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Inversion as a Mechanism of Influence in Political Communication

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Abstract

In political communication, inversion is an effective tool of expressiveness that emphasizes key messages for the purpose of evoking an emotional response and building the speaker's authority. The relevance of the study is determined by the need for a deeper understanding of the functions of inversion in times of crisis, in particular, a full-scale war in Ukraine. The aim of the study is to identify the types, functions, and effectiveness of inversion as a rhetorical device in political speeches delivered in Ukrainian, English, French, and German during 2022–2025. Public speeches by key political leaders: President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyy, former US President D. Biden, current US President D. Trump, Prime Minister of Great Britain K. Starmer, President of France E. Macron, and leader of the German opposition F. Merz were used as the materials for the study.. The study is based on the content analysis of 800 speeches — 200 for each language (Ukrainian, English, French, and German). Quantitative analysis and an empirical survey of 200 respondents with different linguistic backgrounds were also used. As a result, 5 main types of inversions (the most common is verbal, 34.4%) and 4 main functions (the most common is emotional impact) were identified. The survey revealed significant interlinguistic differences in the perception of inversion constructions in political discourse. The academic novelty is the comprehensive empirical approach to the study of inversion as a cross-cultural rhetorical tool. Further research prospect is the analysis of inversions in social networks in comparison with official speeches of politicians.

Keywords: inversion, political communication, rhetoric, emotional impact, public discourse, cross-cultural analysis, language strategy, syntax

1. Introduction

Rhetorical devices play an important role in political communication. One of them is inversion — a violation of the usual word order for emotional or semantic emphasis. In times of crisis, in particular war, it enhances the impact of speeches, making them more expressive and mobilizing.

The rhetoric of the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyy, as well as that of the former US President D. Biden, revealed a significant number of inversion constructions that have become representative examples of political mobilization. Similar rhetorical devices were also actively used by D. Trump, K. Starmer, E. Macron, and F. Merz. This indicates the universal nature of inversion as a means of influence in the political discourse of different cultural and linguistic spaces. Cross-cultural differences in communication style, political traditions, and audience expectations should also be considered, as they affect the functions and perception of inversion.

Despite the active study of inversion in linguistics, its impact in political discourse has been poorly studied. This study combines content analysis, classification of inversion types, and surveys to investigate their effectiveness, functions,

and cultural differences in rhetoric in 2022–2025. The aim of the study is to determine the functions and effectiveness of inversion as a mechanism of rhetorical influence in political communication based on speeches delivered in Ukrainian, English, French, and German during 2022–2025.

Research objectives:

1) Conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of inversions in 800 political speeches.

2) Develop a functional classification of inversions in political discourse, taking into account thematic blocks (war, unity, values, etc.).

3) Conduct a survey to study the perception of inversive and neutral constructions by audiences with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2. Literature Review

Inversion as a stylistic device is of considerable interest in modern linguistics, especially in the context of public and political communication. Inversion performs not only a syntactic, but also an ideological function in the rhetoric of political speeches, where words acquire symbolic and emotional meaning.

A number of researchers emphasize that inversion enhances the emotional impact of an utterance and shapes its rhythm. In particular, Daugaard (2023) defines inversion as a means of rhythmic concentration, similar to repetition, which enhances the listener's attention. Igl (2023) considers inversion as a technique that models thematic tension, while Harlow & Carter (2023) emphasize its function as a linguistic resistance that violates the syntactic norm for the purpose of ideological emphasis. Knobloch-Westerwick et al. (2021) drew similar conclusions, experimentally proving the influence of inversion on the perception of political content. In turn, Tolochko et al. (2024) emphasize that syntactic inversion is considered one of the most powerful stylistic means of speech, which enhances the emotionality and imagery of the utterance. This conclusion is also confirmed by Ordynska et al. (2024), who argue that inversion forms the emotional palette of the speech.

A separate line of research focuses on the analysis of Joe Biden's inaugural address. For example, Umam & Laili (2023) conducted a critical discourse analysis of rhetorical devices, emphasizing the combination of stylistic figures to achieve audience unity. In turn, Renaldo (2021) focused on presuppositions and ideological loading, revealing hidden manipulative strategies in inverted constructions. Takumi (2023) analysed inversions in Jane Austen's literary text, demonstrating their function of creating tension and shifting focus — an approach that has something in common with political rhetoric. So, although all authors analyse inversion as a means of influence, they differ in focus: on rhetorical figures, on ideology, and on the artistic function of inversion extrapolated to public speaking.

Using examples of political speeches (in particular, speeches by Donald Trump), Mammadov & Isgandarli (2021) demonstrate how inversion, for example in the form of permutation of predicates ("Now arrives the hour of action"), emphasizes urgency and a mobilization call. Tymoshchuk (2025) notes that inversion in the inaugural speeches of US presidents plays the role of a means of creating metaphorical images and rhetorical figures that form an emotional connection with the audience. Ordynska et al. (2024) confirmed a similar role of inversion as a means of strengthening emotional argumentation. Mooney (2020) also argues that the author's permutations of words can serve as an ironic inversion of official slogans.

Kosenko & Marushchak (2021) distinguish the functions of inversion into the rhythmization of the text and the accentuation of semantic dominants. Smith and Monforte (2020) interpret inversion as a technique that creates a plurality of voices in a political narrative, creating the polyphony of public expression. Vazhenina (2023) interprets inversion as a source of cognitive paradox that makes the recipient to reflect on the meaning of the utterance. In turn, Paul (2020) analyses inversion in feminist narrative as a means of ideological resistance — such an approach can be appropriately extrapolated to protest rhetoric in political discourse.

