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LINGUISTIC CONCEPTUAL ORGANIZATION OF STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESSES: A CONSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The paper aims at identifying morphosyntactic constructions as conventionalized pairings of form, meaning and function that verbalize the basic concepts of two State of the Union addresses: Barack Obama's in 2016 and Donald Trump's in 2017. While the identical basic concept in the two analysed speeches is UNITY, the similar concepts are CHANGE in the perspective of providing opportunities for the Americans and other countries in Obama's address and RENEWAL as transformation for the better in Trump's oration. In addition, President Trump actualizes the concept THREAT as manifestation of danger, blockage to economic growth or deterioration in various aspects of American life. Obama's address further represents the basic concept FUTURE, coded as an object of attention to the coming changes of the society, and the concept CHOICE, designated as a necessity to choose some alternative. The comparison of the identical concept UNITY reveals that both presidents verbalise it as national integrity and joint actions of Americans. However, in Obama's address, the concept UNITY is also represented as the establishment of joint organizations, while in Trump's oration, it is realised as shared values of the citizens. The concept CHANGE in Obama's speech and the concept RENEWAL in Trump's address are coded as the creation of various job opportunities because they are relevant to the target audience, security guarantees for Americans and development possibilities for other countries. Furthermore, President Obama verbalizes leadership via the concept CHANGE as a return to previous diplomatic relations with the neighbouring countries and the transformation of the US political system. In contrast, Donald Trump portrays leadership as the establishment of new alliances with international partners.

Keywords: morphosyntactic construction, concept, State of the Union address, Barack Obama, Donald Trump.

Анотація

У статті виокремлено морфосинтаксичні конструкції як усталене поєднання форми, значення і функції, які вербалізують базові концепти двох звернень американських президентів до нації: демократа Барака Обами у 2016 році і республіканця Дональда Трампа у 2017 році. Ідентичним базовим концептом у двох проаналізованих промовах виступає ЄДНІСТЬ, подібним – ЗМІНА у виступі Барака Обами в ракурсі забезпечення можливостей для американців та інших країн та ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ як трансформація на краще в посланні Дональда Трампа. Крім того, республіканець актуалізує концепт ЗАГРОЗА як вияви небезпеки, перешкоди або погіршення різних показників життя пересічних американців. У зверненні Барака Обами репрезентовані також концепт МАЙБУТНЄ, утілений у перспективі об'єкта уваги американців до прийдешніх перетворень суспільства, і концепт ВИБІР, представлений як необхідність обирати альтернативний варіант. Порівняння ідентичного концепту ЄДНІСТЬ свідчить, що Барак Обама і Дональд Трамп вербалізують його як згуртованість народу та спільні дії американців. Проте у зверненні Барака Обами концепт ЄДНІСТЬ представлений також як створення спільних організацій, тоді як у посланні Дональда Трампа – як спільні цінності для громадян. Концепт ЗМІНА в промові Барака Обами та ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ у зверненні Дональда Трампа вербалізовані як створення умов для праці у сфері зайнятості, оскільки поява нових робочих місць релевантна для американської аудиторії; інтерпретовані як гарантування безпеки для мешканців США та забезпечення можливостей для розвитку інших країн. Виступ Барака Обами ідентифікує лідерство через апеляцію до концепту ЗМІНА як повернення до попередніх дипломатичних відносин або трансформація політичної

системи США. Натомість у зверненні Дональда Трампа лідерство подано через створення нових зв'язків з іноземними партнерами.

Ключові слова: морфосинтаксична конструкція, концепт, звернення до нації, Барак Обама, Дональд Трамп.

Introduction. The bipartisan nature of the American political system reflects different values and visions of foreign and domestic policy issues (Мельник, 2024). These discrepancies are reflected not only in ideology but also in the actions and statements of leaders. Among the speeches of US politicians, an important place is occupied by the President's State of the Union Address, which is viewed as "a fundamental aspect of the American political landscape" (Youvan, 2024), when the President is authorized by the constitution to "give to the Congress information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient" (Constitution Annotated).

