

# Barack Obama's presidential memoranda of 2016: lingual and cultural codes

Yu. I. Denysiuk

Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Army Academy, Department of Foreign Languages and Military Translation  
Corresponding author. E-mail: hotandcold@inbox.ru

Paper received 05.01.17; Accepted for publication 15.01.17.

**Abstract.** Presidential memoranda are viewed as a separate speech genre of presidential discourse. Barack Obama's memoranda of 2016 have made the corpus of research and their linguocultural codes have been singled out. Having conducted the content-analysis of texts belonging to different thematic groups using Tropes (a Natural Language Processing and Semantic Classification software), the author substantiates the existence of specific linguocultural coding of the studied texts. Situational preferences which characterize the combinability of lingual signs in texts of different genres are defined as lingual coding of the genre and linguocultural codes are treated as the repeated combination of the main referent fields of the texts. The following thematic groups have been singled out: 1) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues; 2) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues; 3) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of military issues; 4) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of terrorism issues. Linguocultural codes have been discovered for all thematic groups of memoranda under study, namely: 1) for memoranda dealing with organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues: ADMINISTRATION → SOCIAL GROUP; 2) in the field of foreign policy issues: POLITICS → EAST EUROPE; 3) for memoranda in the field of military issues: FIGHT → WEAPON; 4) for memoranda in the field of fighting terrorism issues: CRIME → PEACE. Verbal means used by the President to implement the discovered codes in his memoranda issued in 2016 have been analyzed.

**Keywords:** presidential discourse, presidential memorandum, Barack Obama, content analysis, linguocultural code, genre, referent field.

**Introduction.** Linguocultural Semiotics (subdivision of semiotic studies which was singled out by N.Andreychuk) [1, p.36], examines the phenomena of culture as the process of constructing messages based on conventional codes or sign systems. Coding of messages is leads the structuring of their original content and its organization in such forms that had been generated by social practices.

Acknowledging the importance of studying regularly repeated formal and semantic characteristics of texts that belong to the same genre, the representatives of contemporary sociolinguistic approach regard these characteristics as background structure and as a means of expressing another deep similarity in the ongoing social activities, that means that genres are studied not merely as types of texts but as common ways of expressing repeated social situations as well [6].

### A brief review of publications

This research is grounded on the linguosemiotic approach to the analysis of speech genre. In the works that deal with the modern researches of discourse as semiosis, the latter is identified with the process of signification and discourse is treated as communicative and cognitive basis of semiotization. It is interpreted as "specific rules of the organization of speech activity and as a way of modeling language forms in speech communication so as to meet the requirements of the communicative situation and its model in human consciousness" [3].

The person enters discursive space with a concrete purpose and in his/her social role (which presupposes the sphere of communication or the type of Social Institute). In particular, the term *institutional* in reference to discourse involves the relationship with social institution as a relative-

ly stable form of social life. Institutional discourse reflects the forms of society organization and its genres are related to the types of social institute. Presidential discourse as a type of institutional discourse is generated by the social institute of the President.

**The article aims** to substantiate that the detection and analysis of the linguocultural codes (LCC) is of special significance for the research of presidential memoranda (PM) as a genre of presidential discourse. The belief that "there is no intelligible discourse without the action of the code" [5, p. 131]. is fundamental for this research. In contemporary discursive paradigm of linguistic research American presidential discourse has not been the subject of a separate study. This subtype of institutional discourse is a vivid reflection of the socio-political life of the United States, as well as features of the national character and national cultural values. Presidential discourse reflects the established system of status and role relations brought to life by of the social institute of the President of the United States [for more details see 2].

The codes organize the signs into meaningful systems and each speech genre has its own set of codes.

In order to detect LCC in the texts of PM of Obama (2016) the method of content analysis is applied. The latter is considered to be a well established method of textual analysis [4, p. 356].

