում են տրամաբանական գնահատականների համեմատ։ Արտահայտելով քաղաքական խոսույթի «մենք – նրանք» հիմնական իմաստային հակադրությունը և բանախոսի համապատասխան դիրքորոշումը, տարբեր տեսակի գնահատողական արտահայտությունները նպատակ ունեն լսողի մոտ առաջացնել բանախոսի զգացմունքներին համահունչ զգացմունքներ, ազդել լսողի ընկալման և կարծիքի վրա, կանխորոշելով նրա հուզական հակազդումները և համապատասխանխոսյան գործողությունները։

Բանալի բառեր` *գնահատում, համոզում, մանիպուլյացիա, փաստարկում, քաղաքական խոսույթ:*

Political discourse plays an important role in shaping people's cognition, creating a definite picture of the world and by means of special lexicon and rhetoric influences the consciousness and behavior of people. Consequently, the revelation and description of means of influence on public consciousness, methods of persuading and manipulating people is an important scientific task. The strategy of persuasion is one of the main speech strategies and includes three main means of persuasion described by Aristotle as ethos (credibility of the speaker), logos (logical argumentation) and pathos (appeal to emotions of the hearer). All these means of persuasion are realized by what the speaker says, i.e. by means of speech, though nonverbal communication also plays an important role in exerting influence on people.

Persuasion involves also manipulation which is characterised by the use of such manipulative strategies as positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as well as the theatrical strategy which is characterized by a very high level of emotionality and aims at forcing emotional responses on behalf of the audience.

From linguistic point of view persuasion and its constituent part evaluation can be realized by different means – lexical, grammatical, stylistic which, together with universal characteristics, can have culturally specific features in different linguocultures.

The present research paper deals with the problem of how evaluations / appraisals are made and used in political discourse, what kind of appraisal models are used and how they influence people serving as a means of persuasion and manipulation.

An evaluative statement is a statement that establishes the absolute or comparative value of an object and gives it an assessment. The ways of expressing assessments are extremely varied. Absolute assessments are most often expressed in sentences with evaluative words "good", "bad", etc., or expressions implying positive, negative or indifferent attitude. Comparative assessments are formulated in sentences with evaluative words "better", "worse", "equal", "preferred" and so on.

The concept of evaluative statement can be clarified by contrasting its statement with a descriptive one. Description and evaluation represent two opposing relations of statements to reality: truth and value. Evaluation is an expression of the value relationship of a statement to an object, opposite to

the descriptive, or truth, relationship. In the case of a truth relation, the starting point for comparing the statement and the object is the latter; the statement acts as its description. In the case of a value relationship, the starting point is a statement that acts as a sample, a standard. The correspondence of the object to it is characterized in evaluative terms. An object that corresponds to the statement made about it and meets the requirements placed on it is positively valuable.

An evaluative statement is neither true nor false. Truth characterizes the relationship between a descriptive statement and reality; evaluations are not descriptions. They can be characterized as expedient, effective, reasonable, justified, etc., but not as true or false. Whereas the terms true, false are often applied (explicitly and implicitly) to evaluative statements with the aim of persuasion and manipulation.

An evaluative judgment is an opinion or assessment that a person expresses based on his subjective perception, experience or knowledge. It represents a subjective assessment of an object, phenomenon, event or idea and doesn't contain any facts or blend them with emotions. Evaluative judgments can be positive, negative or neutral, but never true or false. The latter terms can be applied to descriptive as well as dual, descriptive-evaluative expressions, which function as descriptions in some situations and as evaluations in others. Evaluative judgments are not subject to refutation and proof of their veracity (Ивин А. А., 2000).

Evaluative language is characterized by the use of words and expressions that convey judgments, opinions, assessments or evaluations. By conveying

their own emotions, opinions or personal viewpoints the speakers influence the listeners' perception, create a sense of authenticity, ensure a stronger emotional engagement, create a sense of involvement, enhance their credibility, build trust with the listeners. All those factors constitute necessary elements of effective persuasion and manipulation (van Dijk, 2006).

The present research is conducted on the basis of the Appraisal theory of J. R. Martin and P. R. White which provides an effective means of studying linguistic peculiarities of evaluation and appraisal in English-language political discourse.

It is admitted in linguistic literature (Thompson and Hunston, 2006) that the most fully developed current model of values in discourse is Appraisal theory, developed by J. Martin and P. White (Martin and White, 2005) within a Systemic Functional Linguistics framework. This theory allows to identifying evaluative language elements, both explicit and implicit, perceived by the reader / listener on a subconscious level. According to this theory, evaluation / appraisal is separated into three interacting domains – 'attitude', 'engagement' and 'graduation'.