Some authors focus on the aesthetic and poetic aspects of inversion. Boc (2022), Miralles (2022), and Pozuelo Calero (2023) note that inversion in poetry causes surprise and enhances the weight of the word, creating internal order rather than chaos. Their conclusions can be applied to the analysis of stylistically reinforced political utterances, in which inversion performs the function of rhythmic and aphoristic design of the message. Such constructions, for example, are often found in the speeches of V. Zelenskyy, where inversion provides pathos and structure to slogans: Не здамося — бо ми є!; Ми — разом, ми — сильні!

Numfor (2023) studies African ecopoetry, noting that inversion focuses the reader's attention and gives the expression a special energy. A similar effect is observed in public addresses of politicians who appeal to moral values and national dignity. Kirom & Ngaisah. (2023) study Greek lyrics and find that inversion violates the addressee's expectations, which enhances the expressive effect — this feature is widely used in political rhetoric to create slogans.

Nünlist (2023) takes us back to the origins of inversion, treating it as a morphosyntactic phenomenon deeply rooted in ancient poetics. This historical approach provides an understanding of inversion as a universal tool of linguistic influence. At the same

time, Harlow & Carter (2023) shows that inversion is an important element in the creation of a rhetorical image, especially in situations of ideological tension, which has something in common with situations of political polemics.

Despite a large number of studies on inversion as a stylistic device, a number of areas still require further study. In particular, there is an urgent need for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analysis of inversions in political discourse to identify universal and culturally specific rhetorical models. The empirical verification of the effectiveness of inversion constructions from the perspective of audience perception is a separate research challenge.. The proposed study attempts to bridge these gaps by combining content analysis of political leaders' speeches with sociolinguistic surveying, and present a systematized typology of the functions of inversion in political communication.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Design

The first stage provided for the analysis of 800 video addresses of four leaders: Zelenskyy (in Ukrainian), Biden and Trump (in English), Macron (in French), and Merz (in German). The total number of available speeches for each leader during 2022–2025 exceeded 2,500 units across the four languages. Therefore, a proportional sample of 200 speeches per leader (approximately 8–12% of all accessible public addresses) was selected to ensure statistical representativeness, thematic saturation, and a balanced cross-linguistic comparison. Earlier rhetorical studies (e.g., Mammadov & Isgandarli, 2021; Tymoshchuk, 2025) similarly rely on proportional samples rather than exhaustive corpora, which supports the methodological adequacy of this approach. All speeches were selected from official Telegram pages and YouTube channel archives with full versions of the leaders' public addresses for 2022–2025. The average duration of one speech was approximately 8 minutes, which amounted to a total of over 106 hours of video material viewed and transcribed for further analysis. The second stage was classifying the identified inversions into five main syntactic types: verbal inversion, meaning inversion, temporal inversion, stress inversion, and plot inversion. The processing identified a total of 1,280 inversion constructions, which were classified by types, pragmatic functions, and thematic blocks. The main criteria for selecting speeches were their subject matter (war, security, freedom, democracy), media coverage, and inverted constructions. The selection of political figures was also theoretically justified. Heads of state and government (presidents and prime ministers) were chosen because they produced the most influential nationally and internationally broadcast political messages. According to rhetorical research (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Ordynska et al., 2024), they also set dominant discursive patterns within their countries. The selection of Zelenskyy, Biden, Trump, Macron, Starmer, and Merz gave grounds to compare inversion use in high-impact political communication across four major linguistic traditions. Other political actors were not included because their speeches have considerably lower frequency, visibility, and agenda-setting impact. Each construction was analysed in terms of its function, emotional colouring, intonation role, and stylistic purpose. The third stage was an empirical survey of audiences — Ukrainian-speaking, French-speaking, German-speaking, and English-speaking — in order to check the perception of inversion and neutral constructions. The respondents were offered pairs of utterances (appendix). The data were statistically analysed to determine the advantages of the inverted structure in political communication.

3.2 Research Methods

The study employed a set of methods:

- Quantitative content analysis to calculate the frequency of different types of inversion constructions in speeches. All cases of inversion were manually coded with subsequent verification of frequencies and percentages.

- Comparative analysis to compare political rhetoric in Ukrainian, English, French, and German according to stylistic features, frequency of use of inverted constructions, their functions, and pragmatic impact on the audience.

- Survey with elements of a psycholinguistic experiment. Structured questionnaire in Google Forms with subsequent processing of results in Excel was used to study the recipients' reaction to inversion/neutral utterances according to three parameters.

- Cognitive pragmatic analysis to interpret the functions of inversion in the context of political communication, taking into account the cultural and linguistic context.

3.3 Sample

For content analysis, 200 speeches in each of four languages — Ukrainian, English, French, and German — were selected for a total of 800 political speeches for in-depth rhetorical analysis. The sample was formed using the method of purposeful selection based on genre, thematic, and structural characteristics. The basis of the corpus was public speeches that represent the modern rhetoric of heads of state in international and domestic political contexts. The materials cover the period 2020–2024 according to the following criteria:

– official affiliation of the speech to public political discourse;

–a video recording;

– duration of the speech of at least 3 minutes;

– topic — foreign or domestic policy, without purely technical or ceremonial speeches.

This volume was sufficient to identify statistically relevant syntactic inversions and conduct a comparative analysis of recurring language structures in the political discourse of both languages.

The survey involved 200 respondents — 50 native speakers of Ukrainian, English, French, and German, which ensured a uniform cross-linguistic representation in the study. All participants were aged 26 to 35 and had higher education. The sample was formed from a pre-selected population of 520 people who completed a screening questionnaire.

The selection criteria were: age 30–65; higher education; regular or active monitoring of political events; basic awareness of media appearances by political leaders.

This approach ensured statistical reliability and cross-cultural relevance of the results.

3.4 Instruments

The following tools were used for data collection and processing:

- Google Forms — to create a questionnaire and collect responses.

- Microsoft Excel — to process survey results, build charts, and calculate percentages.

- TextRazor API (local) — for automatic identification of syntactic constructions when verifying results manually.

