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# Коммуникативные стратегии «Бык» и «Медведь» в риторике кандидатов в президенты США

Целью данной статьи является введение в научный оборот коммуникативистики понятия «стратегия быка (bull) и медведя (bear)» на примере американского электорального дискурса. Подобная метафоричность прослеживается в английской бизнес-терминологии и встречается, например, в понятиях *bull market* и *bear market*. В основе стратегии быка лежит тактика неприемлемости самокритики, тогда как при реализации стратегии медведя говорящий делает все возможное, чтобы дискредитировать своего оппонента. В работе на целом ряде примеров демонстрируется набор тактик, сопровождающий каждую из стратегий, и предпринимается попытка выявить наиболее продуктивные стороны каждой из них. Действенность стратегий доказывается путем анализа дебатных выступлений Дж.Буша-мл., Д. Трампа и их противников. Сравнение эффективности данных коммуникативных стратегий позволяет постулировать, что они обе являются определяющими для конфронтационного дискурса дебатов.

**Ключевые слова:** коммуникативные стратегии, коммуникативная стратегия быка и медведя, американский электоральный дискурс, президентские дебаты в США, дискурсивная конфронтация, агональность.

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# The Bull and Bear Communicative Strategies in the US presidential campaign rhetoric

This article seeks to introduce *bull* and *bear* communicative strategies in the US election discourse. The coinage is derived from the popular images of bull and bear in the economic terms 'bull market' and 'bear market'. The bull strategy focuses on positive self-presentation, while the bear strategy is aimed at negative other-presentation. Research into US presidential debates shows that most frequent communicative strategies aim either to create and reinforce the politician's positive image or to discredit his or her opponent and ruin their chances to win. Which of the strategies stands to be more efficient is yet a matter of argument; however it is vividly shown that these strategies provide the perfect breeding ground for discursive confrontation.

**Key words:** communicative strategies, bull and bear strategies, US election discourse, US presidential debates, discursive confrontation.

## 1. Introduction

In terms of pragmalinguistics, presidential election debates can be primarily considered as a verbal confrontation between candidates seeking to win or hold power. Confrontation, or agonism, plays a leading role in political discourse, as it is directly connected with the quest for power. The word "agonism" originates from Greek *agon* meaning "contest", a struggle between two contenders. As a political theory, agonism emphasizes the importance of dispute, disagreement and conflict to political discourse. It represents "victory through forfeit or default, or over an unworthy opponent, which comes up short compared to a defeat at the hands of a worthy opponent – a defeat that still brings honor" [Chambers, 2001]. Confrontation focuses

on the intention to win. Its main goal is to achieve superiority, domination in interpersonal relationships or even to achieve election victory. Of special interest for researchers are communication tactics and strategies pursued by contenders. Examples of strategies and tactics in electoral discourse are plentiful. Each is somewhat unique as rivals are unpredictable in their communicative behavior.

The article examines communicative strategies and tactics pursued by George W. Bush, Al Gore and John Kerry during the presidential debates of 2000 and 2004. The research material includes The First Gore-Bush Presidential Debates (October 3, 2000), The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debates (October 11, 2000), The Third Gore-Bush Presidential Debates (October 17, 2000), The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debates (September 30, 2004), The Second Bush-Kerry Presidential Debates (October 8, 2004), The Third Bush-Kerry Presidential Debates (October 13, 2004). Special emphasis is laid on efficient use of communicative strategies in the presidential debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016 (September 27; October 10, 20) [Debate Transcripts].

The topicality of the article is determined by the growing significance of political communication in modern society. Politicians greatly influence the electorate through unique political language, the prime means of mass manipulation. Therefore, it is important to study communicative strategies and tactics of political discourse to better understand linguistic profiles of politicians, including their beliefs and intentions.

This paper examines various approaches to strategies and tactics with the intent to find self-explanatory names of recurrent strategies in political debates. We argue that the images of bull and bear most precisely reflect the confrontational nature of political discourse.

## 2. Strategy and tactic

Originally, the word 'strategy' was borrowed from military parlance, where it means "the science and art of military command as applied to the overall planning and conduct of warfare" [https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=strategy]. Today dictionaries provide two definitions of the word:

1) "a plan or method for achieving something, especially over a long period of time";

2) "the skill of planning how to achieve something, especially in war or business" [https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/strategy].

