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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**POPULIST RHETORIC IN CONTEMPORARY
AMERICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

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Field of science: Philology

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH

The relevance of the topic and the degree of its development are defined by the growing theoretical and applied need for an in-depth linguistic analysis of the verbal resources employed in the speeches and texts of populist politicians. In this regard, a thorough study of populist rhetoric is required, since it represents a specific speech genre and a thematically integral utterance that carries a political concept. Verbal communication in modern politics—including political language, political texts, political styles, and linguistic resources—is consolidated under the single notion of political discourse. Discourse analysis of the rhetorical impact of political leaders on public opinion requires the study of the rhetorical strategies and tactics of populism. The relevance of the present dissertation is also determined by the examination of a number of controversial issues concerning the stylistic features, lexico-grammatical representatives, and expressive means of populist rhetoric in contemporary American political discourse, as well as the rhetorical competence of U.S. politicians.

An important question in contemporary linguistics is the rhetorical competence of populists, which generates the binary opposition of lexical frames “truth–lie”. This opposition functions as a conceptual metaphor for manipulating discourse concepts. The study of discursive design through framing, as a method of secondary conceptualization of substantive traditional ideas of American populism, helps fill an existing gap in linguistics concerning the analysis of lexico-semantic and stylistic transformations of stable cognitive structures embodied in linguistic form. The dissertation examines and explicates the process of constructing new speech concepts and frames of binary oppositions in contemporary U.S. populist rhetoric.

The significance of this study is determined by the existing scholarly and practical interest in modern linguistics in the processes of rhetorical influence and in texts that shape public opinion within the virtual sphere. In today’s information society, it is especially important to move from the traditional study of isolated linguistic

units of discourse to a comprehensive analysis of rhetorical style, as well as the individual verbal strategies and tactics of populist politicians. Many aspects of the lexical and syntactic means of expression in populist rhetoric have to some extent been investigated within the general theoretical paradigm; however, the specificity of American populist rhetoric has not received adequate scholarly attention.

The role of American populist rhetoric as the sole fundamental foundation of the entire political discourse of the United States has remained virtually unexplored. The manipulative rhetorical technologies of American populism involved in the reformatting of concepts traditionally characteristic of U.S. political discourse, as well as in the creation of new concepts aligned with the demands of the information society, remain insufficiently studied. This dissertation significantly fills that gap.

American populist discourse was the first to master linguistic strategies of manipulation not only in the real sphere but also in the virtual environment. In this respect, the accumulation, systematization, and critical analysis of contemporary populist rhetoric – its manipulative strategies and tactics, the verbal transformation of essential discourse concepts, the individual style (idostyle) of politicians, and the idiolects of their surrogate speakers– represent issues of both theoretical and practical importance, not only for linguistics proper but also for its applied fields.

The general problems of linguistic analysis of the rhetoric of political discourse have been developed in the works of R.Wodak, L.Goodwyn, T.A. van Dijk, S.-L.Tim, M.Jørgensen and L.Phillips, R. Keller, M. Canovan, C. Mudde, N.Postman, M.Halliday, M.Halst, N.Chomsky, M.Foucault, M.Tarco, G.Thompson, M.Edelman¹.

¹ Wodak, R. Language and Politics. / In J. Culpeper, F. Katamba & Paul Kerswill (Eds.), *English Language: Description, Variation and Context.*//R.Wodak. – Basingstoke: Palgrave, – 2009. – 593 p.; Goodwyn, L. *The Populist moment: a short history of the agrarian revolt in America* / L.Goodwyn. – New York: Oxford University Press, – 1978. – 349 p.; Dijk, T.A. van. *Principles of critical discourse analysis* // *Discourse & society*, 1993. Vol. 4, № 2, – p. 249-283; Tim, S.-L. *An Analysis of Jacques Derrida's Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.* /S.-L.Tim. –London: Macat Library, – 2018. – 112 p.; Jorgensen,

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² Anderson, G. Type Speaks: A Lexicon of Expressive, Emotional, and Symbolic Typefaces. / G.Anderson, H. Steven. – New York: Harry N. Abrams. – 2024. – 464 p.; Barcelona, A. Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective / A.Barcelona. – Boston: Walter de Gruyter, – 2003. – 356 p.; Beqiri, G. Ethos, Pathos, Logos: 3 Pillars of Public Speaking and Persuasion: [Electronic resource].URL:<https://virtualespeech.com/blog/ethos-pathos-logos-public-speaking-persuasion.>; Bosch, M.D., Franch P. In God We Trust, with God We Fight. Religion in U.S. Presidential War Rhetoric: From Johnson to Obama. // Journal of Media and Religion. An academic journal published by Taylor & Francis, – January 2017. vol.16, №1, – 32 p.; Brugman, B.C. Metaphorical framing in

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³Alexander, J.C. The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power. /C.J. Alexander. – Oxford University Press, – 2012. – 384 p.; Butler, J. We, the people: Thoughts on Freedom of Assembly. //J. Butler, A. Stagnell, G.D. Strandberg /Populism and the People in Contemporary Critical Thought: Politics, Philosophy, and Aesthetics. – London: Bloomsbury Academic, – 2023. – 258p.; Zavalniuk, I. Lexical-syntactical repetition in the system of stylistic figures: status, specification, functions: [Electronic resource] //I. Zavalniuk, I. Kholod, V. Bohatko / – Czech Republic, AD ALTA: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, – 2022. Vol. 12 (1), – p.268-274. URL: <https://www.magnanimitas.cz/ad-alta-journal-of-interdisciplinary-research>.; Framing the issues: UC Berkeley professor G.Lakoff tells how conservatives use language to dominate politics: [Electronic resource]. URL:<https://newsarchive.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/10/27>.; Lockhart, M. President Donald Trump and His Political Discourse / L.Michele. – Philadelphia: Routledge, – 2018. – 214 p.; Lucas S.E. The Art of

