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## LEXICO-SEMANTIC ASPECT OF DISCURSIVE PERSONALITY OF BORIS JOHNSON

*The paper focuses on the study of the lexical and semantic features of representation of Boris Johnson's discursive personality in the English political discourse. The concept of discursive personality is clarified and its structural components are singled out. With the help of component analysis of B. Johnson's speeches, the following thematic groups have been identified and characterized: economics and business, environment, governance and management, social and humanitarian domains, international affairs, which represent the discursive personality of Boris Johnson. The lexical and semantic representation of the discursive personality within each of the selected thematic groups was analyzed. The semantic and morphological features of the lexical units are determined. The linguistic analysis has revealed how terms, abstract nouns, action verbs and relative adjectives related to the economy are used to create an image of the UK in Johnson's speeches. The use of verb constructions to emphasize the active role of British business in overcoming the crisis is revealed. The topic of environment is analysed as a combination of past, present and future, with special attention paid to terminological noun lexemes. The main focus within environmental topics is on climate change. The semantic nuances of individual words and phrases used by Johnson to express his opinion are identified and analysed. It has been found out that speeches on governance and management are full of political vocabulary, which demonstrates the politician's desire to highlight the importance of democratic values and institutions. It is noted that Johnson also refers to his government's achievements, such as Brexit and the fight against the pandemic, focusing on key terms related to investment, infrastructure and education. The article also highlights the politician's approach to public health, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's education system and cultural heritage. Johnson's use of terminology that reflects his vision of educational and cultural policy is scrutinized. The words and phrases that convey the emotional importance of Holocaust remembrance and the unique nature of this tragedy are highlighted. The author examines Boris Johnson's approach to international affairs with a focus on two key subtopics: immigration and the conflict in Ukraine. The moral and ethical values used to foreground the rightness of Ukraine and the injustice of Russian aggression are characterized. The vocabulary used by Johnson vividly illustrates the portrayal of the war and its consequences, as well as the UK's attitude to this conflict. The publication aims to fill the gaps that exist today in the field of studying lexical and semantic aspects in the representation of the politician's discursive personality in the English political discourse.*

**Key words:** thematic group, lexical and semantic representation, semantic component, lexical means, discursive personality of Boris Johnson, political discourse.

**Statement of the problem.** The phenomenon of political discourse offers a unique range of linguistic elements, strategies and nuances that shape public perception. Critical to this discourse is the interplay of lexical and semantic features that shape the public image of a leader. Boris Johnson, an influential individual in the international political domain, represents a remarkable discursive personality with inherent verbal behavior involving speech manner, word choice, syntactic constructions. However, too little attention has been paid to lexico-semantic rep-

resentation of Boris Johnson's discursive personality. The lack of targeted research prevents scholars, mass media and the general public from critically perceiving, interpreting and evaluating Johnson's discourse in a nuanced way. Thus, this study aims at enhancing the knowledge in this area by in-depth analysis of the lexico-semantic aspects that define and shape B. Johnson's discursive personality.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Human personality is a complex construct that encompasses various cognitive, emotional and behavioral

patterns. Over the years, scholars have explored different perspectives on personality, including trait theories, psychodynamic theories, and social-cognitive theories. One area of personality that has gained attention in recent years is discursive personality, which focuses on the role of language in shaping personality and identity. L. V. Soloshchuk views discursive personality as “consisting of a linguistic personality that, along with the language code, is capable of using and interpreting other semiotic codes depending on the type of discourse relations in which they are involved at certain moments of communication. Discursive personality operates in a continuum polycode space and has the ability to respond flexibly to its discourse environment, to take into account all the components, not only verbal but also non-verbal, that make up the communication process and influence its course, which emphasizes the ability of discursive personality to move from one type of discourse relationship to another” [30]. Thus, discursive personality reveals itself in communication by a variety of verbal means of morphological, lexical, syntactical language levels as well as expressive means of stylistics. The study of lexico-semantic means utilized by political leaders contributes to understanding their public figures, communicative strategies and, indirectly, their political preferences.

