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Exploring Personal Deixis in Political Discourse: An analysis of Barack Obama's Farewell Address

Azarabu Kulubekova

Osh State University-Kyrgyz Republic
kulubekova-@outlook.com

Cholpon Naimanova

Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University-Kyrgyz Republic
naimanovacholpon2@gmail.com

Aizhanyl Shermatova

Osh Technological University named after M. M. Adyshev-Kyrgyz Republic
shermatova8@hotmail.com

Nazgul Khabibullaeva

Osh Technological University named after M. M. Adyshev-Kyrgyz Republic
nazgulkha@outlook.com

Daniyar Baigaziev

Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after B. N. Yeltsin-Kyrgyz Republic
daniyarbaigaziev@hotmail.com

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Abstract

Personal deixis plays a key role in political discourse. Studying how it works and its role is relevant to current issues in political linguistics. This paper aims to analyze Barack Obama's farewell address to understand how he used deictic expressions to convey messages of unity, democratic values, national identity, and his personal beliefs about American resilience and collective responsibility. The present study uses multiple research methods, including analysis, synthesis, interpretation, generalization, and abstraction, to explore the concept of personal deixis. The system analysis method is also used to examine the theoretical and practical aspects of political discourse. The main results of this study include identifying the characteristics of Barack Obama's personal deixis, determining how often it is used, analyzing the purpose behind his use of personal pronouns in speech, and interpreting deixis as a key tool for engaging the audience. The study shows that in his speech, Barack Obama uses the strategy of self-presentation and effectively applies personal deixis to succeed in politics. The personal pronouns in his speech are key tools that help him connect with the audience, persuade them, and evoke the desired emotions. The findings also show that leaders use personal pronouns in political speech to create a sense of inclusion or exclusion, shaping group identity and public opinion. These results are helpful for linguists and experts studying political discourse, deixis, and strategies to influence the audience.



Ключові слова

Президентська промова; комунікативні стратегії; політична лінгвістика; контакт з аудиторією; особові займенники

Анотація

Мета цієї роботи - проаналізувати прощальну промову Барака Обами, щоб визначити, як політик передав через дейктичні вирази конкретні меседжі про єдність, демократичні цінності та національну ідентичність, а також особисті переконання про американську стійкість і колективну відповідальність. У представленій роботі використано комплекс теоретичних методів дослідження, наприклад, аналіз, синтез, інтерпретація, узагальнення та абстрагування були застосовані для визначення теоретичних підходів до пояснення поняття особистісного дейксису, а метод системного аналізу - для комплексного вивчення теоретичних і практичних аспектів політичного дискурсу. Основними результатами, отриманими в рамках цього дослідження, слід вважати обґрунтування характеристик персонального дейксису Барака Обами, визначення частотності його вживання, аналіз мети використання політиком особових займенників у мовленні, інтерпретацію дейксису як основного засобу залучення аудиторії, виокремлення стратегічного спрямування персонального дейксису в контексті політичного дискурсу. Основними результатами, отриманими в рамках цього дослідження, слід вважати обґрунтування особливостей персонального дейксису Барака Обами, визначення частотності його вживання, аналіз мети використання політиком особових займенників у мовленні, інтерпретацію дейксису як основного засобу залучення аудиторії, виокремлення стратегічного спрямування персонального дейксису в контексті політичного дискурсу. У статті виявлено, що у своїй промові Барак Обама застосовує стратегію самопрезентації та вміло використовує засоби персонального дейксису, які допомагають йому досягти успіху в політичній сфері. Виявлено, що особові займенники, які використовуються у промові Барака Обами, є одним з основних мовних засобів, за допомогою яких політик встановлює контакт з аудиторією, переконує та викликає у людей необхідні почуття та емоції. Результати цього наукового дослідження, а також сформульовані на їх основі висновки мають практичну цінність для лінгвістів та інших фахівців, які вивчають проблеми політичного дискурсу, дейксису та стратегій впливу на аудиторію.