- Google Docs + AntConc — for building a corpus and preliminary analysis of texts. Elements of formal linguistics were also used to describe types of inversion and their distribution in the structure of utterances.

4. Results

The study divided inverted constructions by type in political speeches. A total of 1,280 cases of inversion were identified out of 800 speeches by figures, which were grouped into five main types. The most common is verbal inversion (420 cases), especially in Ukrainian (120) and German (110) rhetoric. It enhances emotionality or logic. Inversion of meaning (360) prevails in French speeches (100) as a means of aesthetics. Time inversion (240) is most common in French (70) and Ukrainian (60), where it creates rhythmic tension. Stress inversion (150) is frequent in French (50) and Ukrainian (40) slogans. Plot inversion (150) is evenly distributed and enhances contrast or drama. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of each type of inversion within the language corpus (relative to the total number of inversions in each language).

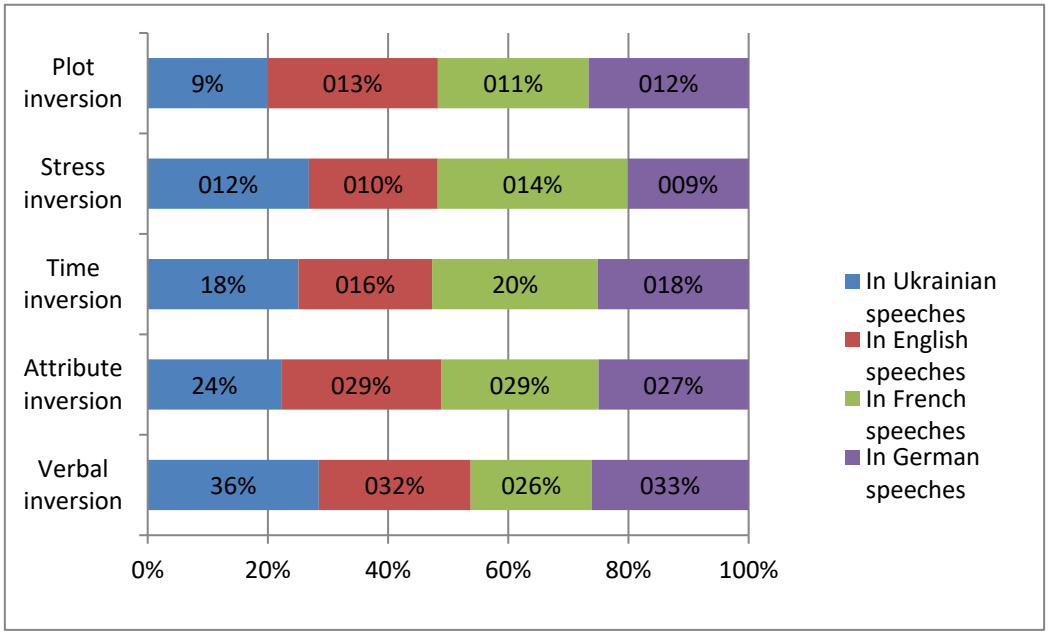


Figure 1. Frequency of use of inversions in political communication, % Source. Developed by the authors

The overall results confirm that inversion as a rhetorical mechanism functions universally in political discourse. However, its distribution by type varies according to linguistic and cultural traditions, communicative purpose, and structural specifics of national rhetorical models.

The identified types of inverted constructions in political discourse are illustrated by the examples from the analysed speeches in Ukrainian, French, German, and English. Table 1 demonstrates several characteristic utterances for each of the five types of inversions. The comparison traces both common rhetorical techniques and culturally determined differences in the syntactic organization of political speech.

Table 1. Examples of inversions from political leaders' speeches (2022–2025)

Inversion type	Ukrainian	English	French	German
Verbal inversion	Знаю я — буде перемога!	Never have we been so united.	Jamais nous n'avons été si unis.	Noch nie waren wir so vereint.
	Не маємо ми іншого вибору.	Gone is the fear — born is the will.	Disparu est le doute — née est la volonté.	Verflogen ist die Angst — geboren ist der Wille.
	Переможемо ми — не вони.	Know we do what matters most.	Ce que nous devons faire, nous le savons.	Wissen tun wir, was zählt.
Attribute inversion	Міцну державу будуємо.	Strong a leader he has become.	Fort un peuple, nous sommes.	Stark ist der Wille des Volkes.
	Незламну націю ми маємо!	Determined a nation we are.	Grande est la tâche, grande la récompense.	Ein großer Kampf liegt vor uns.
	Сильну армію творимо.	Great a task, great a reward.	Solide une nation, nous bâtissons.	Unerschütterlich ist unsere Armee.
Time inversion	Лише тоді ми зрозуміли істину.	Only then did the world believe us.	Ce n'est qu'alors que le monde a cru en nous.	Erst danach glaubte man uns.
	Щойно зникла тривога — прийшов спокій.	Not until dawn did they retreat.	Pas avant l'aube ils n'ont reculé.	Nicht vor der Morgendämmerung zogen sie sich zurück.
	Ще до світанку ворога зупинили.	Just after the call, help arrived.	Aussitôt l'appel lancé, l'aide est arrivée.	Kaum kam der Ruf, folgte die Hilfe.
Stress inversion	Ми — разом, ми — сильні!	We stand — tall and proud!	Ensemble nous sommes — et forts!	Gemeinsam — stark sind wir!
	Пам'ятаємо, шануємо, боремось!	Remember, honor, fight!	Souvenons-nous, honorons, luttons!	Gedenken, ehren, kämpfen!
	Переможемо — і крапка!	Win we will — no doubt!	Nous vaincrons — sans aucun doute!	Siegen werden wir — zweifellos!
Plot inversion	Спочатку сльози, потім слава.	First came silence, then the storm.	D'abord les larmes, ensuite la gloire.	Zuerst kam der Schmerz, dann der Ruhm.
	Війна — наша біль і наша сила.	Losses were endured — then came strength.	La guerre — notre douleur et notre force.	Der Krieg — unser Leid und unsere Stärke.
	Були втрати — стала міць.	From despair rose resolve.	Des pertes sont nées la puissance.	Aus Verlust entstand Stärke.

