'WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY': FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USE AND ITS PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract
Although political discourse is essentially expected to be fact-based and objective, both practice and research show that literal language in political discourse is very often compounded with figurative language.

The paper at hand tackles figurative language use in political interviews. For the purposes of this research, we conducted a critical discourse analysis of a corpus of political interviews given by a former Macedonian female politician – Radmila Shekerinska. The corpus consists of six interviews (with a total duration of about three hours) in which she answers questions about the political climate and the challenges of North Macedonia in the last couple of decades. The selected interviews are all conducted in English as they are aimed at international audiences and they all fit into the time frame from 2017 to 2021, which practically overlaps with the final years of Shekerinska's long-standing political career. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design and focuses, first, on ascertaining the presence of different types of figures of speech in her answers (e.g. metaphors, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, rhetorical questions, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, etc.); then, on identifying the pragmatic functions they perform in the context in which they are used, and finally, on establishing an interface between the figurative language use and the political ideology propagated by this politician.

The results point to an extraordinarily resourceful use of a wide spectrum of figurative devices, skillfully intertwined with fact-based political discourse, primarily for addressing highly sensitive political issues, but also for driving important political points home; also, for gaining support from both the domestic and international community regarding the political ideology of this political figure as well as for enhancing the criticism addressed to political adversaries with an additional layer of creative flourish.

Keywords: political interviews, figurative language, English, pragmatic functions

1 Introduction

In politics, which is normally "viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (Chilton 2004: 3), language is considered the mightiest tool used by politicians to impress and persuade people, and, in some cases, even to manipulate their feelings, ideas, beliefs and values (Jasim, 2018). This suggests that language and politics are intimately linked at a fundamental level and no political activity exists without the use of language (Chilton 2004: 4–6).

Political discourse follows certain standard trajectories, including recounting of events in the form of retrievals and projections (Mihas 2005: 126), due to which politicians are expected to make use of a fact-based and objective language. However, research shows that politicians, for the purposes of persuasion and propaganda, frequently resort to various linguistic tools, among which metaphorical or figurative language is certainly the most exploited one (Vestermark 2007: 1). Charteris-Black (2011: 1) claims that "those who aspire to political leadership persuade their followers through their command of rhetoric and their skill in using metaphor". Chilton (2008: 226) too, underscores a similar premise, stating that "the use of language to do the business of politics includes persuasive rhetoric, the use of applied meanings, the use of euphemisms, the exclusion of references to undesirable reality, the language to arouse political emotions and the like". In Feldman et al.'s (2015: 67) discussion on political interviews, an observation is made that the distinctive features of political discourse encompass "vagueness, evasiveness, or equivocal communication style as they (politicians) hedge from providing direct answers to the questions they are asked".

The nature of the communicative activity, the topic, the audience and the situational context determine the use of figurative language (FL) (Deignan et al. 2013, in Pavlikova 2020: 314). Its practicality in political discourse is commonly attributed to the fact that it can control "some beliefs and ideologies over the prejudice of others" (Lakoff 2008, in Pérez López 2018: 6). Also, FL is deemed to guide "people's understanding and interpreting of political and social events in such a way that it stresses certain details and connections while, at the same time, it minimizes others" (Van Teeffelen 1994: 384).

This study focuses on investigating the presence of FL in political interviews, which according to Feldman (2016) are seriously under-researched despite their key role in shaping public opinion. Unlike political speeches, which are mainly prepared beforehand, political interviews take place in an "ad hock and on the spot" manner; this, in addition to the fact that political interviews are conducive to examining issues such as power, social truth and the motives of the participants to convey particular ideologies

(Feldman 2016), makes them extremely suitable for analyzing FL in a natural, spontaneous, and not premeditated discourse.

For the purposes of this study, the analysis focused on a corpus of political interviews with the Macedonian female politician, Radmila Shekerinska, who has recently stepped down from the political stage, after a remarkably long and eventful political career. Although the focal point of the paper was to analyze the presence of FL in her answers, via the application of critical discourse analysis, the study also aspires to offer some fresh insights into the interplay between FL usage and the political ideology in the political discourse of the aforementioned non-native English speaking politician.

In the coming sections, first we delve into the theoretical background of the issue at hand; then, we explain the methodology used for this research. Consequently, in the next two sections, we present the results gained and the conclusions drawn, respectively.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Figurative language and its use in political discourse

Figurative, i.e. non-literal language is normally defined as a departure from the normal order, construction or meaning of words in order to gain strength and freshness of expression, to create an effect, to describe by analogy or discover and illustrate similarities of otherwise dissimilar things (Holman 1980: 185). According to Wren and Martin (1990: 359), a figure of speech is a departure from the ordinary form of expression, or the ordinary course of ideas in order to produce a greater effect, i.e. to increase shock, novelty, appearance or illustrative consequences. Gill (1995: 24) in the publication titled *Mastering English Literature* lists the following figures of speech: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, oxymoron, hyperbole, overstatement, understatement, synecdoche, and irony. Galperin, the author of *English Stylistics* (1977) distinguishes among three major types of expressive means and stylistic devices: a) *phonetic* (onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme and rhythm); b) *lexical* (metaphors, metonymy, irony, pun, oxymoron, epithet, antonomasia, hyperbole, periphrasis, euphemism, proverbs, allusions etc.), and c) *syntactical* (stylistic inversion, parallel construction, repetition, enumeration, suspense, climax, antithesis, asyndeton, polysyndenton, ellipsis, rhetorical questions, litotes, etc.).

Extant literature suggests that, of all of the above-mentioned types of FL, metaphors seem to occupy a central place in the rhetoric of politicians. Aristotle originally defined metaphor as "giving something a name that belongs to something else" (in Nie et al.