

**CRITICAL REVIEW**  
on the dissertation  
by Skichko Anastasiia Serhiivna  
«**MOTIVATIONAL PUBLIC SPEECHES: COGNITIVE-DISCURSIVE  
AND COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVES**»,  
submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in the speciality 035 Philology 03 Humanities

**The relevance of the dissertation topic.**

The continuous progress in social, scientific and technological spheres that leads to the changes in the functional loading of language and speech, determines the corresponding changes in the pragmatic aim of various types of texts, motivational speeches as a separate genre of public speaking including. The realisation of emotional and pragmatic potential of such texts while interacting with the audience is facilitated by a set of communicative tactics and techniques, actualized by the interaction of language means within the structural elements of motivational speeches. It is natural therefore that a thorough scientific description of the communicative specificity of such texts requires the application of methodological tools of cognitive-discursive and communicative paradigms alongside the use of special software for the corpus-based research. Under these conditions, the study of the specificities of motivational public speeches by leading British and American politicians and public figures being analysed within the framework of cognitive-discursive and communicative approaches as well as from the gender-specific perspective, acquires a particular significance since the implementation of its findings will allow solving such an urgent issue of international communication practice as increasing the efficiency of decoding explicit and implicit hues of English public speaking. Therefore, without any doubts, the chosen research topic is **relevant**.

**Assessment of the validity of dissertation scientific findings, their reliability and novelty.**

To carry out the comprehensive dissertation research, Anastasiia Skichko has formed reliable theoretical and methodological grounds based on the achievements of Ukrainian and foreign scientists in the spheres of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, functional grammar and appraisal theory (the list of theoretical sources comprises 215 items).

The validity and reliability of the scientific assumptions and conclusions made in the thesis are also substantiated by the ample research material (namely, 20 motivational speeches amounting to 375 pages, delivered in the period from 1986 to 2022 by 20 prominent public figures), as well as by a sufficient choice of the employed methodological tools and research methods, especially a number of innovative methods

used for studying text corpora (Key-Word-In-Context methods and corpus-based analysis using the UAM Corpus Tool), which are explicitly characterised by the author in a separate section of the dissertation.

The overall assessment of the thesis under review gives every reason to infer that the obtained theoretical and empirical findings are of unquestionable scientific novelty, since the dissertation (1) advances a comprehensive classification of motivational speeches from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, appraisal theory, and syntactic analysis taking into account their gender-specific properties; (2) defines a set of lingual, cognitive, discursive, and communicative characteristics of motivational speeches that shape their actualisation in various situations; (3) substantiates a comprehensive methodological framework for analysing the communicative strategy, tactics and techniques of motivational public speeches through such innovative tools as the UAM Corpus Tool and AntConc; (4) puts forward a matrix model for the actualisation of the MOTIVATION concept in motivational public speeches.

This proves that scientific tasks set in the dissertation have been fully completed, while Anastasiia Skichko has mastered the methodology of carrying out scientific research. The scientific assertions put forward in the thesis are sufficiently substantiated. The solution to the research problem raised in the dissertation is based on the theoretically grounded and practically tested methodology that can be further applied for the comprehensive study of any motivational speeches of various pragmatic orientations or on the material of other languages.

### **Assessment of the content of the dissertation, its completeness and compliance with the principles of academic integrity.**

In terms of its content, dissertation by Anastasiia Skichko fully complies with the Higher Education Standard in the specialty 035 Philology and has been performed in accordance with the research areas of the PhD educational and scientific programme “Philology”. The dissertation is a completed scientific work that testifies to the author’s personal contribution to cognitive linguistics, communicative linguistics, pragmatics and corpus linguistics.

Having considered the similarity report based on the analysis of dissertation for textual coincidences, I can conclude that Anastasiia Skichko’s dissertation presents the results of independent research and does not contain any elements of falsification, compilation, plagiarism or borrowing. The ideas, concepts or findings by other authors used in the present thesis are accurately referred to. No violation of the principles of integrity has been registered.

