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UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY'S SPEECHES TO NEIGHBORING STATES' PARLIAMENTS: MEDIA RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Стаття доводить, що переконувальний потенціал виступів Президента Зеленського в парламентах держав-сусідів досягається завдяки активації потреб людини, підпорядкованих риторичному пафосу, та культурних аргументів, пов'язаних із риторичним логосом. Встановлено, що виступи активують потреби в приналежності, загрози безпеці та її відновлення, а культурні аргументи спираються на колективні цінності, що охоплюють висловлення провідних політиків окремих країн і події, аналогічні до тих, що відбуваються в Україні. Виявлено, що основним лінгвальним засобом активації потреб людини і культурних аргументів у виступах Президента є морфосинтаксичні конструкції, які тлумачать як будь-яке стійке поєднання форми й функції або форми й значення, закріплене в довготривалій пам'яті мовців.

Ключові слова: виступ, культурний аргумент, потреби людини, медійна риторика, морфосинтаксична конструкція, Президент Зеленський.

The notable feature of the Ukrainian war discourse is President Zelenskyy's domestic and international speeches. The former comprise daily briefings about the state of things in the country contributing to the unification and mobilization of the in-group of Ukrainian citizens against the enemy's out-group. The international speeches meant for the other countries' parliaments aim at forming the in-group of global supporters against the aggressor.

President Zelenskyy's war speeches have triggered vast research. It dwells on the addresses to the domestic (Potapenko 2024: 48) and foreign (Nedainova 2024: 68; Potapenko 2023) audience, their transformation in news discourse (Talavira, Potapenko, Mishchenko 2024) and persuasive effectiveness (Talavira, Potapenko 2023), as well as the use of particular linguistic units (Guliashvili 2023).

A special category of international speeches is meant for the neighboring states' parliaments. Their aim is to form a supporting in-group of an immediate kind since neighbors are close to this country due to the common border. However, the neighboring states turn out to be a heterogeneous set which is emphasized in the President's speech to the Polish Sejm (1):

(1) *It is believed that the number seven brings happiness. That is how many neighbors God has given to Ukraine. Does it bring us happiness? The whole world knows the answer today* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

One of the neighbors, Russia, a Soviet-time "brother", is known to have unleashed the war against Ukraine. That is how the President characterizes that perfidious next-door (2):

(2) *A neighbor who brought trouble and war to our land. A neighbor who obviously acts without God* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

That treacherous neighbor is supported by two others though differently. Belarus let the Russians attack Ukraine from its territory while Hungary opposes European assistance to this country. The friendly neighbors – Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Moldova – support Ukraine though differently which is reflected in the rhetorical structure of the speeches and the dates on which they were delivered. Among the hostile neighbors the President addresses only the people of Belarus. There seems to be two main reasons for that. First, during the Soviet times Belarussians together with Ukrainians shared a similar fate, i.e. used to be Russians' younger brothers. Second, many Ukrainians from the northern territories moved to Belarus during the Soviet times and in the early years of independence. Consequently, the speech was supposed to compel Belarussian Ukrainians to influence the policy of their authorities.

The purpose of this paper is to study the way President Zelenskyy influences the parliaments and population of the neighboring states. It presupposes the fulfilment of the following **tasks**: drawing up a rhetorical methodology of analysis; determining the role of rhetorical modes of pathos and logos in the persuasive potential of the speeches; establishing the role of cultural arguments in the persuasive potential of the speeches; drawing conclusions about the speeches' overall effectiveness.

Methods and material. The analysis of President Zelenskyy's speeches addressing the neighboring states' parliaments to form an immediate in-group draws on the principles of media rhetoric in general (Potapenko 2021) and on two rhetorical modes of persuasion in particular: pathos and logos. However, since ancient times their understanding has altered due to the influence of the media which impact the online delivery of speeches.

The traditional treatment of pathos as an appeal to passion or emotions (Green 2006: 574) is characteristic of the oral rhetorical tradition and therefore it fails to take into account the mechanisms underlying the use of the media treated as an extension of our bodies and senses (Gnach et al. 2022).