Many researchers have delved into the main topic of political discourse. Such scholars as Fairclough [5] and van Dijk [18] have studied how language shapes and forms social structures and power relations. In linguistic studies the emphasis is also laid on the importance of lexical and semantic choices in political speeches and communication [26; 32]. L. V. Soloshchuk [30], A. P. Romanchenko [28], A. V. Nikitina [24], A. V. Pakharenko [25] have shown an increased interest in interpretation and characterization of the discursive personality notion. Several authors have begun to study the discursive personality – a construct that encompasses how a leader's discourse creates a certain image or identity in the eyes of the public [21; 29]. The researchers explore sociolinguistic and linguopragmatic parameters of Boris Johnson's speech behavior focusing on his unique style – a combination of classicism, wit and occasional verbal flamboyance [20; 22]. These initial studies, however, did not dive deep into the lexical and semantic characteristics of his discursive personality.

**Task statement.** The paper is aimed at investigating lexico-semantic manifestation of Boris Johnson's discursive personality in English political discourse.

**Outline of the main material of the study.** Boris Johnson, the former Prime Minister of the United

Kingdom, is a charismatic discursive personality with a unique style of speech. The phenomenon of charisma has attracted the attention of researchers at different times. The issue of charismatic leadership is highlighted in the works of the following researchers J. Barber [2], K. P. Lazor [23], M. Sorokopud [31], J. B. Fuller [6]. The term “charisma” had a religious connotation and was used to describe preachers who had a special gift of direct communication with God, bypassing religious institutions. Nowadays, charisma is defined as a unique form of legitimacy, structuring of power and leadership based on the special qualities of a certain personality, most often a religious or political leader [27].

Boris Johnson is a prominent political figure. Understanding his charismatic communication style provides insight into his approach to leadership and its impact on public perception. Charismatic leaders often excel at communicating, influencing public opinion and rallying support for their policies. They also seek to attract a wide audience and resonate with it, and often leave a mark on history with their words and actions [31]. Considering Johnson's discursive personality in a charismatic context helps us understand his place in the political discourse.

Johnson's speeches cover a diverse range of topics: domestic government policy, the environment, the economy, and social issues such as health care, education, society, and culture. The focus is also on the international relations, including the war in Ukraine, immigration challenges, environmental issues, international aid and development, and technological progress.

The methods of component and contextual analysis of 13 speeches by B. Johnson, dated to 2019–2022, allowed to identify thematic word groups connected by common semantic features, which correlate lexical units as components of a thematic integrity. They are: **economics and business, environment, governance and management, social and humanitarian domains, international affairs**. Boris Johnson frequently addresses **economics and business topic**, emphasizing such concepts as economic growth, investment and job creation. This topic is represented by the following groups of vocabulary: 1) abstract nouns: *skills, technology, innovation, fertilizer, pressures, cost, revolution, vaccines, etc.*; 2) action verbs: *to act, to keep going, to respond, to look after, to fix, to wag, to solve, to regulate, to try, to invest, to save, to produce, to see, to require, to turn over, etc.*; 3) relative adjectives: *economic, industrial, green*.

Focusing on the adaptability of the economy, he uses nouns that nominate types of industrial products

manufactured during the pandemic: *kitchen appliance, hairdryer, motor car, masks, gowns, gloves*. The use of the medical term *vaccines*, which refers to a drug for immunizing the population, is used to emphasize the achievements of British companies in the development of vaccines while the use of abstract nouns *skills, technology, innovation* represent the idea of economic boost within the general narrative of the transition period and future prospects of the UK. The phrasal verb *to turn over* that signifies change; in the context of unprecedented pandemic challenges, is employed by B. Johnson not only to inform about the reorientation of business priorities in response to the crisis, but also to assert the value of saving lives: "*Dozens of you, kitchen appliance makers, hairdryer makers, formula one motor car manufacturers, turning your production lines over in days to try to save lives. For making the masks and the gowns and the gloves at such speed.*" "*A green industrial revolution... And today I want to tell you in the CBI how Britain is going to win in the new green industrial revolution. Provided we act and act now.*" [8].

