

ЯЗЫКИ НАРОДОВ ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ СТРАН (С УКАЗАНИЕМ КОНКРЕТНОГО ЯЗЫКА ИЛИ ГРУППЫ ЯЗЫКОВ) / LANGUAGES OF PEOPLES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES (INDICATING A SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR GROUP OF LANGUAGES)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60797/IRJ.2024.150.52>

THE ROLE OF ZOOSEMISMS IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE USA

Research article

Shustova I.N.^{1,*}

¹ ORCID : 0000-0003-4369-1203;

¹ Voronezh State Pedagogical University, Voronezh, Russian Federation

* Corresponding author (irina.philatova[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of lexis with the zoonymic component, used in the language of politics. The aim is to study the evaluative potential of zoonyms in political context. The following methods have been used: descriptive analysis, contextual analysis, lexis-semantic analysis, analysis of definitions. The differences of the terms «zoonym» and «zoosemism» have been considered, the examples of zoomorphic metaphor in political discourse have been represented and described. The peculiarities of zoosemisms functioning in the language of politics have been revealed. In particular, the possibility of such nominations to have connotative antonyms has been mentioned. Political zoosemisms having connotative antonyms, have been classified according to the source-sphere they belong to, into (birds, animals, insects). The examples of different groups of zoosemisms are provided. It is mentioned that some zoosemisms belong to the language, and they are recorded in the dictionaries of political lexis, others exist on the level of speech and appear as figurative expressions in the speeches of politicians. Nicknames of politicians with the zoonymic component have been selected and described as well. It has been concluded that such nominations possess a high evaluative potential where negative evaluative connotation predominates.

Keywords: political discourse, zoosemisms, zoomorphic metaphor, political nicknames, connotative antonyms, assessment.

РОЛЬ ЗООСЕМИЗМОВ В ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ США

Научная статья

Шустова И.Н.^{1,*}

¹ ORCID : 0000-0003-4369-1203;

¹ Воронежский государственный педагогический университет, Воронеж, Российская Федерация

* Корреспондирующий автор (irina.philatova[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

Статья посвящена исследованию лексики с зоонимическим компонентом, используемой в языке политики. Цель – изучить оценочный потенциал зоонимической лексики в политическом контексте. Методы исследования: дескриптивный анализ, контекстуальный анализ, лексико-семантический анализ, анализ дефиниций. Рассмотрены отличия терминов «зооним» и «зоосемизм», представлены и описаны примеры зооморфной метафоры в политическом дискурсе. Выявлены особенности зоосемизмов, функционирующих в языке политики, в частности отмечена способность таких номинаций иметь коннотативные антонимы. Политические зоосемизмы, имеющие коннотативные антонимы, классифицированы по принадлежности к сфере-источнику (птицы, животные, насекомые). Приводятся примеры различных групп зоосемизмов, отмечается факт наличия зоосемизмов в составе языка и зафиксированных в словаре политической лексики, а также на уровне речи, фигурирующих в качестве образных выражений в речах политиков. Также были отобраны и описаны прозвища политических деятелей, имеющие зоонимический компонент. Делается вывод о наличии высокого оценочного потенциала у таких номинаций с преобладанием негативной оценочной коннотации.

Ключевые слова: политический дискурс, зоосемизмы, зооморфная метафора, политические прозвища, коннотативные антонимы, оценка.

Introduction

The language of politics is rich and varied, though it is pragmatically oriented and called for performing definite functions, the most important of which are influencing and persuasive ones.

Regarding the peculiarities of the language of politics, scientists highlight the fact that "it is connected with the specific using of the general people's language as means of persuasion and control, – this is the language applied in manipulative aims [6, P. 23]". "Fight for power is the main theme and the driving motive of this sphere of communication [8, P. 3]". Political aims are usually achieved by language means. And it is noted that the lexis used in political discourse often has evaluative connotations, marked by its figurativeness together with the ideological bias.