### **Language and style of presenting the research findings.**

The text of the dissertation under review is in line with the requirements of the scientific style of modern standard English. It is properly proofread. The author clearly, logically and convincingly presents the key concepts of the scientific research. Anastasiia Skichko managed to achieve the set objective by solving the tasks put forward in the thesis

and by proving the complex nature of the of English motivational speeches actualisation having substantiated mechanisms of tactics, techniques and language means' interaction.

The dissertation has a logical structure and consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, bibliography and appendices. The total volume of the thesis amounts to 347 pages with the volume of the main text comprising 196 pages.

The Introduction justifies the topic and relevance of the research, defines the objective and tasks, presents the object, subject-matter, research material, methodological framework, scientific novelty, structure, the scope of the study as well as provides an overview of scientific publications on the research topic.

Chapter 1 "Theoretical foundation of linguistic research on motivational speeches" forms theoretical basis for studying motivational speeches as well as substantiates the definition and properties of motivational speeches. While substantiating theoretical foundation of motivational speeches' research, the author (1) conducted an in-depth review of existing approaches to defining motivation and summarised its features from psychological and linguistic points of view; (2) generalised structural features of motivational public speeches and advanced their classification; (3) outlined linguistic characteristics of motivational public speeches as well as defined communicative strategies and tactics typical of motivational public speeches.

The material of the first chapter testifies to the professional level of the author's theoretical thinking, which is confirmed by the rational structuring of a significant amount of information and scientific facts while analysing the problem under study. The notions formed and substantiated in this chapter serve to ensure an adequate description of the results of the practical part of the study of the language means' interaction in motivational speeches.

Chapter 2 "Research methodology of motivational speeches study from cognitive-discursive and communicative perspectives" outlines the research methods applied to motivational speeches study within the framework of cognitive-discursive and communicative aspects.

The value of this chapter lies in a meticulous explanation of methodological steps taken for conducting the empirical study, which provides a logical sequence of the linguistic analysis of motivational speeches in accordance with the up-to-date methods (discourse analysis, transitivity analysis, cognitive-discursive analysis, and emotivity analysis based on appraisal theory) through corpus-based and corpus-driven innovative tools (UAM Corpus Tool and AntConc).

Chapter 3 "Key features of motivational speeches in public: a cognitive linguistic approach" presents the results of the analysis of the motivational speeches' actualisation in a public discourse from a cognitive linguistic standpoint.

The chapter's impact is most evident in advancing the structure of the MOTIVATION concept actualised in motivation speeches as well as in defining the role of conceptual metaphors in conveying motivational messages based on qualitative and quantitative data. Another highlight of this chapter lies in outlining the gender

conditioned actualisation of metaphors and the way they influence the recipients' perception of motivation.

Chapter 4 "Communicative properties of motivational speeches in public discourse" is the summary of the empirical study of motivational speeches' communicative features, conducted with the application of transitivity and appraisal theory methodological tools. The illustrative material in this chapter is notably informative and leaves a favourable impression since it clearly presents a set of tactics, linguistic means and rhetorical devices actualising the communicative strategy of a motivational influence. A thorough presentation of the illustrative material and its in-depth analysis reflect the commendable effort invested by Anastasiia Skichko in the process of preparing and carrying out the empirical research.

Conclusions summarise the main findings of the research, highlight its significance, and outline directions for further inquiry.

Appendices include a list of the author's publications, as well as tables and figures illustrating the results of the analysis and the key points of the study (the main data of the corpus of motivational public speeches, criteria for choice of public speakers, manually annotated speeches within the corpus, the corpus-driven analysis with AntConc, the target domain of the conceptual metaphors within the corpus).

Thus, judging by the dissertation content analysis, it can be concluded that the relevance of the research issue, its methodological and theoretical bases have been properly justified and specified in the thesis under review.

The dissertation is formatted in accordance with the requirements of the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine as of January 12, 2017, No. 40 "On approval of the requirements for the design of a dissertation", approved by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on February 3, 2017, No. 155/30023.