In selecting the perspective and research methods, significant assistance was provided by the works of Azerbaijani linguist K.M.Abdullayev, A.A.Abdullayev, F.Y.Veysalli, A.Y.Mammadov⁴. A comparative analysis of the formation of informativeness in

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⁴ Abdulla, K.M. Dilçiliyə səyahət və yaxud dilçi olmayanlar üçün dilçilik / K.M.Abdulla. – Bakı: Mütərcim, – 2010. – 200 s.; Abdullayev, K.M. Azərbaycan dili sintaksisinin nəzəri problemləri / K.M.Abdullayev. – Bakı: Maarif, – 1999. – 284 s.; Veysəlli, F.Y. Dilçiliyin əsasları. I hissə. Dilin daxili strukturu / F.Y.Veysəlli. – Bakı : Mütərcim, –2013. – 420 s.; Veysəlli, F.Y. Diskurs təhlilinə giriş / F.Y.Veysəlli. –Bakı: Təhsil: NPM, –2010. – 141 s.; Veysəlli, F.Y. Koqnitiv dilçilik: əsas anlayışları və perspektivləri / F.Y.Veysəlli. – Bakı: Mütərcim, – 2015. – 120 s.; Abdullayev, Ə.Ə. Aktual üzvlənmə və mətn / Ə.Ə.Abdullayev. – Bakı: Xəzər Universitetinin Nəşriyyatı, – 1998. – 190 s.; Abdullayev, Ə.Ə. Mətni anlama modelləri / Ə.Ə.Abdullayev. – Bakı: Səda, –1999. – 345 s.; Məmmədov, A.Y. Mətn yaradılmasının formal əlaqə vasitələri sistemi. /A.Y.Məmmədov. – Bakı: Elm, – 2001. – 144 s.; Məmmədov, A.Y. Diskurs təhlilinin koqnitiv perspektivləri / A.Y.Məmmədov, M.Y.Məmmədov. – Bakı: Çəşni, – 2010. – 96 s.; Məmmədov, A.Y. Diskurs tədqiqi / A.Y.Məmmədov, M.Y.Məmmədov. – Bakı: Bakı Universiteti nəşriyyatı, – 2013. – 78 s.

oratorical speech and its stylistic features is presented in the dissertation research of N.Madatova⁵. In the detailed analysis of the stylistic features of contemporary American populism, the studies of B.Gadzhiev on the specifics of logical-semantic text analysis⁶ and E.Gadzhiev on the functional potential of service parts of speech in the English language proved to be useful⁷.

Azerbaijani linguists have, from certain perspectives, addressed a number of linguistic problems that influence the analysis of the rhetoric of American political discourse: the issue of the correlation between the subjective factors of individual speech and the objective linguistic factors; the influence of rhetorical questions on the perception of political speech; the role of lexical repetition as a factor in creating syntactic cohesion; the specificity of rhetoric and argumentation techniques in parliamentary speech; psycholinguistic issues of intonation in linguistic units that go beyond sentence boundaries; and communicative competence.

The analysis conducted allows us to state that the most promising directions of discourse analysis of American populist rhetoric have not yet become the subject of comprehensive linguistic study. The present dissertation seeks to eliminate this gap.

The object and subject of the research. The object of the research is the rhetorical representation of populist concepts and their linguistic characteristics in modern political discourse.

The subject of the research is the generalization of the rhetorical style analysis of the oral and written speech of American politicians, expressed through linguistic means that present the concepts of two opposing ideological directions of populism in U.S. political discourse.

⁵ Мадатова, Н.А. Формирование информации и стилистический аспект ораторской речи (на материале английского, азербайджанского и русского языков): /Автореферат дис. доктор философии по филологии/ –Баку: ADU. 2016. – 24с.

⁶ Наси́ев, В.İ Мәтнин семантик-семiotик тәһлили / В.İ.Наси́ев. – Баки: Elm, – 2005. – 208 s.

⁷ Наси́ев, Е.İ. Müasir ingilis və Azərbaycan dillərində köməkçi nitq hissələrinin funksional semantik xüsusiyyətləri /Е.İ.Наси́ев. –Баки: Mütərcim, –2006. – 272 s.

Aims and objectives of the research work: The aim of the research is to analyze the rhetorical style of populism in contemporary American political discourse. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- to identify the foundations of discourse analysis of populism;
- to examine the linguistic traditions of U.S. populist rhetoric and the lexico-semantic framing of the substantive foundations of American populist discourse;
- to analyze the linguo-cognitive aspects of the formation of rhetoric in contemporary U.S. populist discourse;
- to reveal the lexico-semantic and stylistic features of populist rhetoric in American political discourse;
- to analyze the specificity of modern verbal strategies of populist discourse in the United States;
- to investigate the tactics of verbal suggestion and persuasive verbal influence in American populist rhetoric;
- to determine the lexico-semantic features of populist rhetoric employed by surrogate speakers during electoral campaigns;
- to analyze the distinctive features of linguistic means of expression in contemporary American populist rhetoric;
- to study expressive syntactic devices as a method of creating modality in U.S. populist discourse;
- to describe the lexical means of expression of populism in contemporary American political discourse.

