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Exploring the Cognitive and Semiotic Structuring of English Political Discourse: Implications for EFL Teaching

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Abstract: *The paper delves into the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse and its implications for English as Foreign Language (hereinafter – EFL) teaching. The study aims to identify the linguistic means of concept verbalization and analyze their role in reproducing the cognitive and semiotic space in the discourse. The study's findings suggest that English political discourse's conceptual sphere is realized through linguistic signs designating cultural values relevant to American society. The analysis shows that the concepts PEOPLE, DEMOCRACY, and POWER are characterized by the highest frequency of usage in the analyzed corpus. The former are the symbols of national identity and contribute to better world discretization and reality structuring in the American people's minds. By understanding the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse, EFL teachers can better equip their students to communicate effectively in the target language and develop their critical thinking and intercultural communicative skills.*

Keywords: *EFL teaching; concept verbalization; semiotic space; discourse; world discretization; critical thinking and intercultural communicative skills.*

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Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century is an epoch of global challenges. Consequently, political activity is gaining prominence as one of the most effective ways of altering human real and virtual worlds. Regarding the latest socio-political situation in the world, the emergence of COVID-19, and a full-scale Russian invasion, the political rhetoric of famous political leaders received renewed interest. The latter vividly depicts the complex processes connected with the changes in the national conceptual sphere.

One of the most relevant scientific paradigms is the cognitive and discursive approach, which shifts the scientific interest from a mere description of the linguistic means and structures in political discourse to modelling the concepts in the human consciousness. Modelling the cognitive base of political discourse is viable due to analyzing its basic concepts. The latter provide a base for social institutions and are characterized by a generative force. The political discourse can form its own conceptual space resembling a "cognitive map", formed from the interaction between social environment, political regime, and communication style.

Language is the system assigned to express thoughts, yet it is viewed as "a primary mechanism for 'storing' and communicating cultural cognition" (Sharifian, 2017, p. 5). The former is not only communication means but the phenomenon emerging from socially embedded practices. Furthermore, it is posited as "the primary, or basic, infrastructure for all other human sign systems" (Sebeok, 2001, p. 140) since it establishes a complex hierarchy of signs and can transmit information covering any aspect of human knowledge or activity. In other words, language use facilitates "semiotic" communication, which is "essential to the full understanding of what an object is" (Deely, 2009, p. 16).

The former is indispensable to politics as "politics exercises its power of making decisions and influencing citizens through language" (Rubinelli, 2018, p. 17). In this view, it can be regarded as the resultant superstructure constructed upon language. Political language can remarkably affect our perception and internal representation of socio-political phenomena and events. Being used as a powerful instrument for manipulating mass consciousness, it can instill democratic ideas and values (Onyshchak, 2021, p. 134). Some studies analyzed the relationship between contemporary society and an individual (Parmentier, 2016; Giampietro & Kovacic, 2020; Nerubasska et al., 2020; Paolucci, 2021) through the prism of cognitive and social activity. Nevertheless, the study of political discourse regarding its cognitive and semiotic aspects seems promising since it can

shed light on the hierarchy of social values predominant in society at a definite stage of its development. Furthermore, it can enhance understanding of world mapping and disclose regularizing principles of its modelling.

Understanding the cognitive and semiotic aspects of English political discourse is crucial in EFL teaching, especially regarding social values predominant in American society. Political discourse is a powerful tool that shapes people's perceptions and representations of socio-political phenomena and events. As EFL teachers, it is essential to help students understand the underlying values and cultural beliefs that inform political discourse. By exploring political discourse's cognitive and semiotic structuring, teachers can help students develop critical thinking skills, enhance their understanding of world mapping, and reveal the regularizing principles of its modelling. This knowledge can improve their intercultural communicative skills and enable them to communicate effectively with English-speaking individuals in various contexts.

The paper *aims* to explore the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse and its implications for EFL teaching.

The following *objectives* are set before the research: 1) to characterize the basic conceptual space of English political discourse and its significance in EFL teaching; 2) to single out the linguistic means of concepts verbalization; 3) to analyze their role in the reproduction of cognitive and semiotic space in the discourse under review; 4) to investigate how the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse can affect EFL teaching practices.

The *corpus of the research* comprises 252 examples verbalizing the concepts prevalent in the global society and America in particular. The material has been sampled from President Biden's political speeches concerning the issues of American elections and state policies, COVID-19, and the war in Ukraine.

The general scientific methods used to conduct the complex analysis include synthesis, induction, deduction, and quantitative analysis. They made it possible to elaborate on the notions of sign, semiosis, and political discourse and disclose the essential quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the verbalized concepts. In addition, various linguistic methods (the content, componential and contextual analyses, and the descriptive method) were applied to compile the corpus, analyze the semantics decoded into the concepts under study and classify them due to the cognitive and semiotic space they represent.

Political discourse as a source of knowledge conceptualization

Nowadays, it is impossible to imagine the functioning of any society without signs. They impinge upon every aspect of human activity. Paolucci (2021, p. 14) points out that "no living system is possible unless this living system is also and first and foremost a semiotic system". The latter is a powerful tool for conceiving culturally meaningful information and helps regulate an individual's social behaviour. In the political sphere, the function of signs is not limited to representing the world, but they help construct social reality.

Language as a unique sign system can reflect national outlook, social consciousness, customs, traditions, norms, and values. In his seminal book, Kovecses (2020, p. 34) states, "if we think of culture as a shared set of linguistic signs, we can understand the extreme importance of language in preserving particular cultures". Consequently, socio-political processes and shifts endowing culture with meaning do not occur "in a vacuum" (Halualani, 2019, p. 37) but are revealed in the language. The latter serves as the nation's "memory bank" and the repository of conceptualizations prevalent at the definite point of cultural development.

The political life of the global community has intensified in the last few years due to democratization and globalization processes. In the meantime, the emergence of information technologies and the coverage of current events in printed and online mass media stirred a renewed interest in studying political discourse. As noted by Lorusso (2015, p. 6), texts are not "given objects, but the outcome of a complex cultural negotiation". In this respect, political discourse can be viewed as the "mirror" of the country's socio-political life, which incorporates cultural elements, national and cultural values. The latter can be visualized in human consciousness through signs and complex cognitive models.

Semiosis is the term used to describe the innate capacity for generating and comprehending symbols. Lorusso (2015, p. 6) states that it is "the phenomenon that distinguishes life forms from inanimate objects". Semiosis is represented in signs, pertaining to the symbolic levels of meaning-making (Brandt, 2020, p. 234). According to Sebeok (2001, p. 3), a sign is "any physical form that has been imagined or made externally (through some physical medium) to stand for an object, event, feeling, etc., known as a referent, or for a class of similar (or related) objects, events, feelings, etc., known as a referential domain". Likewise, Zlatev (2009, p. 170) states that "our intuitive understanding of what a sign is, is based on things like words, gestures, and pictures, but then we project it based on a perceived analogy with entities in the biochemical world, and with some

more imagination, even on the physical world". Despite much controversy about its definition, it is believed to be an image, or a symbol assigned to a specific sense.

The sign is traditionally defined in linguistics as adopting linguo-communicative (Saussure, 1966) and logical and philosophical approaches (Peirce, 1991). According to the first approach developed by Saussure (1966), a sign possesses a plane of content (meaning) and a plane of expression (form). The former is called signified and represents a concept or image underlying the phenomena in the ambient world. The signifier corresponds to a material form in which the concept is realized in the language. The relations of content and form are referred to as signification. One issue that emerges from the "dyadic" model of the sign is the asymmetry of the planes. Specifically, the signified can pertain to more than one signifier. Since any language is susceptible to change under extralinguistic factors, both planes can be reformed in their use. In their seminal paper, Luchyck et al. (2021, p. 14) state that the whole concept of Saussure's theory was an attempt "to turn linguistics into a full-fledged science with its ideography".

Peirce (1991), the founder of semiotics, puts a sign at the core of human cognition, pointing out the relation between the object and the human mind. Therefore, a sign stands for a word, symbol, thing, or phenomenon that substitutes the other object in the process of cognition or communication. In the longitudinal article on the theory of signs, Auxier (2018) proposes some limitations stating that the former should be treated as the linguistic theory interpreted in the abstract sense. The scholar believes that the relations visualized in the triadic model hold only among abstract signs and fail to realize concrete, existing individuals.

Regardless of the proposed limitations, we believe that applying Peirce's triadic model of the sign (1991) (Fig. 1) to the study of political discourse might help reproduce the process of semiosis and pinpoint precisely how linguistic signs are stored in the mental lexicon and how concepts are represented in our minds.

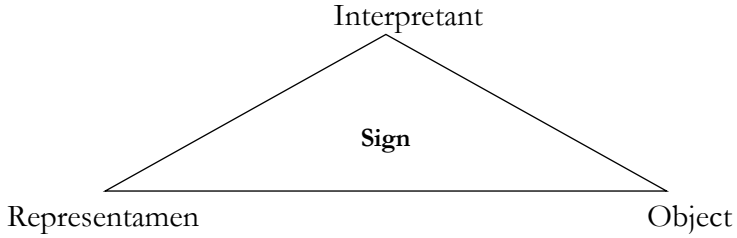


Fig. 1. *Peirce's triadic model of the sign (1991)*

The model indicates the relation between the object, interpretant, and representamen in the process of semiosis. The object visualizes the underlying concept in the socio-political world. It is possible to reconstruct the image encapsulated by revealing its semantics. Hence, semantic meaning comprises modally specific structures of conceptual knowledge which fall under lexicalization (Balaban, 2017, p. 19). However, the scope of semantic meaning is not limited to a verbal code. On the contrary, semantics is seen as "a relation between the communicative act and some cognitive entities" (Gardenfors, 2014, p. 9). Thus, the former overlaps the other linguistic dimensions and contributes to better cognitive processing of information. The interpretant thus influences a person involved in semiosis through pragmatic inference. Finally, the relation of political signs can be explained in terms of representamen. Such relations represented in the realm of extralinguistic knowledge correspond to the syntactic organization of the related items in the mental lexicon. Taken together, signs operate in three basic dimensions: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic. These dimensions logically reproduce the semiotic communication model, treating the sign as the medium of establishing relations between an individual and the objects in the ambient world.

Political discourse is regarded as a universal set of signs constructing political semiotic space. In this regard, its content can be viewed as a dynamic model of a particular world fragment built upon the reference of linguistic means to universal symbolic codes. Analyzing the text, the recipient constructs certain mental (context) models (Dijk, 2006) referring to real-life communicative situations. The cognitive and semiotic approach to studying political discourse sheds light on the interrelation of cognitive entities, signs, and material objects. Merrell (2017, p. 187) claims that "we communicate through language by linking things or ideas through signs (words, sounds) to culturally established reference points of shared meanings". Hence, it is possible to disclose the associative links between the concepts by referring to words designating semiotically meaningful objects and phenomena.

There exists inevitable interdependence between the participants of a communicative political act, who have their functions, cognitive abilities, intentions, and expectations. For example, the political leader interprets facts from his/her perspective using verbal and non-verbal signs. In his/her turn, the recipient tries to follow the speaker's line of reasoning by encoding the concepts occurring in political speech. As a result, the addressee does not only make his/her conclusions about what was seen or heard but also reacts to it, creating specific images in mind.

In summary, concepts encapsulated in linguistic signs are indispensable instruments for interpreting political discourse. Consequently, a thorough examination of political discourse in English will be conducted in two consecutive stages. At the initial stage the linguistic means will correlate with the concepts. The second stage will be directed towards revealing their significance in American culture. In the EFL classroom, the two phases of comprehensive analysis can be incorporated into lesson plans by using real-life examples of political discourse to illustrate linguistic means and cultural concepts.

Enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence through the cognitive and semiotic analysis of English political discourse

English is considered "a global lingua franca and an international language" (Tan et al., 2020, p. 23), and the global language of politics, as it is the main language used in international organizations, diplomacy, and political communication. Therefore, learning English for specific purposes, such as political discourse, has become crucial for non-native speakers wishing to communicate effectively in the political domain. English political discourse is rich in vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures. Studying this type of discourse can help EFL learners improve their language proficiency by exposing them to different language structures and patterns. Furthermore, this exposure can lead to a better understanding and application of the English language since "languages are political constructs and historico-ideological products of the nation-state boundaries" (Wei, 2022, p. 173).

Mirhosseini (2018, p. 29) claims that "not only the way language is taught but also language itself can be viewed from a critical perspective." Viewing language critically means considering the power dynamics and social context in which language is used and taught. In this regard, the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse is an essential topic in EFL teaching practices.

Political discourse is a crucial component of contemporary communication, especially in the era of globalization, where different cultures interact and affect each other. The cognitive and semiotic analysis of political discourse can provide learners with valuable insights into the structure of international political communication, its central concepts, and cultural values. Students can develop intercultural competence by analyzing English political discourse and communicating effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. This skill is crucial for individuals who work in international settings or have cross-cultural interactions.

In addition, it can help students develop critical thinking skills and enhance their intercultural communicative competence by understanding the cultural implications and context of political language. Kuznyetsova (2021, p. 121) maintains that "the introduction of cognitive linguistic practices into the study of political discourse is natural, logical, and highly productive, as the study of cognitive operations observed in factual realizations of political discourse show how certain meanings, images, and values are created in the discursive worlds of listeners and readers." Thus, political discourse is complex and requires students to analyze, evaluate, and understand different perspectives on political issues.

Analyzing discourse critically helps "to find hidden meanings and to uncover the relationship between discourse, ideology, and power" (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012, p. 38) and "better equip learners with a lifelong ability in critical thinking" (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012, p. 38). Thus, this critical thinking process can help students develop analytical and reasoning skills and "encourage them to critically question content and form opinions" (Hamdi, 2023, p. 3), which can be applied to other domains of their lives.

Finally, the cognitive and semiotic analysis of political discourse can contribute to improving language teaching methods by incorporating real-life examples of communication, expanding learners' vocabulary, and enhancing their understanding of grammar, discourse, and pragmatic aspects of language use. For instance, a statement made by a well-known politician could demonstrate that a grammatically correct sentence may not be suitable for its social setting. Therefore, incorporating the cognitive and semiotic analysis of political discourse in EFL teaching practices effectively enhances students' pragmatic and communicative competence and ability to function effectively in a globalized world.

In conclusion, using the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse as the material in EFL teaching practices has several advantages. It enhances critical thinking skills, improves language proficiency, develops intercultural competence, promotes civic engagement, and enhances professional development. Therefore, it is recommended that EFL teachers incorporate political discourse into their teaching practices to prepare students for effective communication in the political domain.

Conceptual space of English political discourse basic and its significance in EFL teaching

Political speeches are considered to be the primary means of pragmatically-oriented and manipulative communication. Joseph R. Biden's speeches, characterized by precision, eloquent language, expressiveness, and

emotionality, are a vivid example of the latter. The corpus analysis shows that the conceptual space of Joseph R. Biden's political speeches is diversified and appeals to current American values. The former is represented through extrapolated concepts. Table 1 demonstrates the distribution of concepts due to the frequency of their occurrence in Biden's speeches.

Table 1. *Qualitative and quantitative characteristics of concepts in Biden's speeches*
Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of a thorough analysis of Biden's speeches (2021; 2021a; 2022; 2022a; 2022b)

Concepts	*Frequency of occurrence*	*Percentage*
POWER	28	11,1
DEMOCRACY	52	20,6
FREEDOM	8	3,2
CONSTITUTION	6	2,4
PEOPLE	101	40
DEFENSE	12	4,8
EQUALITY	3	1,2
LIBERTY	3	1,2
FAMILY	4	1,6
PROSPERITY	4	1,6
POSSIBILITY	5	2
CRISIS	7	2,8
TERRORISM	3	1,2
JOBLESSNESS	5	2
PANDEMIC	11	4,3
Total:	**252**	**100**

In his addresses to the American people, the President chooses accurate linguistic means to verbalize culturally significant concepts, making a strong communicative impact on the audience and creating an image of the country's leader who is not indifferent to people's problems. Moreover, deciphering the signs hidden in political discourse helps get insight into the variety of meaningful associations between concepts that stand for entities and phenomena in the real world.

The concept of POWER is realized with the help of the concept's name "power" with the predominant semantics of the political control in the country: "*So now, on this hallowed ground where just days ago violence sought to shake this Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one nation, under God, indivisible, to*

carry out the peaceful transfer of ***power*** *as we have for more than two centuries*" (Biden, 2021a). "*So tonight, I have come to this place where it all began to speak as plainly as I can to the nation about the threats we face, about the* ***power*** *we have in our own hands to meet these threats, and about the incredible future that lies in front of us if only we choose it*" (Biden, 2022a). Its implications through government and political bodies are actualized in the American President's speeches employing the synonymous substitute "government": "*These are the investments we made together as one country, and investments that only* ***the government*** *was in a position to make*" (Biden, 2021). However, power is not limited to governmental institutions but is concentrated in the nation's hands: "*Well, it's time to remember that "We* ***the People****" are the* ***government*** *– you and I*" (Biden, 2021).

The concept may be marked by different semantic colouring depending on the speaker's communicative intent. For instance, the realizations of the concept are neutral when it is necessary to report certain information without evaluating events: "*As I made crystal clear, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American* ***power***" (Biden, 2022a). The negative connotation in Biden's speeches is often expressed explicitly in collocations. For example, the abuse of power and its consequences to Russia are interpreted by the word combination *a second-rate power* meaning the power of a very low standard: "*Because it will so weaken his country that he'll have to make a very, very difficult choices of whether to continue to move toward being* ***a second-rate power*** *or, in fact, respond*" (Biden, 2022). However, implicit negative connotations are quite frequent to express the attitude towards the current state of affairs: "*My fellow Americans, in life, there's truth and, tragically, there are lies – lies conceived and spread for profit and* ***power***" (Biden, 2022b). The last example contains the implicit meaning of power used for one's advantage and may give rise to the addressed audience's misconceptions.

The given analysis allows EFL students to gain insights into the realization and usage of the concept of POWER in political discourse. They can also gain an understanding of how the semantic coloring of the concept can vary based on the speaker's communicative intent. Students can analyze the contextual usage of the concept in question through the various examples provided in the American President's speeches. Additionally, students can understand how a single word can have diverse meanings, implications, and connotations based on context, collocation, and the speaker's tone. The examples can allow EFL students to improve their vocabulary, develop critical thinking abilities, and gain a deeper comprehension of political discourse.

POLITICS is the concept of universal nature, yet it has specific, national, and cultural features. In his speech, Biden (2022a) points out its characteristics and highlights the necessity to change it to establish democracy: "*Look, I know* ***politics*** *can be fierce and mean and nasty in America. I get it. I believe in the give-and-take of* ***politics****, in disagreement and debate and dissent*" (Biden, 2022a). However, the next example demonstrates that the concepts in the fabric of political discourse establish a definite semiotic system and stand in relation to each other: "*But* ***democracy*** *endures only if we,* ***the people****, respect the guardrails of the republic. Only if we, the people, accept the results of free and fair elections. Only if we, the people, see* ***politics*** *not as total war but mediation of our differences*" (Biden, 2022a). Subsequently, linguistic signs stored in the human mind, are interconnected via multiple links.

The concepts actualized in Biden's speeches indicate the dominant values of American society irrespective of geographical and ideological factors. The concept of DEMOCRACY emerges from interrelated social values such as liberty, freedom, and equality: "*Deep in the heart of America burns a flame lit almost 250 years ago – of* ***liberty****,* ***freedom****, and* ***equality***" (Biden, 2022b). "***Liberty****,* ***democracy****, human dignity – these are the forces far more powerful than fear and oppression*" (Biden, 2022a). "*These two documents and the ideas they embody –* ***equality*** *and* ***democracy*** *– are the rock upon which this nation is built*" (Biden, 2022a). Relative semantic similarity of the conceptual spheres under study points to Biden's aim to persuade people that the situation in the country is under control and every citizen is the bearer of power. American President addresses his people using a rhetoric question which does not require the answer yet bears a powerful social message implicitly: "*Can our* ***democracy*** *deliver on its promise that all of us, created* ***equal*** *in the image of God, have a chance to lead lives of dignity, respect, and possibility?*" (Biden, 2021). For a deeper communicative impact, American President employs parallel syntactic constructions and antithesis in his speeches: "*And in the contest between* ***democracy*** *and* ***autocracy****, between* ***sovereignty*** *and* ***subjugation****, make no mistake*" (Biden, 2022a). They serve to underline the differences in the opposing notions.

In the mind of the American people, the concept of DEMOCRACY is associated with liberties and freedom. In Biden's speeches, the latter is concerned with a conscious choice of the country's leader: "*They refuse to accept the results of a* ***free*** *election. And they're working right now, as I speak, in state after state to give power to decide elections in America to partisans and cronies, empowering election deniers to undermine* ***democracy*** *itself*" (Biden, 2022a). "***Democracy*** *cannot survive when one side believes there are only two outcomes to an election: either they win or they were cheated*" (Biden, 2022a).

Admittedly, FREEDOM can be verbalized as a specific concept realized on the state level, and that representing a universal value: "*We stand up for* ***freedom***" (Biden, 2022a). "*This is a dangerous moment for all of Europe, for the* ***freedom around the world***" (Biden, 2022a). Freedom is a socio-political phenomenon encompassing the main human rights and liberties ensured by Constitution. American President frequently emphasizes the need for defense and the value of the American nation: "*And each of us has a duty and responsibility, as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders – leaders who have pledged to honor our* ***Constitution*** *and protect our* ***nation*** *– to* ***defend*** *the truth and to defeat the lies*" (Biden, 2021a). "*You know the resilience of our* ***Constitution*** *and the strength of our* ***nation***" (Biden, 2021a). "*Our* ***Constitution*** *opens with the words – as trite as it sounds –"We the* ***People****'"*" (Biden, 2021).

The appeal to the addressee in the analyzed fragments of political discourse is made via nominations "union", "people", "nation", "America": "*With light and hope, we summoned a new strength, new resolve to position us to win the competition of the 21st century, on our way to* ***a union*** *more perfect, more prosperous, and more just, as one* ***people****, one* ***nation****, and one* ***America***" (Biden, 2021). Laying emphasis on culturally meaningful concepts serves as an efficient tool to manipulate the masses.

By analyzing the following samples, students learn about the value of politics and democracy in the context of American society, the interrelated nature of political concepts, and the dominant values associated with democracy, such as liberty, freedom, and equality. Moreover, the language samples highlight rhetorical devices in political discourse, such as parallel syntactic constructions and antithesis, for a more profound communicative impact. Students learn to analyze and interpret political speeches and messages, identify the underlying values, and understand the relationships between political concepts.

The concept of DEFENSE is verbalized by various linguistic means. The verbs (*to defend* and *to protect*) and nominal phrases (*collective defense* and *common defense*) are used in Biden's speeches on the war in Ukraine: "*In addition to the economic penalties we're imposing, we're also taking steps* ***to defend*** *our NATO Allies, particularly in the east*" (Biden, 2022a). "*As we respond, my administration is using the tools – every tool at our disposal* ***to protect*** *American families and businesses from rising prices at the gas pump*" (Biden, 2022). "*Our Allies have also been stepping up, adding – the other Allies, the rest of NATO – adding their own forces and capabilities to ensure our* ***collective defense***" (Biden, 2022). "*We must unite in defense of our democracy in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the* ***common defense****, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our prosperity and*

posterity" (Biden, 2022b). The speaker's main communicative aim in the last two sentences resorts to stressing the necessity to join forces against the common foe.

The social processes and issues giving meaning to American culture find reflection in the conceptual language space. Though significantly modified by socio-cultural factors, FAMILY is anchored in American national consciousness. President Biden shares people's concerns and empathizes with those who suffered a loss: "*Our thoughts are with all of the* ***families*** *who have lost a loved one*" (Biden, 2022b). The selected linguistic means in the following sentence deepen the American feeling of anxiety as to the stability and providing for a family, raising the issue of joblessness: "*I understand they* ***worry about their jobs****, about taking care of their* ***families****, about what comes next*" (Biden, 2021a). On the contrary, the following examples demonstrate the application of assurance, the strategy implemented through various words and word combinations: "*We are going* ***to create millions of new jobs*** *in a clean energy economy*" (Biden, 2022a). "We ***can put people to work in good jobs***" (Biden, 2021a). "*I will give my all in your service thinking not of power, but of* ***possibilities***" (Biden, 2021a). "*Forward, to the future. A future of* ***possibility****. A future to build and dream and hope*" (Biden, 2022a). "*That sacred flame still burns now in our time as we build an America that is more* ***prosperous****, free, and just*" (Biden, 2022a).

The results of the comprehensive analysis show that the concept of JOBLESSNESS establishes a referential relation with the concept of DISEASE within the fragments of the political discourse under research: "***Disease****,* ***joblessness****, hopelessness*" (Biden, 2021a). "*Two million women* ***have dropped out of the workforce during this pandemic*** *– two million*" (Biden, 2021). "*The* ***pandemic*** *has only made things worse. Twenty million Americans* ***lost their job in the pandemic*** *– working- and middle-class Americans*" (Biden, 2021). The latter is verbalized by the nouns *pandemic*, and *virus*: "*The worst* ***pandemic*** *in a century*" (Biden, 2021). "*We are entering what may well be the toughest and deadliest period of* ***the virus***" (Biden, 2021a). In his speech, American President aims to urge the people to take immediate action for fighting the deadly disease and preserving lives: "*We must set aside the* ***politics*** *and finally face this* ***pandemic*** *as one* ***nation***" (Biden, 2021a).

CRISIS is mainly perceived by American culture as a decline in economics or a challenging moment in the country's history that can be overcome by uniting efforts and turning it to advantage: "*The worst economic* ***crisis*** *since the Great Depression*" (Biden, 2021). "*This is our historic moment of* ***crisis*** *and challenge, and unity is the path forward*" (Biden, 2021a). "*Now, after just 100 days, I can report to the nation: America is on the move again – turning peril into*

possibility, ***crisis*** *to opportunity, setbacks into strength*" (Biden, 2021). However, the concept realizations may be varied: "*No one nation can deal with all the* ***crises*** *of our time – from* ***terrorism*** *to* ***nuclear proliferation***, ***mass migration***, ***cybersecurity***, ***climate change***, *as well as what we're experiencing now with* ***pandemics***" (Biden, 2021).

Overall, students learn from the analysis of the concepts under study how language can be used effectively to convey complex ideas and connect with the audience and how different concepts can be related and used to highlight the urgency of certain issues in political discourse. For instance, the examples showcase how politicians can use language to connect with their audience and convey empathy, concern, or assurance. Moreover, they demonstrate to students how certain concepts are related and can be used to highlight the urgency of specific issues.

The conducted comprehensive study helped reveal culturally meaningful concepts in structuring American reality. The orientation toward the people, democracy, and power as the primary goals that guide American people in life dramatically soared the frequency of their conceptualizations in political discourse. The rest of the concepts emerging in the President's speeches refer to fundamental social values that set the standards of American citizens' conduct and notions that interpenetrate their social reality. The conducted analysis enables students to analyze political speeches, comprehend the underlying messages and agendas, and enhance their language proficiency. They can also apply the knowledge gained to their own contexts and engage in meaningful discussions about politics and democracy.

Conclusion

Reembedding semiotic and cognitive models to English political discourse interpreting heightens the necessity to focus on its conceptual space. The current study analyzes linguistic signs and underlying concepts involved in American reality structuring and determines their significance in EFL teaching practices.

President Biden's speeches serve as a vast corpus for an in-depth analysis. Thus, the sampling is represented by 252 examples classified based on the frequency criterion. The research results demonstrate that the semiotic space of English political discourse is constructed by a subtlety of signs that stand for concepts of POWER, DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM, CONSTITUTION, PEOPLE, DEFENSE, EQUALITY, LIBERTY, FAMILY, PROSPERITY, POSSIBILITY, CRISIS, TERRORISM, JOBLESSNESS, and PANDEMIC.

Supported by quantitative research, the study results show that the American President employs the concepts of PEOPLE, DEMOCRACY, and POWER the most frequently to convince the recipient audience to be laden with social action and set dominant cultural values. This study has also shown that the concepts in human consciousness trigger an indefinite set of meanings that help integrate the former via multiple links. The relations between them indicate the relations between the objects and phenomena in the ambient world. This finding proves the hypothesis that the structure of the language represents the structure of reality. The rest of the interrelated concepts in Biden's speeches concern social values and issues in American society.

The analysis of the cognitive and semiotic structuring of English political discourse provides students with a deeper understanding of how language is used to construct meaning in political contexts. By analyzing the linguistic means politicians employ to convey their ideas and persuade their audience, students develop critical thinking skills and become more aware of the persuasive techniques used in political discourse. Moreover, by studying the language and discourse structures used in political speeches, students learn how to use complex sentence structures, academic vocabulary, and rhetorical devices in their writing. Finally, analyzing political discourse also helps students to develop their knowledge and understanding of current affairs and social issues. For example, through analyzing American President's political speeches, students gain insights into how American politicians frame and discuss topics such as defense, joblessness, family, and crisis.

To further our research, we intend to study the identified concepts in a translation aspect.

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The authors' contribution to the paper is equal. Authors 1 and 2 critically analyzed the theoretical sources concerned with the research subject matter. Author 3 overviewed the studies on language, cognition, and sign interaction. Author 4 compiled the corpus for the analysis. Author 5 identified the concepts modelling American social reality, revealed their semantics and determined the benefits of their studying for EFL students. Finally, Author 6 verified and edited the paper.

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