The language of party programmes and billboards
The example of the 2014 parliamentary election campaign in Ukraine

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Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of the political language of party programmes and billboards. As genres of political action, party programmes and billboards represent interesting examples of discourse-constituted and discourse-constitutive mechanisms. Adopting the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as the method of analysis, the chapter highlights the linguistic and semiotic characteristics of these genres (Reisigl & Wodak 2009; Richardson & Wodak 2013). To exemplify the topic, the chapter examines programmes and billboards used by three political parties in the 2014 parliamentary election campaign in Ukraine. The analysis of billboards (and to some extent party programmes) as multimodal domains involves the study of both images and words. This is in turn connected to an analysis of colours and types of images, as well as the positioning of images and text objects. Similar to linguistic structures, visual structures represent particular experiences and forms of social interaction (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

This study does not offer a systematic analysis of the political discourse in Ukraine. Rather, the chapter aims to unveil the genre-specific characteristics of party programmes and billboards as genres of political action. It focuses on the forms of the election material, thematic choices, and also linguistic devices. Through the use of words and images, the political parties in Ukraine communicate their notions of defence, security, war and national unity to the electorate. The study also illustrates how different political standpoints can be articulated through different representations of the Russian–Ukrainian relations.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section focuses on genre-specific characteristics of party programmes and billboards, which is followed by an outline of the DHA as a method of analysis. Then, the socio-historical context of the analysed party programmes and billboards is addressed, followed by a section devoted to the analysis of the party programmes and billboards themselves. Finally, there is a summary of the particularities of the language used by political parties in their election material.
The language of party programmes

Party programmes and billboards as genres of political action

The specific way of using language tied to a particular social activity is called a genre. It is characterised through the selection of lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources, and compositional structures (Wodak 2008, pp. 14–20; Fairclough 1992; Bakhtin 1990, pp. 944–963; Cap & Okulska 2013). Reisigl and Wodak cite a long list of genres that are both attached to a specific field of action and vary within the spheres of state domain, private sphere and civil society. These fields of action range from law-making procedures, the political executive, political control, media and party-internal development to the formation of working and personal relationships. These activities are respectively expressed through genres such as laws, bills, debates, speeches, press releases, conferences, books, articles, leaflets, party programmes, meetings with politicians, phone calls, or letters (Reisigl & Wodak 2001, p. 38). Linguists have intensively studied various genres of political communication, focusing on the classification of genres and their components within three domains: national and transnational levels (governments, parliaments, political parties, elections and debates), the sphere of governmental and non-governmental institutions (businesses, non-governmental organisations, educational organisations and workplaces), and the media system. Their particular interest has been in genres such as political speeches, political interviews, policy documents, television election broadcasting, political meetings, presidential debates and political blogging (Cap & Okulska 2013, pp. 7–8). Although the number of linguistics-oriented studies dedicated to party programmes and billboards is rather limited, they deserve broader attention as they remain among the more widely used communication genres of political parties.

Previous studies argue that during an election campaign, a party usually formulates an election manifesto (or a programme) to inform citizens about their policy objectives, commitments and promises. A manifesto is usually employed by a political party striving for power, and in election campaigning it is seen as important as the face-to-face appearances of politicians and reports in mass media (Aman 2009, p. 663). Manifestos create a coherent party identity that can be communicated to non-party members, and seem to convey authority as they are usually amended and approved by party members in the party’s general assembly. They become focal points during election campaigns and can be referred to after an election, for example, to hold parties accountable to their promises. Party programmes are set within a particular time and space frame (the date of an election in a national territory), and are thus constrained by this framework (Kaal 2012, p. 10). Some studies note that the form of a party manifesto (sometimes also called a platform) depends on the political system of a country. For example, the difference between federal and unitary systems of the United States and the UK leads to specific processes being followed when writing a party programme (Smith & Smith 2000, pp. 459–461).

