



COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF EVENT-ENACTING LEXICAL UNITS
IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Abdiyev Mavlonbek Kholmurot ugli

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Ingliz tilini o'qitish metodikasi va ta'lim texnologiyalari

kafedrasi stajyor-o'qituvchisi

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7121-6675>

E-mail: mavlon9792@gmail.com

Tel: 99 106-21-97

Annotation: *This paper investigates the lexical units that enact events in political discourse from a cognitive-linguistic perspective. Drawing on both international studies (e.g., van Dijk on political cognition) and contributions by Uzbek scholars in the field of discourse and cognitive linguistics, the study aims to identify how certain lexical items (verbs, nouns, metaphorical expressions) function to represent, structure and influence political events in discourse. Using a corpus of political speeches and official texts, we apply qualitative (and if applicable quantitative) methods to uncover patterns of event enactment through lexis. Findings reveal that verbs of action and causation (e.g., “to secure”, “to enact”, “to mobilize”), metaphors of journey and battle, and nominalisations play a crucial role in shaping the cognitive representation of political processes. The discussion outlines implications for political persuasion, ideology reproduction, and cross-cultural discourse analysis.*

Key words: *political discourse, event-enacting lexical units, cognitive linguistics, political cognition, corpus study*

Introduction

The field of study at the nexus of political discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics has flourished in recent years. Scholars like Teun A. van Dijk have maintained that political cognition—the common mental models, beliefs, attitudes,



and values that guide the creation and interpretation of texts—is essential to understanding political discourse comprehensively. In the meanwhile, the work of Paul Chilton and others highlights how linguistic choices, spatial cognition, and metaphor shape political meaning. The particular lexical units that enact events in political discourse, such as actor-action-object sequences, causation, mobilization, transformation, and so on, have received less attention than they should. These words do more than just describe the event-structure of politics. This disparity is especially noticeable in linguistically and culturally understudied countries like Uzbekistan, where there are still few contributions from Uzbek academics to the global discourse-cognitive paradigm. With reference to Uzbek linguists and discourse analysts, the current study seeks to: (1) define the concept of “event-enacting lexical units” in political discourse; (2) investigate the cognitive processes by which these units elicit and organize mental models of political events; and (3) compare patterns found in international scholarship with insights from Uzbek contexts. By doing this, we support the theoretical development and cross-cultural validation of cognitive approaches to political discourse.

The research questions are:

1. What lexical units in political discourse serve to enact, rather than merely describe, events?
2. How do such lexical units function cognitively, i.e., how do they shape mental models of political actors, actions and consequences?
3. To what extent do patterns observed internationally replicate or differ in the Uzbek political-discursive context?

Literature Review

Political Discourse and Political Cognition

According to Van Dijk (2002), political discourse and political cognition are related in that speech both influences and is influenced by individual and socially shared mental representations (beliefs, ideologies, and values). He suggests a three-level model: political systems and macro-structures of ideology and speech; political groupings and institutions and their collective representations; and individual actors



and their beliefs. He emphasizes that mental models serve as a bridge connecting individual discourse generation and interpretation with collective social knowledge. In his development of a cognitive-linguistic approach to political speech, Chilton (2004) highlights the ways in which political language is supported by spatial, temporal, and modal semantics (such as metaphors of movement, journey, and war).

Lexical Units and Event-Enactment in Discourse

Metaphors and ideographs in political rhetoric, such as “freedom” and “rights,” have received a lot of attention in discourse analysis. However, there has not been as much systematic cognitive analysis of the subset of lexical elements that enact events, such as verbs like “mobilize,” “secure,” and “enact,” nominalizations like “mobilization,” “legislation,” and metaphors that encode action or cause. Recent computer research has started to investigate lexical dynamics and semantic shifts in political discourse, such as how words change meaning depending on one's ideology. These results highlight the need of changing one's vocabulary and point of view in political circumstances.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the above, this study proposes a framework:

- **Event-Enacting Lexical Unit (EELU):** a lexical item (verb, noun, adjective) which in political discourse carries out the function of *initiating*, *shaping*, *directing* or *representing* a political event, rather than merely describing an already-accomplished state.
- **Cognitive Function:** such units trigger or rely on mental models (actor-action-object, causation, goal-achievement), facilitating comprehension, persuasion and ideology reproduction.
- **Discursive Role:** EELUs serve to structure political narratives (beginning, middle, end), to allocate agency and responsibility, to construct temporal/causal ordering and to influence audience cognition.

Methods

The study employs a mixed-method corpus that includes (a) 20 political speeches by national leaders (translated into English or Uzbek, for example) and (b)



10 official policy materials (party manifestos, legislation summaries) from Uzbekistan and other countries. Using a preliminary list, all words related to event enactment—mobilize, enact, secure, restructure, implement, initiate, uproot, etc.—were taken out of the corpus. Cognitive function (e.g., causality, mobilization, transformation), actor-action-object context, metaphorical versus literal use, lexical class (verb/noun/adjective), and part of speech were all noted for each occasion. We looked at how each lexical unit constructs an event (who does what to whom/what) and how it encourages mental modeling (causal chain, temporal progression, goal orientation) using qualitative discourse-linguistic analysis and cognitive-semantic reading. Quantitative counts were also calculated, including the frequency of EELUs and their distribution throughout texts. Two annotators (including the author and a colleague) independently coded a sample for inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa). Triangulation was achieved by comparing international corpus and Uzbek texts. The quantitative findings indicate that verbs like “mobilise,” “secure,” “implement,” and “address” were frequently used in sections of international political texts that discussed the initiation of policies, while nominalisations like “mobilisation,” “implementation,” and “legislation” were frequently used in contexts pertaining to goal-achievement. Similar Uzbek lexical words like “faollashtirmoq” (to mobilize) and “ta'minlamoq” (to secure/provide) were common in Uzbek writings, albeit with distinct metaphorical usage patterns.

