

Talavira N. M.

Kyiv National Linguistic University

TRUMP 2017 VS TRUMP 2025: COMPARING TWO INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

The paper focuses on analyzing two inaugural speeches by President Donald Trump, which he gave in 2017 and 2025. The inaugural is regarded as the first chance for the newly elected leader to present themselves, highlight their agenda, and unite the electorate despite their personal choices. The speaker addresses the basic concepts of the audience's worldview. The concept as a cognitive representation of our mental code is verbalized by morphosyntactic constructions, i.e., prefabricated pairings of form, meaning, and function. The aim of the research is to establish morphosyntactic constructions encoding basic concepts of the inaugural speeches. The analysis has shown that there are identical concepts of RENEWAL and UNITY, synonymic CALAMITY and CRISIS, and two varying PATRIOTISM in 2017 address and SUCCESS in 2025 speech. The verbalization of the synonymic concepts CALAMITY and CRISIS differs in encoding their structural components: in the first inaugural predominate pairings representing the perceptual level of the concept of CALAMITY designating the problems of an American family, while in the 2025 speech most pairings verbalize the notional component of the CRISIS concept underscoring the dire situation in the governmental activities. The RENEWAL concept is highlighted as a promise to overcome all the difficulties of ordinary Americans in the 2017 inaugural and the renovation of the core American values in the 2025 address. The identical concept of UNITY is represented by similar constructions in both speeches, indicating collaboration and integrity. The concept of PATRIOTISM in 2017 inaugural is represented by the pairings designating loyalty towards everything connected with the USA. The SUCCESS concept in 2025 address is encoded by the constructions naming possible achievements of the nation.

Key words: morphosyntactic construction, concept, public speech, inaugural address, Donald Trump.

Statement of the problem. The current news texts, features and publications in various social media focus their attention on the personality of Donald Trump, his statements, evaluation of the latest events, proclamations and reactions to any comment. His actions cause various responses ranging from a smile, a grin, a detest, and up to the stock market's turmoil. His persona has been researched by many linguists focusing on his populism [16, p. 400], attitude to immigrants [1; 13, p. 12], racial ramifications of his actions [18, p. 15], his relations with other world leaders [15, p. 95], rhetorical strategies he uses in his public addresses [11, p. 385; 17, p. 150]. It seems natural and topical to take an interest in his speeches, their composition, topics and linguistic units used to designate the ideas. In our scope of attention are his inaugural addresses, which he gave in 2017 as a newcomer to politics [19] and in 2025 as a well-known statesman [20].

Analysis of recent research and publications. The inaugural address is a "unidirectional speech presented by the president to the audience," marking the beginning of a new head of state's term in

office: the president begins to "enact the presidential role" [2, p. 42]. Giving their speech to the nation and, in fact, the whole world, the speaker discloses their vision of the future of the state and global issues [3, p. 233], imposing their viewpoints and encouraging other leaders and nations to take action and support American position [22, p. 276], stimulating consensus in the USA, and endeavouring to secure national unity [8, p. 18].

Since the inaugural address is not only a speech act, but also a political one, much attention is paid to its content: it is seen as a coded message about the history of the country's development [2, p. 42], representing the leader's political position and ideological attitudes. The address is supposed to "rehearse common values drawn from the past" [14, p. 72], a reflection of the standpoint of not only the President but also the citizens, an appeal to the basic concepts of their worldview, providing for the cognitive orientation of an individual or a community [9, p. 3].

The research is grounded on the linguistic conceptual approach combining the analysis of concepts with the application of morphosyntactic constructions.

Concepts, i.e. discrete cognitive representations and basic units of the human mental code [6], are closely related to the culture of a people. Any concept is the result of human activity and carries information about objects, phenomena, and events [5, p. 530], designates fragments of experience, and is formed on the basis of sensory expertise, mental activity, as well as verbal or non-verbal communication [ibid]. It belongs to our conscience, is determined by culture and is objectivized in speech.

At the same time, the content of the concept 'is constantly enriched due to the emergence of new features' [6]. The most stable and permanent concepts, which have a special significance for the national culture, are called basic concepts.

