

**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology
Department of English Philology and Intercultural Communication**

Bachelor's thesis

**LANGUAGE PROFILE OF BORIS JOHNSON
(2017-2026)**



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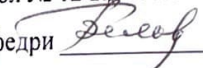
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«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології
та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 12 від 19.05.2026

Зав. кафедри  д. філол. н., проф. Алла БЄЛОВА

KYIV – 2026

ABSTRACT

Romanchuk A.Y. Language Profile of Boris Johnson (2017-2026). – Bachelor's Thesis.

This bachelor's thesis investigates Boris Johnson's idiolect as a distinctive phenomenon in contemporary political discourse. Its relevance is determined by the growing role of linguistic identity, media performance and strategic persuasion in modern politics, where a leader's image is heavily shaped by language. The research objects are political discourse and the specific lexical, grammatical, stylistic and rhetorical features that build Johnson's linguistic persona. The study aims to identify the core characteristics of his idiolect and analyse their communicative and persuasive functions. To achieve this, the thesis reviews theoretical approaches to idiolect, analyses political discourse, identifies stylistic tools in Johnson's speeches and evaluates audience perception.

The methodological framework combines discourse, stylistic, lexical-semantic and critical discourse analysis, which allows us to examine political speech as both a linguistic phenomenon and a deliberate tool for self-presentation. The practical part relies on the textual analysis of Johnson's speeches, media articles and a questionnaire capturing foreign student perception of his verbal behaviour.

The findings demonstrate that Johnson's style blends formal rhetoric with conversational informality, relying heavily on humour, irony, metaphors, historical references and rhetorical devices. While these strategies make his speech highly memorable and recognisable, they simultaneously trigger contradictory audience reactions. Consequently, this research confirms that linguistic creativity and performativity are essential tools for constructing a politician's image in today's media-driven world.

Keywords: *idiolect, political discourse, linguistic identity, political communication, rhetoric, stylistic devices, Boris Johnson.*

АНОТАЦІЯ

Романчук А.Я. Мовний Профіль Бориса Джонсона (2017-2026). – Бакалаврська робота.

У цій бакалаврській роботі досліджується ідіолект Бориса Джонсона як самобутнє явище в сучасному політичному дискурсі. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростаючою роллю мовної ідентичності, медійної поведінки та стратегічного переконання в сучасній політиці, де образ лідера значною мірою формується за допомогою мови. Об'єктами дослідження є політичний дискурс та специфічні лексичні, граматичні, стилістичні й риторичні особливості, що формують мовну персону Джонсона. Мета дослідження – визначити основні характеристики його ідіолекту та проаналізувати їхні комунікативні та переконливі функції. Для цього у роботі розглядаються теоретичні підходи до ідіолекту, аналізується політичний дискурс, визначаються стилістичні засоби у промовах Джонсона та оцінюється сприйняття аудиторії.

Методологічна основа поєднує дискурсивний, стилістичний, лексико-семантичний та критичний дискурсивний аналіз, що дозволяє розглядати політичну промову як лінгвістичне явище та як свідомий інструмент самопрезентації. Практична частина базується на текстовому аналізі промов Джонсона, статей у ЗМІ та опитуванні, що фіксує сприйняття його вербальної поведінки студентами.

Результати дослідження показують, що стиль Джонсона поєднує офіційну риторику з розмовною невимушеністю, значною мірою спираючись на гумор, іронію, метафори, історичні алюзії та риторичні прийоми. Хоча ці стратегії роблять його виступи надзвичайно запам'ятовуваними та впізнаваними, вони водночас викликають суперечливі реакції аудиторії. Тож, це дослідження підтверджує, що мовна креативність та перформативність є важливими інструментами формування іміджу політика в сучасному світі, де домінують ЗМІ.

Ключові слова: *ідіолект, політичний дискурс, мовна особистість, політична комунікація, риторика, стилістичні фігури, Борис Джонсон.*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's political communication, language is central to shaping how the public views political figures and influencing how people see their personalities and beliefs. Political discourse functions as a crucial tool for sharing information or policy proposals, for establishing identity and authority, as well as building bonds with audiences. Politicians have unique ways of communicating that set them apart and help form their public personas through specific lexical choices, grammatical structures and rhetorical techniques. So, researching linguistic features in political speech has become important in areas like discourse studies, sociolinguistics and political communication.

One of the key concepts in analysing speech patterns is idiolect, which refers to the unique "*form of a language that a particular person speaks*" (21). A person's idiolect is influenced by things like education, cultural background and social setting, personal communication choices and so on. In the context of political discourse, a public figure's idiolect can be vital to their political identity through helping people recognize and interpret their speech style. By looking at a politician's language style, we can see the language traits that shape their public image and understand how language is used strategically in political discussions.

Because of the unique style of his speaking, Boris Johnson is a very intriguing subject for linguistic analysis among modern political figures. Known for his expressive and often unconventional rhetorical style, Johnson frequently combines elements of formal and informal language, classical references, humour and vivid metaphorical expressions, with his speeches being a balanced mix of sophisticated vocabulary, colloquial phrasing and elaborate syntactic structures. These linguistic characteristics attract considerable attention from journalists, commentators and scholars, who frequently discuss the role of Johnson's language in shaping his political persona and public reputation.

However, the perception of a politician's speech is not determined solely by the linguistic features themselves but also by how the audiences interpret them. Media

discourse and public commentary play a significant role in shaping of how a political figure's communicative style is understood and viewed. Therefore, linguistic analysis combined with an analysis of public perceptions and audience responses can be beneficial for the study of Boris Johnson's language profile. Such an approach makes it possible to explore how linguistic choices affect the way a political figure is viewed and how their political identity is developed.

The relevance of the paper lies in exploration of a multifaceted topic with implications for politics, media and society. It offers opportunities for scholarly inquiry, critical analysis and deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shape public discourse and perception.

The purpose of the work is to explore the language profile of Boris Johnson by analysing the lexical, grammatical and rhetorical features of his speech, as well as examining how these linguistic characteristics influence the perception of his communicative style and public identity.

The object of the investigation is the portrayal and representation of Boris Johnson's political discourse through his public speeches and statements, as well as through pieces of media written about him.

The subject of the study is the linguistic features of Boris Johnson's idiolect, including lexical choices, grammatical structures and rhetorical techniques that shape his distinctive communicative style.

The objectives of the paper are the following:

1. to examine the theoretical foundation of discourse studies related to language profile, linguistic identity and idiolect;
2. to identify the main linguistic characteristics of political discourse;
3. to analyse the lexical features of Boris Johnson's speech;
4. to investigate the grammatical and stylistic peculiarities of his oratory;
5. to determine the rhetorical techniques that contribute to the expressiveness of his speeches;

6. to explore the public perception of Boris Johnson's linguistic style based on survey results among students.

Research methods: descriptive; discourse and linguistic-stylistic analysis to examine Boris Johnson's speeches and identify their communicative features; comparative and structural-semantic analysis for comparing different linguistic features and identifying patterns in language use; survey method to collect empirical data; qualitative and quantitative analysis to interpret the results of the questionnaire.

Research material: public remarks, transcripts of Boris Johnson's speeches, newspaper and journal articles, videos and the results of a questionnaire conducted among students.

Structure of the work: the work consists of an introduction, two chapters (one theoretical and one practical), conclusion, a list of references and data sources.

The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of applying its results in further linguistic and discourse studies of political communication, as well as in the analysis of the relationship between language use, rhetorical strategies and the construction of political identity in modern public discourse.

Validation of the research results: conference "X Всеукраїнські наукові читання за участю молодих учених «ФІЛОЛОГІЯ XXI СТОЛІТТЯ: НОВІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ»" (3 April 2026); International Scientific-Practical Student Conference "English Studies: The Key to a World of Discovery" (23 April 2026).

1. DISCOURSE STUDIES AND IMAGE CONSTRUCTION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

1.1. Language Profile and Linguistic Identity

According to John E. Joseph, the primary purposes of language are “**communication** with others, it being impossible for human beings to live in isolation; and **representation** of the world to ourselves in our own minds - learning to categorise things using the words our language provides us with” [Joseph 2004, p. 15]. Political communication is inherently linguistic in nature, as political figures rely on language to formulate arguments, justify policies and present their positions to the public. As Paul Chilton stated: “*political activity does not exist without the use of language. The doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language*” [Chilton 2004, p. 6]. For this reason, the study of language has become an essential component of political discourse analysis, allowing researchers to explore how meaning, persuasion and political positioning are constructed through discourse. Scholars studying political psychology and communication argue: “*politicians’ communication is generally guided by three main goals: (1) presenting a positive image of themselves and their party, (2) presenting a negative image of opposing parties, and (3) trying to gain consensus*” [Catellani 2004, p. 60]. Given this, it is now understood that politicians are on the one hand interested in achieving respect and trust from people, and on the other hand they are looking forward to broadening their parties and inviting more people to their side. Therefore, language is not merely a medium for transmitting information and ideas but a fundamental tool which helps influence the audience.