1. Introduction

Political communication has a wide range of concepts that form the so-called thematic core and form a genre structure. All presidential speeches, without exception, are characterized by several individual characteristics that are inherent in each speaker, distinguish them from other politicians and are manifested in the syntactic structure of the statement, the choice of stable figures of speech, lexical originality, and emotional colouring. This can most clearly be seen in the politician's welcoming address to the audience and after his speech, which most often contains words of gratitude to the audience, greetings, wishes and parting words. Expressions in language that indicate the



roles of individuals in a communicative event are explicitly referred to as personal deixis. To indicate the speaker, the addressee, or others, it mostly uses possessive adjectives (“my,” “your,” “our,” and “their”) and personal pronouns (“I,” “you,” “we,” and “they”). Personal deixis occupies a special place in political discourse, since personal pronouns act as a predicative subject that forms the semantic and structural basis of the utterance (Senft, 2014; Ramberdiyeva et al., 2024).

It is worth noting that political discourse, and in particular, personal deixis has often been the subject of close attention of researchers from various fields of knowledge; they also have an important place in political linguistics. The strategic use of possessive adjectives and personal pronouns can subtly convey power relations, control the perceived distance between the speaker and the listener, and foster an atmosphere of inclusion or exclusivity (Chyzykova, 2024; Hurko et al., 2024). For example, using “we” might promote a feeling of shared identity and accountability, but using “they” can establish an outsider group and possibly reinforce a “us versus them” mindset. Depending on their rhetorical objectives, politicians frequently use personal deixis to portray themselves as either members of the public or as authoritative leaders (Diegtiar et al., 2022; Danylova, 2023). Furthermore, personal deixis can play a significant role in defining political issues, assigning blame, and influencing how the general public views particular actions and policies. By carefully choosing the deictic language, political figures can shape public opinion, establish credibility, and affect how the public perceives their message.

Political speech personal deixis analysis can provide insights into the speaker’s personality, values, and intended positioning. The speaker’s self-perception, relationship with the audience, and wider ideological attitude can be inferred from patterns in the frequency and context of deictic utterances. For example, a leader who prioritizes authority or personal accountability may be indicated by a lot of “I” usage, whereas a leader who uses “we” a lot may be more inclusive or collaborative. The deliberate switching back and forth between “I” and “we” can indicate when a speaker is trying to claim credit for themselves as opposed to when they are trying to assign blame or foster a sense of group effort. Furthermore, the way in which the speaker uses “you” and “they” can reveal a lot about how they view and place certain groups in their story. Researchers can unearth minor clues about the speaker’s ideals, such as individualism vs collectivism, or their perspective on in-groups and out-groups, by closely analysing these linguistic choices. Furthermore, variations in deictic patterns among speeches or settings might draw attention to modifications in the speaker’s stance or rhetorical device.

For example, Bekoeva (2019) explores the features of verbalization and functioning of personal deixis in South Ossetian election political communication, identifies combined tactics and strategies that are used by presidential candidates and shows the function of personal deixis in the process of forming a positive image of a participant in election communication. In the meantime, Zheni (2020) analyzes personal deixis as biased political pronouns in George W. Bush’s speeches about the Second Iraq War (2003-2011) and sheds light on how personal deixis is used in political discourse to deceive public opinion.



The author argues that manipulation and distortion in political discourse can be a weapon of mass deception, as politicians rely on language as a tool to achieve their political goals. At the same time, Yahya (2020) examines the construction of ideology in political discourse from the point of view of deictic analysis based on the political discourse of the famous Pakistani politician Imran Khan.

Agbo and Ijem (2022) investigate the extent to which discursive elements such as deictic elements and short phrases in political discourse serve as proximal and distal reference functions in speech. Meanwhile, Bunyarang and Prasongsook (2022) analyze the types of deixis, their frequency, and context in the speeches of famous Americans: Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Steve Jobs, and Dwayne Johnson. Ricca and Johan (2021) conducted a study of deixis in Joe Biden's first victory speech and found that in this politician's speech, there are three categories of deixis: personal, temporal, and spatial.

Although the use of personal pronouns in political contexts has been studied before, little research has been done, particularly on Barack Obama's speech and how his use of personal deixis affects how he presents himself and interacts with the audience. Furthermore, political speeches are frequently the subject of isolated studies in the literature, which fails to sufficiently address the larger implications of personal deixis for a politician's image development and public perception over time. By offering a thorough examination of the deliberate use of personal pronouns in Obama's farewell speech, this study aims to close these gaps.