Regarding the content analysis as a research method for objective, systematic and quantitative description of obvious content of communication, it is applied for an objective identification of specific characteristics of Obama's PM. The corpus of research contains 119 PM of Obama published in 2016 [8] (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The quantity of PM of Barack Obama, issued in 2016.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
9	7	18	4	7	10	11	14	19	10	10	-----

Stages of research include: a) singling out the main thematic groups of PM; b) exploring peculiarities of their linguistic-cultural coding.

**Methodology of the study.** To analyze the corpus of texts under study the software Tropes was applied and the latter served to conduct content-analysis of the texts. The program quickly selects the appropriate information, determines the context, identifies themes and identifies the main actors using semantic classification of three levels. Tropes uses semantic metacategories to group words of parts of different parts of speech. This method makes it possible to detect and describe the focus of attention of the individual, groups, social institute or society in general as reflected in communication [7]. Prior to the use of computer technology for content analysis of PM texts, they were divided into four thematic groups. Taking into account the titles and subjects of memoranda: 1) organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues, 2) organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues, 3) organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of military issues, 4) organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of fighting terrorism issues.

Two biggest and almost identical in the amount thematic PM groups are: organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues (51 PM) and organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues (53 PM). The program identifies the following main referent fields in the first PM group: ADMINISTRATION and SOCIAL GROUP. The program determines that the majority of PM of this thematic group contains these reference fields. This allows to claim that LCC of memoranda concerning the organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues is: ADMINISTRATION → SOCIAL GROUP. In different texts

the referent fields are presented by different lexical units. For instance memorandum written by Barack Obama in August 1, 2016 contains referent field SOCIAL GROUP which is made up of lexical units: *secretary, president, secretaries*. It is combined with referent field ADMINISTRATION and made up of lexical units: *White House and treasury*. In this memorandum Barack Obama are hereby delegated to the Secretary of State to protect and preserve international cultural property act to the functions and authorities:

*The White House*

*Office of the Press Secretary*

*For Immediate Release*

*August 01, 2016*

*Presidential Memorandum - Delegation of Functions and Authorities under the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act*

*August 1, 2016*

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

**SUBJECT:** *Delegation of Functions and Authorities under the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act*

*By the authority vested in me as **President** by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, the functions and authorities conferred upon the **President** by the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act ( Public Law 114-151, 130 Stat. 369) are hereby delegated to the **Secretary of State**. In the performance of such functions, the **Secretary of State** shall consult the **Secretaries of Homeland Security and the Treasury**, and the heads of other departments and agencies, as appropriate.*

*You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.*

**BARACK OBAMA** [8].

The lexical units which populate referent fields of all memoranda of this thematic group are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2..** Lexical units making up the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues

The name of referent field	ADMINISTRATION	SOCIAL GROUP
Lexical units	<i>White House, Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, Executive Departments, officials, Department of Agriculture, federal, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of the Interior, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, Department of veteran affairs, administration, Federal trade commission, Social security administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Energy, external affairs, Federal department, Department of Justice, Department of Commerce, Environmental protection agency, Food and Drug administration, National Institutes of Health, NIH</i>	<i>Secretary, president, civilian employees, employees, director, officers, associate directors, chairperson, chairman, veterans, leadership</i>

The second thematic group of the studied memoranda is organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues. 56 PM concerning these issues were published in 2016. Reference fields: POLITICS and EAST EUROPE. The program indicates that the majority of PM of that thematic group displays the connection of these reference fields. This testifies to the fact that LCC memoranda in the field of foreign policy issues is POLITICS → EAST EUROPE. For instance, in March 2, 2016 it was written two memoranda and they were concerning Ukraine. The main referent fields are POLITICS

and EAST EUROPE. Referent field POLITICS opens: *government, foreign policy, congress*. Referent field EAST EUROPE made of: *Ukraine, Crimea*. In this memorandum Barack Obama supports democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine and authorizes the Secretary of State to assist in ensuring the stability, sovereignty, territorial integrity and continuation of sanctions against Russian Federation in connection with the annexation of the Crimea and the use of force against Ukraine. The second memorandum which was written on the same day contains, the main referent fields: POLITICS and EAST EUROPE. This memoran-

dum is the continuation of the previous one. Referent field EAST EUROPE includes: *Ukraine, Crimea, Russian Federation*. Referent field POLITICS made of: *government, foreign policy*. The following example illustrates the verbalization of LCC in text:

*The actions and policies of persons that undermine democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine; threaten its peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and contribute to the misappropriation of its assets, as well as the actions and policies of the Government of the Russian Federation, including its purported annexation of Crimea and its use of force in Ukraine, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 with respect to Ukraine*[8].