The subject of our linguistic interest is zoosemisms functioning in the USA language of politics. The material of our research is political lexis with zoonymic component that has been selected from a number of dictionaries, analyzed and classified. In the course of the research the following methods have been used: descriptive analysis, contextual analysis, lexis-semantic analysis, cognitive-discursive analysis, analysis of definitions.

Main results

Zoonymic images comprise the whole specter of connotations, evaluative judgements and stereotypes, connected with the definite image that allows to perform more effective influence on the opinions and political beliefs of the citizens making up the English speaking linguo-society. Serving as figurative nominations, zoosemisms like no other lexis can transfer the wide range of emotions which the speaker experiences, resonating with the recipients, because such lexis touches upon deep often archetypic images in the lingvocultural world view of the native speakers. For this reason, such lexis is so popular in the American political discourse.

According to the definition by N.V. Solntseva "zoosemism is a metaphorized zoonym characterizing a human being [5, P. 12]". M.V. Shul'ga identified considerable differences between zoosemisms and zoonyms in the aspect of grammar. The scientist proves that in the process of metaphorization the relationships between grammatical gender and biological sex have been overthought in zoosemisms; zoosemisms adapt to the circle of personal nouns [4, P. 137], [9, P. 49]. Lee Imo shares this opinion and, by the term zoosemism she names "secondary nominations of persons (metaphors), motivated by the nominations of animals (zoonyms) [3], [4, P. 137], [9]". There is also a term zoomorphic metaphor or zoometaphor, which, in its turn, is one of the three basic models of the organistic metaphor. E.V. Bakumova and D.Yu. Gulinov, after Vershinina T.S., identify these three basic models: "phytomorphic metaphor (source-sphere – the world of vegetation); zoomorphic metaphor (source-sphere – widely understood world of animals), anthropomorphic metaphor (source-sphere – anatomy and physiology of the human body) [1, P. 219], [2]".

Metaphor is rather strong means of emotional assessment, with the help of which the emotions are conceptualized in the language. Metaphor is considered as unavoidable phenomenon of human mind and human language bearing the most important function in cognition and description of the world. The essence of metaphor consists in comprehending and experiencing the phenomena of one kind in terms of phenomena of another kind (G. Lakoff, 1980) [10, P. 44].

Many linguists highlight such feature of metaphor as capability to act as a means of nomination, creating the language picture of the world. E. V. Pokrovskaya, in particular, together with the informative function of metaphor, highlights the pragmatic one, the ability to influence the opinions and beliefs, causing "definite psychological and motion reactions from the recipient" (E. V. Pokrovskaya, 1997). The ability of metaphor to act as a means of assessment is mentioned by S.Yu. Il'ina: "... metaphor tends to have rather clear explicit positive or negative connotations" (S.Yu. Il'ina, 1997) [10, P. 44].

Discussion

In the USA political discourse, zoosemisms or zoomorphic metaphors can function as independent nominations (for example, *dove*), and as a unit of figurative word-combinations (*the cheese-eating surrender monkey*). There are some zoomorphic metaphors, for instance, *dark horse*, *lame duck*, which took their place in the row of political lexis; they are registered in the dictionaries of political words having proved their status of political lexis. Nowadays, such zoosemisms are considered to be trite and function as clichés automatically reproduced in the political context.

We selected a row of zoosemisms-clichés with the component "Horse":

Dark horse – 1. A relatively unknown candidate nominated for political office. 2. A long-shot candidate who is not given much chance to win a party's nomination for office. 3. A compromise candidate, being the first choice of few but the final choice of the majority [13, P. 153].

Stalking horse – a politician who is a front for another [13, P. 513]. Фиктивная кандидатура, выдвигаемая с целью раскола голосов сторонников другой партии [7, P. 478].

War horse – "старый боевой конь" (about old and experienced politician) [7, P. 540], [14, P. 488].

