

DISCOURSE AND THE POWER OF 'WE': CONSTRUCTING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

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Abstract

This article focuses on the multidimensional role of the pronoun 'we' in discourse, extending far beyond its traditional classification as a substitutive grammatical unit. In present-day linguistic analysis, pronouns are increasingly recognized as significant communicative, cognitive, pragmatic, and discursive elements that actively shape communicative interactions.

The use of 'we' not only reflects interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and the listener but also conveys implicit information about their identity, inclusion, and positioning within a given context. Central to this study is the concept of *we*-discourse, a macro-discursive phenomenon in which 'we' operates as a key marker and organizing principle. *We*-discourse constitutes a communicative and mental space where strategies of inclusion, solidarity, authority, and opposition are enacted.

This discourse type manifests across a wide range of text genres – political speeches, advertising, news media, and virtual communication – each shaped by specific communicative intentions and sociocultural contexts. The investigation draws attention to the following roles of 'we': how it constructs shared meaning, reinforces commonality or collectivity, and guides the pragmatic framework of discourse. Based on the authentic textual examples analyzed, the article highlights the semantic and functional versatility of 'we' and illustrates how its usage promotes coherence, impact, and persuasive power of discourse. Ultimately, the analysis positions 'we' not merely as a linguistic placeholder, but as a central, dynamic force in the architecture of communication and the construction of collective identity.

Key words: discourse, *we*-discourse, 'we', pronouns, identity, commonality, collectivity.

Introduction

There are several essential aspects that define the concept of discourse: it functions as a *form of communication* – a dialogue involving the exchange of information between an addresser and an addressee; it represents *interaction* shaped by social context; it is a *dynamic process* influenced by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors; it has a *structured nature*, consisting of specific units that enable the encoding and decoding of

knowledge. Discourse also operates as *a system* made up of diverse discursive practices, a *mode of representation and interpretation of reality*, and a *specialized linguistic environment* that preserves, transmits, and transforms information through its own categories, units, and rules. Additionally, discourse provides a framework for the *expression and reflection of national identity* (Gryshchenko 2024, 9–10).

In recent linguistic research, considerable attention has been devoted to the study of units that serve as significant components of discourse. Particular focus has been placed on the functioning of pronouns in discourse – on pronouns as deictic elements, representing one of the most prominent examples of deictic expressions.

From the standpoint of pragmatic linguistic theory, pronouns are not simply grammatical elements but play a pivotal role in discourse, fulfilling distinct communicative functions within speech acts. Far beyond their traditional classification as words with a substitutive function, pronouns are regarded as essential cognitive, pragmatic, and discursive units that contribute to shaping both the pragmatic context and the communicative structure of discourse. They significantly influence the nature of speech acts and convey implicit information about the speaker, the listener, and the situation.

Pronouns are thus viewed as discourse markers due to their transformative potential and their ability to shape diverse interpretative frames. Often referred to as ‘shifters’ or ‘deictics’, pronouns can redirect the communicative focus into various dimensions and frames. In discourse, pronouns perform the following functions: they influence the success or failure of communication, contribute to either cooperation or distancing between discourse participants, shape the dynamics of discourse, model the process of interaction, encode information in specific ways and decode acquired knowledge, transmit knowledge about the world, and reflect the national style of communication as expressed through the resources of a particular language.

Personal pronouns are unique as they lack fixed referents. It distinguishes them from other deictic expressions, which are largely dependent on them. The use of personal pronouns helps create a shared mental model of reality between interlocutors. The pronoun ‘we’, in particular, implies collective identity and shared experience, as it has multiple layers of meaning and implication.

Among them, personal pronouns occupy a particularly significant place. Language would be hard to imagine without their presence. With the help of personal pronouns such as ‘I’ and ‘we,’ speakers define themselves and position themselves within social and cultural contexts. Communication typically begins with the individual (‘I’) and extends to the collective (‘we’), which represents not only inclusion but also a culturally shaped means of conceptualization and reflection of reality.

Theoretical Framework

The present research draws on the main theories – Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatic Linguistics, and Critical Linguistics – which focus on discourse in close connection with ‘power’, ‘dominance’, ‘ideology’, ‘solidarity’, and ‘inclusion/exclusion’.

Discourse is viewed as “a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective” (Fairclough 1995, 14). Language and power are interrelated.

‘Power’ functions in and through discourse: in a “face-to-face unequal discourse”, “cross-cultural discourse” (with more or less dominant cultural grouping), and the “hidden power” of mass media discourse (Fairclough 1989, 43). “Power behind discourse” (Fairclough 1989, 55) is expressed indirectly. Both types of power (as linguistic power in discourse) are exercised, among other means, through the use of pronouns.