The lexical units which made up referent fields of all memoranda of this thematic group are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Lexical units making up the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues

The name of referent field	POLITICS	EAST EUROPE
Lexical units	<i>Government, congress, foreign policy, president, elections, secretary of state, embassy, secretary of treasury, senate, house of representatives, democracy, parliament, assembly</i>	<i>Belarus, Belarusian, Crimea, Ukraine, Russian</i>

The next thematic group of PM concerns organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of military issues. 9 PM concerning these issues which were published in 2016 contains referent fields: FIGHT and WEAPON. The program detects that all PM of this thematic group display the repeated unity of these referent fields. Thus LCC of these is FIGHT → WEAPON. The lexical units which belong to referent fields of the memoranda are shown in Table 4. The fourth thematic group is organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of fighting terrorism issues. 6 PM which were published in 2016. Reference fields: PEACE and CRIME.

**Table 4.** Lexical units making up the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of military issues

The name of referent field	FIGHT	WEAPON
Lexical units	<i>War, Armed Forces, missile, cruise missile, insurgents, Navy warships, attacks, Commander in Chief, combat, forces, conflict, hostilities, military personnel, gun, secretary of defense, gun violence, firearms, Department of Defense, officers</i>	<i>Guns, firearms, weapons</i>

The program determines that all of PM of that thematic group displays the connection of referent fields. Thus LCC memoranda concerning the organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of fighting terrorism issues is PEACE → CRIME. The lexical units which represent reference fields of these memoranda are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Lexical units making up the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of fighting terrorism

The name of referent field	CRIME	PEACE
Lexical units	<i>terrorism, terrorists</i>	<i>Peace</i>

### Conclusions

Presidential memoranda are defined as a repetitive functional-semantic unity of the organized system of signs which are generated by the social institute of the President. Due to explicit instructions and the nature of content of PM, four thematic groups of memoranda of Barack Obama are singled out: 1) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues; 2) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of foreign policy issues; 3) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of military issues; 4) Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of terrorism issues. Each group acquired its separate linguocultural code: 1) for memoranda dealing with organizational maintenance of the Presidential Apparatus activities in the field of home policy issues: ADMINISTRATION → SOCIAL GROUP; 2) in the field of foreign policy issues: POLITICS → EAST EUROPE; 3) for memoranda in the field of military issues: FIGHT → WEAPON; 4) for memoranda in the field of fighting terrorism issues: CRIME → PEACE.

### REFERENCE

1. Андрейчук Н. І. Життєвий світ англійця кінця XV – початку XVII століть у вимірі інституційного дискурсу (лінгвосеміотичний аналіз): автореф. дис. докт. філол. наук: спец. 10.02.04 «Германські мови» / Андрейчук Надія Іванівна. – Одеса, 2013. – 36 с.]
2. Денисюк Ю.І. Жанрова палітра американського президентського дискурсу / Ю. І. Денисюк // Видавництво Науковий вісник Східноєвропейського національного університету імені Лесі Українки. Сер.: Філологічні науки. – 2016. – №16. – С. 96 – 102.
3. Ильин И. П. Дискурс / И. П. Ильин // Терминология современного зарубежного литературоведения (страны зарубежной Европы и США): справочник / ИНИОН РАН. – М., 1992. – Вып. 1 : «Новая критика», структурализм, рецептивная эстетика, нарратология, деконструктивизм. – С. 49 – 50.
4. Титчер С. Методы анализа текста и дискурса : пер. с англ. / Титчер С., Мейер М., Водак Р., Веттер Е. – X. : Гуманитарный центр, 2009. – 356 с.
5. Hall S. Encoding / decoding / Stuart Hall // Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972 – 79 / Ed. Stuart Hall et al. – London: Hutchinson, 1980. – P. 128 – 138.
6. Miller C. R. Genre as social action / C. R. Miller // Quaterly Journal of Speech. – 1984. – Vol. 70. – P. 151 – 167.
7. www.semantic-knowledge.com
8. https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/constitution

