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Discursive Strategies and Tactics in Cognitive Projection

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the mechanisms underlying the development of social reality and national identity through rhetorical devices and perception models, focusing on how individual mental structures influence the interpretation of political and media texts. Particular attention is paid to the mechanisms by which discursive strategies shape cognitive models that affect public opinion and perceptions of power. The study analyses the discursive strategies employed in political speeches and media messages and their impact on the creation of cognitive projections within various social groups. Special emphasis is placed on linguistic personality and its role in structuring discourse. Various levels of audience perception of rhetorical devices and the corresponding reactions are also explored. A comparative analysis of the development of cognitive projections in political discourse reveals differences in the perception of information among various social groups. The results demonstrate that discursive strategies effectively shape social reality, legitimise power, and strengthen national identity. Cognitive projections created through metaphors, historical allusions, and other rhetorical devices guide public perception and facilitate the structuring of complex social phenomena. Linguistic personality plays a key role in the selection of discursive strategies, influencing the cognitive models created for the audience. Multi-discursivity enables leaders to adapt their rhetoric to suit the audience, creating cognitive models that support the perception of their authority as legitimate and trustworthy.

Keywords: national code; concept; conceptsphere; linguistic personality; linguopersonology; multi-discursivity; communicative models; text interpretation; Kazakhstan; political discourse

1 Introduction

Discursive strategies play a key role in the development and maintenance of social reality. This is particularly relevant in political and media speeches, where discourse is used to legitimise authority, shape national identity, and manage public opinion. Amidst rapid social development, discursive strategies and the cognitive mechanisms underpinning them exert considerable influence on the perception of political and cultural identity. This is especially important for post-Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan, where national self-determination continues against the backdrop of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

The analysis of cognitive projections in discourse provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning social perception. These cognitive models, shaped through discourse, influence individual and collective levels of perception and interpretation of political and cultural events. The issue under study is that, although discursive strategies and cognitive mechanisms are actively employed in politics and media, their role in creating cognitive models remains insufficiently explored.

Research on cognitive models in politics and media highlights a limited understanding of how these cognitive projections are created and perceived in different social and cultural contexts. Discursive strategies in Kazakhstan are rarely analysed from the perspective of their influence on national identity and the legitimisation of authority.

Many researchers have investigated various aspects of discursive strategies and cognitive projections, focusing on their influence on social reality and identity. For instance, in the context of constructing social reality through discursive strategies, Rees and Burkhanov (2018) demonstrated how political and media texts shape cognitive schemes that contribute to the creation of national identity in Kazakhstan. Their study highlighted the importance of rhetorical devices in establishing stable representations of society. Cognitive projections are also a vital tool for understanding how people interpret discourses. In the study by Gizdatov and Sopiyeva (2018), dedicated to Kazakhstan's media

space, it was shown how media create cognitive models that influence perceptions of national identity, emphasising the connection between discourse and public opinion. In political discourse, cognitive models play a key role in legitimising authority. Within this framework, Kudaibergenova (2018) examined presidential addresses, demonstrating how historical allusions and cultural myths create cognitive models that reinforce perceptions of authority and loyalty to the leader. This underscores how cognitive projections can be used to manage public relations and perceptions of leadership. Terminology and language play a central role in political discourses, where they are used to create cognitive projections that influence a country's image. Taubaldiyev et al. (2024) explored this aspect in their analysis of political rhetoric, revealing how the use of specific terminology can shape both internal and external images of the country.

In literature, cognitive strategies also influence the development of identity. Altybayeva and Imposti (2020) explored how Kazakhstani literature contributes to the development of cognitive models of national identity, emphasising the importance of literature as a tool for rethinking cultural and political issues through cognitive-communicative strategies. The cognitive aspects of perceiving time and events play an important role in creating meanings in political and media discourse. Sakita (2021) demonstrated that the perception of time influences how people interpret information, highlighting the importance of temporal cognitive mechanisms in understanding events and political processes.

Chilton (2023) examined how rhetorical strategies are used either to strengthen democracy or, conversely, to serve as tools of demagoguery. His analysis focused on the cognitive models through which political actors structure their statements, influencing the perception of "us" and "them". Ultimately, Chilton concluded that language plays a substantial role in maintaining or undermining democratic values, shaping perceptions of power through cognitive constructs. Schweikhard and List (2020) analysed the creation of new terms and demonstrated how they can shape cognitive projections in a political context, influencing the perception of certain events or ideas.

Grammatical structures also play a key role in cognitive processes, particularly in literary contexts. In the study by Giovanelli and Harrison (2024), it was shown how cognitive grammar helps create discursive strategies in literature, influencing readers' perception of the text through structure and style. Cognitive schemas are also crucial in strategic management, where they help shape professional identities. Mantere and Whittington (2020) investigated how strategic discourses and cognitive models contribute to the development of managerial identities, highlighting the importance of cognitive projections in managerial activities. Cap (2021) examined the relationship between social structures and cognitive strategies in the formation of discourse. He analysed how discursive practices help legitimise or delegitimise social groups and actors. In his study, Cap demonstrated that the cognitive mechanisms embedded in language influence societal norms and perceptions, enabling discourse to actively alter social reality and construct public representations.

Thus, the study confirms the importance of cognitive projections and discursive strategies in shaping the perception of reality, influencing public opinion and identity, and in political and media contexts. Existing studies primarily focus on describing discursive strategies but do not pay sufficient attention to how cognitive mechanisms shape the perception of these strategies in real time. The purpose of this study is to examine discursive strategies and cognitive projections in political and media discourses, with a focus on analysing the influence of individual cognitive models on the perception of social reality and national identity.

