"Politicized" Syntagms in Action

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In the present article an attempt is made to study the interaction of some lexical syntagms in the context of political discourse, that is to observe them in action in political reality. The analysis of these syntagms is intended to reveal their role and function in political discourse. The linguistic material is taken from selected speeches both by world superpower and Armenian political leaders. The extralinguistic reality present in the analyzed samples of political discourse is the intersection of the big politics of powerful and "small" countries with their own problems each and, at the same time, common challenges that should be negotiated upon and handled collectively, effeciently and without delay.

The modern political discourse is predominantly action-oriented and the linguistic means typical of its construct should be up to its spirit and intent. Actually, any mature professional politician who is going to deliver a speech has two intentions in mind and two tasks set forward – to persuade and to influence. The first one is mainly realized through logical arguments, while the second one considers human emotions and expressiveness as priorities. With this end in view, a politician becomes highly selective in the ways and means of his or her linguistic expression as this is largely representative of his or her self-image, political ambitions and abilities. On the one hand, the statements should be or seem truthful, unbiased and logical (the actual correlation of the message with the objective reality is not relevant here). On the other hand, they should show the speaker's sincere concern and emotional involvement in the socially relevant matter and his or her will-consistency to pursue its settlement in the way most beneficial to ordinary citizens. Thus, it can be assumed that politicians need such linguistic units which are logical-factive, emotional-evaluative, and, preferably, action-oriented (the latter refers to the semantics of the lexical unit).

The study of our textual material, the speeches by the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, the US President George Bush, the RA President Robert Kocharian and the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs Vartan Oskanian, has revealed that the **lexical syntagms with the suffix - able / -ible** are quite frequent and varied in this kind of discourse.

To begin with our analysis, we think that it is necessary to focus on the term-concept "lexical syntagm", proposed and defined by the representatives of the Russian school of linguistics. Lexical syntagms are those words, which, being clearly divisible in terms of derivation, may be coined, brought to life, regularly reproduced, or regenerated by the speaker at will. In other words, lexical syntagmatics deals only with those

derivative words, the creation or the very existence of which is based on the quite definite, well-fixed rules of combining morphemes according to productive patterns, i.e. rules determined by the lexical-morphological categories of the language under investigation (Alexandrova, Ter-Minasova, 1987).

The lexical syntagms with the suffix -able/-ible express possibility of production (realization) of action and clearly indicate the functional intent of the speeches under research. This is apparently due to the combination of two semantic components in these syntagms, those of action and emotional evaluation which is commonly inherent to the class of adjectives. The semantic component of action turns these syntagms into carriers of the notion of dynamism which is generally typical of active verbs. Our analysis comes to prove that the lexical syntagms with -able/-ible are the second in the frequency of occurrence in the political speeches of the mentioned political leaders. Due to their particularly high frequency some of these syntagms have even acquired certain value of political terms, and collocated with other words tend to form clichйed political expressions.

Here are some minor contexts containing the above-mentioned type of syntagms.

1. The allies of terror are equally guilty of murder and equally **accountable** to justice. (G. Bush, 10 November 2001)
2. What is more, their alternative judgement is both entirely rational and **arguable**. (T. Blair, 30 June 2004)
3. And it was driven not by a set of **negotiable** political demands, but by religious fanaticism. (T. Blair, 30 June 2004)
4. The South Caucasus, as the boundary of the European continent, should be considered an **indivisible** part of European security. (R. Kocharian, 22 November 2002)
5. Many of today's social ills, and the economic ones, too, will be well on their way to disappearing if human rights are accepted, absorbed, respected and implemented as **inarguable, inalienable, unalterable** rights. (V. Oskanian, 15-16 March 2004)
6. As a result, this continent [*Europe*] has produced a **reliable** and unique system of interdependence. (R. Kocharian, 25 January 2001)

Some lexical syntagms such as **accountable, arguable, negotiable, reliable** express possibility of production of action, others, like **inarguable, inalienable, unalterable, indivisible**, on the contrary, express impossibility of production of action, that is rejection of that possibility by means of such negative prefixes as *in-* or *un-*. Taken in isolation, these lexical units do not have any "political colouring" or "orientation": they belong to the common word-stock of the English language. Anyhow, as far as they occur in a "political environment", that is, in a political context, they become "politicized". When these linguistic elements are transposed and interwoven with political discourse, they establish relationships with other linguistic and extralinguistic elements of their new environment and change functionally. This means if we admit the

fact that the functional style defines the character of a lexical syntagm, we have to admit the opposite assertion as valid, too: the character of a lexical syntagm can serve as a distinctive feature of the functional style.

Now an attempt will be made to examine the examples adduced above in terms of the opposition message vs impact and in terms of the system of categories and parameters (Alexandrova, Ter-Minasova, 1987; Тер-Минасова, 1980).

