ФИЛОЛОГИЯ

VIETNAMESE POLITICAL DISCOURSE FROM LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. The article investigates existing approaches of Vietnamese, Russian and Western researchers to political discourse study. Besides works of Russian and Western researchers written within the framework of political linguistics, which is already developed in the relevant scholarly communities, the material of the analysis includes works of Vietnamese, Russian and Western scholars on Vietnamese political discourse. Methods of comparison, discourse analysis and content analysis allowed the author to obtain results that helped identify main trends and point out underdeveloped areas of Vietnamese political discourse research.

ВЬЕТНАМСКИЙ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДИСКУРС: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

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Аннотация. В статье исследуются существующие подходы вьетнамских, российских и западных исследователей к изучению политического дискурса. Помимо работ российских и западных исследователей, написанных в рамках уже развитой в соответствующих научных кругах политической лингвистики, материал анализа включает работы вьетнамских, российских и западных ученых по вьетнамскому политическому дискурсу. Методы сравнения, дискурс-анализа и контент-анализа

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позволили автору получить результаты, которые помогли выявить основные тенденции и указать на слаборазвитые области исследования вьетнамского политического дискурса.

Introduction

Whereas political linguistics has long been studied by Western and Russian scholars as an independent research field, it has become of scientific interest for Vietnamese scholars only by the end of the 20th century. Thus, there is still a rather modest number of studies of Vietnamese political language to date. This article assesses the state of research conducted on Vietnamese political discourse, highlights the main approaches to its study, and proposes new promising study areas. In order to fulfil these objectives, I set forth a number of tasks, which include defining the concept of "political discourse"; briefly reviewing Russian and Western studies of political discourse in comparison with existing Vietnamese studies (in terms of content and volume); identifying understudied aspects of Vietnamese political discourse; as well as proposing new fields and justifying their feasibility. In the course of this work methods of comparison, discourse analysis and content analysis are mainly used.

Definition of political discourse

One widely accepted statement about political discourse is E.A. Sheigal's claim about the field nature of political discourse structure. Since the main goal of politics is fight for power, the core of the political discourse field structure should contain the prototypical genres that correspond as much as possible to the fulfilment of this goal. The researcher refers to the prototypical (primary) genres as "the genres of institutional communication that form the basis of political activity itself: political speeches, statements, debates, negotiations, decrees, constitutions, party programs, slogans, etc." [Sheigal 2004: 244]. On the outskirts, then, are functionally mixed genres that usually contain features of not only political, but also economic, media, scientific and other discourses.

Thus, according to E.A. Sheigal, "a discourse can be considered political if at least one of the three components of the communicative situation (content, actor, addressee) belongs to the sphere of politics" [Sheigal 2004, cited after Perelgut, Sukhotskaya 2013: 36]. This point of view, however, does not coincide with that of T. A. van Dijk, who uses institutionalism as an obligatory criterion for defining political discourse and does not recognise as political any discourse that is carried out outside of the framework of political institutions.

A.P. Chudinov, on the other hand, proposes a broad understanding of political discourse: he claims that, studying discourse, it is necessary to take into account not only the text of the communicative event in question, but also other texts, the contents of which are considered by the communication participants while generating and interpreting new content of communication. In analysing the structure of the communicative situation, according to the scholar, it is also necessary to consider the political views and goals pursued by the communication participants, their view of each other, as well as the cultural, social, and political situation in which the discourse is generated and lives [Chudinov 2006].

In this study I, following E.A. Sheigal and A.P. Chudinov, understand political discourse in a broad and complex sense, i.e. as a set of people's communicative activities in the political (not necessarily institutional) sphere with its extralinguistic (sociocultural, situational, and ideological) background, product (texts) and distinctive features.

Western and Russian studies of political discourse since the beginning of 20th century

The main approaches in the study of political discourse both in the West and in Russia are rhetorical analysis, content analysis, cognitive analysis, and critical analysis.