Attitude includes those meanings by which speakers attach a value or assessment to participants and processes by reference either to emotional responses or to culturally-determined value systems. Attitude is concerned with 'praising' and 'blaming', with meanings by which writers/speakers indicate either a positive or negative assessment of people, places, things, happenings and states of affairs (White, 2001).

Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviour and evaluation of things, and is divided into **three corresponding regions of feeling – 'affect'**, '**judgment**' and '**appreciation**'.

Affect is a statement that contains emotions and it is the core resource for the realization of appraisal. It is the most congruent expression of appraisal because it construes evaluation in terms of the appraiser experiencing an emotional reaction (e.g. *love, hate, embarrassment, joy*) directed toward, or stimulated by, the appraised entity. As J. Martin and P. White put it, affect deals with resources for construing emotional reactions, for example feeling of shock in relation to the events of 9/11 (*horror, worry, anger, gloom*) (Martin and White, 2005:35).

Affect represents the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion and is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings, finding out if the person feels happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored (Martin and White, 2005:43). To determine affect, one should pay attention first of all to verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs that express feelings. However, it should be kept in mind that affect can be determined not only by analysing explicit means, i.e. words, expressions, sentences, but also implicit ones, e.g. the context of the statement.

Speeches of American politicians are characterized by high frequencies of affect signs. Positive or negative feelings expressed by means of corresponding words or expressions (*joy – grief, glad – sad, happy – unhappy*) create a certain emotional mood, affect the audience's feelings and determine their emotional reaction.

One of the methods of evoking feelings and emotions in the audience is the use of an effective and appropriate language. Relevant words, phrases and language forms are used by politicians to achieve that goal. Politicians very often try to persuade people by stimulating the emotions and arousing the feelings of their audiences, provoking the senses of sympathy in them. When the audience is emotionally disposed to what is reported, they would be more inclined to accept what is said by the orator, including his appraisals and evaluations. Politicians use different tactics of achieving emotional influence and persuasion of an audience by means of appraisals.

As R. Bandler notes, feelings are "contagious", which means that if you want someone to feel good, you have to begin by going into a wonderful state yourself (Bandler, 2013). In D. Trump's speeches one of such words designed to evoke positive emotions in the audience was the adjective *great.* For instance, in D. Trump's speech *"Salute to America"* delivered on 4 July 2020 and dedicated to the Independence Day the most often used word was the adjective *great* with its superlative form *greatest* repeated for 43 times. The adjective great was the key word of his presidential campaign slogans both in 2016, 2020 as well as 2024 (*Make America Great Again!; Keep America Great*). Adjective *great* was used by Trump mainly in relation to himself and his policy (*We had the greatest economy in the history of our country),* American nation in general and his supporters, in particular.

The language of evaluation used by Trump is characterized by wide use of linguostylistic devices, such as epithet, especially in the context of opposition we – they *(smart - stupid)*, hyperbole (*I will be the greatest jobs*

president that God ever created), short evaluative judgements *(not good; big bad tech)*, metaphors, repetitions, fragmented sentences that are unusual for institutionalized political discourse but natural and common in everyday speech. It allowed him to secure necessary pathos and dynamics of speech, attract the attention of audience, shorten the distance between him and his potential electorate, make his speeches understandable for ordinary people, give the impression that he is one of them (*"I am your voice"*), thus persuading people and influencing their opinions.

Findings show that politicians use more adjectives and nominalizations than verbs and adverbs to express their emotion and evoke feelings in the audience. Nominalizations (congratulation, freedom, prosperity, etc) are not only used to evoke feelings and emotions but also for manipulative goals. The linguistic process of nominalization is a complex transformational process of forming a noun from a verb whereby a process word or verb becomes an event word or noun. Events are things which occur at one point in time and are finished. Once they occur, their outcomes are fixed and nothing can be done to change them. As R. Bandler argues, nominalization, which turns an ongoing process into an event, is one of the ways people become immobilized as they consider the event as a closed model which is beyond their control and can't be changed or influenced by them (Bandler & Grinder, 1975: 43, 74)

For instance, Joe Biden in a speech in Delaware on the night of the 2020 presidential election said its results depended on the decision of the American people and that he was optimistic about that decision: *"As I've*

said all along, it's not my place or Donald Trump's place to declare who's won this election. **That's the decision of the American people.** *But I'm optimistic about this outcome*". Here an event word or noun *decision* is nominalization and is used in the meaning of something final, though theoretically that decision could be contested by the Supreme Court, members of the electoral college or American Congress.