Discourse and power are examined in close connection in all discourse types. In an environmental discourse, ‘power’ is conveyed within a narrative of ecological issues and environmentalism (Hannigan, 2023). Within environmental discourse, individuals use language and symbolic tools to represent and interpret their relationships with the natural world. People culturally construct their understanding of the environment and its resources in diverse and unique ways, and through discourse, they manifest support, belonging, or opposition and disagreement. These discursive expressions reveal certain values, ideologies, and power dynamics, shape the way environmental issues are framed, who is seen as responsible or affected, and what actions are considered legitimate. Thus, environmental discourse both reflects and influences public perception, public attitude, policy decisions, and collective environmental behavior (Peace 2018).

‘Power’ and ‘solidarity’ are crucial for understanding of ‘gender’ and ‘dominance’, as gender patterns and language use enhance the usage of certain linguistic devices which show dominance, solidarity, or support (Tannen 1993, 9).

The notions of ‘society’, ‘group’, ‘power’, ‘access’, and ‘knowledge’ are intrinsically linked to discourse. ‘Ideology’ is associated with “power and dominance” (Van Dijk 1998). Discourse is one of “ideologically based social practices” (Van Dijk 1998, 6). Discursive manifestations of ideology are multiple. To convey ideology, various structure and strategies can be used, i.e.: solidarity (belonging to a group/community), opposition (‘we are good and they are bad), racism (as an ideology – ‘we’ – white people, Europeans), inclusion/exclusion (polarization between ‘ingroups and outgroups’), cooperation (which may be ideologically based), manipulation (emphasizing group differences, ideological and social enemies), which reflect ‘control’, ‘conflict’, ‘access’, ‘knowledge’, ‘attitude’, etc. (Van Dijk 1998).

R. Wodak defines ideology as “an (often) one-sided perspective or worldview composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, and evaluations”. Ideologies are collectively held by members of particular social groups. They function as a key tool in creating and reinforcing unequal power dynamics through language and discourse (Wodak 2015, 4). According to the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), introduced by R. Wodak, power is not an intrinsic property of language; however, it becomes a tool for acquiring and preserving power when used by people holding power or authority. “Power” refers to an unequal relationship between social actors who occupy varying social roles or belong to distinct social groups (Wodak 2015).

Language is reflexive by nature. “All languages contain indexical forms which change their value depending on the actual event of speaking” (Lucy 1993, 10). Pronouns enhance the reflexive potential of the language. ‘We’ refers to reflexive linguistic means that facilitate communication and convey attitudes, beliefs, identity, and information about the world in general. Pronouns can stimulate solidarity and strengthen it, while also distancing the speaker from the listener. ‘We’ is this particular linguistic device, which may show either solidarity or dominance.

Through pronouns, speakers can signal separation (social or emotional distancing) and define relationship boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Bamberg 2005, 230). It illustrates how individuals in communication position themselves in

relation to other people (“narrative positioning”) (Bamberg 1997, 336). ‘We’ can strengthen oppositional relations and establish boundaries: ‘we’ – ‘they’, ‘our’ – ‘their’. (Am ‘I’ separate from the group or not? Do ‘we’ belong to the same group/community? Are ‘you’ with ‘us’ or not?)

Pronouns, as deictics, appear in a variety of discursive strategies: nomination/predication, referentiality, argumentation, perspectivation, intensification/mitigation. Discursive representation of ‘us’ and ‘them’, studied as specific linguistic devices, is particularly noteworthy (Wodak 2015, 8, 11).

Pronouns, particularly ‘we’, operates as tools to express ideology (understood as “systems of beliefs”) (Van Dijk 1998, 313) through multiple discursive structures and strategic means. Pronoun ‘we’ also assists in “the construction of an intercultural virtual community that uses English as a lingua franca”, revealing both linguistic inclusion and exclusion in a virtual community. It carries pragmatic force. ‘We’ includes the focus on intercultural communication, identity, and cultural diversity (Fontaine 2006, 321). ‘We’ as person deixis (the first person plural) enables participants to associate themselves with others within a virtual community. Members of a virtual community can freely include or exclude themselves from group affiliation. ‘We’ of an intercultural community has the following types: “inclusive, exclusive, general, cohesive, ambiguous, restrictive” (Fontaine 2006, 346).

Communication technologies have broadened and transformed the ways people communicate at a distance. Various types of technology (print technology, mobile phones, the Internet, etc.) have promoted the development of “absent presence”. Communication via the Internet “increasingly absorbs our attention, new clusters of meaning emerge”. The expansion of absent presence contributes to “a cultural shift from the vertical to the horizontal register of relationship” (Gergen 2002). Different forms of relationships emerge, from real to imaginary and virtual. To a large extent, we might be observing a general decline in the value placed on deep, meaningful relationships.