Since language is now viewed as a “*manifestation of the historical and cultural wealth of people*”, the notion of “linguistic persona” has become increasingly popular during the last two centuries, and needs to be refined with extra precision [Mazhitayeva et. al. 2019, p. 3088]. **Linguistic identity** is the way an individual or a community uses language to showcase their identity and cultural background, while also positioning themselves as a part of society. In other words, it refers to “*the uniqueness and individuality of each person in their language use*” [Romanchuk, Kuzmenko,

Berezhna et. al. 2024, p. 16]. Linguistic personality deals with what image people create of themselves and how they are perceived by others. This includes dialect and accent, lexical choices and cultural references, general communicative style etc. And **language profile** is the reflection of the specific set of languages and language skills of a particular person [3]. Ukrainian scholar Snizhana Holyk defines: *“linguistic identity is a social phenomenon which, nevertheless, also has an individual dimension. The individual aspect of linguistic identity is shaped by one’s internal relationship with language. The main means of transforming an individual into a linguistic personality is socialisation, which involves: • the process of integrating a person into specific social relationships; in this respect, linguistic personalities are a kind of realisation of society’s cultural and historical knowledge; • speech and thought processes in accordance with the norms of a specific ethnoculture; • the process of assimilating the laws of a people’s social psychology”* [Holyk 2013, p. 262, our translation]. Consequently, language is a reflection of who we are. It can tell a lot of information about a person, revealing their psychological characteristics through the prism of language – their age, ethnicity, cultural background, social status, belonging to a community and so on. Meaning, all these pieces of information serve as factors that influence both, language profile and linguistic identity. Let’s divide them into groups:

- 1) **Socio-cultural factors.** From the moment a person is born, their family, ethnicity and community shape which language or languages they learn first and their attitude towards said language(s), how they value it/them. At the same time, person’s surroundings – classmates, colleagues or role models, socialise the person into particular accent, offering a sense of belonging to a group, being a part of a community. [21]
- 2) **Psychological factors.** Age, motivation and cognitive abilities affect how many languages a person learns and how fluent they become, which in turn shapes their language profile. Also, previously mentioned emotional attachment in the sense of belonging can directly influence (strengthen or weaken) person’s motivation and/or identification with particular language or dialect.

- 3) **Societal conditions.** The dominant or prestigious languages that individuals orient their identities toward are determined by national and international power relations (e.g., colonial histories, migration, multilingual policies). [21; 25]
- 4) **Language use.** The ability to switch between languages and dialects and/or mix them in different settings (called code-switching and code-mixing respectively) signals multilingual linguistic identity and reflects the richness of a person's language profile. (24; 25); [40]

Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall define: *“identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon”* [Bucholtz & Hall, 2005]. This suggests that identity emerges through the ways people speak, communicate and represent themselves in social contexts. In other words, individuals are not born with a fully formed linguistic identity, rather identity develops through repeated linguistic behavior, interaction with others and different cultural practices. This perspective highlights that linguistic choices are intertwined with broader cultural expectations, ideologies and communicative environment. The scholars continue: *“identities are relationally constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between self and other, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice and authority/delegitimacy”* [Bucholtz & Hall, 2005]. This means that speakers construct their identities by emphasizing either closeness or distance from particular audiences and/or values. In political discourse this approach becomes especially obvious since politicians tend to shape their linguistic persona strategically in order to appear relatable, authentic or distinct from their opponent. Bucholtz and Hall also add: *“identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures”* [Bucholtz & Hall, 2005]. Certain aspects of linguistic behaviour are deliberately constructed for persuasive or performative purposes, while others become habitual and automatic over time. Additionally, identity is influenced not only by self-

presentation but also by the perceptions and interpretations of audiences, media representations and larger ideological structures. Thus, identity is constructed through interaction between the speaker and society.

Implying this analysis to the political discourse, we can make a conclusion that the effectiveness of a political figure is not determined solely by their linguistic competence but also by their social adaptability and creativity in the use of language. In other words, a successful politician is not the one who only speaks without grammatical, lexical or stylistic mistakes, but that who adjusts their discourse to different social environments and audiences, and who can use their language skills to their own advantage through maintaining people's attention and persuasion.

1.2. The Concept of Idiolect

“*“Idiolect” refers to an individual’s unique variety and/or use of language, from the level of phoneme to the level of discourse*” [Wright 2018, p. 1]. The term **idiolect** is widely accepted to have been first used in Bloch, referring to “*the totality of the possible utterances of one speaker at one time in using language to interact with one other speaker*” [Bloch 1948, p. 7]. Later on, Hockett defined it as “*the totality of speech habits of a single person at a given time*” [Hockett 1958, p. 321]. Since then, definitions of idiolect have varied. For instance, Martinet describes idiolect as “*the language as spoken by a single individual*” [Martinet 1961, p. 105]. Now idiolect is considered to be a person’s distinctive way of speaking and using language. This concept highlights that while people may share a common language, each person’s speech reflects their personal experiences, influences and social interactions, leading to a distinctive linguistic fingerprint. The meaning is also reflected in the etymology of the word: the two morphemes of Greek origin: *idio-* meaning “*one’s own, personal, private, peculiar, separate and distinct*” and *-lect*, referring to a “*social variety of a language*” (28; 23). Unlike dialects, which represent the shared language characteristics of a group, an idiolect is entirely personal and can vary widely even within a single dialectal

community. Idiolects are dynamic and can evolve over time due to factors such as age, social environment, and exposure to new linguistic contexts. As David Wright explains, a person's idiolect is *"influenced by a wide range of other sources of variation, such as their life experiences; language encounters; what they have read and listened to; where they have been schooled; jobs they have had; their favorite hobbies and pastimes; and their parents, friends, and teachers"* [Wright 2018, p. 1]. Understanding idiolects is essential in fields like sociolinguistics and forensic linguistics, as they provide insights into individual identity and can be instrumental in identifying authorship or understanding communication styles.

It is important to note that idiolect is not an isolated system but rather a combination of influences from dialects, sociolects and registers, alongside individual linguistic preferences. This means that while some people speak the same language, no two individuals can use it in exactly the same way. Another significant aspect of idiolect is its dynamic nature. A person's linguistic behaviour is not fixed but evolves over time as a result of new experiences, social interactions and exposure to different forms of language. While some features of an idiolect may remain stable, others may change, reflecting the ongoing development of linguistic identity. [21]; (22) Idiolects encompass a person's unique speech patterns, habits and mannerisms in addition to all facets of language, including active and passive lexicon, grammar and pronunciation. Let's examine three key aspects in more detail:

1. **Pronunciation**, the way we enunciate specific speech sounds, contains:
 - stress (the focus on specific words or syllables in the word);
 - rhythm (the regular switching between stressed and unstressed words);
 - pitch (the volume of one's voice);
 - intonation (the change in one's voice's pitch).
2. **Vocabulary** is the combination of words people use to express themselves and to communicate with others. Each person has a unique vocabulary that is unique to them in their lives. It can also depend on other factors, such as life experiences, language situations and encounters, what are their reading and listening

preferences, what school have they attended and where, jobs they have held, hobbies they have enjoyed and people they have been surrounded with.

3. **Grammar** takes into account the structure of the language. It considers:

- word class;
- word order;
- sentence types and clauses;
- aspects and tenses;
- grammatical voices and moods. (22)

In contemporary linguistics, idiolect is intertwined with the notion of linguistic identity, as it reflects how individuals express and position themselves in different social situations. In discourse analysis, particularly in political communication, the concept of idiolect is especially relevant, as it allows researchers to identify consistent patterns in a speaker's language that contribute to the construction of their public persona. For instance, frequently used rhetorical strategies, preferred expressions or distinctive stylistic choices can become markers of a political figure's communicative identity. Despite its importance, the concept of idiolect presents certain challenges for linguistic analysis. As Wright notes, idiolect is a "*theory that is not easily observable or measurable and for which there is little agreement and even less empirical evidence*" [Wright 2018, p. 1], and there is an ongoing debate regarding whether it should be understood as a mental linguistic system or as observable language use. Nevertheless, developments in corpus linguistics and discourse analysis have made it possible to identify patterns of individual language use more effectively, particularly through the analysis of large text collections [8].

Generally, the idea of idiolect offers a crucial analytical framework for comprehending the uniqueness of language behaviour in discourse. The study of idiolect is especially useful in the context of political communication because it allows scholars to pinpoint the regular linguistic patterns that political figures use to establish their public personas. Studying these patterns helps identify how particular language choices and habits affect the perception of reliability, authority and/or authenticity.

Therefore, the analysis of idiolect not only broadens the understanding of linguistic identity but also emphasises the role of individual speech characteristics in shaping political discourse.

1.3. Linguistic Peculiarities of Political Discourse

Political discourse has been widely studied within linguistics, discourse analysis and political communication, therefore there exist various definitions of the term. One of the most referenced and cited is that offered by Teun A. van Dijk, who claims: *“political discourse is identified by its **actors** or **authors**, viz., **politicians**”* [van Dijk 1997, p. 12]. He continues: *“the vast bulk of studies of political discourse is about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels”* [van Dijk 1997, p. 12]. According to van Dijk, political discourse is not only characterised by its participants but also by its functions, which include the exercise of power, persuasion and the management of public opinion. Paul Chilton adds: *“political discourse involves, among other things, the promotion of representations, and a pervasive feature of representation is the evident need for political speakers to imbue their utterances with evidence, authority and truth...”* [Chilton 2004, p. 23]. He also believes that *“the use of language in political discourse can be seen as a form of competition among political actors wishing to promote, to have accepted, their own particular ‘world’”* [Chilton 2004, p. 50]. From this perspective, political discourse is inherently purposeful and structured by the intentions of political actors.