2 Materials and Methods

The primary focus of the study is on identifying patterns and mechanisms through which cognitive models shape the perception of social reality and national identity.

One of the key elements is the exploration of the linguistic personality based on the public speeches and texts of Abish Kekilbayev (*Abish Kekilbayev*, n.d.). The examination of his speeches and addresses reveals specific cognitive strategies aimed at legitimising power and fostering national consciousness. This investigation allows for an in-depth consideration of the diverse discursive strategies employed by Kekilbayev in the context of his political speeches and a deeper understanding of poly-discursivity as a key characteristic of his linguistic personality. The study analyses how discursive tactics influence the interpretation of cognitive projections and the perception of political messages, focusing on different levels of audience reception. These tactics are examined through the lens of their impact on cognitive models, public perception, the creation of national unity, and the legitimisation of political authority.

For comparison, the discursive strategies of global scholars and politicians are also examined, allowing for an exploration of how cognitive projections are formed and perceived in various cultural and social contexts. The analysis includes Barack Obama's (2009) Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech and Margaret Thatcher's (Missing Citation) address on national identity and moral superiority during times of economic challenges. Particular attention is given to how different discursive tactics shape audience perception of cognitive projections and legitimisation.

The strategies and tactics of Wodak (2014) and van Dijk (2019) are employed to analyse the discourses of global public figures. The study examines how these figures use cognitive projections to influence their audiences and how

their rhetorical techniques create cognitive models that guide the interpretation of scientific and political texts. Examples of the use of metaphors, grammatical structures, and other cognitive mechanisms are analysed to demonstrate how these contribute to shaping a specific worldview for the audience. This allows for the identification of parallels between the strategies of Kekilbayev and those of global researchers while highlighting the cultural and social factors that influence the interpretation of discourses in different contexts.

Particular attention is paid to the multi-level perception of discourse, enabling an investigation into how various cognitive tactics affect different social groups. For instance, cognitive projections created through discourses are analysed at the level of perception by elites and the general audience, providing insights into differences in interpretation and reactions to political messages.

3 Results

Discursive strategies are specific rhetorical techniques and methods used to construct social reality and legitimise power through language. These strategies enable participants in discourse not only to convey information but also to influence public perception, shaping particular social attitudes, ideologies, and values. In political and media contexts, discursive strategies play a crucial role in creating public consensus and supporting the legitimacy of power. This is achieved through the construction of certain narratives that foster the perception of authority as lawful and trustworthy. One of the most important aspects of discursive strategies is their ability to shape audience perception by employing rhetorical techniques such as metaphors, euphemisms, historical allusions, and appeals to emotions (M. W. Khan et al., 2025). These strategies can direct the audience's attention to specific aspects of reality while simultaneously concealing or ignoring others. In this way, discursive strategies help construct a social reality that upholds existing power structures and belief systems (Destek et al., 2025). Those in power also actively employ discursive strategies to legitimise their position. This is achieved by creating cognitive projections that portray power as natural and lawful. Strategies such as appeals to tradition or historical achievements contribute to the development of cognitive projections perceived as a foundation for supporting authority. The impact on society manifests in the establishment of stable cognitive models that determine people's attitudes towards political leaders and public institutions.

For example, political discourse often employs strategies of creating an "enemy" or contrasting "us" and "them", which helps to strengthen national identity and mobilise support for political leaders (Koller, 2020; Zhussip et al., 2020).

Cognitive projections represent internal cognitive models that arise in perceiving and interpreting discourses (Figure 1). These projections are unconscious mental structures through which individuals process information received from discourse and create meaningful interpretations of events. Cognitive projections can be described as schemas or frames that guide a person's perception and help them interpret the world around them based on previously acquired knowledge and experience. In the context of discourse, cognitive projections allow individuals to structure and organise the information they receive through language (Yerdembekov et al., 2025). These models are closely connected to cultural and social contexts and can vary depending on social status, experience, education, and membership in specific groups. For instance, different social groups may interpret the same message differently depending on the cognitive projections shaped by their experiences and cultural affiliations. Cognitive projections play an essential role in managing the perception and interpretation of discourses, influencing how people understand the social reality presented to them through language (El-Jaichi & Sheikh, 2020; Wang et al., 2024).

Cognitive projections emerge as the result of these strategies. Through the perception of rhetoric, the audience forms cognitive models that reinforce their social identity and influence their interpretation of messages. These projections not only structure the perception of the world but also govern behaviour, strengthening a sense of belonging to a specific social group (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017).

The linguistic personality plays a central role in cognitive processes, particularly in the context of discourse and the development of cognitive projections. Linguistic personality can be understood as a set of linguistic and cognitive characteristics of an individual, expressed through their speech and communication. It reflects not only the traits of the personality but also the cognitive mechanisms that guide the perception and interpretation of language in specific social and cultural contexts. The concept encompasses a system of knowledge, beliefs, values, and cultural norms that are developed throughout an individual's life and directly influence their behaviour and communication. The linguistic personality consists of several levels that interact with each other and affect cognitive processes. At the first level is the semantic level – this comprises basic knowledge of the language, its rules, and the meanings of words that an individual uses in communication. This level reflects the lexical and grammatical knowledge of the individual, as well as their ability to select appropriate linguistic means to express their thoughts. The second level is the pragmatic level, which