The semantics of the word 'strategy' implies the process of planning and achieving something. van Dijk distinguishes between 'plan' and 'strategy',

saying that "whereas a plan is a global concept of the macroaction and its final result or goal, a strategy is a global representation of the means of reaching that goal" [van Dijk, 1983, p. 65]. 'Strategy' is a wider notion than 'plan' as it includes certain moves to achieve a goal. This term is used not only in military science but also "in political science, economics, and other disciplines involved with complex goal-directed actions" [Ibid, p. 62].

The word 'strategy' has long been exploited by political discourse analysts as it means the art of leadership in the social and political struggle [Issers, 2017], and action-planning in the process of social and political confrontation.

In Russian psycholinguistics and pragmalinguistics, 'strategy' is a communicative behavior with language means predetermined by the speaker's intention, it is a chain of decisions made by the speaker and realized first and foremost through discursive practices. The term 'strategy' (or 'communication strategy') in this paper is conceived of as a set of discursive practices designed to achieve the speaker's intentions. Pursuing a strategy involves the planning of a communication process with regard to steps for implementing this plan, a communication setting, the speaker's profiling, and the like.

In political communication 'strategy' is a manipulatory process, and "the means employed to attain a certain end, in a way in which one seeks to have advantage over others" [Foucault, 1982, p. 793] or "an accurate and intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim" [Wodak, 2003, p. 386] can be considered as its tactics.

The Macmillan dictionary defines 'tactic' as "a particular method or plan for achieving something" [https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/tactic].

If the strategy expresses the speaker's communicative intent, the tactic is a specific communicative move during the implementation of a strategy which is aimed at a communicative goal being achieved at the moment of speaking [Malysheva, 2009]. Issers compares a strategy and a tactic in political science with a genus and a species in biology [Issers, 2017]. A communication strategy can be realized through a number of tactics.

## 3. Two approaches to strategies and tactics

Considerable research has been conducted in recent years on communication strategies and tactics. Research approaches differ, with some linguists making detailed classifications based on various criteria and others, seeking precision, creating dichotomies.

Strategies can be classified in terms of their global purpose or function [Ibid]. Strategies can define the speaker's goal, help to make an impact on the voter, facilitate interaction with the public, monitor the message and

initiative over the course of communication with the opponent or the audience, or personalize and dramatize political discourse. Issers divides strategies into semantic, pragmatic, dialogic, and rhetorical [Issers, 2017].

Parshina classifies strategies and tactics according to the goal of political communication. A politician normally wants to encourage the voter to vote for him/her or his/her party, persuade the opponent to accept his/her point of view, build up his/her own positive image, create and sustain a desired emotional atmosphere, influence the voter in many respects [Parshina, 2011].

Parshina distinguishes between self-presentation, persuasion, power race, and power retention strategies [Ibid].

Bozhenkova et al. argues that strategies can be classified into integrative and disintegrative according to "endeavours communicants make to cooperate with each other". Six integrative and five disintegrative strategies can be identified with 27 and 28 tactics for each cluster respectively [Bozhenkova et al., 2017, p. 276].

Researchers [Sheigal, 2000; Malysheva, 2009] argue that strategies can be considered in terms of confrontation between the us-group and them-group. The actors of political communication are *we* – the speaker, *us* – the voter, – and *them* – the speaker's opponent. Three strategies therefore can be identified with either of these actors as a primary focus – orientation, integration and confrontation strategies [See Malysheva, 2009]. Orientation points out the politician's views and beliefs, integration aims at uniting and winning over the voter, and confrontation seeks to discredit the opponent. Apparently, each strategy presupposes a wide range of tactics.

Insofar as the political discourse [Chilton, 2004, p. 22] tends to divide reality into two opposite categories – 'us' and 'them', some researchers distinguish between two opposite strategies. Sheigal says that any discourse can be manifested through the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative presentation of others [Sheigal, 2004].

According to van Dijk, positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation manifested through "emphasizing our good things, emphasizing their bad things, de-emphasizing our bad things and de-emphasizing their good things" are two main discursive strategies [van Dijk, 2006, p. 734].

Wodak contends that "the discursive construction of 'us' and 'them' is the basic fundamentals of discourses of identity and difference" that employ discursive strategies of positive self and negative other presentation [Wodak, 2001, p. 73].

According to Chilton, there are strategies of legitimization (of the self) and delegitimization (of the other). He argues that "delegitimization can manifest itself in acts of negative other-presentation, acts of blaming, scapegoating, marginalizing, excluding, attacking the moral character of some individual

or group, attacking the communicative cooperation of the other, attacking the rationality and sanity of the other, while legitimization, usually oriented to the self, includes positive self-presentation, manifesting itself in acts of self-praise, self-apology, self-explanation, self-justification, self-identification as a source of authority, reason, vision and sanity, where the self is either an individual or the group with which an individual identifies or wishes to identify" [Chilton, 2004, p. 47].