Ukrainian scholar L.L. Slavova stated: *“Political power is based on the power of influence, on governing people of different political persuasions, and governance is exercised solely through the spoken word. Since the primary aim of political communication is to attain and retain power, strategies and tactics of influence aimed at convincing the audience of the correctness of one’s position or at demonstrating its*

validity in comparison with the positions of political opponents, take on particular significance.” [Slavova 2006, our translation]. Thus, political discourse features distinct linguistic traits designed to persuade, build solidarity and exert influence. These peculiarities often serve ideological goals through strategic language use. The idiolect can influence the effectiveness of rhetorical strategies employed in speeches. Politicians may adapt their language to evoke emotional responses (pathos), establish credibility (ethos) or present logical arguments (logos) based on their personal linguistic style [Hinton & Budzyńska-Daca 2019, p. 12]. Rhetorical devices often combine these elements, enhancing the persuasive power of political communication and allowing speakers to influence public opinion effectively. A rhetorical device is “*a use of language that is intended to have an effect on its audience*” (27). In political contexts, these strategies hold particular importance since they allow political actors to frame issues, construct ideological positions and establish the connection with their audience. One of the most important aspects of rhetorical strategies is their ability to simplify complex political ideas and make them more accessible to the general public. Among the most commonly used devices is metaphor, which involves comparing unrelated concepts in order to create vivid imagery or clarify abstract notions. For example, such expression as “*renewing the ties that bind us together*” (5) creates a sense of relatability and bond between the speaker and their audience, while sentence “*the meteorite that has just crashed through the public finances*” (10) transforms complex socio-economic processes into more comprehensive and concrete terms. This helps not only to improve the overall understanding but also to shape how audiences conceptualise and view political issues. Another widely used rhetorical strategy is repetition, which serves to emphasise key messages and enhance memorability. By reiterating specific words or phrases, political speakers reinforce particular ideas and ensure that people remember them, they sort of hammer key slogans into audience’s memory. Repetition is often combined with parallelism, a figure of speech with two or more elements in the sentence having the same grammatical structure. These elements often create rhythm, add coherence in speech, comparison and emphasis, thereby enhancing the persuasive effect (26). Rhetorical questions also play a significant role

in political discourse. Because rather than seeking for actual answers, such questions are used to provoke thoughts and help the audience reach a preferred conclusion or just create the sense of shared understanding and relatability between the speaker and the listeners. In addition, political discourse frequently relies on emotive language, which involves the use of words that evoke strong emotional responses, such as “freedom”, “justice” or “threat”. This type of language appeals directly to the audience’s feelings and values, making political messages more engaging and persuasive. Emotional appeals are particularly effective in engaging support, especially when addressing sensitive or controversial issues. [31; 34] In political discourse, personal pronouns also play crucial role since they are never neutral – they are highly strategic grammatical tools used to manage relationships, assign responsibility, and construct collective identities. The first-person plural pronoun “we” is arguably the most powerful tool in a politician's vocabulary. According to Ukrainian scholar, N.H. Humeniuk, *“Narration from the first person plural within the political, ideological discourse is a specific feature to show team responsibility for the described events”* [Humeniuk 2020, p. 33]. When a certain policy succeeds, “we” allows the speaker to claim collective credit, and when a crisis occurs, “we” spreads the burden, implying that the public and the leaders must face the hardship together. Last but not least, one of the most important and widely used rhetorical strategy is the binary opposition, the “us vs. them” division (often called ingroup vs. outgroup representation). At its core, the “us vs. them” division refers to the way political actors divide the social world into two opposing groups: “us” – the in-group (e.g., “the people”, “our nation”, “true citizens”) and “them” – the out-group (e.g., political opponents, immigrants, elites, foreign powers). Van Dijk defines that *“ingroups and outgroups and their associated ideologies manifest and reproduce themselves precisely by the ‘position’ their members take in situations of debate and conflict, also in communication”* [van Dijk 1998, p. 223]. He further points out that *“political speeches, interviews, programs, or propaganda typically focus on the preferred topics of ‘our’ group or party, on what we have done well, and associate political opponents with negative topics, such as war, violence, drugs, lack of freedom, and so on”* [van Dijk 2006, p. 734]. This division is not neutral

– it is constructed within discourse through language to emphasise difference, distance and often conflict. The most obvious marker to portray this division is the strategic use of pronouns *we, us, they, them*. As Chilton explains: “*in political discourse the first person plural (**we, us, our**) can be used to induce interpreters to conceptualise group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like, either as insiders or as outsiders*” [Chilton 2004, p. 56]. Thus, it is important “we” identifies as a group with shared principles, ideologies and ideas. Typically, the in-group is portrayed positively, while the out-group is portrayed negatively. This aligns with that van Dijk calls the “*ideological square*”:

- “*Empasize **Our** good things*
- *Empasize **Their** bad things*
- *De-emphasize **Our** bad things*
- *De-emphasize **Their** good things*” [van Dijk 2006, p. 734]

The “us vs. them” opposition is used to create a sense of belonging among the audience; to legitimise power (since some actions, even if they are controversial, can be justified and explained as protection of “us” from “them”); to unify supporters; and to simplify complex issues by reducing political realities into clear, emotionally-driven oppositions. However, it can contribute to polarisation, exclusion and discrimination of the minorities.

Political discourse is also marked by emotiveness and expressivity, which make it more persuasive. Emotional language and expressive structures are frequently used to engage audiences and enhance ideological messages. At the same time, the category of modality reflects the speaker’s attitude toward reality, expressing certainty, necessity or desirability, in that way influencing how statements are perceived. Another important feature is intertextuality, which involves references to other texts, events or cultural knowledge. This allows political messages to gain additional meaning and resonance within a broader socio-cultural context. Similarly, socio-cultural context plays a crucial role, as the interpretation of political discourse depends on shared knowledge, values and historical background. In addition, political discourse is popular

in use of clichés, standard expressions and specialised terminology. These elements contribute to clarity, reinforce stereotypes and facilitate communication within the political sphere. Finally, political discourse possesses several distinctive characteristics, such as competitiveness (agonistic nature), aggressiveness, ideological orientation and theatricality. These features reflect the nature of politics as a struggle for power, where communication often involves confrontation, performance and strategic self-presentation [23].

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

In the first chapter we have laid down the theoretical foundations that are essential for studying Boris Johnson's language profile and linguistic identity in political communication. By examining current research in discourse studies, we can see that language does not simply convey information, it serves as a powerful tool for building social identity, shaping how the public perceives the leader and crafting a specific political image. Modern approaches highlight the continuous interplay between language, society and power, which underscores why discourse analysis is so relevant for exploring political communication today.

We focused closely on concepts of language profile and linguistic identity. Academic literature suggests that linguistic identity is a multi-layered phenomenon, shaped by daily communication and visible in a person's individual language choices. In turn, a language profile allows us to systematically point out those recurring linguistic features that make a speaker stand out and help build their public persona. Together, these concepts give us a clear and reliable framework for analysing how politicians behave when they communicate.

We also explored the concept of an idiolect – the unique mix of vocabulary, grammar, style and pragmatics that sets one speaker apart from everyone else. Analysing an idiolect is highly valuable in political discourse, where unique speech patterns help a politician become instantly recognisable, build credibility and connect with listeners. The theoretical overview confirms that an idiolect is a core element of a politician's broader linguistic identity and public image.

Additionally, our analysis of political discourse highlighted its main characteristics: persuasion, strategic communication, ideological positioning, audience focus and image building. Political speech relies heavily on rhetorical and linguistic devices that help leaders influence public opinion, establish authority and strengthen the bond with voters. Therefore, understanding these specific features provides us with necessary analytical tools to investigate how political leaders actually speak.

2. LANGUAGE PATTERNS IN BORIS JOHNSON'S ORATORY

2.1. The Peculiarities of Boris Johnson's Speech

2.1.1. Lexical Dimension

One of the most distinctive and memorable dimensions of Boris Johnson's idiolect is the vocabulary he uses in his political communication. His lexicon is characterised by a mix of humour and informality, classical and historical references, exaggerated expressions and the blending of colloquial language with elevated terminology. Such a mixture allows Johnson to come across as an intelligent, entertaining and relatable political persona. His idiolect is significantly different from more put-together and bureaucratic style, which one would associate with British political discourse. This makes him both – memorable and accessible to the wide range of audiences.

The central and most noticeable feature of Johnson's linguistic style is his frequent use of humour and comic exaggeration. He often relies on humorous phrasing in order to reduce political tension, attract public attention and create a sense of spontaneity, as well as relatability. His humour is commonly based on hyperbole, absurd imagery and unexpected lexical combinations. For example, during the Prime Minister's Levelling Up speech, Johnson identified leadership as “...*the yeast that lifts the whole mattress of dough, the magic sauce – the ketchup of catch-up...*” (11). This metaphor is intentionally absurd and creates a humorous visual image that simplifies a complex political term. In the CBI conference, he commented: “*I was a bit hazy about what I would find at Peppa Pig World, but I loved it. Peppa Pig World is very much my kind of place*” (6), which drastically disrupts audience expectations since political speeches usually employ serious economic or ideological topics, whereas “Peppa Pig World” is in the field of children's entertainment. Through this statement he jokingly presents himself as the person who genuinely belongs to a children's amusement park, which helps reduce the social distance between the politician and the audience, making him more approachable and more human. Another peculiarity of his humour is self-irony. For instance, in the UK Conservative Party Conference, he admitted: “*And amid*

the rubble of brick, they seemed to be digging a hole for someone or something, or indeed someone, possibly me” (10) – here he constructs the image of his political opponents preparing his “grave”, then weakening the seriousness of the suggestion with the hesitant “*someone or something, or indeed someone*”. This correction looks almost like he is improvising his thought in the real time, yet again contrasting with the expected precision of political discourse. Also, by jokingly presenting himself as a potential victim, he reduces political tension and appears emotionally resilient, as well as more approachable to audiences.

Furthermore, Boris Johnson frequently intensifies his statements through emotionally charged adjectives, including words like “fantastic”, “colossal”, “extraordinary”, “unbelievable”, “magnificent”, “heroic”, “brilliant”, “vital”, “crucial”, “historic”, “momentous”, “unprecedented”, “toughest”, “great”, “strong”, “awesome”, “unreserved”, “global”, “green”, “rapid”, “biggest”, “fastest”, “unstoppable”, “incredible”, “remarkable”, “dramatic” and others. For instance, in the Munich Security Conference Special Edition 2021 speech, he describes global cooperation as based on “*formidable strengths and expertise*”, while vaccines are produced at a “*heroic*” pace and global coordination is framed as “*outstanding collective security*” (18). Through such lexical choices he dramatises international cooperation and reinforces a sense of Western capability and unity. Similarly, in the United Nations General Assembly 2021 speech, climate action is framed through “*extraordinary damage*”, “*unprecedented risk*” and “*crucial turning points*” (19), showcasing environmental policy as existential. The lexis here is deliberately pessimistic yet solution-oriented, combining crisis vocabulary with optimism that offers progress.