A strong tendency is developing towards “a floating world of signification”, a specific world in which “the relationship of the language to ongoing practical activity is ambiguous if not irrelevant”. It becomes the result of the “absent presence” (Gergen 2002). A key concern is the language used to construct this unreal interaction, as the words and meanings are transformed and modified in it. This kind of interaction led to the creation of an “inside space” for active participants and an “outer space” for those present but not involved in the communication (Gergen 2002).

The type of interaction within absent presence changes models of communication and transforms the meanings of linguistic units and deictic words. The pronoun ‘we’ includes those who are both present and absent at the same time. It may involve both real participants and those with unreal and nonexistent personalities invented for this type of contact. ‘We’ can be defined as virtual here and can have particular meanings and functions.

Taken together, these theoretical assumptions provide the conceptual scaffolding for examining how pronominal choice functions as a discursive strategy in the construction of collective identities within various media discourses, including political, advertising, news, virtual, and environmental contexts. The investigation of various types of media discourse is essential because pronouns have different functions within various contexts. The examination of these uses reveals how pronouns contribute to the construction of identity, ideology, and meaning across the media sphere.

Methodology

The methodological framework of the study is based on several theories: discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, pragmatic linguistics, and critical linguistics. These dimensions provide a context-dependent framework for analyzing language as a means of communication and as a carrier of ideology. The analysis is carried out within the parameters of the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak 2015) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995; Van Dijk 2015). These traditions, taken together, foreground the relationship between linguistic form and social practice, showing how discourse participates in the reproduction of values, power relations, and collective identities. These approaches provide the theoretical scaffolding for examining how pronominal choices contribute to the construction of meaning within sociocultural and political contexts.

The material for analysis consists of authentic texts drawn from contemporary English-language mass media sources, including *The Guardian* and *BBC News*, covering the year 2025. The material encompasses several subtypes of media discourse – including political, advertising, news, virtual, and environmental – thereby ensuring thematic variety and representativeness. A total of approximately 150 texts were collected in accordance with three criteria: chronological relevance, discursive diversity, and the presence of the pronoun *we* or related forms (*our*, *us*) as well as oppositional configurations (*we* – *they*).

The analytical procedure was organized in consecutive stages. First, all instances of *we* and its variants were collected from different discourse types. Second, each occurrence was analyzed within both its immediate and wider textual context to identify its semantic value and discursive function. The classification was guided by the distinction between inclusive and exclusive *we*, as well as by the identification of solidarity, oppositional, or manipulative uses. In parallel, the material was subjected to a contextual-pragmatic analysis, which enabled the specification of communicative functions, and to a semantic-functional interpretation, which made it possible to establish the strategic dimension of pronominal choice.

The final stage involved the comparative interpretation of findings across the different discourse types. At this stage, the analysis brought to light stable patterns in the use of *we* as well as context-dependent shifts shaped by genre, communicative purpose, and ideological stance. The findings were arranged through interpretative grouping and functional typology, which clarified the principal pragmatic and ideological roles of *we*. Thus, the methodological approach makes it possible to trace how pronominal usage shapes the articulation of collective identity, the negotiation of power relations, and the formation of commonality and belonging in contemporary mass media discourse.

‘We’ and the concepts of commonality/collectivity

There is no unique understanding of ‘we’ that can unite all ‘us’ (‘we’). ‘We’ is multifaceted and has different shades of meaning.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, ‘we’ has the following meanings:

1) *‘we’ as a group*: “used as the subject of a verb to refer to a group including the speaker and at least one other person”; “used by a speaker or a writer to refer to themselves and the people listening or reading”; 2) *all people/everyone (we all)*: “used as the subject of a verb to refer to all people, especially when considered as a group”; 3) *people (plural)*: “the person speaking and one or more others”; “‘we’ can be used by a speaker or a writer to refer to the listener or person reading and the person speaking or writing”; 4) *in the meaning of ‘you’ (singular)*: “used as the subject of a verb to mean ‘you’, especially when talking to a child or someone who is ill”; “used coaxingly, encouragingly, or in sarcasm” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Thesaurus); 5) *in the meaning of ‘I’ (singular)*: “used by a queen or king when speaking officially to mean ‘I’” (Cambridge Dictionary); “used by writers to keep an impersonal character” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Thesaurus).

