

**The Official Opponent's Review**  
**of the Thesis of Skichko Anastasiia Serhiivna:**  
**“Motivational Public Speeches: Cognitive-Discursive and**  
**Communicative Perspectives”,**  
**submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy degree**  
**035 Philology 03 Humanities**

**Relevance of Research.** The thesis under review represents a broad and multidimensional research focusing on cognitive-discursive and communicative aspects of motivational public speeches, where motivation stands out as a driving force for producing a desired action directed at the target, where reaction is predetermined in part by gender specifics. The thesis aligns with the current focus of scholarly attention of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, functional grammar, neurolinguistics, corpus linguistics as well as psychology, rhetoric, and philosophy. The goal, object and subject matter of the thesis are clearly formulated and grounded on the corpus of 200 diachronic public speeches of prominent American and British male and female personalities who made their contribution in various fields of knowledge and public activity. The multidisciplinary approach to the study is revealed also via the use of UAM Corpus Tool and AntConc to produce a matrix model for the actualization of the *motivation* concept in motivational public discourse.

**Assessment of the Validity of Scientific Results of the Thesis, their Reliability and Novelty.** The methodology of the research is based on a range of general scientific and specialized linguistic methods to establish a theoretical base for the profound empirical outcome.

The scientific novelty of the thesis is outlined via a contribution to the conceptual metaphor theory, particularly to a classification of motivational speeches; the research defines a set of lingual, cognitive, discursive, and communicative characteristics of motivational public discourse; it proposes a matrix model for the actualization of the *motivation* concept in public speeches, which is organized into

twelve domains: *living being, difficulties, purpose, material object, states, cognition, movement, inspiration, life, world, education, and language*. Linguistic categorization covers the actualization of the concept under study at phonetic, lexical, and grammatical levels via cohesion techniques, explicitness techniques, valence-axiology techniques, evaluation techniques, and polarity techniques.

The structure of the given thesis is laid out to comprehensively outline the theoretical aspects of the motivational public speeches, which is compiled into the first chapter. It covers the concept *motivation* in light of linguistics and psychology, structural features, linguistic characteristics, and classification of motivational public speeches as well as communicative strategy and tactics in motivational public speeches. The second chapter highlights research methodology from cognitive-discursive and communicative perspectives where corpus-based and corpus-driven data processing were fundamental in empirical implications with a due emphasis on transitivity and emotivity analyses. Chapter three is focused on descriptive analysis of conceptual metaphors in motivational public speeches, matrix model of the *motivation* concept, and comparative gender analysis of the linguistic texture taking into account the gender approach to the investigation, which simultaneously propels us into questioning if there could be some other bases for grouping the speakers to conduct this research, namely professional, or age-related. Chapter four specifies communicative properties of motivational public speeches from the viewpoint of constructing and intensifying motivational statements with regard to gender perspectives. Some conclusions in the given chapter sound generalized and non-specific though. For instance, on p. 158 the researcher inaccurately concludes that "...male speakers often employ neutral evaluation (34.93%), using neutral process clauses to convey information without revealing their personal attitudes toward specific situations or phenomena in the motivational speeches... Conversely (according to the researcher), female speakers tend to utilize positive (4.66%) and negative (1.91%) clauses...". But if we study Table 4.7 attentively, we will conclude that female speech is also mainly neutral but with somewhat lower percent in



comparison with the male speech due to the use of positive and negative clauses, which definitely deals with inaccurate wording rather than with the mistake made.

A significant scholarly merit of the thesis is that it is based on a broad source base, including both Ukrainian and foreign researchers: Vorobiova O.P., Kalyta A.A., Taranenko L.I., Selivanova O.A., Bednarek M., Halliday M.A.K., Heine B., Johnstone B., Lakoff G. & Johnson M. O'Donnell M. (Corpus Tools), Sullivan J., Van Dijk, T. A. and others.

In Anastasiia's scholarly work, scientifically grounded findings are presented, based on a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of both theoretical material and practical results. It can be stated that the author has successfully achieved the declared objective. The conclusions in the dissertation are clear, well-substantiated, and reflect the outcomes of the research conducted by the doctoral candidate. Therefore, we support the researcher's standpoint that female speakers tend to use ontological metaphors – particularly container metaphors – to highlight themes of identity, inclusion, and self-empowerment, whereas male speakers are more inclined to employ block-building metaphors and personification to emphasize their pursuit of strength, control, and accomplishment. However, this presents a point of contention for various gender equality scholars and feminist initiatives.