The research methods. The dissertation employs discourse analysis, which treats language as a means of communication. The application of the structural-functional method made it possible to identify the principles of linguistic systematicity in the stylistics and rhetoric of populist statements by American politicians.

The method of linguistic fact analysis was aimed at examining idiolectal style as the set of linguistic and stylistic-textual features characteristic of populist politicians and their surrogate speakers during electoral campaigns.

The method of linguistic representation of tropes of political concepts, along with their secondary conceptualization, was combined with the analysis of conceptual metaphors, metonymy, and

semantic shifts of the metonymic type. This made it possible to reveal the verbal strategies and tactics of U.S. populist discourse.

Main provisions for defense:

- Populist rhetoric in contemporary American political discourse has a substantive foundation formed by cultural-historical and politico-economic diachronic and synchronic verbal communications.

- A critical analysis of the frames of American populism makes it possible to view the lexico-semantic and stylistic features of contemporary American populist rhetoric as discursive design of the secondary conceptualization of traditional substantive concepts.

- A specific verbal strategy of populist rhetoric is the argumentum ad populum (“appeal to the people”) in the public speech of American politicians, who invariably draw upon the populist discourse of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

- An important function in the rhetorical presentation of populist verbal strategies is performed by the slogan, which in this research is considered both a minor genre of political text and an effective stylistic device for manipulating the dominant concept of discourse.

- The study introduces the notion of populist discourse in surrogate campaigns, whose speakers are distinguished by a vivid personal idiolect.

- For the first time, the stylistic specificity of American populism has been identified in the form of a semantic shift of the metonymic type, characteristic of the speech of both left-liberal and right-conservative politicians.

- The two most recent U.S. electoral campaigns disrupted the tradition of lexico-semantic political tolerance in criticizing opponents and integrated invective vocabulary into both foreign and domestic political discourse.

- A new means of rhetorical expressiveness in populist discourse—carrying important semantic and stylistic weight—can be considered the rhythmic-syntactic organization of President Donald

Trump's populist slogans and the rap-style speech of former President Barack Obama.

- The rhetorical style of representatives of the two antagonistic vectors of U.S. populist discourse is identical in its use of tropes and lexical means of expression: metaphors, metonymy, invective, and sarcasm. However, lexical-syntactic repetitions and rhetorical questions in the speeches of politicians from the left-radical and right-conservative vectors of American populism are employed in different stylistic tonalities. In the rhetoric of right-conservative politicians, high-frequency lexico-stylistic devices serve as a technique to inspire their supporters toward victory, whereas in the left-radical vector, they are used as a means of exerting pressure on political opponents.

Scientific novelty of the research. The present dissertation is one of the first attempts in modern Azerbaijani linguistics to analyze the rhetoric of American populism from a national-mental perspective, comparing the linguistic traditions of U.S. populist rhetoric, the lexico-semantic framing, and the secondary conceptualization of the substantive foundations of American populist discourse. Within the methodological framework of linguistic science, an analysis is conducted of rhetoric based on textual material from the two most recent U.S. electoral campaigns, including the 2024 rallies and the populist statements of the incumbent U.S. President D.Trump and his opponents during the first year following the elections. For the first time, the dissertation examines the modern verbal strategies and tactics of American populist rhetoric and the lexico-semantic features of the rhetoric of surrogate speakers—representing a phenomenon tied to the problem of the rhetorization of contemporary U.S. public space. It is demonstrated that the semantic shift of the metonymic type is inherent in the national system of U.S. political concepts and is characteristic of the speeches of populists across all ideological directions of American political discourse. It is proposed to consider populist rhetoric as a specific speech genre that combines a political concept, a particular lexico-semantic style, and linguistic means that create the political expressiveness of populist speech. Discursive

semantics is analyzed through the linguistic structure of political concepts within discourse, which shapes the sequence of speech in the creation of populist frames and blends. For the first time, the slogan is treated as a minor genre of American political rhetoric, carrying lexical emotionality while simultaneously embodying the subtle semantics of subtext.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research. The theoretical significance lies in the scholarly analysis of populist rhetoric in American political discourse as a specific functionally determined form of speech activity. The integral and differential characteristics, together with the systemic analysis of the verbal strategies and tactics of populist rhetoric, reveal its potential in mobilizing supporters, forming opposition, and delegitimizing opponents. These findings can also serve as a model for analyzing similar types of discourse in other linguistic systems.

The practical significance of the research is determined by the feasibility and future applicability of its results in English language teaching practice, particularly in the development of lecture and seminar courses in practical and theoretical English grammar, in specialized courses on the theory and practice of communicative interaction and speech influence in English, as well as in the teaching of practical English language skills.

Approbation and application. Reports based on the dissertation have been presented at various scientific conferences, and abstracts as well as articles have been published in local and international journals. Discourse analysis of English-language populist texts, along with the conclusions of this dissertation, may also be applied in the development of special courses on English lexicon, rhetoric, and stylistics, as well as in the preparation of scholarly works, including dissertations and monographs.

