

„Wir Schaffen Das!“ (Angela Merkel as a Linguistic Persona)

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Abstract. The problem posed by the authors of this paper is to reveal peculiarities of linguistic persona of one of the most authoritative state and political actors of our time: Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Material for the research comes from various election debates, speeches at international forums and in Bundestag, addresses to voters, interviews of "the engine of the EU" with journalists of various media outlets. An anthropocentric approach that has become the main principle of modern linguistics, enriched with procedures having been developed within cultural, political and social linguistics, application of methods used in study of linguistic persona in the context of gender and values presented in the media and political discourse, allowed to attain certain results. Lexical and idiomatic markers in Angela Merkel's speeches, her formulation of basic principles of domestic and foreign policy, linguistic response to crisis events and provocative questions give a possibility to model the main parameters of her linguistic persona. She is a strong leader with muffled gender attributes, which usually appear in selection of linguistic means that always conform to the literary language. Physical chemist by education, Merkel speaks logically and strictly to the point in the media and political discourse as well. Having been ushered into the elite of male rulers, A. Merkel realizes male rigidity when formulating her opinion. As a leader of nation, she presents herself as a representative of the whole German society, a society allotted with a high mission to guard common European values. The main concepts, verbalized in her speeches and utterances are We (, the people of Germany), Peace, Freedom, Democracy, Tolerance.

Introduction

Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel is an established leader of the European Union, and together with the presidents of Russia, the USA and France is a part of global political elite. In March of 2018 she was elected for her fourth term as a Federal Chancellor of Germany. Her rise as a politician, her relationships with Russia and Vladimir Putin personally have received some attention from authors of this paper and their colleagues (See [1-5]). However, specific features of Angela Merkel's speech as a non-standard linguistic persona still have not been explored. She is widely known, she is listened to by millions of people worldwide, her opinion shall be taken into consideration by many male leaders of various countries. The secret of her success as a politician and a statesperson are largely determined not only by the perceptive nature of her public speeches. She is capable of feeling the audience's disposition, clearly formulating her thoughts, offering a reasonable way out of a complex situation, while not separating herself from the people of Germany, with which she is inextricably connected and whose prosperity she really tends to. Angela Merkel's utterances are notable for their brevity and extreme simplicity. It is no mere chance, that some of her expressions are perceived as slogans capable of uniting the nation. However, Angela Merkel is not only the first person of the united Germany. She is a

politician of a global scale and being re-elected as a Chancellor of Germany, this woman deservedly received appreciation not only as the head of her country: «“Decisions on key issues will be made by Merkel personally, this is a feature of a strong Chancellor, who has taken this position more than once and has understanding on how to pursue international policy. This is not a new feature: This role has been previously taken by chancellors Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Kohl and Willy Brandt”, – says Julius von Freytag-Loringhoven» ([6]). To get such appreciation, an individual must undoubtedly be an unconventional linguistic persona.

Main part

The term *linguistic persona* found wide currency in Russian and foreign linguistics during a new stage of its development that started in 1970s, when anthropocentrism has become one of the main principles of global linguistics. An individual has become an origin, determining subject, tasks, methods and values of the modern linguistics ([7: 69]). That is why scholars are attentive to the language of an individual person.

The term linguistic persona is widely used in social and psycholinguistics, in language education and cultural linguistics. The phenomenon behind this term was a subject of a number of works. Truth be told, a well-known specialist in political linguistics, V.A. Chudinov thinks, that this term

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is superfluous. He believes, that there is no such thing as a "non-linguistic persona", that an individual becomes a person only in the process of socialization ([8]). However, we tend to agree with Yu.N. Karaulov, who wrote, that the linguistic persona finds expression in language and through the language it carries the characteristics of culture that is reflected by this language ([9]).

V.I. Karasik holds, that the term *discourse persona* fits the nature of the phenomenon better. The scholar insists on distinguishing several types of discourse personae: poet or philosopher, politician, scientist, teacher, lawyer, priest. One of manifestations of a multidimensional personality is its discourse specificity, which shall be assessed while "taking into account individual characteristics of the subject, as well as their status attributes: gender, age, educational status, belonging to a certain ethnic and culture and epoch" ([10: 128]).

As a linguistic persona, Angela Merkel is undoubtedly very interesting. She is one of few female politicians of the highest level and the only representative of the fairer sex taking the position of the Federal Chancellor of Germany so far. Angela Merkel is 64; she is physical chemist by education. Natural sciences helped this talented woman to develop implacable logic in reasoning and thoroughness in selection of arguments. She has grown up in the German Democratic Republic, where she was a member of pioneer organization and later of Free German Youth. It is not improbable, that lack of children contributed to Angela's choice to become a career politician.