From the early 20th century to the 1930s, researchers studied political language within the framework of classical rhetoric and stylistics. Most European and American authors during this period wrote works of a prescriptive (e.g., Dale Carnegie and Paul L. Soper) or critical nature (e.g., Herbert Wichelns, Charles A. Beard).

Although political linguistics in the USSR also started out with rhetorical works, at this period only works of a prescriptive and eulogising nature emerged. Scholars have praised politicians' public speeches not only for their rhetorical prowess, but also for their accessibility for the people. During this period, however, the greatest area of interest for Soviet scholars was not politicians' eloquence, but the changes in language that occurred following the February and October revolutions. The topics of the "language of revolution" and the "revolution of language" was dealt with by G.O. Vinokur, S.I. Kartsevsky, L.V. Shcherba, R.O. Yakobson, E.D. Polivanov, A.M. Selishchev, P.Y. Chernykh, etc.

Modern rhetorical analysis in the field of political linguistics both in the West and in Russia, on the other hand, is more likely to be critical. It is for this reason that today in political linguistics it is customary to consider "rhetorical criticism" synonymous to "rhetorical analysis". The main goals of rhetorical criticism are to reveal the ideological symbolism and intentions hiding behind the speaker's rhetoric, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of rhetorical strategies and devices used in realising these intentions [Budaev, Chudinov 2019: 190].

In the context of World War I and intensification of the propaganda confrontation between the world powers, the focus of attention of both Western and Soviet scholars was redirected to language as a tool for manipulating people. Not only public speeches by politicians, but also propaganda journalism was used for manipulation purposes. Content analysis became the main research method during this period. By applying content analysis, scholars identified elements of propaganda in journalistic texts, such as normalization of ideological, patterned, and euphemised narratives. It was during this period that Walter Lippmann and his supporters developed the theory of agenda-setting, according to which the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" [Cohen 1963].

Content analysis continued to be popular among scholars as a new global conflict, World War II, intensified. Many believe that it was by applying content analysis to the texts of the Third Reich propaganda campaigns that British and American scholars were able to predict Nazi's use of cruise and ballistic missiles against Britain [Iudin, Ryumin 2006: 6]. Besides, scholars have studied the mechanisms of gaining and retaining power in totalitarian states, especially the Third Reich. It was found that this goal was achieved primarily by means of verbal manipulation involving the use of a Nazi-language. According to Victor Klemperer, many years of the German people's "imprisonment in spiritual slavery" were facilitated by the unilateral rule of the Nazi language. For instance,

propaganda material could be altered to fit the events of reality, and foreign borrowings inaccessible to the masses were used, which not only created vibrancy of the speeches, but also drowned out the thinking of the masses [Klemperer 1957].

After the end of World War II, the Cold War began, when relations between the former Allies underwent a dramatic change – the Iron Curtain was erected between the USSR, on the one hand, and the Western Europe countries and the United States, on the other. Since decisions made by the Soviets seemed mysterious to the West, many scholars spoke of Soviet "newspeak[3]" and tried to study it to uncover the mechanisms of Bolshevik thinking and predict communist leaders' actions and reactions. Some Western authors, such as Nathan Leites, have even called Soviet political discourse radical and based on the principle of not "who-whom", but "who kills whom" [Leites 1954].

In the same period with the formation of the concept of "discourse", a new line of research on political communication emerges – critical discourse analysis, which was first widely introduced by the French school of discourse analysis. In contrast to classical content analysis (quantitative semantics), which mainly dealt with statistical research into a large number of texts in order to identify similar, but differently expressed, content, representatives of the French school of discourse analysis (M. Foucault, A. Greimas, J. Derrida, J. Kristeva, M. Pesceau, etc.) focused not on individual texts, but on their links with mechanisms of power and control, the relation of the text and the author's intentions, as well as its formation as a result of various social and institutional settings.