The holistic nature of the work is also revealed via the analysis of syntactical, phonetic and stylistic means used by the speakers to appeal to the audience and reach the intended aim depending on the gender: passive voice, deontic modality (female), non-applicable voice, ellipsis, epistemic modality (male) (however, the term 'non-applicable' is doubtful in the context of modern grammar terminology). On the other hand, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme are used by speakers regardless of the gender for rhythmic continuity.

**Assessment of the Content of the Thesis, its Completeness and Compliance with the Principles of Academic Integrity.** Anastasiia Skichko made a scholarly contribution by

- revealing cognitive-discursive properties of motivational public speeches considering the gender aspect;

- defining the structure of the *motivation* concept and constructing its matrix model;
- detecting the communicative techniques that are employed in the framework – the tactic of constructing motivational statement and the tactic of motivational statement intensification, focusing on the gender aspect in participant and process clauses;
- identifying the realization of techniques in motivational public speeches, tracing its realization on phonetic (stylistic), lexical, and grammar levels.

The research conducted by Anastasiia Skichko meets all the requirements for the logical and structural framework of a scholarly work. The obtained scientific results fully correspond to the declared aim and objectives of the dissertation. No violations of academic integrity have been identified. The outcomes of the research have been widely approved at national and international scientific forums. The author's contributions are presented in 7 publications in leading scientific and professional journals of Ukraine and 1 in a foreign peer-reviewed scientific and professional periodical indexed by the Scopus database. We confirm that the publications cover the content of all sections of the study. The number and scope of the publications fully comply with the current requirements for the dissemination of research findings for obtaining the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

**Disputable Provisions and Comments on the Content of the Thesis.** Like any scientific work, Anastasiia Skichko's thesis is a basis for discussion, proposals, and exchange of opinions. Without diminishing the research achievements of the work under scrutiny, we would comment on the following:

- For a more comprehensive understanding of female and male motivational speeches, including their use of conceptual metaphors and linguistic/extralinguistic techniques, the study could also explore similarities in these techniques, not only gender discrepancies stressing the driving force expressed via various means, which leads to the desired outcome of the intended motivation.



- Stylistic means are widely used in motivational public speeches in particular, moreover, metaphor and conceptual metaphor are the units of study of stylistics and cognitive linguistics. Therefore, it could be advantageous for the thesis contextual canvas to highlight the variety and frequency (measured by corpus tools) of other stylistic means used in motivational public discourse.
- Some contradictory statements are depicted in the wording of the text, for instance, on p.66 of the thesis the researcher says "...the focus remains on their leadership, innovation and contributions rather than societal categorization...", but on p. 68 the author argues that the process of collecting empirical materials for the corpus involves several stages including identifying "...the social spheres of public speakers, crucial for multifaceted human development...".
- Some conclusions sound generalized and non-specific and require further clarification, for instance, on p. 142 we find: "...these examples show that female speakers, like their male counterparts, also use the first person to share experiences and insights, although the overall type of communicative techniques might differ".
- An example on p. 189: "*It is an idea, and what an idea it is*" illustrates an emphatic construction rather than inversion. However, both of them can serve as rhetorical devices in a motivational speech, regardless of gender.

**Overall Conclusion.** The general conclusion further reinforces the positive assessment. I affirm that Anastasiia Skichko's scientific work is an original and independent study. It presents scientifically substantiated provisions and demonstrates novelty in its conclusions and practical value. The scientific level of the thesis research is high, and the stated topic is fully covered making this thesis a substantial scientific contribution to the Humanities in general, and to Philology, in particular.

The thesis meets the requirements of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 44 of 12 January 2022 "On the Approval of the Procedure for Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Cancellation of the

Decision of a One-Time Specialized Academic Council of a Higher Education Institution, Scientific Institution on Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy”, and Anastasiia Serhiivna Skichko deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of knowledge: 03 Humanities in the speciality: 035 Philology.

Official opponent:

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor,

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Olha LYNTVAR

