

Rhetoric Strategies in the Presidents` Speeches: Ukrainian versus English

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Abstract

The article focuses on the prominent stylistic devices of the language, gives their definitions, and examines the effectiveness of their use in the political speeches of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Presidents of Ukraine, and the President of the United States of America. It studies the rhetorical strategies that help the speakers to achieve the desired goal effectively, and add persuasiveness to the addresses. The article aims to reveal the similar tendencies in rhetorical speeches used by the political leaders. The research method, which includes two stages, has been presented. The first stage consisted of material collection. The second stage consisted of two sub-stages of the study and included the description, and the systematization of the obtained data. The significance of the research lies in the fact that the similar traits in political speeches in different countries have been defined. The further studying of the political speeches of the political elites can enable to deepen the knowledge about rhetorical strategies in the sociolinguistic aspect.

Keywords: discourse, English, linguistics, political texts, rhetorical devices, Ukrainian

Cite as: Nasakina, S. V., Kolisnichenko, N., Rohalska-Yakubova, I. I., & Chepelyuk, N. I. (2020). Rhetoric Strategies in the Presidents` Speeches: Ukrainian versus English, *Arab World English Journal: Special Issue on English in Ukrainian Context*. 330 – 341.
DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/elt3.27>

Introduction

In the modern world, the degree of politicization of society has been growing in recent decades. Peoples are involved in inter-party struggles, election campaigning, the political debates, they monitor the significant political events all over the world. More and more political words enter the vocabulary; politicians tend to use more rhetoric devices in their public speaking. Moreover, one of the most notable features of the pragmatic political texts is a large number of manipulative techniques. As Demyankov stated (2002), the primary purpose of the political discourse is to persuade the addressee and motivate to action (p. 33).

The discussion will be easier, if we explain some important terms to use. The modern scholars distinguish between the discourse and the text. Wodak (2009) argues that “*discourse* implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures, whereas a text is a specific and unique realization of discourse” (p. 39).

In political discourse, rhetorical figures have a specific purpose: to create a particular rhythm of a phrase or a whole piece of text, to highlight the most essential semantic elements of speech, to mobilize attention, impose ideological values, increase emotional influence and level of consciousness manipulation. According to Yefimov (2004), rhetorical devices can be divided into several groups according to the type of sentence model transformation: 1) ellipsis, nominal sentences, aposiopesis, asyndeton, parceling, 2) repetition, enumeration, tautology, polysyndeton, and parallel constructions, 3) change of word order, separation of members of the sentence, 4) rhetorical questions. In Klyuyev's (2001) opinion, there are ‘micro’ figures of speech, such as metathesis, prosthesis, alliteration, etc.; and there are ‘macro’ figures of speech, which, in turn, are divided into constructive devices (parallelism, anaphora, epiphora, etc.), and destructive devices (inversion, ellipse, parceling, etc.).

The importance of the topic is due to the growing role of political discourse in the world, and the lack of works on the comparative study of Ukrainian, American, and British politicians' speeches. It is hypothesized that the rhetorical devices have national features, for example, specific figures of speech are more characteristic for certain cultures. Therefore, this research fills the research gap to the literature on political linguistics.

Literature Review

Since the primitive states, the power of the words of nation leaders have always influenced on the feelings of other people and that was used by the rulers of any society. The first scientific studies devoted to problems of political communication appeared in the days of antiquity. Some questions about language and politics were described in the works by Plato (1894), Aristotle (1999), Cicero (2014), and other ancient philosophers. Political linguistics in many countries at the present stage of development of scientific thought is represented by researches carried out at an interdisciplinary level. The achievements of cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, text linguistics, stylistics, and rhetoric are actively used in political linguistics. Studies of various aspects of political linguistics are based on the works of such scientists as Demyankov (2002), van Dijk (1997), Edelman (1964), Hahn (1998), Kovalevska (2001), Kondratenko (2007), Lakoff & Johnson (2008), Petlyuchenko (2009), Wodak (2009), and others.

It must be mentioned that the political discourse became the object of the scientific studies of Demyankov (2002), van Dijk (1997), Fetzer (2013), Kondratenko (2017), Serazhim (2002), and other scientists. One of the priority areas of modern research in political linguistics in Ukraine is devoted to the political discourse.

