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THE FEATURES OF RENÉ LÉVESQUE'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STRUGGLE FOR QUEBEC IDENTITY[1]

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Abstract. This article considers the political discourse of René Lévesque (1922–1987) in the context of his fight for Quebec identity. In our opinion, he was the most brilliant Quebec leader during the second half of the twentieth century. A selection of his public speeches and most notable interviews from the work La voix de René Lévesque (Québec 2002) were used as the source material for analysis. As a media and mass communication researcher, the author does not aspire solely to linguistic analysis. We consider René Lévesque's political discourse in view of his ability to communicate with different audiences supporting Quebec identity. It was therefore vital to determine who these target audiences were and highlight the principal methods employed by Lévesque to influence them. The speeches of Lévesque the politician reflect his experience as a TV journalist (the habit of presenting information in spoken, rather than in written, form), and this is where some of its "coarseness" – the repetition of individual words and phrases, the use of interjections, the absence of stylistic excesses, etc. – comes from. One of the conclusions made is that all of Lévesque's public speeches demonstrate, step by step, his consistent programme for preserving Quebec identity in its English environment (the change of self-designation into "Québécois (Quebecers)"; the proclamation of French as the only language of the province; the attempt to secure the support of France, its former metropole; referendum on province independence; declining the federal offer to sign "patriated" Canadian Constitution without recognizing Quebec as "a distinct society" and others). However, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, his federal opponent, considered René Lévesque an ambitious person, who wanted to split united Canada. Unfortunately, La voix de René Lévesque did not include the internal Parti Québécois discussions on the province's independence, which were the reason he abandoned the Parti Québécois and his post of Prime Minister of Quebec. The author argues that political discourse of René Lévesque was a form of social action, which served as a prerequisite for recognizing the Parti Québécois Nation by the Parliament of Canada in 2006. Today, the Parti Québécois continues to successfully build on and develop René Lévesque's political legacy, and the issue of Quebec's independence is still on its agenda. The research shows that further research is needed on the political discourse of the leaders of small nations, people like René Lévesque. The context of the modern world gives us many other similar regional situations.

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The so-called French Canadian national question emerged in the mid-eighteenth century, following the transferal of the colony of New France to the British Crown[2]. At its core, this is the opposition of the descendants of French settlers to attempts to "dissolve" them into the English-speaking environment. The stubborn resistance of Canada's French-speaking population contributed to the emergence of passionate figures in the region who defended its identity. Their desire to draw the attention of London, and then Ottawa, to the fact that Canada's two founding nations were what formed this identity reached its apogee in the second half of the twentieth century and started to threaten the integrity of the Canadian Confederation. The *Official Languages Act* (1969) initiated by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau based on the principle "one country, two languages" only intensified the confrontation between the federal centre and the lone French-speaking province. It was around this time that one of the most brilliant politicians in the region, René Lévesque (1922–1987), whose centenary is celebrated this year, came to prominence in Quebec. Unfortunately, Russian scholars have largely ignored Lévesque, while the Canadian media typically mentions him only in connection with the successive victories of the Parti Québécois in the provincial elections, painting him almost exclusively in a negative light, and not offering a serious analysis of the significant role he played in the fight got the preservation of Quebec identity. This paper thus has two objectives: 1) to attract the attention of Russian scholars to the speech practices of this most remarkable political figure; and 2) to contribute, as philosophers would say, to the "rehabilitation of René Lévesque," whose negative image has been rooted in the Russian-language media since Soviet times. This second objective will be achieved through the use of empirical material taken from the collection *La voix de René Lévesque* (Québec 2002).

The **theoretical foundations of this paper** are largely based on the monograph *Analyse des données textuelles (Analysis of Textual Data)* published in Quebec by the French authors Ludovic Lebart, Bénédict Pincemin and Céline Poudat in 2019 (Lebart, Pincemin et al. 2019), as well as on certain provisions of the article "Defying the News: New Aesthetics of 'Truth' in Popular Culture" by Canadian scholar Michael Lithgow (Lithgow 2012). Other sources that were useful in the preparation of this paper include *The Orator's Terminological Glossary* by A. A. Romanov, O. N. Morozova, and L. A. Romanova (2011)[3], the article "The French Language as a Spiritual Value

[2] Following the Seven–Years' War.

[3] Romanov A. A., Morozova O. N., Romanova L. A. 2011. *Terminologicheskii glossarii oratora. Posobie k uchebnomu kursu [Orator's Terminological Glossary].* Institut prikladnoi lingvistiki i massovykh kommunikatsii TGSCH, TvGU.

of Quebec and Quebeckers" by Moscow State University of International Relations professor L. G. Vedenina[4], and the monograph "Melodic Discourse as an Information Medium in the System of Public Communications" by A. A. Romanov and G. A. Ulianich (Romanov, Ulianich 2014).

Research: Main Part

The following research tasks are pursued by the author in this article:

- to trace the dynamics of René Lévesque's political discourse concerning the protection of Quebec identity;
- based on the specifics of Lévesque's speech behaviour, to determine his role in the formation of public opinion at that time;
- to chronicle the most important aspects of Lévesque's political discourse, which continue to be used today by the leaders of the Parti Québécois.

