

## POLITICAL DISCOURSE RESEARCH IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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*The article is devoted to political discourse research practice in the English classroom. The notions of discourse in general and political discourse in particular are defined. The main characteristics of political speeches to pay attention to in the classroom are pointed out. The author presents her own teaching model "GET IBIOF" featuring the main stages and steps with all their peculiarities. Different examples of tasks for each stage and comments on their significance are provided. Authentic political speeches abstracts are analyzed to show the way the suggested model works. The author concludes by listing advantages of the political discourse research when developing students' skills of various types.*

*Key words: discourse, political discourse, political speeches, model "GET IBIOF", stages, steps.*

Nowadays the idea of discourse in general is rather wide-spread in different academic spheres. It can be the part of cultural studies, political science, linguistics. It can also be the combination of all these things. The given paper aims to present the ways of conducting political discourse research in the English classroom as one more approach to studies and research in linguistics.

The notion of discourse cannot be interpreted in one way. It can be viewed as a text within a specific context, as a social action, as a cognitive process. According to N.D. Arutyunova, discourse is to be understood as speech imbedded in the context [1, p. 136]. The most detailed definition was provided by V.Z. Demyankov and he considers discourse to be an optional part of text consisting of more than one sentence, which usually involves basic concepts and creates the general context, describing time, people, their actions, objects they deal with and etc [2, p. 7].

Having analyzed different works on discourse we can sum everything up and define it as a complex communicative phenomenon based on a text and speech forms with all linguistic and extralinguistic peculiarities.

Discourse can be of different types, but the most emotionally and socially important is a political one. This variety is characterized by its certain objectives, a number of strategies and tactics, particular terms and etc.

Politicians usually use different strategies to achieve their main purposes. They are to address their audience in the most appropriate way, using certain symbols and ideas. They are supposed to persuade people and make them understand that they are the only ones who know what to do. Consequently using authentic political speeches in the English classroom can improve students' language skills of all kinds.

It is worth mentioning that all authentic political speeches reflect linguistic, cultural and social components, which makes them valuable teaching materials. Besides, there are some basic features that should be pointed out. These are conversational features that can be found in all political speeches:

- 1) authorship and targeting;
- 2) informative value;
- 3) expressiveness;

- 4) formality;
- 5) evaluativity.

The following examples are linguistic features that matter when analyzing:

- 1) specific vocabulary;
- 2) using "Political We" and "Political You";
- 3) specific grammar structures;
- 4) explicit vs implicit information;
- 5) a wide range of stylistic devices [3, p. 87].

Taking into account all these common features of authentic political speeches, we can move to doing political discourse research in the classroom. This activity comprises a great deal of tasks. It can be divided into several stages according to the type of information to find and analyze. I would like to suggest and describe my own model "**GET IBIOF**" as a part of my teaching English method. The model is a combination of three main stages that are supposed to represent all the variety of tasks to do when working with a political speech. "Get" is the overall idea of the practice. You have to get a great deal of key things, supporting evidence, details, hidden sense, connotations and etc.

The first stage is called "*Get into the background*". The core idea of it is to find as much information as possible concerning **who** says **what**, **when**, **where** and **why**. We need those things to get the idea of what we might anticipate when dealing with the text. We get into the time the speech was uttered, its economic and social underlying reasons. Some additional facts could be helpful to get the whole picture, for example, information about the audience or the place where a politician takes the floor.

So, this stages involves searching and brain storm tasks . Once finding facts you need to amass them and arrange into a kind of a scheme. This scheme must be a summary of the key facts and details. It is supposed to be the introduction to the speech and its main idea.

The second stage is "*Get inside the idea*". We have to combine **what** and **why** in every single task or activity. It is mostly about what is said and what is implied by that? Among the common tasks there are "Key words activities" that I usually call in different ways. For instance, "*What is said more than twice?*", "*Who gives more?*", "*Emotions run high*", "*Didn't You get it?*". The general idea of all those exercises is to find those key words that are repeated from line to line, that give the gist, that shape the appeal to the audience and so on.

Sometimes I ask my students to do this task in a creative way. They put key words into groups and then name each group or category explaining it. Checking this task can be organized as a contest with different nominations "Quantity matters" or "Quality is number 1", "Making difference with words", "You've got it!".