The State of the Union address "signals a president's strategy for the remainder of the year and maps out specific tasks an administration expects to undertake to advance that strategy" (Beasley, 2021), "the civic ideals they wish to laud, the national issues they deem important" (Prasch & Scatliff O'Grady, 2017, p. 571). The President simultaneously speaks to lawmakers, who have the power to approve or reject the administration's agenda, and to the American people, who can send these legislators out of office (Beasley, 2021). Given the importance of the speech and the mass audience to which the President appeals, the question arises as to what underlying ideas are inherent in these addresses and whether they differ depending on the President's political affiliation. This study seeks to explore these underlying conceptual structures, examining their linguistic and ideological manifestations in presidential discourse.

Literature overview shows that scholars focus on the investigation of the functions of the State of the Union address (Bond, Smith & Andrade, 2023, p. 523), the President's rhetorical strategies (Rouabhia, 2024, p. 3), and linguistic phenomena used in the speeches, in particular metaphor (Weixuan & Mengting, 2023, p. 225) and metonymy (Cabrejas Peñuelas, 2018, p. 45). However, less attention is paid to key ideas of the address, their basic concepts, which are interpreted as the main mental unit (Голик, 2019, с. 155), representing human experience and knowledge (Черненко, 2021, с. 45). It is believed that the concept includes information about culture, art, and values that are systematised and stored in memory (Іванишин, 2019, с. 26; Савицька, Скоробогатова, 2022, с. 5) and objectivised in language (Світліковська & Шкамарда, 2024, с. 144; Томчаковська, 2022, с. 245), from a single lexical unit to an extended sentence, used to present information about objects, actions, events, phenomena of reality (Потапенко, 2018, с. 243; Шевченко, 2018, с. 64).

This research analyses the basic concepts of American Presidents' State of the Union Addresses drawing on morphosyntactic constructions viewed as "generalized cognitively motivated" (Zhukovska, 2023, p. 53) pairings of form, meaning and function (Croft, 2022, p. 5). The expediency of applying constructions is brought about by the fact that they are stored in long-term memory in a fixed form (Hoffmann, 2022, p. 7) and therefore require less cognitive effort when choosing the right linguistic unit to actualise a concept. In addition, morphosyntactic constructions are "conceptualized as holistic semiotic schemas" (Zhukovska, 2023, p. 53) represented in different forms, ranging from morphemes to complex syntactic patterns (Diessel, 2019, p. 11; Ungerer & Hartmann, 2023, pp. 11–12).

In speech, morphosyntactic constructions are embodied by constructs formed in the short-term memory and used in specific contexts (Diessel 2019, p. 12). In some cases,

a construct represents a single construction, e.g., *Let's go! Good morning*. More typical is the combination of several morphosyntactic constructions in one construct, e.g. '*our businesses have created jobs every single month*' (Obama, 2016). The utterance contains the construct '*our businesses have created jobs*', which includes the agentive construction '*our businesses*', the predicate construction '*have created jobs*', and the frequency construction '*every single month*' with the modifying component *single* intensifying the temporal reference.

The **aim** of the study is to identify the constructions verbalising basic concepts embedded in State of the Union addresses. The analysis is based on two speeches: the 2016 address, delivered by Democrat Barack Obama, and the 2017 address, presented by Republican Donald Trump. The study seeks to identify the basic concepts of each address, establish the key constructions coding them, and compare the structural and conceptual patterns employed in the public speeches by the two US presidents.

Research methodology. The investigation is based on the constructional approach (Goldberg, 2019) and presupposes three stages of analysing presidential addresses: preparatory, textual, and comparative.

The preparatory stage aims at identifying basic concepts of each State of the Union address by examining the frequency of constructions represented in the introduction to the speech. The recurrence of the constructions '*a new chapter*', '*a new national pride*', '*a new surge of optimism*', '*the Renewal of the American Spirit*' (Trump, 2017) points to the key status of *new*-constructions that code the basic concept RENEWAL in President Donald Trump's 2017 State of the Union address.

