

The Pragmatic Use Of First-Person Pronouns In Political And Official Discourses Across Languages: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract: This article investigates the pragmatic functions of first-person pronouns (I/we) in political speeches and formal writing across multiple language systems. By analyzing the discourse of prominent political leaders such as Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Joe Biden, and Emmanuel Macron, the study explores how first-person pronouns function to construct authority, inclusiveness, and responsibility. The research highlights variation across languages in terms of politeness, formality, and rhetorical strategy. Methodologically, the study employs comparative discourse analysis and pragmatic interpretation of political and academic texts. The findings demonstrate that the usage of "I" versus "we" reflects not only linguistic norms but also culturally embedded leadership styles.

Keywords: First-person pronouns, political speech, formal writing, pragmatics, cross-linguistic analysis.

Introduction: In contemporary political and institutional discourse, language serves as a powerful instrument not only for communication but also for the construction of authority, solidarity, and ideological positioning. Among the many linguistic devices employed in such contexts, first-person pronouns ("I" and "we") play a particularly strategic role in shaping the relationship between speakers and audiences. These pronouns are not merely grammatical markers of personhood; rather, they act as pragmatic tools for expressing responsibility, aligning with group identity, establishing proximity or distance, and framing institutional voice.

The shift from singular "I" to plural "we" in political discourse often marks a transition from individual responsibility to collective leadership, serving as a rhetorical mechanism for inclusion or sometimes for deflecting personal accountability. For instance, a leader might say "I promise" to highlight personal commitment or "We must act" to mobilize national or institutional unity. However, the pragmatic functions of these pronouns vary significantly across languages and cultures, shaped by traditions of political communication, cultural norms of hierarchy and collectivism, and formal genre conventions.

This study explores the use of first-person pronouns in Uzbek, English, French, and other typologically diverse languages within the genres of political speeches and official communications. Drawing from the discourses of prominent political figures such as Shavkat Mirziyoyev (Uzbekistan), Joe Biden (USA), and Emmanuel Macron (France), the article analyzes how "I" and "we" are pragmatically employed to craft political persona, institutional authority, and public engagement. Additionally, official documents such as presidential addresses, governmental resolutions, and policy announcements are examined to reveal the degree of formality, inclusiveness, and rhetorical positioning encoded in pronoun usage.

The main objective of this research is to conduct a comparative pragmalinguistic analysis of first-person pronouns across political and formal discourse genres. The methodology involves a qualitative discourse analysis supported by comparative textual interpretation, focusing on both lexico-grammatical structures and pragmatic functions within their sociocultural context. By doing so, the study contributes to understanding how subtle shifts in pronoun choice can reflect broader ideological frameworks, communicative goals, and cultural

expectations in multilingual political environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comparative pragmalinguistic approach to analyze the use of first-person singular and plural pronouns ("I" and "we") in political and official discourse across different languages. The research is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of pragmatics, discourse analysis, and cultural linguistics, aiming to reveal how personal pronouns serve as strategic tools in constructing political authority, collective identity, and institutional voice.

The primary data sources for this study include:

1. Political speeches by heads of state and high-ranking officials (e.g., presidential addresses to the nation, speeches at international forums, inaugural speeches).
2. Official documents, such as decrees, government policy announcements, and institutional statements.

The corpus consists of over 60 speech and document samples from three major languages representing different political-cultural traditions:

- a. Uzbek (e.g., speeches by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev),
- b. English (e.g., addresses by U.S. President Joe Biden),
- c. French (e.g., public statements by French President Emmanuel Macron).

The time frame is limited to 2020–2024, allowing for the inclusion of contemporary global political events and responses (e.g., post-pandemic recovery, geopolitical crises, and institutional reforms).

The analysis proceeded in the following steps:

1. Identification and Tagging of Pronouns: All instances of "I" and "we" were extracted from the corpora and tagged according to genre (political speech vs. official communication).
2. Contextual Function Analysis: Each pronoun occurrence was examined for its pragmatic function (e.g., expression of authority, shared responsibility, inclusion/exclusion, distancing).
3. Comparative Cross-Linguistic Coding: The functions of pronouns were compared across Uzbek, English, and French, with attention to:
 - a. Grammatical flexibility (e.g., null subject use),
 - b. Cultural norms of leadership discourse,
 - c. Degree of personalization vs. institutional tone.
4. Genre-Specific Patterns: Differences were traced between formal official documents (where "we"

often serves as an institutional collective) and political speeches (where the interplay of "I" and "we" carries rhetorical weight).

To ensure reliability, multiple coders cross-checked the annotated data using established functional-pragmatic categories (based on Levinson, 2020; Blum-Kulka, 2021). Validity was reinforced through triangulation: results were compared with prior studies on political discourse, and native-speaker consultants were consulted for pragmatic interpretation in all three languages.

All data used in this study were drawn from publicly available sources, with no personal identifiers involved. The analysis was conducted solely for academic and comparative linguistic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals clear and purposeful patterns in the use of first-person pronouns across political speeches and official documents. These patterns are closely linked to power relations, audience positioning, and cultural expectations of leadership communication.

1. Strategic Use of "I" in Political Speeches

Across all three languages, "I" is predominantly used in political speeches to:

- a. Establish authority and accountability: Politicians often use "I" to show personal commitment and responsibility.