In the first, second, third and fourth mini-contexts the lexical syntagms **accountable, arguable, negotiable, indivisible** represent the objective, logical, formal, direct and real aspects of the opposition message vs impact. Obviously, the intellective function of transmitting information, which is carried out with the help of these syntagms, dominates in the contexts under observation.

The analysis of these syntagms according to the system of categories and parameters shows that these lexical units possess the characteristics of such categories as reproducibility (clichйedness), sociolinguistic and conceptual determination. The presence of the category of reproducibility clearly indicates that the realization of these syntagms in these specific contexts is quite natural, usual and corresponds to language norm. In political discourse these syntagms very often occur in such collocations as **accountable to justice, judgement is both entirely rational and arguable, negotiable political demands, indivisible part** and the like. This is largely due to the sociolinguistic and conceptual determination of the lexical syntagms **accountable, arguable, negotiable, indivisible** whose semantic contents, conceptual meanings and the extralinguistic reality they reflect are in one to one correspondence. This predetermines the reign supreme of the function of message rejecting any connotativeness, the latter being in the domain of the function of impact. Thus, the information passed on via these four utterances is presented as strictly logical and objective, and the utterances themselves realize the intellective function of speech.

We would like to stop for a while on the conceptual and socioliguistic contents of the selected lexical syntagms. The conceptual contents of the syntagm **accountable** becomes condensed due to the lexical intensifier **equally**. At the same time, the lexical unit **accountable** seems to have somewhat lost its semantic content and it is due to its collocation with the intensifier **equally** that it regains its meaning at full. This semantic change is largely conditioned, on the one hand, by a linguistic factor and, on the other hand, by an extralinguistic one: firstly, since the syntagm **accountable** has frequently been used in the context of political discourse it has become clichйed, and clichйed words, as it is known, are not expressive enough; secondly, though this syntagm is frequently used by G. Bush, T. Blair and other world leaders, terror, terrorists and their allies do not decrease. Hence, as we see, the action underlying the concept of this lexical unit, for this or that reason, is not very often realized in our reality. It can be assumed that the conceptual determination of the syntagm **accountable** has weakened because of its current specific sociolinguistic determination.

The combination of the lexical syntagm **negotiable** with the expression **political demands** is, to a great extent, sociolinguistically burdened. Nowadays the world faces

numerous and various challenges which are often presented in the form of different political demands. The concept of **negotiation** and, consequently, also the concept of **negotiable political demands,** are cultivated in the social-political life of the modern progressive society. Thus, when a demand is political and negotiable, it can be handled and met. Being negotiable is already considered a positive start for the solution to the problem, as opposed to religious fanaticism which is considered uncontrollable and impossible to be perceived and overcome rationally.

The second example is an utterance made by Tony Blair in which the lexical syntagm **arguable** is used. This lexical unit is quite frequent in political discourse. So, it could be said that it is observed in a natural environment presented via the following mini-context: "…**judgement is both entirely rational and arguable**". Though the syntagm **arguable** does not stand next to the syntagm **judgement,** the former is directly attributed to the latter on the conceptual-semantic level. So, it can be transferred into the combination **arguable judgement** which is politically marked and is considerably reproducible, sociolinguistically and conceptually determined. The discussed expression is used by Mr Blair in reference to his opponents' standpoint on the matter of the war in Iraq, which the UK took part in. He does not criticize his opponents for their opposite judgement but, on the contrary, qualifies it as arguable and gives objective, logical reasons for that. Further he also gives a reason justifying his own judgement and decision. As a result, the speaker's reason acquires more persuasive force against the background of his rational approach to his opponents' standpoint. The use of the lexical unit **arguable** is a diplomatically justified step for, on the one hand, it calms down the people opposed to the decision, and, on the other one, supports the very decision.

In the fourth example the collocation of the lexical units **indivisible** and **part** is analyzed. This collocation is very usual in political discourse: *indivisible part of a country*; *indivisible part of territorial integrity*; *indivisible part of the European family*; *indivisible part of European security*. The lexical syntagm **indivisible** and its combination with **part** have become clichйs that vividly express the modern political mentality of the world. This means that they reflect the extralinguistic reality by means of their sociolinguistic determination. In this case the extralinguistic reality is the geopolitical position of the South Caucasus Region and the European Continent and the social-political situation in these areas. Though the South Caucasus is a geographically *indivisible* part of the European Continent, and this requires no proof, it is not an *indivisible* part of European security, while the opposite state of things would be logical with respect to the first part of Robert Kocharian's statement. Here we deal with the pragmatic presuppositional aspect of the utterance: "*the South Caucasus … should be considered* **an indivisible part of European security**" but, actually, it is not and this is not right or fair on the part of the other European countries that consider themselves as indivisible parts of the European family and security and do not consider the South Caucasus as an equally indivisible part of the European security.