The terminological lexeme *fertiliser* is used metaphorically to indicate the benefits of business cooperation within the Commonwealth, thereby creating figurative multi-layered meanings, which adds depth to B. Johnson's speech: "*We still see economic pressures. And we're seeing spikes in the cost of energy, spikes in the cost of food, and of fertilise*" [9]. Word combinations with noun components A+N, N+of+N: *economic pressures, cost of energy, cost of food* are used to point out the severity of the economic problems faced by countries after COVID-related restrictions.

In his speeches B. Johnson also uses one- and two-part verb constructions to indicate the proactive role of business: "*And I want to begin with a massive thank you to British business. For keeping going. For looking after your employees... For responding to the call for ventilators in those first dark days*" [8]. The metaphoric epithet as a means of secondary nomination adds to the drama of the pandemic period, which connotes the time associated with extreme tragedy and misfortune.

The results of analyses revealed that his discursive personality not merely pointed out economic difficulties, but focuses on possible ways out of the crisis and positive dynamics: "*We are now waging a cross-Whitehall campaign to solve our productivity... Fixing our infrastructure with investment on a scale not seen since the Victorians.*" "*And we are regulating so as to require new homes...*" [8]. Therefore, the use of verb *fix* indicates the need for change and solving long-standing problems; and *to wag, to solve, to*

*regulate* specify the role of the governmental authorities in promoting economic growth and innovation.

The **topic of environment** in Boris Johnson's speeches is an intertwining of the past, present and future. He delved into ancient times, using terminological noun lexemes such as *fossil record, mammalian species, extinction* to describe the evolutionary path of the Earth by creating a historical context through rooting abstract discussions in concrete entities, to make the discourse more cohesive and intelligible to the public. The urgency of climate change became apparent when the politician referred to the wisdom of Oxford philosopher Toby Ord employing the utterance *old enough to get ourselves into serious trouble*. Here, the conceptual nouns *trouble* and *immortality* played a significant role in denoting the state of affairs and humanity. The concept of humanity's responsibility for the planet is represented by the nouns *world, planet, destruction*. Utilizing verbs of intellectual activity *listen and understand*, the politician explicates the need to take necessary actions and solve environmental problems. The UK's abandonment of coal power and the growth of the electric car market are denoted by nouns *coal, electric vehicles, market*, while the action verbs *invest* and *drive* indicate progress and ambition: "*And business will have the confidence to invest. ... Here in the north east, Nissan has decided to make an enormous bet on new electric vehicles and together with Envision there is now a massive new gigafactory for batteries... And at Glasgow two weeks ago the tipping point came, as motor manufacturers representing a third of the world market ... announced that they would go electric by 2035*" [8].

Emphasizing his commitment to addressing the pressing issues of *climate change*, B. Johnson spells out this clear message using the noun phrase: "*We want to continue to raise the bar on tackling climate change*" [17].

Declaring the urgency of solving today's problems, Boris Johnson presents his positive vision of the UK's future. He asserts that the country would become "*home to innovative businesses, new technologies and green innovations*". The noun *innovation* indicates progress and creativity. The verb *to make* means the act of creating and *to lay* implies fundamental efforts, like building a strong, durable structure. The adjective *green* suggests not only the color associated with nature, but also an environmentally conscious spirit. The phrase *Net zero emissions*, which means achieving an overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and greenhouse gas emissions removed from the atmosphere [19],

represents the achievement of a goal of improving the environment: *"The UK will be home to pioneering businesses, new technologies and green innovation as we make progress to net zero emissions, laying the foundations for decades of economic growth..." [17].*

While the noun "planet" presents a global perspective, *"hydrocarbon combustion chambers"* emphasizes the details: *"We can begin to close down those billions of hydrocarbon combustion chambers that you find currently in every corner of the planet" [7].*

