

COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *This thesis examines the cognitive foundations of political discourse, focusing on how language shapes political perception, interpretation, and decision-making. Political discourse is not only a communicative act, but a cognitive process in which speakers and audiences construct meaning through mental models, frames, and conceptual structures.*

Keywords: *cognitive aspect, political discourse, mental models, frames, confirmation bias, conceptual structures.*

Introduction

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, political actors employ conceptual metaphors, framing strategies, and ideological schemata to influence public opinion. Metaphors such as POLITICS IS WAR or THE STATE IS A FAMILY simplify complex political realities and guide voters' reasoning by activating shared cognitive patterns. Framing, in turn, highlights certain aspects of political events while suppressing others, directing attention and shaping evolution.

The thesis also emphasizes the role of mental models in political understanding. Recipients interpret political messages based on prior knowledge, beliefs, and cultural experience, which explains why identical political texts may produce different interpretations across audiences. **Cognitive biases**, including confirmation bias and in-group/out group categorization, further affect political judgment and ideological alignment:

➤ **Confirmation bias** considerably impacts political discourse by influencing how individuals seek, interpret, and recall information.

a) Seeking out information that supports their existing political beliefs, often through like-minded media or social circles.

b) Interpreting ambiguous information in a way that confirms their pre-existing views, even if other interpretations are equally valid.

c) Remembering information that aligns with their political stance more readily than contradictory information.

This leads to the reinforcement of existing beliefs, making it difficult for individuals to consider alternative perspectives or engage in productive dialogue with



those holding different views. It can contribute to political polarization and the spread of misinformation.

➤ **In-group/out group categorization** plays a powerful role in political discourse by dividing people into “us” versus “them”.

I. **In-group:** individuals identify with a particular political party, ideology, or social group, sharing common values and goals that fosters solidarity and loyalty.

II. **Out-group:** those who do not belong to the in-group are perceived as different, potentially threatening, or even adversarial.

This categorization leads to increase polarization, enhance cohesion within the in-group, bias in information processing. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for recognizing how political narratives are constructed and how divisions are perpetuated.

➤ **Political judgment** in discourse refers to the cognitive process by which individuals evaluate political information, candidates, policies, and events to form opinions and make decisions. Effective political judgment ideally involves critical thinking, openness to diverse perspectives, and a willingness to update beliefs based on new evidence.

The key factors of cognitive aspects in political discourse are:

1. **Conceptual metaphor** assist people understand abstract political processes through familiar experiences. For example:

- “Politics is war” activates a war frame, encouraging citizens to see politics as conflict involving enemies, strategies, and victories.

- “The state is a family” – the state is conceptualized as a parent, while citizens are considered as children, shaping expectations about authority and responsibility.

2. **Framing** highlights how political issues are presented to guide interpretation and evaluation. For instance, “Tax relief” or “Tax cuts for the wealthy” means similar policies, tax relief frames as a burden, while tax cuts for the wealthy triggers concerns about inequality.

3. **Mental models** are internal representations that people use to interpret political messages based on prior beliefs and experience. For example, “Immigrants are taking our jobs” activates a mental model of competition and threat, even when empirical evidence may contradict it.

4. **Ideological schemas** organize political reality into simplified categories through binary oppositions. For example, “We stand for freedom, they stand for chaos” creates us and them cognitive division, reinforcing group identity and ideological alignment.

5. **Presupposition and implicit meaning** frequently contain hidden assumption that are cognitively processed as given truths. For example, “When will the government stop ignoring the people?” presupposes that the government is ignoring the people, shaping perception without direct accusation.





Conclusion

Political discourse operates cognitively by shaping how individuals conceptualize political reality through metaphors, frames, mental models, and ideological schemas. By analyzing these cognitive mechanisms helps explain persuasion, manipulation, and power in political communication. Cognitive biases also play a vital role to imply hidden meaning with the help of confirmation bias, in-group, out-group, and political judgment that lead to different interpretations based on their prior belief, expectation and knowledge.

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