The strategic stimulation of affect lies in the core of persuasion and manipulation. Persuasion through appraisals is achieved by the use of appraisal patterns which provide positive evaluation of ingroups by an extensive use of evaluative terms having positive connotations (*democracy, freedom, progress, peace, justice, change, new, truth, unity,* etc). Other evaluative arguments used by politicians to exert influence on the audience include such emotional arguments as *love, sense of duty, sense of dignity, pride and allegiance.* These arguments inspire people and like interests and needs can motivate their actions. Respectively, the outgroup is associated with negative evaluative terms such as *dictatorship, tyranny, corruption, division, violence, extremism, racism, terrorism, etc.*

Appraisal in general and affect in particular are closely connected with manipulation widely used by politicians. The manipulative communication can be successful only if the hearer fails to recognize the influential intention of the speaker to make the former think and act in favor of the latter and against his own will. This goal is achieved by different manipulative techniques. The main principle of these techniques is to affect the subconscious of the addressees in order to alter their perception of the

world, their evaluations and preferences and by doing it influence their behaviour and actions. As the subconscious of the addressee can't be reached by rational and descriptive argumentation, politicians very often resort to irrational and evaluative arguments, make use of emotionally coloured words and expressions, conversational formulas and structures, different stylistic devices aimed at catching the attention of the audience and evoking emotional responses in them.

Affect also refers to statements in which one can highlight a personal attitude to the subject under discussion. Therefore to assess feelings, the person from whom the author tells the story is important; if the text is written in the first person (I/we), then the author provokes a more vivid emotional response from the reader, the second and third persons are more neutral.

The following extract from Biden's inauguration address, where he promises to act in the interests of American people, is an example of self-presentation and self-legitimization strategies aimed at proving integrity of speaker's intentions (ethos). Besides, the repeated use of 1st person indicates direct personal involvement of the speaker and makes the whole passage more emotional (pathos) thus provoking a more vivid emotional response from the listeners: *"My fellow Americans, I close the day where I began, with a sacred oath before God and all of you. I give you my word, I will always level with you. I will defend the Constitution. I'll defend our democracy. I'll defend America and I will give all, all of you"* (Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. January 20, 2021).

Judgement deals with ethical assessments of human behavior, it represents attitudinal evaluation in which human behaviour is negatively or positively assessed from the standpoint of morality, legality, and religion, by reference to some set of social norms. Judgments of behaviour are concerned with value of actions (ethics) and deal with ethical assessments of human behavior - the actions, deeds, sayings, beliefs, motivations, etc - which can be admired or criticised, praised or condemned (White 2001).

Explicitly expressed judgments are indicated by such terms as *corrupt, civilised, progressive, cruel, honest, dishonest, skilled, eccentric, friendly, obstinate, stupid, courageously, foolishly,* etc. Ethical assessments of human behavior is expressed not only by adjectives and adverbs but also by nouns and verbs, for example *hero, tyrant, stupidity, treachery, betray, steal, lie,* etc.

According to P. White, judgments can be divided into two large groups. The first one involves assessments of morality or legality – that is to say, such judgments that involve assertion that some set of religious, moral or legal rules of behaviour more or less explicitly codified in that culture has either been upheld or breached.

To this group, for example, belong such terms as *immoral, virtuous, sinful, innocent, unjust, fair-minded, law-abiding, murderous, cruel, brutal, compassionate, caring, dishonest, honest, deceptive, fraudulent.*

These judgments involve assessments by reference to systems of legality/illegality, morality/immorality or politeness/impoliteness and can carry a heavy social weight.

The second group of judgments is concerned with assessments of normality (*eccentric, maverick, conventional, traditional, etc*), of competence (*skilled, genius, knowledgeable, stupid, dunce, brilliant, incompetent, powerful, feeble*) and of psychological disposition (*brave, cowardly, determined, obstinate, zealous, stubborn, committed, lazy, etc*).

This group of values arguably does not carry quite the same social weight as the first set as it involves evaluations by which the person judged will be lowered or raised in the estimation of society, but which do not have the same legal, religious or moral implications as the assessments of the first set (White, 2001).

Our investigation shows that positive and negative judgments are used by politicians in relation to themselves, their nation, and others. By using positive judgments, as well as negative ones, the speakers align themselves with certain individuals and policies, and disalign with oppositional forces. In the framework of the basic opposition of the political discourse *"we – they"* (Шейгал Е.И., 2004) positive judgments are related to relevant representation of the self and negative judgments of the other.

Appreciation is the evaluation of things, objects and products (rather than human behaviour) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value. Appreciation involves evaluations of texts or processes, products, performance and natural phenomena (e.g. *beautiful, pleasant, original*), i.e. aesthetic assessments of "products, performances and naturally occurring phenomena".