Research materials. In Quebec, numerous works have been published on René Lévesque (Godin 1994–2005; Gince, Grégoire 2020) that attempt to figure out why his bold ideas about the future of Francophone Quebec as a co-founder of the Canadian Confederation, which has preserved its language, customs and traditions, continue to be popular today. Several books are set to be released in honour of the centenary of his birth. However, among all the works dedicated to Lévesque, a special place is set aside for the collection of selected public speeches and interviews given by the man entitled *La voix de René Lévesque (The Voice of René Lévesque).* The collection, which comes complete with an CD, was prepared by François Brousseau in 2002 based on radiograms of key speeches of the former leader of the Parti Québécois and Premier of Quebec. Its content served as empirical material for the present article: we have translated and reproduced here what we believe to be the most revealing fragments of Lévesque's public speeches and interviews.

Methodology. I would like to note here that, as a researcher in the field of journalism and mass communications, I do not claim to offer a purely linguistic analysis of René Lévesque's political discourse, rather, I consider it from the point of view of Lévesque's communication with various target audiences with the goal of laying out his steps to protect the Quebec identity. This is why it is important, in my opinion, to identify the addressees of Lévesque's public speeches and to trace the methods he employs to influence or win over various groups (supporters, opponents, Quebec voters, and others).

Since this paper is somewhat interdisciplinary in nature, the method of complex analysis was used when working with primary source materials. This includes the following levels:

[4] Vedenina L. G. 2014. Frantsuzsky iazyk – dukhovnaia tsennost' Kvebeka i kvebektsev [French Language as Spiritual Value of Quebec and Quebecers]. In L.G. Mikhailova (ed.). Materialy XXXVI i XXXVII mezhdunarodnykh konferentsii Rossiiskogo Obshchestva po izucheniu kul'tury SSHA Fakul'tet zhurnalistiki MGU imeni M.V. Lomonosova. P. 182–188.

- content analysis ("ideology");
- event context analysis (the country-specific component);
- an analysis of the features that are characteristic of speeches and interviews given by René Lévesque.

Research procedure. As a process of speech behaviour[5], discourse forms the audience's image of a given politician, reflects his or her worldview and the way they present their ideological/party platform. We thus wholeheartedly agree with the French researchers Ludovic Lebart, Bénédict Pincemin and Céline Poudat when they say "political discourse is an area that is particularly suitable for […] analysing the special meaning that words take on in connection with ideologies" (Lebart, Pincemin et al. 2019: 9). The discourse of any given politician also reflects certain features of communication with fellow countrymen, likeminded people, and opponents. What is more, such public speech acts always demonstrate personal, human qualities. Thus, in order to determine the origins of René Lévesque's desire for Quebec to enjoy a special status in the Canadian Confederation, let us first look at some facts from his life. Without such background knowledge, it is difficult to grasp why a well-known, highly paid international journalist on French-language Canadian television suddenly left his creative pursuits and set his sights on domestic politics.

René Lévesque grew up raised in Quebec[6]. At the tender age of 14, he was already working as an editor at a local radio station. The family moved to Quebec city after the death of René's father. He would later attend Université Laval, studying for a degree in law, but left without completing the course, choosing instead to devote all his energy to his work at Radio-Canada[7]. During the Second World War, Lévesque worked as a French-language correspondent for Voice of America and witnessed such significant events as the liberation of France and the Liberation of Dachau Concentration Camp by Allied forces in 1945. Upon his return from Europe, Lévesque worked as a journalist for the Radio-Canada International Service in Montreal, and over the next 14 years, he would work his way up from lowly employee to on-air superstar commanding a substantial salary.

In the 1950s, Lévesque transitioned to Quebec television (Galushko 1980: 13), and from 1956 to 1959, he hosted the popular news show *Point de mire,* which dealt mainly with international topics. It was during his time working on a series of reports about the Algeria War, which was being waged by France, that Lévesque first voiced his views on the right of small nations to self-determination. On the final edition of *Point de mire,* Lévesque, in his closing speech, explained his philosophy on how information

[5] Romanov A. A., Morozova O. N., Romanova L. A. 2011. *Terminologicheskii glossarii oratora. Posobie k uchebnomu kursu [Orator's Terminological Glossary].* Institut prikladnoi lingvistiki i massovykh kommunikatsii TGSCH, TvGU. P. 17.

[6] Lévesque was born in New Brunswick, another province where French is widely spoken. He spent his formative years were spent in Quebec, in the town of New Carlisle on the shored of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which today is home to just 1500 people or so (See: New Carlisle. URL: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Carlisle (accessed 16.01.2022).