The textual stage concerns establishing representation of the basic concepts in the body of the speech through continuous sampling of constructions containing components correlating with the key constructions, i.e. most important pairings, used in the introduction. We identify the thematic sections of the address where the construct is used, e.g., '*Ford, Fiat-Chrysler, General Motors* [...] *have announced that they* [...] *will create tens of thousands of new American jobs*' (Trump, 2017). In the cited sentence, the construct '*will create tens of thousands of new American jobs*' contains the construction '*will create jobs*', indicating the emergence of jobs, '*new American jobs*', emphasising the vacancies that have not existed in the United States before, and the quantitative construction '*tens of thousands*', which underscores their large number. The names of the companies '*Ford*, *Fiat-Chrysler*, *General Motors*' and the construction '*new American jobs*' identify the thematic section about the economy in the speech.

The comparative stage of the research presupposes the analysis of the selected constructions and constructs in the two texts to identify patterns actualising basic concepts in the speeches of the two Presidents. The comparison of the above analysed statement from Donald Trump's speech with the sentence from Barack Obama's address '[...] *a manufacturing surge that's created nearly 900,000 new jobs*' (Obama, 2016) shows similar constructions, since '*created nearly 900,000 new jobs*' designates the appearance of new jobs, a large number of which are accentuated by the quantitative construction '*nearly 900,000*'. The difference lies in the temporal relation of the predicate constructions: Obama in his speech refers to the achieved result ('*has created'*), while Trump indicates an expected number in the future ('*will create*').

Research results. The analysis of the two State of the Union addresses shows that they code both common and different basic concepts.

Barack Obama's 2016 State of the Union address was the last during his term in office, so he chose to focus on his vision of the future. The basic concepts represented in the introduction to the speech are FUTURE, CHANGE, CHOICE and UNITY.

The concept FUTURE as a component of the TIME mega-concept reflects the time that comes after the present and includes events that will take place. In the introduction to the 2016 State of the Union Address, the concept FUTURE is portrayed as an object of attention or as its manifestations:

(1) '*I want to focus on our future*' (Obama, 2016).

(2) '*Our unique strengths* [...] *give us everything we need to ensure prosperity and security for generations to come*' (Obama, 2016).

(3) '*will we face the future with confidence in who we are* [...]*?*' (Obama, 2016).

In the examples above, the concept FUTURE is coded by the verbal constructions '*focus on our future*' (1), '*face the future*' (3), which represent the future as an object of attention by the verbs *focus* and *face*, or as its inherent characteristics with the help of the verbal construction '*generations to come*' (2), naming future generations.

The concept CHANGE as a 'metamorphosis of any phenomenon in time' (Kallio & Marchand, 2012), which leads to the emergence of its other characteristics (Collins Dictionary), but with the preservation of certain previous qualities (Kallio & Marchand, 2012), is implemented in the introduction to the 2016 address as an activity, a way of performing, an object or progress:

(4) "*There have been those* […] *who claimed we could slam the brakes on change*" (Obama, 2016).

(5) "[…] *we thought anew, and acted anew. We made change work for us*" (Obama, 2016).

(6) "*Will we respond to the changes of our time with fear* […]*?*" (Obama, 2016).

As the examples (4-6) show, the basic concept CHANGE is termed as activity by the '*slam the brakes on change*' construct (4) coding its termination. A new way of doing things is denoted by the constructions '*thought anew*' and '*acted anew*', emphasising the repetition of an activity using methods or means not applied before. The concept CHANGE is viewed as an object forced to modify as the construct '*made change work for us*' (5) shows, where the component *made* indicates coercion, or as incentive by means of the pairing '*respond to the changes of our time*' (6), in which the predicate *respond* designates a reaction to a certain stimulus denoted by the lexical unit *change*.

The concept CHANGE as progress, i.e. improvement of the situation, is denoted by the *progress*-construction from two perspectives – compulsion and possibility:

(7) "*I will keep pushing for progress*" (Obama, 2016).

(8) "[…] *it's that spirit that made the progress of these past seven years possible*" (Obama, 2016).

Progress as a manifestation of the concept CHANGE concept as compulsion is designated by the construction '*pushing for progress* (7), identifying the President's pressure to achieve improvement, while the construct '*made the progress possible*' (8) represents progress as enablement of transformation.

