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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2522-4565.2026.65.11>

To cite this article: Pliuta, N. (2026). Prahmatyka osobovykh zaimennykh u dyskursi pressekreteria Biloho domu [Pragmatics of personal pronouns in the discourse of the press secretary of the white house]. *Problemy humanitarnykh nauk: zbirnyk naukovykh prats Drohobytskoho derzhavnoho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni Ivana Franka. Seriiia «Filolohiia» – Problems of Humanities. “Philology” Series: a collection of scientific articles of the Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University*, 65, 94–106, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2522-4565.2026.65.11> [in English].

PRAGMATICS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY OF THE WHITE HOUSE

Summary. *The circle of participants in the political discourse is outlined in the article. It is demonstrated that speakers acting as addressors in political discourse are not homogeneous, as they occupy different levels of the political hierarchy. The concept of addressor-retransmitter is highlighted. The importance of the expressive grammatical means, in particular pronouns, as a means of achieving the goals of political discourse is emphasised.*

The relevance of the study lies in the fact that the speech characteristics of participants in political discourse, who can be classified as addressor-retransmitters according to their functions, remain understudied.

The aim of this work is to study the specifics of the personal pronouns functioning of in the speech of the US White House press secretaries by comparing it with the speech of the US presidents.

The study was conducted using both statistical and discourse analysis methods.

It has been shown that US presidents use the pronoun I more often than press secretaries. They use the pronoun in order to create or protect their own image, the image of their team, to demonstrate determination, leadership and responsibility, to emphasise the uniqueness of their position, and to attract attention.

Press secretaries work to create and protect the image of the president. Most often, this is done by providing the audience with a qualitative description of the president, reporting on his activities in accordance with the situation and from the standpoint of the press secretary. It has been noted that both press secretaries and presidents most often use the pronoun I in combinations with such verbs as think, say, believe, and know. The personal pronoun he is rarely used by the subjects of the study as a means of performing a persuasive function in speech.

The most notable differences in the use of personal pronouns in the speech of press secretaries and presidents are observed in the use of the personal pronoun I. No significant difference in the use of the personal pronouns we, they and the dichotomy we–they was found between press secretaries and presidents.

Key words: *political discourse; press secretary; addressor-retransmitter; personal pronoun.*



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Бібліографічний опис статті: Плюта, Н. (2026). Прагматика особових займенників у дискурсі пресекретаря Білого дому. *Проблеми гуманітарних наук: збірник наукових праць Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка. Серія «Філологія»*, 65, 94–106, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2522-4565.2026.65.11>

ПРАГМАТИКА ОСОБОВИХ ЗАЙМЕННИКІВ У ДИСКУРСІ ПРЕСЕКРЕТАРЯ БІЛОГО ДОМУ

Анотація. У статті окреслено коло учасників політичного дискурсу. Показано, що мовці-адресанти у політичному дискурсі не є однорідними, оскільки перебувають на різних ступенях політичної ієрархії. Виділено поняття «адресант-ретранслятор». Підкреслено, що для досягнення цілей політичного дискурсу важливе значення мають експресивні граматичні засоби, зокрема займенники.

Актуальність дослідження пов'язана з тим, що особливості мовлення учасників політичного дискурсу, котрих можна класифікувати як адресанти-ретранслятори за виконуваними функціями, ще мало досліджені.

Метою розвідки є вивчення специфіки функціонування особових займенників у мовленні пресекретарів Білого дому США шляхом зіставлення з мовленням президентів США. Дослідження здійснено з залученням статистичних методів та методів дискурс-аналізу.

Показано, що президенти США користуються займенником І частіше ніж пресекретарі. Вони послуговуються цим займенником для створення або захисту власного іміджу, іміджу своєї команди, демонстрації рішучості, лідерства, відповідальності, підкреслення унікальності власної позиції, привернення уваги.

Пресекретарі орієнтовані на створення й захист іміджу президента. Найчастіше це відбувається шляхом надання аудиторії якісної характеристики президента, звіту про його діяльність відповідно до ситуації і від власного імені. Відзначено, що як пресекретарі, так і президенти найчастіше вживають займенник І з такими дієсловами: *think, say, believe, know*. Особовий займенник не як реалізатор функції персуазивності в мовленні досліджуваних осіб практично не вживано.