This paper adopts a dichotomous approach to discursive strategies research, proposing to figuratively call commonplace confrontation strategies as a bull strategy and a bear strategy. Drawing on the images of 'bull' and 'bear', we mean to stress how these animals normally attack their victims: a bull drives its horns up into the air, while a bear swipes its paws downward upon its prey. The bull strategy aims at positive self-presentation, while the bear strategy, or negative other-presentation, seeks to undermine the opponent's authority as is the case with the bear seeking to take his enemy down to the ground. The choice of tactics for these two strategies is predetermined by the goals being pursued, positive self-presentation or negative other-presentation.

As is known, economic discourse and political discourse, which are no less confrontational in essence, too exploit the dichotomy bull/bear in the meaning of positive/negative. Suffice it to give a few telling examples.

"There is a widespread belief both by investors, policy makers and academics that low frequency trends do exist in the stock market. Traditionally these *positive* and *negative* low frequency trends have been labelled as *bull* and *bear* markets respectively" [Maheu et al., 2010, p. 2].

"We propose that the most suitable definition of market states should be one which results in considerable differences in the average returns during the different types of market, i.e. the average return in *positive* (defined as "*bull*") states should be higher than that *negative* (defined as "*bear*") states" [Gwilym et al., 2012, p. 7–8].

"If the mean return is *positive* (*negative*), the market status is *bull* (*bear*)" [Nyberg, 2013, p. 5–6].

An analysis into a bunch of classifications of communicative tactics provided in Mikhalyova's *Political Discourse*: *the Specificity of Manipulative Influence* enables us to conclude that the bull strategy can be manifested through the tactics of cooperation, self-presentation, a recipient's value orientation and a positive evaluation of the current situation, while the bear strategy is best revealed in tactics of accusation and a negative evaluation of the current situation.

US presidential debates are a good example of how these strategies and tactics can be pursued in political confrontation.

## The bull strategy

*Cooperation*

Cooperation means merging to the us-group. A search for supporters focuses on creating a sense of unity and is realized through the use of such address forms as *folks*, *America*, *my fellow Americans*, *the United States of America.*

*It's time for our nation to come together and do what's right for the people*, *and I think this is right for the people.* (Bush, 2000)

*We're America*, *and we believe in our future and we know we have the ability to shape our future.* (Gore, 2000)

*But again*, *I repeat to my fellow citizens*, *the best way to protection is to stay on the offense.* (Bush, 2004)

*This is in our country*, *folks*, *the United States of America.* (Kerry, 2004)

*The fact is that my health-care plan*, *America*, *is very simple.* (Kerry, 2004)

*Self-presentation*

As the name suggests, a self-presentation tactic is aimed at creating a positive image of the speaker. It is a way to focus on their positive qualities through highlighting their social status or their moral character.

*And I've been the chief executive officer of the second biggest state in the union. I have a proud record of working with both Republicans and Democrats*, *which is what our nation needs.* (Bush, 2000)

*I've been the governor of a big state. I think one of the hallmarks of my relationship in Austin*, *Texas*, *is that I've had the capacity to work with both Republicans and Democrats. I think that's an important part of leadership.* (Bush, 2000)

*I've been a leader. I've been a person who has to set a clear vision and convince people to follow*. (Bush, 2000)

I've been a person that has been called a *uniter*, not a divider, because *I accept other peoples' points of view*. (Bush, 2000)

I can just tell you, *I'm a person who respects other people*. (Bush, 2000)

*The recipient's value orientation*

The recipient's value orientation is a powerful instrument to address the voter's values in order to attract his/her attention and manipulate them.

*There's a larger law. Love your neighbor like you would like to be loved yourself. And that's where our society must head if we're going to be a peaceful and prosperous society.* (Bush, 2000)

*I see a future when the world is at peace*, *with the United States of America promoting the values of democracy and human rights and freedom all around the world*. (Gore, 2000)

*So I really don't think so. I hope you don't think that. I mean*, **because I think whoever is the President must guard your liberties**, **must not erode your rights in America**. (Bush, 2004)

*What I'm saying is*, *is that as we* **promote life and promote a culture of life**, *surely there are ways we can work together to reduce the number of abortions.* (Bush, 2004)

### Positive tactic

A positive tactic implies a positive analysis of the current situation which celebrates the results of the policy being pursued and importance of actions being taken, which all implicitly works for the speaker's positive self-presentation. It may be called a show-off tactic.