The concept CHOICE represents the need to select one option from the available alternatives being verbalised in Obama's 2016 address as an object with the help of two key constructions '*make choices*' and '*face choices*':

(9) "*It's the result of choices we make together. And we face such choices right now*" (Obama, 2016).

The fourth basic concept of UNITY represents a joint activity of congressmen or citizens being expressed by the constructions '*work together*' (10) and '*make choices together*' (9), with the component *together* underscoring shared selection of actions:

(10) "[…] *we can work together this year on some bipartisan priorities*" (Obama, 2016).

Trump's first State of the Union address, delivered on February 28, 2017, draws on three basic concepts outlined in the introduction: THREAT, RENEWAL, and UNITY.

The concept THREAT in the context of illegal activities is coded by nominal constructions referring to the perilous state of the society:

(11) "*Recent threats targeting Jewish Community Centers and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries, as well as last week's shooting in Kansas City, remind us that* […] *we are a country that stands united*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (11), the concept THREAT is evoked by the construction '*recent threats*', which reflects lack of safety. A medium degree of safety is verbalised by the construct '*vandalism of Jewish cemeteries*', with the lexical unit *vandalism*, which identifies a minor offence, and the '*Jewish cemeteries*' construction, denoting an object of vandalism. A low degree of safety is rendered by the '*shooting in Kansas City*' construct, with the component *shooting* designating a deadly threat to people.

The concept RENEWAL identifies the beginning of an activity after a certain period of stagnation verbalised by five key constructions, the number of which in the speech indicates the importance of the basic concept for the President:

(12) "*A new chapter of American Greatness is now beginning*" (Trump, 2017).

(13) "*A new national pride is sweeping across our Nation*" (Trump, 2017).

(14) "*And a new surge of optimism is placing impossible dreams firmly within our grasp*" (Trump, 2017).

(15) "*What we are witnessing today is the Renewal of the American Spirit*" (Trump, 2017).

(16) "*America is once again ready to lead*" (Trump, 2017).

The construction '*the Renewal of the American Spirit*' (15) refers to the revival of the American system of values in general. The following three constructions indicate the renovation of certain features of the American culture: greatness, e.g., '*a new chapter of American Greatness*' (12); pride, e.g., '*a new national pride*' (13); optimism, e.g., '*a new surge of optimism*' (14). The combination of these constructions with verbal pairings *is beginning*, *is sweeping*, *is placing*, *are witnessing* in the present continuous tense emphasises the changes at the time of the address delivery. The predicate construct '*is once again ready to lead*' (16) represents a return to leadership inherent in the American mentality with the help of combination of two constructions: '*is ready to lead*', indicating the commitment to steering people, and '*once again*', denoting repeated actions.

The concept UNITY in terms of citizens' integrity is coded by the construction "*stands united*" construction (11) and the construct "*deliver a message of unity and strength*" (17):

(17) "*I am here tonight to deliver a message of unity and strength*" (Trump, 2017).

As can be seen, the introductions to both State of the Union addresses contain the basic concept UNITY, as the task of every President is to unite the entire nation, regardless of party affiliation or preferences. The basic concept CHANGE from Obama's speech, realised as activity or progress, correlates with the concept RENEWAL in Trump's speech, represented as a return to the basic values of Americans.

In the bodies of the two speeches, these basic concepts are evoked by constructions or their combinations in the form of constructs.

In Obama's speech, the concept UNITY is represented through the creation of organisations, joint actions and integrity of the citizens:

(18) "*That's how we forged a Trans-Pacific Partnership to open markets*" (Obama, 2016).

(19) "[…] *it will only happen if we work together*" (Obama, 2016).

(20) "[…] *democracy does require basic bonds of trust between its citizens*" (Obama, 2016).

(21) "*Voices that help us see ourselves* […] *bound by a common creed*" (Obama, 2016).

In the examples (18-21), the concept UNITY representing joint work is coded by the constructions '*forged a Trans-Pacific Partnership*', which indicates cooperation of the USA with Asian countries by the component *partnership*, and '*work together*' (19). Integrity of Americans is designated by the constructions '*bonds of trust between its citizens*' (20) and '*bound by a common creed*' (21), where the components *bonds* and *bound* underscore the interaction of Americans.

