ТОРАЙҒЫРОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІНІҢ ХАБАРШЫСЫ

Филологиялық серия
1997 жылдан бастап шығады

TORAIGHYROV UNIVERSITY

ВЕСТНИК ТОРАЙГЫРОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА

Филологическая серия
Издается с 1997 года

НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ ТОРАЙГЫРОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА

Филологическая серия
выходит 4 раза в год

СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО
О постановке на переучет периодического печатного издания,
информационного агентства и сетевого издания
№ KZ30VPY00029268
выдано
Министерством информации и общественного развития
Республики Казахстан

Тематическая направленность
публикация материалов в области филологии

Подписной индекс – 76132

https://doi.org/10.48081/SSBG3232

SRSTI 16.21.27

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USE OF CULTURAL KEYWORDS IN ARGUMENTATION

This research examines culture-specific linguistic units known as cultural keywords, exploring their role in explaining one culture to another, conveying cultural norms, and shaping a culture's image. These keywords often carry connotative meanings that go beyond dictionary definitions and reflect a nation's history, values, and evolving identity. As expressions of widely accepted beliefs, cultural keywords influence how audiences perceive and accept ideas. In argumentation theory, they serve as key tools for constructing arguments, frequently functioning as the terminus medius – the middle term in a syllogism that conveys an unstated but commonly accepted belief, or endoxon. This study reviews existing scholarship on the argumentative use of cultural keywords, employing the pragma-dialectical approach and the Argumentum Model of Topics. The findings show that such keywords strengthen standpoints and enhance persuasive communication. These insights can inform strategies for using cultural references effectively in argumentation, leading to more culturally resonant and persuasive discourse.

Keywords: cultural linguistics, cultural keyword, intercultural communication, argumentation, argumentative analysis.

Introduction

The modern global landscape is shaped by intense cultural, political, and economic interconnections between nations. As communication and cross-cultural exchanges intensify, individuals and communities increasingly adopt foreign cultural values while simultaneously exporting their own. This dynamic

necessitates not only linguistic proficiency but also deep cultural awareness to facilitate successful intercultural and business communication. In this context, the ability to recognize and deploy culture-specific keywords in persuasive discourse becomes critically important.

This study examines the use of cultural keywords as persuasive tools in argumentation. Cultural keywords are understood as linguistically marked concepts that hold significant cultural and ideological value within a given community. These units go beyond their denotative meanings, often acquiring complex connotative associations that reflect historical memory, worldview, social norms, and value systems. Their strategic use in argumentation can influence perception, establish rapport, and shape audience response by appealing to shared cultural assumptions.

The research aims to analyze how cultural keywords function in argumentative discourse, particularly in business and intercultural communication. It draws on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT), and congruence theory to examine how such keywords can serve as *terminus medius* – a bridging premise that connects commonly accepted beliefs *(endoxa)* to the conclusion. This makes cultural keywords crucial elements in the construction of persuasive and culturally resonant arguments.

The study builds upon the theoretical foundations laid by scholars such as Ch. Perelman, S. Toulmin, F. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, A. F. Snoeck Henkemans, and others, whose contributions have shaped modern argumentation theory. In addition, the paper acknowledges significant work in cultural semantics and intercultural communication by A. Wierzbicka, R. Williams, E. Rigotti, A. Rocci, and Russian and Kazakh scholars including E. A. Zemskaya, T. V. Shmeleva, A. D. Shmelev, G. Klyueva, N. Uali, and A. M. Baigutova.

Recent research in intercultural communication and discourse studies increasingly highlights the relevance of culturally loaded language units in mediating meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This paper contributes to that discourse by exploring how cultural keywords operate in argumentative interactions, particularly in contexts of negotiation, persuasion, and identity positioning.

In sum, the study addresses a key gap in argumentation theory by integrating cultural linguistics and rhetorical pragmatics. It explores how culturally significant terms shape reasoning and persuasion, offering insights into the interplay between language, culture, and logic in argumentative discourse. The findings aim to support the development of intercultural competence and improve the effectiveness of communication in globalized professional settings.

Methods and Materials

This research is grounded in the interdisciplinary study of language, culture, and communication, focusing on how language units perform communicative and

cultural functions. In recent decades, the anthropocentric approach in linguistics has emphasized the close relationship between language, thought, and culture, particularly within the framework of intercultural communication.