[7] Radio-Canada is the French-language name of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a federal broadcasting service financed primarily by the government.

should be presented to the audience – a philosophy that would guide him throughout his sparkling political career in Quebec – that any point of view has the right to exist: *"If bringing news to the people really is a profession, then we must present, along with everything else, unpleasant facts and give the floor to the disillusioned, and not only to those who are happy with the way things are. Otherwise, it is as if the information is coming from an advertising agency, intended for tourists, for whom everything is shown in the best light"* (La voix de René Lévesque…2002: 23–24). We should note here that as a television presenter, and later as a television interviewer, Lévesque would at times colour his speech with interjections, and he spoke so quickly that it seemed as though he were having a casual conversation. For example, he would often use the word *ben* – "well, it is what it is; like this; okay; well, yes; well" – which is included in the *Dictionary of Spoken French*[8], as well as in the *New French-Russian Dictionary* compiled by V. G. Gak and K. A. Ganshina[9], as a "colloquialism." However, when speaking publicly as the leader of the Quebec sovereignty movement[10] in front of large audiences (for example, when addressing the voters of Quebec or speaking at the National Assembly of France), Lévesque, even when under extreme emotional stress (following the unsuccessful Quebec independence referendum in May 1980, for instance), refrained from such techniques and spoke in literary French, with the clear articulation that is characteristic of the language, and employing a broad palette of intonation." We should also note that Lévesque's speech as a TV journalist and when communicating with correspondents is characterized by an element of imagery (for example, in the above fragment, the comparison between "opportunistic" information and information coming from an ad agency intended for tourists).

Lévesque himself would late state that his pivot to the internal problems of Quebec was inspired by the legendary strike of the French Canadian staff of CBC in 1958–1959[11]. Arriving in Ottawa as part of a delegation of strikers to negotiate a possible resolution to the stand-off at the federal level, Lévesque realized that French Canadians were seen as "second-class citizens" there. However, the strike fizzled out after the support promised by the English-speaking CBC staff never came. Lévesque called the strike the "starting point of his political education" (*un moment d'éducation politique*), and in an interview with the English-language newspaper *The Ottawa Citizen* the day after the Parti Québécois won the 1976 provincial elections, he stressed that, until that moment, he was neither a federalist nor an anti-federalist (*The Ottawa Citizen*…1976). Lévesque's activities as a journalist caught the attention of the leaders of the Quebec

[8] Griniova E. F., Gromova T.N. 1987. *Slovar' razgovornogo frantsuzskogo iazyka [Spoken French Language Dictionary]*. Russky iazyk. P. 63.

[9] Gak V. G., Ganshina K. A. 2000. *Novy frantsuzsko-russky slovar'*. 5-e izd. [New *French-Russian Dictionary*]. Russky iazyk. P. 111.

[10] Members of the Parti Québécois and Quebecers who supported its platform call themselves as sovereigntists (supporters of sovereign Quebec), although they are often referred to in the English-speaking provinces as separatists. Both terms are used in the Russian scientific literature, but the Russian media prefers to use the term "separatists."

[11] Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. URL: http://www.cbc.ca (accessed 16.01.2022).

Liberal Party, which he subsequently joined. After the Liberals came to power in 1960, he was named Minister of Water Resources and Public Works in their government, thus repeating the path of all Quebec leaders of the eighteenth – twenty-first centuries. In the political history of French Canada, we see that the most memorable politicians, coming from various backgrounds (although they are typically lawyers, notaries, religious leaders, or journalists) and being active on the social scene, would typically go on to join or found political parties, and become members of parliament, speakers of the Assembly, members of provincial government cabinets, or even premiers of Quebec. Their experience in politics almost by default made them the staunchest defenders of the French Canadian identity, and they were always outstanding public speakers. For example, Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786–1871), a graduate of the Petit Séminaire de Québec whose eloquence was legendary, was first an MP, then Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, founder of the Patriote movement, and later leader of the Lower Canada Rebellion in 1837–1838. Or journalist Henri Bourassa (1868–1952), who was a member of parliament and author of the *Doctrine of French Canadian Nationalism,* whose public speeches include the memorable "Language, Guardian of the Faith". The newspaper *Le Devoir* ("Duty") that he founded in 1910 to protect the interests of French Canadians is still in publication today. It is thus no surprise that the rector of Université Laval Camille Roy (1873) included the sections "Political Eloquence" and "Religious Eloquence," which in his opinion had a rich history in the province by the middle of the 19th century and continued to develop, in the very first *Manuel De L'Histoire De La Littérature Canadienne-Française*[12].

The beginning of Lévesque's political career coincided with the so-called "Quiet Revolution" in Quebec, a period of economic and social hardship in the province compared to the country's other provinces. The economy was still dominated by American and Anglo-Canadian monopolies, and French Canadians primarily owned and companies in low-profit industries. The English-speaking population felt like the province belonged to them, and French-speaking citizens of Quebec who used their native language would be berated with the "colonial cry": "Speak White![13]" It was at that time that a number of movements appeared in the region calling for Quebec's independence. These included the Rally for National Independence (Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale, RIN) led by André D'Allemagne and Pierre Bourgault, the National Rally (Ralliement national, RN) led by Gilles Grégoire, and the terrorist organization the Quebec Liberation Front (Front de libération du Québec, FLQ), which had already carried out a number of bombings by this time. Intellectuals from the University of Montreal did their part too, forming the editorial board of the *Parti pris* magazine, "whose founder, sociology lecturer Luc Racine, declared the goal

[12] See: Roy Camille. 1959. *Manuel de L'histoire de la Littérature de Langue Française.* 21st edition.