Name of the organization where the dissertation is performed. The work was performed at the Department of Indo-European languages of the Institute of Linguistics named after Nasimi of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

The total volume of the dissertation with a sign including a separate volume of the structural units of the dissertation. The

dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references. The Introduction comprises 9 pages, 13715 characters, Chapter One includes two subsections, comprises 32 pages, 53526 characters, Chapter Two includes three subsections, comprises 41 pages, 69375 characters, Chapter Three includes two subsections, comprises 38 pages, 64286 characters, the Conclusion comprises 3 pages, 4996 characters. The total volume of the dissertation amounts to 205898 characters, excluding the list of references.

BASIC CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH

In the **Introduction**, the relevance of the research topic is substantiated, the degree of its scholarly development is reviewed, the object and subject of the study are defined, and its main aim and the resulting objectives are specified. The provisions submitted for defense, the novelty and methods of the research, its theoretical and practical significance, as well as its structure, are presented.

In the first chapter, **“Linguo-Cognitive Factors in the Formation of Populist Rhetoric in American Political Discourse”**, the concept of discourse is analyzed as a complex verbal structure, objectified in oral and written forms. In the first paragraph, **“Foundations of Linguistic Analysis of Populist Discourse”**, the thematic determination of discourse and its specific features are considered: the motivation for its creation; its enrichment with ideas, facts, and arguments expressed in rhetorical form; its emotional and psychological impact; and the effectiveness of the speech act. The functional role of discourse is analyzed, expressed through the semantic series, the lexical level, which determines the forms of expressing content, and the stylistic register of discourse as the tonality of linguistic means adequate to the political situation.

According to A.Mammadov, *“Discourse analysis is impossible without the study of mental models, since they provide the real basis for the selection of the necessary communicative information for*

strategic purposes, such as the formation of both general and specific semantic structures.”⁸

According to T.A. van Dijk, “*the formation of several vectors of political discourse is the most important indicator of its linguistic institutionalization*”.⁹ Populism, as a rhetorical genre of American political discourse, creates linguistic constructions at the lexical and grammatical levels, which form manipulative speech strategies and tactics.

Political discourse is distinguished by a polysemantic and voluminous structure. The absence of strict discursive boundaries provides the politician with the opportunity to manipulate rhetorical means and actualize them in accordance with a specific political situation. In particular, the opening paragraphs of Trump’s speeches at the 2024 rallies began with an appeal to national unity «It’s time to *unite*». However, after the assassination attempts on him, Trump sharply changed his discourse, rhetorically contrasting his duty to save the country with the aggressive rhetoric of his opponents. «*Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country – both from the inside and out*»¹⁰. Thus, the particularity of the English language provides the orator with the opportunity to expand the boundaries of political discourse and to employ verbal strategies and tactics by shifting frames and emphases in the political concepts of discourse.

In the second paragraph, “***Linguistic Traditions of U.S. Populist Rhetoric and the Lexico-Semantic Framing of the Substantive Foundations of American Populist Discourse***”, the rhetorical style and lexico-syntactic means of expressiveness of the value concepts of the U.S. Declaration of Independence are analyzed,

⁸ Məmmədov, A.Y. Diskurs təhlilinin koqnitiv perspektivləri /A.Y.Məmmədov, M.Y.Məmmədov. – Bakı: Çarşıoğlu, – 2010. – s. 22.

⁹ Dijk, T.A. van. Discourse, Power and Access. In: Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis. /T.A. van Dijk. – Philadelphia, Routledge, –1995. – p.86.

¹⁰ US politics: Trump, without evidence, blames Biden and Harris for assassination attempt: [Electronic resource]. URL:<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/28/trump-blames-biden-harris-assassination-attempt>.

as well as the linguistic process of their secondary conceptualization. The very concept of populism originated precisely in the United States in the 1890s in connection with the activities of the People's Party. In the Senate, following the tradition of classical Roman law, it began to be referred to as populist, derived from the Latin word *populus*, meaning "the people." In the United States, the concept of populism does not carry a negative connotation, as it is more closely associated with the people than with politicians. In the institutional genre of American populism, the substantive concept of the discourse of popular sovereignty – "We the People" – laid the foundation for the rhetorical technique of *argumentum ad populum* (appeal to the people).

The secondary conceptualization of popular sovereignty went through three stages of semantic shift of the metonymic type, resulting in the creation of new lexico-semantic frames: "the struggle between the common people and the encroachments of organized wealth"; "good guys vs bad guys"; "huge conspiracy against humanity"; and "secret conspiracy of world elites."¹¹ The lexico-semantic frames of an elite conspiracy and the deep state were developed in Trump's speeches at two rallies and expanded through the notion of the fusion of power and the media. «*The Clintons and the Clinton-media complex the are persecuting him for what he described as a concerted attempt to not only smear him but to disenfranchise*»¹².

The linguistic phenomenon that creates a virtually new frame of the concept "We the People" is demonstrated by the pro-Trump group QAnon, which presents in the online space the discourse of restoring popular sovereignty: «*Don't Worry. We the People, who taking back our country*»¹³. The populist concepts of anti-elitism and

¹¹ Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech: Mesmerizing the Masses: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354/>

¹² US election: Donald Trump's five lines of attack on Clinton: [Electronic resource] / –22 June, – 2016. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36592975>

¹³ How Qanon uses satanic rhetoric to set up a narrative of 'good vs. evil': [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://theconversation.com/how-qanon-uses-satanic-rhetoric-to-set-up-a-narrative-of-good-vs-evil-146281/>

the frames of rights and freedoms of the competing left-liberal and right-conservative discourses have become the linguo-mental foundation of the specificity of linguistic units, verbal strategies, and tactics of contemporary populist rhetoric in American populist discourse. The linguistic traditions of U.S. populist rhetoric and the lexico-semantic framing of the substantive foundations of discourse ensure the vitality and the potential for development of American political discourse as a complex verbal system.