It is worth mentioning that in the Soviet Union, due to the internal political situation, the development of political linguistics somewhat slowed down. Only studies of a prescriptive, recommendatory nature on how to use language and style to increase the persuasive power of verbal communication were allowed. The mechanisms of manipulation of public mind were not revealed, and only the bourgeois linguistic heritage, which is on a distant periphery of political discourse, was criticised.

Since the end of the 20th century there has been a methodological and thematic convergence of Russian and Western studies of political discourse. In addition to rhetorical analysis and content analysis, critical and cognitive analysis have been developing rapidly. By dealing with "the ways in which social power exercises dominance in society" [Budaev 2020: 63], contemporary critical analysis can consider political discourse from different perspectives, i.e. dialectical-relational (N. Fairclough), socio-cognitive (T. van Dijk) and discourse-historical (R. Wodak) approaches. Cognitive analysis, in its turn, is engaged in modelling the thinking processes of the actor of political discourse, which tell us about the speaker's attitude to the interlocutor, the speaker's intentions and decisions taken to achieve them. According to T. van Dijk, cognitive analysis should also consider situational models, that means, "not abstract knowledge of stereotypical events and situations (as in mental models, scenarios and frames), but personal knowledge of native speakers, accumulating their previous individual experience, attitudes and intentions, feelings and emotions" [van Dijk 1989: 9].

The works of contemporary Western and Russian researchers can also be grouped into several major blocks based on their topical focus. Quite a number of studies have been conducted in the framework of political discourse genre typology: researchers analyse the development of genres and compare them to identify the verbal, cognitive and linguopragmatic characteristics peculiar to each [Ruzhentseva 2016: 92].

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[3] The term "newspeak" was first used by George Orwell in his novel "1984" to denote the fictional language of Oceania, a totalitarian superstate.

Furthermore, political linguosemiotics, which deals with the correlation of monomodal (verbal) and multimodal elements of political discourse with elements of political reality, has also gained attention of many scholars. Studies of political linguosemiotics can be both diachronic and synchronic. Diachronic in nature, for instance, are studies that compare the USSR and modern Russia's political discourse, in which changes in the language that occurred in connection with the restructuring of the political and social order are discovered. In contrast, studies of political linguistic personality or metaphors, for example, are of a synchronic nature. Extremely popular are studies of presidential discourse (A.P. Sedykh, M.V. Gavrilova, etc.), precedent images in political discourse (E.L. Timshina, E.A. Nakhimova, etc.) and reconstruction of a politician's worldview (A.P. Chudinov, V.N. Bazylev, etc.). Especially, comparing the metaphors of different national political discourses, E.V. Budaev concluded that they (metaphors) not only reflect the current state of societies, their national culture and mentality, and have typical features of a certain cultural space, such as the West, Russia, the East, etc., but also have a universal character [Budaev, Chudinov 2020].

Scholars, however, do not only compare conceptual metaphors, but also the means of speech that are common in various national political discourses. It is the results of comparing English, German, French, Russian and other political discourses that shed light on the considerable similarities in terms of pragmatics (including strategies and tactics) used in these linguocultures. Among the most frequently used communicative strategies of political discourse are presentation, appeal [Kalinin 2009], self-presentation, defamation, attack, self-defence, formation of the addressee's emotional mood, as well as information-interpretative, argumentative, agitational and manipulative strategies [Parshina 2005].

In general, the works of modern Western and Russian scholars are no longer prescriptive, but analytical and critical in nature. Researchers can be grouped into separate research schools. Reputable in Russia, for example, is the Urals school of political linguistics represented by A.P. Chudinov, E.V. Budaev, E.V. Dzyuba, M.B. Voroshilova, etc. In addition, enormous research conducted not only by linguists, but also by political scientists, sociologists, and others, allows for the regular publication of scientific monographs, paper collections and journals, as well as textbooks specialising in political discourse. An example of a highly reputable journal on political linguistics in the West is the Dutch scientific journal *Language and Politics*. Widely cited in Russia are the *Political Science* and *Political Linguistics* journals. Thus, it is quite appropriate to say that with the democratisation of society came the democratisation of political and academic thought, which gave a powerful impetus to the development of political linguistics both in the West and in Russia.