Additionally, Boris Johnson often arranges multiple descriptive words or phrases one after another to create intensity and gradation. A very notable example would be his statement at the Conservative Party Conference speech, where he said: “*Let’s hear it for Jon Bon Govi: living proof that we, you all, represent the most jiving hip happening and generally funkapolitan party in the world*” (10). The accumulation of

expressive adjectives leaves a comic effect and creates rhythm, which elevates his overall notable performance. Boris Johnson also utilises superlative constructions, which contribute to optimistic narration and an energetic and performative quality of his rhetorical style. For example, “...and I will be offering this government nothing but the most fervent support” (4); “the 10 most innovative nations in the world - ... - all but one are liberal democracies” (18); “for months we have had one of the most open economies and societies”; “But we all know that some of the most brilliant and imaginative and creative people in Britain and some of the best paid people in Britain did not go to university” (10); “And we would achieve what I believe we can. And become the biggest and most successful economy in Europe” (6). Such constructions intensify the emotional impact, making his political statements memorable, rather than just neutral. In the Downing Street farewell speech (2022), he refers to “*the fastest vaccine rollout in Europe*”, “*record employment*” and “*biggest majority since 1987*” (4). These superlatives do not function solely as descriptions and illustrations, they construct exceptional governance performance. Superlative forms also present ideas, achievements or goals as outstanding and unquestionable, which helps Johnson awake confidence, optimism and enthusiasm among audiences.

Regarding emotional impact, he generally tends to use emotionally loaded and evaluative language. He does not rely on neutral terminology, but selects words with strong positive or negative connotations. For example, he may describe his opponents with comic insults (“*invertebrate jellies*” or “*mugwump*”), while to allies he refers with highly affirmative expressions. Throughout his speeches, Johnson constantly uses positive adjectives to build a flair of optimism and shared success. For example, in his Munich speech, he talks about “*fantastic things*” when describing America’s return to global leadership (18). When announcing the EU deal, he describes post-Brexit Britain as a “*prosperous and dynamic*” player on the world stage (8). Such linguistic choices actually serve as a key strategy – they help balance out all the talk about heavy crises like the pandemic, climate change, and global instability by framing everything around solutions, capability, and fresh starts. Another really noticeable thing about Johnson’s

style is how he pairs intense, negative words with equally strong, positive ones. For example, in his UN General Assembly speech, he uses heavy phrases like “*irreversible damage*”, “*mass movements of humanity*” and “*appalling effects*”, but immediately balances them out with terms like “*green industrial revolution*”, “*clean energy*” and “*rapid innovation*” (19). This creates a sort of back-and-forth between the threat and the solution, which makes him look like a leader who has everything under control.

From the point of view of vocabulary Boris Johnson employs, the use of unusual and expressive lexical units like rare words, archaic expressions and sophisticated lexical items is pretty frequent in his discourse. For example, Johnson called the London Assembly “*the great, supine, protoplasmic invertebrate jellies*” – scientific and biological vocabulary (13); in the debate with Mike Pence on Brexit, he said: “*there’s only one chlorinated chicken that I can see in this House, and he’s on that bench*” [15]; and described Jeremy Corbyn as a “*mutton-headed, old mugwump*” (3) – archaic and eccentric vocabulary. Even though these examples are insults, through their lexical unexpectedness they appear as entertainment rather than insult. Instead of relying on political criticism, Boris Johnson uses comic verbal attacks that end up being memorable for their absurdity and creativity. Additionally, Johnson makes classical, literary and historical references in his oratory – he alludes to ancient history, Greek and Roman mythology, classical literature. With this he constructs the image of an intellectual and educated persona. For instance, in his speech at the UK Conservative Party Conference on October 6, 2021, he said: “*our wonderful nurses pulled my chestnuts out of that Tartarean pit*” (10); in other speeches he also refers to figures like Napoleon, Pericles, and Cincinnatus (in his final speech as PM), as well as occasionally uses Latin phrases like *alea iacta est* (“the die is cast”). Also, in a speech about Brexit, Johnson retold a myth about Prometheus, where Zeus punished Prometheus with the eagle eating his liver over and over again. Johnson commented: “*...and this went on forever, a bit like the experience of Brexit in the UK*” (12). Also, in his speech at the UN General Assembly in 2021, he quoted the words of the Oxford philosopher, Toby Ord: “We’re just old enough to get ourselves into serious trouble.” (19). Apart from

that, he tends to make contemporary references as well, like the mentioning of famous American comic strip Peanuts in *“a torture we all remember that came to resemble Lucy snatching away Charlie Brown’s football”* during his speech on Brexit (20); or film character James Bond who is, according to Boris Johnson, *“most globally famous fictional son”* of Scotland and with whom *“we are roughly in the same position my fellow global leaders”* (15). As opposed to classical references, these ones create a sense of relatability, appeal to audiences of different age and mindset, and sometimes simplify complex political issues by drawing parallels between reality and fiction.

Across the corpus, it's clear that Johnson's word choices are always tied to his political branding. In the Munich speech, he uses terms like *“free world”*, *“liberal democracy”* and *“rule of law”* to paint a picture of traditional Western values (18). But in his Brexit speeches, he shifts to phrases like *“sovereign control”* and *“global Britain”* to push the idea of a new, independent identity. Then, in his 2019 Conservative Conference speech, he creates a clear dividing line by pitting *“free market capitalism”* against *“socialism”*, using his vocabulary to take a very specific political side (14). Johnson also loves to use casual words and informal exaggerations, which makes his speeches feel more like a performance. Phrases like *“folks”* and *“let’s get this done”*, along with colourful descriptions like *“paving the path of prosperity”* or *“superinformative vermicelli of broadband”*, add humour and make serious political topics easier to digest. By mixing serious policy talk with this kind of playful, everyday language, he manages to look like both a high-level politician and an ordinary, relatable guy.

Johnson's speeches also rely heavily on kinetic verbs that focus on movement, force, and speed. This makes politics feel like an active, fast-moving process rather than just boring government paperwork. Throughout his speeches, he constantly uses words like *“build”*, *“deliver”*, *“drive”*, *“boost”*, *“unlock”*, *“tackle”*, *“strengthen”*, *“mobilise”*, *“transform”* and *“turbo-charge”*. For example, when he announced the EU deal in 2020, he kept using phrases like *“take back control”*, *“unlock opportunities”* and *“drive jobs and growth”* (8). This made Brexit sound like an exciting economic

breakthrough rather than just a legal separation. Later, in his 2019 Conservative Party speech, words like “*level up*”, “*roll out*” and “*invest*” made governance a continuous operational action. By constantly repeating the word “deliver” (“*deliver Brexit*”, “*deliver jobs*”, “*deliver our manifesto*”), he treats politics like a list of goals to achieve. Ultimately, this language makes governing look like technical execution and engineering, rather than a slow process of debate and discussion (14).

Another key strategy is the systematic use of binary opposition, where Johnson sets up clear good-vs-bad contrasts in his vocabulary, splitting his words into contrasting categories. For example, freedom vs. control (in negative sense) democracy vs. authoritarianism, innovation vs. stagnation, global cooperation vs. isolationism, growth vs. decline, and similar. In his Munich speech, he talks about “*free societies*”, subtly contrasting with “*authoritarian states*” (18). This creates a clear political divide just through his word choice, without him having to make a huge, detailed argument. Similarly, in his 2020 Brexit speech, “*independent*” and “*sovereign*” are positioned against “*bureaucratic*” and “*restricted*”, framing independence as a good thing and being tied to the EU as a negative restriction (8). This binary structure simplifies complicated global politics into emotional and easy-to-understand categories.

Boris Johnson’s idiolect differs significantly from traditional norms and overall formality of political discourse and political communication. Through his lexical strategies, Johnson constructs a political person that appears energetic, unpredictable, educated and approachable – all at the same time. This contributes to his memorability and makes him rather intriguing for the audience and other politicians.

2.1.2. Grammatical Dimension

Boris Johnson’s political discourse is predominantly characterised by specific word order, frequent use of personal pronouns, rhetorical questions, imperative constructions, repetitions and deviation from formal political grammar. These features build his image as spontaneous, emotional and engaging with the audience. Since

Johnson's style is different from the neutral syntax typical of many other politicians, his verbiage often appears dynamic and even theatrical.

In his idiolect, he extensively uses personal pronouns, particularly “we”, “you”, “I”. The pronoun “we” is an important instrument, which signals collective identification and political unity. Johnson frequently uses this pronoun to create the impression of solidarity between the government, the nation and the audience. For example, in his first speech as PM on July 24, 2019, the pronoun “we” was used 45 times, which is almost ~2.5% of the word count of the speech (5). This repeated use portrays a shared national identity and presents political goals as collective, not individual. With the pronoun “you”, Johnson directly addresses the listeners to create a sense of conversation and to involve the audience more. In many speeches he shifts from institutionalised language to direct personal interaction with people. For example, *“And that is a judgment that you, the people, have now confirmed at the polls”* (16). Such wording reduces the distance between politician and his audience, making the speech more personal and engaging. The use of the second person narration may also bolster the sense of impact and value people have on their country's state, as well as show them they are working together with the government. Like when Boris Johnson said in his speech on Coronavirus: *“With the time you buy - by simply staying at home - we are increasing our stocks of equipment. We are accelerating our search for treatments. We are pioneering work on a vaccine. And we are buying millions of testing kits that will enable us to turn the tide on this invisible killer”* (7). This strengthens trust and motivates the audience to pay attention and obey the rules and offers. Finally, while using the pronoun “I”, Johnson often foregrounds and highlights his personal opinions, emotions and experiences, unlike politicians who prefer impersonal constructions. For example, *“when I was a kid literally zero per cent of our energy came from wind”* – personal experience (6); *“I think that is the right and healthy and democratic thing to do”* (16); *“I don't think it will be a bad thing if we in the UK do things differently, or a take a different approach to legislation”*; *“I want to stress that...”* (8) – opinion; *“I regret not to have been successful in those arguments...”* (9);

“I am very pleased that this afternoon that we have completed the biggest trade deal yet” (8) – emotions/feelings. The use of first-person singular pronoun reinforces the image of an active and invested leader, while also centering the speaker’s personality within political discourse.