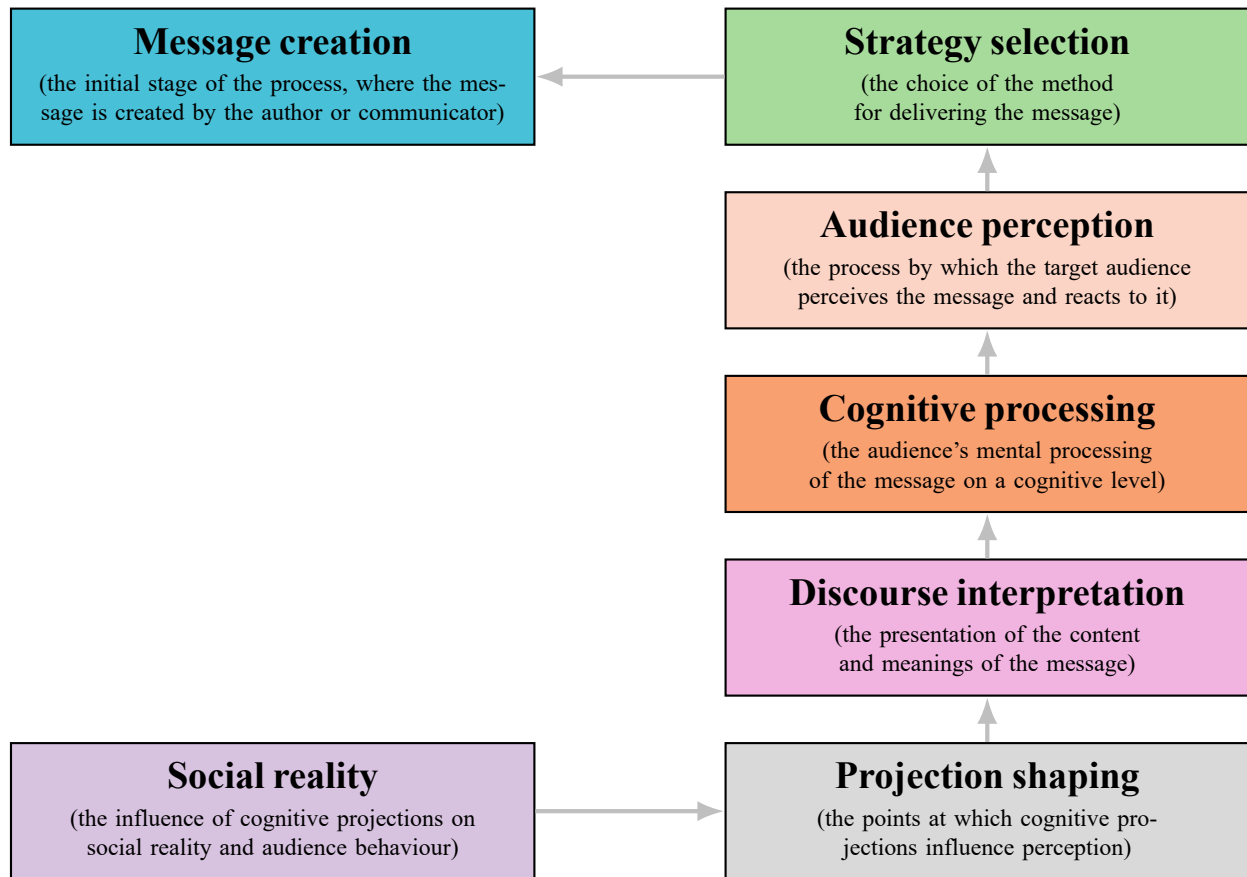


Figure 1. The development of cognitive projections. *Note:* Compiled based on Giachanou et al. (2020), Iskakova et al. (2023).

includes knowledge about how and when to use specific linguistic expressions to achieve communicative goals. At this level, interaction strategies are formed, varying according to social roles, context, and communication objectives.

The third level is the cognitive level, which includes deep mental models and cognitive schemas that govern the perception of information and the interpretation of reality. This level is particularly significant in developing cognitive projections, as it is responsible for structuring information and creating meaningful interpretations of events. Cognitive models are formed based on experience, knowledge, cultural norms, and social stereotypes that individuals acquire throughout their lives. Acting at this level, the linguistic personality influences how an individual perceives and interacts with the surrounding world (Serapio-García et al., 2023).

In the context of discursive communication, the linguistic personality plays the role of a mediator between reality and its perception through language. The discursive strategies used by an individual in communication reflect their linguistic personality and depend on the cognitive models that guide them when forming their statements. The linguistic personality influences the choice of discursive tactics and rhetorical devices aimed at legitimising a specific social reality or beliefs (Rajapov, 2025).

For example, political leaders or public figures with a strong linguistic personality may use their cognitive models to shape public perception and manipulate mass consciousness. Their speech may predominantly feature specific metaphors, frames, or conceptual schemes that shape the audience's perception and create cognitive projections that influence social identity and the perception of power. The linguistic personality of such speakers is closely tied to their role in society and reflects their personal beliefs, worldview, and cultural characteristics (Kieliszek, 2025).

One of the key functions of the linguistic personality is its role in forming cognitive projections. Cognitive projections are mental models through which individuals perceive and interpret discourse (Fitriasari et al., 2024). These projections are built based on prior experience, cultural and social norms, and individual cognitive schemas developed throughout life. The linguistic personality determines how the audience will perceive discursive strategies, and which cognitive projections will be formed in their minds. For example, if an individual adheres to a particular political or

cultural identity, their linguistic personality will shape the way discourses are interpreted according to that identity. This may manifest in the support of certain ideological positions, the perception of political leaders, or the interpretation of social events. The linguistic personality, as a mediator between language and thought, guides cognitive processes and helps individuals form stable interpretations of social reality (Giachanou et al., 2020; Karabalaeva et al., 2025).