As with affect and judgment, we can recognize positive and negative evaluations – properties we value alongside those we do not.

Positive and negative valuations of something imply positive and negative judgments of the capacity of someone to create or perform (*"crooked", "corrupt", "incompetent", "the worst president in the history of our country"*). In the field of mass media valuation of *news* is expressed by means of such terms as *bad, good, interesting, fake, shocking, startling, unexpected, welcome,* etc.

Modern political discourse is characterized by high degree of aggressiveness, active use of the strategy of delegitimization of the opponent and his / her policy, employing words and expressions arising negative emotions and feelings and often resorting even to direct insults.

According to Martin and White's appraisal theory **Engagement** as a method of valuation is the way speakers show their attitudes toward each other or events, make alignments with their audiences including previous texts, present ideas or future potential responses.

According to appraisal theory, key Engagement resources include meaning which can be grouped together under such headings as: Denial (e.g. *it won't harm*) and Counter-Expectation (*amazingly, bizarrely*); Expectation (*predictably, of course*) and Pronouncement (*I contend that; the facts of the matter are that; undeniably; in fact, I am compelled to conclude that, we **do** have …*); Evidence (*It seems; There is evidence which indicates that*), Likelihood (*it may, probably, likely, perhaps, I think…, I believe, surely*) and Hearsay (*I hear that, it's said*

that, his alleged crime); Attribution / Projection (*Government says, experts have indicated, informed sources report …, scientists have found evidence suggesting that*) (White, 2001).

Other Engagement resources include adverbial clauses of concession, rhetorical questions (*Can you believe it?),* general questions, tag questions including short conversational forms *OK? Right?.* For instance, question tag *Right?* in the sentence *You know we're leading in Florida, right?* is used to create an impression of a dialogue with the audience. The general question in the sentence *Is this damaging the trust?* presupposes the existence of the trust and expresses the likelihood of its damaging. The adverbial clauses of concession in the sentences "*Even though the press said Ohio is going to be close, we set a record"* or "*You are certainly right, whatever others may say"* introduce different points of view which contrast with the real state of things.

The inclusive *we* as well as the opposition *we – they* can also be considered as such important linguistic resource of Engagement as dialogism. Its aim is to create an atmosphere of involvement of the listeners into the discourse and to convince them in the judgments and assessments of the speaker. Direct address to the audience serves the same goal (*Believe me*).

One of the important Engagement resources having persuasive effect on the recipient is the method of indicating personal emotional assessment and positioning in indirect way. It is mainly done by appealing to authorities and citing reputable sources which can be taken by the audience for

granted. Among them are such sources as the Bible, American Constitution, quotes from the speeches of American presidents and other famous politicians and activists, e.g. G. Washington, A. Lincoln, F. Roosevelt, J. Kennedy, M.L. King and others. For instance, in his inauguration speech to prove his love and devotion to America Joe Biden quoted a verse from American Anthem and called Americans to act in accordance with the words of their Anthem, to do their best for the greatness of America: "*The work and prayers of a century have brought us to this day. /What shall be our legacy? What will our children say? / Let me know in my heart when my days are through. / America, America, I gave my best to you*".

To stress the importance of unity he makes an allusion to American Constitution by referring to its first three words: "*The American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us, on* **we the people** *who seek a more perfect union*".

Because American concept of democracy involves wide participation of people in governing and lawmaking, which stems from the American tradition of "government of the people, by the people, for the people", reference to the support of people is an important resourse of engagement in American political discourse, a means of legitimization of the self and delegitimization of the opponent. For instance, in Joe Biden's inauguration speech among the five most frequently used words were the words *nation* (used for 15 times) and *people* used for 11 times). The other three most frequently used words included *America* (used for 21 times), *American* (19 times) and *democracy* (11 times). No wonder that his inauguration speech

he began with reference to people as the source of democracy and argued that his victory was not the triumph of a candidate, but of a cause of democracy: "*This is democracy's day. A day of history and hope of renewal and resolve through a crucible for the ages. America has been tested anew and America has risen to the challenge. Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy.* **The people, the will of the people, has been heard and the will of the people has been heeded**".

According to Martin and White's appraisal theory, the other domain of appraisal is **Graduation** showing how speakers downgrade or intensify their feelings, how strongly and how directly the feelings are expressed, how strongly speakers are aligned with the value position being presented or discussed.

Graduation is realized by means of such intensifiers or noncommittal and evasive statements as *somewhat, slightly, rather, very, entirely, sort of / kind of, true / pure,* etc. Researchers distinguish between values by which speakers graduate (raise or lower) the interpersonal impact, force or volume of their utterances (*slightly, somewhat, very, completely*), and by which they graduate (blur or sharpen) the focus of their semantic categorisations (*kind of, a true friend, pure folly*).