1. E.g., "I promise to protect our Constitution" (U.S. President).
2. E.g., "Men bu islohotlarga bosh-qoshman" (Uzbek President).

- b. Create emotional connection with the audience:

1. E.g., "I have felt your pain; I have heard your voices."
2. In Uzbek, the use of "men" in emotionally charged contexts reinforces sincerity and national solidarity.

This strategy is more prominent in Anglo-American and Uzbek political discourse than in French, where institutional style often prevails.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Through "We"

The pronoun "we" functions in three distinct ways:

- a. Inclusive "we" (speaker + audience): Used to promote unity and shared purpose.

1. E.g., "We will build back better" or "Biz birgalikda bunga erishamiz."
2. Creates collective identity and trust.

- b. Exclusive “we” (speaker + government/institution): Used in official decisions or statements to denote group authority:
 - 1. E.g., “We have approved the new legislation.”
 - 2. E.g., “Nous avons adopté cette décision.”
- c. Ambiguous “we”: Allows speakers to obscure agency or shift responsibility:
 - 1. E.g., “We may have made some mistakes” — unclear whether it includes the speaker personally.

3. Genre-Specific Differences

- a. In political speeches, there is a flexible switch between “I” and “we,” showing a balance between personal charisma and collective leadership.
- b. In official documents, “we” is more dominant, often appearing in passive or bureaucratic tone (e.g., “We hereby declare...”).
- o Uzbek and French documents often omit the subject pronoun altogether, reflecting institutional formality.

Language	“I” Usage in Speeches	“We” Usage in Official Texts	Notable Feature
Uzbek	Expresses leadership and personal agency	Strong collectivism (“biz davlat nomidan...”)	Ellipsis common in formal texts
English	Personal empathy, leadership	Bureaucratic, legalistic	Inclusive/Exclusive shifts are rhetorical
French	Less personal, more formal	Heavily institutionalized	Preference for passive voice

4. Cultural-Pragmatic Insights

In Uzbek discourse, the switch between “men” and “biz” is guided by respect, modesty, and context-specific authority. The use of “biz” can signal either inclusion (e.g., “biz xalqmiz”) or hierarchical leadership (“biz qaror qildik”).

English political speeches tend to favor transparency and personal tone with “I,” especially in crisis or emotional moments.

French discourse remains formal and detached, with rare use of “je” in official contexts, reflecting state-centered republican traditions.

Interpretation and Implications: These findings support the idea that personal pronouns are not merely grammatical markers but powerful pragmatic tools of persuasion, ideology, and social positioning. The genre (speech vs. document) and cultural-political setting deeply affect the choice and effect of “I” and “we.”

This also underlines the need for pragmatic competence in translation and interpretation of political texts, as the pronoun choice carries hidden layers of power dynamics and relational strategy that may not be visible in literal translation.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the use of first-person pronouns “I” and “We” in political and official discourse serves as a significant indicator of power, responsibility, formality, and group alignment. A cross-linguistic comparison among Uzbek, English, and French revealed distinct yet overlapping pragmatic patterns:

The pronoun “I” is used to assert personal leadership,

emotional engagement, and direct accountability, particularly in Anglo-American and Uzbek political contexts.

The pronoun “We” performs multifunctional roles:

- a. Inclusive: Unifying speaker and audience.
- b. Exclusive: Distancing responsibility from the audience.
- c. Ambiguous: Softening or deflecting agency.

Genre plays a critical role. Political speeches allow more emotional and strategic variation, while official documents tend toward institutionalized and impersonal language, often omitting overt subject pronouns in Uzbek and French.

Moreover, the socio-pragmatic dynamics of pronoun choice reflect deeper cultural values: 1. Collectivism and indirectness in Uzbek. 2. Individualism and rhetorical openness in English. 3. Formality and bureaucratic neutrality in French.

These findings affirm that personal pronouns are not simply syntactic elements but rhetorical instruments that shape discourse, reflect leadership styles, and reveal sociocultural ideologies.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the following practical and scholarly recommendations are proposed: 1. For Linguists and Discourse Analysts: a) consider personal pronouns as core units of pragmatic analysis, especially in political communication; b) extend the comparative framework to include more languages (e.g., Arabic, Russian, Japanese) for broader typological insight.

For Translators and Interpreters: a) avoid literal pronoun translation. Pay attention to

inclusive/exclusive reference, emotional load, and genre conventions; b) in Uzbek-English or Uzbek-French translation, be mindful of pronoun omission (common in Uzbek) and the necessity to restore subject clarity in the target language.

For Political Speechwriters and Advisors: a) Use “I” to establish sincerity and personal responsibility, especially in times of crisis; b) use “We” to create unity and shared vision, but clearly define the scope of inclusion to avoid ambiguity or manipulation.

For Educators and Curriculum Designers: a) include sociopragmatic analysis of pronouns in academic writing and intercultural communication courses; b) develop materials that show how pronoun use reflects cultural norms, leadership expectations, and institutional voice.

For Further Research: a) investigate the intersection of gender and personal pronouns in political discourse; b) explore diachronic changes in pronoun usage in evolving political rhetoric (e.g., populist vs. technocratic leaders); c) analyze pronoun use in digital political discourse (e.g., tweets, blogs, video messages).

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