### **Publication of the dissertation findings.**

The research outcomes are presented in 8 publications, 7 of which are featured in specialised Ukrainian journals and 1 in the journal indexed by Web of Science. These publications, amounting to 3 printed sheets of paper, provide a comprehensive view of both theoretical and practical aspects of the thesis. They do not violate the principles of academic integrity. Thus, the scientific results presented in the dissertation are fully reflected in the author's scientific publications.

### **Recommendations and comments on the dissertation.**

While acknowledging the relevance of the chosen topic, the novelty and convincing substantiation of the conclusions as well as the overall high level of general scientific and philological insight presented in Anastasiia Skichko's thesis, I find it important to draw attention to the following disputable points that require some closer examination and further discussion.

1. The question arises as to the feasibility of forming a corpus of 200 public speeches, if only 20 were singled out and analysed. I would also appreciate some clarification regarding the rationale behind the selection criteria for the annotated lexical units serving as the units of the analysis (amounting to 156,192 words (p. 19)), or their characteristics that allowed the author to choose these very words for the analysis (i.e. are these only the notional parts of speech, lexical units denoting motivation, or some other units specifically singled out as the units of the analysis?) as this remains unclear from the text of the dissertation. The next point for clarification is as follows: in the introduction, the author notes “*The UAM Corpus Tool was used to analyze these units of analysis, focusing on **such criteria as motivation, gender, emotions, transitivity, field, and author.** These criteria were chosen for their relevance in investigating motivational public speeches*” (pp. 19-20). At the same time, in conclusions to Chapter 2 (p. 100) it is noted “*The systematically organized corpus considered **speaker, gender, expertise, and date***”. Could you explain whether these are different criteria for selecting lexical items and/or texts for the formation of the illustrative material corpus? Why were these very criteria chosen for consideration? Another question addresses the clarification of the author’s understating of the phrase “emotional patterns” used in the thesis (pp. 70, 75, 82, 100)?

2. For the study, the author selected motivational speeches by public figures from Great Britain and the United States between 1986 and 2022. Is it possible to identify linguo-cultural specificities (British or American) in the language means employed within the communicative strategies and tactics of the studied public speeches addressed at different audiences? Furthermore, is it possible to distinguish consistent tendencies and regularities in the use of conceptual metaphors across these public addresses? If so, can we differentiate culturally shaped stereotypes of motivational speeches in British and American linguo-cultural traditions?

3. As is known, motivational messages are aimed at forming a steady suggestive subliminal effect in the audience through the interaction of lingual and extra-lingual means. In this regard, I believe that a comprehensive study of motivational speeches requires the participation of informants. This will increase objectivity of the research since registering the recipient’s reflection on the motivational message will allow defining those elements of the text that cause instant resonance in the recipient and affect the perception and effectiveness of motivational speeches. Therefore, as a research perspective, I would suggest focusing attention on the study of the cognitive basis of the recipient’s interaction with the motivational text.

4. To enhance the overall understanding of the research findings, it is advisable to include examples of the analysed speeches in the appendices, accompanied by their structural division, classification features, functional domains, and other characteristics defined in the theoretical framework of the thesis.

I believe, the expressed comments are not critical and do not reduce the scientific novelty and practical value of the results obtained in the thesis as well as do not affect its overall positive evaluation.

### **Conclusion on the dissertation.**

The dissertation by Skichko Anastasiia Serhiivna on the topic “Motivational Public Speeches: Cognitive-Discursive and Communicative Perspectives” is performed at a high scientific and methodological level without violating the principles of academic integrity. It is fully completed scientific research, whose theoretical and practical findings serve to solve a scientific problem of high significance for the field of knowledge 03 Humanities. The dissertation research in terms of its relevance, practical value and scientific novelty entirely complies with the requirements of the current legislation of Ukraine, as provided for in paragraphs 6-9 of the “Procedure for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and revocation of the decision of a one-time specialised academic council of a higher education institution, scientific institution to award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy”, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of January 12, 2022, No. 44.

Skichko Anastasiia Serhiivna deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of knowledge 03 Humanities, specialty 035 Philology.

### **Reviewer:**

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