A number of previous studies have explored party programmes within the framework of discourse studies and semiotic analysis. Using a discourse space model, Kaal identified differences in the conceptual structures of Dutch party programmes (Kaal 2012). Employing Corpus Analysis as a base, Edwards compared various manifestos of the British National Party (BNP) to gauge how language is used by the party to construct a national community and to appeal to a wider electorate (Edwards 2012). Work by Aman looked into how the Barisan Nasional coalition of parties in Malaysia utilised language in order to gain political power. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, Aman particularly investigated the textual features and discursive properties of the party manifestos, focusing on discursive practice (production, intertextuality, interdiscursivity and semiotics) and textual analysis.
(analysis of grammar, vocabulary and the generic structure of the text) (Aman 2009). A study by Smith and Smith highlighted the rhetorical construction of political realities by political parties in the UK. The authors examined the packaging and layout of the manifestos of the British parties (including graphs, tables and pictures), as well as the policy narratives put forth by the parties in their programmes (Smith & Smith 2000). Breeze also focused on the discursive construction of key issues of the main British parties in an election campaign. Adopting a discourse-analytical approach, the author conducted a detailed linguistic analysis of the manifestos to explore their role in setting a relationship between the parties and the electorate (Breeze 2011).

Billboards and their related posters are another genre of political action, indicative of political party development. A primary means of media communication in the nineteenth century, posters are still an influential mode of political advertising today. This is particularly the case in countries where legislation restricts the use of other media, or where political parties cannot afford to buy expensive television air time. Although television has now become dominant during election campaigns in many countries of the world, posters still help politicians to establish their names and to communicate their political goals to potential voters (Seidman 2007, p. 1). As a genre of communicative action, a billboard or poster is a multimodal text. In a commercial poster, two elements are linked: the image and the word. Slogans on posters have played an important part in poster-driven successes. To be memorable, the slogan on a poster is usually short and simple, and slogans often contain rhyme, alliteration and assonance (Bernstein 1998, pp. 142–143).

Several scholarly studies have offered a semiotic-oriented analysis of posters. A study by Teo uncovered the ideological standpoints of posters produced by Singaporean state structures during their ‘Productivity’, ‘Speak Mandarin’, and ‘Courtesy’ public campaigns (Teo 2004). Work by Oyebode explored the communicative and representational strategies of HIV/AIDS posters found in hospitals in Nigeria (Oyebode 2013). Discourse-orientated studies of posters and billboards have uncovered the ways in which posters work specifically as a means of persuasion for political parties, particularly involving examinations of right-wing discourses in Austria, the UK and Italy. Work by Richardson and Colombo examined right-wing ideological discourse using the example of the Italian political party Lega Nord. Adopting the DHA, the authors explored how the party put forward anti-immigrant and xenophobic arguments by combining linguistic and visual elements in its posters (Richardson & Colombo 2013). Richardson and Wodak also traced the histories of right-wing discourses, exemplified through the positions of the BNP and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). Particular attention was paid to how their election posters recontextualised the political rhetoric of pre-Second World War colonialism and antisemitism (Richardson & Wodak 2009). Additionally, Forchtner et al. (2013) have focused on the construction of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy in the FPÖ posters during one of its election campaigns.

The Discourse-Historical Approach as a method of analysis

One way to analyse the political language of a specific genre is to employ the DHA. As part of the CDA agenda, the DHA denotes a cluster of semiotic practices that are situated in a specific social context or embedded in a specific social action. Discourse is both socially constituted and socially constitutive. It is shaped by social structures, classes, institutions, norms and conventions, but it also contributes to the construction of objects and concepts. It is manifested in a macro-topic and linked to the argumentation strategies of social actors who have different points of view (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, p. 89). The constructive effects...
of a discourse are realised through identity, as well as through the relational and ideational functions of language. The identity function refers to the way in which language shapes certain identities; the relational aspect addresses how social relations are enacted between the discourse participants, and the ideational function is concerned with the meanings through which the discourse signifies processes and relations (Fairclough 1992, p. 64).