One of the important manifestations of persuasion and manipulation is the **conversationalisation** of political discourse. The manipulative and pragmatic effect of communication becomes apparent in the choice of such style of speech which can attract the attention of the audience and have the

strongest influence on it. The use of non-standard word order, colloquial lexis and conversational style is an important means of influencing people, creating ан atmosphere of confidence and trust towards the speaker.

Thus, D. Trump in his speeches among other intensifiers often used emphatic amplifier *hell* in different syntactic constructions (in comparisons, in verbal collocations to intensify the adverb, in combination with interogative pronouns, in phraseological combinations). For example, in his speech in Tulsa (20.06.2020) he used the amplifier hell for 6 times (e.g.: "They don't know what the hell they're doing"), in his speech in Ocala (16.10.2020) he used it for 9 times (e.g.: "Their economy has gone to hell with our sanctions and everything I've done".

It should be noted that one and the same word depending on its meaning and context can be in one case an element of graduation and in the other one an element of attitude. For instance, in the sentence "We had that damn dust coming in from China" informal adjective damn is used to express anger (attitude), while in the sentence " This guy is so damn bad" the same word is used as informal adverb in the function of intensifier to mean "very" when one is annoyed (graduation).

Our investigation shows that Appraisal theory by J. Martin and P. White can be used in analysis of political discourse in general and in identifying evaluative language elements, both explicit and implicit, in particular Based on it, it is possible to create a relatively complete and integral model of political discourse and its perception.

Analyzing political discourse according to three main parameters - attitude, engagement and graduation it is possible to notice that all of them are actively used in political discourse according to the political position and goals of the speakers. Speaking about attitude and its components it is possible to conclude that attitude of the speaker towards the opponents and their policy is most often negative while the attitude towards his own policy is mostly positive. Correspondingly, the judgements, assessments and opinions expressed by the speaker are usually presented as the only truth that cannot be doubted.

In political discourse engagement is used frequently, speakers take responsibility for expressing their own pledges and opinions *("Our enemies want to take my freedom because I will never let them take away your freedom, they want to silence me because I will never let them silence you".* D. Trump's Remarks at rally in Wildwood, NJ, 11.05.2024), and when necessary turn to authoritative sources *("In another January in Washington, on New Year's Day 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. When he put pen to paper, the President said, "If my name ever goes down into history, it will be for this act and my whole soul is in it." My whole soul is in it. Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation".* J. Byden. Inaugural Address. 20.01.2021).

Another characteristic feature of political discourse is graduation which represents mechanisms by which speakers/writers 'graduate' either the force of the utterance or the focus of the categorisation by which semantic

values are identified (Martin and White, 2005, p.94). Political discourse is characterized by high intensity force of utterance and the focus is also usually strong, which contributes to the growth of the listener's /reader's emotional perception of the speech / text (*totally fake, total moron, complete and total endorsement, I think we're going to win them all, all across America*). However, in some cases politicians prefer to downgrade the force of utterance and weaken the focus, e.g. using political euphemisms (*military operation* instead of *invasion*). In such cases hedges are used which include low intensity modals and expressions (*may, probably, possibly, I think*). In some contexts, such formulations can convey a sense of uncertainty or lack of commitment to truth value on the part of the speaker/writer, but sometimes they act to convey deference, modesty or respect (Ibid., p. 107-108).

Our investigation showed that parameters of the Appraisal theory correspond to the characteristics of modern political discourse which is highly evaluative and is characterized by the use of different types of evaluations / appraisals performing persuasive functions.

As persuasion is very often realized with the help of irrational arguments and emotional appeals it is closely correlated with the system of appraisal. It includes such interacting domains as 'attitude', 'engagement' and 'graduation' where all of them are concerned with irrational arguments and feelings used as a substitution of proofs and facts. Attitude includes emotional reactions (affect), judgments and appreciation of behaviour (ethical assessments), evaluation and appreciation of things (aesthetic

assessments); engagement involves alignment with some value position by means of quoting, reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, affirming, using passivization and nominalization, etc.; graduation includes downgrading or intensifying the feelings by means of different hedges and intensifiers.

Appraisals, both explicit and implicit, are usually used for self- evaluation and other-depreciation and reflect the basic opposition of the political discourse "we – they" where everything connected with "us" is good and everything what refers to "them" is bad. At the same time the arguments used for self- evaluation and other-depreciation are taken as a rule from the irrational domain and respectively can't be verified.

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