

THE FACEBOOK STATUS UPDATE – A BULGARIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE GENRE

Nelly Tincheva

St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia

Abstract: *The paper investigates political discourse genres, which requires an advance clarification of the notions of ‘political discourse’ and ‘genre’. Next, the paper provides a snapshot of how Bulgarian political audiences view political genres in the current ‘post-truth reality’.*

The theoretical premises adopted draw on two general observations. The first one suggests political discourse analyses tend to be conducted qualitatively (see, e.g., Reyes-Rodríguez 2008). The second observation suggests that, in accounting for the communicative effect of a political text, investigations tend to correlate political audience reception with the presence of ‘in-text’ structures (e.g. Gamson 1992; Lee 2001). In more recent times, analyses tend to correlate political audience reception with conceptual metaphoric ‘in-text’ structures (e.g. Lakoff 2002, 2013, 2014; Musolff 2006, 2016; Kövecses 2010, 2017). Overall, the permanent political-discourse-related trend focuses exclusively on in-text uses; the analyses do not focus on whole genres but only on specific texts exemplifying those genres.

In contrast, this paper adopts a quantity-based, non-prescriptive and not speculative standpoint to political discourse analysis. It provides data on how whole political genres are perceived by Bulgarian audiences. The paper systematizes and discusses results from a questionnaire-based study on Bulgarian recipients’ expectations concerning the communicative effect of genres in political discourse. The Study includes 120 respondents and their answers to 6 questions.

The results from the Study reveal Bulgarian political audiences, whether consciously wary of fake news or simply distrustful of politicians and media, seek information from multiple sources and cross-check information not only across sources but also across genres. Possibly unexpectedly, the investigation establishes the genre of the Facebook status has become a prominent communicative tool in Bulgarian political discourse.