In President Trump's address, the concept UNITY is verbalised as integrity, joint actions and values. With respect to people's integrity, the concept UNITY is represented as a connection between individuals or the indivisibility of the people:

(22) "[…] *the people turned out by the tens of millions, and they were all united*" (Trump, 2017).

(23) "*We are one people, with one destiny*" (Trump, 2017).

(24) "*We all bleed the same blood*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (22), the integrity of Americans is denoted by the '*they were all united*' subject-predicate pairing in the past simple, while the quantitative construction '*tens of millions*' emphasizes the mass of people. The indivisibility of the people as a manifestation of the concept UNITY is expressed by the constructions '*one people*' and '*one destiny*' (23), which indicate the perception of nation and its destiny as an integral entity, and the '*bleed the same blood*' construct (24), underscoring the integrity of all individuals.

From the joint action perspective, the concept UNITY is represented in Trump's address by predicate constructs with the component *together*:

(25) "[…] *thousands of citizens now spoke out together*" (Trump, 2017).

(26) "*Republicans and Democrats can work together*; *Democrats and Republicans should get together and unite*" (Trump, 2017).

As the examples (25-26) suggest, Americans' joint actions are represented as shared communication activity by the construction '*spoke out together*' (25) or as a possibility of a joint activity by the predicate constructions '*can work together*' and '*should get together*' (26).

Shared values as a manifestation of the concept UNITY are represented by three constructs '*share vital security interests*' (27), '*shared interests align*' (28) and '*share the dreams*' (29):

(27) "*It is American leadership based on vital security interests that we share with our allies*" (Trump, 2017).

(28) "*America is willing* […] *to forge new partnerships, where shared interests align*" (Trump, 2017).

(29) "*We just need the courage to share the dreams*" (Trump, 2017).

The three statements above designate the values and security that Americans share with the rest of the world (27, 28) and with each other as a nation (29).

Transformations in the society are represented by the basic concept CHANGE in Obama's address and the concept RENEWAL in Trump's speech.

Obama implements the concept CHANGE in the sections about economy, environment, security and leadership.

In the economy section, the concept CHANGE is coded in terms of employment improvement by constructs with the semantics of making working conditions better, eliminating negative factors, enablement or compulsion to modify employees' activity:

(30) "*More than 14 million new jobs,* […] *an unemployment rate cut in half*" (Obama, 2016).

(31) "[…] *a great education isn't all we need in this new economy*" (Obama, 2016).

(32) "*Americans* […] *may have to retool and they may have to retrain*" (Obama, 2016).

In the examples above, the concept CHANGE concerning the economic sphere is represented by the '*14 million new jobs*' construct (30), which the emergence of new vacancies represented by the '*14 million*' quantitative construction. Constructs with the semantics of reduction reflect the decrease of negative phenomena, namely unemployment, e.g. '*an unemployment rate cut in half*' (30). The concept CHANGE as enablement is denoted by the '*new economy*' construction (31) with the component *new* denoting the appearance of a new object. In addition, the basic concept CHANGE is perceived as compulsion by the modal verb *have to* in the pairings: '*they may have to retool*' (32) and '*they may have to retrain*' (32), implying the necessity for ordinary Americans to transform their professional skills.

In the environment section of Obama's 2016 address, the basic concept CHANGE is represented as compulsion:

(33) "*I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources*" (Obama, 2016).

In the example (33), the construct '*push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources*' renders a compulsion to change the use of oil and coal resources by several constructions it consists of: '*push to change*' designates a compulsion to transform, '*oil and coal resources*' refers to fossil fuels, and the subject-predicate structure '*we manage*' identifies control over them, i.e. the construct.

Constructs in the security section from the perspective of Americans or other nationalities represent the basic concept CHANGE in Obama's speech as improvement, enablement for other countries, and obstacles to societal modifications:

(34) "[…] *our standing around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office*" (Obama, 2016).

(35) "[…] *the international system* […] *is now struggling to keep pace with this new reality*" (Obama, 2016).

(36) "*It's up to us* […] *to help remake that system*" (Obama, 2016).

