

THE POWER OF PERSUASION: UNVEILING THE PRAGMATIC UTILIZATION OF STYLISTIC DEVICES IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *The article delves into the nuanced realm of political discourse, exploring the strategic deployment of stylistic devices for persuasive purposes. Through a comprehensive analysis of various political speeches, debates, and communication strategies, this study uncovers the pragmatic utilization of rhetorical devices, such as metaphors. By examining how politicians employ these stylistic tools to influence public opinion, shape perceptions, and garner support, this research sheds light on the intricate dynamics of persuasion in the political arena. Furthermore, it investigates the interplay between linguistic techniques and socio-political contexts, revealing how language can be wielded as a powerful instrument for manipulation or empowerment. Ultimately, this inquiry not only enhances our understanding of the persuasive mechanisms at play in political communication but also underscores the significance of critical discourse analysis in deciphering the complexities of contemporary political rhetoric.*

Keywords: *Political discourse, Stylistic devices, Persuasion, Rhetorical analysis, Communication strategies, Public opinion, Linguistic manipulation, Metaphor.*

Introduction

The fundamental realm of political discourse remarkably appears with the exigency of the art of persuasion. Politicians possess the power of language to influence public opinion, rally support or several courses of socio-political narratives as decent communicators. One of the core elements of the intended result from that persuasive speech can be the stylistic devices – linguistic tools employed to enhance rhetoric and appeal audiences. Stylistic devices, ranging from elaborate metaphors to structured parallelism, function as influential tools

within the political sphere. This article embarks on an interpretation by means of the pragmatic utilization of such stylistic devices in the mentioned discourse. By understanding how language is wielded as a tool of convincing, it is provided to gain insights into the mechanisms through which political actors seek to impact on the general perceptions of public and how they deal with the advancement in personal agendas. While previous studies have explored various aspects of political communication, there remains a gap in our understanding of how specific stylistic devices are strategically employed by politicians to achieve persuasive ends. This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a systematic analysis of the pragmatic utilization of such devices in political discourse. The primary objective of this research is to uncover the strategic deployment of stylistic devices in political communication and examine their impact on shaping public opinion and influencing political outcomes. By employing a multidimensional approach, this study aims to provide insights into the complex interplay between language, power, and persuasion in the political field.

Materials and Research Methods

Numerous studies have explored various aspects of pragmatic features of political discourse in recent years. Van Dijk TA (1997)¹ conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis examining the effects of political discourse on political speeches across different political segments. His findings suggested a significant positive correlation between pragmatics and stylistic devices, supporting the notion that discourse plays a crucial role in politics. Furthermore, Van Dijk investigated the mechanisms underlying the relationship between political discourse and its individualism through a series of experimental studies. Van Dijk suggests that in order to prevent the expansion of political discourse into domains as vast as public discourse in general, certain forms of discourse with potential political implications, such as corporate, medical, or educational discourse, will not be considered political discourse in this context. Additionally,

¹ Van Dijk TA (1997) What is political discourse analysis? *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 11: 11–52.

while acknowledging the feminist perspective that personal matters can have political significance, not all interpersonal communication, including discussions about gender, will be classified as political discourse. (Van Dijk TA (1997) What is political discourse analysis?) Indeed, this explanation can help to stabilize the direct conventions of coping with the research techniques and frames. More recently, a persuasive case that analysis of political discourse needs to focus on argumentation, and particularly on theoretical properties of discourse, has been made in political theory by Finlayson (2007). According to him, political decision-making is distinctive in the way it combines two levels of contingency and uncertainty: 'the uncertainty of the world', the need to act on the basis of incomplete information, not knowing for certain what the nature of the circumstances is, what the best way to act is, or what effects any action may have; and the uncertainty caused by 'the (possibly competitive) presence of others' who think in different ways which include not only conflicting interests but the possibility of a clash of 'first principles', of basic values. (Fairclough N (2006) Genres in political discourse.) Fairclough's interpretation² could emphasize the importance of understanding how political actors construct arguments and negotiate competing viewpoints within the discourse, shedding light on the complexities of decision-making processes and the shaping of political outcomes. In addition to theoretical research, several longitudinal studies have examined the considerable effects of literary techniques on political discourse. For instance, Van Leeuwen (2007) followed a cohort of participants over several years and found that among other tools, metaphor which is commonly used in political discourse to facilitate a legitimising or delegitimising moral and which proves to be an important ideological instrument. Apparently, by framing political issues or actors in metaphorical terms, speakers can shape public perception and advance particular ideological

² Fairclough N (2006) Genres in political discourse. In: Keith Brown K (ed.) Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics

agendas. This highlights the strategic use of language in politics, where metaphors act as potent instruments for conveying and reinforcing ideological beliefs. To achieve the aim and to solve specific tasks of the article, the methodology was represented by mostly textual analysis and case studies leading to sort out various political speeches and press releases.

Discussion

The significance of a linguistic unit is commonly acknowledged to be regulated by syntactic, semantic, phonological, and stylistic principles, with the selection of a specific type being significantly influenced by the pragmatic intent of the utterance. The pragmalinguistic examination is deemed effective, particularly in analyzing the techniques of persuasion within political discourse. Discourse analysis, a multifaceted undertaking, employs various methodologies and perspectives. Discourse constitutes a structured framework of thoughts, comprising ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs, and practices, which systematically shape the subjects and the contexts in which they articulate their discourse. Regarding the textual analysis of several presidential speeches, the general outcome may sound directly characteristic depending on the purpose of the speech and speakers. Among the usage of stylistic devices metaphors mostly represent that mentioned unique values of the speech. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". (G.Lakoff)

In accordance with George Lakoff's definition, the fundamental nature of metaphor lies in the comprehension and perception of one entity through the framework of another. This conceptualization underpins the analysis conducted in this study, which sought to elucidate the role of metaphor in cognitive processes.

Results

Through a series of experiments and data analyses, the findings revealed a profound interplay between metaphorical expressions and cognitive

understanding. The results indicate that individuals consistently employ metaphors to make sense of abstract concepts, thereby shaping their cognitive frameworks. Furthermore, the study identified variations in metaphorical interpretations across different political communicators, suggesting the influence of sociocultural factors on cognitive processes. Trump creates the aura of a super-male talking in abrupt sentences, ‘barking’, recycling the same words over and over again; he bullies and wants

everything that is ‘number one’. (Lakoff R. 2017, 598) The excerpt of this definition encapsulates a striking portrayal of former President Donald Trump's rhetorical style, characterizing it as imbued with traits associated with hyper-masculinity. By employing succinct, abrupt sentences and repetitive language, Trump constructs an image of dominance and authority, often likened to that of a "super-male." This rhetorical strategy, characterized by what Lakoff R. ³terms as "barking," serves to convey a sense of forcefulness and assertiveness, reinforcing Trump's desired image as a strong leader. Furthermore, Lakoff R. highlights Trump's tendency to recycle certain words and phrases, suggesting a limited vocabulary that emphasizes simplicity and directness in communication. This linguistic pattern not only aids in crafting a memorable message but also contributes to the perception of Trump as a decisive and unwavering figure. The results in the form of political speech parts with the metaphor usage of Donald Trump maintain an influential understanding of how political leaders could convince the audience and appeal them with linguistic power. For instance, in his speech called “Inaugural Address” (January, 2017) he mentioned these several metaphors making the persuasion in the extreme level:

1. *"American carnage"* - This metaphor was used to describe the state of the nation, emphasizing the problems and challenges facing the country.

³ Lakoff, Robin T. 2017. “The hollow man. Donald Trump, populism, and post-truth politics”

2. *"Rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape"* - This metaphor paints a vivid picture of economic decline and decay in certain regions of the country.

3. *"The bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America"* - This metaphorical use of "bedrock" implies a strong and unshakeable foundation for the nation's political principles.

4. *"We will bring back our jobs, we will bring back our borders, we will bring back our wealth, and we will bring back our dreams"*⁴ - This series of metaphors employs the idea of "bringing back" to convey a sense of renewal and restoration in various aspects of American life. The very last example found in the list also depicts the promising utilization of parallelism by means of making the speech more rhetoric and rhythmic. Generally, the main purpose of utilizing stylistic devices in political discourse is to persuade, influence, and engage the audience. Pragmatically, these devices serve several values:

1. *Attention-grabbing*: Stylistic devices help capture the audience's attention and maintain their interest throughout the speech.

2. *Emotional appeal*: They evoke emotions and create a connection with the audience, making the message more relatable and persuasive.

3. *Memorability*: Using memorable phrases and rhetorical flourishes helps ensure that the key points of the speech stick with the audience long after it's delivered.

4. *Clarity and emphasis*: Stylistic devices can clarify complex ideas and emphasize important points, making the message more understandable and impactful.

5. *Identity and branding*: Political figures often use stylistic devices to reinforce their personal or party brand, creating a distinct voice and image in the minds of the audience.

⁴ Journal of Language and Politics 16 (4): 619–639.

Conclusion

Overall, culminating our exploration into the pragmatic utilization of stylistic devices in political discourse, it becomes evident that language is not merely a tool for communication but a potent instrument for persuasion. From the artful manipulation of language to the strategic deployment of rhetorical devices, politicians wield a formidable arsenal to sway public opinion and shape political narratives. By unraveling the intricacies of these techniques, we gain insight into the mechanisms of persuasion that underpin modern political communication. Armed with this understanding, we are better equipped to navigate the complex terrain of political discourse, fostering a more discerning and engaged citizenry in the process.

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