As globalization accelerates, understanding cultural context becomes essential for effective intercultural communication. Cultural keywords – terms that reflect culturally specific values and conceptual frameworks – are key to successful cross-cultural dialogue, especially in the domain of business discourse. These keywords encapsulate societal norms and beliefs and often serve as tools of persuasion, influencing how arguments are constructed and interpreted.

The study analyzes both universal and culture-specific keywords in business communication. Keywords are examined as linguistic markers that convey cultural identity and as functional elements of argumentation. For the first time, these units are investigated through the combined lens of communicative, intercultural, and argumentative dimensions.

A qualitative research methodology is employed to explore the persuasive potential of cultural keywords in cross-cultural contexts. The theoretical framework integrates three main approaches: the Pragma-Dialectical model, the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT), and Congruity Theory. The Pragma-Dialectical method (van Eemeren & Grootendorst) treats argumentation as a critical discussion and helps identify strategic speech acts. The AMT (Rigotti & Greco Morasso) enables detailed analysis of argumentative structure by identifying key components such as topics, loci, and culturally shared premises *(endoxa)*. Congruity Theory is used to evaluate the coherence and persuasive alignment between the speaker's intention and the audience's cultural expectations.

The research procedure involves identifying cultural keywords within selected business texts and analyzing their argumentative roles – specifically, how they activate *endoxa*, structure reasoning, and enhance persuasive effect. By combining tools from argumentation theory, cultural linguistics, and discourse analysis, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language functions as a mediator between culture and persuasion.

Results and Discussion

Keywords are terms that convey essential ideas in a text. In cultural contexts, they carry deeper meanings tied to collective values, beliefs, and worldviews. Cultural keywords shape audience perception and function as rhetorical tools in argumentation by invoking commonly accepted premises *(endoxa)*.

In argumentation theory, such keywords often serve as the *terminus medius* in syllogisms, linking premises and reinforcing persuasive strategies. Their role goes beyond semantics – they structure discourse, trigger associations, and reflect cultural narratives. For example, in literary texts, keywords unify themes, contribute to symbolic layers, and relate to social or ethical issues. In

digital environments, they guide search engine optimization and user navigation, demonstrating their broad applicability.

Cultural keywords have also been explored in linguistic and anthropological studies. Raymond Williams first introduced the idea of culturally significant words that reflect societal transformations (e.g., *class, culture, art*). Anna Wierzbicka further expanded this by identifying untranslatable terms deeply rooted in cultural consciousness, such as Russian *dusha* (soul) or *toska* (melancholy). These words encapsulate emotional and philosophical concepts specific to cultural experiences.

Nevertheless, the true importance of cultural keywords extends beyond their basic dictionary meanings. Their value emerges from their intricate connections with other equally nuanced terms within the ever-evolving cultural framework, where they play a central role in shaping discourse [1, p. 4]. Cultural keywords are words around which whole discourses are organised. They are culturally revealing, difficult to translate and semantically diverse. They capture how speakers have paid attention to the worlds they live in and embody socially recognised ways of thinking and feeling [2].

Despite increasing scholarly interest, the specific role of cultural keywords in argumentative texts remains underexplored. Most existing research focuses either on general rhetorical strategies or on lexical semantics without addressing the cultural function of key terms within arguments.

This study seeks to fill that gap. By using a multidisciplinary framework – Pragma-Dialectical Theory, the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT), and Congruity Theory – we examine how cultural keywords influence the construction, coherence, and reception of arguments. The Pragma-Dialectical model structures argumentation into four stages: confrontation, opening, argumentation, and closing. Cultural keywords often emerge during the confrontation and argumentation stages, where they function as culturally loaded premises that strengthen the persuasiveness of the standpoint.

According to Rocci, argumentation strategies and the cultural values embedded in them vary significantly across societies. Cultural keywords, therefore, differ in meaning, use, and rhetorical impact depending on the communicative context. Their persuasive power lies in their ability to resonate with shared cultural experiences and norms [3, p. 409].

The first research papers addressed at the study of keywords of a culture go back to R. Williams. The researcher defined the keywords as follows: «[…] they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought» [4, p. 13].

Cultural keywords are words or expressions that carry significant meaning within a specific cultural or social context. Unlike general vocabulary, they reflect core values, beliefs, and worldviews, serving as linguistic markers of cultural

identity. Polish linguist Anna Wierzbicka conducted a semantic study of cultural keywords across Polish, English, German, Russian, and Japanese, illustrating how words like *dusha* ('soul'), *sud'ba* ('fate'), and *toska* ('melancholy-cum-yearning') are deeply embedded in Russian culture and «offer invaluable insight into this culture» [5, p. 15]. Such keywords help reveal a culture's distinct features and shared elements with others [6]. Every nation possesses its own set of cultural keywords that encapsulate its identity. However, as Wierzbicka notes, there is neither a finite list nor an objective procedure to determine these terms. Their identification relies on contextual and interpretive analysis, making them essential yet elusive tools for understanding cultural and communicative practices.