All given nominations referring to politicians contain various evaluative connotations; they are used in pre-election period in order to cause firm figurative associations in the electorate's mind, as well as the popular expression "*Don't change horses mid-stream*", (is a phrase used to urge voters to stick with the incumbent president during times of turmoil and conflict [11], or when it is required to persuade people to choose the same politician for the second term, usually during presidential elections in the USA.

Many political zoosemisms have a long history and with the time passed they have extended a sphere of their application. For instance, *a lame duck*.

Lame-ducks – The session of Congress which came to a close on the 4th of March in the year following the election of a new president of the USA was nicknamed the Lame-duck Congress because many of those making up this session of Congress had been defeated in the November elections and would be replaced by the successful candidates on March 4th. The session of Congress which convened in 1922 was the first to be called a Lame-duck Congress and members of this Congress were known as Lame-ducks [14, P. 248].

Nowadays this zoosemism has negative connotation and it is associated with the political weakness characterizing the President at the end of his ruling term without the right to run for President again, so actually he has only nominal power and his opinion often is no longer important in serious political decision making.

One more feature of political zoosemisms has been noticed, namely the ability of some of them to make pairs-antagonists. We have found out several such pairs, oppositions which can be considered as connotative antonyms.

Under connotative antonyms we understand such words that have no opposing seme like (*good – bad*, *day – night*, *black – white*) in their primary meaning, but acquire it as a connotation only in a special context that allows to contrast them. We classified these words into groups according to their belonging to the world of animals, birds or insects.

Table 1 - Lexis-semantic groups of connotative antonyms

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60797/IRJ.2024.150.52.1>

BIRDS	ANIMALS	INSECTS
hawks – doves	elephants – donkeys bear – bull	gypsy moths – boll weevils

Connotative antonyms, as a rule, name the representatives having opposing political ideas and views, belonging to rivaling political parties. Let's consider the zoosemisms-connotative antonyms from the WORLD of BIRDS:

hawk – 2. a person who believes in strong action or the use of force, esp. one who supports warlike political ideas [12].

dove – 2. (in politics) a person in favour of peace and compromise [12].

The words "Hawk" and "Dove", which include a priory an element of evaluative connotation (positive one is in the word dove as the symbol of peace, negative one is in the noun hawk – an image of a carnivorous bird is imagined at once), started signifying the supporters of war actions (hawk – negative assessment) and those who are for peaceful negotiations (dove – positive assessment), since that time when American parliamentarians divided in the opinions on the issue of Vietnam war. The war has complicated the existing frames of connotation for the account of additional, ideological component.

Lexemes "hawk" and "dove" are of current interest even nowadays. For example, in Washington, there exists one of the most politicized bars in the country, named "Hawks and Doves", and both words were used in the same meanings concerning the American war in Iraqi that caused not less contradictory opinions. We provide an example from an American writer Kurt Vonnegut's saying: ... But we can understand metaphors such as *hawks V-s doves*. Who will win? Will *Hawks* defeat *Doves*? Can *Doves* overcome *Hawks*? *Hawks* are prepared to lie, cheat and kill. *Doves* do not want to lie, cheat and kill. If *doves* won't fight *hawks* on the *hawks'* terms, how can *doves* win? [10, P. 39-40].

The next pair of connotative antonyms belongs to the ANIMAL WORLD:

Elephant – the symbol of the Republican party since 1874 [13, P. 190].

Donkey – the symbol of the Democratic party since 1874 [13, P. 175].

Thanks to Ignatius Donnelly's (1831-1901) critical comment that "the Democratic party is like a mule – without pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity" [13, P. 176], the word donkey gained a negative evaluating connotation in comparison to elephant, which has no negative comments registered in the dictionary.

Regarding the next pair – bull-bear, we should mention that these lexical units are recorded in the dictionary of political words, though they can be viewed as connotative antonyms only in one of their meanings and more suit for business sphere. Nevertheless, the words are polysemantic and they can be used in rather wide political context. Let us see these definitions.