The discursive personality also covers the topic of **governance and management**. Boris Johnson discusses state policy and management strategy, using political vocabulary: nouns *government, leadership, policy, administration, service, duty, obligation* and parliamentary vocabulary – *conservative, liberal, opposition, parliament*. The verbalization of the importance of democratic values and the significance of democratic institutions is provided by the nouns *democracy, representation, voters, participation*. The politician resorts to verbs of mostly foreign origin that denote action and aspirations: *to implement, to regulate, to act, to unleash, to level up, to vote, to restore, to maximise, to promise*. In speeches on this topic, adjectives shade, clarify and add depth to nouns, creating a broader context. For instance, the adjective *new*, used in the phrase *new deal*, emphasizes a departure from the status quo, offering a renewed vision; *strong*, as in *strong leadership*, paints a picture of perseverance and determination, adding depth to the noun *leadership*. Also, in his final speech, the politician talks about the change of leadership in the Conservative Party and the upcoming election of a new leader. Key nouns include *leader, Prime Minister, cabinet*. Johnson expresses his gratitude to the voters who supported the Conservative Party in the 2019 election. He emphasizes the significant mandate they have received, using phrases such as *incredible mandate, largest Conservative majority, largest share of the vote*. The Prime Minister dwells on the achievements of his government, such as Brexit, fighting the pandemic and facing international challenges using *achievements, Brexit, pandemic, vaccine rollout*. Key terms include *investment, infrastructure, skills*.

*"The people who bet against Britain are going to lose their shirts because we are going to restore trust in our democracy and ... we will do a new deal, a better deal that will maximise the opportunities of Brexit while allowing us to develop a new and exciting partnership with the rest of Europe..." [7]*

*"...so I want to say to the millions of people who voted for us in 2019 – many of them voting Conservative for the first time. Thank you for that incredible*

*mandate, the biggest Conservative majority since 1987 ... I felt it was my job, my duty, my obligation to you to continue to do what we promised in 2019" [14]*

The discursive personality of B. Johnson also considers the topic of **social and humanitarian domain** with the focus on healthcare, education, society and culture.

The politician delivered speeches on various aspects of health and healthcare during his term in office and has spoken out on important public health issues. The large number of speeches on this topic is due to the fact that most of his time in office was spent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Core thematic elements therefore include pandemic-related nouns *pandemic, vaccination, health* and compounding forms, such as the term *healthcare*, which combines two root morphemes *health* and *care*, indicating the service-oriented dimension of health, *NHS (National Health Service), hospitals, ventilators, intensive care beds, clinics, doctors, nurses, descriptors threat, disease*, accompanied by *verbs to protect, to support, to save, to cope, to treat*. The importance of planning for crisis situations in this area is ensured by the use of phrases with components of medical terminology: *medical research, vaccine development, healthcare innovation, life-saving treatments, research, innovation*, with an emphasis on the contribution of medical research and innovation to healthcare:

*"To put it simply, if too many people become seriously unwell at one time, the NHS will be unable to handle it ... So it's vital to slow the spread of the disease... we reduce the number of people needing hospital treatment at any one time, so we can protect the NHS's ability to cope – and save more lives." [15].*

In his speeches, Johnson considers the issues of education system. He uses nouns to refer to educational institutions and people involved in activities *schools, colleges, universities, teachers, students*; dwells on cultural heritage and historical significance using phrases of direct nomination: *cultural preservation, national treasures, heritage sites, cultural diversity*. The speeches emphasize the enrichment of culture through education. A separate set of lexical items nominates creativity and innovation in education and culture: *technology, innovative programmes, investment*. In addition, Johnson uses terms such as *genius, talent, enthusiasm and imagination* to emphasise the potential he sees in the British population, stressing the importance of equal opportunities. The use of nouns to denote skills and abilities related to the knowledge acquisition is also typical: *literacy, numeracy, education, learning, knowledge, skills, schooling*; verbs such as *unlock, succeed, help*,

*receive, spread*; as well as qualitative adjectives of a positively evaluative nature: *world-class, excellent, stable, prosperous, happy*; *world-class* compound adjective. It combines the broad scope of world with the evaluative component.

"... We have at the same time been pushing forward a vast programme of *investment* in *infrastructure, skills and technology* ... if I have one insight into human beings it is that *genius and talent and enthusiasm and imagination* are evenly distributed throughout the population" [13].

"*Literacy and numeracy* are the building blocks of a *world-class education*. They *unlock the learning, knowledge and skills* that every child needs to *succeed in later life*." [16].