Cultural context plays an important role in the development of linguistic personality, as it determines the set of cognitive models and schemes that an individual uses in communication. In different cultures, there may be various approaches to the use of language and communication strategies, which directly affect cognitive processes (Seok et al., 2021). For example, in Anglo-Saxon culture, a particular rhetorical style may prevail, emphasising individualism and freedom of opinion, whereas in Eastern cultures, language may be more restrained and collective, reflecting the priorities of society over the individual. These cultural differences influence linguistic personality and how a person perceives discourses within their social group. Research also shows that linguistic personality can vary depending on the context and social situation. For example, political leaders may adapt their linguistic personality to communicate with different audiences, using various rhetorical devices and strategies to persuade or manipulate listeners. This flexibility of linguistic personality allows leaders to be effective communicators and have a considerable influence on public perception (Sakita, 2021; Tanasiichuk et al., 2024).

Linguistic personality is an important component of cognitive processes, affecting how individuals perceive and interpret discourses. It determines the choice of discursive strategies aimed at legitimising power, forming social identity, and creating cognitive projections that influence public perception. In different cultural and social contexts, linguistic personality can play different roles; however, its primary function remains unchanged: it serves as a bridge between cognitive models and real communication, helping individuals form their perception of social reality (Kieliszek, 2024).

One example of the application of discursive strategies and tactics among prominent figures in Kazakhstan is the linguistic personality of Kekilbayev. Analysing his works is an essential element of researching discursive strategies in the context of Kazakhstani political and cultural rhetoric. Kekilbayev, a writer, well-known politician, and public figure in Kazakhstan, used his linguistic personality as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and constructing national identity. His rhetorical devices and strategies encompass a wide range of tactics aimed at legitimising power, creating national myths, and mobilising social solidarity. Notably, the discursive strategies of the writer are based on deep cognitive projections that are formed in the minds of his audience and guide their perception of political and social reality.

One of the key discursive strategies used by Kekilbayev is the strategy of legitimising power. In his rhetoric, Kekilbayev frequently appealed to traditional values and national myths to justify the legitimacy of the existing political system. This was reflected in his public speeches, where he emphasised the historical achievements and cultural characteristics of Kazakhstan. Through these allusions and cultural references, he created cognitive projections that formed the image of a strong and just state, which in turn strengthened support for the government among the population.

An example of this strategy is his frequent reference to the history of the Kazakh people. In his speeches, the politician emphasised the importance of generational continuity and respect for ancestors, which served as a justification for the existing political order and its legitimacy. In this way, he created cognitive models that connected the audience with deeply rooted cultural and historical values. These projections helped form a positive perception of the government as a continuation of national traditions, thereby strengthening trust in political institutions (Iskakova et al., 2023).

One of the most powerful tools used by Kekilbayev in his discursive strategies was metaphorisation. Metaphors played a key role in his rhetoric, helping not only to clarify complex political concepts but also to form cognitive projections that influenced the perception of listeners. Metaphorisation allowed Kekilbayev to create vivid images that became entrenched in the audience's mind and served as the basis for further interpretations of political reality. For instance, in his speeches, he often used metaphors related to nature and agriculture to describe the political growth and development of Kazakhstan. These metaphors formed cognitive projections that linked political changes with natural processes such as growth, revival, and blossoming. This allowed the audience to perceive political processes as natural and inevitable, which strengthened their support for the ruling elite. Metaphors were also used by the politician to describe the relationship between the people and the government. In one of his speeches, he compared the people to the roots of a tree, and the government to its trunk and branches. This metaphor formed a cognitive projection in which the people were perceived as the foundation of the state, and the government as its natural continuation and development. Such an image created a sense of symbiosis between the people and the government, reinforcing social solidarity and trust in the political system.

Another important discursive strategy of Kekilbayev was the creation of national identity through language and rhetoric. In his speeches, he actively used cultural and historical images to form a clear idea among his audience of what it means to be Kazakh. In his discourse, national identity was linked to common cultural values such as respect for traditions, the heroism of ancestors, and love for the homeland. A key element of this strategy was the creation

of cognitive projections that connected modern Kazakh society with its historical past. He frequently used the image of the steppe as a symbol of freedom and independence, which formed a stable cognitive model in the audience in which national identity was perceived as something unwavering and natural. These cognitive projections strengthened national consciousness and contributed to the construction of a shared cultural and political identity.

Another important feature of Kekilbayev's rhetoric was his polydiscursiveness – the ability to adapt his discursive strategies depending on the context and audience. Polydiscursiveness allowed him to communicate effectively with various social groups, using different rhetorical devices to achieve his goals. For example, in political speeches aimed at the elite, he could use more formal and complex language, emphasising the importance of national unity and political stability. When addressing the mass audience, his rhetoric became more emotional and simple, focusing on common cultural values and historical images (Iskakova et al., 2022). Polydiscursiveness was also evident in his ability to appeal to different cognitive projections depending on the audience. For the elite, Kekilbayev formed cognitive models related to responsibility and leadership, while for the broader audience, his discourse was aimed at creating projections related to national pride and unity.

One such example can be considered Kekilbaev's (2022) speech during the first presidential inauguration in Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev: "History has placed a heavy burden upon you. You are not only building the foundation of a new state, but you are also taking on the responsibility of shaping the entire image of the country for the future. All pioneers have faced such a fate. And you will have to go through this as well..."

