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## Political discourse in the language of culture: content and functions

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### Abstract

Language is an invariant means of expressing political ideas and carrying out political actions. The functioning of political discourse in society is connected, on the one hand, with the performance of general language functions, and on the other, with its difference from other types of discourse, conditioned by its system-forming intention. Political discourse, due to its multifunctionality, is of particular importance in the framework of cognitive linguistics, where language acts as a mechanism for ensuring the interaction of man and the world: the world is not given to man directly ("objectively"), but is created and interpreted (subjectively). Political discourse is one of the varieties of institutional discourse entering into a complex interaction with other types of institutional and non-institutional discourses. The most significant of the language functions is the regulatory / incentive function (in particular, prohibition and enthusiasm). Accentuated creativity of the language of politics constitutes the specifics of the reference function, which allows us to conclude that the language of referent and magical functions is connected in the political discourse. Specificity of the social functionality of political discourse in relation to other types of discourse manifests itself in its basic instrumental function (power struggle), which is expressed in the basic concepts of political discourse. As for examples, the author cites the statements of contemporary Tajikistan politicians.

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**Keywords**

Language, politics, political linguistics, political discourse, institutional discourse, the reference function of language, Tajik politics.

**Introduction**

The link between language and politics is manifested primarily in the fact that a political regime cannot exist without communication. Language is an invariant means of expressing political ideas and implementing political action. According to a fair observation of E. Sheigal, "The specifics of the policy, in contrast to some other spheres of human activity, is its predominantly discursive nature: many political actions are by nature speech actions " [Sheigal, 2000; 27]. In science, there are opinions that political activity is generally limited as such by linguistic activity [Dieckmann, 1981; Edelman, 1964]; in addition to that, in modern studies language is considered, within the framework of the subject-subject philosophical paradigm, not so much as a means of reflecting political reality, but as a means of its creation [Ealy, 1981].

The question of the role and place of political language in culture is debatable. Some researchers use this term as a given; others question the very existence of the phenomenon of political language; one way or another, there are heated debates about the place and role of political language in the system of national language.

Thus, A. N. Baranov and E. G. Kazakevich do not question the independence of the role of political language in the communication system: "Political language is a special sign system designed specifically for political communication: to develop public consensus, to make and justify political and socio-political decisions..."[Baranov, Kazakevich, 1991]. Parshin B. P., on the contrary, expresses the opinion about the absence of any distinctive features of the language of politics: "It is obvious that purely linguistic features of the originality of political discourse are few and not so easy to identify. What is usually meant by the "language of politics" normally does not go beyond the grammatical and in general lexical norms of the corresponding idioethnic ("national") languages-Russian, English, German, Arabic, etc. Such conclusions exist and are easy to identify and explain only in extreme cases – like only in extreme cases idiostylistic peculiarities in literature relates to the language as it is or processes of verbalization (as V. Khlebnikov or A. Platonov in Russian literature) " [Parshin, 2002, 183]. The scientist suggests a thesis that the subject of political linguistics is an idiopolitical discourse, which means "the originality of what, how, to whom and what this or that subject of political action says" [ibid.].

D. Graber also defends a similar point of view: "Political language does not have any specific vocabulary or specific grammatical forms. Rather, it is the content of the information communicated, the circumstances in which the information is disseminated (the social context), and the functions performed. When political agents (actors) communicate on political topics, pursuing political goals, then, therefore, they speak the language of politics" [Graber, 1981, 196]. It is possible to hear a point of view, according to which the language of politics is not characterised by a specific form, but only by the content, and formally it differs only in a certain number of canonized expressions and clichés [Corcoran, 1979]. It is obvious that some grammatical features do not give grounds to speak about the "own grammar" (Y. Stepanov) of the political language, and it quite naturally can be attributed to the category of "professional languages" or languages of the professional sphere the distinctive features of which are still not special grammar, but some features of vocabulary, semantics, usage in general.

### **Political discourse in the language of culture**

It is possible to distinguish the spheres of political discourse' contact with other types of institutional discourse (advertising, scientific, pedagogical, legal, religious, sports, military) as well as with non-institutional forms of communication (art and everyday discourse) [Sheigal, 2000]. Media discourse plays a special role in the functioning of political discourse, being both a channel for political communication and an influential way of interpreting of political discourse.

The functioning of political discourse in society is connected, on the one hand, with the performance of its general language functions and, on the other hand, with its difference from other types of discourse due to its system – forming intention.

The most important and basic distinctive function of political discourse is its use *as an instrument of political power*. This function in relation to the language of politics is as global as the communicative function is all-encompassing in relation to the language as a whole. Therefore for a more accurate analysis of the language of politics it is necessary to turn to other functions of political discourse, which are aspects of manifestation of its instrumental function.