In the second chapter, “**Lexico-Semantic and Stylistic Features of Populist Rhetoric in Contemporary American Political Discourse**”, an analysis is carried out of the verbal strategies and tactics of American politicians and their surrogate speakers. The linguistic markers of the strategies and tactics of American political discourse are represented by the means of the lexical, grammatical, phonosemantic, and syntactic levels.

In the first paragraph, “*The Specificity of Contemporary Verbal Strategies of American Populist Discourse*”, the lexico-semantic and stylistic specificity of the author’s discourse is examined, which determines the verbal strategy of raising or lowering the evaluation of the object of the discourse’s intention. The most in-demand strategy in contemporary populist rhetoric of U.S. presidential candidates, despite the contrasting differences in discourse concepts, is the verbal strategy expressed through the lexical cliché: «I will be the president *of all Americans*». However, the individual verbal strategies of the candidates differ in their rhetorical play on enhancing their own value in politics and diminishing the significance of their opponent. D. Trump, by writing just a single expressive phrase with a sharply negative connotation on a popular online network «*I hate Taylor Swift*»¹⁴, implemented a verbal strategy aimed at lowering public support for his opponent, K. Harris. The response to the insult followed in the form of a verbal strategy of elevation, expressed through a vivid positive connotation of the role of the people rejecting Trump’s candidacy. The chosen

¹⁴ Trump says ‘I hate Taylor Swift’ after pop star endorses Kamala Harris: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/15/trump-says-i-hate-taylor-swift-after-pop-star-endorses-kamala-harris.html>.

verbal strategy made K. Harris's discourse more appealing to voters: «*The American people want to be out of the woods of the chaos and division of the Trump era, leave behind the blank space of Trump's broken promises, and begin again by electing Vice President Harris to ensure America's future of opportunity is long lived*»¹⁵.

In the given quotation, expressive repetitions of explanatory subordinate clauses create the image of Trump's negative governance. Then, through the device of antithesis, the verbal strategy sharply elevates the significance of Kamala Harris as the best candidate for the presidency of the United States. The antithesis "*the woods of the chaos and division – ensure America's future*" generates a discourse of the possibility of choosing a better future for America.

In the 2024 electoral competition, the leaders of both major U.S. parties demonstrated extremely aggressive rhetoric and presented populism in a low stylistic register, reducing their style to the lower register of colloquial speech. The dominant means of presenting the subjective modality of verbal strategies of American populism is evaluative vocabulary, which contains a significant range of semantic components (semes) expressing aggression and negative evaluative meanings. The most important role in the verbal strategies of American populism belongs to the slogan, whose functional role in political discourse does not have a universally accepted definition in modern linguistics. Slogans that possess rhythm, rhyme, or alliteration—that is, the repetition of identical consonant sounds in speech to enhance expressiveness—significantly strengthen the verbal strategy of discourse¹⁶. In this chapter, ten slogans of the most prominent American politicians participating in the last rally of 2024 are analyzed. These slogans encompass the entire spectrum of U.S. populist discourse. Make America Great Again (MAGA) was the only slogan at the 2024 rally that fully fulfilled its function as a

¹⁵ Kamala Harris Campaign Cites Taylor Swift Lyrics In Response To Trump's Meltdown: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://deadline.com/2024/09/kamala-harris-campaign-taylor-swift-lyrics-response-trump-meltdown-1236088338/>

¹⁶ Safire, W. Political Dictionary. / W. Safire. – Oxford University Press, – 2008. – p.145.

verbal strategy of strengthening rhetoric as a means of political influence. The lexical clarity and direct orientation of the slogan to the entire nation called for a return of America to the successes of President Reagan's era.

The MAGA slogan was distinguished by lexical, emotional, and political expressiveness. The analysis shows that the leaders of the U.S. Republican Party, in their verbal strategies, use slogans far more frequently than their left-liberal competitors, treating them as an effective stylistic device. In our view, the slogan should be regarded as a lexico-semantic and stylistic feature of the verbal strategies of American political discourse. The slogan, within verbal strategies, presents the idiolect of a particular politician and his linguistic personality.

In the second paragraph, *“Tactics of Verbal Suggestion and Verbal Persuasive Influence in the Populist Rhetoric of American Political Discourse”*, grammatical means are analyzed that possess the illocutionary force of speech acts, expressing the speaker's intention or communicative goal through exclamation, question, promise, proposal, threat, and warning.

The verbal tactic “Rally round the flag effect” consists of the leader's direct appeal to the people in difficult circumstances, which increases his support. The verbal tactic “Ad Populum Fallacy” (appeal to the people's misconception) generates lexical blends in which binary oppositions such as truth – lie are combined, creating the effect of “post-truth.”

The verbal tactic “Ad Populum Fallacy” in most of Biden's speeches at the 2024 rallies was built on a derogatory comparison of two Republican presidents—Trump and Hoover—creating a lexical blend from the two proper names and surnames. «Donald Herbert - Hoover Trump». This lexical blend conveys a single meaning – the failure of the economy: «*President Hoover's rule caused the Great Depression. While you work hard and pay your taxes, Trump's coming for your money, your health care, your Social Security*»¹⁷.