Controversy is a powerful tool in various fields, including science and philosophy, where it is used to present facts, research, evidence, and logic to others. It appears to denote the act of providing the interlocutor with the required justification in order to 'help' them recognize something. This brings us back to the word argumentum, which possesses the essential meaning of «*reason, evidence, and proof*» [7, p. 10]. They do not, however, disprove the alternative meanings or qualities that the word 'argumentation' *(argumentum)* may possess.

Liebert describes keywords as «linguistic points of reference», serving to orient participants in a discourse and facilitate understanding. In argumentation, they act as anchors around which ideas are structured. This aligns with the goal of the pragma-dialectical model: to reach rational consensus through coherent, socially situated dialogue [8, p. 129].

The results of the study highlight three major functions of cultural keywords in argumentation:

1 Anchoring Endoxa: Cultural keywords embody widely accepted cultural beliefs, allowing arguments to rest on seemingly self-evident truths.

2 Framing Values: These terms signal core values, such as *freedom, respect,* or *honor,* shaping the moral framework of the argument.

3 Enhancing Identification: Keywords foster identification with the audience by drawing upon shared experiences, thus increasing persuasive effect.

The pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation, developed by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst [9], is a structured method for analyzing argumentative discourse. It remains rooted in its normative foundations and seeks to establish dialectics as a theoretical framework for structured debate. This approach examines the full spectrum of speech acts involved in resolving disagreements in dialogue, assessing them through the lens of the critical discussion model.

From a pragma-dialectical perspective, argumentative discourse is fundamentally a means of resolving differences of opinion [9, p. 6]. In political debate, its effectiveness lies in its ability to contribute to conflict resolution. The

ideal model of critical discussion, as formulated in pragma-dialectics, consists of four key stages designed to navigate disagreement (*see Fig.* 1):

- Confrontation stage – One participant presents a standpoint, while the other either questions its validity or offers a counter-position.

- Opening stage – Often implicit, this phase establishes the roles of protagonist (defending the standpoint) and antagonist (challenging it), setting the groundwork for the discussion.

- Argumentation stage – The protagonist supports their position with arguments, refining or expanding them as needed in response to the antagonist's objections.

- Closing stage – A resolution is reached when the antagonist accepts the protagonist's argument or when the protagonist concedes to the antagonist's criticism.

The confrontation stage reveals the disagreement, as one party presents a standpoint and the other challenges or opposes it. This phase is crucial – it justifies the need for argumentation. In political and legal discourse, it appears as debates, disputes, or policy clashes.

The opening stage sets roles and ground rules. Participants become the protagonist and antagonist, outlining how the argument will proceed. Though often implicit, this stage may include defining terms or agreeing on assumptions to ensure fairness and clarity.

The argumentation stage is the core of the discussion. The protagonist supports their position with arguments, while the antagonist critiques them through counterarguments and reasoning. This interactive phase may involve revising arguments and using evidence, rhetoric, or logic to persuade.

The closing stage resolves the dispute. Resolution occurs when one side accepts the other's argument. Ideally, this happens through rational consensus, ensuring a justified conclusion. In real-life settings, this might result in official decisions, rulings, or policy outcomes.