The politician accentuated the importance of building a National Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre to ensure that future generations awareness of this historical atrocity and prevent its recurrence. Boris Johnson uses the following nouns to depict memories of the Holocaust, emphasizing the importance of documenting, understanding and perpetuating the events: *story, scene, holocaust, truth, memory, testimony, reality*. He also utilizes nouns that specify the impact of the Holocaust on generations and society's responsibility to prevent recurrence, focusing on societal forces or technological advances, in shaping how the Holocaust is taught, and remembered: *forces, generation, responsibility, resolve, genocide, technology*. The verbs, that denote action, commitment, and forward movement in ensuring that the Holocaust is remembered and understood by future generations, are used *to promise, to tell, to liberate, to build, to preserve, to share, to encourage*; as well as verbs that convey a more passive meaning, alluding to the challenges of living with the history of the Holocaust and the emotional impact it has had: *to doubt, to happen, to deal, to feel, to forget*. The adjectives denote the severity of the Holocaust, the fight against anti-Semitism, and the preservation of survivors' testimonies for future generations: *unique, deep, special, tangible, palpable, irrefutable, industrialized*. The latter adjective relates to the term "industry", which refers to production, and in combination with the suffix -ized means "turned into systematic production", in this context referring directly to the systematic extermination during the Holocaust:

"The Holocaust is *unique*, because it was the *industrialised murder of a race*..."

"As Prime Minister, I *promise* that we will preserve this *truth* forever."

"I feel a *deep* sense of *shame* that here in Britain – in 2020..." [10].

The next thematic group is **international affairs**, where two main sub-themes were identified: immigration and the war in Ukraine.

Within the first thematic subgroup, positively evaluated nouns referring to migrants were identified: *refugees, asylum, sanctuary, persecution*; while *people smuggling* and *economic migrants* have a negative evaluation semantics, as they represent immigration problems. The Prime Minister refers to the government's commitment to providing asylum through safe and legal routes and resettlement for vulnerable people in the UK. Johnson uses verbs of positive semantics *to welcome, to resettle, to integrate, to help* to convey a sense of openness and generosity towards immigrants. However, there are also verbs such as *to control, to end, to halt*, which foreground the importance of border management to stop illegal immigration:

"It's a striking fact that around seven out of ten of those arriving in small boats last year were men under 40, paying *people smugglers* to queue jump and taking up our capacity to *help* genuine women and child *refugees*" [11].

The second subtheme is represented by lexical means with positive and negative connotations: *courage, freedom, glorious, innocent, heroism, bravery, destiny, independence, good, right, barbaric, war crimes, illegal campaign, atrocity, tyranny, oppression, evil, catastrophic mistakes, invasion, missiles, freedom, democracy, aggression, violence, pariah*. He uses clear moral and ethical values to affirm the rightness of Ukraine and the wrongness of Russia's actions. The speaker lays emphases on UK's support for Ukraine by using lexical items with assistance semantics: *solidarity, support, aid, commitment*.

"Innumerable *missiles and bombs* have been raining down on an entirely *innocent* population. A vast *invasion* is underway by land by sea and by air. ... Ukraine is a country that for decades has enjoyed *freedom and democracy* and the right to choose its own *destiny*" [14].

"They are *committing war crimes*, and their atrocities emerge wherever they are forced to retreat ... We in the UK will do whatever we can to hold them to account for these *war crimes*" [12].

Johnson also calls attention to the importance of imposing sanctions on individuals and entities that supported Putin's actions in Ukraine. The use of the term *sanctions*, which refers to punitive measures, likely of an economic or diplomatic nature, imposed on individuals or countries in response to alleged violations or crimes, reinforces the UK's position and stance against individuals and entities that support

Russia's actions in Ukraine, while the nouns *support*, *killing*, *civilians*, *destruction*, *occupation* clearly indicate the actions and consequences associated with Russia's aggression in Ukraine and show the seriousness of the situation. Words such as *safe*, *vicious*, *ruthless*, *illegal*, *sovereign* provide vivid descriptions of the situation and actions, evoke strong emotions underlying the severity of the offences.

"*There can be no safe havens for those who have supported Putin's vicious assault on Ukraine. Today's sanctions are the latest step in the UK's unwavering support for the Ukrainian people. We will be ruthless in pursuing those who enable the killing of civilians, destruction of hospitals and illegal occupation of sovereign allies*" [1].

