

MODERN DISCOURSIVE TRENDS IN THE DEBATES OF BRITISH PARLIAMENT

The article defines the roles of foreign and domestic political processes and their manifestation in political discourse through parliamentary debates. The article also reviews the trends in the debates in the Houses of Commons of British Parliament and makes conclusion about general shift in the percentage of discussions in favour of foreign policy and positioning the country as a part of European Union and strategic partner of the Unites States of America.

Keywords: political discourse, parliamentary debates, ideology, mass media, news.

Being a vast field of scientific research, discourse analysis has now developed into an independent and fully fledged field of study which involves several institutional approaches with their own methodological tools. This article will concentrate on one of these numerous areas of discourse domain, viz. political discourse, which presents considerable amount of scientific interest and draws enough scholar attention taking into account recent trends on political map of the world. Widely discussed and significantly important for nowadays establishment, political discourse still remains difficult to define and delimit from converging fields of study. A famous scholar Teun van Dijk presents political discourse and its many genres as a specific example of political action and interaction which may be singled out as a prominent way of 'doing politics' [3]. According to his extended classification, the political domain involves not only such obvious constituents as political actors, events, and encounters, but also, in a wider context, political processes, for example, perestrojka, initiated in the mid-eighties of 20th century by a declining Soviet regime, construction of integration unions (European Union), and military-political blocks (NATO). These integration processes caused by globalization trends and recent political challenges provoke numerous in-state discussions, which in countries with diverse national, cultural and religious backgrounds may lead to deep political crises (like that in Ukraine) and in its ultimate manifestation to civil wars (Syrian confrontation). The same situation inevitably occurs in the sphere of foreign policy making foreign political discourse one the hottest and toughest as it defines the position of the country on the political arena for several decades ahead and bears significant importance for its residents.

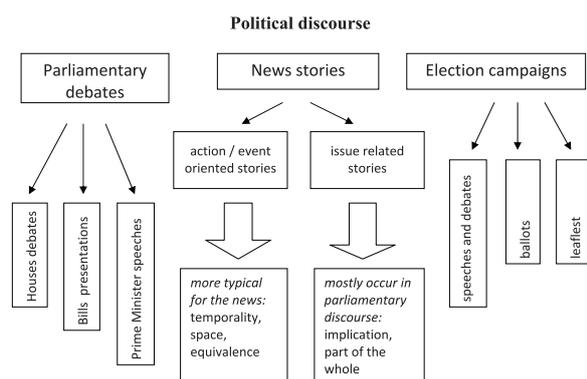
Other vivid spheres of political interaction also include discussions about political systems and

attempts of spreading democracy to the states with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Ideologies, such as liberalism, socialism, and communism, still exert a significant influence on the sphere of political cognition and give rise to numerous in-state and inter-state conflicts always being a stumbling block of debating. Another substantial part of political discourse is presented by political relations, such as power, inequality, hegemony, oppression, terrorism, etc. which remain the top issues in political charts of many countries and often make headlines in world media.

All these make political discourse, on one hand, a form of political action expressed primarily and mostly verbally as the very root of the word *parliament* derives from an Old French verb *parler* which is *to speak*, and on the other hand, a pan of political processes **accessible to general public, which is illustrated by an alternative etymology of the word *parliament* which states that historically it was compounded by two latin words *parium* (equal) and *lamentum* (complaints, laments). This feature is really actual for British parliamentary debates which are usually hotly debated and widely broadcasted via numerous media. Debates in the Houses of Commons presented through Written Ministerial Statements in the Official Journal of the UK Parliament (Hansard) possess three fundamental premises of parliamentary discourse implying that (a) the participants are Members of Parliament and the process is held in the Institution of parliament; (b) it becomes a political act of legislation and policy-making, and (c) the consequences of the debates are defined in a specific terms of policy-making: enacting laws, deciding policies and holding elections [4, p. 21]. According to these features, parliamentary debates can be defined as a unique type of political, PR-, and mass-media discourses, and due to its**

triple nature, pragma-semantic, stylistic and argumentative features of its construction and delivery act as tactics and strategies of communicative influence on the users of Internet as a global means of mass communication [6, p. 54–55]. Moreover, parliamentary discourse acts as an important mechanism of British democracy because the speeches in the Parliament fulfill a variety of roles: they allow government ministers to present and defend new legislation; allow opposition MPs to debate the merits of such legislation; and they also allow any member to raise questions about the current functioning of government, or propose new actions and initiatives [1, p. 1]. This definitely positions parliamentary debates as one of main areas of talks on political arena and extends its role from a purely legislative organ to a powerful tool of influence not only on political actors, but also on numerous audience of interested individuals.

