

# Gender Peculiarities of Modern English-Language Political Discourse

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## Abstract

The paper examines the gender orientation of political discourse from a stylistic viewpoint. Gender markers contemporary English political discourse and the colloquial clichés that these markers form are analyzed. As politicians appear on the political stage, the verbalization of their political ideas is a new and promising oratorical experience. Therefore, the ways and means of analyzing the linguistic characteristics of politicians in terms of tenderness and benevolence seem to be a relevant and promising aspect of the study, given the linguistic and psychological features of intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** verbalization, gender, gender marker, verbal dominants, political discourse, stylistic aspect

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of political discourse, especially its gender aspects. Gender-oriented research is a socio-cultural construct associated with the attribution of certain qualities and norms of behavior to individuals based on their biological sex. It is a relatively new field of humanitarian knowledge. Among the well-known works dealing with gender studies are the following written by A.K. Iermolaiev(2017), T.A. Klymenkova(2006), O.I. Horoshko(1999), M.D. Horodnikova(2000) and others. Among foreign scholars dealing with the problems of gender linguistics, the works written by R. Lakoff(2004), D. Cameron(2009), B. Preisler (1995), F. Smith(2002), O. Jespersen(1922), D. Spender(1980), M. Adler(2017), and others stand out.

Although the gendered features of political discourse in political English are a relatively new and promising area of research, there are still unresolved aspects of this general problem. In particular, not all aspects of gender discourse have been studied from a comparative point of view, i.e., different linguistic expressions and styles used by politicians of different genders and gender identities have not been compared with each other. Also, various aspects of intercultural communication, which play an important role in the political dialogue between different cultures and languages, have not been fully explored. The relevance of the problem of gender peculiarities in political discourse cannot be overestimated, as it is directly related to the issues of power, support for public ideals, and cultural identity. Political discourse is a means of expressing political ideas and, at the same time, a tool for supporting or damaging various interest groups in society, including in terms of gender. Therefore, the study of gender discourse in politics is of great importance for understanding political processes and social dynamics in the modern world.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The research aims at investigating:

- a. The use of gendered language in political discourse, which has been found to have significant effects on the way in which political messages are received by audiences.
- b. The research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how gender is constructed and performed through language, and to explore the potential implications of these constructions for political communication and representation.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The study is stylistic in essence. There are many research methods used in this research including observation, analysis, comparison, hypothetical deduction and induction, and discourse analysis. The process of analysis starts by identifying gender markers in political speeches, such as the use of specific words, sentence structures, and nonverbal cues. The aim is to collect data on how gender influences political communication. Then, there is the analysis and Comparison process which involves analyzing and comparing the language used by male and female politicians in political discourse. It aims at identifying the similarities and differences as for vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and rhetorical strategies used by both genders. The final process of analysis is hypothetical deduction and induction: it involves developing hypotheses about the underlying gender dynamics at play in political discourse, based on the data collected through observation and analysis. The hypotheses will then be tested through further analysis and comparison. By and large, the process of analysis involves examining the broader social and cultural context in which political discourse takes place, including the historical, political, and cultural factors that shape gender roles and expectations with a view to providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between gender and political communication.

The study analyzes the speeches of both Boris Johnson and Liz Truss as a case study.

### 4. Results

As a structural component of the political media discourse field, political representatives interact and influence each other. Modern terminology uses the term "political media discourse" to describe political communication in the media between interactants of media broadcasting.

The verbal process of interaction consists of successive statements by the speaker that take into account the opinion of the other political interlocutors. That is, it has certain structural components between the thoughts and actions of each participant in the political communication dialog. The study of discursive materials in political media allows, on the one hand, predicting future actions and intentions of politicians, and on the other hand, to determine the best opportunities and methods of influencing the audience to achieve the effect of influencing the policy of language interaction (Melnyk, 2009, p.111).

Gender aspects are a particularly interesting area of research in linguistics, an approach whose main focus is on linguistic differences between men and women. One of the primary tasks of political discourse research in modern linguistics is to study communicative behavior as an integral component that characterizes the activities of political leaders in the professional sphere. Gendered communicative behavior is socially determined. It requires a systematic description based on the materials of political discourse.