Основні відмінності стосовно використання особових займенників у мовленні пресекретарів і президентів стосуються особового займенника І. Натомість значної різниці у вживанні особових займенників *we, they* та дихотомії *we – they* між пресекретарями і президентами не зафіксовано.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, пресекретар, адресант-ретранслятор, особовий займенник.

Problem Statement. An analysis of publications on the speech of participants in institutional political discourse has shown that the vast majority of scientific studies analyse the speech of independent politicians, such as presidents, party leaders, movement leaders, and parliamentarians. At the same time, the problems of speech among the participants in political discourse, who can be classified as addressors-retransmitters according to the functions they perform while under the circumstances, equivalent to the speech conditions of a press secretary during press briefings (e.g., the White House press secretary or politicians of sim-

ilar level), remain understudied, which determines the relevance of this work (Pliuta, 2024, 71).

Review of Research and Publications. In today's world, political communication plays a vital role in society. In the scientific community, the term 'political communication' is most often understood as the process of transferring information from the speaker to the recipient. This process typically occurs through certain information channels, all while taking into account the circumstances of speech, the context of action, or, in other words, the communicative situation (Лукіна, 2021, 79). At the same time,

as A. Akayomova notes, “it is only through the channels of political communication that politicians can publicise and explain their decisions, seek political support, report on their activities, and create an image” (Акайомова, 2011, 90). The participants in political communication are politicians in power; political parties and movements that aspire to power; politically active citizens of the country; and the apolitical strata of society. In the process of political communication, politicians actualise their political texts in oral or written form. Political discourse, as noted by N. Kondratenko, is a specific manifestation of political communication, which involves the actualisation of political text in the communicative act of interaction between political subjects and objects. This type of discourse is institutional and status-oriented (Кондратенко, Стрій, Билінська, 2019). Participants in political discourse within the scientific community are usually divided into two broad categories: addressors (speakers) and addressees (recipients). At the same time, many factors influence the linguistic behaviour of participants in political communication. The parameters of addressors and addressees are not constant. Changes can occur even within a single statement. With this in mind, the following modifications of the addressee were identified: quasi-addressee, addressee-retransmitter, and indirect addressee (Борисов, 2016, 81).

In institutional political discourse, speakers are also not homogeneous and operate in different conditions. In particular, they occupy different positions in the political hierarchy. Their speech is determined to a greater or lesser extent by institutional pressure. Some of them are relatively independent politicians (e.g. the president of a country), while others are employees of political institutions. The latter ones usually speak on behalf of a political institution. However, in some cases, they can also speak on their own behalf. In our opinion, such politicians can be classified as addressors-retransmitters. An example of such a politician is the White House press secretary (Pliuta, 2024).

There is a perception that in political discourse, communicants (the addressor and the addressee) interact on equal terms. A. Romanchenko disagrees with this idea, noting that “the degree of their equality depends on the

genre in which the discourse is realised” (Романченко, 2019, 196). T. Kovalevska marks that, given the main goal of political discourse (to seize and retain power), it is rather one-sided, focused on unilateral influence rather than equal interaction between communicants (Ковалевська, 2008). In the process of political communication, the addressor seeks to manipulate the consciousness of the addressee (primarily the electorate): to convince them to consciously or subconsciously interpret, evaluate and act in the manner desired by the addressor.

N. Frasinyuk asserts that “in English-language political discourse, there are a number of linguistic devices at all levels of language that perform a persuasive function in political discourse.” At the same time, she notes that “at the morphological level, the persuasive effect is achieved through the use of pronouns, verbs and verbal constructions, adjectives, etc.” (Фрасинюк, 2020, 129–130). Pronouns, as a grammatical class of words, are used primarily to avoid repetition, which makes speech more concise and understandable. Pronouns also belong to the group of cohesive elements, which are the means of achieving text coherence. Their use makes the text more logical and consistent.

Pronouns can be considered among the most important elements in the speech of participants in political discourse. This is because “all speech is addressed to someone, and one of the main grammatical means of addressing someone is pronouns” (Гнатковська, Сапожник, Суродейкіна, 2021). In addition, their use can significantly influence the tone and emotional component of speech, alter the evaluative and expressive parameters of a statement, and serve as a constructor of rhetorical questions and appeals (Безгодова, 2024).

Drew and Heritage believe that in conversational analysis, both the local context, which can be viewed as the text directly surrounding the linguistic units and phenomena, and the broader context, which involves taking institutional frameworks into account in the analysis, are equally important (Drew & Heritage, 1992, 18).