Tentatively and approximately, political discourse and its main constituents, elements and functions may be presented in the following scheme.



One of the most distinctive features of political discourse altogether with other institutional discourses, such as legal, educational or scientific, is that it hardly presents a separate and independent genre, but rather a class of genres defined by a social domain of politics. Although the boundaries of this domain are quite obscure and fuzzy due to impossibility to distinctly define what actually makes ‘politics’, we will depart from a rather simplified definition suggested by T. van Dijk, which, however, perfectly fits the frameworks of this article, who names politics as the discourse of politicians, in other words, the activities politicians are routinely engaged in [4, p. 20]. Some of these conventional domains of politics are presented in the scheme above, with a necessity to mark that variety of these discursive activities cannot be limited to such a small number.

This unique possibility to express social attitudes and beliefs through the Members of Parliament as rather influential figures of political arena makes parliamentary debates the most effective instrument

offering social ideology and shaping political cognition. Thus ideologies organize attitudes of social groups toward relevant social and political issues according to schematically organized opinions about e. g. war and peace, freedom and restrictions, racial policies, welfare programs, etc and act as driving forces for mass movements. Interestingly enough, that quite often they may bear noticeable traits of inconsistency when, for example, speaking about economic freedom and equality, which, however, does not prevent them from discussing on different levels of political comprehension. This can be explained by the fact that each ideology operates not by a firm set of principles but rather a free chosen collection of beliefs which fit the ideological pattern and ensure general support of public.

The most prominent matters for British society traditionally covered in parliamentary hearings are a) Law, Crime and National Securities; b) Europe; c) Defense and Foreign Affairs; d) Environment; e) Health; f) Labour, Employment and Immigration; g) Civil Rights, Minority Issues, Civil Liberties; h) Education; i) Agriculture; j) Economy [1, p. 7]. Let us survey how they are presented in the debating taking into account modern political trends and world challenges.

As has been mentioned before, integration processes make substantial part of parliamentary debates being an urgent need of modern times. The following episode of debates on 10 November 2015 (Example 1) illustrates how Members of Parliament background opposing views on whether and to which extend Britain should be a part of the EU. Using the arguments of labour provision and employment, a MP from Conservative party defends the idea of EU membership. The main message of this debating is emphasizing the responsibility for decision-making on British people:

(1) Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): *Does the Secretary of State agree that the best interests of business will be served by our being a member of a reformed and reforming European Union? That extends to our remaining in the single market. From my right hon. Friend's vantage point as President of the Board of Trade, it is extraordinarily useful that the European Union can negotiate such good strong deals for us globally.*

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and President of the Board of Trade (Sajid Javid): *My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of the need for EU reform, but many businesses believe that the costs of membership currently outweigh the benefits. As the Prime Minister said, in order for us to get the best deal, we must have the referendum and let the British people decide.*

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): *Writing in The Telegraph, the Prime Minister's potential successor as leader of the Tory party, the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), said that the Prime Minister was right "to unsheathe a section of the blade that might soon be used to cut the rope and set Britain free" from the EU. Has the Secretary of State made an assessment of the likely impact on Scottish business of Britain turning its back on its European trading partners, and does he think that is appropriate language from a man of such standing?*

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Similar discussions in Example (2) preceded Scottish Independence Referendum which took place on 18 September 2014 and demonstrated that those who opposed Scottish autonomy outnumbered their opponents only by nearly 10 % and voted 55 % Yes to 45 % No in answering the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?" [5]. This was a triumph of British Unionism, a core part of traditional Conservative ideology, and a convincing victory of David Cameron's policy. Probably, the same proportion can be traced in negotiating the matters of economic and political unions now. This discourse tends to be favourable to British membership in the EU, however, as in previous case, stresses the necessity for British people to decide themselves on their alliance future. Another typical feature of British Parliamentary debates is competition between two leading parties: Conservatives and Laborists. Traditionally, being the defenders of British membership in the EU, the majority of present Conservative members in the Parliament oppose very close economic and political alliance with the rest of united Europe arguing that *the costs of membership currently outweigh the benefits* and even *the Prime Minister was right "to unsheathe a section of the blade that might soon be used to cut the rope and set Britain free" from the EU* (Example 1). As can be seen from Example (2), representatives of opposition Labor Party hotly advocate close economic ties of Great Britain with the rest of Europe. These two examples demonstrate a shift from a strong pro-European position of the Conservatives to a medium emphasizing again on making decision according to the public opinion expressed at the referendum:

(2) The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr David Jones): *The EU remains a vital export market for Wales, together with countries outside the EU, but Wales and the UK would benefit from a renegotiated position within Europe, which is why the Prime Minister has committed to negotiating a new*

settlement in the European Union, to secure jobs and growth and to enable EU to become more competitive, flexible and prosperous.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): *Given that 191,000 jobs in Wales are directly dependent on the EU, that £1 billion came to Wales last year from the EU, and that firms such as Ford in the south and Airbus in the north are committed to maintaining our relationship with the EU, will the Secretary of State join me in saying that the EU is good for Britain? The uncertainty that he is creating should be stopped.*

Mr Jones: *I certainly agree with the right hon. Gentleman that membership of a free trade area is extremely good for Britain. Where I disagree with him, I think, is on the level of intervention and top-down meddlesome interference by the EU. The people of this country clearly want a referendum on Europe and only the Conservative party can and will deliver that referendum.*

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): *What Welsh business leaders want from their political leaders is certainty about our future in the European Union. Why is the Secretary of State so reluctant to say that being a member of the European Union is good for Wales? Is he personally committed to this country's future membership of the European Union?*

Mr Jones: *As I have just made clear to the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson), I believe that membership of a free trade area is extremely important for Britain, but what the people of this country want is a say on whether they should remain part of the sort of Europe we have at the moment. It is interesting that the Labour party is not anxious to deliver a voice to the people of Wales.*

Mode of access: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140514/debtext/140514-0001.htm#14051448000014>

The position of close world cooperation is also expressed by the Minister for Immigration when proving the benefits of international relations of British Universities:

(3) The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): *I agree with my hon. Friend. Of course it is important that students should actually be coming here to be educated. We need to deal with the abuse whereby they are really coming here to work instead of study, which happened all too frequently under the previous Government, but he is right: there is a real benefit to Britain in having those students come here. That is why I am pleased that the latest statistics saw an increase in the number of international students coming to our excellent UK universities.*

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Taking into account labour, trade and employment prerequisites, British membership in the EU is presented in an ambiguous way, however, the vector of British foreign policy is presently definitely inclining to a more pro-European position. The emphasis on political and strategic alliance with the United States promoted by the policy of Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in the early 2000th and involvement into Iraq war was perceived as a turning point of his Cabinet and caused him to lose much of his political support. As it was mentioned by one of the prominent politicians of Labour government, the Leader of the House of Commons (2001–2003) Robin Cook, who resigned in March 2003 in protest at the imminent war in Iraq, “I leave with a deepening apprehension as to whether Tony [Blair] can really get away much longer without making a choice on which side of the Atlantic he sees Britain spending the rest of the century” [2, p. 102]. New political and strategic alliance between Britain and the USA was brought about by recent challenges posed by increasing tension in Syria, invasion of refugees fleeing from Middle East and terroristic attacks on Paris on 13 November 2015. In his weekly address to the House of Commons four days after the attacks, on 17 November 2015, the Prime Minister David Cameron says,

(4) *The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):* *The more we learn about what happened in Paris, the more it justifies the full-spectrum approach that we have discussed before in the House. When we are dealing with radicalised European Muslims, linked to ISIL in Syria and inspired by a poisonous narrative of extremism, we need an approach that covers the full range: military power, counter-terrorism expertise, and defeating the poisonous narrative that is the root cause of this evil. <...> First, we should be clear that this murderous violence requires a strong security response. That means continuing our efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL in Syria and Iraq, and, where necessary, working with our allies to strike against those who pose a direct threat to the safety of British people around the world. <...> That was a result of months of painstaking work in which America and Britain worked hand in glove to stop this vicious murderer. <...> Over Syria we are supporting our allies – the US, France, Jordan and the Gulf countries – with intelligence, surveillance and refuelling.*

Mode of access: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151117/debtext/151117-0001.htm#15111751000004>

As can be seen from the Example (4), the rhetoric of the Prime Minister argues for relying on cross Atlantic relations and viewing the USA as political “ally No 1” for Britain, as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997–2007) proclaimed their

cooperation [2, p. 102]. Although this status has undergone some changes, it remains one of the main vectors of British foreign policy.