Quite frequently Boris Johnson uses imperative constructions. Generally, imperative mood is employed to motivate, persuade and mobilise audiences. Johnson commonly uses short and memorable imperative phrases that function as slogans. For example, *“Let’s get Brexit done!”* Grammatically, the phrase is extremely simple, consisting of an imperative verb followed by a direct object. However, its brevity and directness make it powerful and easily memorable. Through imperative mood in phrases like *“Let’s get on with the job”* or *“Let’s get going now on our own position navigation”*, Johnson “issues commands or calls to action” [Humeniuk 2020, pp.33-34]. Imperative in Johnson’s speeches often creates a sense of urgency and collective action. During the pandemic, he repeatedly used constructions such as *“stay home, protect the NHS, save lives”* (7). Such grammatical simplicity increases accessibility and persuasiveness. Sometimes Johnson also refers to the strategic use of passive voice. While he generally prefers active sentence structures, he switches to the passive voice when he wants to emphasize a process rather than assign responsibility. For example, in the UN General Assembly speech, he states that *“Emissions are being reduced”* and *“Vaccines were developed in record time”* (19). These passive structures place the focus entirely on the positive outcome while keeping the specific actors in the background. This contrasts with his use of the active voice when highlighting political successes, such as *“We delivered Brexit”* or *“We built new hospitals”*. It means that he uses the passive voice to describe general progress and the active voice to claim political credit.

Another component of Johnson's linguistic style is the use of rhetorical questions. These are used to influence audience perception and emphasize particular arguments, as well as maintain audience engagement. For example, *“What is it that we want?”* or *“Who would want to go back?”* These questions imply their own answer

and encourage emotional agreement and reflection from listeners. He also utilises unusual and expressive word order. In his first speech as PM, he states: “*We will leave the European Union on October 31st, no ifs or buts*” (5). In his statement on coronavirus on March 23, 2020, he adds: “*Without a huge national effort to halt the growth of this virus, there will come a moment when no health service in the world could possibly cope*” (7); and in his Resignation speech on July 7, 2022, he comments: “*I regret not to have been successful*” (9). These all are examples of inversion, that, depending on the context, emphasises commitment and urgency (1st example), or builds suspense and underscores the gravity of the situation before revealing the subject (2nd example). Similarly, Johnson often constructs long, loosely connected sentences. Such syntactic structures imitate spontaneous conversation and prove his image as an improvisational speaker. For example, “*Their leader, like a seriously rattled bus conductor, pushed this way and that by a Corbyn Easter mob – not that they have bus conductors anymore, unfortunately*” (10). Simile and then the detached comment interrupt syntactic flow and add comic flair to the sentence and the speech as a whole. Grammatically, these digressions make the speech appear more natural and less scripted.

Johnson also tends to rely on paratactic structures, where clauses are coordinated rather than subordinated. For example, in his final speech as Prime Minister, he states: “*We have delivered Brexit and we have delivered the fastest vaccine rollout in Europe and we have delivered economic recovery...*” (4). The use of polysyndeton (repeated use of *and*) here creates a chaining effect rather than building a layered, hierarchical argument. Similarly, in the EU statement (2020), clauses are presented as a sequence: “*We have taken back control of our laws and we have left the customs union and we are now able to do free trade deals...*” (8). This structure keeps the sentences simple and increases rhetorical momentum, making political actions feel like a continuous flow instead of a carefully structured argument.

Another key grammatical feature is Johnson's frequent use of modal verbs like “must”, “will” and “can” to convey necessity, future certainty, and capability. For

example, in the United Nations General Assembly 2021 speech, “*we must act*”, “*we must go further*”, “*we must come together*” frame climate action as a non-negotiable moral duty (19). In the Munich speech, “*we will stand together*”, “*we will defend*”, “*we will strengthen NATO*” creates a sense of absolute certainty rather than speculation, projecting political confidence (18). Meanwhile, he uses “can” to construct a sense of collective empowerment, using phrases like “*We can do it*”, “*We can build back better*”, “*We can succeed together*”. Together, these modal verbs create a dual message of **obligation** (must) and **capability** (can), positioning political discourse as both necessary and achievable. Additionally, Johnson frequently uses adverbial modifiers of time and place such as “*now*”, “*today*”, “*this moment*” and “*here*” to create a sense of immediacy. In Munich, he declares: “*Today we are turning a corner*” (18) and in his resignation speech, he states: “*This is it, folks*” (9). These expressions close the time gap between the speech and the events described, making the audience feel as though they are experiencing a historical moment in real time.

Boris Johnson also sometimes omits grammatical elements that would normally appear in formal discourse. Such omissions increase informality and put emphasis on emotions. For example, short constructions or comments like “fantastic” or “absolutely extraordinary”. Furthermore, Johnson jumps between formal and informal structures within the same speech. He may start with complex syntactic constructions, involving historical or classical references, and then suddenly switch to simple colloquial phrases or short humorous remarks. This contrast further contributes to his unpredictability as a speaker, reflecting the duality of his idiolect, i.e. the combination of intellectualism and accessibility.

2.1.3. Rhetorical Techniques

The rhetoric of Boris Johnson is highly vibrant, dynamic, emotional and often includes vivid imagery. Johnson actively employs various complex and often consistent rhetorical devices such as triads, anaphors, epiphoras, metaphors, puns, and

others in order to influence audiences and make his speeches more impactful and memorable. Through such rhetorical techniques he constructs the image of a charismatic, approachable and unconventional political persona, while simultaneously increasing the persuasiveness and power of his oratory.

Triads are pretty frequent in Johnson's speeches. Generally, the rule of three has long been considered effective in political discourse since it creates rhythm, balance, and memorability. For example, in his first speech as a Prime Minister on July 24, 2019, he said: “The doubters, the doomsters, the gloomsters...”; “...to take decisions, to give strong leadership and to change this country for the better”; “...protect you or your parents or grandparents” (5); in his final speech as PM on September 6, 2022: “...we can, and we will get through it, and we will come out stronger” (4); in his statement on EU negotiations: “We will be able to set our own standards, to innovate in the way that we want, to originate new frameworks for the sectors in which this country leads the world,...” (8); and in his resignation speech on July 7, 2022: “I felt it was my job, my duty, my obligation to you to continue to do what we promised in 2019” (9). This creates gradation, adds tension and attracts the attention of listeners. Also, the brevity and rhythm of the constructions make them more easily and effectively remembered. Additionally, Boris Johnson employs anaphoric and epiphoric parallel constructions that create emphasis, reinforce particular ideas and ensure people remember them. In case of anaphora, it also adds emotional escalation and performative rhythm of Johnson's speeches, since repeated opening of the sentence improves the power of oral delivery and creates the sense of anticipation among listeners. For example, in his first speech as PM, he dwells: “My job is to make your streets safer”; “... My job is to make sure you don't have to wait 3 weeks to see your GP”; “... My job is to protect you”; “... My job is to make sure your kids get a superb education...” (5); in his statement on EU negotiations, he adds: “We have taken back control of laws and our destiny. We have taken back control of every jot and tittle of our regulation” (8); or during the UK Conservative Conference Party in 2021, he points out: “We will do northern powerhouse rail. We will link up the cities of the

Midlands of the north. We will restore those sinews of the union... And we will invest in our roads...” (10). In the last example the repetition of the grammatical pattern “*we will..., we will..., we will...*” projects action, determination and adds motivation. As for epiphoras, since they are repetitions at the end of the clause or sentence, they serve as “closing” points and reinforce central ideological messages. For example, in his first speech as Prime Minister in 2019, he promised: “*And the ports will be ready and the banks will be ready, and the factories will be ready, and business will be ready, and the hospitals will be ready, and our amazing food and farming sector will be ready and waiting to continue selling ever more, not just here but around the world*” (5). Since people tend to remember final elements within repeated structures, such epiphoras strengthen emotional impact and recollection.

Apart from that, Boris Johnson's speeches are filled with vivid and often humorous metaphors, which he is particularly famous for. He commonly uses them for various reasons like the simplification of complex political issues, creation of memorable emotional imagery and contribution to his performative and theatrical linguistic style. For example, in his first speech as PM, he says: “*answering...by physically and literally renewing the ties that bind us together...*” (5) – this metaphor presents social and political unity as physical bonds or ties. It showcases unity as not solely an abstract political principle but as exiting and almost material relations between citizens and state institutions. The metaphor also has emotional connotations and implications of family and interpersonal relationships, offering a sense of collective identity. He then proceeds: “*...it has become clear that there are pessimists at home and abroad who think that after three years of indecision that this country has become a prisoner to the old arguments of 2016*” (5) – this metaphor simplifies and illustrates certain political issues, particularly Brexit debates which are represented as “captivity” and Britain as “a prisoner”, suggesting limitations and lack of freedom. Since the word “prisoner” and the notion of imprisonment have strong negative connotation, they make this metaphor emotionally more powerful. Johnson finished up by saying: “*No one in the last few centuries has succeeded in betting against the pluck*

and nerve and ambition of this country” (5) – this compares politics and history to gambling and betting, constructing the image of Britain as a resilient country despite all the scepticism and disbelief. By using words like “pluck”, “nerve” and “ambition”, Boris Johnson personifies the nation and appeals to their patriotism and national identity. Additionally, during the UN General Assembly in 2021, he commented: “*the adolescence of humanity is coming to an end and must come to an end*” (19) – here he conceptualises humanity as a developing human being who is still immature and irresponsible, thus in need of growing up, switching from “adolescence” to adulthood; and at the UK Conservative Party Conference, he referred to the economic crisis as “*the meteorite that has just crashed through the public finances*” (10), which intensifies the perception of financial problems as of something violent, abrupt and destructive, beyond human control like a meteorite. Other than metaphors, Boris Johnson also occasionally employs puns in his speeches. For example, during the Conservative Party Conference in 2021 he reiterated the slogan “*Build Back Better*” as “*build back beaver*”, referring to the wildlife; and “*build back burger I say*”, when talking about UK beef imports (10). Or in his first speech as PM he said: “*Never mind the backstop - the buck stops here*” (5); and in the levelling up speech he called leadership “*the magic sauce - the ketchup of catch-up*” (11). Pun generally is a powerful technique which proves “*the high level of its creator IQ, as well as addressor orientation to the high level of addressee knowledge to decode this message in the form of pun*” [Humeniuk 2020, p. 42]. Thus, metaphors and puns function not only as a stylistic ornament but also as a tool that shapes audience perception and emotional response.

