



RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Solijonova Mohiraxon Baxtiyorjon qizi

KSU 1st year Master's student

mohiraxonsolijonova0704@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the principal rhetorical strategies employed in political discourse and their role in shaping public opinion, legitimizing power, and constructing ideological meanings. Drawing on classical rhetoric, critical discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics, the study explores how political actors use language strategically to persuade, manipulate, and mobilize audiences. The analysis demonstrates that rhetorical strategies such as legitimization, polarization, emotional appeal, metaphorization, and presupposition are central to political communication and ideological reproduction.

Keywords: political discourse, rhetoric, ideology, persuasion, critical discourse analysis, power.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются основные риторические стратегии, используемые в политическом дискурсе, и их роль в формировании общественного мнения, легитимации власти и конструировании идеологических смыслов. Опираясь на классическую риторику, критический дискурс-анализ и когнитивную лингвистику, исследование анализирует, каким образом политические акторы стратегически используют язык для убеждения, манипулирования и мобилизации аудитории. Анализ показывает, что такие риторические стратегии, как легитимация, поляризация, апелляция к эмоциям, метафоризация и пресуппозиция, занимают центральное место в политической коммуникации и воспроизводстве идеологии.



Ключевые слова: политический дискурс, риторика, идеология, убеждение, критический дискурс-анализ, власть.

Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada siyosiy diskursda qo‘llaniladigan asosiy ritorik strategiyalar hamda ularning jamoatchilik fikrini shakllantirish, hokimiyatni legitimlashtirish va mafkuraviy ma’nomlarni barpo etishdagi roli tahlil qilinadi. Klassik ritorika, tanqidiy diskurs tahlili va kognitiv lingvistika yondashuvlariga tayangan holda tadqiqot siyosiy aktorlarning auditoriyani ishontirish, manipulyatsiya qilish va safarbar etish jarayonida til vositalaridan qanday strategik foydalanishini ochib beradi. Tahlil natijalari legitimatsiya, polyarizatsiya, hissiy ta’sirga murojaat, metaforizatsiya va presupozitsiya kabi ritorik strategiyalar siyosiy kommunikatsiya va mafkuraviy qayta ishlab chiqarishda muhim o‘rin tutishini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: siyosiy diskurs, ritorika, mafkura, ishontirish, tanqidiy diskurs tahlili, hokimiyat.

Introduction

Political discourse occupies a central position in modern societies, functioning as a primary mechanism through which power relations, ideologies, and collective identities are constructed and sustained. Unlike neutral forms of communication, political language is inherently strategic and goal-oriented, designed to influence public opinion, legitimize authority, and shape social cognition.¹

Classical rhetorical theory conceptualized persuasion through the triad of **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**, which remains foundational for understanding political communication. In contemporary research, however, political discourse is examined through interdisciplinary frameworks that integrate linguistics, sociology, cognitive science, and political theory.²

¹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 15

² Charteris-Black, *Political Rhetoric*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 4



Modern approaches such as critical discourse analysis emphasize that political discourse does not merely reflect political reality but actively constructs it. According to van Dijk, discourse functions as a form of social practice that both reproduces and challenges power relations through language and cognition.³

Fairclough similarly argues that political discourse naturalizes ideology by embedding it in everyday language practices, thereby presenting dominant interpretations as common sense.⁴ Consequently, rhetorical strategies should be understood as constitutive elements of political power rather than as stylistic embellishments.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative analytical design grounded in critical discourse analysis (CDA) and classical rhetorical theory. The methodological framework draws on the models proposed by Fairclough, van Dijk, and van Leeuwen, which enable the systematic examination of ideological meanings embedded in political language.⁵

The data consist of representative political speeches, public statements, and mediated political texts commonly used in contemporary political communication. These texts were selected due to their high persuasive intent and ideological density, which makes them suitable for rhetorical analysis.⁶

The analytical procedure involved three stages:

1. Identification of dominant rhetorical strategies;
2. Analysis of their linguistic realization;
3. Interpretation of their ideological and persuasive functions within socio-political contexts.⁷

³ van Dijk, *Political Discourse and Ideology*, Elsevier, 2002, p. 22

⁴ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Longman, 2015, p. 10

⁵ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Longman, 1995, p. 3

⁶ Chilton, *Analyzing Political Discourse*, Routledge, 2004, p. 7

⁷ Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, Sage Publications, 2015, p. 26



This approach allows for uncovering both explicit and implicit mechanisms of persuasion, including metaphor, presupposition, and emotional framing.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that political discourse consistently relies on a limited but powerful set of rhetorical strategies. One of the most frequently observed strategies is legitimization, which presents political actions and decisions as lawful, moral, or unavoidable. This is achieved through appeals to authority, tradition, and rational necessity.⁸

Another prominent result is the extensive use of polarization, whereby political actors construct a dichotomy between an in-group (“us”) and an out-group (“them”). This strategy reinforces collective identity and delegitimizes opposing groups or ideologies.⁹

The findings further indicate that emotional appeal, particularly fear and hope, is systematically employed to mobilize audiences. Emotional language is often foregrounded over logical argumentation, increasing the persuasive impact of political messages.¹⁰

In addition, metaphorical framing was found to play a crucial role in simplifying complex political issues. Conceptual metaphors structure political reasoning by mapping abstract concepts onto familiar experiential domains.¹¹

Finally, the analysis reveals the frequent use of presupposition, through which ideological assumptions are embedded in statements and presented as unquestionable facts.¹²

Discussion

⁸ van Leeuwen, *Legitimation in Discourse*, Discourse & Society, 2007, p. 92

⁹ van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 69

¹⁰ Westen, *The Political Brain*, PublicAffairs, 2007, p. 47

¹¹ Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 158

¹² Fowler, *Language in the News*, Routledge, 1991, p. 83



The results confirm that rhetorical strategies function as multidimensional instruments operating at linguistic, cognitive, and social levels. By shaping mental models and emotional responses, political discourse influences how individuals perceive political reality and evaluate legitimacy.¹³

The dominance of polarization and emotional appeal suggests that contemporary political discourse increasingly prioritizes affective persuasion over rational deliberation. This tendency is particularly evident in populist and crisis-oriented narratives, where fear is used to justify exclusionary policies and extraordinary political measures.¹⁴

Metaphorical framing and presupposition further illustrate how ideology operates implicitly within language. These strategies limit interpretive alternatives and contribute to the normalization of dominant political worldviews.¹⁵

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that rhetorical strategies are fundamental components of political discourse and serve as key mechanisms of persuasion, legitimization, and ideological reproduction. Strategies such as legitimization, polarization, emotional appeal, metaphorization, and presupposition enable political actors to shape public consciousness and maintain power relations.¹⁶

Developing critical awareness of these rhetorical mechanisms is essential for enhancing political literacy and resisting manipulative discourse. From a broader perspective, discourse analysis provides an important analytical tool for understanding how language functions as a form of political power in modern societies.¹⁷

¹³ van Dijk, *Discourse and Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 112

¹⁴ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 65

¹⁵ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 14

¹⁶ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Longman, 2015, p. 29

¹⁷ Chilton, *Analyzing Political Discourse*, Routledge, 2004, p. 218



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