Diagram 1. The ideal model of critical discussion
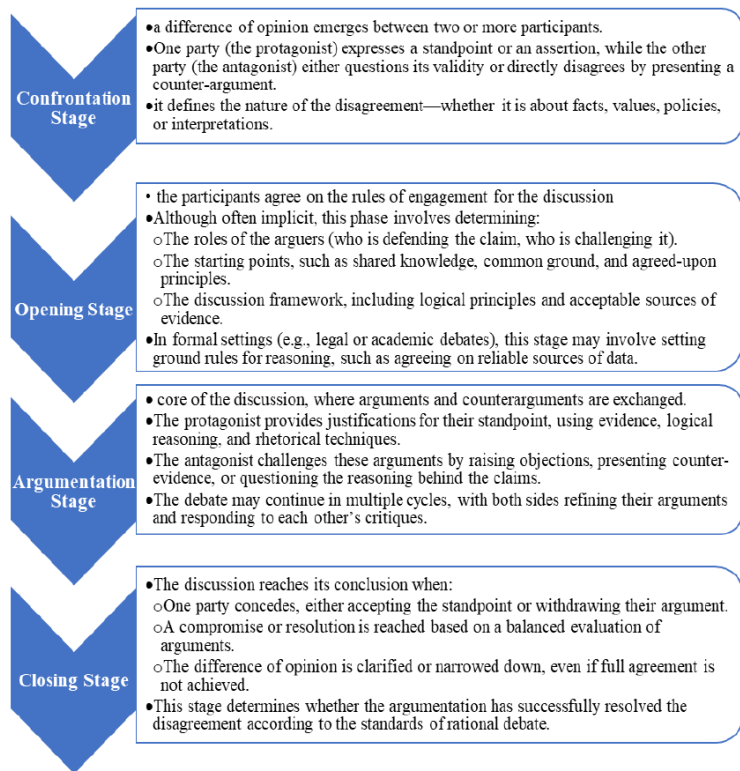
The pragma-dialectical approach combines pragmatics (language in context) with dialectics (rational debate) to analyze argumentation. It aims to resolve disagreements through reasoned dialogue governed by specific norms. *Key features:*

- It is both descriptive and normative, showing how arguments function and prescribing how they should be structured.

- Based on the model of critical discussion, it includes four stages: confrontation, opening, argumentation, and closing.

- Ten rules guide argumentation, such as the freedom rule (participants may express arguments freely) and the relevance rule (arguments must relate to the issue).

- Fallacies are seen as rule violations rather than mere logical errors, as they hinder rational discourse.

- Widely applied in law, politics, media, and education, it helps assess arguments in various cultural and linguistic settings.

As a result, we can observe that the pragma-dialectical approach has significantly influenced research in discourse analysis, rhetoric, and communication studies. It provides a systematic way to analyze argumentation across cultures and languages, offering insights into how people reason and persuade in different contexts. Moreover, it has practical applications in education, debate training, and conflict resolution, helping individuals engage in more structured and rational discussions.

The pragma-dialectical model offers a structured framework for analyzing political argumentation by specifying which speech acts – based on J. Searle's classification – are appropriate at different stages of conflict resolution: assertives are used to express standpoints and arguments, directives to prompt justifications, and commissives to accept or reject arguments and set discussion rules [10, p. 12–16]. Argumentation, from this perspective, requires a clear standpoint followed by a supporting argument [11, p. 454]. This study builds on the theoretical foundation of Rigotti and Greco Morasso [7], later developed by Rocci [12] and Rigotti [13], to examine how cultural keywords function in argumentative discourse. A strong argument is evidence-based, relevant, and persuasive, ensuring rational justification and impact.

Argumentation can take two primary forms:

● Evidential argumentation, which focuses on justifying or proving a claim through logical reasoning and evidence.

● Counter argumentation, which aims to refute an opposing thesis by challenging its validity and presenting alternative perspectives.

AMT (Argumentum Model of Topics) is a model developed in the field of argumentation and cognitive science to analyze and structure discussions, debates and other forms of reasoning. The model is designed to identify and describe the main topics and arguments discussed in argumentation.

According to Rigotti, «The Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT) is designed to offer a coherent and well-founded approach to the study of argument schemes» [13, p. 493]. The Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT) analyzes the internal structure of arguments by distinguishing between their contextual and inferential components, emphasizing that inferential reasoning alone is insufficient without understanding when and how it should be applied. Key components of AMT include topics (general or specific themes), arguments (based on facts, logic, or values), and the relationships between them, often illustrated through argumentation schemes. This model allows for a clearer understanding of how arguments evolve and how effectively they support a standpoint in discourse. AMT also introduces concepts such as topos, locus, maxim, endoxon, and datum,

with endoxa referring to widely accepted community beliefs, as described by Aristotle [14, p. 100]. The framework has proven valuable in analyzing argument structures in academic, legal, and political contexts.

Toulmin's concept of a «field of arguments» is ambiguous and has been interpreted as rhetorical or discourse communities, disciplines, or collective mentalities [10, p. 204]. Zarefsky views «field» metaphorically, akin to Aristotle's topoi–repositories of arguments used to construct enthymemes [15, p. 49]. Aristotle distinguished general topoi (applicable across contexts) from specific ones tied to particular subjects, viewing them as community-derived patterns of reasoning rooted in endoxa – commonly accepted beliefs [16, p. 440]. Though topoi are widely used, they remain among the most debated concepts in argumentation. Aristotle described them as methods for forming arguments from accepted propositions (ex endoxon) [13, p. 43], introducing the notions of standpoint and locus. A standpoint is a claim aimed at persuasion, while a locus is an argumentative device that links the claim to shared community beliefs through a maxim [17, p. 81].