Source: Developed by the authors.

In Ukrainian speeches, inversion often serves as a slogan or a call to action, acquiring emotionally elevated aphoristic features. Its use is closely related to the context of struggle, resistance, and mobilization of society. In English-language speeches, inversions are more often embedded in formalized syntactic constructions, which gives them rhetorical restraint, structural symmetry, and logical consistency. French political rhetoric is characterized by a pronounced stylistic orientation: inversions are often used to achieve rhythm, elegance, and stylistic melodiousness. Stress inversion is especially noticeable, which is a means of aestheticizing political speech, supporting rhetorical intonation. In German speeches, inversion acquires mainly a logical-structural meaning: inverted constructions perform the function of accentuating secondary members of the sentence or cause-and-effect blocks because of the rigid syntactic organization of the sentence. The frequent use of verbal and plot inversions ensures the consistency of the presentation, while enhancing the persuasiveness of the political message.

A thematic classification of utterances with inverted constructions was carried out for a deeper understanding of the communicative role of inversion in political discourse. Table 2 shows the six leading thematic blocks that most often appear in the speeches of political figures. The characteristic pragmatic functions of inversion are indicated and typical examples from the original speech of politicians are given for each block.

Table 2. Classification of political topics of the use of inversion

Thematic block	Characteristic functions of inversion	Examples of inversion constructions
1. War and national resistance	Emotional mobilization, dramatization of events	Ukr. Не здамося — бо ми є! Eng. Never will Ukraine fall. Fr. Jamais nous ne reculerons face à l'oppression. Germ. Niemals wird unser Wille gebrochen sein.
2. Belief in victory / future	Giving slogans energy and rhythm, implicit hope	Ukr. Лише разом — переможемо! Eng. Out of struggle will rise peace. Fr. De notre espoir naîtra la victoire. Germ. Aus dem Mut erwächst der Morgen.
3. Unity of the people / allies	Emphasizing collectivity, bringing the subject to the beginning	Ukr. Ми — українці! Ми — нація! Eng. United we stand, divided we fall. Фр. Ensemble nous formons la nation. Germ. Gemeinsam sind wir stark.
4. Condemnation of the enemy / aggressor	Contrast, antipodes, rhetorical exposure	Ukr. Не вони нас зламають — ми їх! Eng. Gone is their power — ours remains. Fr. Disparue est leur force, debout est notre peuple. Germ. Verschwunden ist ihre Stärke – geblieben ist unsere Einheit.
5. Democracy / values	Appeal to higher meanings, moral argumentation	Ukr. Не для страху — для свободи ми живемо. Eng. Not for fear, but for freedom we live. Fr. Ce n'est que debout que nous sommes dignes. Germ. Nicht aus Angst, sondern für Freiheit leben wir.
6. Call to action / mobilization	Creating rhythm, increasing tempo, structured repetition	Ukr. Боротись. Вірити. Перемогти! Eng. Rise. Speak. Defend. Fr. Lutter. Résister. Avancer. Germ. Aufstehen. Handeln. Verändern.

Source: Developed by the authors.

The classification of thematic blocks of inversions in political discourse in four languages shows both common features and national peculiarities. In all cases, inversion is concentrated around the themes of war, resistance, democracy, unity, and mobilization. In military rhetoric (blocks 1–2), it performs the function of emotional amplification, dramatization, and a call to action. Ukrainian speeches are distinguished by pathos and haselity, English ones — by logical structure and rhythm, French — by rhetorical sophistication, while German ones — by clarity and logical opposition. Inversion helps to create aphoristic symbolically loaded utterances in the themes of unity and values (blocks 3–6). So, inversion is a universal rhetorical tool adapted to linguistic and cultural contexts. A functional analysis of the inversion use in speeches was conducted in order to detail the ways in which inversion influences political speech. Table 3 presents four key functions of inversion constructions that are most often implemented in the speeches of political leaders: enhancing emotional impact, manipulating the audience's attention, creating a solemn or rhythmic structure, and implicit argumentation. Examples from original speeches are given for each of the functions in order to trace differences in style, target effect, and composition of utterances depending on the linguistic environment.

Table 3. Functional analysis of inversions in speeches

Inversion function	Examples from Ukrainian speeches	Examples from English speeches	Examples from French speeches	Examples from German speeches
Increasing emotional impact	Лише разом — переможемо!; Нас не зламати — ми боремось!; Ворог не пройде — ми стоїмо.	Never will Ukraine be left alone.; Freedom will win.; We will not walk away.	Jamais notre peuple ne cédera! Disparue est la peur. Vive est notre volonté.	Niemals werden wir weichen! Geblieben ist unsere Kraft. Erwacht ist unser Mut.
Manipulating audience attention	Перемога буде — знаю я.; Незламні ми були і будемо.; Свободу захищаємо — ми, українці.	With Ukraine we stand.; Together we face aggression.; For liberty we fight.	À la paix nous aspirons. Ce combat, c'est le nôtre. Pour la liberté, nous nous dressons.	Für den Frieden kämpfen wir. Dieses Land verteidigen wir. Zusammen stehen wir.
Creating a rhythmic/solemn structure	Пам'ятаємо, шануємо, боремось!; Хочемо миру — здобудемо його!; Разом — сильні, разом — вільні.	Stand. Resist. Defend.; One goal, one purpose, one future.; Peace we seek, justice we demand.	Lutter. Résister. Vaincre. Debout, unis, invincibles! Un peuple, un espoir, une victoire.	Kämpfen. Glauben. Siegen. Gemeinsam. Mutig. Stark. Ein Ziel, ein Weg, ein Morgen.
Implicit argumentation	Тільки боротьба — інакше бути не може.; Ще не вмерла — і не вмре!; Сили більше — бо правда з нами.	Not by fear, but by courage, we lead.; Only when free can people thrive.; Gone is silence — the world speaks now.	Ce n'est qu'uni que l'on triomphe. Debout est notre cause, légitime est notre combat. À genoux, jamais!	Nur gemeinsam kann Freiheit bestehen. Wahr ist unsere Stimme – stark ist unser Recht. Ohne Mut – keine Zukunft.