R. Bramley, researching the use of pronouns in forming identity in political discourse, expands on this idea. The context in the scholar’s interpretation “includes the lexical and

grammatical features that surround the pronoun”; the full text of the conversation; the situation in which the conversation takes place; the background knowledge and assumptions of the participants; and the sociocultural environment in which the speakers operate. The latter can be specified: it is advisable to analyse speech taking into account the available and obtained information about the participants, their political views, and the political situation in the country and the world (Bramley, 2001, 21–22).

At the same time, N. Bezhodova notes that “pronouns do not have a constant lexical meaning, vivid stylistic colouring and complete grammatical independence; they acquire semantic and syntactic content in the text” (Безгодова, 2024, 67).

I. Yushchuk points out that “depending on the linguistic situation, a pronoun adapts its grammatical form to a certain extent to the words it replaces” (Юшук, 2008, 361).

In scientific literature, the issue of the use of personal pronouns by participants of the political discourse, such as political leaders and the top officials of states, who can be classified as addressors based on their functions in a communicative situation, has been extensively researched (Гнатковська, Деренчук, Фрасинюк, Бацевич).

Thus, according to N. Frasyuniuk, the use of personal pronouns in the first person singular and plural is characteristic of politicians who hold high office; “by using the pronoun “*I*” in speech, a politician shows that only he can change something in the life of society, that he is confident in his strength, that he is <...> a leader.” By using the pronoun *we*, politicians demonstrate their belief in cooperation and mutual understanding with the people, thereby convincing voters to support their ideas. They address the voters directly and indirectly, presenting themselves and their programme (Фрасинюк, 2020, 130–131).

A. Fedorova and I. Dudko assert that “at the morphological level, emphasis can be achieved through the use of personal pronouns and adjectives.” They allow one to represent oneself, emphasise confidence in one’s own abilities, and indicate that only the speaker (politician) and his team are capable of resolving the issue at hand and changing the situation for the better (Федорова, Дудко, 2022, 67).

T. Khorunzhuk, researching “the interaction between anthroponyms and third-person singular pronouns in the characterisation of politicians’ spoken language,” notes that the pronoun *he* is used in politicians’ spoken language to refer to a previously mentioned person’s name. She suggests considering “the nominative transformation of an anthroponym into a third-person singular pronoun as one of the features of the spoken language of representatives of the political elite” (Хорунжук, 2021, 24–26).

O. Vorobyova and V. Ts’okan note the role of the personal pronoun *we*, the so-called collective ‘we,’ in the implementation of communicative tactics of unity, opposition, contrast, and identification. In her opinion, “this technique creates the effect of blurring the boundaries between the politician and the audience, which allows the speaker to manipulate the consciousness of listeners in favour of the political figure” (Воробийова, Цьокан, 2024, 104).

The aim of this work is to study the specifics of personal pronoun usage in the speech of the US White House press secretaries, with an emphasis on the polypersonal dimension of linguistic personality, considering it as a collective image of a specific group of people distinguished by professional characteristics.

Achieving the aim of the study requires accomplishing the following **objectives**:

- a) to analyse the specifics of the activities of White House press secretaries, taking into account their status and role restrictions;
- b) to conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the use of personal pronouns by White House press secretaries during press briefings and by US presidents during press conferences;
- c) to perform a comparative analysis of the use of personal pronouns by White House press secretaries and US presidents and identify the possible differences;
- d) to compare the frequency of use of personal pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, *they*, *he* by White House press secretaries with the frequency of these pronouns in the COCA corpus;
- e) to identify the peculiarities of the use of personal pronouns by White House press secretaries.

The object of the study is the speech of White House press secretaries during press

briefings and the speech of US presidents during press conferences.

The research material. Since our focus is on studying the specifics of the use of personal pronouns in the briefings of White House press secretaries as representatives of a political institution, we consider it appropriate to compare their speech (briefings) with that of US presidents as leaders of the same political institution (presidential press conferences).

Methodology of the research. The study was conducted using the following methods: quantitative (including corpus-based) methods, descriptive method, and comparative methods.