The pronoun ‘we’ has been extensively studied in linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, which has allowed us to identify other uses and meanings and to systematize them:

- 1) ‘we’ meaning ‘you’ (in medical or institutional speech; in conversations with children);
- 2) ‘we’ meaning ‘I’ (royal or editorial ‘we’);
- 3) inclusive ‘we’ (‘we’ combines the speaker and the listener);
- 4) exclusive ‘we’ (it includes the speaker/writer and their associates, but excludes the person or people being addressed – listener/listeners) ;
- 5) solidarity or strategic ‘we’ (used to create group or community identity);
- 6) oppositional or distancing ‘we’ (in the opposition ‘we’ – ‘they’).

This pronoun is central to the formation of what is identified as ‘we-discourse’, where ‘we’ serves as the primary marker. However, such discourse is not limited to the direct use of the pronoun itself. It also includes a range of *we*-related semantic elements (‘we’-semes) such as ‘ours,’ ‘not ours,’ ‘with us,’ and ‘not with us.’ Additionally, pronominal configurations like ‘we – I’ and ‘we – they’ contribute to the formation of the discursive model, which emphasizes group alignment, inclusion, or exclusion and opposition.

We-discourse reflects the semantics of collective identity and plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of communication. Through the strategic use of *we*-inclusions, *we*-semes, and pronominal structures, speakers align themselves with their audience, foster a sense of unity by constructing an inclusive ‘us.’ This linguistic alignment reinforces shared beliefs, perspectives, and also lays the groundwork for positive interaction and future cooperation. In this context, the pronoun ‘we’ functions as a text-forming element, shaping both the tone and communicative dynamics of the discourse.

We-discourse can be constructed using a variety of linguistic means, including personal and possessive pronouns (*we, our, for all of us, with us, etc.*). Accordingly, the

pronoun *we* can serve multiple functions; it reveals the speaker's intentions and shapes the communicative-pragmatic pattern of interaction.

We-discourse can be understood as a spoken or written text characterized by the use of 'we' and its related elements to create a sense of identification and solidarity between the speaker and the listener/s. It constitutes a cohesive discourse that reflects sociocultural interaction, functions as a type of communicative act designed to incorporate the recipient's perspective, and influences the nature of the speaker-listener relationship. Moreover, *we*-discourse operates as a context-bound communicative event, shaped by the overarching principle of commonality/collectivity, and acts as a marker of social context, cultural norms, cognitive orientations, and value systems.

Furthermore, *we*-discourse may be viewed as a form of macro-discourse that gives rise to diverse text genres, each driven by distinct communicative intentions. It also functions as a mental and communicative space, where the implementation of discourse strategies is guided by the underlying structure of the concept of commonality/collectivity.

Commonality and collectivity are closely related concepts. 'Commonality' refers to the shared traits, experiences, beliefs, or interests among individuals or groups. It focuses on what people have in common. Commonality can exist without active group interaction. You and someone else may have something in common without even knowing each other. 'Collectivity' refers to a group acting or existing as a unit, often emphasizing group identity, cohesion, or collective action. It refers to how people function together as a group. Collectivity implies a more intentional or functional grouping – people not only share things but also act or exist as a collective body.

The concept of commonality (or collectivity) is presented with the help of *we*-discourse. We define *we-discourse* as a spoken or written text in which the pronoun *we* and *we*-semes are used to identify and unite the speaker and the addressee; as a coherent text which reflects the sociocultural interaction of communicators; as a specific type of communicative act that considers the recipient's perspective and models their communication and relationship with the sender; as an indicator of the social context (encompassing participants in communication), cultural traditions, cognitive attitudes, and values in speech; as a macro-discourse that generates texts of various genres, each dominated by different communicative intentions, etc.

It interacts with other discourse types (*political, diplomatic, interpersonal, family, cooperative*) and performs multiple functions (for example, a manipulative function in a political and advertising discourse; a unifying function – in an *interpersonal, family discourse*, and *community discourse*; a contrasting function – 'we – they' – in a *political party discourse, in-group/out-group discourse, manipulation discourse, racist discourse, oppositional discourse*, etc.). The idea of 'togetherness,' 'unity' or 'solidarity' expressed through discourse of commonality can be seen as a key dimension in discourse analysis.

Results and Discussions

To gain a complete understanding of the pragmatic and ideological functions of the pronoun *we* in contemporary communication, it is essential to examine its usage across various subtypes of mass media discourse, including political, advertising, and news texts. Each of these domains employs 'we' strategically to construct group

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identities, establish proximity with the audience, or reinforce authority and solidarity. Through the analysis of textual examples from mass media sources such as *The Guardian* and *BBC News*, we can trace how the pronoun ‘we’ operates differently depending on the context, different communicative goals, and the intended relationship between the speaker and the listener/audience. This approach provides deeper insight into how language shapes public perception and social alignment through discourse.

The use of non-specialized signs and signs of integration – such as the inclusive *we* (plural *we*, i.e., *we* = *I* + *you, you all*), lexemes of collectivity (*members of the party, family*), vocatives of unity (*comrades, we are together*), and formulas of inclusion (*we with you, I and the entire nation*) – as subtle means of influence allows for a high degree of manipulation of the addressee’s consciousness. The transformation of ‘others’ into ‘us,’ of ‘them’ into one of ‘us,’ is one of the fundamental mechanisms of power.

Political mass media discourse. In our view, the use of personal and possessive pronouns in a political mass media discourse is most indicative:

*I don't know if **he** was fully informed about the terms of the deal. **We** just don't know (D. Trump); Hamas should accept the framework proposal **we** put forward as the basis for proximity talks, which **we** can begin this coming week. That is the only way **we** can close a 60-day ceasefire deal in the coming days in which half of the living hostages and half of those who are deceased will come home to **their** families and in which **we** can have at the proximity talks substantive negotiations in good faith to try to reach a permanent ceasefire (Witkoff) (The Guardian 2025): This is what the analysts are assessing – in 2029. So **we** have to be ready by 2029... If **you** ask **me** now, is this a guarantee that's not earlier than 2029? **I** would say no, it's not. So **we** must be able to fight tonight; The Baltic States are really exposed to the Russians, right? And once **you** are there, **you** really feel this... in the talks **we** are having over there (BBC News 2025).*

Personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ hold a special place in political mass media discourse, serving as means of personalization and belonging to the category of addresser-identifying elements (such as self-identification, time, mission, role, and activity). The choice of one pronoun over another reflects a politician’s communicative strategy: ‘I’-addressing versus ‘we’-addressing. Politicians often use the ‘we’-addressing mode as part of a broader ‘we’-narrative. This choice of pronoun isn’t just stylistic – it plays a key role in how they present themselves and shape their public persona. The frequent use of ‘I’ and ‘we’ helps them carry out different tactics and strategies in their speeches, allowing them to connect with audiences, express unity, or assert leadership depending on the context.

However, there is another perspective on the use of pronouns – personal pronouns are employed not only to establish trust between participants in communication but also to create distance from opponents. Integration markers within the semiotic opposition of political discourse – ‘us’ versus ‘them’ – allow politicians not only to unite their own group but also to draw closer to the audience and express solidarity by appealing to the idea of shared experience. Deictic pairs formed with the pronoun ‘we’ (such as ‘we –you’, ‘we –they’) can serve both to unify and to distance the speaker and the audience. Political discourse is inherently evaluative. One of the most common means of expressing evaluative meaning is through the use of pronouns (*I, we, my, our, you, they, your, their*) and the central pronoun opposition ‘we’ vs. ‘they’:

*We want to act, we want to preserve **our** stability and **our** peace and **our** prosperity, calling for a positive new alliance between Europe and Asia where **they** would ensure our countries are not collateral damage of the imbalances linked to the choices made by the superpowers; **Our** concentration now is to push **them** to get that into operation so they can intercept these smugglers and stop these people in the boats, not just on the shore. **We** all want to end dangerous small boat crossings, which threaten lives and undermine **our** border security (BBC News 2025); **Our** forces make extraordinary sacrifices to keep **us** safe and to serve this country and yet for years, **we** 've forced **their** families to live in substandard homes; If **we** do not feel that sufficient progress is being made by the autumn, **we** will consider what further legislative steps **we** should take to ensure that use of agency staff is brought to an end. **Our** reforms towards driving down agency spend by nearly £1bn over the past year will boost frontline services and help to cut down waiting lists, while ensuring fairness for **our** permanent staff ('we' – agency staff and officials) (The Guardian 2025).*

In a political discourse, the pronoun 'we' performs the following functions: an integrative function (the function of unification), a contrasting function (separation or distancing), and a manipulative function. The manipulative function is based on the use of strategies or tactics such as shifting responsibility ("ask them, not us") and hyperbolic collectivity ("we are all together with you"):

***We** actually are taking steps down this path... **we** understand it, **we're** up for it; Elon Musk has blocked the account of the hostage mayor and presidential candidate, upon Erdogan's request – silencing the country's most prominent opposition voice. **We** are **all** Imamoglu; **We're** doing all **we** can to drive the enemy from **our** land! **We'll** strike them at sea, in the air, and on land. If necessary, **we'll** get them from underground, and with a way of life that **we** don't want the deep state looking over **our** shoulders or being scared of what **we** say (BBC News 2025); The poll's margin of error was 2 %. Despite this, Trzaskowski immediately appeared on stage in Warsaw to claim victory. "**We've** won!" ('we' meaning 'I' or he and his supporters) (The Guardian 2025).*