[13] The grim poem *Speak White* (1968) by Michèle Lalonde (1937–2021) is dedicated to this disenfranchised position of the French language in Canada's only French-speaking province.

of the movement and the magazine to be the struggle for 'independence, separation, socialism'" (Agamoglanov 1976: 99).

Lévesque also developed his plan to change Quebec's standing in the Canadian Confederation and the situation in his native province to the benefit of French Canadians, which he called the "Sovereignty Association" ("Souveraineté–Association"). According to the plan, relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada were to be based on economic association with Canada, with Quebec having political sovereignty[14].

On October 14, 1967, Lévesque left the Quebec Liberal Party, which had not welcomed his initiative, and founded Movement for Sovereignty-Association (Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, MSA) which became the Parti Québécois precisely one year later[15]. Let us quote a fragment of Lévesque's speech at a congregation of his supporters at the founding of the Parti Québécois (October 14, 1968). It is a call-back to the programmatic essay *Option Québec* published in the run-up to the meeting, the opening paragraph of which reads "We Are Others": "We are Quebecers." The name change, which had been discussed by the editorial board of the *Parti pris* magazine and agreed by Lévesque, set a completely new course for the development of events in the province.

"This choice, which united us and took the form of a manifesto, as they called it, and whose opening words – and this struck me so much today – were not only something simple and natural for us, but it, this phrase, in my opinion, was an active beginning, since it already contained a name that we had accepted, that we had chosen. It is simple: 'We are Quebecers'" (*La voix de René Lévesque*…2002: 48). These words, taken from the CD that is part of the collection *La voix de René Lévesque,* highlights the contrast between Lévesque's clear speech, his measured and "non-oratorical" intonation, which is more reminiscent of someone presenting a report, and the stormy reaction of the audience, especially to the last phrase, "We are Québécois." Clearly, the content of this particular public speech did not require any additional emotional "colouring" on the part of Lévesque. The new name, according to the members of the Parti Québécois, was the first step towards changing Quebec's status in the country.

As the Canadian researcher Michael Lithgow correctly points out, "Language is the medium through which we encounter a world in which we already exist and that is transformed by our presence" (Lithgow 2012: 287). The name "Québécois," which comes from their native French, marked the beginning of the renewal of the whole of Quebec society. MGIMO professor L. G. Vedenina remarks on this event: "The question of the name is a signal pointing to the existence of other, deeper, social issues […]

[14] The prototype of this idea was already evident in the work of French Canadian economist Errol Bouchette (1862–1912) "L'indépendence économique du Canada français" ("The Economic Independence of French Canada") published in 1906 (See: Roy Camille. 1959. *Manuel de L'histoire de la Littérature de Langue Française.* 21st edition. P. 145).

[15] In early 1968, Lévesque laid out and substantiated his concept of "Sovereignty Association" in the book *An Option for Quebec* (Lévesque, R. (1968). *Option Québec*). He saw this as a union somewhat similar to the union of states of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The term French Canadian, according to those involved in the debate, is associated with the concept of a minority. It denotes a connection with two territories: France on the other side of the Atlantic, and the English-speaking Canada (Vedenina 2014: 185). The rejection of the names "French Canada" and "French Canadians" was thus a rejection of the position of the "Canadian" minority. In addition, by using the self-designation "Québécois," the new Parti Québécois sought to designate the "specialness" of the country's only French-speaking province.

Quebec enthusiastically adopted the new name: "According to sociologists, it took less than fifteen years for the word Québécois to supplant the name French Canadian" (Ibid.: 185).

In November 1976, the Parti Québécois won the provincial elections for the first time. Neither their liberal opponents, nor the members of the Parti Québécois itself, expected such an outcome. It is common knowledge that Lévesque had two speeches ready – one for if the conservatives won, and one noting the small positive changes that the people of Quebec could expect in the event that the liberals emerged victorious. As it turned out, neither was needed, and Lévesque had to give a completely unprepared speech after the results were announced (the Parti Québécois won 71 seats, while the second-placed Liberal Party won 28). His words were completely improvised and extremely emotional. He is noticeably confused and surprised when he begins, which is somewhat strange for an experienced former journalist, but quite understandable for the leader of a fledgling party who, at the end of the day, is just a person: *"I don't think I have to tell you just how unable I am, at this moment, to make any commentary on the extraordinary sign of confidence that was hoped for […] I have to frankly say to you that we hoped for this with all our hearts […] but we didn't expect it to come like this year. I never thought I could be as proud to be Québécois as I am this evening"* (La voix de René Lévesque…2002: 58). The repetition of the expression "from the bottom of my heart" in various versions (*de tout notre cœur, du fond du cœur, du fond de notre cœur*) speaks to Lévesque's deep gratitude to all voters – the mass addressee[16]: *"From the bottom of my heart I want to thank all Québécois, in every corner of Quebec, who weren't afraid of the changes needed by Quebec"* (La voix de René Lévesque…2002: 58). What is more, Lévesque is clearly proud of the result, and proud of himself: *"I never thought I could be as proud to be Québécois as I am this evening"* (Ibid.: 58). Lévesque then thanks his fellow party members, emphasizing the "specialness" of Quebec and calling it a country (*pays*)[17]. Here, once again, he colours his speech with uncharacteristically emotional overtones: *"I would also like to thank and congratulate, in all corners of the country, all*

[16] Romanov A. A., Morozova O. N., Romanova L. A. 2011. *Terminologicheskii glossarii oratora. Posobie k uchebnomu kursu [Orator's Terminological Glossary]*. Institut prikladnoi lingvistiki i massovykh kommunikatsii TGSCH, TvGU. P. 6-7.