Presentation of the material. The specific use of personal pronouns by press secretaries is determined by the peculiarities of the role of a press secretary as a representative of a political institution with a subordinate status. On the one hand, he is obliged to act within the status and role restrictions established by the institution and to perform the main task of this institution – fight for the retention and exercise of power. He cannot deviate from the trajectory of political discourse defined by the institution, since he is fighting for power not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the president and his team. On the other hand, given that press briefings often involve impromptu oral speech, he is unable to anticipate all the questions from the audience and, accordingly, prepare answers to them. Therefore, in certain situations, the press secretary is forced to act as an independent politician-addressee – that is, to choose the necessary speech tactics and strategies unilaterally to accomplish his mission as a participant in political discourse. The ambiguous status of the press secretary forces him to choose his words more carefully than an independent politician-addressee. In other words, if the main factor influencing the president's speech is situational (political expediency), then the two key factors influencing the press secretary's speech are status and role restrictions, as well as political expediency.

Let us consider the use of the first-person singular pronoun *I*. First of all, it should be noted that press secretaries use this pronoun less frequently than presidents, while implementing other communicative intentions. Thus, the frequency of use of the pronoun *I* in US President George W. Bush's press conferences is 26.1 per

thousand words, while for his press secretaries, A. Fleischer and D. Perino, the corresponding frequencies are 11.3 and 18.7, respectively. The frequency of use of the pronoun *I* in US President Donald Trump's press conferences is 34.3 per thousand words, while in the press briefings of his press secretaries, Sean Spicer and Kayleigh McEnany, it is 20.9 and 12.6, respectively.

The president most often uses the pronoun *I* to create or protect his own image, as well as the image of his team. For example, during a press conference on 16 February 2017, President Trump stated in his opening remarks:

Mr TRUMP: I'm here today to update the American people on the incredible progress that has been made in the last four weeks since my inauguration. We have made incredible progress. I don't think there's ever been a president elected who in this short period of time has done what we've done.

In the above statement, the pronoun *I* is used for the first time in the context of units that indicate the speaker's time-space positioning here and now. The purpose of the meeting is emphasised separately. The president stresses that he personally came to the audience to talk about the results of his work in office. In this way, he not only establishes contact with the audience but also strengthens his image as a decisive, interested in effective work, and ready-to-engage leader. In the next two sentences, the pronoun *we* is used to denote the actant instead of the pronoun *I*. President Trump uses this substitution to demonstrate unity with his team, emphasising that all achievements are the result of the work of the entire team. In the third sentence, the pronoun *I* is used to construct an evaluative framework through which the president emphasises his own exceptionality by comparing himself to his predecessors, thereby strengthening his image.

In addition, the pronoun *I* can be used by presidents to demonstrate determination, leadership, and responsibility, to emphasise the uniqueness of their position and attract attention, and to create a personal connection with the audience.

For example, during a press conference on 22 February 2001, President George W. Bush responded to the reporter's question, "*You said that your \$1.6 trillion tax cut is reasonable and responsible within the outlines of the budget*

you're going to present. If, when that gets to Congress, things start getting layered on to it, like corporate tax cuts, capital gains, would you still support it? And if it reached your desk at a higher level, would you sign it?" with the following statement:

Mr BUSH: As you know, I shy away from hypotheticals, Pancho. I'm going to resist the Christmas tree effect of tax policy. I don't want people putting ornaments on my plan.

In the first sentence, President George W. Bush uses the pronoun *I* to position himself as a unique, charismatic personality. At the same time, by using the phrase '*as you know,*' he emphasises his personal connection with the audience. By using the pronoun *I* in the phrase '*going to resist,*' he demonstrates determination to achieve his goal. In the third sentence, the pronoun *I* is used to position himself as a leader.

We believe that this response demonstrates the president's leadership position and his responsibility for the ideas presented.

During the same press conference, the president skilfully demonstrated his ability to maintain personal contact with the audience, remaining calm and respectful when a reporter interrupted his answer:

Mr BUSH: I didn't get to finish my answer, with all due respect.

By pointing out the tactless interruption, he regains control of the situation and continues his answer to the substance of the question.

Unlike the president, the press secretary cannot use the pronoun *I* to create or protect his own image due to status and role restrictions. His primary task is to work on the president's image, not his own. The technique used by the press secretary to accomplish this task is to provide a qualitative description (of varying degrees of completeness) of the president or a report on his activities or work performed, depending on the situation and on his own behalf. For example, during a press briefing on 23 January 2017, press secretary Sean Spicer characterised President Donald Trump in the following way:

Mr TRUMP: I mean, that's gonna happen. I think, look, you're seeing with respect to the other meetings, it's day one – working day one here. He's gonna start with the leadership. He's gonna have a great conversation with them. But then I think you're gonna see a variety of meetings:

the Congressional Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, small groups of leaders.

