

Review of the master's thesis by Yulia Nikolayevna Gavrytina
“Comparative analysis of political discourse in France and Russia”
450402 “Linguistics”

(St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg State University, 2017. 105 p.)

Ms Gavritina's thesis is devoted to a comparative analysis of the types of political discourse in France and Russia. More precisely, the author sets a task of comparing assessments of the 2015-2017 European migration crisis, reflected, in particular, in speeches of leading French and Russian politicians, as well as in French and Russian media. Speaking even more precisely, Ms Gavrutina analyzes the layer of emotional an evaluated lexis, specific for such speeches and statements. First, I have to say that all the set tasks are solved.

The novelty and interest of Ms Gavritina's research consists, first, in the material of the research, since only modern sources are analyzed, and secondly, only the newest scientific approaches and analytical methods developed in the framework of political linguistics are applied to the analysis. The fact that it is the problems with the migration crisis that are the most obvious stumbling blocks to public opinion in Europe and Russia, around which the relevant political positions are polarized, should also be taken into account.

Thus, there is no doubt that both the topic and methodology of research meet the requirements of relevance and novelty, presented to the master's thesis. I also emphasize that the work is in full conformity with the direction of study – “Linguistics”, and is a demonstrative result of the fundamental training provided in the spirit of the best traditions of the St. Petersburg school of linguistic, always famous for its undivided attention to the history of the language and its latest actualization.

The structure of the research reflects clearly formulated tasks and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a list of references and sources.

In the first chapter of the thesis, entitled “The Formation of Political Linguistics and Its Problems”, an overview of the major milestones in the history of science, the methodology of which is used in the study, is given. I note at once that this chapter, which is predominantly abstract in character, is, in my opinion, somewhat protracted, repetitions are encountered in the text, mainly related to the definition of the basic working concepts: discourse, political discourse, discursive and verbal portrait of a politician, and so on. At the same time, I cannot fail to note some gaps in the reviews of the main theoretical sources of modern political linguistics: in

particular, it is difficult to agree with the fact that the science first appeared with the beginning of the Second World War and the studies of American linguists. Herein, it is enough to recall the classical work of the distinguished French Slavist A. Mazon “Vocabulary of War and Revolution in Russia (1914-1918)”, published in 1920 (russian translation: “Political Linguistics”, 2013. № 3. P. 226-231), as well as other studies on Russian and French languages of Revolutions (see: Selischev A. M. “The Language of the Revolutionary Epoch”, 1928). Finally, I am somewhat bewildered by the lack of references to the leading Russian magazine, especially devoted to political linguistics. Despite the comments made, I believe that the tasks set in the first chapter of the dissertation have been generally solved, and the main conclusions are not objectionable.

The second chapter of the dissertation, is devoted to the peculiarities of political discourse in modern France, and contains the most valuable linguistic material that is accompanied by accurate observations of the author. Of course, we cannot agree with all the interpretations of certain passages, but overall, the chapter presents remarkable experiments of the lingo-stylistic analysis of prominent French politicians. In general, using the traditional scheme of dividing politicians on the left-wing, right-wing, and centrists, Ms Gavryutina strives to outline significant differences in their statements, in some cases she succeeds, in some, not. Indeed, the victory of Macron in the presidential election of 2017 clearly demonstrates that traditional politics cease to work, that the time of the “right” and “left” is in the past, that a new stage of political rhetoric is coming, in which half-forgotten concepts come to the forefront - values relating to French identity, formed from the era of the Revolution: the Nation, the Republic, the unity of spirit, culture and language. Perhaps these keywords are the least likely to “work” on the problem of migrants, seeking in Europe shelter, peace and freedom, but the very fact that they are in demand in political discourse signifies attempts to overcome another “abduction of Europe”, that is threatened by a peaceful invasion of foreign cultures from Asia and Africa. In this respect, the author's observations regarding the tendency toward political correctness in language, which is becoming more and more stringent in the dominant democratic discourse and which in reality is a form of political blindness, are especially valuable. I repeat: neither the experiments of a successful lingo-stylistic analysis, nor the language material presented in the second chapter, raise serious doubts. Nevertheless, I note the rare linguistic roughnesses encountered in the text, especially in translations (for example, it is difficult to agree with the Russian version of the translation of F. Fillon's rhetorically saturated phrase “Je suis heureux d'être avec vous parce que nous avons fait ensemble de grandes réformes, Parce que nous avons fait passer la France au travers de violentes tempêtes, parce que nous avons toujours choisi l'audace contre la prudence, les routes de crêtes contre les chemins de ronde” (p. 30). I also would like to point out the not quite successful sentences (for example:

the book of two famous French journalists about F. Holland, composed of frank interviews with the former president, is attributed to F. Holland himself, p. 69).

The third chapter of the thesis is also very interesting and truly ambitious: in the first section the chapter the author boldly talks about the correlation of such complex concepts as Russia, the West, and Europe, several times referring, however, to a single article from the popular scientific intellectual journal of a pro-Western orientation. In the second section, an analysis of a number of statements by Russian politicians about the migration crisis in Europe is presented. In comparison with the second chapter, the material here is not so winning, because it is sufficiently explored in the modern scientific literature. However, in the text of the chapter there are some controversial judgments, for example, the provision according to which “V.V. Putin rarely quotes works of Russian classics, preferring Russian proverbs and sayings to them”. In contrast to this idea, which has not been confirmed by any reference, it is possible to point out the work of the French philosopher of Russian origin M. Elchaninov “In the head of Vladimir Putin” (2015), in which he studied the main cultural sources of the personal doctrine of the Russian president, and where, in particular, based on the analysis of quotations from the program statements, it is asserted that the beginning of the formation of Putin's ideology is done, on the one hand, by the Slavophile line of Russian thought, and on the other, by conservative-traditionalist line. It is also evident that the head of the Russian state is not alien to the Eurasian ideology, referring in particular to L. Gumilev (see: Michel Eltchaninoff, “Dans la tête de Vladimir Poutine”, Actes Sud, 2015). Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that the main research tasks formulated in this chapter have also been successfully solved.

To summarize, it should be emphasized that Ms Gavryutina demonstrated a deep understanding of the laws of the formation of political discourse and solid knowledge of political linguistics. The comments made are mainly of a discussion nature and do not reduce the level of scientific results obtained by the author. Master's thesis fully meets the requirements that are presented to such kinds of work, and deserves a high grade.

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