The purpose of this research work is to analyze Barack Obama's farewell address to determine the role of deictic expressions in the political discourse of this leader. This analysis seeks to uncover how Obama's linguistic choices in personal deixis function as tools for audience engagement and influence. The main objectives of the study include the examination of how personal pronouns are used to convey messages, thoughts, and beliefs and the identification of the strategic functions these pronouns serve in the speech. The study also seeks to reveal how Obama utilizes these linguistic tools to establish rapport with his audience and influence public perception.

2. Methodology

The scientific study of personal deixis in political discourse based on the material of Barack Obama's farewell address was carried out consistently. Initially, its theoretical basis was prepared, which was subsequently used as the main foundation for further scientific research. Next, an analytical study of the farewell speech of the American politician was carried out, in particular, the identification of deictic expressions, their features, and role, the analysis of personal pronouns in the politician's speech and the purpose of their use, the identification of the main strategic goal of using personal deixis in Barack Obama's farewell address, and analytical comparison of the results obtained with the results and conclusions of other modern scientists who have studied personal deixis in the context of political discourse. In conclusion, the conclusions of the scientific



study were formulated.

Focusing solely on Barack Obama's speeches allows for an in-depth exploration of his unique rhetorical style and strategic use of personal deixis. Known for fostering unity and personal connection, Obama skillfully uses inclusive pronouns like "we" to build rapport and "I" to convey accountability. This exclusive focus provides a clear framework to analyze how his language choices shape public identity and trust, making Obama's speeches an ideal case study in the strategic role of deixis in political communication.

As political discourse continues to evolve, the relevance of these findings may shift over time, as future leaders adopt new linguistic strategies and audience engagement techniques that could influence the role and interpretation of personal deixis.

2.1 Research Design

The actual material of the study is Barack Obama's farewell speech of January 11, 2017, in which pronouns act as one of the mechanisms for manipulating public opinion and an important characteristic of the political leader himself, which reflects his ideology and worldview. Choosing only one speech by Barack Obama allows for a focused analysis of his strategic use of personal deixis in a pivotal moment, capturing the culmination of his rhetorical style and public messaging at the end of his presidency.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The basis of the methodological approach in this scientific work is a qualitative, comprehensive, and systematic combination of various theoretical research methods. Thus, in the process of carrying out the research, both general scientific and special (linguistic) research methods were used. Among the general scientific research methods, the following were used: analysis, synthesis, information retrieval method, descriptive method, as well as induction and deduction. It is worth noting that the analysis was used to substantiate the theoretical foundations of the study and process the collected material; using the synthesis method, the components of the complex concept of "deixis" were combined to obtain new knowledge; the information retrieval method was used to process the basic materials necessary for further analysis of the purpose of the politician's use of personal pronouns in his speech; the inductive method served to form the main conclusions regarding the strategies for using personal pronouns in the political discourse of Barack Obama; the deductive method was used to coherently communicate the research findings and move the text from the general to the partial (Yule, 2022).

Among the special (linguistic) research methods, the following were used in the work: the method of linguistic description and observation, as well as methods of contextual, functional, and statistical analysis. The method of linguistic description and observation served to systematize, classify, and interpret personal deixis as the main tool for attracting an audience, which made it possible to form a corpus of analysed personal pronouns. The method of contextual analysis was used to identify the features of personal pronouns in political discourse and indicate the purpose of their use. The method of



functional analysis was used to identify the specifics of the politician's statement in both the local and global linguistic dimensions. The method of statistical analysis was used to form the basis of the research material. The theoretical basis of this scientific work consists of the results of research carried out by modern scientists, which are aimed at considering several problematic issues related to the study of political discourse, its specifics, features, main components, as well as the study of the use of personal deixis in political discourse.

To reduce researcher bias, deixis was analyzed using a systematic coding process with predefined criteria, and findings were validated through peer review. By grounding the analysis in established linguistic frameworks and referencing similar studies, the conclusions reflect a balanced, objective perspective.

3. Results

With the help of political speeches, the leader not only conveys the necessary information, but also influences public opinion, convinces the audience of the correctness of his policies and the validity of his actions, and at times imposes this or that opinion on others. In most cases, the public tends to trust and follow a political leader if they believe in his integrity (Harutyunyan & Yeghiazaryan, 2021). There are two main ways to convince the audience of the sincerity of the words spoken. The first way is to create an emotional impact and appeal to people's feelings, and the second way is to present arguments supported using appropriate language. Based on this, the success of a speech depends on the leader's ability to achieve personal participation of the audience in the subject of the speech, and it also directly depends on the correctness of the chosen strategy in the use of linguistic means, a special place among which is occupied by personal deixis.