The media have changed the role of pathos revealing the link of emotions to motives and human needs. This interaction is confirmed by several facts. First, it is the origin of the terms denoting emotions and motives from the common root "motion" (Skeat 1994: 295). The etymology reveals that the meanings of the two words go back to the same basic concept of motivating a person to do something. Second, it is the modern psychologists' opinion that emotions are often the driving force behind motivation, positive or negative (Gaulin et al. 2003: 121). Third, it is a link between Aristotle's list of emotions and the human needs singled out by A. Maslow: physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem / reputation, self-actualization (Maslow 1970: 35-47). Those correspondences, direct and indirect, are brought about by meeting or flouting particular needs. The direct match is revealed by the relation of safety to *fear* treated by Aristotle as "pain at the imminent evil to oneself" (Green 2006: 577) as well as by correlation of belongingness with *friendliness* regarded by Aristotle as "pleasure at the appearance of procuring benefits for another" (Green 2006: 577). Moreover, the analysis of media discourse gives reasons to single out different subtypes of safety need: potential threat, safety loss (real threat), safety renewal (Potapenko 2009).

The media have also altered the understanding of logos. Aristotle applied the term to refer to "reasoned discourse" or "the argument" while presently it is defined in terms of the content of a message. It is claimed that logos is given to us through the speaker's choice of words, which is the persuasive dimension that best showcases the importance of wording in any persuasive endeavor (De Oliveira Fernandes et al. 2023). Moreover, logos as a means of argumentation turns out to be based on long-standing cultural arguments entrenched in a nation's collective worldview, or memory. Accordingly, the difference between appeals to human needs and cultural arguments appears to be based on the opposition between individual and collective values which is reflected in their use in media texts in general and in President Zelenskyy's speeches in particular.

The understanding of elocution, a rhetorical canon dealing with wording (Campbell 2007: 523), has changed due to the development of cognitive linguistics which introduces morphosyntactic constructions as new units of analysis treated as any fixed combination of form and function or form and meaning entrenched into human long-term memory (Hoffmann 2022: 4-5). Constructions comprise multilevel linguistic units: morphemes, words, complex and abstract syntactic patterns (Hoffmann 2022: 9). There are two approaches to the classification of constructions. The earlier one divides them into three types: *item-based*, fixed in any context; *lexicalized*, with the main element making dependent the other one (Tomasello 2000); *grammaticalized*, representing abstract relations (Tomasello 2000). The later approach splits any construction into two elements: substantive with a stable phonological form and dependent, or schematic, being a slot which can be filled in with variable elements (Hoffmann 2022: 5). The latter view covers only lexicalized and grammaticalized constructions which single out stable and variable elements at the level of referents and relations but overlooks the item-based constructions which keep the same form in all the contexts and have no open slots to be filled in. Therefore this paper combines the two approaches distinguishing item-based, or fixed, constructions and changeable with substantive and variable elements representing referents and relations.

The speeches to the neighboring states can be found on President Zelenskyy's site in Ukrainian and in English. This paper analyzes their English variants meant for the international community (https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/speeches) keeping in mind that their translations are supposed to preserve the rhetorical potential of the original.

To sum up, the media rhetorical methodology presupposes an analysis of the textual appeal to pathos and logos evoking human needs and cultural arguments, on the one hand, and the use of the morphosyntactic constructions to study the implementation of the canon of elocution, on the other.

Results. All in all, there are three speeches to the parliaments of the friendly neighboring states delivered about a month apart from each other which reflects the role of particular countries in helping Ukraine: Poland which hosted an enormous number of refugees in the first days of the invasion; Romania and Slovakia which became helpful at later stages. However, there is no address to Moldova since being in need of defense itself it cannot assist Ukraine though one can also find an address to the Belarussian people instead of the authorities.

The first friendly neighbor to be addressed was **Poland** (Zelenskyy 2022a). It was on 11 March 2022, sixteen days after the beginning of the war, the period which showed Polish tremendous assistance to Ukrainian citizens.

