



SEMANTIC AND CROSS-CULTURAL SPECIFICITIES OF FIRST- PERSON PRONOUNS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES (UZBEK-ENGLISH- FRENCH)

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Abstract

This article offers a comparative analysis of the semantic and indexical functions of first-person pronouns (“I/we”) in Uzbek, English, and French political discourse. Based on a corpus of presidential addresses and official speeches from 2020–2024, the study shows that “I” commonly indexes personal responsibility and proximity, while “we” signals solidarity, an institutional voice, and at times the strategic blurring of agency. The analysis identifies cross-linguistic differences linked to cultural norms and genre conventions (ceremonial political speech vs. formal bureaucratic text). Findings indicate that English and Uzbek speeches more strongly deploy “I” for affective alignment and the personalization of accountability, whereas French discourse more frequently favors an institutional “we” alongside a tendency to background or omit the explicit subject. The results illuminate leadership styles, strategies of legitimation, and audience mobilization.

Keywords: first-person pronouns; semantics; indexicality; political rhetoric; cross-cultural pragmatics.

Ushbu maqola o‘zbek, ingliz va fransuz siyosiy nutqlarida birinchi shaxs olmoshlarining (“men/biz”) semantik va indeksik funksiyalarini qiyosiy tahlil qiladi. 2020–2024 yillardagi prezidentlik murojaatlari hamda rasmiy nutqlardan tuzilgan korpus asosida “men” ko‘pincha shaxsiy mas‘uliyat va yaqinlikni, “biz” esa hamjihatlik, institutsional ovoz va ba‘zan agentlikni noaniqlashtirishni signal qilishi ko‘rsatildi. Tahlil tillararo madaniy normativlar va janr konventsionalari (marosimiy siyosiy nutq vs rasmiy-burokratik matn) bilan bog‘liq farqlarni ochadi. Natijalar ingliz va o‘zbek siyosiy nutqlarida “men”ning affektiv yaqinlashtirish va javobgarlikni shaxsiylashtirishdagi roli kuchliroq ekanini, fransuz diskursida esa institutsional “biz” va subyektni yashirish (ellipsis/impersonallik) tendensiyasining ko‘proq uchrashini ko‘rsatadi. Topilmalar rahbarlik uslublari, legitimatsiya va auditoriyani safarbar etish strategiyalarini yoritadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: birinchi shaxs olmoshlari; semantika; indeksiklik; siyosiy ritorika; madaniyatlararo pragmatika.

Аннотация





Статья представляет сравнительный анализ семантических и индексальных функций местоимений первого лица («я/мы») в узбекском, английском и французском политическом дискурсе. На основе корпуса президентских обращений и официальных речей 2020–2024 годов показано, что «я» обычно индексирует личную ответственность и близость, тогда как «мы» сигнализирует солидарность, институциональный голос и в ряде случаев стратегическое размывание агентивности. Анализ выявляет межъязыковые различия, связанные с культурными нормами и жанровыми конвенциями (торжественное политическое выступление vs формальный бюрократический текст). Результаты указывают, что в английских и узбекских выступлениях «я» активнее используется для аффективного сближения и персонализации ответственности, тогда как во французском дискурсе чаще предпочитается институциональное «мы» и наблюдается тенденция к фоновому или опущенному субъекту. Выводы проливают свет на стили лидерства, стратегии легитимации и мобилизации аудитории.

Ключевые слова: местоимения первого лица; семантика; индексальность; политическая риторика; межкультурная прагматика

1. Introduction

First-person pronouns are not merely grammatical markers; they are key discursive resources that construct meanings of power, responsibility, and solidarity (Bull, 2021; Fairclough, 2022; Wodak, 2021). In political speech, choosing between “I” and “we” reconfigures not only referentiality but also ethos, legitimation, and speaker–audience distance. This study addresses two questions: (RQ1) What semantic networks are activated by the choice of “I/we” in political discourse? (RQ2) How does this choice vary across Uzbek, English, and French contexts? The theoretical grounding draws on recent work in pragmatics and discourse analysis (O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2023; Schmid, 2021).

2. Methods

The dataset comprises over 60 samples of political discourse from 2020–2024, including presidential addresses and other formal speeches in Uzbek, English, and French. In each text, occurrences of “I/je” and “we/nous” were identified and manually annotated. Semantic and indexical roles were coded under the following categories: (a) assumption of responsibility, (b) claim/promise, (c) solidarity and inclusion, and (d) agency-blurring. A comparative discourse–pragmatic approach was applied, foregrounding concepts such as cooperation, audience design, and indexicality, broadly within the Levinsonian tradition.





3. Results

First, “I” (I/je). In English and Uzbek political speeches, “I” functions as a key means of personalizing leadership: it ties responsibility to the speaker, articulates commitments at the personal level, and enhances affective proximity to the audience. In Uzbek texts, the relational and warm tone of “I” is particularly salient, while English speeches often emphasize explicit personal accountability for decisions and outcomes.

Second, “we” (we/nous). The pronoun oscillates along an inclusive–exclusive spectrum. Inclusive “we” (uniting “people–leadership”) strengthens solidarity and mobilization; exclusive “we” (restricted to government or institutions) highlights institutional boundaries. In some contexts, “we” strategically diffuses accountability by blurring agency, normalizing policy directions and presenting decisions as collective.

Third, cross-linguistic profile. English discourse shows overt personalization and a prominent role for “I” in ethos construction. Uzbek speeches often build legitimacy via “we,” framing unity and collective purpose. French discourse more frequently adopts an institutional tone, with greater reliance on subject ellipsis/impersonality; “nous” tends to index formal collegiality.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal systematic links between “I/we” choices and leadership styles. Across cultural orientations along the individualism–collectivism continuum, political subjectivity is verbalized through different indexical cues: in more individualist-leaning contexts, explicit personal accountability (“I”) becomes central to legitimation; in collectivist-leaning settings, solidarity and the institutional voice (“we”) take precedence. The role of “we” in blurring agency requires particular attention in discourses of political responsibility (Wodak, 2021). Genre conventions also matter: ceremonial political oratory tends to foreground affective proximity and mobilization, whereas bureaucratic/formal texts maintain greater institutional distance (Fairclough, 2022; Bull, 2021).

5. Conclusion

1. “I” constructs political subjectivity through personal responsibility and proximity.
2. “We” operates along an inclusive–exclusive spectrum and may blur agency.
3. Genre and cultural factors shape pronoun choice: EN—personalization; UZ—legitimation and unity; FR—institutional tone.





4. Translators/interpreters should preserve indexicality wherever possible, as pronouns are diagnostic of leadership style, legitimation, and mobilization strategies.

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