This method of using the pronoun *I* by press secretaries is the most common among the press briefings analysed and accounts for approximately one third of the recorded cases. For the same reasons, press secretaries cannot use the pronoun *I* to demonstrate their determination, leadership or the uniqueness of their position.

The other most frequent cases of use of the pronoun *I* occur when the press secretary makes use of the pronoun to:

- resolve organisational issues related to the briefing. For example, K. McEnany during the briefing on 6 May 2020:

Ms McENANY: I'd like to direct your attention to a very encouraging graph regarding test results. It'll be over my shoulder and hopefully on the screen for those of you watching on television.

- performing the part of the duties that concerns informing the audience. For example, J. Siewert during a briefing on 6 November 2000:

Mr SIEWERT: And, frankly, that was a little over-blown in the press. I made that point perfectly clear to those of you who I discussed that with on Thursday. And I don't have anything to add to what we've said about that.

- using polite phrases when interacting with the audience. For example, A. Fleischer during a briefing on 25 July 2001:

Mr FLEISCHER: Good afternoon. For you travelers out there, welcome back. I hope you got some rest last night.

- expressing one's own view of the situation. For example, A. Fleischer during a briefing on 25 July 2001:

Q What I'm asking is, I understand what his opinion is on this, but it appears that politically at this point, that point of view is not winning in the House of Representatives.

Mr FLEISCHER: I disagree with that assessment, and I think that's what the vote –

Q Based on what? I mean, that's what I'm trying to get at, is what's his assessment of how likely his approach is of winning in the House?

Mr FLEISCHER: I think there is plenty of evidence that the President's approach is making good progress with members of the House, Democrat and Republican alike. And the question was, when will we know, when will the

ultimate test come, which, of course, is a vote. And you'll find out when the vote is, and that will be the ultimate answer to your question.

It is quite common to use the pronoun *I* to avoid giving a direct answer and to change the modality of the statement, which allows the president to partially disclaim responsibility for certain actions or inaction (in approximately 10% to 20% of cases). In this case, the press secretary takes some responsibility for the situation upon himself, justifying the president and the administration. For example, during a briefing on 12 May 2020, C. McEnany responded to a question “*President Trump yesterday said the U.S. had prevailed on testing, but today we heard from senators, both Democratic and Republican, who say that's not the case. <...> What's the White House response?*” in the following way:

Ms McENANY: I've sat in the task force meetings where Admiral Giroir has talked to governors and literally pulled out his chart and said: "Governor X, here is your plan and your request for testing in order to safely reopen. I can assure you that that will be satisfied this month."

So I have seen those meetings take place. I can assure the American people, in line with what Dr. Fauci has said, we do have enough for phase one.

Compared to presidents, press secretaries use the pronoun *I* much less frequently to motivate their audience. For example, during a briefing on 24 January 2001, press secretary A. Fleischer was asked the following question:

Q: Ari, the fact that they even held this meeting, is that a sign that campaign finance has risen on the President's agenda? Because he hadn't mentioned it as one of his top priorities before.

The answer to this was as follows:

Mr FLEISCHER: Well, he mentioned many issues that came up in the meeting. Again, they talked about defense, they talked about energy, they talked about a variety of things. And particularly on pork barrel spending, I urge you to pay some attention there in the future.

The pronoun *I* is also used by press secretaries when justifying themselves, in the process of defending the image of the president's team, and when implementing strategies to undermine the image of their opponents.

For example, during a briefing on 25 July 2001, press secretary A. Fleischer was asked the following question:

Q That's what I mean. So if it's the law of the land, why can't Congress just approve it? What's holding up Congress?

In his response, the press secretary not only defends the president's image, but also employs a strategy to undermine the image of political opponents (in this case, the US Congress):

Mr FLEISCHER: I think that's a great question for Congress. And this is an issue that the President differs with Congress and differs with some people in his own party. The President thinks it's terribly important to be fair to our Mexican friends.

In some cases, press secretaries, like presidents, try to draw attention to themselves by emphasising the pronoun *I*. A striking example of this can be found in a quote from US White House press secretary Sean Spicer, delivered in his opening remarks during his first briefing as press secretary on 23 January 2017.