Source: Developed by the authors.

A functional analysis of inversions in political speeches in four languages show that this technique performs different functions depending on the cultural and political context despite their common rhetorical purpose. In Ukrainian speeches, inversion mobilizes, forms slogans, and evokes emotional uplift as a response to wartime reality. In English speeches, it structures thoughts, reinforces moral accents, and sends diplomatic signals. French discourse tends toward aesthetics: inversion adds solemnity and a humanistic touch. In German, it is a logical tool that clearly establishes cause-and-effect relationships. A comparative analysis of leaders' speeches was conducted for a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cultural features of the use of inversion in political discourse. Table 4 summarizes the key differences in the style, functions, and structure of inverted constructions. The comparison was made according to five criteria: frequency, purpose, style, rhetorical role, and form of presentation. This approach identifies linguistic differences, also tracing the ideological and communicative strategies characteristic of each political context.

Table 4. Comparison of political rhetoric in four languages (2022–2025)

Criterion	Ukrainian speeches (Zelenskyy)	English speeches (Biden, Trump, Starmer)	French speeches (Macron)	German speeches (Merz)
Frequency of use of inversions	High, especially in themes of resistance, hope, and identity	Moderate, focused on reinforcing key points	High in stylized appeals; inversion as part of aesthetics	Moderate, mainly in introductions or for emphasis
Purpose of inversions	Mobilization, emotional rallying, call to action	Argumentation, diplomatic support, moral positioning	Emphasis of dignity, historical continuity, European solidarity	Logical structuring, explanation of causes and effects
Style	Pathetic, slogan-like, aphoristic	Moderate, analytical, official ethical	Solemnly sublime, stylistically sophisticated	Reserved, rational, with elements of argumentative rigour
Role of inversions	Emphasis of national strength, self-identification	Confirmation of political consistency, stability	Demonstration of the cultural tradition of eloquence	Highlighting the logic of judgments, enhancing persuasiveness
Form of presentation	Short appeals, slogans, syntactic impulses	Structured sentences with internal balance	Rhythmic phrases, anaphoric inversions	Clear constructions with inversion in subordinate or introductory blocks

Source: Developed by the authors.

Inversion is used in all four languages, but for different purposes: in Ukrainian speeches — for mobilization and emotional cohesion, in English — for logical reinforcement of theses, in French — for stylistic expressiveness, while in German — for clear argumentation. Its form and style depend on the political context and rhetorical tradition of each country. A survey was conducted to test the hypothesis of increased memorability of inverted constructions. The respondents were offered pairs of utterances — neutral and with inversion — and asked to choose the one that was better remembered. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who preferred the inverted option in each of the five pairs of utterances. The study assesses the effectiveness of syntactic shift from the perspective of the cognitive trace in the audience's mind.

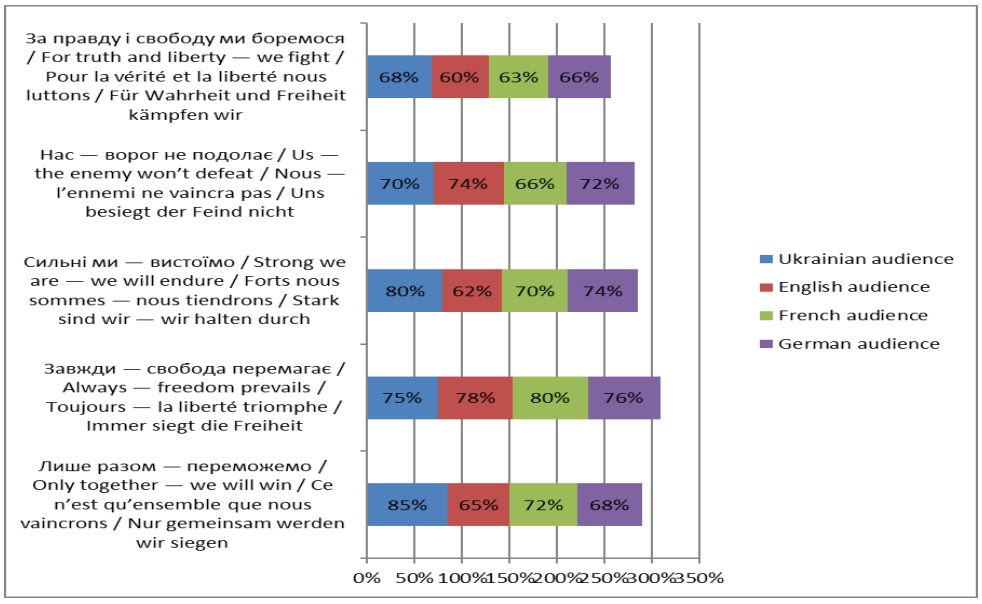


Figure 2. Memorability of inversion utterances

Source. Developed by the authors

The analysis of the survey results shows that inverted utterances have a high level of memorability in all language groups, but the intensity of perception varies depending on the linguistic and cultural context. The highest rates are recorded in the Ukrainian audience (85%, 80%, 75%), which indicates increased emotional sensitivity to slogan forms during military mobilization. The French audience shows a consistently high reception (70–80%), which is consistent with the rhetorical tradition of stylized appeals. English-speaking and German-speaking respondents demonstrate a slightly lower, but even level of memorability (60–76%), which can be explained by the priority of logical sequence and the lower familiarity of inversions as an emotional device.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate which of the two utterances — inverted or neutral — sounded more convincing and leadership-like. Figure 3 presents the percentage of respondents who preferred the inverted option as one associated with the speaker's authority.