[17] This name for the province of Quebec (*le pays de Québec*) likely comes from the novel *Maria Chapdelaine* by the early twentieth century writer Louis Hémon, which was incredibly popular in Quebec and tells the emotional story of the life of the Quebec peasantry in the sticks. The book was written in 1913 and first appeared in Quebec in 1916. It has been reprinted on numerous occasions and three films have been made based on it.

those who for the last ten years […] thousands of them […] and even more in the last month, who worked so hard, in a superhuman way, to bring about this result that had come about, think about it, in ten years. This is so quickly in the life of a people. We aren't a small people; we are perhaps something like a great people" (Ibid.: 58). The recording of this speech captures the festive atmosphere of the event – Lévesque is often interrupted by applause, the chanting of his name and the slogans of the Parti Québécois by its supporters – yet it also demonstrates his skill as a public speaker. Noticeably exhausted after the tense election campaign, Lévesque nevertheless speaks extremely emotionally, he is in his element, "playing" with intonation, "holds pauses" before what he believed to be important statements, and accentuating them (for example, the phrase about "great people" when expressing his gratitude to all Québécois and his party members).

René Lévesque won by a landslide as the member of the Taillon electoral district of Montreal and became Premier of Quebec.

Lévesque's strength as a politician was his ability to make bold yet well-thought-out decisions. Despite the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969, residents of Quebec were not always able to speak their native language. For example, "only 68% of French Canadians had the opportunity to use French at work, and 21% were forced to speak English in the workplace"[18]. This prompted Lévesque's government to adopt Bill No. 101 (the Charter of the French Language) on August 26, 1977, proclaiming French the only official language of the province of Quebec! The bill was drawn up by Lévesque's colleague, the psychiatrist Camille Laurin, and it, of course, contradicted the Official Languages Act. We should point out here that the French language issue has been a sore point for Quebecers since the middle of the eighteenth century, when new France was transferred to Great Britain and English was declared the official language for its 65,000 French-speaking residents. The first significant speech in defence of the French language was given at a meeting of Parliament of Quebec in 1792, by French Canadian MP Eustache-Gaspard de Lotbinière, and it posed a serious challenge to the British administration, for which he had previously served. But it was not until over a half a century later, in 1848, that French Canadian members of parliament were given the right to use French in parliamentary debates. However, English continued to dominate in other areas of life for a long time, and the Official Languages Act did little to change the situation. This is why, in September 1977, in an appearance on the Télémag programme and commenting on the adoption of Bill 101, Lévesque addressed his words to the federal government directly, and called his political opponent, Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau (who, incidentally, was also a native of Montreal), a "staunch federalist." In the interview, Lévesque fell back on the speech technique of interjections that is characteristic of television journalists. He also resorted once again to the use of imagery, simple but effective: *"If I am a*

[18] Bantsekin N. B. 1982. *Frankokanadskaia problema na sovremennom etape (1968–1980) [The French Canadian Issue Today (1968–1980)].* Doctoral Dissertation. Moscow, ISK AN SSSR. P. 30.

supporter of independence, then language is only one of the reasons, and not the most important by far. I just don't see how the issue of our cultural and linguistic identity can be resolved without achieving political sovereignty – so that 'we can be at home' (d'être chez soi). And – yes (ben) – it is the native language that gives the majority of the population the feeling of 'home,' and that's natural. I take exception [to this], it's humiliating. And I ask myself: why are our god-damned circumstances forcing us to do this? But that is exactly what they are doing" (La voix de René Lévesque: 65). Commenting on such an important law for Quebec, Lévesque speaks with a measured intonation, although he does speak rather quickly due to the limited airtime he is given, which is normal for television, and poses no problem for a man who used to work as an on-air journalist.

Lévesque the politician knew how to distance himself from the illusions that prevented the Parti Québécois from moving forward, winning over his fellow Québécois, and he said as much publicly. When he formed the party back in 1968, the plan was to declare the independence of Quebec after winning the provincial elections. But the tactic proved unsuccessful, as the party won just six seats in parliament in the October 1973 elections. This prompted Lévesque to propose a new strategy at the following congress of the Parti Québécois in 1974 that he called "stageism" and involved moving towards the end goal in stages, through a series of referendums on the independence of Quebec. Abandoning the "fast track" route to independence caused a wave of criticism from Lévesque's radical party members, including the famous Canadian economist, Jacques Parizeau. They were the main addressee of Lévesque's September 1977 speech, a year after the party's victory in the Quebec elections, where he stressed that he had not abandoned his ultimate goal: *"It seems to me that the biggest challenge here* [in governing the province] *is not to lose sight of the ideal, with your illusions fading away into nothing. Those that remain – I swear to use – disappear within the first few months of being in power. I've been in power for some time now, but here is the thing that they forget* […] *I've never been in the position that I am right now. Any illusions I may have harboured had disappeared completely after a few months. But hope, or the ideal, is what we are talking about when everything else goes away*" (Ibid.: 66). The recording of this speech reflects Lévesque's clear and calm manner of speaker. These are the words of a man who is confident in his righteousness, who is prepared to take on any difficulties that may appear.