In these words, one can note the use of discursive strategies and cognitive projections to shape the perception of the role and responsibility of Kazakhstan's new leaders. Kekilbayev appeals to historical significance by referring to the "heavy burden" imposed by history, emphasising the importance of the moment and the responsibility passed down through generations. The image of 'pioneers' creates a cognitive projection linking modern leaders with past heroes who paved the way in uncharted territories, thus instilling in the audience a sense of heroism and the significance of their mission. The metaphor of the "foundation of a new state" reinforces this perception, creating an image of Nazarbayev and his team as architects whose actions determine the stability and future of the entire "house" being built – the country. Thus, Kekilbayev employs these rhetorical devices to legitimise Nazarbayev's authority, linking him to key historical processes and emphasising his central role in shaping Kazakhstan's future, thereby mobilising society and strengthening social unity during the critical period of state formation.

The discursive strategies and tactics of Kekilbayev, rooted in his distinctly expressive linguistic personality, played a key role in shaping the political and national identity of Kazakhstan. His use of metaphors, historical allusions, and cultural imagery created enduring cognitive projections that guided his audience's perception and strengthened the legitimacy of authority. Kekilbayev's polydiscursiveness enabled him to adapt his strategies depending on the audience, making his rhetoric more effective and influential. His rhetoric contributed to the development of social solidarity and support for the political system, establishing him as one of the most influential public figures of his time.

Examples of the application of cognitive projections can also be traced in Obama's (2009) speech at the Nobel Prize ceremony. In this speech, Obama found himself in a challenging situation, having received the Peace Prize while the United States was engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His rhetoric aimed to balance the ideals of peace with the necessity of using force. He employed cognitive projections to construct the notion of a "just war" as a necessary evil for achieving peace, justifying U.S. military actions through moral leadership, where America acts as the defender of world order and democracy. Obama actively used metaphors such as the "fire of peace", which could only be sustained through struggle and sacrifice, appealing to historical examples, such as the fight against Nazism, to legitimise the use of force in the modern world. He utilised multi-discursivity, adapting his rhetoric depending on the audience: his speech was addressed both to the international community and the audience in the U.S., where debates about wars were ongoing. He created multilayered cognitive projections to shape different perceptions of his policies. Obama also legitimised his authority through moral responsibility, appealing to global citizenship, where leaders are obliged to maintain world order for the sake of future generations. Ultimately, his speech is a multilayered example of discursive strategies, through which he controls the perception of his actions and reinforces his legitimacy on the global stage, emphasising the necessity of protecting peace even through the use of force.

In analysing the application of discursive strategies and cognitive projections, one may also note Margaret Thatcher's speech dedicated to national identity and moral superiority during times of economic challenges (Crines et al., 2016). Her speech at the Conservative Party Conference in 1984 serves as a classic example of the use of robust rhetoric aimed at legitimising her economic reforms and strengthening political power. Amid sharp criticism of her policies, Thatcher employed powerful discursive strategies to create cognitive projections that reinforced the image of the "Iron Lady" and increased support among proponents of her reforms. A key aspect of her rhetoric was the construction of a contrast between the old and the new Britain. Thatcher positioned her reforms as a radical departure from the past, associated with economic stagnation and crises, and as a step towards a prosperous country with a dynamic market economy.

Through this cognitive projection, she cemented the idea of the necessity of painful reforms for long-term success. Margaret Thatcher also used discursive strategies aimed at mobilising national identity and pride. She emphasised that Britain was restoring its strength and international influence due to economic reforms, which required decisive actions and a willingness to overcome challenges. Through historical allusions and metaphors, Thatcher appealed to the idea of national greatness, evoking a sense of patriotism and responsibility for the country's future in her audience. This approach enabled her not only to justify strict economic policies but also to present them as essential for restoring Britain's former greatness. Another important aspect of her speech was the creation of a clear division between the "friends" and "enemies" of her reforms. Thatcher actively employed polarisation in her rhetoric, identifying the opposition and trade unions as forces resisting progress and modernisation. This created a cognitive projection in which her opponents were associated with chaos and disorder, while supporters of the reforms were linked to order and development. This polarisation allowed her to strengthen the legitimisation of her actions in the eyes of the public, emphasising that her policies were aimed at protecting the country's interests from destructive forces.

Thatcher's speech was also notable for its use of metaphors of war and struggle, adding emotional intensity and a sense of drama. She described her economic policies as a battle for Britain's future, which reinforced her image as a decisive and unwavering leader. Emotional appeals in her rhetoric enabled her to link economic challenges to national security and survival, thereby bolstering support among conservative circles. Thus, Margaret Thatcher's speech at the 1984 Conservative Party Conference demonstrated how discursive strategies and cognitive projections can legitimise stringent political measures and economic reforms. She employed contrasts, polarisation, national symbols, and emotional appeals to construct a public perception of her reforms as necessary for restoring Britain's power and prominence.

For a deeper understanding of the subject, the study also examined the rhetoric of prominent linguists. For instance, in the work of Austrian linguist Wodak (2014), she highlights the crucial role of discursive strategies and cognitive projections in creating and sustaining social reality, as well as their influence on the perception of power and collective identities. The researcher places particular emphasis on linguistic identity, describing it as a dynamic structure shaped through communication practices, language, and social experience, which significantly impacts the choice of rhetorical strategies in communication. Wodak defines linguistic identity as a combination of cognitive and linguistic characteristics that determine an individual's communication style and perception of social reality. Linguistic identity encompasses values, beliefs, cultural and political norms that develop throughout an individual's life and manifest in their rhetorical strategies. Cognitive projections, shaped by linguistic identity, guide the perception and help structure the information received through language.