As it was already mentioned earlier, Boris Johnson is famous for his classical references, therefore his speeches are filled with allusions, which construct the image of intelligence, sophistication and rich rhetoric profile. For example, his comparison of Brexit and the myth about Prometheus, his references to the Tartarian Pit, Cincinnatus, Pericles, Napoleon, Shakespeare. He even once recited some lines of Homer’s *Illiad* in Greek, at the Melbourne Writers Festival, claiming: “*that is what I do when I’m in*

trouble” (1). With these rhetorical techniques and strategies, Boris Johnson creates highly memorable, unique and emotionally-charged speeches, which make his idiolect one of the most recognizable in contemporary British political discourse.

2.2. Linguistic Strategies in the Construction of Boris Johnson’s Public Persona

The analysis of Boris Johnson’s speeches clearly demonstrates that his linguistic identity is central to how his public image is constructed. Unlike many modern politicians who build their authority on institutional status or formal expertise, Johnson’s persona is shaped largely through language itself. His idiolect blends humour, rhetorical creativity, informality and a highly performance-driven style, making his communication immediately recognisable and setting him apart within British political discourse.

One of the key findings arising from the analysis is that Johnson consistently presents himself as a public performer rather than just a politician. His speeches are packed with jokes, irony, hyperbole, unexpected metaphors, historical references and unconventional word choices. These elements make his speech eye-catching and highly memorable. Instead of relying solely on cold, logical arguments, Johnson intentionally creates a rhetorical performance to build an emotional connection with the audience through entertainment. Humour and self-parody are perhaps the most defining features of Johnson’s linguistic identity. The analysed speeches suggest that humour is not just an occasional tool but the core of his self-presentation. Through the frequent use of self-deprecating jokes, exaggerated statements and unconventional expressions, Johnson successfully creates the impression of a leader who does not take himself too seriously and is willing to break traditional political rules. This strategy makes him appear authentic and accessible, helping him connect with ordinary voters much better than traditional, “polished” politicians. However, relying so heavily on humour is a double-edged sword. While it makes Johnson memorable, it also undermines perceptions of his seriousness and competence. In many cases, the comedic

side of his speech completely overshadows the actual political message. It even seems like he is deliberately trying to make fun of himself and create an image of him as a clown, rather than a reliable politician. For instance, his discourse is associated with expressive lexical units like “puns”, “whimsical interludes”, “absurd images”, “relentless gagery” and others [26]. Boris Johnson is thought to like jokes “best of all”, to be “greedy for them” [26]. As a result, audiences often focus on his colourful personality rather than his arguments themselves. The image of an eccentric, unconventional and sometimes chaotic communicator has become inseparable from his political identity. Consequently, the very same linguistic features that drive his popularity also lead to perceptions of him as unserious or lacking political weight.

Another key feature of Johnson’s linguistic identity is its highly performative nature, which helps build a quasi-theatrical political persona. The analysis suggests that instead of simply communicating as a political leader, Johnson consistently performs a recognisable character that remains stable across various communicative contexts. This “character” is defined by spontaneity, controlled chaos, humour and an intentional break from conventional political norms. Consequently, his public speaking often functions as a staged performance rather than purely informational communication. While this performative consistency makes him much more recognisable, it also reinforces the view of Johnson as a symbolic figure rather than a politician driven strictly by policy.

Furthermore, within Johnson's speech we can also trace a constant tension between intellectualism and informality. On one hand, his broad vocabulary, rhetorical fluency and frequent nods to classical culture, literature and history present him as an educated, sophisticated speaker. On the other hand, his fondness for colloquialisms and casual language bridges the gap between himself and the public. This combination creates a paradoxical image: he comes across as both highly intellectual and deliberately anti-elitist. This contradictory nature is also reflected in the specific vocabulary commonly associated with him. Positive evaluations often include words like “charismatic”, “intelligent”, “authentic”, “flamboyant” and “maverick” [14; 33].

Conversely, negative feedback frequently labels him a “clown”, “buffoon”, “gaffe-prone”, “untrustworthy” or “opportunistic” [14; 33]. The fact that such opposing views coexist proves that Johnson's identity cannot be oversimplified: it is constantly being shaped by a battle between admiration and criticism, competence and eccentricity.

Another crucial point is that Johnson's public image seems to rely less on ideological consistency and much more on his communicative performance. The speeches examined suggest that his political success is tied to a talent for capturing attention, sparking emotion and creating memorable rhetorical moments. Therefore, his linguistic identity acts as a strategic personal branding tool rather than just a way to deliver political policy. Eventually, the public often remembers the speaker far more than the actual message. From a political perspective, however, this communicative strategy can be seen as a double-edged sword. Effective political leadership generally requires more than just capturing attention and entertaining an audience – it also depends on ensuring that the core message is taken seriously, and that the speaker is viewed as a credible, authoritative leader rather than merely a source of amusement.

It is equally important to note that Johnson's linguistic identity is heavily shaped by public and media interpretation, which has both its positive and negative sides. Media coverage tends to selectively focus on the most expressive, humorous or unconventional moments of his speech, which helps create a highly stylised but sometimes exaggerated public image. In this sense, Johnson's idiolect is continuously reinterpreted and reframed within broader socio-political discourse. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that Johnson's linguistic identity triggers the controversy among the audience. The exact same speech features that some interpret as signs of charisma, originality and communication talent are viewed by others as indicators of superficiality, a lack of seriousness and theatrical excess. He is perceived as: *“Boris bamboozles. He describes, and never analyses. Ultimately he de-clarifies, like fog.”* [26] This sharp split suggests that his idiolect focuses on emotions, where public reaction is strongly driven by personal political attitudes rather than purely linguistic

criteria. Consequently, Johnson's public image is far from stable – rather, it is dynamically constructed through these competing interpretations of his speech style.

In contemporary political communication, effective leadership is traditionally expected to rely on rational competence, evidence-based reasoning and the systematic presentation of empirical data. From this perspective, political discourse serves as a platform for deliberate debate, where positions are proved through factual arguments, statistical evidence and logical consistency. Such a data-driven approach is essential not only for establishing the credibility of the speaker but also for ensuring that the public is informed based on policy contents rather than rhetorical appeal. Therefore, the centering of Boris Johnson's political persona around humour, self-parody and personal storytelling can be viewed as problematic departure from these standards. While the integration of comedy and personal stories undeniably functions as a powerful mechanism for projecting approachability, accessibility and maintaining voter engagement, overly relying on entertainment puts the image of a successful politician and communicator at risk. Moreover, blurring the boundaries between political leadership and theatrical entertainment makes the discourse shift from objective evaluation of policy outcomes to a subjective perception of the leader's personality. In the case of Johnson, this strategy creates imbalance – his prioritisation of wit and theatrical performance over dry factual argumentation ultimately undermines the quality of political debate, leading to people finding him untrustworthy and unserious.

2.3. Case Study: Global Student Perceptions of Boris Johnson's Linguistic Style

In order to investigate the public perception of Boris Johnson's linguistic style, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted among foreign students from diverse academic backgrounds. The primary objective of the questionnaire was to identify how young, international audiences perceive Johnson's idiolect, persuasive strategies, rhetoric devices and overall communicative image. Because Boris Johnson is widely

recognised for his unconventional public speaking style, the survey sought to determine which specific linguistic characteristics are considered the most distinctive and memorable by listeners.

The questionnaire consisted of both single-choice and multiple-choice questions on several core aspects of Johnson's speech: the level of formality, lexical creativity, use of rhetorical devices, persuasive strategies, emotional and logical appeal and the immediate impression his speeches leave on listeners. In total, 32 responses were collected and analysed. The resulting survey data demonstrates that respondents generally possess a clear awareness of Johnson's communicative style, perceiving his speech as highly recognisable compared to other contemporary political figures. Ultimately, the collected answers provide important insights into the relationship between unconventional linguistic style, international political image and audience perception.

One of the central aims of the questionnaire was to determine how respondents characterise Boris Johnson's overall register and speaking style. The majority of participants described his speech as "semi-formal" (18 responses), while a slightly smaller group considered it "mostly formal" (13 responses). Only one respondent described his speech as "highly conversational". These results suggest that Johnson's discourse is generally perceived as balancing between formal political communication and informal everyday language. This indicates that Johnson actively avoids the excessively rigid and emotionless style traditionally associated with political discourse, opting instead for a more accessible, audience-oriented manner of speaking. This semi-formality allows him to maintain political authority while simultaneously appearing relatable to ordinary listeners (Diagram 2.1).

The questionnaire also explored perceptions of Johnson's lexical originality. Half of the respondents stated that his speech "often" contains unusual or inventive word choices (16 responses), while almost the other half selected the option "sometimes" (14 responses). Only two respondents believed that such lexical creativity appear rarely. These results demonstrate that lexical inventiveness is one of the

defining features of Johnson's linguistic persona, with his tendency to use expressive unusual vocabulary contributing heavily to the memorability of his public image. His speeches frequently contain unexpected metaphors, humorous phrases, classical references and creative formulations that distinguish him from more conventional politicians. Consequently, international respondents perceive his idiolect as dynamic and unique (Diagram 2.2).