Mr SPICER: I was going to start with a recap of the inauguration, but I think we've covered that pretty well. By the way, just as I get started, I know that Josh Earnest was voted the most popular press secretary by the Press Corps, so after reading -- checking my Twitter feed, I shot Josh an e-mail last night letting him know that he can rest easy, that his title is secure for at least the next few days.

The first-person plural pronoun *we*, also known as the ‘collective pronoun’ (Vorobiova, Ts'okan, 2024, 104), plays a significant role in the construction of communication strategies and tactics. It is often used to implement communication tactics of unity and opposition, contrast and identification.

There is no significant difference in the use of the pronoun *we* by presidents and press secretaries. The frequency of use of this pronoun in President George W. Bush's speech is 12.36 units per thousand words, and in President Donald Trump's speech, it is 9.52. For press secretaries: D. Perino – 17.34; K. McEnany – 9.92; D. Myers – 8.93; J. Siewert – 16.92.

In the part of President Obama's press conference on 10 September 2010, which was 2,183 words long, the first-person plural pronoun *we* was used 46 times, including 20 times when

using the tactic of uniting with his team, 11 times when using the tactic of uniting with the American people, 4 times when uniting with the entire government of the country, and 2 times each when uniting with the audience and the US Congress.

Press secretaries use the pronoun *we* somewhat more frequently, emphasising that they are acting together with the president and his team. During a press briefing on 4 November 2002, press secretary A. Fleischer used the pronoun *we* 30 times, 20 of which were intended to show unity with the president's team; five times to express unity with the president's team and the government as a whole; twice to express unity with the American people; and three times to express unity with the audience.

The use of this pronoun by the addressor helps to blur the boundaries between him and the collective addressee, creating the effect of unity between the politician and the audience (the American people), thereby creating conditions for manipulating the addressees' consciousness in favour of the politician. An example of this can be seen in the response of press secretary J. Carney to a correspondent during a briefing on 4 June 2012:

Q On Friday, at multiple fundraisers, the President seemed to make the case that the disappointing job numbers in May were largely due to the turmoil in Europe. If these jobs – if the jobs picture continues as it is, does this administration plan to make the case that it's Europe – it's Congress and Europe that's slowing the nation's economy?

The press secretary's response was as follows:

Mr CARNEY: We have the biggest economy in the world. We have the most dynamic work-force in the world. But we cannot completely control events around the globe economically; therefore, we need to pass every piece of legislation we can that helps our economy grow and helps it create jobs. And we need to take all the action we can to insulate the American people from the effect of those kinds of events.

In addition, the first-person plural pronoun *we*, together with the personal pronoun *they*, is quite often used in the process of constructing the dichotomy *we – they*. This pronoun was used in this way by press secretary D. Perino during a briefing on 17 November 2008:

Q On the auto industry money, you all have talked about how what you want to do is pursue changes to the DOE loan program. What are you all doing to push that forward in terms of talks on the Hill or actively out lobbying?

The press secretary's response:

Ms PERINO: We are talking with members of the Hill. Remember, a lot of them haven't been in town, but they're back today and I think that they will be having a lot of meetings both on the Republican side and Democratic side today. Hopefully they're talking to one another, as well. We have yet to see any proposal put forward by the Democrats and they will be back in session in just a couple of hours. So we are waiting to see that.

The personal pronoun *they* can also be used to avoid repetition, instead of nouns and other parts of speech.

The third-person singular personal pronoun *he* is mainly used by press secretaries to avoid repeating the phrase "the President of the United States". Much less frequently, in certain situations, it is used to refer to political figures from other countries. For example, during a briefing on 1 May 2017 on US domestic policy issues, press secretary Sean Spicer used the personal pronoun *he* 24 times, each time in place of the phrase "the President of the United States". Meanwhile, during a briefing on 15 November 2007, press secretary Dana Perino used the pronoun *he* 12 times instead of the phrase "President of the United States" and 21 times instead of the words "President Musharraf".

To perform the function of persuasiveness in political discourse, the third-person singular personal pronoun *he* is not actually used. Press secretaries use the pronoun *he* slightly more often than presidents. Here is the frequency of use of the third-person singular pronoun *he* by White House press secretaries: D. Myers – 8.9 per thousand words; A. Fleischer – 6.86; J. Siewert – 8.1; D. Perino – 5.96; S. Spicer – 7.62; K. McEnany – 8.2. Meanwhile, President J. Bush used it 3 times, and President D. Trump used it 6.6 times.

In the speeches of presidents, the third-person singular pronoun *he* serves to replace nouns referring to persons. Generally, these are political figures of national and international standing, depending on the specific context. The range of nouns that are replaced by the pronoun

he in speech is much narrower for the discourse of the press secretary than for the discourse of the president, with a significant part of it consisting of nouns that refer to the president. Therefore, it can be argued that in the discursive plane, the central figures for the press secretary's speech are two people: himself and the president he represents.

An analysis of the frequency of pronoun usage, using statistical methods, in the speech of both White House press secretaries and US presidents during press briefings and press conferences revealed the special role of the first-person singular pronoun *I*. Not only is it used more frequently than other pronouns in the speech of these politicians, but it is also characterised by a different frequency distribution. For example, we present graphs of the frequency distribution of the personal pronouns *I* and *we*, based on an analysis of a 290,000-word corpus of speeches by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer. This corpus was divided into 29 sub-samples of 10,000 words each. For each sub-sample, the frequencies of use of the pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, *they*, and *he* were calculated per thousand words. Next, the range of frequencies obtained for each pronoun was divided into intervals of 0.5

frequency units each. After that, the values of the frequency of use of the pronoun in the subsamples were sorted by intervals and the number of times δn_i the corresponding frequency values fell into one interval or another was counted. The probability ω_i of the value x_i of the frequency of use of the pronoun falling into the i -th interval was calculated using the formula:

$$\omega_i = \frac{\delta n_i}{n},$$

where i – interval number; δn_i – number of values of pronoun frequency that fell into the i -th interval;

n – number of subsamples (number of measurements).

Fig. 1 shows the frequency distribution graph of the first-person singular pronoun *I*. The $\delta n_i/n$ values were plotted on the y-axis, and the x_i values were plotted on the x-axis.

For comparison, Figure 2 presents a graph of the frequency distribution of the personal pronoun *we*, based on the same corpus.

The graphs showing the frequency distribution of the pronouns *you*, *they*, and *he* are similar.

In mathematical statistics, frequency distributions similar to the distribution of the

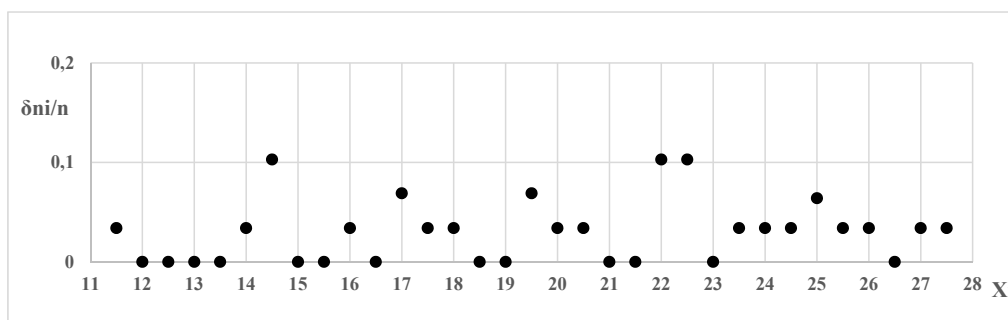


Fig. 1. Frequency distribution of the pronoun *I* for a corpus of 290,000 words formed from briefings by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer

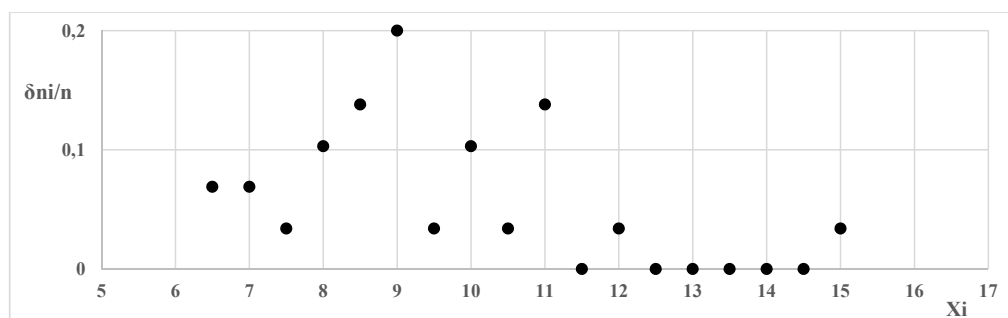


Fig. 2. Frequency distribution of the pronoun *we* for a corpus of 290,000 words formed from briefings by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer

pronoun *I* (Fig. 1) are called uniform distributions (Васильків, 2020, 61).