In the fifth example a frequent use of syntagms with the suffix **-**able is observed: "*human rights …as* **inarguable, inalienable, unalterable rights**". Mr Vartan Oskanian

tends to be maximum objective and logical in his evaluation of human rights. He also tends to present this in a direct and factive manner. The use of these lexical units in the given context is both sociolinguistically and conceptually determined, and it is even the demand of the time - the 21ˢᵗ century, and the occasion - the 60ᵗʰ session of the Commission on Human Rights**,** on which the speech was presented. The use of such attributes with the word-combination **human rights** which has already become one of the key social-political terms is quite reproducible (clichйed) in political discourse. The adjectives **inarguable, inalienable, unalterable** have so frequently been used to modify the above-mentioned word-combination that have become somewhat hackneyed and tend to lose their full semantic meaning. But when these three adjectives occur in immediate succession they become a kind of intensifiers for one another and contribute to the reconstruction of the meaning of the underlying concepts at full. The clichйed environment gives way to the emotional-expressive o ne, and this brings about a pathetic element introduced into the speech. As a rule, in such cases the speech becomes brighter and the target-audience more liable to perceive it. This peculiar interchange of the objective-logical and emotional-evaluative elements in these lexical syntagms comes to prove that these lexical units are "politicized", that is, they are politically marked and have a specific functional value. The simultaneous coexistence of different parameters in a linguistic unit obviously shows that no hard line between the categories can be drawn, and what is relevant to speak about in this context is the balance, the proportion of the categories present in this or that particular case. Actually, there can be found not only purely connotative or clichйed lexical syntagms, but also a great variety of intermediate cases.

    In the sixth example the lexical syntagm **reliable** is under study. It is realised in the following lexical-syntactic environment: "… **a reliable and unique system of interdependence**". If we compress the environment even more, the combination of immediate constituents **reliable system** will be left. This word-combination is typical of social-political discourse. Reliable system is what is sought for in every country, every region, every organization nowadays. The adjective **reliable** is used to attach objective, logical evaluation to the reality denoted by the lexical unit **system**. But, at the same time, we should bear in mind that this evaluation is made by one individual and, thus, it cannot be regarded purely objective even if this opinion is shared by other individuals. Also, it should be taken into account that the criteria for reliability may be different for different individuals, groups of people, political parties and nations.

    According to President Robert Kocharian, Europe has produced a reliable and unique system of interdependence. On the part of the speaker this can be regarded quite an objective, factive statement which may have its supporters and opponents. But it is not a secret that a number of politicians and political scientists in the world think that the system of the European family has to some extent consumed itself and does not fully meet the everchanging challenges the countries and nations of the continent face at present. Hence, the syntagm **reliable** synthesizes both the components of objectivity and subjectivity in its semantic content. The coexistence of these oppositional elements

indicates that the relations of the lexical syntagm **reliable** to the linguistic environment it is found in and to the extralinguistic reality it refers to are not identical. The use of this syntagm in the given context is by all means sociolinguistically determined.

The lexical syntagms with -able/-ible really form a specific group of adjectives in the English language. Being originated on mostly verbal bases, they realize the category of possibility of production of action and the category of quality that are actually present in a great variety of pure and intermediate forms in real speech situations. In these syntagms the verbal component of meaning accounts for the semantic element of process which makes them carriers of dynamism and action. This is an essential characteristics for the functional context these syntagms are observed in. Political discourse, or, speaking more accurately, political speeches have a definite functional orientation – *persuasion and impact on the audience, that is logical argumentation and emotional influence, promoting the hearers to certain activity "encoded" in the speeches*. Hence, the speeches themselves should also have a dynamic and action-oriented content. This makes the politician's speech lively and effective.

Our observations come to show that a large variety of **lexical syntagms with -able / -ible** due to their high frequency of use in political discourse, have already acquired the value of political terms or, in other words, they have become **"politicized"** and tend to form clichйed political expressions in collocation with other lexical units. The above-mentioned lexical syntagms have acquired a distinctive feature of the functional substyle of political discourse. But this is only realized via and owing to certain functional linguistic environment and the transactions of the lexical units with the concepts of the social reality and the reflections of the latter in these lexical units.

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«ՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆԱՑՎԱԾ»
ՇԱՐՈՒՅԹՆԵՐԸ ԳՈՐԾՈՂՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ

Սույն աշխատանքում փորձ է արվում քննելու որոշ բառային շարույթների փոխներթափանցումը և դերը քաղաքական դիսկուրսում, այսինքն դիտարկելու, թե ինչպես են դրանք գործի դրվում ներկայացնելու քաղաքական իրականությունը: Ուսումնասիրությունը ցույց է տալիս, որ դիտարկվող բառային շարույթները քաղաքական դիսկուրսի տվյալ տեսակում կիրառման բարձր հաճախականության շնորհիվ ձեռք են բերել քաղաքական տերմինների արժեք կամ, այլ կերպ ասած, «քաղաքականացվել» են և, այլ բառային միավորների հետ գործածվելով, միտում ունեն ձևավորելու վերարտադրելի կամ կաղապարային քաղաքական արտահայտություններ: