



Rhetorical Questions as a stylistic device in English political speeches

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ABSTRACT

The principal objective of this paper was to explore what rhetorical strategies and stylistic devices of President Barack Obama use in his political speeches and how these devices help him to gain the audience's attention and render the message. The speeches of President B. Obama were analyzed in order to highlight the patterns of the usage of rhetorical strategies and to investigate the stylistic devices which are aimed at making speech more emphatic, expressive and persuasive. The method chosen for the study was content analysis including generalization and evaluation of the results. The results of the research showed a significant contribution of stylistic means to persuade the listeners on an emotional level or even to manipulate them.

Keywords:

Section one: Introduction

1.1 Background

Since the ancient times political rhetoric was the attention of many orators. Rhetoric was considered as a valuable skill of communication. Nowadays, political leaders are concerned about their use of language, too. They always pay attention to various rhetoric techniques how to enhance their ideas and due to this to glamorize their public image. In the process of time, rhetoric has become a crucial way to spread their ideology to manipulate the audience's emotions and to become more prominent figure among other rivals in everyday interactions.

Language is the significant tool of persuasion. Therefore, to gain a favorable

public opinion, politicians employ appropriate linguistic recourses in their political speeches. Stylistic devices help to embellish the speech and to attain success in public debates or in political discussions. Political leaders apply stylistic devices in their remarks in order to strengthen their thoughts and arguments on an issue or to create an impression of an authoritative leader. Therefore, language is a powerful instrument in gaining public support in elections or to achieve any political interests.

1.2 The aim of this study was to investigate , rhetorical strategies and the use of stylistic devices such as metaphor, personification, epithet, rhetorical questions and hyperbole in political speeches by president B. Obama.

1.3 The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To overview the theoretical material under the question.
2. To analyse the speeches of B. Obama; to highlight the patterns of the usage of rhetorical strategies.
3. To investigate the stylistic devices which are aimed at making speech more emphatic, expressive and persuasive.

1.4 The research questions are: What rhetorical strategies and stylistic devices do

president B. Obama use in his political speeches and how these devices help him to gain the audience's attention and render the message?

1.5 As for significance of this study: the analysis of the rhetorical persuasion will help to conceive how these stylistic devices and rhetorical strategies help presidents to seize the political power and position. Also, it is a valuable contribution to the teaching and learning rhetoric and stylistics.

Section Two: Literature Review

2. THE ART OF RHETORIC

2.1. Rhetoric and communication

According to Kennedy (2007: 08) rhetoric is the ability to use language effectively. It is the art of persuasion. For centuries rhetorical study was considered as a clincher of a gentleman's education. Every individual, who wanted this communication to have impact, had to study rhetoric. Rhetoric was considered as the cornerstone of communication. Rhetoric could be used to make ideas clear and concise and to make issues essential or important for people. Rhetoric concerns itself with language and how people use it. The good rhetorician had to be proficient to control arguments according to the rules of art of persuading (ibid).

Kennedy (2007: 08) states that the English word "rhetoric", and its various forms in European languages, is derived from the Greek word *rhetōr*, a speaker in a public meeting or court of law, sometimes equivalent to us might call a "politician". Before and after "rhetoric" came into use there were other terms current. One was *peithō*, which means "persuasion"; more common was use of the word *logos*, meaning word or speech, in combination with other words: a *démiourgos logōn* was a "worker of words", and thus an orator; "tekhne logon art of words" was used to describe the technique or art of speech and became the common title for a handbook of public speaking (ibid).

(Connolly (2007: 146) defines political rhetoric as a device of government in the political system of any society. Rhetoric

contains the variety of cultural and linguistic expressions as a part of the process of social communication. A good orator knows that words are a powerful tool. The appropriate choice of words is similarly important as the distribution of the purpose in the speech. In order to convince the people, politicians try to select clear, accurate, descriptive and short words that best convey ideas, as well as the words are arranged efficiently, coherent and correctly. Every word contains value meaning and performance in their speeches. Indeed, rhetoric is not just empty words in political speeches. Rhetoric concerns itself with language and how politicians use it (ibid)

History of rhetoric 2.2

Rhetoric as a science and an art last more than **3,000** years and gathers almost all the sciences and the arts. In ancient times, a good orator was considered as an educated man who was a charismatic person, and without a doubt, was able to model voice and gestures as an actor. The orator acquired knowledge of psychology, medicine, architecture, history, literature, logic, and the most essentially law and philosophy (Kennedy, 2007: 08).

2.3 Rhetorical strategies

Yoos (2009: 55) shows that rhetorical strategies are the ways that writers and speakers use words and language in order to persuade the audience. In other words, rhetorical strategies help to find all methods that allow us to convey the most convincingly our point on a given topic. These strategies help effectively, efficiently and coherently

present our material on a chosen subject also, to connect facts into a sequence, provide clusters of information necessary for conveying a purpose or an argument. Rhetoricians use sounds, objects and behaviors especially gestures as well as words, to say what they would like to say. "Rhetoric is a much more comprehensive art especially as one finds it going on in the art of negotiation in politics that aims to bond and interact with others in shaping a community"(ibid).

According to Harris (2013: 01-02) rhetorical devices can be distinguished into three categories: first, involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus (antithesis, asyndeton, simile, etc.). Second involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement. Third, involving decoration and variety (metaphor, personification, etc.). He (ibid) claims that "sometimes a given device or trope fall mainly into a Single category, but more often the effects of a particular device are multiple, and a single one may operate in all three categories e.g. parallelism, helps to order, clarify, emphasize and beautify a thought" (ibid).

However, despite the body language, an argumentation speech is a form of persuasive public speaking. Argumentation can play an important role in presenting ideas and influencing others.

2.3.1 Argumentation

According to Collins English Dictionary (2009), an argument is "a discussion in which reasons are put forward in support of and against a proposition, proposal, or case; debate". Argumentation is understood as evidence of any statement based on other statement of which the justice is already known. However, an argument is attempt to persuade someone of something, by giving reasons or evidence for accepting a particular conclusion. Fahnestock & Secor (2013: 01-02) pointed out, that "arguments addressed to favorably inclined audiences can have other practical consequences aside from such immediate ones as creating enough votes for a new community park or starting a letter

campaign. They can also create group cohesiveness, solidarity among those who find themselves agreeing with the appeals cast at them. The person who articulates the reasons that hold the group together may of course become its leader. But more important is the fact that the argument that meets with agreement has created a human community ready to act together" (ibid).

Fairclough (2012: 38) states that sometimes a third type of argumentation is recognized, namely, conductive argument. He (ibid) says that "In conductive arguments, the support pattern is said to be convergent and the premises are put forward as separately or independently relevant to the claim. One difference is that the "even-if" characteristic of conductive reasoning takes into account the arguments on both sides of a disputed issue, the pro and contra'(ibid).

According to Crawford (2002: 23) political argumentation can be classified into four ideal-type categories that vary in terms of their content: practical/instrumental, ethical, scientific and identity. She says that "in complex situations that demand complex arguments, more than one, in some cases all these types of arguments may be deployed" (ibid).

The role of practical or instrumental argument is more to persuade rather to prove, demonstrate or refuse. Crawford claims that "these arguments involve beliefs about cause and effect relations among individuals; they are about how to do things in the social world" (ibid).

2.3.2 Persuasion

Rhetoric and persuasion go together. Rhetoric may fail if it is not persuasive. Actually, the measure of a successful rhetoric is its ability to persuade. According to Frezza (2011) a good start of persuading is acknowledging the prevalence of moral diversity, because each of us has different viewpoints of life. Roberts Roberts (2008: 10) points out that "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is a

function of any other art. Every other art can persuade about its own particular subject-matter, for example, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences" (ibid).

Section Three: Methodology Linguistic Management In Political Speeches 3.

3.1 Stylistic approach in political speeches

Speech is human communication through spoken language. With reference to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, speech is "a formal talk that a person gives to an audience" (OALD, 2000: 1241). It is not easy to define the political speech. However, according to Rice (2007: 18) a political speech is "any oral presentation that sets forth a proposal of a political position, particularly one in which the speaker hopes to influence others" (ibid).

Stylistics is concerned about different range of language styles and varieties which are feasible in different spoken or written, formal or informal etc., texts. Similarly, the scientists claim that "styles may be seen as characteristic of an author, of a period of a particular kind of persuasion (rhetoric) or a genre" (Childs & Fowler, 2006: 228). Nowadays, stylistics is considered as the modern version of the ancient discipline known as 'rhetoric' which taught students how to structure the argument, how to make effective use of figures of speech and how to create a speech in a way which can have an absolute influence on listeners or readers

However, the possibility of stylistics for taking insights from other disciplines means that it is a subject that is always expanding and developing. While it is true to say, that "stylistics is neither theoretically nor in practice limited to study the language of literature" (ibid:193).

***Models of Analysis is depended on Galperin's Function and Classification of Stylistic Devices**

3.2 Functions and classification of stylistic devices

As it was mentioned above, stylistics is a branch of general linguistics. Stylistics deals with: functional styles, stylistic devices and figures of speech.

Functional stylistics analyzes functional styles and their possible use in communicative situation. The fact of the matter is that there exist a number of classifications of functional styles, but the most common one was introduced by Galperin.(1977) So, he distinguishes five groups of functional styles:

1. official style (all kinds of documents).
2. scientific (academic publications).
3. publicist (public speeches, essays).
4. newspaper (articles printed in newspapers).
5. belles-letters style (emotive prose, poetry, drama

speech and how to create a speech in a way which can have an absolute influence on listeners or readers.

Therefore, the possibility of stylistics for taking insights from other disciplines means that it is a subject that is always expanding and developing. While it is true to say, that "stylistics is neither theoretically nor in practice limited to study the language of literature" (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010: 193). They (ibid :193) claim, that "there are many outside the field who consider stylistics and literary stylistics to be identical". That is to say, "speeches, love letters, gas bills, committee minutes etc. can be analyzed for their stylistic features in just the same way as poems, plays and novels" (ibid).

3.2.1 Metaphor

Metaphors are one of the most frequently used stylistic devices. The purpose of using metaphors is to create a vivid picture in the audience's mind and to arouse imagination for example "She has a heart of stone" or "We are all shadows on the wall of time". Rhetoricians or poets use metaphors in an imaginative way to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the speech more persuasive and more powerful. With reference (Lakoff Johnson, 2008: 04).

3.2.2 Epithet

Galperin (1977: 143) says that "the epithet is a stylistic device based on the interplay of emotive and logical meaning in an attributive and logical meaning in an attributive word, phrase or even syntactically used to characterize an object and pointing out to the reader, and frequently imposing on him, some of the properties or features of the object with the aim of giving an individual perception an evaluation of these features or properties" (ibid).

3.2.3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech when the speaker exaggerates and overemphasizes some words or phrases in order to produce more noticeable effect or to stress a specific point of the speech. The word 'hyperbole' has its origin in the Greek language and means exaggeration. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines hyperbole as "a way of speaking or writing that makes the sound better, more exiting, dangerous, than it really is" (OALD, 2000: 639).

Also, hyperbole can be expressed by all notional parts Of speech as all, every, everybody; numerical nouns a million, a thousand, adverbs of time ever, never" (Kukhareenko, 2000: 33).

3.2.4 Rhetorical question

Rhetorical devices and literary techniques are closely connected to tone and style. Rhetorical question is defined as any question which not intended to be answered. So, it is normally used for rhetorical effect with a presumption that only one answer is possible or it is asked without needing or intending to be answered. According to Galperin (1977: 222) "the rhetorical question is a special syntactic stylistic device the essence of which consists in reshaping the grammatical meaning of the interrogative sentence" (ibid). Similarly, Nozan(2010: 270) claims that "rhetorical questions are infelicitous or false questions in that the answer to the question is already known to the questioner and a rhetorical

question may or may not have the illocutionary force of questioning but often bear the force of an indirect assertion."(ibid). Furthermore, Han (2000: 202) says ' 'a rhetorical positive question has the illocutionary force of negative assertion, and a rhetorical negative question has the illocutionary force of a positive assertion" (ibid).

There are different kinds of rhetorical questions. According to Athanasiadou (1990: 108-109) using rhetorical questions is the intention of the speaker is to give emphasis to some particular point. Moreover, in a rhetorical question, the speaker considers the propositional content he/she is going to utter to be trivial or well-known. In a rhetorical question a constituent is given emphatic prominence and gets a universally valid touch and finally, rhetorical questions express wonder in an exclamative way (Athanasiadou, ibid).

Section Four: Data Analysis

4.Barack Obama's Rhetorical Strategies And Their Linguistic Realization

4.1 Stylistic peculiarities of metaphors in the speeches

Obviously, one of the greatest linguistic tools of political persuasion is the metaphor. It is popular to believe that the President of the United States Barack Obama delivers emotional speeches, full of stylistic devices. However, by putting ideas into metaphors the President presents himself as a strong leader who is responsible for his country. Thus, B. Obama masterly uses metaphorical phrases in order to gain people's attention.

The length of the speeches performed by B. Obama is enormous. However, the speeches make people want to listen, because they create a situation in which people feel that they are in the presence of a great political leader.

That's where peace begins not just in the plans of leaders, but in the hearts of people.

The stylistic device supports the President's wish that people all around the world live peacefully and secure liberty across the globe. He metaphorically claims that the values of freedom, heritage and principles depend on people's internal value.

President B. Obama
1. To focus on preservation of the peace in the world
2. To criticize educational system
3. To emphasize economic situation
4. To appeal to people’s internal value

Table 1. The usage of metaphors in President B. Obama.

4.2 Stylistic peculiarities of epithets in the speeches

The President B.Obama uses a great number of epithets, too. Describing people, events or things he tries to strengthen his arguments and to create emotional atmosphere. The President likes to share his personal life in order to convey a message that he is friendly for everyone and to show his closeness. Talking

about his personal life he appeals on the audience's feeling.

Sasha and Malia, before our very eyes you're growing up to become two strong, smart beautiful young women, just like your mom.

Argumentative force of epithets is seen when he praises other people shows his pride and of them and at the same time tries to inspire the audience to believe in government and politics.

Table 2. The usage of epithets in President B. Obama.

President B. Obama
1. To enhance the significance of the ideas
2. To show responsibility to people
3. To establish ‘personal’ relationship
4. To reinforce the people to find right solutions

Stylistic peculiarities of hyperbole in the speeches 4.3

As it was mentioned above, stylistic means play a crucial role in B. Obama's speeches. So, the President's speeches contain a great number of stylistic devices, still hyperbole is not very often used for emphasizing ideas. However, B. Obama likes using hyperbole in order to

transfer strong expression of opinion or perspective.

Thank you for believing all the way, through every hill, through every valley.

In his passionate speech, B. Obama describes Mandela as a 'giant' of a history. The

President B. Obama uses magnification in order to inspire the audience to struggle for racial freedom in Africa and America.

Table 3. The usage of hyperbole in President B. Obama.

President B. Obama
1. To inspire the people to struggle for racial freedom
2. To emphasize the importance of cooperation and self-devotion
3. To enhance the importance of new technologies

Stylistic peculiarities of rhetorical questions in the speeches 4.4

The President B. Obama mostly uses wh-question form. The American President expresses himself by using questions that are asked and at the same time immediately answered. These types of questions allow the President to highlight the reason why he is expressing his worryment.

Now, you may ask, why are we here at Hudson Valley? We're here because this is a place where anyone with the desire to take their career to a new level or start a new career altogether has the opportunity to pursue that dream.

In order to force the audience to think about the future possibilities of the country. The President seeks to break the stillness and to probe the audience's opinion.

Table 4. The usage of rhetorical questions in President B. Obama.

President B. Obama
1. To show closeness to the audience
2. To support already expressed views
3. To influence further thought

Section Five: Conclusions

The results of this study conducted to achieve the aims of the study, which were to examine what rhetorical strategies and stylistic devices President Barack Obama use in his political speeches and how these devices help him to gain audience's attention and render the message.

The analysis of President's speeches showed that President through stylistic means transmit a valuable information and express their vision of the political situation. Thus, from the results it became evident that the President uses tactical manipulation of rhetoric to obtain

the target aims, still B. Obama employs more stylistic means in his speeches.

In the course of analysis it became evident that metaphors are the most prominent stylistic device in the President's remarks. It is obvious that President employs metaphorical language in his speeches because metaphors have a huge influence on people and help him to gain votes. However, the President uses them to strengthen his arguments differently. Through metaphorical language B. Obama appeals to logos (logic) that means B. Obama appeals to the audience's mind when he emphasizes economic and educational issues in the country.

Rhetoric especially pathos causes people to feel sympathy. That is why B. Obama through epithets shows his thoughts based upon pathos (emotions). Epithets relieve the President to characterize the people and describe places or things.

The way of seeing situation, B. Obama transfers through rhetorical questions. Political message delivered here is more grounded pathos (emotions). The analysis revealed that B. Obama's often expresses his personal touch with the people. By asking rhetorically he stresses the issues like storm that stroke the country and at the same time bringing the people to self-reflection.

Furthermore, in order to stir the audience's emotions the president uses pathos (emotions). Through the use of hyperbole both Presidents emphasize the significant issues of the countries like conflicts in the world, importance of cooperation and significance of the military service. As well as that the President supports arguments proficiently according to the rules of persuading.

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