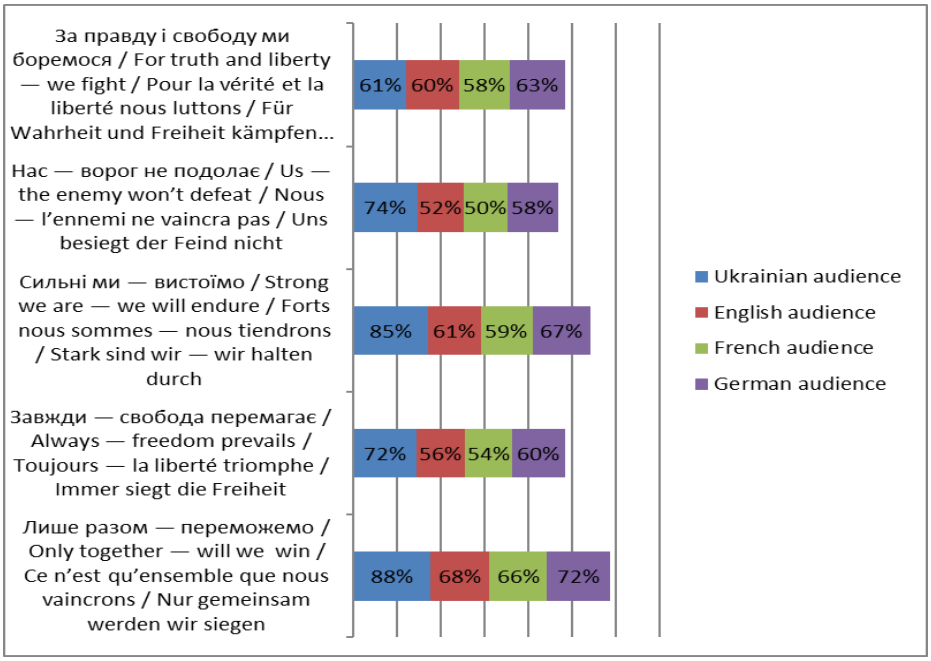


Figure 3. Authoritativeness of perception of inverted utterances

Source. Developed by the authors

The obtained results demonstrate a clear advantage of inversion constructions in the perception of the Ukrainian audience: in all utterances, over 60% of respondents considered the inverted form to be more convincing. The highest support was received by the phrase "Лише разом — переможемо" — 88%, and the lowest — "За правду і свободу ми боремося" — 61%. A similar, although less pronounced, trend is observed among German respondents (72%, 60%, 67%, 58%, 63%, respectively), which indicates a moderate association of inversion with leadership. The French audience demonstrates the lowest perception of the authority of inverted constructions: support does not exceed 66% in any of the examples. The English-speaking audience generally demonstrates average indicators, with a maximum of 68% (the first utterance). So, inversion works most effectively as a rhetorical means of influence in the Ukrainian cultural and linguistic context, while it is perceived more cautiously by Western European audiences and requires additional stylistic adaptation.

In addition to memorability and authority, an important component of the impact of inversion in political speech is its emotional resonance. This emotion often becomes the driver of action, especially in crisis situations. Therefore, respondents were tasked with choosing which of the two utterances evoked a stronger emotional reaction — neutral or inverted. Figure 4 shows the percentage of those who preferred the inverted utterance as more emotionally expressive.

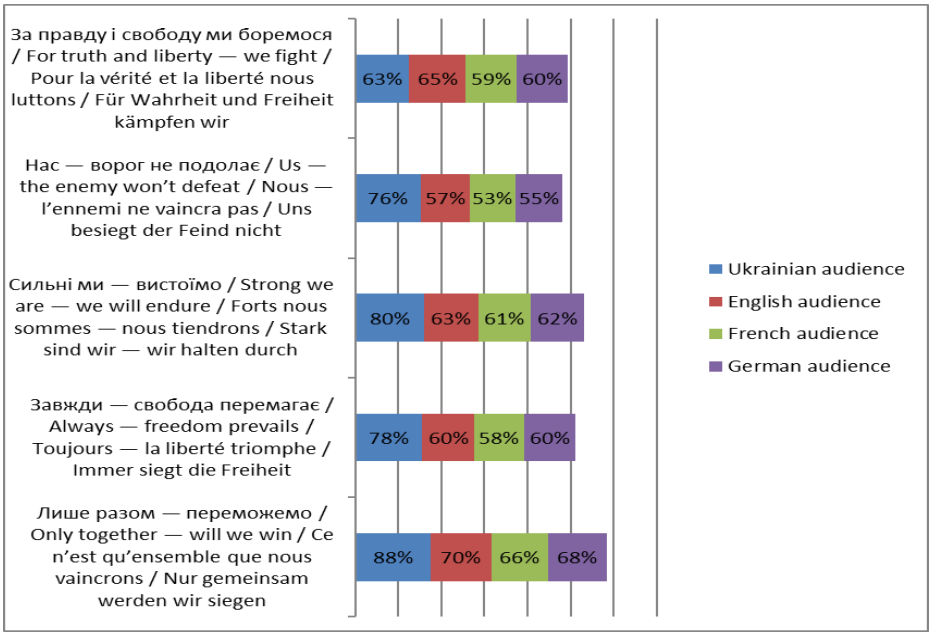


Figure 4. Emotionality of perception of inverted utterances

Source: Developed by the authors

The results show that the Ukrainian audience reacts much more emotionally to inverted constructions, which is especially noticeable in slogans with a clear mobilization focus: "Лише разом — переможемо!" (88%), "Сильні ми — вистоїмо!" (80%). This confirms the hypothesis of high affective sensitivity to rhetorical devices in the speech of Ukrainian leaders, especially in wartime.