Argument construction often involves two components: *endoxon* and *maxim.* In Aristotle's view, *endoxa* are statements grounded in beliefs widely accepted by a society – by everyone, the majority, or the wise [12, p. 78]. They form the basis of *enthymemes,* which differ from analytical syllogisms by relying on shared assumptions rather than formal premises. This explains why one premise in enthymemes often remains implicit, as in Aristotle's example of Dorieus, where the audience fills in the missing assumption based on common knowledge. *Topos (*or *locus)* functions to connect argument to conclusion, but it requires more than a definition; it must be anchored in argumentative analysis [18]. Rigotti defines locus as a semantic and analytical relation generating *maxims,* which in turn support arguments by establishing meaningful links between argument and standpoint [17, p. 564]. Thus, *endoxa* and loci jointly shape the persuasive force of enthymematic reasoning.

Endoxa refers to widely accepted beliefs, opinions, or premises that serve as the foundation for reasoning and persuasion. The term originates from Aristotle, who used it in his Topics to describe ideas that are commonly held by the majority or by respected authorities.

According to scholars of a Swiss University of Lugano E. Rigotti and S. Greco Morasso *maxims* are «implications that establish a connection in the form p→q, which initiate inferential processes. Each inferential process defines, within the locus, the structure of a subclass of arguments that are formed in relation to appropriate *endoxa.* All maxims within the same locus represent implications of the ontological relationship that constitutes the locus» [7, p. 44].

Rigotti and Rocci define *cultural keywords* as terms functioning as *terminus medius* in enthymematic arguments – that is, the middle term linking the major

and minor premises without appearing in the conclusion. These keywords often embody an *endoxon* or a set of *endoxa,* providing implicit cultural assumptions shared by the communicative community [13, p. 905].

Within pragma-dialectical theory, strategic maneuvering describes how speakers aim to resolve differences of opinion while still advancing their own position. Rational discourse norms do not eliminate attempts at persuasion; instead, argumentation balances dialectical reasonableness with rhetorical effectiveness [19, p. 87–92]. Thus, cultural keywords serve both a logical and rhetorical function, grounding arguments in culturally shared meanings while enhancing persuasive appeal.

Scholars use varying terminology to describe these culturally embedded word-concepts. Wierzbicka calls them «cultural keywords, «while others refer to them as «cultural concepts» (Stepanov, Arutyunova, Likhachev, Maslova), «culture-specific vocabulary» (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov), or «realia» (Mullagaliyeva). Further variations include «words with connotative cultural components» (Belchikov) and «cultural and connotative vocabulary» (Vorobiev, Sayakhova). In some cases, these classifications are used interchangeably or organized systematically (V. V. Vorobiev, V. G. Sayakhova, G. M. Badagulova, etc.)

V. V. Kolesov writes that the concept of culture «within the boundaries of a verbal sign and language as a whole appears in its meaningful forms as an image, as a concept and as a symbol. A symbol is a cultural construct based on the combination of an image and a concept; a symbol is the relation of a sign to a subject, i.e. the moment of symbolization of an object by means of substitution for another is the level of knowledge represented by a complete meaning [20].

Keywords, having the ability to encode the original information, convey it in a generalized form, can serve as a support for further oral or written communication. This argumentative perspective is evident in the works of various Western scholars, including Rigotti and Rocci, Bigi, and Filimon, who have contributed significantly to this field of study.

So, what is a keyword? In a broad sense, Bigi suggests defining cultural keywords as «words that are necessary for the text to achieve its intended communicative goal» [8, p. 131]. This intended communicative purpose can be elucidated through Congruity Theory, as it relates to the objectives outlined by the connective predicate.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of cultural keywords in argumentation, emphasizing their function as linguistic and cultural tools that enhance persuasion and coherence. Drawing on pragma-dialectics, the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT), and Congruity Theory, it demonstrated how cultural keywords operate as key components within argument structures, linking premises to conclusions.

The paper first explored definitions and theoretical perspectives on keywords, particularly cultural keywords, presenting them as argumentative tools grounded in semantics and social cognition. In the second section, foundational concepts of argumentation were introduced, including a glossary of argument schemes to support the analytical framework.