Vietnamese studies of political discourse

While political discourse has long been recognised as a separate subject of study in the West and Russia, forming around it an entire independent research field – political linguistics, in Vietnam today the prerequisites for the development of political linguistics are just emerging.

Political discourse has attracted the interest of Vietnamese researchers only in the late 20th century – the first decades of the 21st century, with a very limited number of works carried out during this period. Nguyen Hoa was one of the first to write about Vietnamese political discourse. In his Ph.D. thesis "A study of socio-political discourse (in modern English and Vietnamese press)" [Nguyễn Hoà 1998] Nguyễn Hoà viewed discourse from a formal perspective, i.e. as a coherent text, and compared topical macrostructures as well as means of coherence, cohesion, and relevance in Vietnamese and English news and political commentary texts. The author concluded that there is a distinct typological difference on the levels of sentences and below but many similarities in the overall

structure of discourses on the above sentences level. In the following years, Nguyễn Hoà also published a few papers, which, in fact, were abstracts of his Ph.D. thesis. In one such article, the scholar did specify that he was interested in "discourse in the textual aspect", hence in linguistics of text.

Another Ph.D. thesis devoted solely to grammatical cohesion was written by Đang Thi Bao Dung [Đặng Thị Bảo Dung 2021]. A detailed analysis and comparison of the use of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction in Vietnamese and English political newspaper articles was provided.

Leaving aside the question of the relations between text and discourse, hence, those between linguistics of text and linguistics of discourse, there is a fact that cannot be denied: the language of newspapers is not in the centre of the field structure of political discourse, but on its periphery. The main reason is that newspaper language combines the functional and structural components not only of political, but also of media communication. Another reason is that newspaper language does not have the highest level of institutionalism.

Institutional political discourse in particular is usually studied by Vietnamese scholars in terms of its influential function. Nguyen Thi Huong and Tran Thi Hoang Oanh, for example, in their article "On the Political Discourse" [Nguyễn Thị Hương, Trần Thị Hoàng Oanh 2014] identify two types of politicians' power. According to the authors, the first type is magical power, which takes place when politicians are seen as the embodiment of values such as sovereignty, peace, social progress, tradition, etc. In such a case, their power has an absolute character like that of "God, Saints, Buddha, kings, popes, cardinals, prophets, spiritual teachers". The second kind of power is based on politicians' own image, which they use to convince the masses. The scholars also focused on analysing and illustrating the means of persuasion used in the language of educational administration (discourse of promise, discourse of justification, and discourse of lie).

A more ambitious work is Vu Hoai Phuong's Ph.D. thesis "Study of the influential function of discourse in Vietnamese political speeches" [Vũ Hoài Phương 2016] in which analysis of over 40 speeches by Vietnam's political leaders was conducted. As a result of the study, the scholar has identified the most common linguistic means used by Vietnamese politicians to influence the public, such as forms of addressing, as well as various argument techniques and rhetorical devices.

Another work that discusses the problem of argumentation in political discourse in detail is Vu Ngoc Hoa's article of a prescriptive nature "Arguments in Political speeches" [Vũ Ngọc Hoa 2014]. Having carried out a rhetorical analysis of the speeches of Vietnamese and world communist leaders, the author concluded that political speeches have a typical structure of macro-arguments, which cover the entire text and are supported by sub-arguments. The researcher paid special attention to methods of reasoning in argumentation, such as deduction, induction, comparison, causation, and antithesis. Crucial to an effective political argumentation, according to Vu Ngoc Hoa, is its conclusion that concentrates the political ideology of a class, a party, and even the ideology of an entire nation or universal spiritual values.

It is worth underlining that, studying political discourse, most Vietnamese authors are interested in studying conceptual metaphors. Besides the theoretical framework of conceptual metaphors analysis that was set by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Vietnamese scholars also rely on the works of Michael Halliday in system-functional linguistics and social semiotics, as well as on Norman Fairclough's works about socially- and philosophically- oriented critical analysis of discourse.