Situated within the broader context of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), the DHA relies on the main concepts of critique, power and ideology. Adhering to the socio-philosophical orientation of critical theory, the DHA focuses on three aspects: it discovers inconsistencies and contradictions, either in the texts, or in the discourse-internal structures; it unveils the ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices; and it seeks to contribute to the improvement of communication. For the DHA, ideology embodies mental presentations, opinions and attitudes that are shared by a particular social group. Ideologies serve as a means of establishing power and retaining unequal relations through a discourse, or even through controlling access to specific public spheres. In this respect, the DHA views language as a medium of power. Power refers to an asymmetric position of social actors who have different social standings and are attached to different social institutions (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, pp. 87–89; Wodak 2013; Forchtner 2011).

Thus, the study of party programmes and billboards through the DHA entails an analysis of the political discourse, and it includes an inquiry into intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Intertextuality means the linkage of texts to other texts through a reference to an event, actor or topic, or a transfer of argumentation from one text to another. Interdiscursivity refers to the connection of a discourse to other discourses, that is, to other sub-topics (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, p. 90). As a three-dimensional approach to discourse analysis, the DHA aims to identify the specific content or topics of a discourse, and the discursive strategies and linguistic means used for the articulation of these topics. The latter aspect is manifested in how the specific actors and processes are named, what characteristics are attributed to them, what arguments are employed regarding them, from what perspective they are used, and to what extent these arguments are intensified or mitigated. This stretches to the identification of rhetorical tropes (metaphors, personifications, metonymies, etc.), and the analysis of grammar (personal pronouns, temporal and modal verbs, etc.) (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, pp. 93–95).

The DHA also encompasses the analysis of four levels of context: the immediate text-internal context; the intertextual and interdiscursive context of the relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses; the institutional context in which the texts were produced; and the broader socio-political and historical context of the analysed discourse (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, p. 93). This focus on context is necessary to understand both the texts and the discourse. As an interdisciplinary approach, the DHA seeks to cross the linguistic boundary of discourse analysis and to draw upon the historical, political, sociological and psychological dimensions in which the interpretation of a specific discursive event is embedded (Wodak 2008, pp. 10–14).

The context of the 2014 parliamentary election in Ukraine

The early parliamentary election on 26 October 2014 in Ukraine took place in a highly complex environment. The Euromaidan Revolution in the winter of 2013–2014 led to the emergence of new societal groups, political parties and civil-society organisations. The popular uprising eventually ousted the authoritarian President Viktor Yanukovych, who then fled the country. Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 violated the territorial
integrity of Ukraine. The ensuing armed conflict between separatist forces backed by Russia and the Ukrainian army in the Donbas has further destabilised the country. Preceding the 2014 parliamentary election campaign in Ukraine, the conflict in the Donbas resulted in thousands of casualties. According to the UN, more than 3,500 people had been killed in the conflict by September 2014, including the victims of the Malaysian Airlines plane crash (Interfax-Ukraine 2014b). Since April 2014, the Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) by the Ukrainian army in the Donbas has triggered public debates on the nature of the military operation, martial law and conscription into the Ukrainian army. An early presidential election in May 2014 brought the country a new President, Petro Poroshenko, who eventually dissolved the Ukrainian parliament *Verkhovna Rada* (which consisted of deputies elected under the old authoritarian regime), and called for an early parliamentary election.

The election turnout was only 52.42 per cent, and although there was no voting in Crimea and some of the constituencies in the Donbas, the international observers classified the 2014 early parliamentary election in Ukraine as being in line with democratic standards that respected fundamental human freedoms (Interfax-Ukraine 2014a). Following the results of the election, out of 29 political parties who were registered, six parties passed the 5 per cent threshold and moved into the Ukrainian parliament (see Table 29.1). The parliamentary coalition, which was swiftly formed in November of the same year, declared itself as being pro-European, pro-Western, and reform-oriented. However, although all of the leading politicians in the coalition stood for the territorial unity of Ukraine and condemned Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its involvement in the Donbas, the coalition partners seemed to disagree on the question of Ukraine’s policy towards Russia (Stratievski 2014, p. 2).