The English-speaking audience also demonstrates a positive emotional reaction to inversion, but the level of support is lower (for example, 70% for the first of inverted utterance), which may be associated with more restrained cultural communicative norms. The French and German audiences revealed even lower rates of emotional resonance, in particular, for the slogan "Nous — l'ennemi ne vaincra pas/ Uns besiegt der Feind nicht" only 53% of French and 55% of German respondents chose the inverted option.

It is interesting that the emotional impact indicators are almost equal among all audiences (from 59% to 65%) in the last example ("За правду і свободу…"). This may indicate the universality of the theme of the struggle for values, regardless of the linguistic environment. So, inversion resonates most strongly in the context of patriotic, collectivist appeals, while its impact varies depending on the cultural characteristics of the audience.

5. Discussion

The results of the study of inversions in the political discourse of four leaders confirm the conclusions of earlier studies regarding the functional richness of inverted constructions in public speech. A total of 1,280 inversions were identified in 800 speeches, indicating the constancy of this rhetorical device in political communication regardless of the linguistic and cultural context. At the same time, our results indicate significant interlinguistic differences in the frequency and functional load of inversions. So, Ukrainian speeches (primarily the speeches of Volodymyr Zelenskyy) demonstrate a higher density of inversion constructions, which mainly perform an emotional, mobilizing, and aphoristic function. In English-speaking discourse (Biden, Trump, Starmer), inversion is mostly stylistic, logical or structural (e.g., Strong we are). At the same time, French rhetoric tends to aesthetically rhythmic formulations, while German — to logical argumentative construction. In this way, the results of the study particularize earlier findings (in particular, Tymoshchuk, 2025), significantly expanding them with a cross-cultural dimension. Our findings indicate that inversion adapts to the rhetorical traditions and expectations of a specific audience, while maintaining its influential potential.

As Fanani et al. (2020) and Mammadov & Isgandarli (2021) confirmed, inverted constructions in Donald Trump's speeches served the function of rhetorical reinforcement, brevity, and accentuation of key messages, particularly in the context of mobilizational communication. A similar trend is observed in Ukrainian political discourse, particularly in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speeches. According to our findings, the phrase "Лише разом — переможемо!" evoked an emotional response in 88% of Ukrainian respondents, demonstrating the high affective potential of inversion. At the same time, this same expression received only 70% of positive reactions among the English-speaking audience, which indicates a significant difference in cultural sensitivity to syntactic deviations.

These results are consistent with the findings of Knobloch-Westerwick et al. (2021), who show that stylistically marked constructions (in particular, inversions) have an increased emotional impact only if they correspond to the cultural code of the audience. Our cross-linguistic comparison confirms this hypothesis: inverted constructions related to the themes of collective resistance, national unity, and moral values consistently received higher ratings among Ukrainian respondents. The gap in the level of emotional perception sometimes reached 20–25% compared to the English-speaking sample. This indicates that the effectiveness of inversion as a rhetorical tool depends largely on the socio-cultural context and the expected rhetorical form within the national political discourse.

The findings of Ordynska et al. (2024), which emphasize the functional similarity of inversions in political discourse in Ukrainian and English with different frequencies of their use, are consistent with our results. An average of 0.8 inversion constructions per speech was recorded in V. Zelenskyy's speeches, while in Joe Biden's speeches — approximately 0.6. Similarly, the frequency of inversions was somewhat lower in the Donald Trump's and Rishi Sunak's English speeches, but they were used to create accents and logical rhythm, which was confirmed by Nurkhamidah et al. (2021) and Boussaid (2022).

Comparison of our sample with the data of Igiri et al. (2020), Jegede (2020), and Karp et al. (2021) gives grounds to conclude that inversion in political speech performs both an emotional expressive and a structural logical function. Zelenskyy's speeches tend towards an emotional-metaphorical style similar to Obama's rhetoric, while Biden demonstrates a tendency towards harmonizing logic and ethics, and Trump — towards syntactic simplicity. In our study, inversions in Ukrainian speeches have higher emotional effectiveness (up to 88% of positive emotional resonance), while they do not exceed 70% in English ones.

As for the French corpus, our results show that inversion is distinctly stylistic and functions as a means of rhythmization, aestheticization, and symbolic design of the message. In E. Macron's speeches, inversions were most often used in slogan and humanistic contexts, but the audience's emotional response was lower than in the Ukrainian one. For example, only 66% of respondents chose inverted utterances as more convincing. This indicates a stylistic code focused on eloquence, rather than direct emotional appeal. German political rhetoric represented by F. Merz's speeches demonstrated the highest logical structural order of inversions. They were used to emphasize cause-and-effect relationships, clarify arguments, and construct rationally verified of inverted utterances. At the same time, the emotional impact of inversions was moderate (55–72% support depending on the utterance) as in the French case, while utterances in which inversion was combined with parallelism or logical sequence demonstrated the highest level of authority.by So, our results confirm the opinion of Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2023) that inversion is effective only when it functions in synergy with other rhetorical devices — anaphoras, contrasts, repetition — and adapts to the linguistic norms of a specific audience. This is confirmed in our study by a statistical gap of up to 25% in the level of emotional perception of the same inversion constructions between Ukrainian, English, French, and German audiences.

Our study drew particular attention to the functional load of inversion in the creation of rhetorical rhythm and cognitive effectiveness of political speech. As Muhammad (2021) notes, inversion creates the effect of rhythmic amplification, faciliting the perception of the message. This is consistent with our data: 88% of Ukrainian and 68% of English-speaking respondents recognized inverted constructions as more memorable compared to neutral ones. Rhythmically constructed inversions (such as Strong we are, Rise. Speak. Defend, Не здамося — бо ми є!) significantly increased the cognitive load of the message in the speeches of Zelenskyy, Starmer, and Trump. This indicates that inversion performs not only a stylistic, but also a mental function — it structures the message so that it is better encoded in the listener's memory.