Conceptual metaphors are mostly studied by Vietnamese scholars using the cognitive method, in which metaphorical projections from the source domain to the target domain(s) are modeled. The greatest attention is paid to political metaphors with the source domains "human activity", "family", "construction", "road", "plants", "disease", and "living organism". In studying them, Vietnamese scholars conduct detailed analysis of various specific metaphors such as "politics as a journey", "politics as a war", "the world as a community", "the state as a family", "power as a mechanism", etc. (Nguyễn Tiến Dũng 2018; Nguyễn Thị Bích Hạnh, Hồ Thị Thoa 2018; Nguyễn Xuân Hồng 2020; Hồ Thị Thoa 2021; Nguyễn Xuân Hồng 2022).

Besides, Vietnamese scholars tend to distinguish macrometaphors (*thượng danh*) from their constituent micrometaphors (*hạ danh*). This way, for example, the macrometaphor "politics as construction" is explored through the two micrometaphors "country as a building" and "politician as a builder". Comparing conceptual metaphors in Vietnamese and foreign-language political discourse (mostly American), Vietnamese scholars conclude that there are significant similarities in macro-metaphors in different cultures, but their realisation (both in frequency and quantity) in forms of particular micro-metaphors is much more modest in Vietnamese political discourse. Nguyen Tien Dung attributes the latter phenomenon to the difference in the intentions of Western and Vietnamese politicians [Nguyễn Tiến Dũng 2018]. Whereas, for example, American politicians try to use less formal and more expressive language to reach the masses, Vietnamese politicians seek to maintain objectivity and formality in political communication. The Vietnamese view metaphors as a means of expressing the speaker's personal impression and consider them suitable only for literary genres, not for institutional political communication. Thus, Vietnamese politicians impose certain restrictions on the use of conceptual metaphors, leading to their limited number, frequent repetition, and, consequently, to a gradual semantic "blurring" and loss of influence power in relation to listeners and readers.

Vietnamese scholars have indeed become more enthusiastic about the study of political discourse over the past 10 years, but the amount of research done is still not comparable with that in the West and in Russia; and it is not enough to form a separate field of research. It can also easily be seen that there is a lack of research groups, not to mention linguistic schools, that could work together to develop theoretical and methodological frameworks for the study of any aspect of political communication. Moreover, there have been no books, academic journals, collections of research papers or textbooks published on Vietnamese political discourse.

In terms of theory, Vietnamese researchers tend to rely on the already existing developments of Western colleagues, as in the case of conceptual metaphors research. The analysis of foreign works, however, is carried out poorly. This entails risks of mechanical and inadequate application of Western theories in relation to Vietnamese linguoculture and society. Similar thoughts about the impossibility of mechanically applying the results of Western scholars' research to Eastern political communication were expressed, for example, by the Japanese scholar Ito Y. [Ito 2000]. He argued that the concept of "opinion leaders" cannot be relevant in Japanese culture because the Japanese, as members of a collectivist society, tend to avoid talking about political issues for fear of opinion differences and interpersonal confrontation.

In theoretical reviews, Vietnamese scholars often merely list the main approaches that are used by foreign authors to explore the relevant research subjects, sometimes even without mentioning names of the credible representatives or main research methods. Nguyen Xuan Hong, for example, in the article "About one direction of Vietnamese political discourse research" [Nguyễn Xuân Hồng 2017] when discussing possible areas of Vietnamese political discourse research, only mentioned and

illustrated the research subjects that, as he believed, deserved more attention from Vietnamese scholars, namely the structure of political texts as a language unit above sentence, argumentation, cohesion and implementation of conceptual metaphors in political discourse. The author, however, did not explain the methods that can be applied in the study of these subjects, and never mentioned the results that had been already achieved by foreign scientists in these areas.