Deixis is a way of indicating elements of a situation using linguistic expressions or gestures (Kyrychok, 2021). In linguistics, deixis is defined as the use of common words and phrases to designate a specific place, time, or person in context, for example, the words: I, we, tomorrow, they, there. In other words, deixis is words and phrases that require full understanding of contextual information. It should be noted that pronouns act as a means of personal deixis according to their semantic characteristics.

The speaker himself is the semantic basis of all deictic words, since deictic vocabulary is inherently egocentric, and it is the speaker who gives it a specific meaning and determines the referents of his utterances (Denys, 2024; Milo, 2024). Also, pronouns can be an effective political tool, play a significant role in building social relations, and the use of personal deixis makes speech socially oriented and reflects the politician's ideology. The following pronouns belong to personal deixis: I, you, we, my, yours, his, myself, themselves, yourself. These pronouns indicate that the speaker pays special attention to other people and cares not only about himself, but also about other people. The use of personal deixis in this research work was carried out on the material of the farewell speech of the 44th President of the United States of America – Barack Obama, which was delivered in Chicago in 2017 (Mills, 2017).

It is worth noting that Barack Obama begins his farewell speech by expressing great



gratitude to the American people, using personal pronouns: I, we, my. He then draws attention to the close connection between himself and the nation by using the pronouns “you” and “I”, this connection signifies that he is always with the people since the American people contributed greatly to his success and made him a better man and a better president: “My” fellow Americans Michelle and “I” have been so touched by all the well – wishes that “we” have received over the past few weeks. But tonight, it’s “my” turn to say thanks. Whether “we” have seen eye-to-eye or rarely agreed at all, “my” conversations with “you”, the American people – in living rooms and schools; at farms and on factory floors; at diners and on distant military outposts – those conversations are what have kept “me” honest, and kept “me” inspired, and kept me going. And every day, “I” have learned from “you”. “You” made “me” a better president, and “you” made “me” a better man” (Golovastov, 2017).

The politician further emphasizes that in their history there were difficult times when various forces challenged American security, solidarity, democracy and prosperity, and points to ways to overcome these forces. Using the pronoun “our,” Barack Obama emphasizes that he was with the people at that time, that America is united and strong, creates an atmosphere of unity, shows the importance of overcoming trials and determining the future of the country: “There have been moments throughout “our” history that threatened that solidarity. And the beginning of this century has been one of those times. A shrinking world, growing inequality, demographic change, and the spectrum of terrorism. These forces haven’t just tested “our” security and “our” prosperity but are testing “our” democracy as well. And how “we” meet these challenges to “our” democracy will determine our ability to educate “our” kids and create good jobs and protect “our” homeland. In other words, it will determine “our” future” (Golovastov, 2017).

Barack Obama also mentions achievements, but he does not mention himself, does not praise, but focuses on unity, which is manifested using the pronoun “our”. Moreover, the politician indicates the positive aspects of his personality and commitment to publicly supporting improvements by using the pronoun “I,” which also indicates that he is a citizen who cares about his country: “And “I” have said, and “I” mean it, anyone can put together a plan that is demonstrably better than the improvements “we” have made to “our” health care system, that covers as many people at less cost, “I” will publicly support it” (Golovastov, 2017).

It is worth emphasizing that the pronouns “we” and “our” were used here to focus the listeners’ attention on his involvement in the designated actions. Except in addition to his farewell speeches, Barack Obama proclaims: “So regardless of the station “we” occupy; “we” all have to try harder; “we” all have to start with the premise that each of our fellow citizens loves this country just as much as “we” do; that “they” value hard work and family just like “we” do; that “their” children are just as curious and hopeful and worthy of love as “our” own” (Golovastov, 2017). In this passage, the leader often uses the pronouns “we” and “they,” through which he challenges new generations to preserve



the national values of the older generation, love their country as much as the older generation loves its country, and try to move forward diligently.