The speech begins with reference to the belongingness need by the address *Polish brothers and sisters!* evoking the family metaphor and repeated three times to divide the address into parts.

The structure of the introduction rests on the antithesis between belongingness and safety loss needs.

Three belongingness needs are evoked at the beginning of the introduction by reference to European, friendly, and family values (3):

(3) *As Europeans. As friends. As parents who love their families and realize that our children must live in a world of equal good values. Our shared values. […] And 78 Ukrainian children who died from rockets and shelling of the Russian Federation know it better than others* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

The necessity of belonging to one of the groups indicated above (3) as a means of ensuring security is supported by reference to safety loss exemplified by the construction *78 Ukrainian children who died* describing the death of kids.

Belongingness need is further intensified by the use of the family metaphor (4):

(4) *On the morning of February 24, I had no doubt who it would be. Who will say to me: Brother, your people will not be left alone with the enemy." And so it happened. And I'm grateful for that. Polish brothers and sisters are with us. And this is natural* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

The family metaphor appealing to belongingness is expressed in (4) by the address *Brother* and the construction *Polish brothers and sisters.*

Cultural arguments appealing to safety loss and various kinds of belongingness are evoked in the second and third parts of the speech introduced by the construction *Polish brothers and sisters!*

The first cultural argument is President Lech Kaczyński's prediction about Russia's threat for Ukraine and its neighbors voiced during the 2008 Russian attack on Georgia (5)*:*

(5) *"We know very well: today – Georgia, tomorrow – Ukraine, the day after tomorrow – the Baltic countries and then, perhaps, the time will come for my country – Poland".*

On February 24, this terrible "tomorrow" for Ukraine came, which President Kaczyński spoke about (Zelenskyy 2022a).

Lech Kaczyński's prediction serves as a thesis for subsequent arguments referring to the current situation in Europe through appeal to the safety renewal and belongingness needs (6):

(6) *And today we are fighting for such a bad time for Poland and the Baltic States to never come. We fight together. We have strength. Remember, there are 90 million of us together! We can do everything together* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

Safety renewal is evoked in (6) by the first predicative construction *today we are fighting for such a bad time for Poland and the Baltic States to never come.* The combination of safety renewal with strong belongingness is rendered by the repetition

the adverb *together* in three constructions: *fight together, 90 million of us together, do everything together.*

The second cultural argument employed in the speech to the Polish Sejm is the reference to the 2010 Smolensk tragedy (7) which demonstrates the Russian aggressive nature evoking the safety loss need:

(7) *We remember the terrible tragedy of 2010 near Smolensk. We remember all the facts of the investigation into the circumstances of this catastrophe. We feel what this means for you. And what does the silence of those who also know all this mean to you, but... But they still feast their eyes on Russia* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

The movement from the persistent appeal to memory expressed in (7) by the repetition of the verb *remember* to emotions named by the verb *feel* reveals the depth of the President's compassion for the Polish people. The perception of this cultural argument is intensified by the nouns *tragedy* and *catastrophe.*

The Smolensk argument proving Russia's threat for its neighbors is followed by the most intensive combination of belongingness and safety renewal needs achieved by repeating the noun *alliance* (8) to depict the unity between Poland and Ukraine:

(8) *I feel that we have already formed an extremely strong alliance. Even though it is informal. But this is an alliance that grew out of reality, not words on paper. Of the warmth in our hearts, not of the speeches of politicians at summits* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

The third cultural argument is John Paul II's statement about unity which is followed by the expression of President Zelenskyy's gratitude to the Polish people for the assistance Ukrainians received (9):

(9) *We united to constantly gain and create freedom, as a great Pole, a close friend of Ukraine John Paul II said* (Zelenskyy 2022a).

The address to the Polish Sejm seems to be the strongest with respect to the use of metaphors and cultural arguments since the help of the country was really important at the very outset of the war when its outcome was not at all clear.