Foreign studies of Vietnamese political discourse

Most works by Vietnamese scholars are prescriptive, and those that claim to take a critical approach to political communication do not actually apply it. In contrast, virtually all studies of Vietnamese political discourse conducted independently of the Vietnamese scholarly community are critical in nature.

A. Fforde and L. Homutova, for example, in their article "Political Power in Vietnam: Is the Communist Party of Vietnam a Paper Leviathan?" concluded that Vietnam's political discourse was "imbued with relations of power as domination" [Fforde, Homutova 2017: 15], which means that the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) had no authority-based power. The researchers then expressed their view of the consequences of what they believed to be the lack of credibility of the CPV: for them, an obvious result of such an atmosphere was "detachment of people from politics, and this may indeed be desired by those who rule" [Ibid.].

Not only papers by Western authors, but also those by scholars of Vietnamese origin but written abroad can be critical. An example of such works is Mai Thu Thuy's Ph.D. thesis "The Politics of Nationalism in Vietnamese Communist Discourse" [Mai Thu Thuy 2019], which explores what it means to be Vietnamese within Vietnamese communist discourse. According to the author, the authorities in Vietnam, through communist discourse, equate the socialist regime with the "Vietnamese nation", which, in turn, is only a construct of that same communist discourse. Mai Thu Thuy believes it is the communist discourse that, having achieved hegemony, has become the main tool for keeping Vietnamese communists and socialist supporters in power.

While Western studies are often rather political or sociological in nature, Russian scholars usually write about Vietnamese political discourse from the linguistic perspective and their work is not marked by criticism. For instance, R.B. Kelimberdin in his work "Politics as a component of the linguistic worldimage (Based on the material of the Russian and Vietnamese languages)" [Kelimberdin 2018] about Russian and Vietnamese discourse on politics found that the structure of the Russian concept "politics" (Russian "*политика*") lacks two components – conceptual and evaluative, compared to the Vietnamese one (Vietnamese "*chính trị*"). In addition, the researcher conducted a survey to scale responses to the stimuli "politics" and "*chính trị*", the results of which showed a difference in the evaluation of these concepts by Russians and Vietnamese. Despite revealing quite significant difference in the structural and evaluative composition of the concepts, the author refrained from making subjective statements about the effectiveness of the political institutions of the respective countries and explained it by the difference in the political activities of the states, in the ideology pursued by them and in the coverage of politics by the media.

The problem of the peculiarities of political discourse pragmatics is partially revealed in the article "Verbal disagreement strategies in political discourse (on the material of Vietnamese parliamentary discourse)" by Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet [Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet 2022]. The author reveals that most often Vietnamese politicians express disagreement with their interlocutor's judgment or evaluation through the tactics of suggesting, hedging, and expressing an opposite point of view. The research also reveals several tactics that are not common or even not used in Vietnamese

political discourse, such as intensification of negative evaluation, irony, or short, vulgar statements. The results of the study can be used in comparing and identifying specific features of disagreement expression in other national political discourses.

Conclusion

There remains an obvious need to develop a theoretical and methodological basis for political discourse studies that would be adequate to the Vietnamese linguistic and cultural realities. Among the approaches that are common in the world, Vietnamese scholars work mainly with three – rhetorical, cognitive, and content analysis, leaving critical discourse analysis virtually untouched.

The works of Vietnamese authors are aimed mainly at the fields of political metaphors and argumentation analysis. Little research has been done in such areas as political linguistic personality study, linguistic prognostic analysis, genre typology, as well as research into linguistic pragmatics of political discourse. At the same time, most foreign scholars' works on Vietnamese political discourse are critical in nature and lean towards the political science and sociological rather than the linguistic spectrum.

Overall, at this point it would be inappropriate to speak of political linguistics as an independent field of research in Vietnam, as studies are conducted sporadically and cover only a few isolated areas of political discourse. Analysis of Vietnamese political discourse studies and their comparison with foreign works, hopefully, may serve as a stimulus for a more active study of aspects that are already more or less explored, as well as new ones.

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