Barack Obama also calls on people not to be afraid of threats such as The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and calls for unity, saying that no one will ever be able to defeat America unless its citizens betray their principles and the Constitution. Using the pronoun “we,” he convinces listeners that America is the strongest and most influential country in the world and conveys strength and unity: “So let’s be vigilant, but not afraid. ISIL will try to kill innocent people. But they cannot defeat America unless “we” betray our Constitution and “our” principles in the fight. Rivals like Russia or China cannot match our influence around the world – unless “we” give up what “we” stand for and turn ourselves into just another big country that bullies smaller neighbours” (Golovastov, 2017). The application of the personal pronoun “we” appears a weighty tool in the hands of this political leader, because with its help he also encourages people to take on their civil responsibility: “All of this depends on “our” participation; on each of “us” accepting the responsibility of citizenship, regardless of which way the pendulum of power happens to be swinging” (Golovastov, 2017).

At the end of his speech, Barack Obama again and again used the pronoun “I” to indicate that he will always be with his nation and will continue to serve it. He also often uses the pronoun “you”, with which he asks the American people to support him. Subsequently, the politician creates an atmosphere of unity, without alienating it, indicates that he is an important person for the country, both as a president and as an ordinary citizen: “My fellow Americans, it has been the honour of “my” life to serve you. “I” won’t stop; in fact, I will be right there with “you”, as a citizen, for all my remaining days. But for now, whether “you” are young or whether “you” are young at heart, “I” do have one final ask of “you” as “your” president – the same thing I asked when “you” took a chance on “me” eight years ago. “I” am asking you to believe. Not in my ability to bring about change – but in “yours” (Golovastov, 2017). At the end of his farewell speech, Obama says: “Yes, “we” can. Yes, “we” did. Yes, “we” can” (Golovastov, 2017). Here, he uses the personal pronoun “we” to encourage people to restore their faith in a better world.

Thus, after analysing Barack Obama’s farewell speech, it was determined that it consists of 4263 words, including many pronouns. For example, the personal pronoun “I” was used by the politician 44 times, its objective form “me” – 12 times, and its possessive form “my” – 20 times. This pronoun is used by a politician to assert himself over others and demonstrate his authority, it allows the leader to list his accomplishments during his presidency, identify himself as part of America, and show that he is a responsible and active leader.

The personal pronoun “we” makes up almost half of all pronouns used by a politician – 48%, it is used to create a close connection with the audience, to show that the leader is part of the nation, and he shares responsibility for his actions not only with Congress, but also with the nation. Barack Obama also uses the pronoun “you”, with which he assures all Americans and youth that only faith will lead them to their goal and



emphasizes that the American Constitution is a wonderful gift, but it is powerless without the American people, since they endow it with their participation and the choices they make. The most used pronoun after “we” is the personal pronoun “you”.

The pronoun “you” was used 81 times and accounts for 18%, it is used to denote a part of a whole or a whole, as well as to motivate the people, it also has a very strong authority among the audience and emphasizes that the politician will always be with the nation and calls people to faith. The pronoun “they” was used 29 times in Barack Obama’s farewell speech, accounting for 7% to distinguish himself from others. The pronoun “it” was used by the politician 14 times, which is 14%. Using this pronoun helps establish that the leader is speaking clearly so that the audience can understand him and helps avoid repetition.

To calculate the percentage of the frequency of use of personal pronouns in Barack Obama’s farewell address, the complete transcript of the speech was first obtained and cleaned of any non-speech elements. The list of personal pronouns to be analyzed was defined. The total number of words in the speech served as the denominator for percentage calculations. The occurrences of each personal pronoun were counted. For each pronoun, the frequency was calculated by dividing the number of occurrences by the total number of words. This frequency was subsequently converted into a percentage by multiplying by 100. The results were summarized to reflect the proportion of each pronoun relative to the overall word count of the speech, providing insights into the strategic use of personal deixis in the address (Figure 1).