The speech to the **Romanian Parliament** was delivered almost a month later, on 4 April 2022 since that country is more distant from the frontline than Poland.

The address opens with reference to the current events triggering safety renewal for the cities of the Kyiv region by the constructions *liberated cities, expelled the Russian occupiers* while the appeal to safety loss associated with the death of Ukrainian citizens is evoked by the construction *the video is brutal* (10):

(10) *A few hours ago I returned from the liberated cities of the Kyiv region – near our capital. It is these territories from which we expelled the Russian occupiers and saw what they had been doing to the Ukrainian people on our land. And I want you to see it now. What the occupiers left behind. I apologize – the video is brutal, but it's a reality* [...] (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The safety loss need is further intensified by a citation from a Russian media outlet (11) promising belongingness deficiency for Ukrainians:

(11) *The article describes a clear and calculated procedure for the destruction of everything that makes Ukrainians Ukrainians and our people themselves. Those whom they will not be able to break and conquer. It is said that "de-Ukrainization" and "de-*

Europeanization" of Ukraine should be carried out. It is said that even the name of our state should be erased (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The deficiency of belongingness is evoked in (11) by the constructions which denote levelling Ukraine to the ground: *destruction of everything that makes Ukrainians Ukrainians; "de-Ukrainization" and "de-Europeanization" of Ukraine; the name of our state should be erased.*

The speech to the Romanian parliament draws on two **cultural arguments**. The first one compares the current Russian regime with that of Ceauşescu who had reigned Romania by 1989 appealing to the audience's loss of safety (12):

(12) *In 1989, Nicolae Ceauşescu finally ended his life. It has been clear that he, his wife, his entourage, his "Securitate" have been dragging your country and people down - to suffering, to poverty, to isolation not just from the world, but from everything advanced in the world* (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The safety loss in (12) is triggered by the predicative construction *his "Securitate" have been dragging your country and people down – to suffering, to poverty,* while deficiency of global belongingness and self-actualization of Romania is expressed by the nominative construction *isolation not just from the world, but from everything advanced in the world.*

The second cultural, or rather geographical, argument appeals to a possible safety loss for the Romanian people if Russians occupy the Ukrainian cities of Mikolayv and Odesa which are at a stone's throw from Moldova, the Danube and Romania (13):

(13) *Therefore, the defense of Ukrainians of their own state is a fundamental prerequisite for security and independence of Moldova. And therefore a prerequisite for peace in the whole large region of the Danube* (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The speech is wrapped up with two passages combining safety renewal (14) with belongingness need (15).

Safety renewal for the Danube region is emphasized in (14) by the units *restoring, protecting, reconstruction, safety*:

(14) *I believe that Romania's leadership will be one of the decisive factors in restoring justice and protecting normal life both in our region and in Europe as a whole. I am confident that Romania and Romanian companies will also take part in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction program. I am sincerely grateful to all the Romanian people for their kind treatment of Ukrainian immigrants who have found safety on your land* (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The combination of belongingness and safety renewal needs is evoked in (15) by the construction *to be defenders of freedom*:

(15) *Because our destiny is to be as close as we can. Our destiny is to be defenders of freedom in our region. Our destiny is to be together in the European family* (Zelenskyy 2022b).

The European belongingness of Romania and Ukraine is denoted in (15) by three constructions: *to be as close as we can*, *to be together, the European family.*

Unlike the speech to the Polish Sejm full of various belongingness metaphors in this address *the European family* seems to be the only one of the kind implying a bigger distance between the nations.

The speech at the **National Council of the Slovak Republic** delivered on 10 May 2022, i.e. more than two months after the war beginning, contributes to further formation of the immediate in-group. It begins with a gratitude for the help Ukraine has received (16):

(16) *Last year, we, with your President, Ms. Zuzana Čaputová, signed a Declaration of Recognition of the European Perspective of Ukraine. The significance of that step has now only grown stronger* (Zelenskyy 2022c).