The discrepancy of the functions of political communication is obvious: "Political communication performs a function of an intermediary link which often substitutes actual physical violence and makes possible changes in society in the direction of regulation, paves the way to compromise making facts and arguments public. At the same time, it is the language of fractionalism (division), the division of society into friends and enemies. It can sharpen differences to the extent of fatal or, on the contrary, smooth them down. Its ability to transform society for better is encouraging, but its widespread abuse

is frustrating. So, political rhetoric has many faces: it can inform, inspire, calm, divide and sow enmity" [Denton, Woodward, 1985, 14].

The works devoted to this question [Bergsdorf, 1978; Corcoran, 1979; Elder, Cobb, 1983; Denton, Woodward, 1985; Smith, Smith, 1990; Graber, 1981; Schäffner, Porsch, 1993] allow to make a list of the most important functions of political discourse within its instrumental function:

1) **function of legitimization of power:** explanation and justification of decisions of the authorities on important national affairs (for example, 1994 : "we need to release our own money <...> This is due to the need of the current economic situation in both Tajikistan and Russia as well as other neighboring countries" [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 1, 218]);

2) **the function of reproduction of power:** consolidating the fact of being part of the system, in particular, through the use of symbols (for example: "The Constitution is a legal document that legislates the participation of the people in determining the form of political power, the creation of the highest bodies of state power and increasing their responsibility to the people" [ibid., 116]);

3) **the function of social control:** creation of prerequisites for unification of behavior, thinking, emotions and goals of social groups or manipulation by public consciousness (for example: "...in order to become worthy heirs of our civilized ancestors, each of us must constantly strive to ensure that our Motherland develops keeping up with the time so that our independent state is able to withstand the impact of undesirable factors of the modern world and the adverse effects of globalization " ["We must know the heritage of ancestors", 2009; 46])

4) **orientation function:** formulation of tasks and problems, creation of a picture of social and political reality in public consciousness (for example: "The socio-economic policy of the state of Tajikistan is primarily aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development, improving the life standards and quality of life of the people, improving social protection of the needy population and creating the necessary conditions for the education of a healthy and educated generation "[Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 129]);

5) **the function of social solidarity:** Consolidation of the whole society or individual social groups (for example: "Having determined the factors and ways of improving the mentality of society, we will be able to develop a national idea that will prevent various attempts to isolate and raise panic among the people and unite them under the banner of unity and consolidation, national identity, defence of state independence of Tajikistan" [Rakhmonov, 2004/4; 9]);

6) **the function of social differentiation:** exclusion of social groups (e.g.: "Our experience in the twentieth century proved that, despite all the difficulties and even tragedies, the intelligentsia of Tajikistan showed dedication, created developed science, education, culture and medicine in the

country" [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 4, 25] - emphasizes the role of the intelligentsia);

7) **agonal function**: starting and resolution of a social conflict, protest against actions of the government (for example: "With the help of foreign dollars and countless donations of mosques and fanatical Islamists, this party was able to create a powerful extremist organization for a short period of time and acquire weapons, military equipment and ammunition" [ibid, vol. 1, 17]);

8) **active function**: policy implementation through mobilization (recruitment of supporters) or "drug anaesthetization" (appeasement) of the population (e.g.: "Let us shoulder to shoulder rebuild the destroyed economy of the country" [same, 58]; and: "The purposeful and steady growth of national consciousness, the growing warmth of patriotism in the hearts of the honest and noble sons of the nation, manifested in their creative work, as I was fully convinced during my trips to cities and regions of the country, are a convincing proof of <...> gratitude and respect" [ibid, vol. 4, 286]);

9) **dissemination of information**: the message about the state of affairs in politics (e.g.: "We support the initiatives of the UN Secretary General to reform the peacekeeping mechanism, we believe that it is necessary to continue to provide peacekeepers with the necessary political, financial and logistical support, helping them to cope with their difficult mission" [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 166]);

10) **advancement function**: advancing certain issues to the focus of public attention, controlling the dissemination of information (for example: "...I draw your attention to the need for a balanced and cautious approach to these issues, preventing extremes and going beyond the established protocol and state attributes" [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 4, 171]);

11) **projection into the future and the past**: forecasting and reconstruction of the past as an argumentative method ("Our main goal is to create a competitive economy, and lead Tajikistan into the group of prosperous countries with developed infrastructure, democratic values while improving the standard of living of the Tajik people" (H. Zarifi) in the near future [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 212]; "Avesta culture appeared three thousand years ago, and the impetus for this was the need to unite the peoples belonging to the Aryan race. We, as the rightful inheritors of our ancestors, along with the celebration of independence, will celebrate also the 2700th anniversary of "Avesta", the oldest sample of our written heritage" [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 4, 129]).