The initial successes of the Parti Québécois – the victory in the Quebec general elections and the proclamation of French as the province's only official language – inspired Lévesque to seek support for his efforts at the international level. He soon made his way to France at the invitation of French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Quebec's rapprochement with France began during the Quiet Revolution, and the first step was a direct agreement on cultural cooperation concluded between the two in 1963, much to the chagrin of the federal government. But what really caught Ottawa off-guard was the speech of President Charles de Gaulle, who, during an official visit

to the Expo 67 in Montreal, uttered the words "Vive le Québec libre!" ("Long live free Quebec!"). Unsurprisingly, de Gaulle's visit spiralled into a political scandal and he left the country immediately.

French support for the idea of Quebec's independence was not the only reason Lévesque was drawn to the country, as it also headed up the influential Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), which could help strengthen Quebec's position in its confrontation with Ottawa. This explains why Lévesque's speech before the National Assembly of France on November 2, 1977 (another collective addressee) is in completely different vein. Speaking to representatives of the former *metropole*, Lévesque, as a skilled diplomat, appealed to the common origin of the French people and Québécois, using the image of Asterix[19] – the hero of the popular French comic book series – even though it was wholly uncharacteristic of him to use proper names in his public speeches. He even took a dig at the well-known vanity of the descendants of the man who discovered Canada, Jacques Cartier, suggesting that *"… all of North America could very well have been Gallic, rather than, say, 'neo-Roman'"*). But Lévesque's main task was to explain to the French deputies why the people of Quebec were so insistent on the sovereignty from the English-speaking provinces: *"We are talking about a people who for a long time were content with being forced, as it were, to forget their own identities in order to survive. Now, as it seems to me, as it seems to us (and our number is growing) – people who are convinced that a new country* (pays) *will soon appear on the map through democratic means, where until now the Federal State would very much like to see only one of the other provinces, and where a very large majority of what you often call 'the French Canada' (les Français du Canada) lives. At almost two thousand kilometres from north to south and more than one thousand five hundred kilometres from east to west, Quebec is, at least physically, the largest contrée (region) in the world, where the official language has to be* (soit) *French[20]. Moreover, four out of every five Québécois can trace their roots to France. Just like you, we can talk about 'our ancestors the Gauls' in all earnestness, or at the very least with a slight smile. However, since there are only six million of us, and because we are located on the edge of a continent where forty times more Anglophones live, we sometimes feel 'surrounded'* (de nous sentir cernés), *like Asterix in his village, and therefore only dream that North America could very well have been Gallic, rather than, say, 'neo-Roman'"* (Ibid.: 67–68). Talking about Québécois French, and using (in accordance with the rules of French grammar) Le présent du subjonctif (present subjunctive) in his statements, Lévesque expresses his desire to give the people

[19] Here is the description of Asterix given by *Le Petit Larousse:* "héros de bande dessinée, créé en 1959 […] Les aventures de ce petit guerrier gaulois, luttanat avec son ami Obélix contre les occupants romains, mettent en scène les stéréotypes nationaux" (Le Petit Larousse. 1994. P. 1150).

[20] "Subjonctif – mode personnel du verbe employé soit dans les propositions subordonnées, soit pour exprimer le doute, l'incertitude, la volonté, etc." (Le Petit Larousse. 1994. P. 968). "Le présent du subjonctif exprime l'attitude personnelle de celui qui parle à l'égard de ce qui est dit […] Il sert ainsi à exprimer une action incertaine, douteuse, désirée, etc." (Popova I. N., Kazakova Z. A. 2005. *The French Language. A Practical Course in French Grammar.* Nestor Academic Publishers. P. 273).

of Quebec the opportunity (in accordance with Bill 101) to use their native language in full, and this is something that the French people could latch onto. In his speech to the National Assembly of France, which is included on the *La voix de René Lévesque* CD, Lévesque again employs a number of oratorial techniques: the pace of the speech is slow, his articulation is exceptionally clear, reminiscent of de Gaulle; he varies his intonation and takes pauses before important statements; and he stresses phrases that, in his opinion, are particularly important. The speech was clearly designed to elicit a reaction from the Canadian government, and was not long before one came.

Lévesque's speech and the support promised by the French President concerned the Canadian Ambassador to France, Gérard Pelletier, a long-time acquaintance of Lévesque who had at one time worked alongside him, but who was now a "staunch federalist."