¹⁷ Remarks by President Biden at a Campaign Event Scranton, PA: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/04/16/remarks-by-president-biden-at-a-campaign-event-scranton-pa/>

Stylistic lexical blending combined a conceptual metaphor—since the name and surname of each president were associated with a negative political process—and metonymy, which, by contiguity, transferred the notion of presidential responsibility for managerial actions. The two-level process of mutual explanation and mutual complementarity, where both similarity and contiguity of the two objects participated in the transfer of meaning, created the metaphonymy of the blend.

Discursive tactics of verbal suggestion are built on sharp confrontation, rhetorical antithesis of competing populist concepts, and are characterized by commonly used vocabulary with an intensification of colloquial expressiveness, subjective evaluation of the transmitted information, and a lack of factual accuracy, logical sequence, and clarity of exposition.

In the third paragraph, “*Lexico-Semantic Features of Populist Rhetoric of Surrogate Speakers in American Political Discourse*”, the pragmatic function of the discourse of speeches by surrogate speakers supporting the U.S. presidential candidate’s electoral campaign is analyzed. Surrogate discourse is distinguished by emotive rhetoric and socially oriented semantic exemplification, which is associated with the image and activity of a particular politician.

Surrogate speakers create a representational effect through a personally oriented, individual populist concept. The discourse of surrogate populism is formed using such expressive means as rhetorical accentuation, rhetorical repetitions and questions, logical-semantic transitions from one frame to another, metaphorical hyperboles, and lexical allusions. For example, the well-known American actor Chuck Norris, in urging people to vote for Donald Trump, placed emphasis on the candidate’s professional and human qualities: «*an excellent candidate for US President and a real man*». The verbal tactic of the surrogate speaker consisted in exemplifying Trump through his own experience as a multiple-time winner in the ring: «*When I met him, he asked why I was leaving. I replied: “Donald, I’m 34 years old, I’ve been champion for 6 years. I want to leave as a winner.” Donald thought for a second and replied: «I*

understand». The strategy of exemplification in the discourse is revealed in the actor's final phrase: «*We must all hang together or we will surely hang separately*»¹⁸.

The rhetoric of Chuck Norris's tactic had the character of double exemplification, since the quoted phrase belongs to Benjamin Franklin, the author of the U.S. Constitution text. Thus, the actor's populist discourse contained the concept of a personal-political connection between Franklin, Trump, and Norris himself, as all three present themselves as victors who value personal dignity. The lexicosemantic uniformity of the speeches of the politician and the surrogate speaker creates the effect of unity in rhetorical style, enhances the expressiveness of discourse concepts, and underscores the purpose of that particular rally.

In the third chapter, **“Features of the linguistic means of expressing the rhetoric of American populist discourse”**, modern trends in the use of rhetorical devices, linguistic means of expressiveness, the rejection of rhetorical neutrality, and the deliberate embellishment of political speech for the purpose of manipulative influence on voters are analyzed.

In the first paragraph, **“Expressive Means of Syntax as a Tool for Creating Modality in U.S. Populist Discourse”**, the role of lexicosyntactic repetitions in the system of stylistic figures of populist discourse is examined, along with the impact of syntactic constructions of rhetorical questions on the effectiveness of populist discourse, as well as the specificity of inversions in contemporary populist rhetoric. Repeated lexemes with identical semantics, emphasizing joint action, are more characteristic of the populist discourse of the Democrats. They were often used by J. Biden when communicating future intentions: «*We are going to have fantastic trade deals. We are going to start making money and bringing in*

¹⁸ Norris warns of '1,000 years of darkness' if Obama re-elected: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/chuck-norris-warns-1000-years-darkness-obama-elected/story?id=1715203>

jobs»)¹⁹ Kamala Harris offered the voters joint actions: «Let's turn the page on this. Let's not go back»²⁰.

Republican Trump, on the contrary, places rhetorical emphasis more on his own personality. Trump's rhetoric is characterized by emphatic syntactic constructions of lexico-semantic repetitions combined with the emotional effect of parcellation, pleonasm, and epizeuxis. In a speech delivered in Evansville, the intention of Trump's discourse was focused on instilling in everyone the belief that he always wins. This discursive intention explains Trump's use of a complex syntactic construction built on lexico-syntactic repetitions of a closed, cyclical series of simple two-part sentences with the addition of "winner" and the stylistic figure of pleonasm as an excessive repetition of semantically duplicating words: «*Winners are winners. We love winner. We love winner. We love winners. Winners are winners. We love winners. Our country is becoming a winner, and our country is respected again. You see that...*»²¹. The final phrase of the speech again ends with the ellipsis "You see that...", which shows that the words are deliberately omitted, since Trump had already said everything about being a winner.

The paragraph then compares the rhetorical questions in the speeches of Democrat Bernie Sanders and Republican Marco Rubio at the 2024 rally. A syntactic feature of Sanders's populism is the imitative form of "implicit speech" as an inner monologue, presented in the form of rhetorical questions asked by a young, gender-neutral, non-racial persona to itself. «gender neutral non-racial person». «What is going on? This is the wealthiest country in the history of the world – why am I still living at home? Why can't I afford

¹⁹ Remarks by President Biden at a Campaign Event Scranton, PA: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/04/16/remarks-by-president-biden-at-a-campaign-event-scranton-pa/>

²⁰ Harris-Trump presidential debate transcript: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/harris-trump-presidential-debate-transcript/story?id=113560542>.