Despite the seemingly successful stabilisation of the system of political parties and some restructuring of the party space preceding and following the parliamentary election, many scholars agree that the political parties in Ukraine remained highly undeveloped. As Whitmore points out, some parties that participated in the early parliamentary election did undertake some reconfiguration and electoral alliance-building by including some of the Euromaidan civil-society activists and combatants from the Donbas. However, the key players of the political parties remained the same. Scholarly studies have already underlined various problematic features of the Ukrainian political party system, such as institutional constraints, the influence of financial-industrial groups, extreme personalisation, the weakness of structural and ideological positions, the regionalised basis of electoral support, and the gap between political parties and civil-society organisations. The loyalty of deputies to a party also remains highly fluid. The political parties in Ukraine encompass a rather loose collection of politicians who are grouped under main party brands. Parties often act as the projects of particular individuals, and even the core teams of these parties remain fluid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political parties</th>
<th>Percentage of votes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People’s Front</td>
<td>22.14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petro Poroshenko Bloc</td>
<td>21.82 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>10.97 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Bloc</td>
<td>9.43 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Party of Oleh Liashko</td>
<td>7.44 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatherland</td>
<td>6.68 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29.1 Political parties that entered the Ukrainian parliament in the 2014 parliamentary election (Tsentralka Vyborcha Komisiia 2014)
as party members often switch their affiliation between elections (Whitmore 2014, p. 2). As Whitmore argues in this respect: ‘Applying Western definitions of political parties, few, if any, parties of Ukraine can claim to aggregate interests, reflect societal cleavages, offer alternative governments or act as a linkage mechanism between state and society’ (Whitmore 2014, p. 3).

Defence discourse in the 2014 parliamentary election campaign

Petro Poroshenko Bloc

In the programme of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, the defence of the country is one of the five policies that the party proposes to follow (Petro Poroshenko Bloc 2014). This defence policy is subsumed under the heading ‘To Live Secure!’, and it touches upon the themes of Ukrainian national unity and the Ukrainian armed forces. The party appeals to the voters by suggesting that a united Ukrainian nation is important in the fight against the occupiers. The party’s message is transmitted in the programme primarily through nominal sentences without personal pronouns, as in the following examples: ‘The most effective defence against the foreign aggressor is the unity of the nation […]’ and ‘The political and diplomatic fight will become the priority […]’. The use of personal pronouns has been identified by previous studies as one of the main linguistic features in the creation of a connection between the electorate and the party (Breeze 2011, pp. 15–17). From this perspective, the analysed party programme appears relatively impersonal and distanced to the voters. Only occasionally the party uses the personal pronoun ‘we’ to create a common Ukrainian identity. This can be seen in the conclusion section of the programme where it is argued: ‘We can listen and understand each other and unite for the sake of a worthy future for Ukraine and a common victory’.

The party promises to fight politically and diplomatically to return Crimea, and to secure the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However, in its discourse on defence, the party does not explicitly mention the identity of the enemy to be fought. Instead (and in contrast to the other party programmes analysed in this chapter), the programme of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc presents Russia as Ukraine’s enemy only implicitly. This is evident through the party’s naming of Crimea as a temporally occupied territory. This term is intertextually connected to other Ukrainian legislative documents, which determine Russia as an aggressor in the territory of Ukraine. For example, in April 2014, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a law about the legal regime in the temporally occupied territory. This law classified Crimea as a Ukrainian territory, temporarily occupied under military aggression by the Russian Federation (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 2014a).