As the examples above suggest, in Obama's address the concept CHANGE is represented differently in the US and around the world. From the Americans' perspective, this concept is viewed as an improvement for the United States or as development possibilities for other countries. The construct '*our standing around the world is higher*' (34) points to the US reputation enhancement at the international level, which is encoded by the component *higher*, indicating an upward movement (Collins Dictionary). The concept CHANGE as enablement for other participants is denoted by the construct '*help remake that system*' (36) with the component *help* identifying assistance, and the construction '*remake that system*' refers to modification of security measures. From the perspective of other states, the concept CHANGE is represented as an obstacle to transformation of countries into more developed ones, denoted by the '*is now struggling to keep pace with this new reality*' (35) construct with the component *is struggling* denoting the need to make efforts to perform the activity denoted by construction '*keep pace*', reflecting movement, and in combination with the construction '*new reality*' underscoring obstacles to any change.

In the section about the US leadership in the world, the concept CHANGE is represented in Obama's address as a return to the previous state or transformation of the political system:

(37) "[…] *we restored diplomatic relations*" (Obama, 2016).

(38) "*We have to change the system to reflect our better selves*" (Obama, 2016).

(39) "*Changes in our political process – in not just who gets elected, but how they get elected*" (Obama, 2016).

The examples (37-39) illustrate manifestations of the concept CHANGE in Obama's 2016 address. The return to the previous state in relations with Cuba is reflected by the construct '*restored diplomatic relations*' (37), while transformations of the American political system are indicated by the constructs '*changes in our political process*' (39) and '*have to change the system*' (38), with the component *have to* representing compulsion to change political organisation of the country.

In President Trump's 2017 State of the Union address, change as a return to a better state is a manifestation of the concept RENEWAL, which correlates with the concept THREAT, as is believed misfortune and risk precede the revival of various aspects of American life.

In the section about employment, Trump evokes the concept THREAT in terms of disability to work because of the previous administration's obstacles:

(40) "*Ninety-four million Americans are out of the labor force*" (Trump, 2017).

(41) "*Over 43 million people are now living in poverty*" (Trump, 2017).

(42) "*More than 1 in 5 people in their prime working years are not working*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (41), the concept THREAT is portrayed as a container by the construction '*are now living in poverty*', with the preposition *in* locating citizens in a state of privation. In the example (40), the construct '*are out of the labour force*' posits the above-mentioned concept from the perspective of Americans being beyond the work force, and their number is accentuated by the quantitative constructions '*over 43 million people*' and '*ninety-four million Americans*' respectively. The concept THREAT is associated with the unsatisfied physiological need to earn a living by the '*1 in 5 people are not working*' construct (42).

The concept RENEWAL in the section about employment is perceived by Donald Trump as enablement for Americans to work:

(43) "*We have cleared the way for the construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines – thereby creating tens of thousands of jobs*" (Trump, 2017).

(44) "*We have withdrawn the United States from the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership*" (Trump, 2017).

(45) "*I am going to bring back millions of jobs*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (43), the concept RENEWAL is depicted as a removal of an obstacle by the construct '*cleared the way for the construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines*', with the construction '*cleared the way*' designating the removal of a threat, and by the pairing '*withdrew the United States from the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership*' (44), in which the construction '*Trans-Pacific Partnership*' refers to the agreement with international organisations promoted by Barack Obama (18), while the construction '*withdrew the United States*' points to the removal of a barrier for interior job market growth, as a result, the prospect of employment improvement. The construct '*creating tens of thousands of jobs*' (43) verbalises the concept RENEWAL in terms of providing opportunities for Americans and correlates with the construction '*14 million new jobs*' in Obama's speech (30), while the '*bring back millions of jobs*' construction (45) implies a return of vacancies that disappeared before.

In Trump's section about healthcare, missing from Obama's speech, the concept THREAT is viewed as deterioration brought about by the previous administration's healthcare reform, while the concept RENEWAL is perceived as removing the obstacle of Obamacare and protecting Americans:

(46) "*I am also calling on this Congress to repeal and replace Obamacare with reforms that expand choice, increase access, lower costs, and at the same time, provide better Healthcare*" (Trump, 2017).