The analysis of political leaders' speeches will allow us to explore gender differences in the field of oral communication. Thus, a politician's speech can have a targeted impact on a male or female audience if a gender-oriented approach is applied.

In studying the gender specifics of political interactions, we focus on the gender specifics of political communication. Researchers have identified the following characteristics of interactions between men and women in the process of political communication:

1. Women politicians can be more emotional and flexible in their political statements and actions. Moreover, they can easily change their social roles during speech interaction, putting themselves in the position of a listener and listening to another point of view, and paying attention to comments. Men may have a harder time shifting their attention. They are more likely to show emotional detachment.
2. Women are more likely to give specific factual examples based on their own experience or refer to the experience of friends or relatives. Male politicians, on the other hand, tend to be more inclined to plan for the future and less inclined to reflect and analyze past mistakes.
3. Frequently, the initiative to interrupt a conversation comes from the man who is involved in the conversation.
4. The speeches of male politicians also contain explicit specific, precise, out-of-context judgments and proposals. They often avoid using emotionally colored words and expressions in political texts, and their speech behavior can be perceived as rude.
5. One of the features of women's political speech can be the emotional intensity of the examples, facts, and phenomena used.
6. Male politicians are often associated with areas of human activity such as business, economics, or political careers.
7. Women's statements can be psychologically emotional, but this is not a general rule. Men can also use evaluations in their statements. Women may emphasize different aspects, including positive and seldom neutral evaluations.

People engaged in political activities often focus the audience's attention on negative comments, sometimes quite harshly. Researchers have identified these features of the speech of men and women involved in political dialogue as key (Kondratenko, N. V., 2017).

Speech specificity can also include psychological traits, temperament, specifics of professional activity, and the role politicians play in society as a whole, especially in social and status groups.

Foreign scholars who study the communication of women politicians have identified the peculiarities of such behavior. Small affixes are often used in speech acts, indirect speech acts prevail, and women's speech is more likely to use words of politeness. Sometimes questions are used to express their perspective. Moreover, women make a greater attempt to hear and understand the participants of the conversation and focus on their questions.

Thus, the "personality" approach to speech emphasizes various personality traits that are reflected in speech. With this in mind, gender is understood as a social phenomenon that is studied in terms of cultural identity.

In the consolidated analysis of the statements of politicians of both sexes (Boris Johnson and Liz Truss), common linguistic features are highlighted:

1. Addressing the basic concepts of a democratic society (freedom, law, democracy, right, equality, justice):

"I have one message for you today: Ukraine will win, Ukraine will be free", "And I tell you why I believe you will succeed, members of the Rada", "They will say that Ukrainians proved by their tenacity and sacrifice that tanks and guns cannot suppress a nation fighting for its independence, and that is why I believe that Ukraine will win", "And it is precisely because we understand this danger in Britain and Ukraine – precisely because we are democracies, and because we have a free media, the rule of law, free elections and robust parliaments, such as your own, we know that these are the best protections against the perils of arbitrary power" (Johnson, 2022).

These concepts are "sacred formulas" for every citizen of their country. Here are their characteristics and frequency of use in political speeches. In addition, speakers use them to justify their actions to the public.

2. The use of comparative and superlative adjectives adds expressiveness:

"There were some who believed the Kremlin propaganda that Russian armour would be like an irresistible force going like a knife through butter, and that Kyiv would fall within days" (Johnson, 2022).

3. The prevalence of negatively colored lexical items (such as failure, disaster, and ruin). Male politicians use these words when they need to discredit the opponent's policy:

"Vladimir Putin, your speech is a fraud and a disgrace. The world must never accept your fake referendums or your brutal and illegal attempt to colonize Ukraine. We stand with the people of Ukraine and will support them without flinching until their country becomes whole and free" (Johnson, 2022).

4. Using words with negative prefixes un-, dis-, il-, im-, in-, ir-:

"The notion of humanitarian intervention was the meddling of the unwise, untutored, and inexperienced" (Johnson, 2022).

5. The use of the word war and semantically related lexical units, such as war, a war crime, Battalion Tactical Groups, armour, military, and guns:

"You have exploded the myth of Putin's invincibility and you have written one of the most glorious chapters in military history and the life of your country".