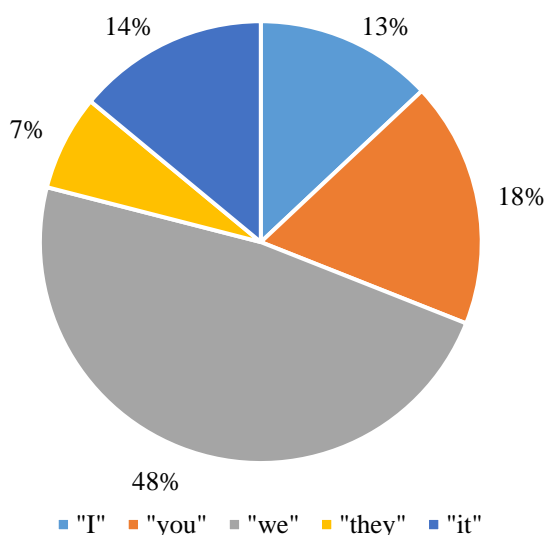


Figure 1. Frequency of use of personal pronouns by Barack Obama in his farewell speech

Barack Obama skilfully integrated personal deixis with a number of other linguistic tools and rhetorical strategies to increase the effect of his farewell message, even though it was a major component of it. Obama emphasized group accomplishments by using anaphora, repeating statements like “That’s what we did” and “That’s what you did.” He used metaphors and vivid imagery, such as describing democracy as a “garden,” to make abstract concepts more relatable. His administration was contextualized by historical allusions and intertextuality, frequently combined with an inclusive personal deixis. Obama frequently combined parallelism with direct address to generate rhythm and emphasis in his sentences. Additionally, he purposefully changed the register and tone of his speech, alternating between professional and informal language to engage the listener on several levels. Together with personal deixis, these diverse linguistic tools produced a multi-layered rhetorical strategy that improved Obama’s goodbye speech’s persuasiveness and emotional resonance.

The political climate during Barack Obama’s farewell address was marked by heightened divisions within the United States, a growing sense of social and economic uncertainty, and an increasing polarization of political ideologies. Against this backdrop, Obama’s language sought to bridge divides and promote unity, employing personal deixis such as “we” and “our” to foster a collective identity and shared responsibility among Americans. His use of inclusive pronouns served as a rhetorical tool to counteract the fragmentation within the nation, appealing to a common sense of purpose and resilience. The farewell speech not only highlighted his administration’s accomplishments but also encouraged Americans to uphold democratic values beyond his presidency. This context of political tension and transition significantly shaped Obama’s linguistic choices, underscoring his focus on unity and continuity as a means to reinforce stability and hope during a period of national uncertainty.

However, different audience segments may interpret the use of deixis in Obama’s speech in varied ways, potentially influencing the speech’s impact across demographic or ideological groups. For instance, the inclusive pronoun “we” might resonate strongly with supporters who feel a shared identity with Obama’s vision, fostering a sense of collective accomplishment and unity. Conversely, individuals with differing political views may perceive the same pronouns as rhetorical inclusivity that lacks personal relevance, potentially diminishing the unifying effect. Similarly, the pronoun “you” could have a varied impact; younger audiences or individuals newer to political engagement might find it empowering, while more experienced or skeptical listeners might interpret it as an attempt to transfer responsibility. These nuances suggest that deixis does not have a universally consistent effect, as interpretation is inherently shaped by the listener’s background and perspective, highlighting the importance of audience diversity in analyzing political discourse.

It is possible to conclude that Barack Obama skilfully uses personal deixis in his farewell speech, namely pronouns, with the help of which he establishes a connection with his audience, convinces them that America is a strong and great country, and he is a true



democrat and patriot, a responsible politician, a citizen who is part of his people and country. In addition, with the help of different pronouns, the politician demonstrates his linguistic competence in terms of meaning, speech etiquette, correct use of words, is an experienced speaker and leader, and the language models of relationships that are created using personal pronouns in his speech are focused on the interests of the United States and are exclusive character.

4. Discussion

In the context of political discourse, politicians use a variety of linguistic and artistic means, which makes language a crucial tool for achieving various goals and controlling the electorate (Abidi, 2021; Darginavičienė, 2023). With the help of linguistic and artistic means, political leaders can more effectively convey to the audience the desired message, the meaning of a message, have the desired emotional impact on the audience, and convince that their intentions and actions will benefit the country and its citizens. Such means include, for example, parallelism, metaphors, anaphora, deixis (Baidildayeva & Akhatova, 2023; Shynkaruk, 2024).

An analysis of the scientific literature indicates that deixis plays an important role in political discourse, it is multifaceted, and its study has only recently begun. It should be emphasized that many modern scientists are engaged in the study of deixis, in particular linguists, who consider it from different angles, approaches, points of view, in different languages and in different genres.