In its discourse on defence, the programme also refers to the theme of the Ukrainian armed forces. The party calls for an extension of the country’s military-industrial complex. In this context, the following examples of intertextuality are worthy of attention. The programme cites two sayings that urge the Ukrainian population to support the Ukrainian army: ‘If one wants peace, one should prepare for war’ and ‘If one does not feed one’s own army, one is feeding the foreign one’. Previous studies have already discovered that the use of proverbs in political discourse adds power and authority to the political message, and thus to the politicians. This effect derives from the sentiment that proverbs commonly condense complicated and long messages into one sentence, and also transmit ideas that are commonly regarded as containers of conventional wisdom and communal identification (Orwenjo 2009, pp. 124–125). In the setting of the analysed party programme, the use of proverbs
brings credibility to the party’s agenda and justifies the president’s actions towards strengthening the Ukrainian military.

The theme of national unity is furthermore accentuated on one of the party’s billboards (see Figure 29.1). The billboard’s slogan ‘Час єднатись’ (It is time to unite) is set in the imperative mood and calls for unification. However, the slogan’s addressees (i.e. the people being urged to unite) remain unclear. The appeal for unification seems to be kept deliberately broad as it suggests that each Ukrainian citizen identifies with this message, regardless of their ethnicity, age, or place of residence. Akin to the strategy of the party programme, the billboard strives to attract as many voters as possible who will come up with their own concepts of national belonging. At the same time, the phrase ‘Блок Петра Порошенка’ (Petro Poroshenko Bloc) placed below the slogan suggests that everybody should recognise the party as the leading force of national unification.

The positioning of the slogan on the billboard and the coloration of the two phrases support the party’s message. According to the image-reading theory of Kress and van Leeuwen, the placement of information on the top and the bottom of a multimodal text form a particular interactive meaning. In a visual composition of this kind, the information placed on the top is presented as ‘ideal’, and the information on the bottom presented as ‘real’. The top part is essential and most salient, whereas the bottom part is more specific and down to earth (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, pp. 186–187). On the analysed billboard, the party’s invitation to unite is positioned at the top. Painted in an intense red colour, the slogan is potentially memorable to the electorate. The slight upwards-inclination of the slogan (in the

![Figure 29.1  Billboard of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc (photograph by the author, Poltava, Ukraine, September 2014)](image-url)
direction of reading) implies a progressive development of the party’s promises. The absence of photographs or pictures makes the slogan the most important element on the billboard. The intense red colour represents not only the colour of the party, but also functions as a warning signal and offers a strong appeal. The party’s name, which is placed on the bottom, is presented as a real force of national unification. Placed on a white background and painted in black, the party’s name potentially attracts viewers’ attention.

The Fatherland Party

Of the nine policy fields that the Fatherland Party addresses, one is dedicated to defence (All-Ukrainian Union Fatherland 2014). In the party programme, the corresponding section is entitled ‘A decisive victory over the aggressor instead of the illusion of peace’, and it is divided into four thematic sections with the characteristic titles: ‘For achieving peace, it is necessary to introduce a totally new negotiation process’, ‘It is urgently necessary to strengthen the defence of Ukraine’, ‘The organisation of counter-activity against the Russian aggression’ and ‘The urgent entry of Ukraine into NATO’. Additionally, the programme’s introduction is entitled ‘Do not surrender! Ukraine will win’, and its conclusion has the title ‘We will never surrender. Ukraine will definitely win’. These titles explicitly relate to the discourse on defence as being a central point of the party’s programme. In contrast to the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, the Fatherland Party explicitly presents Russia as Ukraine’s enemy. This reference can already be found in the introduction of the party’s programme where it is argued: ‘Ukraine’s independence is threatened by the military intervention of Russia. The events in the Donbas should not be classified as an ATO, but as a real war and as an occupation of Ukrainian cities by the Russian Army’. The party programme contains vocabulary that is characteristic of the discourse on defence, employing words such as peace, military intervention, aggression, retreat, occupation, victory, front, allies, and so on.