Bear – 1. One who believes that prices on a stock market will decline, as opposed to a bull, who believes they will rise. 2. The Soviet Union, whose national symbol is the bear. (Now it is Russia (our comment)). 3. A series of Soviet bombers [13, P. 47].

Bull – 1. One who believes that prices on a stock market will rise. *Compare to* bear. 2. A lame excuse or lie. 3. A slang term for a police officer or prison guard. 4. An official message from the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, so called because bulla refers to the official seal used on such documents [13, P. 72].

Let's regard a pair of connotative antonyms belonging to the WORLD of INSECTS.

Gypsy moths – those liberal and moderate Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives who tend to deny support to President Ronald Reagan's domestic and foreign policies. They are called gypsy moths, in contrast to boll weevils, after a leaf-eating moth found in the north, because most of these House members represent congressional districts from the Northeast and Midwest [13, P. 259].

Boll weevils – a long used term for southern Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives who support conservative policies. 2. Southern Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives who have supported President Ronald Reagan's economic programs. Boll weevils are insects that feed on cotton. *Compare to* gypsy moths [13, P. 59].

Figurative nominations-zoosemisms coming from the world of insects represent the opposing political forces in the USA Parliament in the epoch of President Ronald Reagan.

However not all political zoosemisms are registered in the dictionaries. Many metaphorical nominations exist on the speech level; and they can be seen as components of similes and other expressions of different politicians and journalists.

Zoomorphic metaphors, according to E.V. Bakumova and D.Yu. Gulinov, "are connected with the negative assessment of definite political phenomena and possess an aggressive pragmatic potential [1, P. 220]". Let's give the examples:

1. Russia's *twin-headed eagle* faces east towards Asia as well as west towards Europe (The Economist, 2016, Nov.26, P.48).

In this context, the foreign policy of Russia has been figuratively represented in the image of a two-headed eagle (the Russian coat of arms), which, according to the journalist's opinion, threatens both the East and the West. Zoosemism *twin-headed eagle* is called for highlighting the possible double danger for the whole world.

2. Christopher Shays is confronting Democrat Diane Farrell, who is a natural pol and has taken *like a bloodhound* to his chase (Washington.com/ Nov. 6, 2006, A09).

In this example, the comparison (*like a bloodhound to his chase*) characterizes the political rivalry, in the result of which a Democrat Diane Farrell has to "catch up with" her competitor Christopher Shays. We have noticed that sometimes women-politicians are subjected to verbal depreciation by means of figurative comparisons and metaphoric nomination. In particular, it was noted that the women-politicians are figuratively endowed with dogs' qualities (*like a bloodhound*) [10, P. 138].

In the course of selection and analysis of political zoosemisms, it also has been noted that zoosemisms are widely used in a number of nicknames of politicians.

Nicknames of some politicians with the zoonymic component selected from the dictionary "American nicknames. Their Origin and Significance".

Federal Bull-dog – Martin Luther, politician in 1787 [14, P. 285]

Great Wolf – William Tryon, Governor of North Carolina [14, P. 181]

Bull Moose, the Old Lion, the Man on Horseback – Theodore Roosevelt, US President [14, P. 384-385]

The Owl – John Nance Garner, Vice President of the US [14, P. 166]

The Old Fox – George Washington, US President [14, P. 490]

The Coiner of Weasel Words – Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the USA [14, P. 513]

Warhorse of the Confederacy – James Longstreet, an American Confederate general [14, P. 488]

The Watchdog of the Treasury – Elihu Benjamin Washburne, politician 1853-1869 [14, P. 490].

Political nicknames with a zoonymic component seldom have positive connotation that is called for elevating a politician (for example, *the Old Lion*). Usually, they "highlight any conspicuous feature of a person, often negative one, that negatively reflects on a referent's image. Frequently, the political opponents give derogatory nicknames to their rivals. Sometimes a man involuntarily reveals his weak sides before the enemy; and the watchful malevolent people use it in their interests. For example, T. Roosevelt's usual answer to the question about his health was "Fit as bull moose" (in good health), that caused attaching to him a nickname "*Bull Moose*" [10, P. 148-149].