Wodak (2014) underscores the importance of discursive strategies as tools for forming cognitive projections in audiences. These cognitive models enable individuals to structure and interpret information conveyed through discourse, thereby creating stable perceptions of social reality. In discursive practice, rhetorical strategies are aimed at constructing these models, influencing the legitimisation of power, public opinion, and social interactions.

One of the key strategies identified by the linguist is the strategy of inclusion and exclusion. This strategy is actively used in political discourse to construct collective identities by dividing audiences into "us" and "them". Politicians employ such strategies to manipulate public opinion and create cognitive projections that reinforce a sense of belonging to a particular social group while fostering opposition to others (Spytska, 2023). This is especially evident in the context of rhetoric concerning national identity and security.

An example of this strategy's is rhetoric aimed at creating a cognitive projection in which immigrants are perceived as a threat to national security and cultural integrity. The use of such rhetorical devices helps to establish enduring cognitive models within the audience's consciousness, embedding notions of internal threats and the necessity of protection. This enables political leaders to legitimise their actions and strengthen public support.

Another important rhetorical strategy, according to the researcher, is the strategy of legitimisation. Political leaders and other figures employ discursive strategies to create cognitive projections that justify their authority and sustain the social order. Legitimation is often achieved through appeals to shared values, such as tradition, religion, or moral principles. These rhetorical techniques aim to establish stable cognitive models that enable the audience to perceive the existing authority as fair and necessary.

The researcher also emphasises the importance of metaphors and allusions in rhetorical strategies. These metaphors help political leaders translate complex social and political concepts into images that are easily understood by the audience (Dudar, 2024). For instance, the use of military metaphors to describe battles against economic crises or terrorist threats creates cognitive projections in which political actions are perceived as necessary and inevitable. Allusions to cultural symbols and historical events also play a significant role in reinforcing cognitive projections, as they evoke associations with national identity and political legitimacy.

Cognitive projections, as Wodak notes, are the products of rhetorical strategies and are formed during discourse perception. These mental models assist individuals in structuring the information they receive through language and interpreting social reality through the lens of particular attitudes and values. Rhetorical strategies, such as the use of metaphors or historical allusions, play a vital role in shaping these cognitive models and influence how the audience perceives ongoing events.

In international politics, these rhetorical strategies are also employed to legitimise foreign policy decisions, including military actions or the imposition of economic sanctions. In these cases, cognitive projections based on ideas of national interest or international justice help politicians convince audiences of the necessity of their actions.

Wodak's study is a substantial contribution to understanding how discursive strategies shape cognitive projections that influence the perception of social reality and the legitimisation of authority. Linguistic personality, as part of these processes, shapes rhetorical strategies, creating stable cognitive models that affect collective perceptions and social interactions.

Equally significant is the work of van Dijk (2019). His book focuses extensively on macrostructures in discourse and the cognitive processes underlying the perception and interpretation of these macrostructures. One of the central concepts in van Dijk's work is linguistic personality, which, in his context, plays a key role in the organisation of discourse and cognitive projections, influencing the perception of social and political reality. Van Dijk defines linguistic personality as a complex system comprising a set of cognitive and linguistic characteristics of an individual. These characteristics are shaped by social experience, culture, history, and personal beliefs. Linguistic personality, in his view, is organised through macrostructures – global structures that determine how an individual perceives and interprets discourse at the level of meanings, rather than merely at the level of individual words or sentences. These macrostructures help individuals construct cognitive schemas that simplify and systematise complex discursive constructions. Linguistic personality, according to the author, guides the choice of discursive strategies used in communication. These strategies, in turn, shape cognitive projections through which the audience perceives and interprets reality. Notably, linguistic personality is a dynamic and flexible structure that adapts depending on the social context and communicative situation.

One of the researcher's key concepts is the idea of macrostructures, which act as global frameworks organising information at a high level of abstraction. In discourse, macrostructures reflect the main ideas, themes, and intentions of the speaker, which underpin cognitive projections. These macrostructures systematise the perception of discourse, helping the listener or reader highlight key points and ignore irrelevant details. Van Dijk asserts that macrostructures are an integral part of cognitive information processing, as they simplify and organise complex discourses into comprehensible and manageable frameworks. These macrostructures also influence the creation of cognitive projections that shape the interpretation of social reality. For example, in political discourse, macrostructures may encompass overarching themes such as "crisis", "security", or "justice", which help the audience perceive and interpret events more coherently.

A focus of the study is discursive strategies aimed at creating cognitive projections through macrostructures. These strategies encompass various rhetorical techniques and methods that help individuals and groups organise information in ways that influence audience perception. Van Dijk identified several key discursive strategies that play a vital role in cognitive projection. One such strategy is simplification and generalisation, which enables the organisation of complex information into simple and easily understandable frameworks. In political discourse, this strategy is often used to present complex social and economic problems as straightforward macrostructures, such as "crisis" or "threat". These macrostructures form cognitive projections that help the audience interpret events quickly and unambiguously, without delving into the details. Another equally important strategy is polarisation, which is employed to divide discourse into opposing categories, such as "friend" and "foe", "good" and "evil". Polarisation is frequently utilised in political rhetoric, where leaders seek to mobilise support for their policies by creating cognitive models in which their opponents are perceived as threats to national security or public welfare. Van Dijk noted that such discursive strategies can have a profound impact on public opinion, as they organise the perception of social reality through macrostructures that support one-sided and simplified interpretations.

Research indicates that macrostructures and discursive strategies guide cognitive models that determine how people understand and interpret the world. These cognitive models are based on existing knowledge and experience but can also be altered or supplemented through new discourses and communicative situations. Macrostructures formed through discourse become part of these cognitive models and influence the perception of new information.