By referring to the theme of peace, the party criticises the peace negotiations initiated by the Ukrainian president with the separatists in the Donbas. It does this by intertextually referring to the (first) Minsk peace agreement and to the law adopted by the Ukrainian parliament in September 2014 following the Minsk Protocol. This law provided special regulations for the local self-governing authorities in some areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 2014b). In its promise to establish a reliable peace, the party further calls for co-operation with other countries. It creates a shared identity between Ukraine, the US and the EU member states by utilising the wording ‘our allies’. This can be seen in the following passage: ‘The plan of victory includes the organisation of a principally new type of co-operation with the Western countries – our allies – against the aggression of the Russian Federation’. A leading role for the party (and particularly its leader Yuliia Tymoshenko) in a proposed new peace-negotiation process is accentuated in the programme through the inclusion of a photograph that portrays Tymoshenko surrounded by her party members.

Another key theme addressed by the party in its programme is the status of the Ukrainian armed forces. As with the previous theme, the party’s position on this issue is contrasted with the position of the Ukrainian government. The party proposes to improve the situation by strengthening the country’s defence, by getting rid of weak and incompetent generals, and by buying highly effective weapons and equipment. The party’s promise is made through the frequent use of the modal modifier ‘it is necessary’ (neobkhidno/treba), as shown in the following examples: ‘It is urgently necessary to strengthen our defence […]’ and ‘It is necessary to defend our native land with dignity, force, and self-sacrifice’. The
party’s support for the Ukrainian army is additionally illustrated by a photograph depicting Tymoshenko shaking hands with men in military uniforms.

The party further proposes to organise counter-activity against Russia. In this context, it terms the Russian Federation as an aggressor and sponsor of terrorism, and the leadership of the self-proclaimed Luhansk and Donetsk republics as terrorist organisations. The party promises to gain official international recognition of this classification. Moreover, the party includes certain internal Ukrainian political actors in the category of enemies. It promises to investigate the cases of some Ukrainian generals, who in the party’s view sell off weapons and military equipment, and send Ukrainian soldiers, officers and volunteers to their deaths. These generals are metaphorically labelled as ‘the fifth column’ of the Kremlin, a term that usually denotes forces that internally undermine a country by supporting an external enemy.

Moreover, the party calls for Ukraine’s North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession. This claim is supported in the programme by inclusion of a picture of various national flags, with the Ukrainian national flag placed in the foreground. As an international organisation, NATO is presented in the programme as a group of 28 countries, always ready to defend each other. In the party programme, NATO represents a strong and modern army, weapons, economic development, foreign investment, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The adherence of the party to the theme of Ukraine’s NATO accession is an interesting example of interdiscursivity as in this case the discourse on defence is linked to Ukraine’s NATO membership discourse. As is well known, this issue has been central in political debates in Ukraine and abroad for a long time (Malek 2009).

In contrast to its programme, the party’s billboard avoids any reference to Russia, albeit engaging in the discourse on defence (see Figure 29.2). The slogan ‘Україна переможе!’ (Ukraine will win!) on the left of the billboard is printed in intense red. The additional slogan ‘Не здаватись!’ (Do not surrender!) is placed above the main message in saturated black. The combination of intense red and black highlights the information and catches viewers’ immediate attention. Using the imperative mood and exclamation marks, both phrases urge Ukrainian citizens to continue fighting in order to ensure victory for their country. However, the question of the enemy’s identity remains open on this billboard. The vocabulary of the slogans is not strictly military and could be used in any context of struggle, fight, or challenge. The party leader, Tymoshenko, is portrayed on the right-hand side of the billboard and evokes association with Ukraine as a country. Since in Ukrainian, the grammatical gender of the word ‘Україна’ is feminine, Tymoshenko might be seen as a personification of the country, and such a representation of Tymoshenko serves as a projection area of victory for both herself and Ukraine.