Mobilization to action is an active function of political discourse, according to E. I. Sheigal, is perhaps the most significant manifestation of the instrumental function of the policy language, which should stimulate action. The stimulation can be carried out in the form of direct appeal (in the genres of slogans, appeals and proclamations, in legislative acts), or through the creation of an appropriate emotional attitude (hope, fear, pride of the country, confidence, a sense of unity, cynicism, hostility, hatred), as well as through speech acts that are substitutes of actions – threat, promise, accusation.

Speech acts such as expressions of support and trust serve as an important stimulus for political action [Sheigal, 2000, 50]: "...I fully trust you and I am sure that you will cope with the tasks set before you with honor and will ensure peace, tranquility and legality in the country" – from the address of Emomali Rakhmonov at the meeting of employees of government bodies and military structures in 2002 [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol.4, 252].

Political discourse due to its multi-functionality is of particular importance in the framework of cognitive linguistics, where language acts as a mechanism for ensuring the interaction of man and the world: the world is not given to man directly ("objectively"), but is created by him and interpreted (subjectively); R. Langacker even offers his own definition of discourse as a way of reflecting the world created by the subject [Langacker, 1987].

Politicians acting as interpreters of events form an opinion about them in society. For example, at a press conference with representatives of media in 2008 the Deputy Minister of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan D. K. Nuraliev says: "...despite the global financial and energy crises, cold winter and lack of water that affected the economy of the Republic of Tajikistan, in general the development of national finances, the implementation of new initiatives in the political and economic life of the country were tangible " [Nuraliev, 2009, www], although at the same time, calling for help of the international community, Emomali Rahmon says: "The sharp increase of the world prices for basic food products had a negative impact on Tajikistan <...> Tajikistan faced abnormal cold weather, lack of water and drought, which led to energy and food crises and consequently – to a significant worsening of the socio-economic situation of the country's population. <...> It is very difficult for Tajikistan to solve these problems on its own" [Tajikistan Diplomacy, 2009, 224]. In this case, those political figures whose definitions (nominations) are accepted by the society, get the undeniable advantage. D. Khan compares the definition (naming) with blinkers: focusing attention on one thing, interpretation excludes the other from the field of vision: "The power of definition is in its ability to create or destroy" [Hahn, 1998, 65].

Among the most important general language functions of political discourse is the *creative* one, "the situation in which linguistic entities are primary in relation to non-linguistic entities" (E. I. Sheigal). Thus, in the lexicon of the socialist period "Many of the "A"model socialist" phenomena (*NEP (New Economic Policy)*, *GOERLO (State Commission for Electrification of Russia)*, *subbotnik (volunteer working day)*, *record-setting in work productivity*, *specially distributed goods*, *Perestroika (lit. restructuring)*) appeared first on paper as verbal constructs. In general, the whole history of utopian socialism is a vivid confirmation of the creative function of language" [Norman, 1997, 30]. The creative function of the language is related to the respondents' lack of knowledge of the situation: lacunae in knowledge are filled with word forms and metaphors, cognitive constructions, which by virtue of the peculiarities of the psyche

are accepted as a direct reflection of the immediate reality. The creative function of language, being an integral part of its functioning and human cognition, at the same time, can lead to a loss of ability of critical thinking, provided that a person abuses verbal construction of the situation, losing touch with the real world. Structuring reality through the removal or introduction of new concepts has become a hallmark of totalitarian discourse: "The old generation in our country is well aware of the experience of arbitrary exclusion from circulation of a number of concepts, such as *denunciation, compassion, God, dignity, trust, honor* and planting of the new ones like *collectivization, the enemy of the people, proletarian culture, class approach, socialist realism*" [Klyucharev, 1995, 215].

Also important is the general language function of political discourse related to creative, is a *magical one ("spellcasting")*. Attitude to the word as a magical power based on non-conventional interpretation of the linguistic sign (the idea that the name is part of the subject). The modern man to some extent retains faith in verbal magic which is manifested not only in religious but also in the political discourse. R. Barth, describing the political language as a language that "is developed directly in the course of political *praxis* and therefore is directed to *production* rather than *reflection*", notes that "the elimination or glorification of words has in it almost magical effectiveness, with the abolition of the word the referent is as if also abolished; and the ban on the word "nobility" is perceived as the elimination of the nobility itself" [Bart, 1994, 526].

The most significant and widespread manifestations of the magical function of language in modern political discourse are taboo substitutions or euphemisms, which also pursue the goals of ideological control and manipulation of mass consciousness [Mechkovskaya, 1998, 134]. E. Cassirer notes that in the state of totalitarian type political leaders accept functions which in the primeval society were assigned to sorcerers and shamans, – freeing from the social evil and prediction of the future. "Our politicians know very well that large masses of people are easier to activate with the help of force of the imagination than with the use of brute physical force...>. Politicians have become a kind of fortune tellers, the prophecy has become an essential element of the new management techniques. They promise the most incredible and even the most impossible things, again and again promise people the "Golden age" [Cassirer 1996, 206-208].