In speech concepts are encoded by a lexeme, word combination, idiom, syntactic pattern and even text. One of the means of their verbalization is morphosyntactic constructions, regarded as pairings of form, meaning, and function [7, p. 7; 10]. The effectiveness of applying morphosyntactic constructions rests on the fact that they are kept in a fixed form in long-term memory demanding less cognitive efforts during the choice of the necessary linguistic unit to verbalize any concept. Moreover, morphosyntactic constructions range from morphemes to idioms and to various syntactic patterns [21, p. 11].

Task statement. Thus, the aim of the paper is to identify the constructions verbalizing basic concepts embedded in both inaugural addresses by Donald Trump. The tasks of the research are to single out concepts construing the core ideas of the inaugural addresses, establish constructions encoding basic concepts of each speech; compare the verbalization of basic concepts in two inaugurals.

The investigation presupposes three stages of analyzing inaugural addresses: selective, textual, and contrastive.

The selective stage presupposes the identification of the basic concepts of each speech by studying the recurrence of constructions used in the introduction to the address that contains the core ideas of the President. The frequency of the units '*a thrilling new era*', '*Our safety will be restored*', '*The scales of justice will be rebalanced*', '*Our sovereignty will be reclaimed*' [19] points to the key status of *new* and *renovate*-constructions that verbalize the basic concept of RENEWAL in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural.

The textual stage aims at establishing means of encoding the basic concepts in the speech body via continuous sampling of morphosyntactic constructions relating to the key constructions, which are the

most relevant pairings, used in the introduction. We identify the structural levels of each basic concept, expressed by constructions. As is known, concepts have three components: perceptual, based on sensorimotor experience, notional, resting on its definition and description, and evaluative representing properties relevant to the entire language community.

The contrastive stage of the investigation concerns the study of the selected constructions in the two inaugural addresses to establish patterns verbalizing structural components of basic concepts.

Outline of the main material of the study. The analysis of the two inaugural addresses shows that they code both identical and different basic concepts. The concepts of the 2017 inaugural include CALAMITY, RENEWAL, UNITY and PATRIOTISM. The concepts of the 2025 inaugural encompass CRISIS, RENEWAL, UNITY, and SUCCESS.

As you see, inaugurals refer to identical RENEWAL and UNITY concepts; CALAMITY and CRISIS are similar as they denote negative effects on people and the country, underscoring a lot of damage and suffering in case of CALAMITY and severe problems, pinpointed by the concept of CRISIS. The varying concepts are PATRIOTISM in 2017 inaugural and SUCCESS in 2025, but still, they reflect the values of American society.

First, let's focus on the two similar concepts: CALAMITY and CRISIS because they are encoded at the beginning of the speech body as the President started with the criticism of the previous administration.

According to the definition, the concept of CALAMITY reflects 'a terrible and unexpected event that results in a lot of damage or suffering' [12]; 'a disaster or misfortune, esp. one causing extreme havoc, distress, or misery' [4]. In 2017 inaugural, the notional component of the CALAMITY concept is encoded by constructions, designating damage to the key spheres of the economy, e.g. *at the expense of American industry, infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay, face challenges*, army, e.g. *depletion of our military*, security, e.g. *crime and gangs and drugs*.

The perceptual level of the CALAMITY concept, connected with sight, hearing, touch, names objects that are destroyed or severely damaged, those referents that people come across in their daily life, e.g., *rusted-out factories, the jobs left, struggling families*.

The evaluative component is evoked by constructions, denoting destruction of self-esteem, e.g. *confidence of our country has disappeared*, private property, e.g. *wealth of our middle class has been ripped*,

general disaster, concerning all spheres of life, e.g. *American carnage*.

The CRISIS concept in 2025 inaugural indicates 'a situation in which something or someone is affected by one or more very serious problems' [4]; a period of great difficulty, danger, or uncertainty, especially in politics or economics [12], thus representing less danger than calamity. The perceptual component is not widely represented, describing only the recent dangers, e.g. [fires] *raging through the houses, even affecting some of the wealthiest*, natural disasters, e.g., *suffering from a hurricane* [20].