*I think most of the* **economic growth** *that has taken place* **is a result of ingenuity and hard work and entrepreneurship**, *and that's the role of government to encourage that.* (Bush, 2000)

**We pay 4.7 billion**. *<…> We're doing it faster than any other state our size*, *comparable state.* **We're making really good progress. And our state cares a lot about our children.** (Bush, 2000)

**The quality of the air is cleaner** *since I've been the president of the United States. And we'll continue to spend money on research and development.* (Bush, 2004)

**Added 1.9 million new jobs over the past 13 months. The farm income in America is high. Small businesses are flourishing. Home ownership rate is at an all-time high in America.** (Bush, 2004)

## The bear strategy

### Accusation

An accusation tactic helps politicians build a negative image of their opponents in order to discredit them by blaming them for broken promises and failure to meet commitments.

*Let me tell you about one of the governor's. He has promised a trillion dollars out of the Social Security Trust Fund for young working adults to invest and save on their own. But he's promised seniors that their Social Security benefits will not be cut, and he's promised the same trillion dollars to them. So this is a show me state. Reminds me of the line from the movie*, "*Show me the money.*" **Which one of those promises will you keep**, **and which will you break**, **Governor?** (Gore, 2000)

*I think what is misleading is to say you can lead and succeed in Iraq if you keep changing your positions on this war. And he* [*Kerry*] *has. As the* **politics change**, **his positions change. And that's not how a commander in chief acts**. (Bush, 2004)

*Ladies and gentlemen*, **he gave you a speech and told you he'd plan carefully**, **take every precaution**, **take our allies with us**. **He didn't. He broke his word.** (Kerry, 2004)

**This is a president who hasn't met with the Black Congressional Caucus. This is a president who has not met with the civil rights leadership of our country.** *If a president doesn't reach out and bring people in and be inclusive, then how are we going to get over those barriers?* (Kerry, 2004)

*Negative tactic*

A negative tactic implies pinpointing problems in the country and exposing negative aftermaths of political actions undertaken by various agencies and actors in order to undermine their authority. It is meant to show disapproval. The speaker acts as if he were either a panic-monger or an attorney for the prosecution, hence the tactic can be called panic-mongering or prosecutorial.

*Look*, *this is* ***a funding crisis all around the country***. (Gore, 2000)

*I think one of the big issues here that doesn't get nearly enough attention is the issue of corruption.* ***It's an enormous problem and corruption in official agencies***, ***like militaries and police departments around the world***, ***customs officials***, ***is one of the worst forms of it.*** (Gore, 2000)

***I think that racial profiling is a serious problem.*** *<…> I was surprised at the extent of it. <…> And it's not an easy problem to solve.* (Gore, 2000)

*Look*, ***the world's temperature is going up***, ***weather patterns are changing***, ***storms are getting more violent and unpredictable.*** *What are we going to tell our children?* (Gore, 2000)

*Look*, *95% of our containers coming into this country are not inspected today. When you get on an airplane*, *your bag is X- rayed*, *but the cargo hold isn't X-rayed. Do you feel safer? <…>* ***We have bridges and tunnels that aren't being secured***, ***chemical plants***, ***nuclear plants that aren't secured***, ***hospitals that are overcrowded with their emergency rooms.*** (Kerry, 2004)

## 4. Trump–Clinton Election Debates

A question arises as to which strategy is more efficient. The latest debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton may be of some help.

Although Trump strives to build an image of a prosperous businessman and point out some positive moments in the US economy, it is the bear strategy that prevails in his rhetoric through an accusation tactic and a negative tactic.

1. *Accusation*

Trump accuses Clinton of making empty promises, misappropriation and squander in order to expose and discredit her.