In this context, the observation of Amusan (2023), who treats inversion as a tool of political agitation with manipulative potential, is also confirmed. In our study, this effect was recorded in the speeches of both V. Zelenskyy (85% of respondents perceived inverted utterances as more authoritative) and D. Trump (up to 76%). Although in the latter, inversions often had a simple and declarative structure, emphasizing directness and determination. For comparison, the authority index of such utterances in Biden's speeches did not exceed 61%, which indicates differences in rhetorical strategies even within the same language group.

This tendency is even more clear in E. Macron's speeches, where inversion serves the function of rhetorical sophistication, rather than emotional pressure. Despite the technically complex constructions (Disparue est la peur. Vive est notre volonté.), the French audience demonstrated a relatively restrained reaction — only up to 66% of respondents identified inverted phrases with authority. On the contrary, inversion emphasizes rational logic and structural clarity in the speeches of the leader of the German opposition F. Merz (for example, Nur gemeinsam kann Freiheit bestehen.). However, such rhetoric also does not provide high emotional feedback — the authority of inverted utterances was supported by 63% of German respondents.

The function of inversion as linguistic resistance, which is analysed by Daugaard (2023) and Harlow & Carter (2023), is

also worth mentioning. In our study, this function was most clearly manifested in Zelenskyy's speeches, where inversion constructions — especially in the themes of struggle, dignity and resistance — form a symbolic framework of national opposition. A similar, although less intense, effect was recorded in K. Starmer's speeches, in which inversion acted as a means of distancing from the previous political line and actualizing social justice.

So, our analysis confirms that inversion is a multifunctional rhetorical tool, capable of performing an emotional, cognitive, structural and ideological role — but its effectiveness largely depends on the political context, national rhetorical tradition and expectations of the target audience.

6. Research Limitations

The study does not cover all types of inversions possible in political discourse, but focuses only on the five most common ones. The sample of speeches is limited to six political leaders and a specific period (2022–2025), which reduces the possibility of generalizing the results to a broader political context. Another limitation concerns the reliance on publicly available speeches, which may not fully represent internal political communication or closed-audience rhetoric. In addition, although the sample covers four linguistic cultures, it does not include non-European or non-Indo-European political traditions, which may use inversion differently. Finally, the study measured perceived emotionality, memorability and authority only through self-reported questionnaire responses; the inclusion of neurocognitive or behavioural data could provide a more objective assessment of rhetorical influence.

7. Recommendations for Further Research

It is appropriate to expand the corpus of studied speeches by including other linguistic cultures (e.g., Polish, Greek, Spanish). It is recommended to investigate the impact of inversion on the audience's nonverbal reactions and emotional arousal using neuropsychological techniques or biometric indicators. Future studies should also consider longitudinal tracking of rhetorical changes during different phases of political crises, such as elections, escalations of conflict, or post-war restoration. Another promising direction is corpus-driven comparison of inversion use in political speeches versus spontaneous media interviews. Furthermore, machine learning-based classification of inversion types could deepen the quantitative modelling of rhetorical strategies across languages.

8. Conclusion

The research findings confirm the effectiveness of inversion as a universal rhetorical mechanism, which is realized in political communication through five main syntactic types. The analysis of 800 speeches in four languages (Ukrainian, English, French and German) identified 1,280 cases of inverted constructions, with verbal inversion (420 cases, or 33%) being the most common, which is actively used in Ukrainian (120) and German (110) political discourse. Attribute inversion (360 cases, or 28%) is most often found in French rhetoric (100 cases), which correlates with the aesthetic orientation of political speech in France.

Content analysis supplemented by an empirical survey of 200 respondents (50 from each language group) revealed key differences in the perception of inverted utterances. In particular, 85% of Ukrainian respondents considered inverted constructions to be more memorable, 88% — more emotional, and 84% — more authoritative. For the English-speaking audience, these figures were 70%, 68%, and 66%, respectively, indicating lower but stable receptivity. French and German respondents demonstrated a more restrained reaction (emotional resonance — within 53–65%, authoritativeness — up to 66%).

It is established that inversion performs both universal (rhythm, accent, mobilization) and specific functions for each language. It mobilizes in Ukrainian speeches, structures thought in English-speaking ones, adds aesthetics in French, and logic in German. Most often, inversion occurs in utterances about war and resistance. It enhances the emotionality of speech and meets the cultural expectations of the audience.

Academic Novelty

The study is the first to propose a comparative functional typology of inversion in Ukrainian, French, German, and English political rhetoric, taking into account cultural specifics of perception. The research combined content analysis and empirical questionnaire surveys to study the real impact of syntactic changes on the audience.

Practical Significance

The obtained results can be used in the teaching of political rhetoric, stylistics and translation studies, as well as in the training of political speakers, copywriters, and public communicators. The results provide a better understanding of how to adapt language strategies to the target audience, increasing the effectiveness of political and social messages.

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Appendix

Questionnaire on the topic "Inversion as a rhetorical device: an audience survey".

1. Socio-demographic block

No.	Question	Answer options
1	Your age	18–25 / 26–35 / 36–50 / 51–65 / 65+
2	Education	Secondary / Unfinished higher education / Higher education / Scientific degree
3	How much do you follow political events?	I don’t follow / From time to time / Regularly / Very active

2. Analytical block

In each pair, choose the statement that:

A – is better remembered

B – evokes stronger emotion

C – sounds more authoritative / leadership-like

No.	Statement 1 (neutral)	Statement 2 (with inversion)
1	We will win if we are together.	Only together — we will win!
2	Freedom always wins.	Freedom always wins.
3	We are strong, so we will stand.	We are strong — we will stand!
4	The enemy will not overcome us.	The enemy will not overcome us.
5	We fight for truth and freedom.	We fight for truth and freedom.