The opponents tried to ridicule him in such a way, but "Roosevelt's friends and the adherents of the Progressive Party, however, proudly accepted this nickname for him, declaring that the bull moose, a large male member of the deer family found in the extreme northwestern part of the United States, was one of the largest most powerful, most noble, and sturdiest of American animals [14, P. 385]".

In any case, political nicknames based on zoosemisms are very effective as means of assessment. They stick to a politician so firmly that trace him down to the history, causing strong unavoidable associations with him.

Conclusion

In modern political discourse, lexis with the zoonymic component mainly serves manipulative aims. Political zoosemisms or zoomorphic metaphors are widely used and function as a means of assessment with the purpose of forming a particular biased opinion. The emotionally colored expressions with a high evaluative potential, such as nicknames, based on zoonyms are the easiest way to form seldom positive, but more often negative opinion about this or that politician. Due to the fact that such words are expressive and memorable, they have long-lasting associations with the object of assessment. Most derogatory political nicknames with the zoonymic component are aimed to ridicule the politicians in order to discredit and spoil their political image.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

Список литературы / References

1. Бакумова Е.В. Роль метафоры в реализации интенций инаугурационного обращения / Е.В. Бакумова, Д.Ю. Гулинов // Человек в коммуникации: концепт, жанр, дискурс. — Волгоград: Парадигма, 2006. — С. 218–223.
2. Вершинина Т.С. Зооморфная, фитоморфная и антропоморфная метафора в современном политическом дискурсе : дис. ...канд. : 10.02.01 : защищена 2002-01-19 : утв. 2002-08-19 / Т.С. Вершинина. — Екатеринбург, 2002. — 225 с.
3. Киприянова А.А. Об ассоциативной семантической нагрузке зоосемизмов / А.А. Киприянова // Семантика языковых единиц. Доклады VI Международной конференции. — Москва, 1998. — С. 23.
4. Имо Л. Зоосемизмы и зоонимы в составе фразеологических единиц / Л. Имо // Современная наука: актуальные проблемы теории и практики. — 2021. — № 3. — С. 137–143.
5. Солнцева Н.В. Сопоставительный анализ зоонимов русского, французского и немецкого языков в этносемантическом аспекте : дис. ... канд. : 10.02.01 : защищена 2004-05-17 : утв. 2004-11-25 / Н.В. Солнцева. — Омск, 2004. — 220 с.
6. Спиридовский О.В. Лингвокультурные характеристики президентской риторики как вида политического дискурса / О.В. Спиридовский — Воронеж: НАУКА-ЮНИПРЕС, 2011. — 173 с.
7. Томахин Г.Д. США. Лингвострановедческий словарь / Г.Д. Томахин. — Москва: Рус яз, 2000. — 576 с.
8. Шейгал Е.И. Семиотика политического дискурса: Монография / Е.И. Шейгал. — Волгоград: Ин-т языкознания РАН; Волгогр. гос. пед. ун-т. Перемена, 2000. — 368 с.
9. Шульга М.В. Грамматические оппозиции в истории морфологии имени / М.В. Шульга. — Москва: Индрик, 2017. — 256 с.
10. Шустова И.Н. Роль аксиологической лексики в формировании имиджа англоязычных политических деятелей : дис. ...канд. : 10.02.04 : защищена 2012-02-27 : утв. 2012-04-09 / И.Н. Шустова — Воронеж: 2012.— 186 с.
11. Political dictionary. — 2002 — URL: <https://politicaldictionary.com/> (accessed: 07.11.2024)
12. Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture. — London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992. — 1528 p.

13. Shafritz J.M. The Dorsey Dictionary of American Government and Politics / J.M. Shafritz. — Chicago; Illinois: The Dorsey press, 1988. — 670 p.
14. Shankle G.E. American nicknames. Their Origin and Significance / G.E. Shankle — N.Y.: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1967. — 524 p.