How would you characterise Boris Johnson's overall speaking style?
32 відповіди

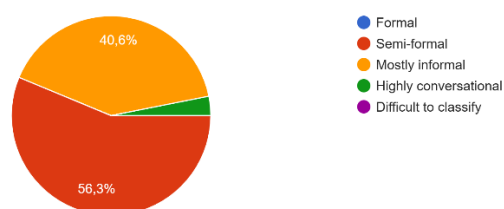


Diagram 2.1.

To what extent does his speech contain unusual or inventive word choices?
32 відповіди

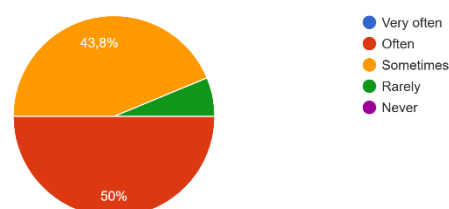


Diagram 2.2.

Another important aspect investigated in the questionnaire was Johnson's use of historical and literary references. The majority of the respondents (25 out of 32) described these references as "moderately noticeable", while four participants considered them "very noticeable". Only three respondents regarded them as "slightly noticeable". These results confirm that Johnson's speeches are widely associated with intellectualism and cultural awareness, contributing to the construction of his public image as an educated and sophisticated politician. At the same time, the moderate rather than overwhelming recognition of these references suggests that they function more as stylistic illustration than as the dominant element of his discourse. The presence of literary and historical references may also strengthen Johnson's political authority. By referencing historical events, classical literature or well-known cultural symbols, he positions himself as a politician with broad knowledge. This contributes to the perception of Johnson not only as a statesman but also as a public performer capable of combining politics with intellectual entertainment.

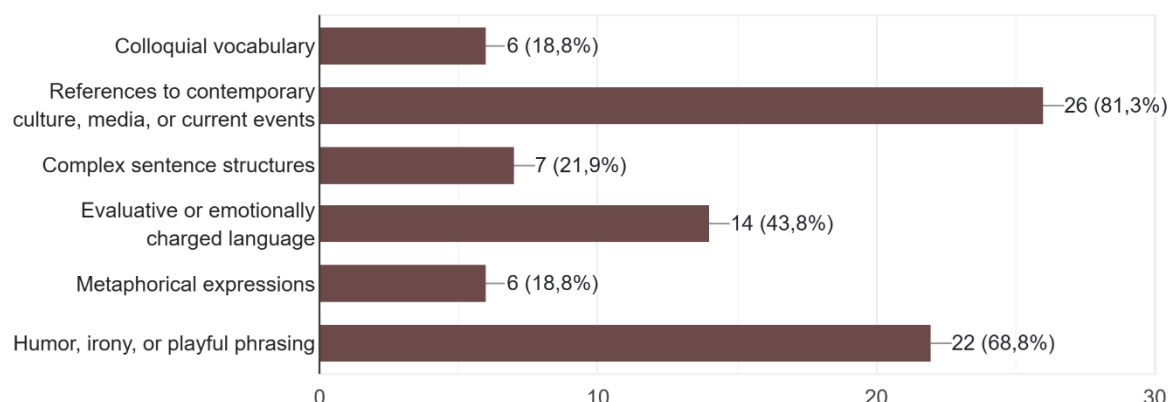
The questionnaire included a multiple-choice question concerning the specific linguistic features respondents considered most characteristic of Boris Johnson's idiolect. The most frequent choices included "reference to contemporary culture and

current events” (26 responses); “humour, irony and playful phrasing” (22 responses); “evaluative or emotionally charged language” (14 responses). Notably, the combination of cultural references and playful phrasing appeared particularly frequently, with 20 out of 32 respondents selecting both options in their answers. This demonstrates that respondents strongly associate Johnson’s speech with entertainment-oriented communication and rhetorical performance.

Another important feature identified by respondents was the presence of emotionally charged language, which strengthens persuasive effects and increases audience engagement. The use of evaluative vocabulary enables Johnson to frame political issues in emotionally impactful ways, thereby influencing audience perception more effectively. A smaller number of respondents additionally highlighted metaphorical expressions (6 people), complex sentence structures (7 people) and colloquial vocabulary (6 people). Although these features appeared less frequently, they still demonstrate that Johnson’s discourse combines both intellectual complexity and conversational accessibility (Histogram 2.3). Humour also appears to be one of the most recognisable features of Johnson’s discourse, with many respondents perceiving his communication style as deliberately theatrical. Humorous expressions and ironic remarks help create a more informal atmosphere and attract audience attention. Furthermore, the use of contemporary references allows Johnson to appear modern, socially aware and connected with public discourse outside politics.

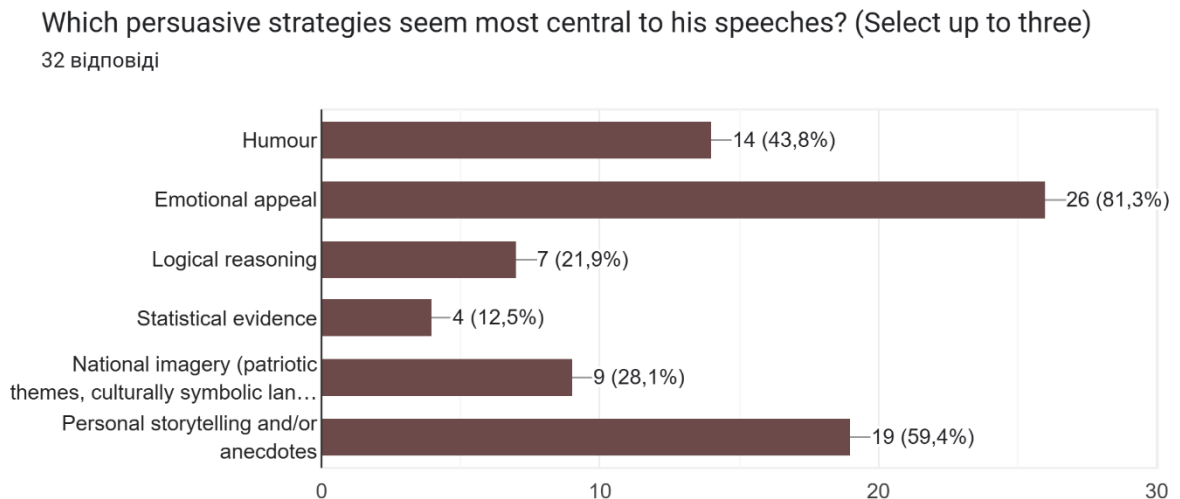
Which linguistic features do you find most characteristic of Boris Johnson’s idiolect? (Select up to three)

32 відповіді



Histogram 2.3.

The analysis of persuasive strategies revealed that respondents primarily associate Johnson's speeches with emotional appeal and personal storytelling. The most common response combination included "emotional appeal" (26 out of 32) together with "personal storytelling and/or anecdotes" (19 responses). Several respondents also selected humour as one of the central persuasive strategies (14 people). These results indicate that Johnson's persuasive style is largely personality-driven (Histogram 2.4). Rather than relying exclusively on statistical evidence or formal argumentation, he tends to construct an emotional connection with audiences through narratives, humour and relatable examples. Personal anecdotes and storytelling make political discourse more human and accessible.



Histogram 2.4.

The survey additionally examined whether respondents perceive Johnson's arguments as more emotional or factual. The majority of participants selected the option "balanced use of emotion and logic" (18 respondents), while a high number described his style as mostly emotion-based (11 respondents). Only two people considered his discourse primarily factual. This demonstrates that Johnson's rhetorical strategy is perceived as combining logical explanation with emotional influence. However, emotional appeal appears slightly more dominant in public perception. Such findings correspond to the idea that Johnson's political success partly depends on

charisma, performance and emotional engagement rather than purely rational argumentation.

The questionnaire also investigated perceptions of specific rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, hyperboles and allusions. Most respondents answered that such devices are used “frequently” (23 out of 32), while a minority chose “sometimes” (8 people) and one respondent selected “very frequently”. This suggests that expressive rhetorical techniques are a prominent element of Johnson’s discourse. The regular use of rhetorical devices contributes to the memorability and vivid imagery of his speeches. Metaphors and hyperbolic expressions make political statements more emotionally powerful and easier for audiences to remember. Therefore, respondents perceive Johnson not only as a political speaker but also as a rhetorically skilled communicator.

The survey results also provide insight into the public image created by Johnson’s linguistic style. The most common impressions associated with his speech were “relatable” (15 responses) and “charismatic” (12 responses). A smaller number of respondents described him as “eccentric” (4 out of 32), while only one participant selected “performative”. The dominance of the categories “relatable” and “charismatic” demonstrates that Johnson’s speech style successfully creates a bond with listeners. His informal vocabulary, humour and expressive communication style contribute to an image of accessibility and confidence. Even when his language appears unconventional, the respondents generally perceive it positively rather than negatively.

Furthermore, the questionnaire examined whether Johnson’s verbal style comes across as carefully constructed or spontaneous. Most participants selected either “balanced” (16 people) or “somewhat crafted” (14 people). Only two respondents viewed his speech as predominantly spontaneous. These results suggest that the audience recognises a strategic element within Johnson’s public communication. Although his speeches may appear natural and improvised, the respondents largely believe that his linguistic persona is consciously constructed. Another significant part of the questionnaire concerned the intended audience reaction. Most respondents believed that Johnson’s speaking style aims to provoke “trust” (21 out of 32). Other

responses included “amusement” (5 responses), “agreement” (3 responses), “excitement” (2 responses) and “admiration” (1 response). The dominance of “trust” indicates that Johnson’s humour and conversational style are not perceived solely as entertainment, but rather as tools for establishing credibility, relatability and audience loyalty.