For example, Al-Ameedi and Mukhef (2017) argue that when pronouns are used in political speeches, they can serve a variety of communicative needs of politicians, such as demonstrating their attitude towards the topic and audience, social status, gender, motivation, ideology. The type of pronouns used, according to researchers, is determined by their pragma-semantic function. Thus, personal pronouns perform not only a personal deictic function, but also a social deictic function in political discourse. Indeed, pronouns are widespread in political discourse; they are often used by leaders in communication with audiences and perform important functions.

Hadi (2023) is convinced that the use of deixis in political discourse can define the rhetorical space between the politician and the audience, that is, deixis can convey whether the politician perceives himself as part of the people or is far from them, in terms of frankness and specificity or formal speech and generalization. Without a doubt, with the help of deixis, a politician can influence the audience, build the necessary relationships with it and evoke certain feelings and emotions.

Maalej (2013) studied the peculiarities of the use of personal deixis (pronouns “I”, “you”, “we”, “they”) in political speeches and came to the conclusion that first-person plural personal pronouns: “we”, “us”, as well as possessive pronouns, implement a strategy of identifying oneself with the people; the candidate associates himself with ordinary people, tries to be closer to them and seeks to attract people to his side. Harutyunyan and Yeghiazaryan (2021) also note that personal deixis is widespread in



political discourse and with the help of the pronoun “we”, politicians do not exclude themselves from the audience, but equate themselves with the people, erasing numerous barriers between them. It is worth agreeing with the opinion of these scientists, since the results of a study of the farewell speech of the 44th President of America, Barack Obama, also indicate that with the help of the personal pronoun “we,” the politician conveys the meaning of participation, unity, and intimacy, he is trying to show that he is part of the country and people. The former President of United States of America does not exclude himself from the audience, as can rightly be noted. Instead, he equates himself with the nation, blurring the lines of demarcation between them. In his speech on the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, then-President George W. Bush meant to reunite his countrymen around one main goal – to justify war and fight for sacred freedom.

Agbo and Ijem (2022) believe that political actors seek to identify with the people and ensure solidarity in their speeches, so they resort to the use of personal deixis. In the authors’ opinion, pronouns are very effective in achieving this political communication goal, which is very closely related to the issue of power. These scholars are convinced that when a politician uses the personal pronoun “we” and its derivative possessive forms “us”, “our”, he seeks to achieve political victory through a strategy of identification and inclusion, as well as exclusion. In addition, a leader who uses the pronoun “we” wants to identify with his audience, form an alliance with them, and establish a common identity as people sharing the same existence and experience. It is difficult to disagree with these conclusions of scientists since they are consistent with the results of this study. But it must also be remembered that the use of the pronoun “we” presupposes the presence of “they”, which means that the pronoun “we” polarizes “we” and “they”, and creates unhealthy competition between political leaders, and to some extent jeopardizes unity and peace existing among people.

Meanwhile, Alkhalwaldeh (2022) puts forward the idea that personal deixis concerns the identity of the interlocutors in a communication situation, it serves to encode the role of the participants in the context in which the utterance is made and is a means of violating the boundaries of someone else’s identity and indirect manipulation of the speaker. This point of view deserves attention and is true to some extent, but it is important to study in detail examples of the use of personal deixis and draw conclusions based on these examples.

Based on the results of this study, it can be determined that personal deixis really acts as an indirect manipulation of the speaker, who wants to evoke a certain reaction in the viewer or listener and violates people’s personal boundaries. Khalifa (2018) examines the use of deictic expressions in the speech of the 45th President of the United States of America, Donald Trump. The author believes that the frequent use of “we” may be due to the desire to show strength and dominance. It is worth noting here that more often the personal pronoun “we” is used by politicians to evoke a sense of community and cohesion in people; Barack Obama’s farewell speech precisely noted this purpose of using this pronoun, but we should not forget about the other side of the impact of this pronoun.



When examining the use of personal deictic expressions in the speech of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, Abdulrahman (2022) concludes that both politicians often use means of personal deixis in their speech. The author is convinced that the frequent use of the pronouns “I” and “we”, both for Obama and for Trump, does not indicate an authoritarian political approach, but the pronoun “you” has a generic role in the speeches of both politicians. In addition, the researcher believes that Barack Obama has his own unique style in speeches; he recognizes the power of language, carefully selects his words, because he understands that language is the way to the hearts and thoughts of people. Of course, one should agree with this, since all of Barack Obama’s speeches are well-thought-out and structured, and the language of his speeches indicates that the politician pays great attention to his speech and has developed his own unique speech approach.

