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Review Report for HABILITATION THESIS submitted to Pavol Jozef Šafárik
University in Košice
Faculty of Arts
Study branch: 2.1.29 Non-Slavic Languages and Literatures
Department: Department of British and American Studies
Title: “CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MESSAGES IN
AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS”
Candidate: Mgr. Július ROZENFELD, PhD

It was my great pleasure to review the Habilitation thesis “CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MESSAGES IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS”, submitted by Július ROZENFELD. I have had a chance to be introduced to a thorough analysis of modern political discourse presented in the dissertation and to evaluate the work. In the review I provide: 1) general comments; 2) specific comments; and 3) final evaluation statement. My comments and perspectives emerge from my specialization as a cognitive linguist, who holds a professorship in Ukrainian university.

1. General Comments

The focal terrain in the thesis “CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MESSAGES IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS” is the political discourse. Julius Rozenfeld claims that political discourse holds the conflicting interpretations of cultural schemata which are most vividly observed in political speeches and election debates of Republican and Democratic political leaders in 2024. The schemata and categories are viewed as abstract systems of thought revealing a complex relationship between language, culture and thought, and culture is understood as one dominant characteristic of a group whose members share common interpretations and understandings of schemata and categories. From the perspective of this research the definition of culture may also include some chronological reference, so culture may be defined as ‘one dominant characteristic of a group whose members share common interpretations and understandings of schemata and categories *at a*

particular time'. By expanding the definition of culture we underline that cultural conceptualisations (schemata and categories) are not everlasting, but changeable and they are subjected to the political figures' intentions, manipulations and endeavors to create a desired image through political speeches in particular place at particular time. Also, it is worth mentioning, that the influence of culture on cognition can be dynamic, it depends on the accessibility of the cultural schemata to the minds of people and the cultural schemata applicability to the situation.

Noteworthy, a linguocultural analysis of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump's speeches in the US presidential elections in 2024 provides convincing findings about high selectivity of cultural schemas used by two politicians to influence the American voters of the third decade of the XXI century. The list of cultural schemata offered in the research by Julius Rozenfeld is perhaps the strongest aspect of his project. The research also delivers valuable conclusions on different communication styles of the leaders of two opposing political parties.

The plausible points in the dissertation include a rich review of theories discussing a complex relationship between language, culture and thought, a deep insight into the development of different communication models and their relationship with cultural schema theory, and a detailed interpretation of political culture through schemata and categories.

2. Specific Comments

a) The focus on understanding how values and beliefs shape political text is insightful and novel. This area of research proves to be intriguing as modern political interactions take place in an extremely interconnected world, so the ideologies in political texts can either harmonize societies or lead to conflicts. In this research the candidate attempts to trace how cultural schemata encompassing cultural norms, values and cultural practices shape political texts and communication behavior of politicians. The dissertation "CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MESSAGES IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS" addresses the following issues: the relationships between language and thinking, communication models that activate communicative behavior, principles of cultural conceptualisations, framing of political culture through schemata and categories. These questions are successfully tackled in the thesis.

b) The theoretical grounding is vast and convincing. The candidate provides definitions of core terms of the dissertation (culture, conceptualisation, categorisation, cultural schemata, political text, etc) and elaborates his research pattern based on a big array of intercultural, communicative and linguistic theories, namely, frame theory, linguistic relativity, prototype theory and vantage theories, speech act theory. We share the statement in Chapter 1.3., that the relationship

between political text and language is deeply intertwined and language serves as a tool for competition, persuasion and negotiation. At the same time, the perspective to view two politicians not only as representatives of opposing political cultures, but also as language personalities with their individual cultural mindsets manifested in their culture-specific cognitive and communicative styles may reveal and explain more variations in their communicative behavior in terms how they perceive and interpret situations in their characteristic ways, what words they choose to color their feelings and express their intensions.

c)The methods applied in the research are based on critical discourse analysis and the research follows several classical methods of text analysis through pragmatics, semantics and syntax, but they are broadened through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, that enabled the candidate to uncover power dynamics and analyse ideologies in political texts. The candidate using methods for cultural schema analysis and political discourse analysis offers interpretation of cultural schemata and categories in two political speeches and one political debate. The combination of methods of cognitive linguistics, communicative linguistics and cultural studies is impressive. The suggested research methodology and a skilled theoretical overview enabled Julius Rozenfeld to reach the research objectives.

d)The objectives of the research have been achieved through pedantic data analyses. Julius Rozenfeld puts forward several questions (Is there evidence to suggest that contemporary American culture is fragmented? Is it possible to reveal cultural fault lines between the two American political communities using cultural analytical methods? Does existing literature offer analytical models which can clearly identify cultural schemata and their impact on social cohesion?) and provides ample answers in the analytical part of the thesis in Chapters 3.1, 3.2, 3.3., and 3.4. It is proven by the analysis that in political aspect there are “two distinct American cultures, which create and apply fundamentally different cultural schemata and thus result in conflicting communication styles, behaviour and decision-making patterns”. The candidate states that cultural fault lines between two American cultures are marked by cultural schemata which are conflicting, mutually recognised or simply non-existent in one or the other cultural group.

e)The contribution to the further development of science. The research is carried out at the crossroads of cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and cultural studies. The use of methodological tools and theoretical grounds of these scientific branches enabled Julius Rozenfeld to focus on how political culture could be understood through categories and cultural schemata used in political texts. The suggested approach, combining conceptual and cultural analysis with discourse analysis, can be successfully implemented in culture-related studies in the future, for example, cultural schemata and categories in mass-media discourse, etc.

f) Suggested improvements. The research Julius Rozenfeld completed for the Habilitation Thesis was ambitious and it delivered valuable results, but the analytical part was based on a limited material.

3. Final Evaluation Statement. In the view of the above review, the dissertation "CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL MESSAGES IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS", makes a solid contribution to culture and discourse studies. It is especially significant that the thesis shows that methods for cultural schema analysis and political discourse analysis can be used to grasp political culture through schemata and categories. I strongly recommend the conferment of the academic title of Associate Professor in the field 2.1.29 - Non-Slavic Languages and Literatures to Mgr. Julius Rozenfeld. PhD.

The candidate may consider the following questions:

- 1) To what extent does the personality of a politician (personal communication behavior patterns, personal beliefs) influence his/her political discourse as a representative of a certain political culture?
- 2) If it were not an alphabetical arrangement of 46 cultural schemata, what cultural schemata would bring about the most conflicting issues and would be placed top 3?

Yours sincerely,


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