The manipulative function of the pronoun 'we', as used in political discourse, is one of the dominant functions – alongside its presentational, informative, solidarizing, phatic (contact-establishing), divisive, and oppositional roles, among others. The potential of the pronoun 'we' as a tool for linguistic manipulation of consciousness is both rich and varied. Of particular interest is the interplay between the pronouns 'I' and 'we' in political discourse: the transcendence of 'I' into 'we', or the absence of such a shift, serves as a significant indicator of political image:

*The protection of Vilnius is the protection of Berlin. And **our** common freedom does not end at a geopolitical line – it ends where **we** stop defending it; It can create an opportunity for folks like **me** and companies like ours, yeah, but it can also crush business plans – if **you're** reliant on foreign goods and suddenly you just took a 25 % hit on your cost. It's made some people sit on their hands and not move forward on some efforts that **we** were thinking would happen soon. It's made some other folks, you know, escalate plans and have to do them faster (The Guardian 2025); Universities are not about the pursuit of knowledge, **they're***

*about the forceful pushing of a left-wing world view. **We** 're here to shake it up; What is at stake in Ukraine is **our** common credibility, that **we** are still able to preserve territorial integrity and sovereignty of people; If **we** abandon Gaza, if **we** consider there is a free pass for Israel, even if **we** do condemn the terrorist attacks, **we** kill **our** own credibility in the rest of the world (BBC News 2025).*

Thus, the semantics of collectivity has a broad field of discursive application in political communication. In political discourse, the realization of the category of collectivity through the pronoun 'we', the configuration of pronouns ('I – we'), and lexemes of unity is primarily manipulative in nature; however, it also contributes to the preservation and presentation of cultural information in the form of a cultural code. We-discourse defines the role of the politician in the political 'game' and shapes the 'script' of their presence on the political stage. It characterizes the politician's communicative image and speech profile. As non-specialized signs in the semiotic space of political discourse, pronouns are not equally represented in male and female political discourse, which highlights the gender parameter of contemporary political *we*-discourse:

***We** want to co-operate but **we** don't want to depend... **we** don't want to be instructed on a daily basis on what is allowed, what is not allowed and how **our** life can change because of a decision by a single person (BBC News 2025); Ipsos themselves said that, of course, they were well prepared for the challenge ahead, but would still need a bit more luck than usual. There is also a second exit poll, by OGB for Republika (same caveats and rules on margins of error apply). They were pretty close in the first round, so I will bring you both sets of figures (The Guardian 2025).*

The specificity of *we*-discourse in political mass media communication – reflecting the speaker's position and containing evaluative meaning – fully aligns with its primary goal: the power struggle, in which non-specialized signs are increasingly employed. Through 'we'-inclusions in political communication, the idea of collectivity is exploited as a key element of the Russian linguistic worldview: politicians identify themselves with the people and distance themselves from their opponents and adversaries.

Advertising discourse. In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the grammatical means of language in advertising, particularly to pronouns as one of the key segments of discourse. Pronouns, as specific markers of advertising mass media discourse, create and maintain speaker-audience relationships. As pragmatically significant elements within the "speaker-listener" framework, pronouns can signal either cooperation or its absence. The principle of cooperation is critically important in constructing advertising discourse, as it serves to bring the addressee as close as possible to the addresser.

Advertising texts make use of both various types of pronouns and pronominal groups. The most frequently used are personal and possessive pronouns. Out of 100 advertising text samples, 80% are constructed using pronouns, while the remaining 20% consist of "pronoun-free" advertisements and announcements of various types and lengths:

*We've made contact with a new alien species and, apparently, **they** are Foodies. Mr Ramsey will need **you** to cook for **them**, **you**'ll have access to everything the Area 51 Test Kitchen has to offer (cookware); Should **we** bring in the big guy? (Mountain Dew); This is a face **we** all know and love. Soon this face will be changed forever. Who? What? **We**'re raising eyebrows (pizza) (Commercials 2025).*

Personal pronouns perform both pragmatic (indicating the speaker's attitude toward the communicative situation) and deictic functions (defining the relationship of the referent to the communicative context). Of particular interest is the personal pronoun 'we', which, as a bearer of the semantics of collectivity, can express solidarity between the speaker and the listener, influence the effectiveness of communication, and, consequently, affect the success of the advertising message. The use of 'we' brings the advertiser closer to the consumer, creates a generalized image of the addressee, may indicate an active position of both the speaker and the listener, creates the illusion of interactivity, and modifies the recipient's attitude toward the communicative situation.