Reasoning about linguistic person, V.I. Karasik mentions "communicative indicators of speaker's belonging to this or that social institution" ([10: 128]). It includes vocabulary and idioms, as well as some communication arrangements and patterns. Angela Merkel's speech is publicistic, it is rich with words and expressions pertaining to the social and political field: *military conflict, establishment of a dialog, peaceful settlement, violation of territorial integrity, annexation, rocket test, nuclear threat*, etc. She is an orator of a specific constitution: she knows how to convince her listeners without grandstanding and extravagant feats. Masculine hegemony of power forces her, a female politician to be rigid and to act decisively. For example, when speaking of her disagreements with Vladimir Putin and his supposed grievance over criticism in the field of human rights on behalf of Germany, Angela Merkel highlights impossibility to show feminine character in politics: *«Wenn ich immer gleich eingeschnappt wäre, könnte ich keine drei Tage Bundeskanzlerin sein» / If I had taken offense all the time, I would not have been the Chancellor even for three days* ([11]). Masculinity is reflected not only in Angela Merkel's actions and strong beliefs, but in her speech as well. Often she starts her addresses with the words: *Ich bin überzeugt / I am convinced; aus meiner Sicht / from my point of view; ich glaube / I suppose*, thus showing her determination, clear position and readiness to make decisions.

The aim of the political discourse is the struggle for domination, the struggle for power. Examples of such a discourse may be found in parliamentary debates, election addresses, inauguration speeches, slogans. So, in her manifest when first elected to the position of the Federal Chancellor, Merkel quoted Willy Brandt: *«Mehr*

Demokratie wagen» / To venture upon a greater democracy and put in her own words: «Lassen Sie uns mehr Freiheit wagen!» / Let us dare to a greater freedom. Her critics were fast to call her on having grown up in East Germany that was under the influence of the USSR and lacked freedoms. In 2005, she coined a colorful expression: *Und ich bin überzeugt, Deutschland kann es schaffen / I am convinced, that Germany can cope with that* ([12]). In 2015, this expression became her appeal to her own people to get in refugees from EU countries, as well as from countries overtaken by colorful revolutions and civil wars: *«Wir schaffen das!» / We will cope* ([13: 209-210], [3: 278-279]). This slogan of Merkel was not adopted by everybody. Replying to criticism, she explained her words: *«Ich kann das sagen, weil es zur Identität unseres Landes gehört, Größtes zu leisten» / I can say that, because it pertains to the mission of our country to undertake great deeds* ([14]).

Discourse persona of a politician, as noted by V.I. Karasik, embodies the attributes forming "a functional foundation of the relevant social archetype" in its communication behavior ([10: 155]). Status of the EU's leading politician puts on certain liabilities on the Chancellor of Germany. She takes on the role of a peacemaker in many ethnic and political conflicts, for example, she is an intermediary in resolution of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine: *«Wir müssen über die Grenzen der Europäischen Union hinausdenken, und diejenigen in unserer Nachbarschaft, die unsere Werte teilen, darin unterstützen, ihren staatlichen Weg in freier Selbstbestimmung gehen zu können» / We have to think about the borders of the European Union and support our neighbors, who share our values, in possibility to freely choose their national pathway* ([15]). Here is how she sees her mission in resolution of the nuclear crisis with the North Korea: *«Deutschland und ich ganz persönlich, wir bringen uns, wo es Konflikte gibt, ein. Wir wollen durch Diplomatie Probleme lösen, so wie wir es in der Ukraine tun und wir auch in Nordkorea bereit sind, es zu tun. Das ist unser Markenzeichen» / Germany and me personally, we participate where there are conflicts. We want to solve problems through diplomacy, like we are doing it in Ukraine and are ready to be doing in the North Korea. It is our trademark* ([16]).

In her speeches, Angela Merkel gives arguments, providing convincing action onto her supporters and opponents. So, among her favorite words are an adverb *gemeinsam / together* and a pronoun *wir / we*, which she often employs to start her speeches thus showing her involvement in the event. For example; *«Wir haben die Kraft. Gemeinsam für unser Land!» / We have such force. Together for our country!* (election campaign of 2009). *«Gemeinsame Politik für ein geeintes Europa» / Common policy for a united Europe* ([17]). Convincing is her appeal *«Wir schaffen das!» / We will cope!*, which is, while not being grammatically imperative, is perceived as such. Merkel's speech at the press-conference in Moscow, arranged to coincide with the festivities due to 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War over Nazi Germany had a significant impact onto listeners: *«...wichtig, dass man diesen Teil der Geschichte würdigt und vor allen Dingen auch den Menschen in Russland sagt,*

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dass wir uns dessen bewusst sind und dass wir wissen, wie viel Leiden wir über die Welt und gerade auch über die Sowjetunion gebracht haben» / It is important to assess this part of history and, first of all, to tell the people in Russia, that we are aware of how much suffering we caused to the world and to the Soviet Union ([18]). By using the we pronoun Angela Merkel shares the Nazi Germany's guilt in front of the world, which undoubtedly brings up sympathy and response in her listeners.