The frequency distribution graph of the pronoun *we* is close to the Student's distribution (*t*-distribution). With a large number of measurements (in this case, the number of subsamples), the Student's distribution approaches the Gaussian distribution (normal distribution).

A comparison of the frequency distribution of the pronoun *I* with the frequency distributions and values of the pronouns *we*, *you*, *they*, *he* allows us to conclude that its use by participants in political discourse has a number of distinctive features.

First of all, it should be noted that uniform distribution means that all values of the frequency of use of the pronoun *I*, within the range of their values ($x_{\max} - x_{\min}$), have approximately the same probability of occurrence (within the margin of error). Whereas the frequency distributions of the pronouns *we*, *you*, *they*, *he* have pronounced maxima and, accordingly, the most probable values of their frequency of use.

Given the aforementioned, it can be argued that when constructing speech constructs with the pronoun *I*, participants in political discourse are guided by slightly different rules than when using the pronouns *we*, *you*, *they*, *he*. The use of the pronoun *I* by press secretaries and presidents is systematic, and the pronoun itself plays a key role. In our opinion, the use of the pronoun *I* is primarily determined by institutional pressure and political expediency.

Let us also compare the frequency of use of the pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, *they*, *he* by White House press secretaries with the frequency of use of these pronouns in the COCA corpus (Table 1).

As can be seen from the table, the average frequency of use of the personal pronoun *he* by

White House press secretaries actually coincides (within the margin of error) with its values for the COCA corpus. This is likely due to the fact that in political discourse, it is not typically used to achieve persuasiveness, and when it is used, speakers follow the same rules as those found in the COCA corpus.

At the same time, the average frequency of use of the pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, *they*, which are widely used by press secretaries to construct communication strategies and tactics, is several times higher (from 1.4 to 3.5) than the frequency of use of these pronouns in COCA, which, in our opinion, may serve as confirmation of the systematic use of these pronouns. However, this issue requires further research.

Conclusions. In institutional political discourse, the use of personal pronouns in the speech of White House press secretaries as addressors-retransmitters is determined primarily by two main factors: status-role restrictions and political expediency (circumstances, situation, time). The speech of presidents, as addressors, is primarily determined by political expediency.

The most significant differences in the use of personal pronouns in the speech of White House press secretaries and US presidents are observed in the use of the first-person singular pronoun *I*. The use of the pronoun *I* by both the press secretary and the president is systematic, and the pronoun itself plays a key role in their speech.

Unlike presidents, press secretaries do not use the pronoun *I* to create or protect their own image, as the primary task of a press secretary is to work on the president's image. For the same reason, press secretaries cannot use the pronoun *I* to demonstrate their determination, leadership, or the uniqueness of their position.

Table 1

Frequency of use of pronouns *I*, *we*, *you*, *they*, *he* by press secretaries and in the COCA corpus

Speaker	I/1000	We/1000	You/1000	They/1000	He/1000
D. Myers	30.59	8.93	5.8	4.43	8.9
J. Siewert	17.59	16.92	5.2	5.53	8.13
A. Fleischer	12.92	5.99	7.62	6.24	6.86
D. Perino	18.76	17.34	7.85	8.76	5.96
S. Spicer	20.99	9.53	8.24	4.63	7.62
K. McEnany	12.59	9.92	9.83	3.72	8.2
Mean value	18.88	11.44	7.42	5.55	7.61
COCA	5.56	3.26	3.19	4.06	7.16

There is no significant difference in the use of the first-person plural pronoun *we*, the third-person plural pronoun *they*, and the *we–they* dichotomy for constructing communication strategies and tactics by White House press secretaries and US presidents. Nevertheless, press secretaries resort to the *we–they* dichotomy less often than presidents do.

White House press secretaries most often use the first-person singular pronoun *he* primarily to replace the words ‘President of the United States.’ US presidents use this pronoun to refer to

political figures at the national and international levels.

The prospects for further research are considered in conducting studies on the influence of a press secretary’s personal traits, as an individual linguistic personality, on his speech. We believe that this approach will allow us to outline the features of the collective linguistic portrait of a press secretary as an addressor-retransmitter and will give an idea of the typical linguistic behaviour of a speaker of similar status and communicative functions.

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Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 26.01.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 26.03.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 02.04.2026