This function is very fruitful in the Tajik political discourse. So, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan S. A. Nasriddinov notes at the Eurasian economic forum: "Dushanbe and its residents are focused only on a bright future" [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2005, 123]. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Kh. Zarifi says in an interview to the Kazakh newspaper "Business Week": "Our main goal is to create a competitive economy, and in the near future to bring Tajikistan among the prosperous countries with developed infrastructure, democratic values while improving the living standards of the Tajik people" [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 258].

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This function is particularly evident in the framework of the discourse of the present government and Presidential discourse. Thus, in 1993, Emomali Rakhmon sees a sign of a bright future in the fact that the dates of the celebration of Ramadan and Navruz coincide: "Here lies the regularity of our life - we are waiting for a bright and joyful future" [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 1, 36], although in general during this period in the political discourse of the official Tajikistan the image of a bright future is considered only as a goal, which requires solidarity, unity, strengthening the role of education, etc. In 1996, the state policy is already considered as a natural way to a bright future: "Every hour and day since the glorious date of our country's independence is a milestone on our path to a better future, because our state cares about the people and the people protect their state" [ibid., 352]. Confidence in the bright future of the country is emphasized (1997): "I'm pretty sure our Tajikistan in the near future will become one of the most popular and developed countries" [ibid., vol. 2, 101], of course, while maintaining the existing policy. In 1998, it is already spoken about overcoming obstacles to a bright, advanced future: "All these efforts have made it possible to save the long-suffering people of the country from disappointment and to open the way to a bright future and an advanced society" [ibid., 245]. In 1999 the bright future was considered as a near-term state: "The day is not far off when Tajikistan, thanks to these efforts of the people, will enter into a bright future" [ibid, vol.3, 21]; "it will take very little time by historical standards, maybe two or three decades, in the third Millennium the future generation of the Tajiks will see a mature democratic, secular, legal society created by their and our hands" [ibid, 151]. In 2000, one of the factors of a bright future was declared to be the glorious past of the people: "The torch on our way to a brighter future is the ancient traditions of our people, the great cultural heritage of our nation and the glorious history of our country" [ibid., 277]. Further, as the metaphor of the political discourse of official Tajikistan shows, the image of the great past will be the basis of the doctrine of national identity.

The magical function of political discourse (in opposition to rational, sensible use of language) is manifested in propaganda saturated with slogans, rituals and symbols: flags, posters, parades, constant demonstration of power [Bosmajian, 1983, 17].

## Conclusion

Political discourse is a type of institutional discourse that interacts with other types of institutional and non-institutional discourses in a complex way. The most significant of the language functions for it is the regulatory/incentive function (in particular, prohibition and encouragement). The accentuated creativity of the language of politics is the specificity of the reference function, which allows us to make a conclusion about the combination of the reference and magical functions of the language in the political discourse. The specificity of the social functionality of political discourse in relation to



other types of discourse is manifested in its basic instrumental function (struggle for power), which is expressed in the basic concepts of political discourse.

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## **Политический дискурс в языке культуры: содержание и функции**

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**Аннотация**

Язык является инвариантным средством выражения политических идей и осуществления политических действий. Функционирование политического дискурса в социуме связано, с одной стороны, с выполнением им общеязыковых функций, и с другой, – с его отличием от иных видов дискурса, обусловленным его системообразующей интенцией. Политический дискурс, в силу своей многофункциональности, имеет особое значение в рамках когнитивной лингвистики, где язык выступает как механизм обеспечения взаимодействия человека и мира: мир не дан человеку непосредственно («объективно»), а создается им и интерпретируется (субъективно). Политический дискурс является одной из разновидностей институционального дискурса, вступающей в сложное взаимодействие с другими видами институциональных и неинституциональных дискурсов. Наиболее значимой из языковых функций для него является функция регулятивная/побудительная (в частности, запрет и воодушевление). Акцентированная креативность языка политики составляет специфику референтной функции, что позволяет сделать заключение о соединении в политическом дискурсе референтной и магической функций языка. Специфика социальной функциональности политического дискурса по отношению к другим видам дискурса проявляется в его базовой инструментальной функции (борьба за власть), находящей свое выражение в базовых концептах политического дискурса. В качестве примеров автор приводит высказывания современных политиков Таджикистана.

**Для цитирования в научных исследованиях**

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**Ключевые слова**

Язык, политика, политическая лингвистика, политический дискурс, институциональный дискурс, референтная функция языка, таджикская политика.

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