We observed that many of these functions of the pronoun 'we' are also characteristic of advertising texts. In the context of advertising, we identified the following functions of 'we': the integrative function (inclusive 'we'), the contrasting function ('we' vs. 'they'), and the affective function (expressing enthusiasm and a sense of shared involvement).

Moreover, the analyzed text samples show that the pronoun 'we', when used in advertising texts, very rarely functions as an 'isolated 'we''; more often, it implies the presence of another party or parties. For example: *we and the world, we and ourselves* (e.g., *with us – we, to us – we*), as well as correlations such as *we – you (to you – we, we – you, we – for you)*. *We*-discourse conveys not only the advertisers' 'we-perspective' but also enables the maximum identification of the sender with the recipient:

*I can't believe they let **us** back in this place. Why? Hello. Nobody remembers that. Something wrong? Not doing it? No good? Nothing. Well, **we** can't have that (Hellmann's) (Commercials 2025); **We** have something to tell **you**. **You** have a twin brother. **We** never told **you** about. **I**'m sorry. What's his name? Other David. **You** called him other David. Where is **he**? Left **him** in America. <...> Sorry, it's a thing **I** do. **You** drink Stella? I have taste, David. Something **I** have to tell **you** ... (actors-brothers go away together, being united) (Stella Artois); Look, from the very beginning football has been a conspiracy to make **us** hungry. Now let **me** tell **you** where it all started (Uber) (10 Best Commercials 2025).*

Thus, the use of the pronoun 'we' in advertising and PR texts serves several functions, with the manipulative function being central. *We*-discourse allows the sender to fully identify with the receiver, influence their actions, expectations, and needs, and construct an imagined reality – a model of *we*-relationships in which the intentions, desires, and values of both the sender and the recipient align.

Marketing communications (advertising and PR texts) based on *We*-discourse not only shape but also reflect national linguistic consciousness. A distinctive feature of any linguistic consciousness is the inclination toward collectivity (whether conscious, unconscious, or subconscious). Marketing communications fully exploit the idea of togetherness.

News discourse. News discourse encompasses a wide range of topics and social spheres – from politics and economics to culture and everyday events – and employs diverse linguistic strategies to engage audiences. The use of pronouns is among these strategies, particularly the pronoun ‘we’, which has various discursive and pragmatic functions, such as fostering solidarity, constructing group identity, or distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups:

*We had not long been open, and then these exceptional visitors arrived. Camilla was great and then the king showing up was an incredible surprise. He couldn't stop talking about the beauty of the mosaics, but Camilla kept telling him: 'But no, **I**'ve found interesting stuff here.' **We** are very happy because obviously the visit provided an important international showcase ('we' – Italians, museum personnel); Working from home? It's so much nicer if you're a man. Ever since lockdown **we** 've supposedly all been in it together. doing conference calls in **our** slippers. But in straight couples, guess who gets the spare bedroom and the proper desk? <...> But in real life, generally, women's work is still given less and worse space, while the gender pay gap narrows agonizingly slowly. When do we get that room of our own? ('we' – women) (The Guardian 2025); These strategic bombers are capable of launching long-range strikes against **us**. There are only 120 of them and **we** struck 40. That's an incredible figure ('we' – Ukrainians, military people); Our love is frowned upon, but we push through. If we have kids, I feel like it's important that they learn about both religions and faiths (different religions and relationships, 'we' – young people of different religions); We are seeing many, and lots of there events in the last years in the Alps are linked to global warming ('we' – people who live in the Alps, people all over the world); It's terrible. They've lost everything. There's nothing we can do. We can cry forever. We must believe in God, that He will help us, so that life can go on ('we' – villagers) (BBC News 2025).*

Virtual discourse. Virtual discourse refers to communication that occurs within digital environments and virtual spaces such as social media, forums, blogs, and online platforms. It is related to computer-mediated or Internet communication. It is characterized by immediacy, informality, and interactivity, often blending written and spoken language features. One specific feature of virtual discourse is the dynamic roles of participants – users can be content creators and consumers at the same time. Multimodal elements like emojis, hyperlinks, and memes can be frequently employed to enhance meaning and engagement. Anonymity and non-simultaneous communication can influence tone and content, enabling both openness and conflict. Virtual discourse reflects evolving linguistic norms and has a significant impact on shaping public opinion and online communities.