Emboldened by his success, and urged on by radical members of his party, Lévesque decided to hold a referendum on Quebec independence. The disappointing results of the vote produced one of his most dramatic speeches. The referendum, held on May 20, 1980, saw just 40.5% of Quebecers voting in favour of independence, while 59.5% voted against. Lévesque took the defeat badly. In spite of this, his primary concern was to make sure that the people of province remained united and respected each other's points of view on the independence of Quebec. Here is an excerpt from his concession, eloquent and full of human dignity in the face of a devastating defeat and demonstrating his ability to "take a blow." He first addresses his supporters (the collective addressee), and then everyone who may be listening at the time (the mass addressee): *"My dear friends, if I understand you correctly, you're saying: 'until the next time.' But in the meanwhile, with the same serenity with which we conducted ourselves during the campaign, we have to swallow the defeat this time… it's not easy. I apologize for having waited to come here to see you. I have to admit that we continued to hope for a while… because it's… I have to tell you, it's tough, it hurts more, it hurts more deeply than any other electoral defeat, and I know what I'm talking about* […] *This May 20, 1980 will perhaps remain as one of the final glimmerings of the old Quebec that must be respected. We are a family that is very obviously still divided from this point of view. But I'm confident that one day there will be a normal rendezvous with history that Quebec will keep, and I'm confident that we'll all be there together to participate in it. But I admit that tonight I'd have a hard time telling you when or how. The only thing I want to add is this: with the same fundamental confidence in us, and taking into account that tomorrow we have to continue to live together, and that it's extremely obvious that there are great divisions among us, can we finish up this evening by singing for everyone that which remains the most beautiful song from Quebec to all, without exception, to all the people from our home? If someone would like to start it up, 'Gens du pays.' Me, I don't have any voice left"* (Ibid.: 73, 75). The song he is referring to is a declaration of love for his native land (words and music by Gilles Vigneault and Gaston Rochon)[21]. It was first performed

[21] Refrain: *"Gens du pays, c'est votre tour / De vous laisser parler d'amour."*

in Montreal on Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day (St. John the Baptist Day), Quebec's national holiday, on June 24, 1975, and was soon adopted at the province's unofficial national anthem. It would also come to be associated with the memory of René Lévesque following his suggestion that the people sing it on May 20, 1980.

Lévesque's proposal in his address to the mass audience to sing the unofficial national anthem of Quebec is somewhat surprising, as his speech behaviour, which is full of the usual verbal (words), acoustic (volume of voice), and kinetic (gestures) aspects, did not typically include spatial behaviour: by invoking his favourite song, which just so happened to be about Quebec, he used the space to unite his fellow countrymen[22]. This gave his speech a hint of ritual performance, traditionally accompanied by singing, appealing to an important aspect of the lives of Québécois – being good Catholics. The Russian scholars A. A. Romanov and G. A. Ulyanich define this kind of scene as "a social act of interaction between a person and another person or group of people aimed at clarifying the truth and bringing it closer to that person or group of people" (Romanov, Ulianich 2014: 48). In any case, the truth that Lévesque wanted to convey to all the people of Quebec was the need, in spite of everything, for them to be united in the same linguistic and cultural environment.

Despite the setback, the Parti Québécois won the subsequent general election on April 13, 1981. The referendum and Lévesque's re-election as Premier of Quebec forced the federal government to take retaliatory measures: Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau launched the so-called "patriation" of the Canadian Constitution, the process that would eventually lead to full Canadian sovereignty, ceding from the United Kingdom. However, in November 1981, Quebec was not invited to approve the project developed by the nine English-speaking provinces, and the following year, Lévesque refused, in protest, to sign the "patriated" Constitution, which, incidentally, did not include any mention of Canada's two founding nations.

In the autumn of 1984, the Progressive Conservatives ("moderate federalists") came to power in Ottawa. Disagreements arose again within the Parti Québécois on the issue of declaring the independence of Quebec, and key ministers of Lévesque's cabinet, led by Jacques Parizeau, left the government. Having lost many of his former associates, Lévesque resigned as leader of the Parti Québécois, and on October 3, he resigned as prime minister. Needless to say, the Liberal Party won the next Quebec general election. In an interview to promote the release of his memoirs in October 1986, Lévesque, now out of politics, optimistically and figuratively made it clear that his dream for the future of Quebec was still intact, no matter what: *"Modern Quebec, as we know it today, appeared a quarter of a century ago, and its fortunes, like the tide, have risen and fallen. This image is dear to me, as it is to all residents of the coast. Yes, the tide may go out, with the intention of returning. But, in any case, regarding Quebec's*

[22] Romanov A. A., Morozova O. N., Romanova L. A. 2011. *Terminologicheskii glossarii oratora. Posobie k uchebnomu kursu [Orator's Terminological Glossary]*. Institut prikladnoi lingvistiki i massovykh kommunikatsii TGSCH, TvGU. P. 17.

movement towards ultimate prosperity, I personally think that this process is irreversible and will, as a result, lead to a clearer definition of its national status" (La voix de René Lévesque…2002: 84).

René Lévesque died unexpectedly of a heart attack on November 1, 1987. His death marked the end of an era in the history of Quebec.

Research Findings

La voix de René Lévesque is an invaluable primary source that allowed us to analyse, "first-hand" the features of René Lévesque's political discourse in the context of defending Quebec identity. We were able to trace the development of Lévesque's world view in connection with this issue, identify the presence and consistency of his political programme to ensure the protection of Quebec identity, and (thanks to the included CD) note some of the oratorial techniques he tended to employ. In addition, our analysis demonstrated that the speech practice of Lévesque the politician was based on his experience as a television journalist. Of course, this small study – the only one of its kind so far – could not cover all the features of René Lévesque's political discourse.