There is one more possible way of doing this and I can say that it works quite well. I ask my students to find the key words and divide them into parts of speech they represent. So we have key nouns, key verbs, key adjectives or key adverbs. Having done that we start to find out what we have more: ideas and notions, actions, manners and ways of doing any of these things or assessment. And only then we are busy with generalizing and making conclusions and coming up with a scheme or a short story that is based on those key words. So, if the general idea in the speech of Barack Obama (Presidential election campaign 2012) is to suggest something new and make sort of difference then key words scheme "*focus on*" - "*rebuild*" - "*change*" - "*move forward*" can tell such a story: The politician has some certain issues to *focus on* and doing that he is going to *rebuild* the whole system with the help of urgent *changes* that the country has been waiting for. And the purpose of his political plan is to *move forward*.

This stage gives one more great chance to get deeper into the idea and I call it "**advanced linguistic performance**". What I mean is stylistic devices search. It can also be a hard thing to do and it shows students' ability to read, think and analyze at the same time. This linguistic knack helps to sort ideas out and emphasize their significance.

Even though any types of stylistic devices can be found and analyzed but I tend to ask my students to find any evidence of lexical or syntactical ones because these are rather popular and easy to get. And we look for metaphors, repetitions, epithets, inversion examples, rhetorical questions, anaphora sentences and so on. Students are likely to work in groups searching for some particular things.

As we have the full list of these figures of speech we can move to the next step which is the one I personally like. I created a special name for that and every time students wonder why it is "**Stratics**". Sometimes we even play a guessing game with prompts. Yes, we are talking about strategies and tactics of politicians. I have always thought that it gives a lot of benefits not only for students' linguistic performance and reading and critical thinking skills development. Stratics activities teach us how to present and position ourselves, to persuade others, to make them believe and many other essential things.

When analyzing authentic political speeches I ask students to say WHY this politician is the one to vote for/ to believe and find proves of what makes him/her the most appropriate. In other words, I ask them to assess how good he/she is at positioning. All their ideas must be based on statements from the speech:

*An economy built to last... **We can do this**. I know **we can**, because **we've done it before**... But challenges remain. And **we know how to solve them*** (Barack Obama. Third Presidential State of the Union Address, January, 2012) [4].

This example proves the fact that the politician is the one who knows what to do and how to do. He has some experience and he understands that a lot of hard work is on the way.

Another question to find any answer to is WHAT is wrong with his/her rivals and in what way he/she surpasses them. Such practice checks the ability to read between the lines, to get the hidden sense. All of these tricky questions are taken from political marketing that makes people assert themselves in a proper way. It is highly important no matter what you do. You have to be good at that, you have to know the way it is.

One more step is "**Persuasive workshop**". We deal with "extremely persuasive" collocations and words. The key words we have might be useful. What I am interested in is the ability to find and assess how persuasive the word can be. It is exciting when you see the way students try to get rid of less emotional words. Such activities are to feel the word, its magic, its music. Afterwards we deal with persuasive speaking tips, we sum everything up and present our findings.

Going that way provided a lot of examples we can use for further stage "**Get outside the frame**". And here we do a bunch of things. Thus, "Sharing impressions", "Giving feedback" and "Quotes for thought" let students go beyond the speech and demonstrate themselves. The way they choose "Quotes for thought" and comment on them shows their capacity to think big. It can be done in the written form as a homework.

Students can implement those ideas in Political Speeches Contest and win as "the most persuasive speaker", "the most emotional speaker", "the most thought-provoking speaker". A

teacher can use the criteria elicited when analyzing for some more categories. You may give a list of key words and students will give a speech using them as the key ideas. Such like contests can be hold as a part of election campaign and students can be as creative as possible, trying to present themselves.

Summarizing the above, it is important to say that authentic political speeches in the English classroom can be useful for different skills development. You may listen or watch the speech video and complete the gaps, write a script, mark sentences true or false. You may improve reading skills of all kinds. You are to read and point out, to read and analyze, to read and compare. You can keep calm about writing skills development because you can write short stories, essays, feedbacks. Speaking skills can be enhanced too much through commenting on quotes, persuasive workshops, public speech contests. You may develop critical thinking and assessment skills. You can teach students to present themselves in the best way. You can help them not to be afraid of public speaking showing great examples. You may boost their creativity and imagination letting them go far to get the best idea and prove that.

Following the teaching model "**GET IBIOF**" can be helpful for all these. You may vary the steps and increase the number of tasks and give them special names. You may combine the second and the third stages, getting evidence and interpreting or anticipating the idea and making sure. Authentic political speeches convey the idea from the social and cultural points of view, which may help to broaden the mind. You may improve your contextual guess skills as well as other skills of language performance. You may GET all those ideas and their relevance, bright examples of great speakers, diverse styles and their features, get hold of all those things to practice in everyday life.

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