The notional component of the CRISIS concept predominates in the 2025 speech as the President storms about the inability of the former administration to carry out its duties. This level of the CRISIS concept is expressed by 12 constructions, designating dangerous situations in all possible spheres, e.g., *can no longer deliver basic services, inflation crisis, corrupt establishment, face challenges, a government that cannot manage even a simple crisis, devastating crime* [20].

The evaluative level of the concept reflects dangers to principles of the American society, e.g. *a crisis of trust, extracted wealth from our citizens* [20].

As we can see, in the first inaugural Donald Trump focuses on the sensorimotor reflection of the CALAMITY concept, underscoring catastrophic issues close to the target audience, repeating several times the absence of the bare necessities, while in the second inaugural he encodes the concept of CRISIS as danger to the executive power of the country, the pillars of the society, criticizing harshly the previous administration. The perceptual component is more widely represented in the first inaugural. Still, an interesting case is the construction *even affecting some of the wealthiest*, as the first speech was targeted at ordinary Americans, and in the second one, the President views their misfortune on par with the richest citizens.

The concept of RENEWAL reflects 'an activity, situation, or process that begins again after a period when it had stopped' [12]; a process in which something improves or is improved after being in a bad condition [4]; when a company, economy, area, etc., is changed and improved. So, the perceptual level of the concept RENEWAL is represented by constructions naming specific objects that are repaired or created anew. The notional component of the concept is coded by pairings representing improvements in various sectors of the economy, organizations and companies. The evaluative component of the concept reflects basic principles and values of the society.

In his first inaugural address, Donald Trump uses 12 out of 22 constructions activating the perceptual level of the RENEWAL concept to appeal to the basic needs of ordinary Americans, as he came to power with a promise to radically change the entire establishment. The pairings indicate return of work-places, e.g., *bring back our jobs*, security, *bring back our borders*, new infrastructure facilities, *build new roads, and bridges, and airports*. The notional component is designated by 3 constructions that denote new legal proclamations of the president, e.g. *issue a new decree*, restoration of relation with allies, e.g., *reinforce old alliances*. The evaluative component is encoded by constructions, marking the return to the previous state, e.g., *rediscover our loyalty to each other, the people became the rulers of this nation again*, the appearance of new values, e.g. *a new national pride*.

The second inaugural is dominated by constructions implementing the evaluative component of the RENEWAL concept in all aspects. The pairings denote the return of hope, prosperity and peace, e.g., *bring back prosperity and peace*, freedom of speech, e.g., *bring back free speech*, respect for the state, e.g., *America will be respected again*, the American dream, which embodies all their ideals, e.g., *the American dream will soon be back*. The constructions emphasize the restoration of national dignity after damage, e.g., *rebuild the nation*, independence, e.g., *sovereignty will be reclaimed*, rule of law, e.g., *restore fair, equal, and impartial justice*. In addition, the structures reflect the emergence of new entities: national success, e.g., *a thrilling new era of success*, a new sense of unity, e.g., *bring a new spirit of unity*, bringing American values in new lands, e.g., *carry our flag into new horizons*.

The notional and evaluative levels of the RENEWAL concept are represented by the same number of constructions (4 each). The notional component is encoded by the pairings denoting the revitalizing policies, e.g., *restore the competence of America's government, restore competence and effectiveness to our federal government*, as well as the emergence of new agencies for the effective work of the government, e.g., *establish the brand-new Department of Government Efficiency*.

The representation of the perceptual component of the concept RENEWAL is based on constructions designating the restoration of the automobile industry, e.g., *build automobiles in America again*, returning ordinary Americans to their jobs, e.g., *reinstate any service members*, changing the names of geographical objects, e.g., *restore the name of a great president*,

William McKinley, to Mount McKinley. In general, in the first inaugural the perceptual component of the concept of RENEWAL predominates. In contrast, in the second address, the President focuses on revitalizing the values of American society.