Analysis of the Research Findings

Our goal at the beginning of this paper was to analyse the content of the political discourse of René Lévesque aimed at defending Quebec identity (that is, of his "ideology," as defined by the French scholars Ludovic Lebart, Bénédict Pincemin and Céline Poudat). This enabled us to trace a logical programme for defending the national interests of Quebec and the preservation of Québécois identity in the context of an English-speaking environment, which Lévesque consistently put into practice (the change of the name of the people of the province to Québécois; the declaration of French as the only official language of Quebec; the attempt to enlist the support of the former *metropole*, France; the referendum on Quebec independence; the refusal to sign the "patriated" Constitution of Canada, on which Quebec was not consulted and which did not recognize Quebec as "a distinct society," and so on). It was precisely this ability to be a consistent politician that was denied to him by his main opponent, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who viewed Lévesque as nothing more than an ambitious opportunist who sought to split a united Canada. It is important to note that the speech practice of Lévesque the politician reflects his experience as a television journalist (the habit of presenting information in spoken, rather than in written, form), and this is where some of its "coarseness" – the repetition of individual words and phrases, the use of interjections, the absence of stylistic artistry, etc. – comes from. The political life of the "René Lévesque era" was so intense that I believe this article should be accompanied with a detailed description of the historical context of this period.

Having analysed the key speeches and interviews given by René Lévesque, it can be argued that the political discourse of these speeches is a social action itself. The observation of Canadian scholar Michael Lithgow confirms this conclusion: "It is the use of language, a system of symbols used to represent collective intentionality, that creates certain kinds of social commitments, obligations, and expectations that implicate speakers and listeners in particular social realities (Lithgow 2012: 287). The cornerstone symbols of René Lévesque's political discourse were: "Québécois" – the change of the name of the people of Quebec as a rejection of their status as a "Canadian minority"; the new meaning of the traditional phrase "Quebec country," reflecting the desire for a sovereign, independent Quebec; and the definition of the French language as providing a sense of "home" for Québécois.

In November 2006, almost 20 years after Lévesque's death, and more than two and a half centuries since the emergence of the French Canadian national question that troubled the country, the Canadian Parliament recognized the "existence of the Québécois Nation," which would, of course, been impossible without the foundations laid down by Lévesque's political discourse and the discourse of the Parti Québécois. René Lévesque foresaw this development of events: *"We all need to constantly dream together so that these dreams result in concrete projects"* (June 4, 1985) (La voix de René Lévesque…2002: 87).

In the monograph *Analyse des données textuelles* (Lebart, Pincemin et al. 2019) that we have already mentioned, the French researchers Ludovic Lebart, Bénédict Pincemin and Céline Poudat quite rightly state that "in qualitative text analysis, the researcher's attention is focused not on the text itself, but rather on the subject of the analysis, for which the text is one of the types of access" (Ibid.: 28).

The "subject" of Lévesque's public speeches is quite evident from the texts – the struggle to preserve Quebec identity. However, his participation in the internal discussions of the Parti Québécois is not covered in the collection *La voix de René Lévesque,* since it did not relate to his public speeches. We know that Lévesque was unable to convince his fellow party members that the unity of the nation was more important than a hasty declaration of independence, and this was the reason he ended up leaving politics altogether. Having listened to Lévesque's public speeches on political topics (in speeches and interviews) that are included on the CD, we can conclude that he always strived to "ideologically" and verbally focus on the audience to whom he is speaking; or to clearly, in a business-like manner, formulate a programme of action in a circle of colleagues; or to express, through the use simple oratorical techniques (accents, pauses, "playing" with intonation), his views in order to elicit a response from other groups of addressees.

Conclusion

The Parti Québécois has been in power several times since the "René Lévesque era," and the issue of Quebec's independence is still on its agenda. For example, 28.8% of the party's campaign during the run-up to the spring 2014 elections (which it won) was associated with this topic (compared to just 2.5% for its main opponent, the Quebec Liberal Party) (Sanger, Warin 2018: 260). What is more the Parti Québécois continues to successfully build on René Lévesque's political legacy of defending Québécois identity. During its time in power at the turn of the century, for instance, the Parti Québécois set up the Estates-General on the Situation and Future of the French Language in Quebec (2000), fearing the threat of the global trend towards globalization, as well as the influx of diverse multilingual immigration to the province. As a result of its activities, everyone living in the province of Quebec, regardless of ethnic origin, would henceforth be considered "Québécois." In 2013, when the Parti Québécois was in power once again, the "Charte des valeurs québécoises" "Quebec Charter of Values") was adopted, which attempted to create the preconditions for uniting all Québécois under the auspices of the French language, regardless of origin, religion, and gender, and thus had great potential in terms of the development of Quebec society (Audette-Longo P., Esseghaier M. et al. 2017).

It is important to point out here that further research is needed on the political discourse of the leaders of small nations such as the Québécois Nation, as the "overlapping context" of the modern world (that is, situations similar to the Quebec problem in Canada) has existed, and continues to exist, in many regions around the world.

The material in this article may be used in a linguistic and cultural studies course.

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