Example (5) illustrates British position on climatic issues presented by the Prime Minister David Cameron in his speech to the Parliament on 17 November 2015 before the International Climatic Conference in Paris:

(5) *The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):* *Finally, the G20 also addressed other longer-term threats to global security. In just two weeks’ time, we will gather in Paris to agree a global climate change deal. This time, unlike in Kyoto, it will include the USA and China. Here at this summit, I urged leaders to keep the ambition of limiting global warming by 2050 to less than 2° above pre-industrial levels. Every country needs to put forward its programme for reducing carbon emissions. And, as G20 countries, we also need to do more to provide the financing that is needed to help poorer countries around the world to switch to greener forms of energy and adapt to the effects of climate change.*

Mode of access: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151117/debtext/151117-0001.htm#15111751000004>

Great Britain is a state of traditional and conservative values which is indicated in Example (6). Religious issues become quite hotly debated when speaking about different freedoms, however, the position of state church goes in accordance with traditional values which are proclaimed from main legislative gathering:

(6) *The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Tony Baldry):* *I am quite relieved by that question because I feared that we might have a question about Mrs Bone and, assuming that Mr and Mrs Bone are already married, I was not quite sure how I was going to deal with that. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. So far as the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and many other faith groups are concerned, marriage is a union between one man and one woman. That is a point that we will be putting forward, I hope, responsibly and clearly in the consultation.*

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As can be seen from the presented examples, modern British political discourse in the Houses of Commons, together with other typical traits of parliamentary debates such as passing bills and enacting laws, presently acts as an indicator of domestic and foreign policies. A crucial element of parliamentary discourse is its public nature which greatly contributes to fair policy-making and ensured

democratic accountability. Speeches before parliament are intended not only on political influence, but also can be witnessed by members of the public, and are frequently broadcast on television, radio and the Internet. Recent digitalization of Hansard archives enables to investigate the dynamics, changes and values of the debates in the recent years.

In domestic issues, Britain tends to show the features of traditionally accepted social values: safety of the citizens especially in the wake of recent terroristic attacks, labour distribution and

employment, possibilities of education, impact on the environment, labour migration, flows of refugees and their social protection. In the issues of foreign policy, Great Britain maintains the position of the state with strong democratic traditions which tries to assert its unique position on international arena as a beneficial trade partner and reliable political ally of the USA. The history of this partnership now enters into a new stage taking into account the challenges of modern times.

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СУЧАСНІ ДИСКУРСИВНІ ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ В ДЕБАТАХ БРИТАНСЬКОГО ПАРЛАМЕНТУ

У статті визначено роль і місце дискурс-аналізу як самостійної лінгвістичної дисципліни і виокремлено поняття політичного дискурсу, який визначається як особлива форма політичної дії і взаємодії, а також як основний спосіб ведення політики. Поняття політичного дискурсу включає політичних діячів, події, процеси, ідеології, стосунки і розглядає способи, у які вони взаємодіють. Представлено схему політичного дискурсу, яка наводить здебільшого вербальні способи ведення політики, як-от парламентські дебати, новини, виборчі кампанії. Також визначено роль зовнішніх та внутрішніх політичних процесів і їх вираження в політичному дискурсі через парламентські дебати.

У статті розглянуто особливості парламентського дискурсу взагалі й зокрема визначено основні ціннісні пріоритети в обговореннях британського парламенту та їхні зміни під впливом реалій сьогодення. Відмічено, що найактуальнішою темою парламентських слухань є інтеграційні процеси (членство Великої Британії в Європейському Союзі), захист громадян у зв'язку з підвищенням терористичної загрози (терористична атака на Париж у листопаді 2015 року), стратегічне партнерство зі Сполученими Штатами Америки, в яких Британія традиційно вбачає свого «політичного союзника № 1». На прикладі обговорень у стінах британського парламенту було продемонстровано, що політика правлячої нині Консервативної партії за останній час стала менш інтеграційною й з огляду на переваги і недоліки для пересічного населення Британії спрямована на проведення референдуму щодо членства країни в ЄС, тоді як постійний політичний суперник консерваторів – Лейбористська партія – однозначно виступає за продовження членства в спільноті, аргументуючи це вигодами для бізнесу. Партнерство з США, яке пройшло через багато стадій, нині набуває стратегічного значення в рамках світової боротьби проти тероризму. Іншими пріоритетами парламентських обговорень, що належать до сфери внутрішньої політики, є захист прав людини, екологія, освіта, зайнятість та трудова міграція.

Завдяки аналізу останніх тенденцій у дебатах Палати громад британського парламенту в статті було зроблено висновок про загальне зміщення відсоткового співвідношення дебатів у бік зовнішньополітичних питань і позиціонування країни як частини Європейської Спільноти та стратегічного партнера Сполучених Штатів Америки.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, парламентські дебати, ідеологія, ЗМК, новини.

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