#### REFERENCE

1. Andreychuk N. I. Zhyttievyy svit anhliytisia kintsia XV – pochatku XVII stolit' u vymiri instytutsiynoho dyskursu (linhvo-semiotychnyy analiz) [Life world of an Englishman of late XV - early XVII centuries in terms of institutional discourse (linguosemiotical analysis): avtoref. dys. dokt. filol. nauk : spets. 10.02.04 «Hermans'ki movy» / Andreychuk Nadiya Ivanivna. – Odesa, 2013. – 36 s.
2. Denysyuk Yu.I. Zhanrova palitra amerykans'koho prezidents'koho dyskursu [Genre palette of American presidential discourse] / Yu. I. Denysyuk. – Naukovyy visnyk Skhidnoyevropeys'koho natsional'noho universytetu imeni Lesi Ukrayinky. Ser.: Filolohichni nauky. – 2016. – 16. – S. 96 – 102.
3. Ilin I. P. Diskurs / I. P. Ilin // Terminologiya sovremennoho zarubezhnogo literaturovedeniya (strany zarubezhnoy Yevropy i SShA) [The terminology of modern literary criticism abroad (foreign countries of Europe and the United States)] : spravochnik / INION RAN. – M., 1992. – Vyip. 1 : «Novaya kritika», strukturalizm, retseptivnaya estetika, narratologiya, dekonstruktivizm. – S. 49 – 50.
4. Titcher S. Metody analiza teksta i diskursa [Methods of analysis of text and discourse] : per. s angl. / Titcher S., Meyer M., Vodak R., Vetter E. – H. : Gumanitarnyy tsentr, 2009. – 356 s

#### Президентские меморандумы Барака Обамы 2016 г.: лингвокультурные кодирования

. . Денисюк

**Аннотация.** Президентские меморандумы рассматриваются как отдельный речевой жанр президентского дискурса. Меморандумы Барака Обамы 2016 года составили материал для исследований, в которых были выделены их лингвокультурные коды. Проведя контент-анализ текстов, относящихся к различным тематическим группам с использованием програму Tropes (программное обеспечение для обработки естественного языка и его семантической классификации), автор обосновывает существование специфического лингвокультурного кодирования изучаемых текстов. Ситуативные предпочтения, которые характеризуют сочетаемость языковых знаков в текстах разных жанров, определяются как лингвистическое кодирование жанра, а лингвокультурные коды рассматриваются как повторное сочетание основных референтных полей текстов. Следующие тематические группы были выделены: 1) деятельность президентского аппарата в области вопросов внутренней политики; 2) деятельность президентского аппарата в области вопросов внешней политики; 3) деятельность президентского аппарата в области военных вопросов; 4) деятельность президентского аппарата в области проблем терроризма. Лингвокультурные коды характерны для всех тематических групп меморандумов в рамках исследования, а именно для меморандумов, касающихся организационного обеспечения деятельности президентского аппарата: 1) в области вопросов внутренней политики: ADMINISTRATION → SOCIAL GROUP; 2) в области вопросов внешней политики: POLITICS → EAST EUROPE; 3) для меморандумов в области военных вопросов: FIGHT → WEAPON; 4) для меморандумов в области вопросов борьбы с терроризмом: CRIME → PEACE. Проведен анализ вербальных средств, используемых президентом для реализации обнаруженных кодов в своих меморандумах, изданных в 2016 году.

**Ключевые слова:** президентский дискурс, президентский меморандум, Барак Обама, контент-анализ, лингвокультурный код, жанр, референтное поле.