As noted by Kress and van Leeuwen, the composition of images in multimodal texts bears significant meaning. An element placed on the left of a billboard is presented as ‘given’, and an element placed on the right as ‘new’. The right side usually contains the key information, something that previously has not been known to the viewer, and to which the viewer should pay more attention. The left side presents something that is understood to be common sense and self-evident (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, pp. 180–181). In the context of the Fatherland Party’s billboard, the slogan on the left projecting Ukraine’s victory is presented as self-evident, but the depiction of Tymoshenko on the right implies that she is the person who would lead the country to that victory. The portrait of Tymoshenko as a close-up directly addresses the viewers and creates a closeness with the target audience. At the same time, however, the picture of the party leader does not establish eye contact with the viewers. Rather, it depicts her seriously looking off-frame. According to van Leeuwen,
such depiction of a figure functions as an invitation to viewers to dispassionately scrutinise the depicted figure (van Leeuwen 2008, pp. 140–141).

**Radical Party of Oleh Liashko**

Of the seven policies that the Radical Party addresses in its programme, one is devoted to defence. The corresponding section of the programme is entitled ‘Victory and deseparatisation’, and is organised around themes of counter-activities against the perceived enemies of Ukraine (Radical Party of Oleh Liashko 2014). Similar to the Fatherland Party’s standpoint, the Radical Party explicitly presents Russia as Ukraine’s enemy. This is conceptualised through the party’s call to the Ukrainian population to counteract Russia and support the eastern front in Ukraine. The party further suggests creating partisan units and to begin training the civic population to defend big cities. Similar to the Fatherland Party’s discourse, the Radical Party also positions itself as an anti-establishment party. It promises potential voters that it will make state authorities work for the front, replace generals with experienced officers, and ensure that social benefits are made available to the injured and their families. The party even ambitiously argues that Ukraine should return to the status of a nuclear power. The leading role of the party in achieving these goals is visible from the use of the personal pronoun ‘we’, as in the following sentences: ‘We will change the government […]’ and ‘We will enable the return of Ukraine to the status of a nuclear power [...]’.
In categorising their enemies, the party additionally points to certain political actors in Ukraine. The list includes some deputies in the Ukrainian parliament, Ukrainian state officials in the east of the country, Ukrainian police officers, and oligarchs. In fighting these political actors, the party proposes to carry out a ‘deseparatisation’ (deseparatyzatsiia) process. This neologism seems to refer to counteracting secessionist activities in Ukraine. Other linguistic devices in the programme, through which the party attempts to create a personal connection with its electorate, include the use of metaphors and a specialised vocabulary. For example, the programme calls deputies from the Ukrainian parliament ‘shapeshifters’ (perevertni). This metaphor likely denotes corrupt deputies that commonly change their political party affiliation between elections. Police officers are named in the programme as corrupt ‘menty’. Originating in criminal slang, this term is familiar to the Ukrainian population and is used to convey the citizens’ low level of trust in the Ukrainian police. Another interesting example is the use of compound nouns that refer to particular groups of people. In these nouns, a second word is used to describe the qualities of a societal group. For example, the term ‘chynovnyky-separatysty’ (officials-separatists) describes state authorities who are allegedly involved in secessionist movements, and the term ‘kradii-biznesmeny’ (thieves-businessmen) refers to businesspeople who are allegedly stealing from the state.

The presentation of Russia as Ukraine’s enemy is exceedingly clear on one of the party’s billboards, where Russia is personified through its President Vladimir Putin (see Figure 29.3). The president’s portrait is placed on the left of the billboard, and it immediately
The close-up of Putin directly faces the audience. However, the image is intimidating rather than inviting: the president is portrayed with open mouth and discomforting stare. The party’s rhymed slogan ‘Путін–Ху#ло! Переможе добро!’ on the right of the billboard is an interesting example of intertextuality. The first part of the slogan in intense black mocks President Putin as in Ukrainian, the second word of the phrase can be roughly translated as ‘dickhead’. First sung in March 2014 as a fan chant in a Ukrainian football club, this phrase later became widely known in Ukraine and even abroad. In June 2014, after a Ukrainian transport aircraft was shot down by pro-Russian separatists, the then-acting Ukrainian foreign minister Deshchytsia sang this chant in front of a furious crowd outside the Russian embassy in Kyiv as he desperately tried to calm the crowd. The incident triggered intense public debate and also received significant international media coverage (Walker 2014).