²¹ Trump (R) has won. An estimated 98 percent of Indiana votes: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/election-results/indiana-2020/>

healthcare?»²² Marco Rubio elevates the discourse to an existential level, which is lexico-semantically reflected in the rhetorical questions: «*What will the world look like if America declines? Who's going to create the innovations of the 21st century?*»²³

In contemporary American populist discourse, Trump's speeches stand out for their particularly expressive syntax. He often ends repetitive sentences with three exclamation marks, using rhetorical repetition of punctuation to draw heightened attention to the decisions he announces. The rhetoric of modern American populism is characterized by lexical repetitions that emphasize the role of the deep state, corruption, ill-gotten wealth, and social injustice.

The cases of inversion functioning in the populist rhetoric of American political discourse, presented in this study, lead to the conclusion that sentences with altered word order bring the politician's official speech style closer to the conversational genre and are more readily perceived by the audience. The most commonly used grammatical means of expressiveness among liberal politicians are rhetorical repetitions and questions that angrily denounce political opponents. In the rhetoric of conservative politicians, lexico-syntactic repetitions and rhetorical questions become a technique for inspiring their supporters toward victory.

In the second paragraph, "***Lexical Means of Expressiveness of Populism in Contemporary American Political Discourse***", the role of metaphors and metonymy, as well as the current trend of rhetorical influence through invective vocabulary, are analyzed. Conceptual metaphors and metonymy are the most frequent lexical means of creating threats and tension.

Through case studies of conceptual metaphors, their functional potential is examined as a trope that lends special expressiveness to

²² Bernie Sanders on Labor's Future and Why Democratic Socialists Keep Winning. An exclusive interview with Sen: [Electronic resource] / B. Sanders. URL: https://inthesetimes.com/features/bernie_sanders_interview_labor_janus_democratic_socialism_teacher_strikes_medicare_for_all.html

²³ Rubio and American "Decline": [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/rubio-and-american-decline/>

populist rhetoric by transferring the meaning of an object or phenomenon through analogy. Metaphors figuratively present both the politician's linguistic persona and the discourse concepts he promotes. Metaphor allows the politician to construct a concept and give an oral speech or written text greater expressiveness and semantic coherence. The sarcastic ontological metaphor "Rocketman", used by Trump to refer to the leader of North Korea, contains a hint that he is not only a man of short stature but also from a small country, which should not be threatening the powerful Trump: «*Rocketman should have been handled long ago*»²⁴.

At the 2024 rally, K.Harris developed the discourse of liberation from past political mistakes with the polysemous conceptual metaphor "unburdened by what has been." Harris quoted her mother, who used to tell her children: «*You think you just fell out of a coconut tree? You exist in the context of all in which you live and what came before you*»²⁵.

A striking expressive device that helps the audience grasp the figurative meaning or fill in what the politician has left unsaid is metonymy. President F. Roosevelt was the first to replace the epithet "unemployed" with the metonymy "the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid"²⁶.

The metonymic shift with lexical repetitions and caps lock became a verbal tactic of manipulation in Trump's 2024 rally. He promised the men and women whom the government had neglected and pushed aside that they would no longer be forgotten: «*To all of the forgotten men and women who have been neglected, abandoned, and left behind, you will be forgotten no longer. We will press forward, and together, we will WIN, WIN, WIN! Nothing will sway*

²⁴ Elton, John. Says Donald Trump Calling Kim Jong Un 'Little Rocket Man Was 'Brilliant': [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://variety.com/2024/film/news/elton-john-donald-trump-kim-jong-un-nickname-brilliant-rocket-man-1236136630/>

²⁵ The many identities of the first woman vice-president: [Electronic resource] / – 10 September, – 2024. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2501n5rvvno>.

²⁶ Franklin, D. Roosevelt Radio Address: [Electronic resource] / – April 7, – 1932. URL: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-from-albany-new-york-the-forgotten-man-speech>.

*us. Nothing will slow us, and no one will stop us»*²⁷. We believe that the expressive impact of a conceptual metaphor is achieved through the unity in the text of two or more conceptually distant domains. The expressive impact of metonymy, on the other hand, is achieved through semantic contiguity between elements within the same conceptual sphere of populist political discourse.

In particular, the metonymic shift “the forgotten man” in J. Vance’s populist discourse extended the metonymy to the communities of the Rust Belt: “*all the forgotten communities*”²⁸.

Comparing the degree of expressive force between conceptual metaphor and metonymy, it can be noted that both figures of speech have important stylistic significance and alter the emotional perception of concepts. However, for a conceptual metaphor, the necessary expressive effect is achieved when the politician’s discourse unites two or more conceptually distant domains. For metonymy, the expressive effect is determined primarily by semantic contiguity between elements within the same conceptual sphere of populist political discourse.

The study reveals a pronounced trend toward the intensification of expressive and invective vocabulary in American populist discourse, especially during the 2024 electoral campaign. To enhance the emotional impact on public consciousness, invectives are characterized by simplicity of speech constructions. The semantic core of invectiveness in modern American populist discourse is represented by lexemes. The periphery of the functional-semantic categories of invectiveness is represented by units at various levels, particularly grammatical and syntactic means. The unity in the text of the lexico-semantic core and the peripheral functional-semantic categories of invectiveness is perceived not only as an insult to a particular politician but also to their electorate.