Van Dijk's work is a substantial contribution to understanding the role of macrostructures in organising discourse and their impact on cognitive projections. Linguistic personality, macrostructures, and discursive strategies interact to create cognitive models that guide the perception of social reality and influence public opinion. Within this framework,

the author provides a comprehensive analysis of how global structures of discourse shape the understanding of the world and how linguistic personality determines the choice of strategies to be used in communication.

Table 1 illustrates how various discursive strategies contribute to developing national identity, legitimising power, and structuring perception through global macrostructures.

Table 1. Comparison of discourse strategies and their cognitive impact.

Analysis parameter	A. Kekilbayev	R. Wodak	T.A. van Dijk
Main objective of discourse strategy	Emphasis on the importance of the moment and the responsibility placed on the president as the leader of the new state	Legitimisation of power, manipulation of public perception	Organisation and simplification of complex discourses through macrostructures
Typical cognitive projections	The main cognitive projection is related to the image of the “pioneer”, symbolising the beginning of a new path	Creation of a division between “us” and “them”, strengthening of national identity	Simplified perception schemes of social reality based on global themes
Use of metaphors	The metaphor of “heavy burden” is used, symbolising the difficulties and responsibilities placed on the leader	Metaphors of struggle and defence, used to create cognitive models of national security	Metaphors of crisis and threat, which structure the perception of social instability
Use of historical allusions	References to the fates of great pioneers who faced difficulties on their paths, recalling historical examples of nations and leaders who went through similar trials	Use of historical allusions to strengthen political positions and legitimise power	Allusions to historical processes as a way of justifying current political events
Role of the linguistic personality	The ability to appeal to both the emotional and rational aspects of listeners, using the language of a mentor and wise figure who supports and inspires	Focus on the inclusion and exclusion of groups, with the linguistic personality acting as a tool of manipulation	The definition of global structures of discourse and the organisation of macrostructures through the linguistic personality
Inclusion and exclusion strategies	Use of inclusive strategies, appealing to the whole nation, emphasising shared responsibility for the future of the state	Creation of cognitive projections that divide society into “us” and “them”	Polarisation of themes through macrostructures, creating cognitive models of “friend-foe”
Examples of discourse strategy usage	Discourse of a nation-builder, a leader-pioneer, and responsibility to history and future generations	Political rhetoric in the context of immigration and national security in Europe	Political rhetoric in the context of crises and threats in international relations
Examples of using discursive strategies	Application of mentoring and support strategy; strategy of legitimising power through appeal to responsibility to history	Legitimisation of political decisions through appeal to traditions and historical analogies	Simplification of political problems through macrostructures, for example, creating themes of “crisis” and “threat”

Note: Compiled based on Kekilbaev (2022), Wodak (2014), van Dijk (2019).

The study shows that the authors use various tactics, such as metaphors, historical allusions, and inclusion and exclusion strategies, to create cognitive projections that simplify the perception of complex social and political phenomena.

4 Discussion

One of the key aspects of the study is the identification of the role of discursive strategies in shaping social reality and legitimising power. Political leaders use these strategies to create and strengthen cognitive projections that influence the perception of power and society. In the media discourse of Kazakhstan, this process is actively facilitated. Burkhanov (2020) emphasised that through political narratives, a positive perception of national identity is created, which contributes to the consolidation of society and support for power. The use of media in these processes allows for the dissemination of discourses aimed at strengthening statehood and creating an image of national unity, which was also identified in this study.

Discursive strategies aimed at developing cognitive models are actively employed in political discourse to manage audience perception. Kurmanova et al. (2021) analyse speeches by political figures in Kazakhstan and the United States, focusing on the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphors and historical allusions. These devices form stable cognitive models in the audience that facilitate the interpretation of complex political phenomena. This study also identified that the rhetoric of political leaders plays a key role in creating cognitive projections that shape stable representations of political reality and contribute to the legitimisation of power.

Another important aspect is the role of metaphors in discourse. Metaphorisation helps political leaders structure complex social and political processes through simple and familiar images (An et al., 2024). Charteris-Black (2018) noted that metaphors play a central role in simplifying the perception of political discourses, which helps the audience better absorb and interpret information. The study confirms this conclusion, showing that metaphors create cognitive projections that become the basis for interpreting political reality and contribute to strengthening the legitimacy of power.

Polydiscursivity, or the ability to adapt rhetoric depending on the audience, also plays an important role in political discourse (Zelenov, 2024). Zhang et al. (2023) noted that political leaders actively adapt their rhetoric according to the context, which allows them to effectively influence audience perception. Poly-discursivity, as the study shows, helps not only manage public perception but also form cognitive models that contribute to policy support. Adapting rhetoric for different social groups enables political leaders to create cognitive projections that align with the expectations and beliefs of these groups, thereby strengthening their political influence.

The strategy of inclusion and exclusion is another important tool in political discourse (K. A. Khan et al., 2025). It is actively used to divide the audience into “us” and “them”, which contributes to strengthening social identity and mobilising support for political leaders. Sagadiyeva et al. (2021) examined this aspect and concluded that inclusion and exclusion strategies help develop collective cognitive models that support social solidarity and political stability. This aligns with the findings of the study, which established that inclusion and exclusion play a substantial role in creating stable cognitive projections that govern the perception of political reality and sustain the legitimacy of power.

Allusions to cultural and historical events also play an important role in legitimising power through discourse. The study by Zhunussova et al. (2024) analysed addresses by heads of state, emphasising the importance of using historical and cultural symbols to create cognitive projections that strengthen the perception of power as just and legitimate. The use of such symbols helps political leaders create positive associations in the audience with historical achievements and national traditions, thereby strengthening trust in the political system. This supports the conclusion that allusions to history and culture play a key role in constructing stable cognitive models that contribute to the support of political institutions.