(47) "*Obamacare is collapsing*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (47), the threat to healthcare is depicted as a rapid downward movement by the pairing '*Obamacare is collapsing*', while the improvement of the situation associated with the concept RENEWAL is evoked by the construction '*repeal and replace Obamacare with reforms*' (46) with the semantics of removing a barrier and the constructions '*expand choice, increase access*', '*lower costs*', '*provide better Healthcare*' (46) denoting enablement for Americans.

In the section about US security, Trump dwells on immigration and terrorism, representing the concept THREAT as an obstacle to American economic growth, and RENEWAL is designated as an enhancement of the life of ordinary Americans:

(48) "[…] *our current immigration system costs America's taxpayers many billions of dollars a year*" (Trump, 2017).

(49) "[…] *real and positive immigration reform is possible, as long as we focus on the following goals: to improve jobs and wages for Americans, to strengthen our nation's security*" (Trump, 2017).

In the example (48), the construct '*costs America's taxpayers many billions of dollars a year*' verbalises the obstacle to American economic growth, which is caused by financial expenses indicated by the component '*many billions of dollars*'. The concept RENEWAL is related to an improvement by the '*real and positive immigration reform*' construction (49), which implies changes in legislation, as well as in the perspective of enhancing the life of ordinary citizens by the '*improve jobs and wages for Americans*' pairing (49), and countering the threat by the '*strengthen our nation's security*' construction (49).

In the section about leadership, the concept RENEWAL correlates with that of UNITY (28):

(28) "*America is willing to find new friends, and to forge new partnerships, where shared interests align*" (Trump, 2017).

In the statement above, the concept RENEWAL is perceived in terms of emergence of new friends denoted by the construction '*find new friends*' and partners '*forge new partnerships*', and the construction '*shared interests*' reflects common values, embodying the concept UNITY.

Discussion. The comparison of the concept UNITY identical in the two State of the Union addresses reveals that both Presidents belonging to the Democratic and Republican Parties perceive it as the integrity of the nation and joint actions of Americans. However, in Obama's address, the concept UNITY is portrayed as the setting up of joint organisations, while Trump views the concept in terms of shared values, which we interpret as an attempt to unite all Americans at the beginning of his term in office by appealing to the principles that make them a nation.

The concept CHANGE in Obama's speech is identical to the concept RENEWAL in Trump's address. In the sections about employment, both Presidents represent transformations in the employment sphere by the '*create jobs*' construction, as the denoted phenomenon is relevant to the target audience, and verbalise the concepts CHANGE and RENEWAL as providing opportunities for Americans. In the security section of Obama's speech, the concept CHANGE is represented as safety improvement for Americans and enablement for other countries, which similar to the implementation of the concept RENEWAL in Trump's address. In addition, the Republican President presents improvements in security as an emergence of new opportunities in the spheres of employment and legislation. In the section about leadership, the concept CHANGE is coded from the perspective of return to the previous state of diplomatic relations with Cuba or the transformation of the political system in the USA that will be required during the next president's term in the address by Barack Obama. Instead, leadership is represented as the creation of new ties with foreign partners referring to two concepts RENEWAL and UNITY in the speech by Donald Trump.

Conclusions. The investigation of two State of the Union addresses, when Democrat Obama was ending his term in office in 2016 and Republican Trump came with a devastating criticism of the previous administration in 2017, show that the basic concepts for both politicians are UNITY and CHANGE / RENEWAL. The concept UNITY is viewed as an integrity of the nation, its joint actions and values. The concept CHANGE in Obama's speech is coded in terms of providing opportunities for the Americans and other countries, returning to the previous state of diplomatic relations with Cuba. The concept THREAT in Trump's speech indicates perilous state of the country and an obstacle to economic growth, whereas the concept RENEWAL embodies danger elimination and the creation of new ties with other countries. The concepts FUTURE and CHOICE dwelled on only in Obama's address, are viewed respectively as an object of attention and an alternative for ordinary citizens.

Further research entails applying the constructional approach to the analysis of other State of Union addresses, as well as establishing basic concepts in inaugurals and ceremonial speeches delivered by politicians.

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence was not used.

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