Here are some examples of ‘we’ in a virtual discourse in various digital communication environments and online discourse domains:

*Dive into the world of gaming with **us**; **We** cannot do so many things **we** would love to do; **We** really need a remaster ('we' – gamers); **We** build this virtual world together ('we' – virtual reality community); *We've been on Discourse for over a year and really, really love the platform you've built ('we' – users of the Discourse platform (Gaming communities, online forums); **We'll** take a closer look at the most important social media trends to keep an eye on ('we' –**

social media marketers): *We proactively work with health experts at the World Health Organization and NHS to promote reliable information on **our** platform and remove 98% of harmful misinformation before it's reported to **us*** ('we' – social media platform – creators and users).

'We' can also mean participants of different social media movements, members of communities (blogs and vlogs), participants of virtual events and webinars, etc. These examples demonstrate the versatility of the pronoun 'we' in virtual discourse, serving functions from fostering inclusivity to delineating group boundaries.

Environmental discourse. Environmental discourse refers to how language is used to communicate, frame, and negotiate issues related to the natural world, climate change, sustainability, and ecological responsibility. This type of discourse often incorporates scientific terminology, emotional appeals, and persuasive rhetoric to raise awareness, mobilize action, and influence public opinion or policy. Among the defining features are the following: the use of evaluative language, metaphors (such as 'carbon footprint' or 'climate crisis'), and modal expressions that signal urgency or necessity (e.g., "must reduce emissions"). It also frequently employs inclusive pronouns like 'we' to foster a sense of collective responsibility and community or global solidarity. In this discourse type 'we' encompasses a varied and wider audience – from a community, company, to scientists, researchers, and all people. Here are some examples:

*With WWF's ocean conservation specialist, Tom Brook as **our** guide, **we** waded through the thigh-high grass to visit the site of the experiment; **We** know these sites act as a natural flood defences, too and that they store carbon. Any of these habitats that **we** can restore will be a big win for nature ('we' – researchers); **We** 've got to do something to save this wonderful area, it's got so much history ('we' – campaigners who try to stop sale of green space for housing); *These days, nature is so important for mental health as well – **we** 've got to try and give it back to today's generation of young people* ('we' – campaigners, community, all people) (BBC News 2025); ***We** know the deepest layers are still readable because it is cold enough. But it is an absolute race against time; **We** are witnessing what is happening and it must be documented so **we** can leave something for future scientists. This is **our** duty* ('we' – scientists); ***I** think about two or three years ago, **we** passed the point where any government wants to be seen publicly objecting to this law, because they will just look crap* ('we' – international campaigner) (The Guardian 2025).*

The aforementioned textual examples and theoretical framework reveal two novel semantic dimensions of the pronoun 'we': manipulative 'we' (in a political discourse and advertising discourse, the meaning of 'we' is ambiguous and unclear, often meaning 'not we') and virtual 'we' (in online or distance communication with the help of communication technologies, "the absent presence").

Conclusions

Pronouns are reflexive elements in language that function as discourse markers and deictic expressions, and reflect power relations within communication. The pronoun

‘we’, in particular, acts as a major factor in shaping interaction by expressing viewpoints, shared identities, and group affiliations. It can be used to show unity, authority, ‘dominance’ or support, depending on the speaker’s intention. As a communicative tool, ‘we’ helps to construct meaning by revealing underlying beliefs, social bonds, and perceptions of the world. Additionally, it can indicate both inclusion in a collective and exclusion or distancing from others, depending on how it is positioned in discourse.

We-discourse, while preserving mental and linguistic traditions, serves as the primary representative of the concept of commonality/collectivity. By realizing the content of the concept of collectivity, *we*-discourse forms, maintains, and transmits *we*-relationships – understood as the relationships of *we*-groups, *we*-society, *we*-state, *we*-nation – within the *we*-sphere, *we*-space, *we*-time, *we*-culture, *we*-community, and *we*-world.

The use of ‘we’ not only reflects interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and the listener but also conveys implicit information about their identity, inclusion, and relational positioning within a given context. Central to this study is the concept of *we*-discourse, a macro-discursive phenomenon in which ‘we’ functions as a central indicator and structuring element. *We*-discourse constitutes a communicative and mental space where strategies of inclusion, solidarity, authority, and opposition are enacted.

This discourse type is manifested across a wide range of text genres – political speeches, advertising, news media, and virtual communication – each shaped by specific communicative intentions and sociocultural contexts. The study emphasizes the role of ‘we’ in the way it constructs shared meaning, reinforces commonality or collectivity, and guides the pragmatic framework of discourse. By examining authentic textual examples, the article highlights the semantic and functional versatility of ‘we’, and illustrates how its usage contributes to the coherence, impact, and persuasive power of discourse. Ultimately, the analysis positions ‘we’ not merely as a linguistic placeholder, but as a central, dynamic force in the architecture of communication and the construction of collective identity.

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