An important role in the development of cognitive models is played by the linguistic personality of political leaders. Paltridge (2021) noted that linguistic personality influences the choice of discursive strategies and rhetorical devices, which, in turn, affects audience perception. This is confirmed by the results of the study, which indicate that the linguistic personality of politicians shapes cognitive processes, creating stable models of perception of political reality. The linguistic personality forms perceptions of the political leader as a person capable of expressing the shared values and goals of society, thereby contributing to their legitimisation and support.

One aspect of the findings is that the cognitive projections created through discourse not only structure the perception of social reality but also govern audience behaviour. The study by Khajavi and Rasti (2020) emphasised that the rhetorical devices used by politicians actively influence the cognitive processes of the audience, developing stable models of perception that define social and political beliefs. This confirms the data obtained, which demonstrate that cognitive projections help the audience structure information and form stable representations of political and social processes.

Another important aspect is the influence of metaphors and historical allusions on the perception and interpretation of political reality (Hoxha et al., 2025). Metaphors play a pivotal role in rhetoric, as they allow political leaders to explain complex and abstract political concepts through simpler, more understandable images, which makes them

easier for the audience to absorb. Liang and Kelsen (2018) noted that metaphors not only help simplify the perception of political processes but also create deep cognitive models that cement certain representations in people's minds, influencing their behaviour and political beliefs. These models become a stable foundation for interpreting events, supporting certain narratives that political leaders seek to convey to society. Historical allusions also play an essential role, linking contemporary political processes with well-known historical events or figures, which strengthens the perception of current political decisions as justified and legitimate (Efremov, 2025). This rhetorical strategy helps create stable mental models that not only facilitate the understanding of complex political phenomena but also strengthen trust in authority. This confirms the findings of the study, which state that metaphors and historical allusions effectively contribute to the legitimisation of power, solidifying its position through the creation of cognitive projections that support the perception of authority as fair and trustworthy.

This study also highlights the importance of rhetorical strategies that contribute to the creation of cognitive projections, which play a key role in the legitimisation of political power and the strengthening of social identity. These strategies encompass a wide range of rhetorical devices that structure the perception of events, creating cognitive models capable of deeply influencing mass consciousness. Gigauri (2021) emphasises that political leaders use these strategies to create stable images of political institutions based on positive representations and widely accepted values. The created cognitive projections help not only to ensure support for power but also to strengthen society's belief in its fairness and legitimacy. Such rhetorical strategies include elements aimed at constructing collective identity, which is especially important in conditions of political instability or social change. As a result, the cognitive models developed through rhetorical strategies have a long-term impact on the perception of political processes, contributing to the consolidation of society around certain ideological positions and strengthening national unity.

Thus, the study confirms that discursive strategies and cognitive projections play a central role in the development of social reality and the legitimisation of power. Political leaders actively use rhetorical devices such as metaphors, historical allusions, and strategies of inclusion and exclusion to manage audience perception and create cognitive models that bolster their authority.

5 Conclusions

The study confirms the important role of discursive strategies in shaping and managing cognitive projections, which greatly influence the perception of social reality. Discursive strategies are important tools for the creation and legitimisation of social identity, political structures, and cultural values. Through the use of various rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, historical allusions, and emotional appeals, these strategies help create stable cognitive models that structure the perception of complex social phenomena.

Cognitive projections, developed through these strategies, are key mental constructs that simplify and shape the audience's perception. They allow individuals to interpret reality through the lens of existing knowledge, cultural norms, and social experience. Depending on the context and social position of individuals, cognitive projections can vary, leading to different interpretations of the same discourse. This confirms that discursive strategies not only inform the audience but also actively manage their perception and understanding of social reality.

Linguistic identity, as an important element of the discursive process, influences the choice of rhetorical strategies and the development of cognitive models. Within political and social discourses, linguistic identity contributes to the legitimisation of power, the strengthening of social solidarity, and the construction of national identity. The influence of linguistic identity is reflected in the use of rhetorical devices that highlight cultural and historical norms, shaping cognitive projections designed to reinforce the legitimacy of political structures and social institutions.

Polydiscursivity, or the ability to adapt rhetoric depending on context and audience, also plays a substantial role in the effectiveness of discursive strategies. Political and scientific leaders use different approaches to achieve their goals, adapting their message to the specifics of a particular social group or situation. This flexibility allows them to influence different audiences effectively and create cognitive projections that support their political or social positions.

The conducted analysis shows that the discursive strategies used by global leaders and researchers have a significant influence on the construction of social identity and the legitimisation of power. These strategies aim to create stable cognitive models that help the audience interpret political and social phenomena, strengthen the sense of belonging, and shape the perception of power as legitimate and trustworthy.

Thus, the study demonstrates that discursive strategies are powerful tools for managing public perception and shaping cognitive projections. These projections not only help the audience structure and simplify complex social information but also influence their attitude towards political and social institutions.

Further research areas could include a deeper analysis of the influence of cultural differences on the choice of discursive strategies and cognitive projections and the exploration of the role of digital media in the development of new models of perception of social and political reality.

The limitations of the study lie in its focus on specific cultural and political contexts, which may complicate the generalisation of the results on an international level. The application of certain analytical methods may not cover all aspects of cognitive projections, especially in a digital environment where discourses dynamically change. In addition, the limited amount of factual data on the perception of discourses by different social groups may narrow the possibilities for drawing more precise conclusions.

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