Jamshaid et al. (2023) believe that in political speeches, personal deixis is an important part of speech and serves both persuasive and strategic political functions in constructing a positive self-image and a negative image of other politicians. In the present study, no similar examples of the use of personal deixis were recorded in Barack Obama’s farewell speech, but certainly such use of personal deixis in other speeches of the politician is quite possible. Thus, an analysis of numerous publications in the scientific literature led to the conclusion that deixis in political discourse is a relevant research topic for many modern scientists. It is important to note that the study conducted on the characteristics of personal deixis in political discourse based on the material of Barack Obama’s farewell address in the context of this research work once again confirms the views of various scientists on the specifics of deixis in political speeches, its role, and functions.

In summary, the analysis of Barack Obama’s farewell address reveals the strategic role of personal deixis in establishing a connection with the audience, conveying shared responsibility, and reinforcing democratic values. The findings suggest that Obama’s rhetorical choices are aligned with his broader political objectives, using pronouns to foster inclusivity and national unity. This study contributes to the understanding of personal deixis in political discourse, highlighting its potential as a tool for both engagement and persuasion.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

An analysis of the politician’s farewell speech indicates that one of the components of his success in the political sphere is the skilful use of the main tactics of his self-presentation strategy, in particular, the tactics of self-praise and the tactics of showing one’s success. In addition, Barack Obama very skilfully used personal pronouns in his farewell address, which, as it was determined, are one of the main linguistic means in political communication, with the help of which politicians establish contact with the audience, convince people, show themselves positively and evoke the emotions and feelings they need.



Using personal pronouns in his farewell speech, Barack Obama once again convincingly pointed out to the audience that he is a true democrat, a patriot, a responsible politician, and a citizen who is always united with his nation and country, and also emphasized that America is strong, great and rich a country. Moreover, he positions himself as an active citizen, a peacemaker, a politician who has great respect for his political rivals, and his goal in the future is to unite the nation with a common idea.

Different audience segments may interpret Obama's use of deixis in varied ways, leading to distinct impacts on their perceptions of his message. Supportive listeners might view the inclusive pronoun "we" as a unifying call, reinforcing their sense of shared identity with the leader. In contrast, those with opposing viewpoints might perceive these pronouns as rhetorical devices lacking genuine inclusivity, which could reduce the speech's intended effect of unity and collective responsibility.

The research carried out does not exhaust all aspects of this issue, because the political sphere is filled with interesting speeches and statements that require attention from linguists since their research can reveal more about the politician, and show his intentions and goals, which are encoded in his language and at first glance elusive. The prospect of further research into the identified problem is, firstly, to study other speeches of Barack Obama for the use of personal deixis and compare the political speech of this politician with other modern political leaders.

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Authors' Biodata

Azarabu Kulubekova is an Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies and Translation at the Osh State University in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic. Her research interests lie in the role of deictic expressions in persuasion, rhetorical tools in speeches, and political linguistics.

Cholpon Naimanova is a Professor at the Department of Philology of the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. She is interested in linguistic strategies in political oratory, self-presentation strategies in political speeches, and personal deixis in political communication.

Aizhanyl Shermatova is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Linguistics at the Osh Technological University named after M. M. Adyshev in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic. Her research interests are narrative and deixis in political communication, quantitative analysis methods for political speech, and cross-cultural analysis of deixes.

Nazgul Khabibullaeva is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Osh Technological University named after M. M. Adyshev in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic. Her research interest lies in linguistic analyses of speeches, the evolution of political language overtime, and cognitive linguistics approaches to analysing political speeches.

Daniyar Baigaziev is a PhD student in the Department of Germanic Philology at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after B. N. Yeltsin in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. The researcher explores political leadership and language, pragmatics functions of deixis in political oratory, and rhetorical strategies in presidential speeches.

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed to the study's conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by *Azarabu Kulubekova*, *Cholpon Naimanova*, and *Aizhanyl Shermatova*. The first draft of the manuscript was written by *Nazgul Khabibullaeva* and *Daniyar Baigaziev*. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript and all read and approved the final manuscript.

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