

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.24.4.33>ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ КУЛЬТУРНО-СПЕЦИФИЧЕСКИХ ЭЛЕМЕНТОВ В АМЕРИКАНСКИХ
ПРЕДВЫБОРНЫХ ДЕБАТАХ

Научная статья

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Аннотация

В статье рассматривается лингвистическая составляющая американских предвыборных теледебатов. Выделяются языковые единицы, имеющие культурную коннотацию, отражающие социокультурный контекст. Актуальность обусловлена недостаточной изученностью лингвокультурного аспекта электорального дискурса. Обращение к языковым фактам, отражающим современные социальные и культурные доминанты американского общества, предопределяет новизну исследования. Было выявлено, что культурно окрашенные номинации выборки включают реалии и фразеологизмы. Реалии, в свою очередь, подразделяются на политические, социальные и культурно-нормативные. Фразеологизмы выборки отражают культурные коды американского социума. Они подвергаются трансформациям, что позволяет вписать данные образные номинации в актуальный политический контекст.

Ключевые слова: предвыборные дебаты, культурно-специфичные компоненты, реалии, идиомы.

USING CULTURE-SPECIFIC ELEMENTS IN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

Research article

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Abstract

The article explores the linguistic component of American presidential debates. The linguistic units that are embedded in the social and cultural contexts and have cultural connotations are singled out. The culture-specific linguistic units remain an important but under-researched area of pre-electoral discourse analysis. The research revealed that such units of the text encompass realia and idioms. The former incorporates political and social realia as well as those connected with cultural norms and practices. Idioms used in the presidential debates reflect American culture codes. They are transformed by politicians to fit specific political contexts.

Keywords: presidential debates, culture-specific components, realia, idioms.

Introduction

Pre-electoral discourse being a part of political discourse has become a focal point of researches in the field of political science, social philosophy, media linguistics and political linguistics. The electoral component of political communication has acquired great prominence recently, as modern electoral campaigns prove to be a never-ending process [1, P.95]. The pre-electoral situation is characterized by a high level of political confrontation which reaches the greatest point of its intensity during televised presidential debates [2, P.170]. In American political realm televised debates encompass primaries when contenders strive to secure party nomination as well as the debates between the Republican and Democratic candidates that take place before the Election Day. In 2020 presidential debates have become even more important for those running for the presidency, as rallies were limited due to the pandemic and the main means for politicians to reach and persuade their voters was televised debates participation.

The linguistic aspect of presidential debates has been analyzed from different perspectives. Researchers investigate the strategies used by politicians to impact their electoral base [3], [4], [5]. They also consider the stance and linguistic means employed by presidential hopefuls to manipulate the audience [6]. However, rhetorical properties of televised debates remain an understudied field of pre-electoral discourse. One of the aspects that require further investigation is the way the speeches of politicians reflect the socio-cultural context. This takes shape of a culture-specific component of pre-electoral discourse. They are viewed as linguistic units that bear some social and cultural references that can be described as cultural connotation.

The aim of this research is to establish and analyze the elements of debate speeches that are specifically American since they mirror some values, elements of the social and political landscape typical of the US culture.

The sample includes transcripts of the 2020 Democratic televised debates in Las Vegas and South Carolina as well as Trump vs Biden debates.

The research is set in sociolinguistics framework and employs critical discourse analysis.

Classification of culture-specific components of the 2020 presidential debates

The linguistic units of the sample fall into two main categories: realia and idioms. By realia we understand the items that represent some aspects of a particular political and social contexts which are closely associated with a specific culture. Idioms can also be culture-specific as they contain culture codes that linguists describe as their cultural connotation [7]. The realia singled out in debate texts pertain to the political realm, social sphere as well as cultural norms and practices.

Political realia include nominations well established in the English language as well as some new words and phrases that became a part of mainstream vocabulary due to the emergence of new phenomena. The former type can be exemplified by the nominations *bumper sticker* and *hanging chads*:

Senator Klobuchar: *What I think we should do is make things more affordable [...] do something for the people of America, instead of a bunch of broken promises that sound good on bumper stickers* [8].

Bumper stickers are a type of political advertisement extensively used in the US during electoral campaigns alongside *posters* and *pins*. In the context of debates they serve as representations of slogans that are never implemented.

Joe Biden: *Except we had a thing called an election with hanging chads in Florida and it was not reauthorized* [8].

By hanging chads they understand the fragments of card ballots, which were not punched the whole way leaving a piece dangling. Such votes were not counted by the machine, thus because of this technical error people's votes were not valid.

As for the new political realia mentioned by presidential hopefuls, they include such names as *white supremacists*, *Antifa* and *Me Too*:

D. Trump: *But I'll tell you what, somebody's got to do something about Antifa and the left because this is not [a] right-wing problem This is a left-wing problem* [9].

The words *Antifa* and *MeToo* denote new movements that promote liberal values, while *white supremacy* is a new label that masks the old issue of racial segregation. It is a euphemism employed to substitute for the terms that have become socially unacceptable.

Social realia used by the candidates denote some elements of American educational landscape:

Bernie Sanders: *We are going to triple funding for low-income Title I schools, because kids' education should not depend upon the ZIP Code in which they live* [8].

The democratic contender speaks about schools where the majority of children are from low-income families, so they are entitled to government subsidies, and *Zip Code* in this context stands for underprivileged neighborhoods.

Another term belonging to social realia is *redlining*:

M. Bloomberg: *Redlining was not the problem of the mortgage market...* [8].

Though the notion of *redlining* is usually associated with banks discriminating against people of color, Bloomberg underlines its financial basis which is not connected with ethnicity.

The discussion of issues of illegal immigration brought about the usage of the slang word *coyote* in the final presidential debate:

D. Trump: *These children are brought here by coyotes and lots of bad people, cartels, and they used to use them to get into our country* [10].

The slang noun *coyote* is used to denote someone who smuggles immigrants into the US across the Mexican border. The metaphorical meaning of this word is based on the association with an animal who preys on the weak unable to defend themselves. The animal meaning of this word originates from the language spoken by the indigenous people of Central America, and it is widely used metaphorically by Mexican-American community.

Cultural norms and practices are referred to in the following critical remark of Senator Klobuchar that expresses her opinion of President Trump's relationships with the North Korean leader:

He literary thinks he can go over and *bring a hot dish* to the dictator *next door* and he thinks everything is going to be fine [8].

To describe Trump's close ties with North Korea Senator Klobuchar uses metaphorical mapping. It refers to the practice of helping neighbours, as Americans tend to greet new arrivals to the neighborhood by bringing them some hot dishes.

Apart from realia culture-specific linguistic units embedded in presidential debates **rhetoric** include typically American **idioms** that are **endowed** with cultural connotation. Being asked about the sources that might help to fund the proposed free universal health care, Bernie Sanders gave the elusive answer: *"I can't rattle off to you every nickel and every dime". It is a transformation of the idiom nickel and dime that means "something not important because it does not involve much money"*.

Another transformed American idiom was used by Joe Biden in reference to his opponent Tom Stayer who also participated in the South Carolina Democratic debate:

Where I come from it is called **Tommy come lately** [8].

The original idiom *Johnny-come-lately* underwent transformation that involved the substitution of the proper name *Johnny* for *Tommy* to fit the specific political context. That was Biden's way to say that his rival was late to join the conversation and missed his turn to speak.

Conclusion

The analysis of presidential debates rhetoric shows that culture specific units employed by American politicians in pre-electoral discourse encompass realia and idioms. The former incorporate political and social realia as well as the units denoting some cultural norms and practices. As for idioms, they originate in American culture and are normally transformed to fit the political context of debates.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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