In Ukrainian studies, the discourse has been actively studied since the 90s of the last century. The political discourse was considered in Didenko's dissertation research (2001); in particular, the researcher analyzed political speeches as a type. In the monograph by Kondratenko (2007), general theoretical and applied aspects of political discourse are highlighted; in particular, the concept of political discourse and political communication is defined. In the monograph by Petlyuchenko (2009), the features of the speech of Ukrainian and German political leaders are presented with the help of the linguistic and discursive approach, particularly, the verbal and non-verbal specificity of oral appellative discourses of modern politicians in Germany and Ukraine is revealed. Specific attention is paid to the paralinguistic features of the speech of political leaders.

According to Mesenyashina et al. (2016), the primary function of political discourse is the power struggle. In this regard, Didenko (2001) divides all political speeches into parliamentary, pre-election, party, congratulatory, festive. Studying the semiotics in the political discourse, Sheigal (2000) describes the following categories of genres: 1) ritual genres (inaugural speech, anniversary speech, traditional radio address); 2) orientation genres (party program, constitution, presidential message on the situation in the country, report, decree, agreement); 3) agonial genres (slogan, advertising speech, election debates, parliamentary debates) (p. 330). Mesenyashina et al. (2016) claims, that in all political addresses, the suggestiveness dominates over informativeness.

The Rhetoric Peculiarities in State Leaders' Speeches

The verbal means of expression are often used in public speeches of Ukrainian Presidents (1st. Leonid Kravchuk (1991–1994), 2nd. Leonid Kuchma (1994–2005), 3rd. Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010), 4th. Viktor Yanukovich (2010–2014), Acting. Oleksandr Turchynov (2014), 5th. Petro Poroshenko (2014–2019), 6th. Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2019-Present)). The number and quality of rhetorical devices of all Presidents of Ukraine are different. In general, in the world, the most recognizable figures, which are in demand, should be evident to the average citizen, understandable to them, and therefore very useful. According to Fedoseev (2018), these are the figures based on various repetitions, among which the most popular are anaphora and parallelism, and based on the omission of any component of the expression of the reduction figure, the most popular of which is the ellipse.

There are lots of repetitions in every speech of Ukraine's presidents and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. According to Didenko (2001), the repetitions actualize and fix in the mind of the addressee the keywords, they increase the perception of the content, and stimulate the public. For example: "*In fact, **the barrack**, built 70 years ago, we have to rebuild in 18 years into a normal house. Although all the structural elements were intended for the **barracks**, the architects were used to building only the **barracks***" (Yushchenko, 2009). The third President of Ukraine called the former Soviet Union and its communist system a recurring token 'barracks' in a figurative sense, with a negative connotation, as opposed to the modern state system, represented in the image of an ordinary house. The rhetoric of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson (2019

– present) is always associated with topical issues that concern to millions of British citizens. For example, speaking about the COVID-19 pandemic, he says: “*It is now almost two months since the people of this country began to put up with restrictions on their **freedom** – your **freedom** – of a kind that we have never seen before in peace or war*” (Johnson, 2020). The repetition of the word *freedom* is used to enhance the expressiveness of the appeal. A kind of repetition is an anaphora, designed to perform similar functions, and, besides, it can help to organize rhythmic text, make it easier to perceive. All analyzed Ukrainian and British speeches are saturated with anaphors. For example, “*A **nation** that has managed to survive and preserve itself in the fiery crucible of revolutions, two devastating world wars, fratricidal conflicts, severe famines, and repressions. The people who took the blow of Chernobyl and shielded humanity from the global catastrophe. A **nation** that felt united*” (Kuchma, 1999). Anaphora strengthens the sense of patriotism, the importance of the people, such as, in Johnson’s statement: “***We must protect our NHS. We must see sustained falls in the death rate. We must see sustained and considerable falls in the rate of infection. We must sort out our challenges in getting enough PPE to the people who need it, and yes, it is a global problem, but we must fix it***” (Johnson, 2020). Like all types of repetitions, parallel constructions are designed to expand the sentence model. For example, “*Throughout my life, I tried to do everything to make **Ukrainians** smile. Now I will do everything so that **Ukrainians** at least do not cry anymore*” (Zelenskyy, 2019). On the one hand, the syntactic parallelism, that is the arrangement of words in several phrases in an identical order, allows the speaker to make the element of the text as expressive as possible. On the other hand, it helps to add more deep meaning and emotions to the speech; the description becomes fuller, voluminous, and bright.