If we look at the constructions, we can clearly see that 9 *new*-constructions predominate in the 2017 inaugural, followed by 5 *redo* pairing and *-back* structures. The second inaugural contains 13 *redo* units, 7 *back*-construction, 6 *new*-constructions and 6 *again*-pairings. So, in the first speech the president underscored innovations in the life of the country, while in the second address he focused on the return to the policies and values in the country under his rule.

The other two concepts don't represent significant differences. The identical basic concept of UNITY is mainly embodied by *unity*-constructions, e.g. *live in unity* [19], *America is united* [19], *a spirit of unity* [20], *national unity* [20], *nation is rapidly unifying* [20]. The predominance of such pairings can be explained by the necessity to underscore the integrity of the people, their collaboration, and collective action, notwithstanding the election results.

PATRIOTISM concept is verbalized as doing everything for the country by constructions *America First*, *Buy American* in 2017 inaugural.

The concept of SUCCESS in 2025 speech indicates possible outstanding achievement of the country and its citizens and prosperity in all spheres by the

pairings *golden age, unrelenting success, our country will flourish, nation's glorious destiny*.

Conclusions. Linguistic conceptual approach to analyzing public speeches helps to successfully identify recurring constructions capturing core ideas. The framework of morphosyntactic constructions, grounded in the idea that certain linguistic pairings are stored in long-term memory, provides a solid foundation for understanding how the basic concepts are represented and communicated. Though the President voiced his ideas eight years apart, he still turned out to advocate for the improvement of the society damaged severely by the previous democratic administration. The vivid disparity lies in the fact that in the 2017 inaugural the perceptual component of the CALAMITY and RENEWAL concepts is encoded by the prevailing number of constructions underscoring the catastrophic situation in the life of ordinary people and the necessity to improve it respectively. In the second address, the notional component of the CRISIS concept dominates, reflecting via constructions the harsh criticism of the previous government. On the contrary, the evaluative level of the RENEWAL concept in 2025 speech outweighs the other two components because the constructions indicate the promise to return to the core values of American society with the new President in office. Further research presupposes using the constructional approach to analyzing other public speeches and establishing basic concepts in media texts.

Bibliography:

1. Baxter A.M., Nowrasteh A. A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present Day. *Policy Analysis*. 2021. № 919. URL: <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/brief-history-us-immigration-policy-colonial-period-present-day> (accessed 10.04.2025)
2. Campbell K. K., Jamieson K. H. Presidents creating the presidency: Deeds done in words. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 433 p.
3. Chung C. J., Park H. W. Textual analysis of a political message: The inaugural addresses of two Korean presidents. *Social Science Information*. 2010. Vol. 49, № 2. P. 215-239.
4. Collins Dictionary. URL: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/> (accessed 10.04.2025)
5. Egré P., O'Madagain C. Concept Utility. *The Journal of Philosophy*. 2019. Vol. 116, № 10. P. 525-554. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil20191161034>
6. Enfield N. J. Linguistic concepts are self-generating choice architectures. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*. 2022. Vol. 378. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2021.0352>
7. Hoffmann T. Construction Grammar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 315 p.
8. Howlett M., Cashore B. Conceptualizing Public Policy. *Comparative Policy Studies* / Eds I. Engeli, C.R. Allison. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. P. 17-33. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137314154_2
9. Glaz A. Linguistic Worldview(s): Approaches and Applications. New York: Routledge, 2022. 240 p. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003018803>
10. Goldberg A. E. Explain Me This. Creativity, Competition, and the Partial Productivity of Constructions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. 195 p.
11. Kellner D. Power, Autocracy, and the Crisis of Democracy in Donald Trump. *Power, Politics and Influence: Exercising Followership, Leadership, and Practicing Politics* / Ed. A. Akande. Cham: Springer, 2024. P. 383-409. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69610-7_14
12. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online. URL: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/> (accessed 04.04.2025).