A practical analysis of a bank's proposal letter showed that the persuasive power of a keyword depends on its association with endoxa – shared beliefs – and the strength of that connection in supporting a given position. Cultural keywords, therefore, function not just as lexical units but as carriers of collective meaning and rhetorical force.

This research contributes to the understanding of how cultural knowledge shapes argumentation. Future work might examine the use of cultural keywords in various professional domains, highlighting their potential in enhancing intercultural communication and persuasive discourse.

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18.09.24 ж. баспаға түсті.
15.01.25 ж. түзетулерімен түсті.
25.08.25 ж. басып шығаруға қабылданды.

МӘДЕНИ ТҮЙІН СӨЗДЕРДІҢ
ДӘЙЕКТЕМЕДЕ ҚОЛДАНЫЛУЫ

Зерттеу мәдениет түйін сөздері деп аталатын мәдени нышанды тілдік бірліктерді зерттеуге бағытталған. Зерттеуде түйін сөздерді бір мәдениетті өзге мәдениет өкілдеріне түсіндірудің құралы, мәдениетті сипаттаудың құралы, мәдениет «бейнесін» қалыптастырушы тілдік құралы ретінде қарастырылады. Мәдениет түйін сөздері – белгілі бір топта жалпы қабылданған және түсінікті идеяларды, көзқарастарды немесе сенімдерді білдіретін терминдер. Бұл терминдер жай ғана белгілі ұғымдар емес; олар аудиторияның дәлелдерді немесе идеяларды қабылдауына әсер ететін тереңірек мәдени коннотацияға ие. Аргументация (дәйектеме) теориясының бөлігі ретінде түйін сөздер дәйектерді құруда шешуші рөл атқара алады. Олар көбінесе terminus medius ретінде әрекет етеді, яғни постулаттарды байланыстыратын силлогизмдегі орташа термин рөлін атқарады. Бұл орташа термин эндоксон деп аталатын мақұлданбаған негізгі алғышартты немесе жалпы қабылданған сенімді жеткізуге көмектеседі. Мақалада түйін сөздерді анықтау үшін аргументативті талдауды қолдану мен дәйектеме теориясына қатысты зерттеулерге шолу жасалады. Прагма-диалектикалық тәсіл, аргументативті топиктер моделі және сәйкестік теориясы

арқылы зерттеу аргументативті дискурстағы мәдениет түйін сөздерінің қызметін зерттейді. Зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері сендіру, иландыру қарым-қатынасы барысында мәдени эталондарды стратегиялық тұрғыдан қолдануды дамытуда пайдалы бола алады.

Кілтті сөздер: лингвомәдениеттану, мәдени нышанды түйін сөз, мәдениетаралық коммуникация, дәйектеме, аргументация теориясы, дәйектемелік талдау.

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ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ КЛЮЧЕВЫХ
СЛОВ КУЛЬТУРЫ В АРГУМЕНТАЦИИ

Исследование нацелено на изучение культурно-специфических языковых единиц, которые называются ключевыми словами культуры. В исследовании ключевые слова рассматриваются как средство интерпретации одной культуры представителям другой культуры, как средство описания культуры, как языковое средство, формирующее «образ» культуры. Анализируя культурные концепты, мы можем определить ключевые слова культуры, которые, в свою очередь, позволяют определить историю развития культуры нации, ее современный характер, характерные для нее исторические изменения. Следовательно, ключевые слова культуры – это термины, которые выражают общепринятые и понятные идеи, точки зрения или убеждения в определенной группе. Эти термины – не просто общеизвестные понятия; они имеют более глубокий культурный подтекст, который влияет на то, как аудитория воспринимает и принимает аргументы или идеи. В аргументации культурные ключевые слова играют важную роль: они часто выступают как terminus medius – средний термин силлогизма, выражающий общее или неявное убеждение, известное как endoxon. Это позволяет

аргументу восприниматься как естественный и убедительный. В статье рассматриваются теоретические подходы к исследованию аргументации, в частности pragma-dialectical подход и Argumentim Model of Topics, разработанные европейскими учёными. Результаты анализа показывают, что культурные ключевые слова усиливают убедительность аргументов и способствуют более эффективному воздействию на аудиторию. Такие данные могут быть полезны для разработки стратегий, направленных на культурно адаптированное аргументирование в межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: лингвокультурология, ключевое слово культуры, межкультурная коммуникация, аргументация, аргументативный анализ.