The necessity of forming an immediate in-group is further substantiated by reference to safety loss in (17) by the units *war, to seize our land, subdue our people, erase Ukrainian identity* describing Russian invasion of Ukraine:

(17) *Russia's war against our state is not only an attempt to seize our land, subdue our people and erase Ukrainian identity* (Zelenskyy 2022c).

Further on the President refers to two kinds of help which contributes to safety renewal for Ukraine, namely, different kinds of weaponry and sanctions against Russians:

(18) *So the first and foremost tool to win this confrontation is weapons. And I can say on behalf of all our people that Ukrainians will always remember how Slovakia gave our country at a crucial time what really helped us. And there is potential to continue this cooperation, in particular, in the issue of aviation – aircraft, helicopters. […] The second tool is sanctions against Russia* (Zelenskyy 2022 c).

The second part of the speech drawing on ***cultural arguments*** is introduced by the address *Ladies and Gentlemen! Dear Slovak people!*

The first cultural, or rather historical, argument concerns Ukrainian mistakes of the past which might be repeated by Slovaks and other Europeans incurring safety loss. This argument concerns reliance on Russian energy used to blackmail, split and weaken Europeans which is expressed by the constructions *gas wars* and *a direct threat* (19):

(19) *Ukraine depended not only on Russian gas, but also on Russian political decisions. And any attempt to move at least to market conditions in supply ended in gas wars, and ultimately in a bonded gas agreement, which posed a direct threat to our sovereignty* (Zelenskyy 2022c).

The second cultural argument evoking the safety loss need (20) refers to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. It is contrasted with the present-day situation around Ukraine when all its European friends show solidarity depicted by the constructions *together with all our friends on the European continent* and *have shown solidarity* appealing to belongingness and the unit *defending freedom* evoking safety renewal:

(20) *After more than two months of the full-scale war, Ukrainians, together with all our friends on the European continent who have shown solidarity in defending freedom, have proved that Moscow will never be able to repeat what it did in 1968 and all other attempts to spread tyranny* (Zelenskyy 2022c).

The speech to the Romanian Parliament ends up combining belongingness perceived from the unity perspective with safety renewal:

(21) *But to really fully respond to the mockery of freedom then, in 1968, and to the attempts to mock freedom now, we still have to fight. We must strengthen our unity*

and put pressure on Russia until we see that victory has been achieved (Zelenskyy 2022c).

Belongingness evoked by the inclusive pronoun *we* and the noun *unity* (21) is combined with safety renewal expressed by the predicative constructions *we still have to fight* and *we see that victory has been achieved.*

The organization of the speech to the Slovak parliament reflects the advanced stage of the war which results in the gratitude for the military help to support Ukraine's safety renewal and reference to the belongingness to the European union.

The address to the people of **Belarus** inhabiting a hostile state was delivered on 27 February 2022, only five days after the beginning of the war.

The speech opens with reference to Ukraine's safety loss evoked by the constructions *more shelling, more bombing, they fight* with the last one repeated twice (22):

(22) *Last night in Ukraine was cruel. More shelling. More bombing of residential areas, civilian infrastructure. Today there is not a single object in the country that the invaders would not consider a valid target for themselves. They fight against everyone. They fight against everything that's alive – against kindergartens, against residential buildings and even against ambulances* (Zelenskyy 2022d).

The source of safety loss is denoted in (22) by the noun *invaders* and the pronoun *they*. Its targets on the territory of Ukraine are named by the constructions *residential areas, civilian infrastructure, against everyone, against everything that's alive, against kindergartens, against residential buildings* and *against ambulances*. The three-time repetition of the preposition *against* intensifies the feeling of threat.

The two ***cultural arguments*** the speech to the Belarussian people rests on are World War Two and the role of the Belarussian authorities in peace talks on Ukraine.

The World War Two arguments underscore two points. First, it is the idea that the same cities – *Vasylkiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv* – (23) suffer during the two wars which intensifies the loss of safety:

(23) *Vasylkiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and many other cities of Ukraine are surviving in conditions that were last seen on our land and your land during the Second World War* (Zelenskyy 2022d).