6. A variety of conjunctions, such as since, as, moreover, thus, therefore, consequently, however, nevertheless:

"And it is precisely because we understand this danger in Britain and Ukraine – precisely because we are democracies, and because we have a free media, the rule of law, free elections, and robust parliaments, such as your own, we know that these are the best protections against the perils of arbitrary power".

The lexical features of female political media discourse include:

1. Frequency of words such as hope believe, feel glad, love, frustrated, doubt, worry, happiness, and a bright future:

"I believe the world is a place where free peoples persevere in achieving their goals and prospering. Where freedom and democracy are strengthened through economic and security cooperation. Where the aggressors are restrained and forced to turn to the right path" (Truss, 2022).

This vocabulary helps in creating a positive image of the politician and bringing him or her closer to the people.

2. Such introductory words as maybe, probably, perhaps, verb seem, modal verbs may, might, indefinite pronouns some, somewhat, somehow, someplace, phrases a kind of, a sort of, and phrases some kind of, some sort of:

"However strong the storm, I know the British people are stronger. We have enormous reserves of talent, energy, and determination. I am confident that together we can rebuild our economy and become a modern, brilliant Britain" (Truss, 2022).

3. Expressing the connotation of obligation with modal verbs:

"We are doubling our efforts. We will try harder to oust Russia from all of Ukraine. We must also maintain such a tough position regarding threats that arise outside of Ukraine" (Truss, 2022).

The openness and official nature of political speeches (election programs, notes, addresses, statements), as well as the peculiarities of the social and legal status of political leaders, oblige them to comply with certain norms and rules of communication behavior.

Politicians' speeches are diverse in terms of stylistic means that make their speeches bright, rich, and effective. The use of these means allows them to influence the audience and facilitate the adoption of decisions that are favorable to the speaker. Thus, speeches of political leaders fulfill their agitation and propaganda tasks.

By using special syntactic constructions intended for the syntactic form of speech, the politician realizes another function - pragmatics. He regulates and coordinates the behavior and activities of participants in political communication, encouraging the audience to act, and prohibiting or condemning any actions. Furthermore, speeches can be analyzed to determine the extent to which they are influenced by gender. Speeches by politicians almost always contain certain peculiarities. Emotionally colored vocabulary is combined with official

business language, the use of rhetorical questions draws attention to the statements of a politician, and the use of inverted word order allows one to convey the topic before specifying details.

Thus, politicians face the need to combine lexical, morphological, and syntactic features of speech. They have to do this in a way that influences listeners, informs them, and at the same time does not overload their speech with various techniques, so that the speech does not seem difficult to understand and lacking in meaning. In other words, a politician must convince the listener with his or her statement using the most possible and optimal set of techniques.

For the leaders of both countries, which are among the world's leading countries, the use of language manipulation is an integral part of their discourse.

## 5. Discussion

Although the speech of men is often characterized by rigidity, their political discourse tends to be expressive and inconsistent. Masculinity, as a feature of the political process, is expressed through metonymy, metaphor, and allusion. Speeches by both men and women are characterized by verbal aggression, intolerance of interlocutors who interrupt each other, and a negative "stigma" of verbal aggression.

Further research should focus on analyzing the feasibility or inappropriateness of distinguishing between purely "female" and purely "male" political discourse. Aggressive and uncompromising political debate in the twenty-first century reduces the chances of isolating typically female speech, which was previously characterized by the use of affectionate suffixes and nominals.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis of politicians' speeches shows that the line between "male" and "female" speech is not clear, and this is mainly due to the peculiarities of the social, linguistic, and cultural situation. It should be noted that at the communicative and pragmatic level, gender factors are reflected in the use of complex language methods and techniques.

Common linguistic features of gendered political media discourse are the frequent use of adjectives of comparative and superlative degree and the active use of several stylistic techniques. The male political media discourse is characterized by the dominance of negative vocabulary, and frequent use of words with negative prefixes and various conjunctions. Women's political media discourse is characterized by the high frequency of words expressing different emotional states, and the use of expressive phrases and words with modal meaning to express obligations, doubts, uncertainty, and opportunities. The study shows that the boundary between masculinity and femininity in political speech is often blurred or uncertain. The main factor in the choice of linguistic means is the discourse itself and its rigidly set parameters aimed at winning the support of voters regardless of their gender.

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