13. Nagel C. Populism, immigration and the Trump phenomenon in the U.S. *Environment and Planning C*. 2019. Vol. 37, № 1. P. 12-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263774X18811923c>
14. Potapenko S. Communicative strategies as a two-faceted phenomenon: A cross-linguistic study of inaugural addresses. *Вісник Київського національного лінгвістичного університету. Серія: Філологія*. 2020. Vol. 23, № 1. P. 71-83.
15. Rudd K. UN Reform under the Trump Administration: The Way Ahead. *The Washington Quarterly*. 2017. Vol. 40, № 1. P. 95-107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1302741>
16. Smith A. X. Donald J. Trump in the Whirlwind of Populism and Globalization. *U.S. Democracy in Danger: The American Political System Under Assault* / Ed. A. Akande. Cham: Springer, 2023. P. 383-408. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36099-2_17
17. Svehla L., Lyons W. The Audacity of Trump: The Rhetorical Strategy of President Donald Trump. *The Legacy of the Trump Administration. The Evolving American Presidency* / Eds. M. Grossman, F. Schortgen, R. E. Matthews, D. B. Cohen. Cham: Palgrave, 2024. P. 149-165. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65247-9_9
18. Taim A. The Impact of Realism on U.S. Foreign Policy during the Trump Presidency. *Journal of International Relations*. 2024. Vol. 4, № 2. P. 14-29. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jir.2552>
19. Trump D. J. The Inaugural Address. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/> (accessed 04.04.2025).
20. Trump D. J. The Inaugural Address. 2025. Retrieved from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/> (accessed 04.04.2025).
21. Ungerer T., Hartmann S. Constructionist Approaches: Past, Present, Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 75 p.
22. Widiatmoko P. Analysis of presidential inaugural addresses using Searle's taxonomy of speech acts. *English Review: Journal of English Education*. 2017. Vol. 5, № 2. P. 275-282.

Талавіра Н. М. ТРАМП 2017 VS ТРАМП 2025: ПОРІВНЯННЯ ДВОХ ІНАВГУРАЦІЙНИХ ПРОМОВ

Стаття присвячена аналізу двох інавгураційних звернень президента Дональда Трампа, які він виступив у 2017 та 2025 роках. Інавгурація розглядається як перша можливість для новообраного лідера презентувати себе, висвітлити свій порядок денний та об'єднати електорат, незважаючи на його особистий вибір. Спікер звертається до базових концептів картину світу аудиторії. Концепт як когнітивна репрезентація нашого ментального коду вербалізується морфосинтаксичними конструкціями, тобто поєднанням форми, значення та функції. Метою дослідження є встановлення морфосинтаксичних конструкцій, що кодують базові концепти інавгураційних звернень Дональда Трампа. Дослідження показало, що існують ідентичні концепти ВІНОВЛЕННЯ та ЄДНІСТЬ, синонімічні НЕЩАСТЯ та КРИЗА, а також два різні концепти ПАТРІОТИЗМ у зверненні 2017 року та УСПІХ у виступі 2025 року. Вербалізація синонімічних концептів НЕЩАСТЯ та КРИЗА відрізняється представленням їхніх структурних компонентів: у першій промові переважають структури, що репрезентують предметно-образний рівень концепту НЕЩАСТЯ, позначаючи проблеми американської сім'ї, тоді як у промові 2025 року більшість конструкцій вербалізують поняттєвий компонент концепту КРИЗА, підкреслюючи катастрофічну ситуацію в діяльності уряду. Концепт ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ поданий як обіцянка подолати всі труднощі пересічних американців в інавгураційній промові 2017 року та повернення до основних американських цінностей у зверненні 2025 року. Ідентичний концепт ЄДНІСТЬ репрезентований схожими конструкціями в обох зверненнях, що вказують на співпрацю та згуртованість народу. Концепт ПАТРІОТИЗМ в інавгураційній промові 2017 року вербалізований конструкціями на позначення лояльності до всього, що пов'язано з США. Концепт УСПІХ в виступі 2025 року кодується конструкціями на позначення можливих досягнень нації.

Ключові слова: морфосинтаксична конструкція, концепт, промова, інавгураційне звернення, Дональд Трамп.