²⁷As Donald Trump wraps up his remarks at the Republican National Convention he says "we will press forward and we will win: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://x.com/ABC/status/1814150650281816327/>

²⁸Vance makes direct appeal to his native Rust Belt: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.ironmountaindailynews.com/opinion/columns/2024/07/vance-makes-direct-appeal-to-his-native-rust-belt>.

The **conclusion** presents the main findings and generalizations derived from the content of the research:

1. The discourse of American populism represents a relatively stable thematic, compositional, and stylistic type of oral and written texts. The populist rhetoric of American discourse is built on the interconnection and interaction of a whole range of linguistic units, creating semantic and structural rhetorical unity of political discourse, which performs regulatory, controlling, persuasive, and informative functions.

2. The rhetoric of the first state-forming document, “The Declaration of Independence of the USA,” became the semantic core of all populist trends in American political discourse, shaping its substantive foundations and national rhetorical traditions of political speech.

3. The process of verbalizing modern populist concepts is marked by the rhetorical reproduction of semantic shifts, the formation of new lexico-semantic frames, and the stylistic structuring of the secondary conceptualization of the substantive foundations of American political discourse. Rhetoric expands the verbal capacity of secondary conceptualization in American discourse.

4. Rhetoric as a special category of verbal construction serves to express populist political concepts accessible to voters’ understanding, which largely ensures the rationality and effectiveness of American political discourse. In U.S. political rhetoric, against the linguistic backdrop of deeply entrenched national traditions, lexically stereotypical phraseological schemes, and syntactic constructions, new verbal strategies and tactics are dynamically formed. The modern style of American political rhetoric is distinguished by stylistic units with heightened emotional connotations, built either in extremely negative or excessively enthusiastic stylistic registers. In the U.S., the 2024 rallies were marked by an expressive stylistic register, often including not only politically incorrect but even invective vocabulary.

5. Expressive rhetorical strategies and tactics make it possible to consider populism the leading genre of U.S. political discourse. In the dissertation, linguistic strategy is regarded as a set of a

politician's speech actions, his personal style of operating with linguistic devices, and means of emotional influence on the audience. Rhetorical strategies have the illocutionary force of a speech act expressing the communicative goal and the intention of populist concepts of a politician's personal style. Individual lexico-stylistic forms of rhetorical strategies of American populists are characterized by subjective modality of evaluative vocabulary.

6. A distinctive feature of American populist rhetoric should be recognized in the saturation of speeches with slogans that characterize a dominant concept of populist discourse and the linguistic persona of the politician. The American slogan, as a minor genre of political text, is linked with the dominant concept of discourse, the synergistic complexity of a politician's speech text, and the presence of subtext and hidden meaning. As a means of enhancing the effect of a verbal strategy, the slogan conveys the core idea of a politician's personal stance in figurative form and exerts an influence effect on the political choice of a significant segment of voters. A new means of rhetorical expressiveness of political discourse in the 2024 rallies can be considered the rhythmic-syntactic organization of populist slogans, which carry important semantic and stylistic weight.

7. Rhetorical tactics represent a combination of identical techniques in the form of catenas as syntactic and morphological units in grammatical dependence. The emotionally intensifying stylistic catenas include rhetorical questions and repetitions, rhetorical parallelisms, emphasis, and ellipsis. Representatives of American populism often use expressive syntactic figures of speech, most frequently parcellation, pleonasm, epizeuxis, and inversion. The totality of lexico-syntactic means of rhetorical tactics provokes the emotional reaction of the opponent and elicits an expressive response from the audience.

8. Speech strategies and tactics of populist discourse are realized at monosemantic, lexico-semantic, and syntactic levels, characterized by commonly used vocabulary with enhanced colloquialism and conversational expressiveness. The choice of linguistic strategies and tactics is conditioned by the linguistic

persona of the politician and his rhetorical competence. These factors of personal rhetorical style explain the extremely subjective evaluation of the information conveyed by the politician. Personal rhetorical competence is reflected in modern lexical blends of binary oppositions such as “truth – lie”, which blur the distinction between a real fact and its interpretation in a politician’s populist discourse.

9. The rhetoric of contemporary American populism is characterized by semantic repetitions emphasizing the role of the deep state, corruption, ill-gotten wealth, and social injustice. The most frequent lexical means of creating threats and tension are conceptual metaphors and metonymy. The most commonly used grammatical devices of expressiveness among liberal politicians are rhetorical repetitions and questions that angrily denounce political opponents. In the rhetoric of conservative politicians, lexicosyntactic repetitions and rhetorical questions serve as a means of inspiring their supporters to victory.

The main points of the dissertation are reflected in the following publications of the author:

1. Искендерли, М.Х. Политические и социальные предпосылки возникновения популизма как концепта в современном американском политическом дискурсе // – Bakı: AMEA, Nəsimi adına Dilçilik İnstitutu, Dilçilik araşdırmaları, – 2019. № 1, – с.217-224.
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October 2023. Issue 57, – p.7-21.
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13. Искендерли, М.Х. Лингвистическая динамика популизма: вопросительные предложения в современном американском популистском политическом дискурсе // – Bakı: AMEA, M.Füzuli adına Əlyazmalar İnstitutu, Filologiya məsələləri, – 2024. №2, – с.223-231.
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