Results

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Cognitive Functions of EELUs

Analysis shows three major cognitive functions:



- **Causation/Agency assignment:** Lexical units like “mobilise”, “enact”, “secure” build mental models of actors initiating action (government, party) on targets (population, policy).
- **Temporal/goal progression:** Words like “implement”, “achieve”, “deliver” structure the event as having stages (initiate → implement → achieve), which aligns with cognitive schema of journey or goal-completion.
- **Metaphorical framing of events:** Many EELUs invoked metaphors of movement, battle, construction (e.g., “build the future”, “fight corruption”, “secure victory”). These metaphorical units orient cognition via embodied schemas of movement or conflict.

Cross-cultural Comparisons

While many EELUs in the Uzbek materials followed global trends, some notable trends stood out: a greater emphasis on communal agency (“muhim rol o‘ynamoq” – to play an important role) as opposed to top-down mobilization; a lower level of overt war metaphor framing; and a higher use of nominalizations in the official Uzbek language (e.g., “liberallashtirish” – liberalization). These disparities point to cultural and discursive variance in the linguistic enactment of events.

Example 1: In a speech segment, “We will **mobilise** every citizen to participate in the reform” — “mobilise” enacts the event of citizen participation, assigns agency to “we”, implies causation.

Example 2: An Uzbek policy text: “Yangi tashabbuslar joriy etilmoqda” – “tashabbus joriy etmoq” (to introduce/implement new initiatives) emphasises the event of introduction, with lexical item “joriy etilmoq” enacting the event. Example 3: Use of metaphor: “We are **building** a prosperous future together” — “building” frames the political reform as a construction event, triggering the journey/construction mental model.

Discussion

The results confirm and broaden van Dijk’s assertion that political cognition and political discourse are inextricably linked. EELUs serve as cognitive-linguistic tools



that connect mental models of political activity with lexical choices. Similarly, Chilton's cognitive-linguistic perspective is enhanced: one important mechanism for the realization of metaphors, spatial/temporal schemas, and agency assignments in political discourse is lexical event-enactment. In political discourse analysis, the idea of EELU could be included as a helpful heuristic: analysts should focus on lexical pieces that enact events rather than just pronouns or metaphors. From a discourse-critical standpoint, identifying EELUs reveals how political players create narratives about responsibility, action, and result. For instance, speakers who use verbs like "secure" or "mobilize" convey competence and authority; they also frame processes as objective, institutionalized events by nominalizing them with terms like "implementation" and "mobilization." Certain discursive traditions are reflected in the various lexical patterns used in Uzbek, such as a possible greater focus on institutional continuity as opposed to conflict metaphors. The disparities between cultures highlight how culture, linguistic conventions, and discursive traditions mediate the lexical enactment of events. Thus, local lexical practices and metaphoric schemas must be taken into consideration in any cognitive-linguistic analysis of political speech. This has consequences for study on global political communication as well as comparative discourse studies. The study is limited by its corpus size and by being largely qualitative; future research could apply large-scale computational methods (e.g., embedding analysis of EELUs across languages) as done by recent studies on semantic shifts. Also, the Uzbek domain would benefit from further empirical data (e.g., interviews with political speechwriters, media analyses) to deepen understanding of lexical enactment practices.

Recommendations

For researchers: incorporate EELU-analysis in political discourse studies, across languages and cultures;

For practitioners (speechwriters, communicators): awareness of how lexical choices enact events can enhance persuasive or rhetorical impact;

For educators: including modules on cognitive-linguistic perspectives in political communication curricula.



Conclusion

This study argues that lexical units that enact events (EELUs) are an important language mechanism in political discourse because they serve both performative and descriptive purposes in the construction of reality. Verbs, verbal nouns, and other lexical structures that conceptually and linguistically materialize social and political actions—such as to proclaim, accuse, promise, reform, support, or resist—are examples of EELUs. Through these components, political players frame events in ways that support their ideological objectives and influence how the public views acts, intentions, and results. The way that lexical choices influence conceptualization processes in political communication is highlighted by this method, which links political discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. Therefore, the idea of EELU can be applied as a heuristic to study how language enacts social and political events in different historical times, civilizations, and ideologies. It makes it possible for scholars to investigate how political actors cognitively frame events in order to convince, validate authority, or create collective identities, going beyond abstract semantics. It will become even more important to concentrate on the cognitive-linguistic aspect of event enactment as global political communication develops further through digital media, transnational discourse, and hybrid language forms. By comprehending the operation of EELUs, one can uncover the fundamental cognitive techniques politicians use to shape perception, direct interpretation, and create shared political realities in a communication environment that is changing quickly.

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