**Conclusions.** Thus, from the point of view of the lexical and semantic aspect, the linguistic identity of an individual is formed by the perfect integration of various linguistic means. In the context of effective communication, Boris Johnson as a discursive personality demonstrates his linguistic prowess by skilfully using

a wide range of linguistic elements to convey his messages. The following thematic groups of lexical means represent Johnson's discursive personality: economics and business, environment, governance and management, social and humanitarian domains, international affairs. Boris Johnson's discursive personality is characterized by several distinctive features of his lexical and semantic representation, namely a strong choice of nouns that reflect key themes and values, dynamic verbs, vivid and evocative adjectives to emphasize his thoughts and emotionally engage the audience. His speeches often feature words that reference British history, culture and values and despite his vast vocabulary, Johnson often combines restrained language with evaluatively charged vocabulary, creating a distinctive blend of the formal and the informal. This makes him both knowledgeable and accessible.

Further research can be focused on the study of strategies and tactics of Boris Johnson's discursive personality with regard to variable extralinguistic context.

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### **Козлова В. В., Малишева А. А. ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЇ ДИСКУРСИВНОЇ ОСОБИСТОСТІ БОРИСА ДЖОНСОНА**

Стаття присвячена дослідженню лексико-семантичного аспекту репрезентації дискурсивної особистості Бориса Джонсона. Уточнено поняття дискурсивної особистості та виокремлено її структурні компоненти. За допомогою компонентного аналізу промов Б. Джонсона було виділено та охарактеризовано тематичні групи: «економіка та бізнес», «екологія», «уряд та управління», «соціально-гуманітарна сфера», «міжнародні відносини», які репрезентують дискурсивну особистість Бориса Джонсона. Був проведений аналіз лексико-семантичної репрезентації дискурсивної особистості в межах кожної із виділених тематичних груп. Встановлено семантичні та морфологічні особливості використаних лексичних одиниць. Мовний аналіз виявив, як терміни, абстрактні іменники, дієслова дії та відносні прикметники, пов'язані з економікою, використовуються для створення образу Великої Британії в промовах Джонсона. З'ясовано використання дієслівних конструкцій для підкреслення активної ролі британського бізнесу в подоланні кризи. Тематика екології проаналізована як поєднання минулого, сьогодення і майбутнього, де особлива увага фокусується на термінологічних іменникових лексемах. Основний акцент в екологічній тематиці робиться на кліматичних змінах. Виділено та проаналізовано семантичні нюанси окремих слів і словосполучень, які Джонсон використовує для вираження своєї думки. Виявлено, що промови на тему управління та урядування насичені політичною лексикою, що демонструє прагнення політика підкреслити значущість демократичних цінностей та інститутів. Відзначається, що Джонсон у своїх виступах також звертається до досягнень свого уряду, таких як Brexit та боротьба з пандемією, акцентуючи на ключових термінах, пов'язаних з інвестиціями, інфраструктурою та освітою. Висвітлюється підхід політика до питання громадського здоров'я, особливо в контексті пандемії COVID-19, системи освіти і культурної

спадщини Великобританії. Проаналізовано використання Джонсоном термінологічної лексики, що відображає його бачення освітньої та культурної політики. Висвітлюються слова та фрази, що передають емоційну важливість пам'яті Голокосту та унікальний характер цієї трагедії. Досліджено підхід Бориса Джонсона до міжнародних відносин з акцентом на дві ключові підтеми: імміграція та конфлікт в Україні. Схарактеризовано морально-етичні цінності для підкреслення правоти України і несправедливості російської агресії. Лексика, якою користується Джонсон, яскраво ілюструє зображення війни та її наслідків, а також відношення Великої Британії до цього конфлікту. Публікація покликана компенсувати лакуни, які наявні сьогодні у сфері дослідження лексико-семантичних аспектів у репрезентації дискурсивної особистості політика.

**Ключові слова:** тематична група, лексико-семантична репрезентація, семантичний компонент, лексичні засоби, дискурсивна особистість Бориса Джонсона, політичний дискурс.