The figures of addition include the amplification standard in Presidential speeches, and the accumulation of homogeneous elements of language helps to enhance expressiveness and emotionality. For example, “*The country is in a complicated situation - the lack of a state budget for the current year, huge debts on foreign borrowing, poverty, a collapsed economy, corruption*” (Yanukovych, 2010). Amplification with the injection of negative emotions is combined here with asyndeton (the lack of connectors between homogeneous members). Gradation often helps Presidents increase their emotional impressions when listing their achievements or the wrongdoings of previous governments. For example: “*It is in line with European standards that we have reformed education, launched a new system of fair external testing in higher education institutions, joined the Bologna Process, and entered the single European educational space*” (Yushchenko, 2009), and “*Bit by bit, day by day, by your actions, your restraint and your sacrifice, we are putting this country in a better and stronger position, where we will be able to save literally thousands of lives, of people of all ages, people who don’t deserve to die now*” (Johnson, 2020).

A kind of elliptical construction is *zeugma*, that is, a stylistic device in which one statement agrees with several logically heterogeneous members of the sentence, in which case the effect of unreasonable expectation can be created, and if the information has a direct and symbolic meaning, in other words, an interesting language game. For example, “*It is a great honor to address free people who hold in their hands not only the Ukrainian flag but also the fate of their country*” (Yushchenko, 2005). It combines the expression literally ‘hold the flag’ with the phrase ‘hold the fate’, which has a symbolic meaning.

In political discourse, there are often evaluative judgments that form the antithesis. According to Mesenyashina et al. (2016), estimates are characterized by a pronounced polarity based on binary oppositions, for example: “*We have become **further** from Moscow and **closer** to Europe*” (Poroshenko, 2019). This statement does not allow for the possibility of parallel cooperation. Plahotnaya (2012) argues, that the antithesis is usually used to contrast their ‘correct’ actions or qualities with ‘wrong’ actions or qualities of their opponent to influence the decisions of voters (p. 92), for example: “*It was a kind of first aid to the state, which suffered not because of its inability to compete successfully in the modern world, but solely because of the selfishness of the previous rulers*” (Yanukovych, 2010).

Rhetorical questions are designed to attract attention and impress, but their use is closely linked to the speaker's temperament. For example: “*A year ago in New York, we discussed threats to the international future, made plans and forecasts. But could anyone at least imagine that 2020 would stage such a crash test for the planet?*” (Zelenskyy, 2020).

There are 12 great and outstanding political speeches in American history, which are considered well-known. Among them are speeches by 11 American presidents and one of the most famous speeches of Martin Luther King (“I Have a Dream” speech). One of the 11 presidential speeches mentioned, the 12th belongs to Barack Obama. In the texts of the 44th President of the United States, there are many rhetorical figures which are mentioned below.

An example of the effective use of rhetorical questions is Barack Obama's speech at George Mason University on 21st Century Economy: “... *The first question each of us asks isn't, “What's good for me?” but “What's good for the country my children will inherit?”*” (Obama, 2009). This example harks back to President Kennedy's inaugural speech of January 20, 1961, when he said, “*And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country*” (Kennedy, 1961). It was instantly recognizable to Americans and enhanced its impact. The speech in general, was about the present and future of each person in particular and the country. These rhetorical questions effectively combine the needs of all people for a happy end, from the President and every grown-up to each child and all young generations, whose future depends on the actions of adults, namely those to whom the above-mentioned speech is addressed.

In the following examples, we can see that Barack Obama uses the rhetoric questions not only while he is talking in front of the students, the youth, but also at the international meetings and summits when he addresses the politicians of the most powerful countries in the world. For instance, “*And what the American people care about I suspect are the same thing that the British people care about, and that is, are you putting people back to work? Are businesses growing again? Is business – is credit flowing again? And, you know –and that's just true concerning this summit. But when it comes to our Afghanistan policy, the question is going to be, have we made ourselves safer; have we reduced the risks and incidents of terrorism?*” (Obama, 2009). Barack Obama uses the rhetorical questions to enhance the expressiveness of speech as one of the universal sociolinguistic methods of influencing the addressee. In this way, Obama says it is absurd to think that without radical change, the spread of terrorism or weapons will stop.

There is evident that the texts of Barak Obama's speeches contain an abundance of rhetorical appeals, as well as rhetorical exclamations, among them, is "Hello America!" in Pre-Inauguration Address at the Lincoln Memorial. All the expressions mentioned above have an expressive means, inherent in Obama's speeches (and all American Presidents' rhetoric).

Thus, a characteristic feature of the texts of political speeches of the leaders of the United States, Ukraine, and Great Britain is a wide range of lexical and syntactic means used by the speaker. In Barack Obama's rhetoric, the use of various rhetorical figures creates novelty and uniqueness of images, which works effectively in the mentioned language situations. Boris Johnson often uses repetitions, which serve to provide higher efficiency of speech impact. A significant number of rhetorical questions, repetitions, metaphors are found in the speeches of Viktor Yushchenko, