

EXPERIMENTAL AND INSTRUMENTAL-PHONETIC METHODS FOR STUDYING POLITICAL CHARISMA

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This paper discusses experimental and instrumental-phonetic methods for studying political charisma. Charisma is expressed through verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal means and may depend on the conditions of interpersonal communication, channels of perception, and modes of presentation, whether online or in person. Charisma can be identified through various scientific methods, such as sociological surveys, observation followed by identification and associative experiments, and instrumental identification of prosodic and co-speech gesture manifestations of charisma using speech and gesture processing software packages.

Key words: *political charisma, verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal, experimental, instrumental-phonetic.*

The development of modern technologies expands the possibilities of identifying charisma by various scientific methods, for example, using sociological surveys; observation method followed by identification and associative experiments; through instrumental identification of voice and gesture manifestations of charisma with the help of speech and gesture processing software packages (Berger, Niebuhr & Zellers, 2019). Linguistic research primarily involves identifying the verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal correlates of political charisma through experimental and instrumental-phonetic procedures (Berger, Niebuhr & Peters, 2017; Michalsky & Niebuhr, 2019; Niebuhr, 2021). In contemporary media discourse charisma is treated as a personal quality based on psychological traits such as attractiveness, i.e. emotional states such as enthusiasm, inspiration, which are reflected both in perceptible verbal (“what the politician says”) and paraverbal (“how the politician says”) behaviour and make his speech charismatic (Rosenberg & Hirschberg, 2005). These perceived behaviours include the auditory and gestural potential of language. They are judged differently by different people and essentially depend on the beholder’s expectations (Petlyuchenko, 2019).

Politicians appear charismatic when they communicate *verbally* by delivering forward-looking, people-oriented, change-driven, and inspirational messages. They can achieve this by telling stories, using metaphors and inclusive language, and packaging messages as simply as possible while still conveying positive and negative emotions. Charismatic individuals also set overarching goals and articulate them clearly. Charismatic politicians have always been characterized by their sharp

statements, categorical views, and mobilizing and inspiring appeals (Petlyuchenko & Chernyakova, 2019).

The *paraverbal* features of charismatic speech are distinguished by an amplification of its dynamic, tonal, and temporal components. In phonetic studies, the acoustic effect of charisma is referred to as prosodic intensity, which is characterized by sudden changes in pitch, loudness, tempo, and pauses in significant utterances that contain addresses, appeals, and concepts with positive semantics. Charismatic speech is also formed by co-speech gestures of both the right and left hands, head nods, visual contact with the audience, and backchannel signals such as applause, ovations, approving laughter, and exclamations (Petlyuchenko & Artiukhova 2015, p. 191).

A charismatic leader must possess several *non-verbal* traits that are considered fundamental: energy, which involves the ability to exude and amplify the energy of those around them; a striking and colourful appearance that implies attractiveness, not necessarily beauty (often such leaders have physical imperfections); a high degree of independence, particularly from the opinions of others; excellent oratory skills; and absolute and unwavering self-confidence in their own actions (Petljutschenko, 2018). Pushing phonetic research further into the realm of non-lexical charisma triggers, the study of the interaction of attire with prosody and gender in the perception of speaker charisma (Brem, Niebuhr, 2021) is the first to investigate the combined effects of variation in attire and prosody on the perception of male and female speaker charisma. Results clearly show that both attire and prosody had significant effects on the speakers' perceived charisma. The charisma effects of attire and prosody are additive, but in gender-specific ways and with gender-specific effect sizes. A bipartite results pattern among the female speakers further suggests that it depends on their physical attractiveness whether attire and prosody conditions have a charisma-supporting or charisma-reducing effect (ibid).

The identification of political charisma is primarily possible through *interpersonal communication*. This includes direct identification through face-to-face interaction or dialogue, such as communication with a politician at a round table. Indirect identification can occur through face-to-side interaction, such as at a rally, party congresses, or debates, where you only listen and see a politician but do not communicate with him/her. Face-to-back identification involves perceiving the actions and statements of a politician as charismatic in the absence of contact with him/her such as through the media. At the same time, the following *channels of perception* of charisma are distinguished: (1) *auditory*, where the sound, tone, loudness, timbre, inflection, emphasis, and pauses of a charismatic politician's

speech are dominant; (2) *visual*, where the visual system of the charismatic politicians' performance is dominant: appearance, gestures, proxemics, and clothing colour scheme; (3) *kinesthetic*, which may involve bodily contact such as handshakes or hugs, and reactions to these actions such as goosebumps or a pleasant warmth.

Identification of political charisma can occur both *online* and *in person*. Online perception of charisma occurs in real-time, often utilising technology such as Volodymyr Zelensky's live video conferences with governments of different countries, as well as recorded appeals to Ukrainians on Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. This enables a larger audience to experience Zelensky's charisma, but it may be less effective as non-verbal cues and emotional nuances may be lost in the process. When communicating with a charismatic person in person, interlocutors have the ability to directly perceive charisma through nonverbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions to express their thoughts and feelings.

The potential for studying the charisma of political figures is linked to the development of a communicative model between politics and performance in the media. This is where politicians are portrayed and accepted as charismatic figures. The mechanisms of influence (such as suggestion and emotional involvement), expression (verbal and non-verbal), and perception (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) all play a role in this model.

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