Finally, the respondents were asked to reflect on the memorability of Johnson’s idiolect compared to other political figures. More than half of the participants described his speech as “much more memorable” (17 participants), while most remaining respondents selected “slightly more memorable” (14 participants). Only one respondent considered his speech to be approximately the same as that of the other politicians. This result strongly confirms that Boris Johnson possesses a highly distinctive linguistic identity. His rhetorical style clearly differentiates him from more traditional political communicators. The combination of humour, cultural references, lexical creativity and emotional appeal contributes to the formation of a memorable public persona that remains highly recognisable to foreign audiences.

In conclusion, the questionnaire analysis demonstrates that Boris Johnson’s linguistic style is perceived as highly distinctive, emotionally expressive and rhetorically effective. Respondents generally associate his discourse with semi-formal communication, lexical creativity, humour and strong emotional appeal. Crucially, because the survey participants consisted predominantly of international students rather than domestic Ukrainian students, these findings offer a unique perspective on how Johnson’s communicative strategies translate globally. Despite being foreigners who did not grow up within the British socioeconomic or political ecosystem, these international respondents proved to be highly perceptive of his idiomatic nuances, British cultural references and deliberate eccentricities. This indicates that Johnson’s communicative success relies on structural and emotional tools, such as storytelling, performance and conversational accessibility, that successfully cross national and cultural boundaries. The data confirms that international audiences view Johnson as a charismatic and relatable speaker whose idiolect sharply distinguishes him from

standard global politicians. Ultimately, the survey supports the broader argument of this thesis – Boris Johnson’s linguistic identity represents a powerful strategic tool capable of shaping public image and influencing audience perception far beyond the borders of the United Kingdom, making his idiolect one of the most uniquely recognisable phenomena in contemporary Western political discourse.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

The practical chapter has looked at Boris Johnson's speeches from several angles, focusing on his choice of words, grammar and rhetorical habits, as well as how they shape his public image. The analysis shows that his speech stands out because of a unique mix of casual vocabulary, expressive words, varied sentence structures and the frequent use of humour, exaggeration and historical references. These features are exactly what make his political communication so recognisable and performance-like.

The study also shows that Johnson's idiolect is not just about language structure – it is his main tool for building a political persona. His speeches constantly balance intellectual references with a casual, conversational style, making him appear both accessible and unpredictable. This dual nature is key to how different audiences view and understand him.

The analysis of public opinion confirms that Johnson's style causes strong polarisation. While many people connect his way of speaking with charisma, wit and originality, others feel it lacks seriousness and political depth. This split shows that while his strategy is great for catching people's attention, it easily opens the door to completely opposite interpretations.

The case study on student perceptions supported these points. It showed that while Johnson's style is widely recognised and easy to spot, it is judged differently depending on what individual listeners expect from politics. Overall, the findings suggest that his idiolect works both as a way to communicate and as a tool for personal branding.

In conclusion, Boris Johnson's communication style proves that modern political speaking is about much more than just the information delivered. Style, performance and audience reaction matter just as much. His idiolect plays a major part in creating a public image that is engaging, controversial and unique, which ultimately defines his place in modern politics.

CONCLUSION

The present research paper has investigated the idiolect of Boris Johnson as a distinctive phenomenon within contemporary political discourse. The study aimed to identify the key lexical, grammatical, stylistic and rhetorical characteristics of Johnson's speech, as well as to analyse how these features contribute to the construction of his linguistic identity and public image. The theoretical framework of this study demonstrated that an idiolect is an individual system of language use, which is shaped by a combination of personal, social, cultural and professional factors. In the context of political discourse, an idiolect serves not only a communicative purpose but also performs persuasive and image-building functions. Political actors deliberately employ specific linguistic strategies to influence audiences, establish authority and create an emotional connection with listeners. In this regard, Boris Johnson's speech represents a highly significant case study due to its recognisable and unconventional nature.

The practical analysis revealed that Johnson's idiolect is characterised by a hybrid combination of formal political rhetoric and conversational informality. His public speaking style frequently incorporates expressive vocabulary, humour, irony, metaphors, hyperboles, as well as historical and literary references. Furthermore, he regularly employs rhetorical devices such as repetition, parallelism, and direct address to the audience (e.g., *"a judgment that you, the people, have now confirmed"*, *"let's get Brexit done"*, *"we can do it"*). These elements enhance the vividness, memorability and performative nature of his discourse. On a lexical level, this hybridity is particularly evident in his consistent use of evaluative and intensifying adjectives (*"fantastic"*, *"extraordinary"*, *"unbelievable"*, *"colossal"*), alongside metaphorical expressions, such as *"adolescence of humanity"* regarding global cooperation or *"green industrial revolution"* in the context of climate policy. Such lexical choices simplify complex geopolitical and economic issues, making them more accessible to the general public.

Another distinctive feature of Johnson's style is the strategic integration of cultural, historical, and literary references, which serve to legitimise his arguments and increase his persuasive appeal. By referencing contrasting figures, ranging from Sophocles to Kermit the Frog, and appealing to British industrial history ("*we inaugurated the steam age, the atomic age*"), he establishes a clear link between past achievements and his current political ambitions. Because these references are usually embedded within casual commentary, they create a deliberate stylistic contrast. This ultimately reinforces his image as an intellectual leader who, at the same time, remains approachable. Consequently, Johnson's speeches minimise the boundary between political communication and public performance, allowing him to attract audience attention and maintain high public visibility.

The analysis of the questionnaire results confirmed that respondents perceive Johnson's speech as highly distinctive and memorable (31 out of 32 respondents) in comparison with other politicians. The participants primarily associated his idiolect with humour, lexical creativity, emotional appeal and rhetorical expressiveness. Furthermore, the survey data indicated that the audience recognizes both the spontaneous and the strategically pre-planned aspects of his linguistic behaviour, which highlights the performative dimension of modern political communication.

The empirical data also shows that Johnson's linguistic style is perceived as a coherent identity rather than a random set of speech habits. Respondents frequently associated his language with charisma (12 out of 32) and accessibility (15 out of 32), which proves that his personal vocabulary is essential for establishing the connection with voters. However, the findings also indicate that this style leads to controversial public opinion. The same linguistic features, including his humour, dramatic exaggeration and informal phrasing, are interpreted in two opposite ways: either as effective communication strategies or as evidence of a lack of seriousness and reliability. This contradiction demonstrates the complexity of political discourse, where a leader's choice of words can simultaneously project strength and reveal vulnerability.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the statement that Boris Johnson's idiolect functions as an important political tool that shapes audience perception and reinforces his public image. His linguistic creativity reflects the growing influence of emotional engagement, media visibility and personal branding in contemporary political discourse. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for analysing the role of language in politics and the ways political leaders construct their public persona. This issue is particularly relevant in the modern media environment, where political statements are rapidly disseminated and evaluated by the public. Therefore, the study of linguistic identity in political discourse provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between language, power and public opinion.

SUMMARY

Підсумовуючи результати дослідження, можна стверджувати, що ідіолект Бориса Джонсона є одним із найяскравіших прикладів того, як індивідуальний стиль функціонує в сучасному політичному дискурсі. Нам вдалося детально розібрати лексичні, граматичні, стилістичні та риторичні маркери його мовлення, що дозволило зрозуміти, як саме формується мовна особистість політика та його публічний образ.

Теоретичний аналіз підтвердив, що ідіолект – це не просто набір звичок, а цілісна індивідуальна система, на яку впливають особистісні, соціальні, культурні та професійні чинники. У політичній комунікації він виконує не лише базову інформаційну функцію, а й працює як інструмент переконання та створення іміджу. Сучасні лідери часто свідомо обирають конкретні мовні стратегії, щоб завоювати авторитет і встановити емоційний контакт із виборцями.

Практична частина роботи показала, що феномен Джонсона полягає у балансуванні між офіційним політичним тоном та абсолютною розмовною невимушеністю. Серед ключових рис його стилю варто виділити експресивну лексику, тонкий гумор, іронію, яскраві метафори, гіперболи, а також часті алюзії на історичні та літературні сюжети. Крім того, він активно взаємодіє зі слухачами через повтори, паралелізми та прямі звернення. Особливу роль відіграють оцінні прикметники та образні вислови – вони допомагають політику "перекладати" складні економічні чи державні проблеми простою, доступною для загалу мовою. Водночас інтелектуальні посилання на історію та культуру додають його аргументам ваги, формуючи образ водночас ерудованого, але близького до народу лідера.

Результати проведеного анкетування чітко продемонстрували, що аудиторія сприймає мовлення Бориса Джонсона як унікальне та легко впізнаване на тлі інших спікерів. Респонденти найчастіше пов'язували його стиль із

креативністю, емоційністю, гумором та виразною риторикою. Цікаво, що опитані помічають як спонтанні прояви його емоцій, так і чітко прораховані, стратегічні мовні ходи. Це зайвий раз доводить перформативний характер сучасної політики. Проте сприйняття його стилю виявилось неоднозначним: для одних респондентів така манера є ознакою харизми та ефективної комунікації, тоді як інші бачать у ній легковажність і ненадійність. Це підкреслює складність політичного дискурсу, де ті самі мовні прийоми можуть як зміцнювати авторитет, так і викликати серйозну критику.

Отже, проведене дослідження показує, що ідіолект Бориса Джонсона – це потужний політичний інструмент, який безпосередньо впливає на сприйняття аудиторії та конструює його імідж. Його мовна гнучкість повністю вписується в головні тенденції сучасної комунікації, де ключову роль відіграють емоційний вплив, медійна присутність та персональний брендинг. Загалом, аналіз мовної особистості таких фігур є надзвичайно важливим для розуміння того, як взаємодіють мова, влада та суспільна думка в умовах сучасного медіапростору.

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