Список литературы на английском языке / References in English

1. Bakumova E.V. Rol' metafory v realizatsii intentsij inauguracionnogo obraschenija [The role of metaphor in implementing the intentions of the inaugural address] / E.V. Bakumova, D.Ju. Gulinov // Man in communication: concept, genre, discourse: Collection of scientific works. — Volgograd: Paradigma, 2006. — P. 218–223. [in Russian]
2. Vershinina T.S. Zoomorfnaia, fitomorfnaia i antropomorfnaia metafora v sovremennom politicheskom diskurse [Zoomorphic, phytomorphic and anthropomorphic metaphor in contemporary political discourse] : dis....of PhD in Social and Human Sciences : 10.02.01 : defense of the thesis 2002-01-19 : approved 2002-08-19 / T.S. Vershinina. — Ekaterinburg, 2002. — 225 p. [in Russian]
3. Kiprijanova A.A. . Ob assotsiativnoj semanticheskoi nagruzke zoosemizmov [About associative semantic loading of zoosemisms] / A.A. Kiprijanova // Semantics of linguistic units. Papers of the VI International Conference. — Moskva, 1998. — P. 23. [in Russian]
4. Imo L. Zoosemizmy i zoonimy v sostave frazeologicheskikh edinits [Zoosemisms and zoonyms in phraseological units] / L. Imo // Modern science: topical problems of theory and practice. — 2021. — № 3. — P. 137–143. [in Russian]
5. Solntseva N.V. Sopotavitel'nyj analiz zoonimov russkogo, frantsuzskogo i nemetskogo jazykov v etnosemanticheskom aspekte [Comparative analysis of Russian, French and German zoonyms in ethno-semantic aspect] : dis. ... of PhD in Social and Human Sciences : 10.02.01 : defense of the thesis 2004-05-17 : approved 2004-11-25 / N.V. Solntseva. — Omsk, 2004. — 220 p. [in Russian]
6. Spiridovskij O.V. Lingvokul'turnye karakteristiki prezident'skoj ritoriki kak vida politicheskogo diskursa [Linguocultural characteristics of presidential rhetoric as a type of political discourse] / O.V. Spiridovskij. — Voronezh: AUKA-JuNIPRES, 2011. — 173 p. [in Russian]
7. Tomahin G.D. SShA. Lingvostranovedcheskij slovar' [USA. Linguocultural dictionary] / G.D. Tomahin — Moskva: Rus jaz., 2000. — 576 p. [in Russian]
8. Shejgal E.I. Semiotika politicheskogo diskursa: Monografija [Semiotics of political discourse] / E.I. Shejgal. — Volgograd: Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Volgograd State Pedagogical University Change, 2000. — 368 p. [in Russian]
9. Shul'ga M.V. Grammaticheskie oppozitsii v istorii morfologii imeni [Grammatical oppositions in the history of the name morphology] / M.V. Shul'ga. — Moskva: Indrik, 2017. — 256 p. [in Russian]
10. Shustova I.N. Rol' aksiologicheskoi leksiki v formirovanii imidzha anglojazychnykh politicheskikh dejatelej [The role of axiological lexis in the forming of the image of English speaking politicians] : dis....of PhD in Social and Human Sciences : 10.02.04 : defense of the thesis 2012-02-27 : approved 2012-04-09 / I.N. Shustova — Voronezh: 2012.— 186 p. [in Russian]
11. Political dictionary. — 2002 — URL: <https://politicaldictionary.com/> (accessed: 07.11.2024)
12. Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture. — London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992. — 1528 p.
13. Shafritz J.M. The Dorsey Dictionary of American Government and Politics / J.M. Shafritz. — Chicago; Illinois: The Dorsey press, 1988. — 670 p.
14. Shankle G.E. American nicknames. Their Origin and Significance / G.E. Shankle — N.Y.: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1967. — 524 p.