One of types of the political discourse is a mediapolitical discourse, appearing as agitation / propaganda and commentary of political analysts on some events. The objective of this discourse lies in a characteristic of a certain political course. This discourse is realized as support, criticism or neutral analysis.

During the election campaign, Angela Merkel participated in a Saturday political talk show on Das Erste, the German public TV channel. Answering the question of Anne Will about her motivation for running for the fourth term, she said: *«Die Frage ist, was kann ich dem Land geben» / The question is, what I can give to my country.* Political analysts later said that it is an ideal answer for a politician standing in an election. The strongest criticism Merkel has received for her attitude to the Alternative for Germany (AfD) opposition party and Pegida popular movement, which reflect opinion of a significant part of German people opposing islamisation of the West. Merkel countered: *«Ich bin genauso das Volk wie andere das Volk sind» / I am just as much people as others.* The interviewer has not overlooked a sensitive issue of a good time for ending a career of a politician, or a Chancellor for that matter. The host reminded Merkel about an interview to Herlinde Koelbl back in 1998, when Angela answered a similar question: *«Ich will dann kein halb totes Wrack sein» / I do not want to be a half-dead wreck.* Anne Will provoked Merkel, asking: "When will the wreck appear?". Merkel smiled and replied: *«Ich hab ja meine Worte nicht vergessen. Aber nun hab ich mich da mal angeguckt im Spiegel. Und ich finde, dass ich das noch nicht bin» / I have not forgotten about my words. But I have also seen myself in the mirror recently. And I find that I am still not that ([19]).* Analyzing the answers, given by Angela Merkel, one may note her self-confidence, readiness and willingness to serve her people, evident self-irony. In an interview granted to the Kriesenfrei Internet portal, she said, alluding to her ancestry: *«Immerhin haben wir es geschafft, dass das Gesicht der Kanzlerin ostdeutsch ist. Das ist ja schon mal was» / At least we achieved, that the Chancellor has an East German face. It is at least something.* Where it is appropriate, she is sincere. In the same interview, replying to a question about whether she always keep campaign promises, Merkel said: *«Man kann sich nicht darauf verlassen, daß das, was vor den Wahlen gesagt wird, auch wirklich nach den Wahlen gilt und wir müssen damit rechnen...» / One should not rely on all campaign promises being fulfilled, we have to deal with it ([20]).*

V.I. Karasik noted, that "media discourse has a hybrid character and is coming closer to the entertainment discourse" ([10: 333]). The news media portal *tagesschau.de* gives the following analysis of dynamics in Merkel's manifests delivered in the years of her re-election as a Federal Chancellor of Germany: *«2005 ist sie mutig. 2009*

klingt sie geschäftsmäßig. 2014 spricht sie im Sitzen. Und heute nun Merkels Antritts-Regierungserklärung Nummer vier. Alles schon gesagt?» / In 2005 she is courageous. In 2009 her speech is business-like. In 2014 she speaks while sitting. Today is her fourth try to deliver a manifest. Has she said everything? ([12]). Irony of the observer is evident, for it is widely-known, that the fourth re-election of Angela Merkel as a Federal Chancellor was troublesome. No party was able to get the necessary number of votes, so a decision was made to create a ruling coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD. And while the parliamentary elections were held back in the autumn of 2017, Angela Merkel was officially inaugurated only in spring of 2018. ([21]).

Conclusion

Analysis of discourse persona of the Chancellor of Germany allows us to conclude, that the politician's speech contains communicative and pragmalinguistic indicators giving the recipient an ability to determine her status, ethnic belonging and Merkel's attitude to a certain event or phenomenon. At that, the Chancellor herself is more of a ritual communicative persona. She follows the rigid rules, imposed onto any high-level politician, tries to maximally level her individuality, appearing as a protector of nation and peacemaker of the EU. That is, the political discourse has made an imprint onto her linguistic persona and has formed an image of the German leader Angela Merkel as a supporter of modern European values, tolerance and behavior reactions dictated by the Western civilization.

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