The second point emphasizing the loss of safety is evoked in (24) by comparing Belarussians and Russians with the Nazis:

(24) *But in the war that is going on now, you are not on the same side with us. Regretfully. From your territory, the troops of the Russian Federation launch rockets into Ukraine. Our children are being killed from your territory, our houses are being destroyed, they are trying to blow up everything that has been built over decades - and, by the way, not only by us, but also by our fathers, our grandfathers* (Zelenskyy 2022d).

The loss of safety need is triggered in (24) by the constructions *launch rockets, children are being killed, houses are being destroyed, to blow up everything that has been built over decades*. The role of Belarussians as a source of safety loss is intensified by the repetition of the construction *from your territory*.

The cultural argument dealing with possible peace talks associated with safety renewal for Ukraine are evoked by the constructions *negotiations between Ukraine and Russia; can end this war; restore peace; a platform for these negotiations* (25):

(25) *Now there is a lot of news about possible negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, which can end this war and restore peace to all of us. And they often mention your capital. Minsk. As a platform for these negotiations. A place we didn't choose. And, in fact, you did not, too. The leadership of Russia chose it. And now, there is an offer to meet there again* (Zelenskyy 2022d).

The address to the Belarussian people mainly evokes safety loss for Ukrainians hinting at the impossibility of safety renewal with the neighboring country except the conclusion (26) where construction *become that kind, safe Belarus* implies a probable safety renewal between Ukraine and Belarus in future:

(26) *I sincerely wish Belarus to once again become that kind, safe Belarus that everyone saw not so long ago. Make the right choice. I am sure this is the main choice of your great people* (Zelenskyy 2022d).

Conclusion. The speeches to the friendly neighbors mainly evoke two needs: safety loss denoted by the constructions representing Russians as a source of confrontation and Ukrainians as its target, on the one hand, and belongingness with the help of the units denoting unity, on the other. The addresses also trigger friendly, family and European belongingness values combining them with two types of safety: its loss and renewal. The speeches differ in the use of family metaphors: they are frequent in the address to the Polish Sejm, rare in the speech to the Romanian Parliament being absent from the address to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Cultural arguments representing collective values are employed to refer to leading politicians of particular countries, events similar to those occurring in Ukraine or places important for achieving or flouting the safety need. **Further study** presupposes the analysis of President Zelenskyy's speeches of the first days of the war.

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UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT ZELENSKYY'S SPEECHES IN THE NEIGHBORING STATES' PARLIAMENTS: MEDIA RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Background: The notable feature of the Ukrainian war discourse is President Zelenskyy's domestic and international speeches. The latter have been discussed so far from the perspectives of their effectiveness, news transformations, the use of particular linguistic units. A special category of international speeches are meant for the neighboring states' parliaments: they are aimed at forming a supporting in-group of an immediate kind.

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to study the way President Zelenskyy influences the parliaments and population of the neighboring states.

Results: The persuasive potential of President Zelenskyy's speeches to the neighboring states' parliaments rests on appeal to human needs subordinated to pathos and to cultural arguments related to logos. The speeches evoke human needs of belongingness, safety threat and safety renewal while the cultural arguments are represented by collective values covering opinions of particular countries' leading politicians and events similar to those occurring in Ukraine. The main linguistic means of evoking human needs and cultural arguments are morphosyntactic constructions treated as any fixed combination of form and function or form and meaning entrenched into human long-term memory.

Discussion: The delivery of the speeches to the parliaments of the friendly neighboring states about a month apart from each other reflects their role in assisting Ukraine: Poland which hosted an enormous number of refugees in the first days of the invasion; Romania and Slovakia which became helpful at later stages. However, there is no address to Moldova since being in need of defense itself it cannot help Ukraine. One can also find an address to the Belarussian people instead of the authorities.

Keywords: speech, cultural argument, human needs, media rhetoric, morphosyntactic construction, President Zelenskyy.

Vitae

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