*Typical politician.* ***All talk***, ***no action. Sounds good***, ***doesn't work.** Never going to happen. Our country is suffering because **people like Secretary Clinton have made such bad decisions** in terms of our jobs and in terms of what's going on.* (Trump, 2016)

*The problem is*, *you talk*, *but **you don't get anything done***, ***Hillary**. You don't. Just like when you ran the State Department*, ***$6 billion was missing***. *How do you miss $6 billion? You ran the State Department*, *$6 billion was either stolen. They don't know. It's gone*, *$6 billion.* (Trump, 2016)

*And it's **politicians like Secretary Clinton that have caused this problem**. Our country has tremendous problems. We're a debtor nation. We're a serious debtor nation. And we have a country that needs new roads*, *new tunnels*, *new bridges*, *new airports*, *new schools*, *new hospitals. **And we don't have the money***, ***because it's been squandered on so many of your ideas.*** (Trump, 2016)

2. *Negative tactic*

Trump focuses on the difficult economic situation with employment and health insurance. He lambasts Barack Obama and Bill Clinton by repeating that their policy was a "disaster".

*So **we're losing our good jobs***, *so many of them. <…> So Ford is leaving. You see that*, *their small car division leaving. Thousands of jobs leaving Michigan*, *leaving Ohio. They're all leaving.* (Trump, 2016)

*Look*, *our country is stagnant. **We've lost our jobs. We've lost our businesses.** We're not making things anymore*, *relatively speaking. Our product is pouring in from China*, *pouring in from Vietnam*, *pouring in from all over the world.* (Trump, 2016)

*Obamacare is a disaster. <…> Obamacare will never work. **It's very bad***, ***very bad health insurance***, ***far too expensive***, *and not only expensive for the person that has it, unbelievably expensive for our country.* (Trump, 2016)

*Because NAFTA*, *signed by her husband*, *is perhaps the **greatest disaster trade deal in the history of the world**. Not of this country. It stripped us of manufacturing jobs. We lost our jobs*, *we lost our money*, *we lost our plants. It is a disaster.* (Trump, 2016)

While Trump is well known for his aggressive responses and interruptions of his opponents, Hillary Clinton, on the contrary, largely focuses on creating her positive image. Therefore, she uses a positive tactic, cooperation, and self-presentation tactics, which is to suggest that she resorts to the bull strategy.

1. *Cooperation*

Clinton seeks to create a sense of unity with the citizens through the phrases *we can do together*, *work together*, *stronger together*, *we will all come together*.

*I have a positive and optimistic view of what **we can do together**. That's why the slogan of my campaign is **stronger together**. Because I think if **we work together**, **if** we overcome the divisiveness that sometimes sets Americans against one another and instead we make some big goals and I've set forth some big goals, getting the economy to work for everyone, not just those at the top. <…> If we set those goals and we go together to try to achieve them, there is nothing, in my opinion, America can't do. I hope **we will all come together** in this campaign.* (Clinton, 2016)

2. *Self-presentation*

Clinton accentuates the importance of her position as Secretary of State and her success during her career in public service which is meant to create her positive image.

*When I was **Secretary of State**, we actually increased American exports globally 30 percent. We increased them to China 50 percent. So I **know how to really work to get new jobs and to get exports** that helped to create more new jobs.* (Clinton, 2016)

*So let me talk about my 30 years in public service. I'm very glad to do so. Eight million kids every year have health insurance because when I **was first lady I worked with Democrats and Republicans** to create the children's health insurance program. Hundreds of thousands of kids now have a chance to be adopted because I **worked to change our adoption and foster care system**. After 9/11, I **went to work with Republican mayor**, **governor and president to rebuild New York and to get health care** for our first responders who were suffering because they had run towards danger and gotten sickened by it.* (Clinton, 2016)

3. *Positive tactic*

Equally important for Clinton is to give a positive evaluation of the situation within the country.

*Nine million people – nine million people lost their jobs. Five million people lost their homes. And $13 trillion in family wealth was wiped out. Now, **we have come back from that abyss**. And it has not been easy.* (Clinton, 2016)

***We're making progress.** Our military is assisting in Iraq. And we're hoping that within the year we'll be able to push ISIS out of Iraq and then, you know, really squeeze them in Syria.* (Clinton, 2016)

As a result, it is the bear strategy that secured Trump his victory. Yet one can hardly be certain as to which strategy is more efficient. What is apparent is in presidential debates politicians tend to pursue either the bull strategy or the bear strategy. The outcome of the election depends on the choice of a strategy and tactics that go along with it.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, communication strategy is part of the politician's communicative behavior, it reveals contenders' intentions, while tactics are specific steps to achieve the goal. Politicians pursue two main goals: either to build their positive image or to discredit their opponents; confrontation between them is manifested through the strategies of positive self-presentation (the bull strategy) and negative other-presentation (the bear strategy). US presidential debates show a wide range of tactics including cooperation, self-presentation, the recipient's value orientation, accusation, positive and negative tactics through which these strategies are realized.

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