The second part of the billboard’s slogan ‘Переможе добро!’ (Good will win!) is printed in saturated red. In combination with the first phrase, this line metaphorically implies that the Russian president is evil and will be defeated by good. The claim is supported by the use of different colours: intense black representing evil and intense red referring to good. An exclamation mark placed after each phrase gives the slogan an authoritative character. Along the lines of Kress and van Leeuwen’s theory on the positioning of images (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, pp. 180–181), the placement of Putin’s portrait on the left of the billboard and the slogan on the right bears a significant meaning. It implies that the Russian president is a well-known figure to everyone, but at the same time, the slogan frames him in a new light: he is presented as an evil that can be overcome by good. The fight with Putin’s Russia is metaphorically portrayed through three thick red lines covering the president’s face. These lines are reminiscent of prison bars, thus implying that the Russian president is guilty, but they also resemble a pitchfork, which is a well-known emblem of the Radical Party of Oleh Liashko and symbolises the party’s fight with the political establishment in Ukraine. A similar, but smaller pitchfork – reminiscent of the Ukrainian national coat of arms – is visible in the name of the party in the lower-right corner of the billboard.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how political parties put language and images to use in order to persuade the electorate during the 2014 parliamentary election campaign in Ukraine. The analysed party programmes are organised around particular policies that the political parties promise to address once elected. Similar to the structural features of party programmes discussed in previous studies (Smith & Smith 2000; Breeze 2011; Aman 2009), the generic structure of the party programmes analysed in this chapter involves various fonts, numeration, bullet points and so on. Previous works have also shown that party programmes can take the form of multimodal texts by combining words and images. Among the analysed party programmes, only the programme of the Fatherland Party contains pictures. This seems to be due to the format of the programme: as it has been created in PDF format, it is presumably designed for distribution beyond the internet pages on which it is found. This is unlike the two other programmes, which are also accessible online, but only as part of the parties’ websites. However, the pictures in the programme of the Fatherland Party serve merely as illustrations that accompany the text and do not have a strong value of their own.

The billboards analysed in this chapter function as multimodal texts. The parties operate with simple right–left and top–down geometrical dimensions in the positioning of their images on the billboards. The colour schemes of the slogans are limited to saturated red and
black colours that potentially attract viewers’ attention. Overall, the billboards of the analysed political parties transmit central themes of their respective political campaigns by condensing messages in laconic slogans that evoke emotions rather than rationality. Indeed, it has been argued elsewhere that visual texts used in election campaigns are usually designed to elicit feelings (Richardson & Wodak 2013, p. 251).

As genres of political action, party programmes and billboards function as a medium to create a connection between the party and the electorate. Previous studies have underlined that through its election campaign material, a party attempts to attract potential voters and provide a sense of commonality between the party and the electorate (Richardson & Colombo 2013; Breeze 2011; Smith & Smith 2000). To this end, both the analysed party programmes and the billboards work using intertextuality and interdiscursivity, employing discursive strategies and a particular choice of vocabulary. In particular, the frequent use of personal pronouns (we/our), time verbs (will) and modal modifiers (should/it is necessary) in the analysed party programmes is similar to observations made in previous studies (Aman 2009, p. 677; Breeze 2011, pp. 15–17). This study also showed that the meaning of images and words in party programmes and billboards remains vague. As previous studies have pointed out, such vagueness is an inherent feature of political communication, particularly when expressed in genres that strive for the construction of common identities (Richardson & Wodak 2013, p. 250).

References

The language of party programmes


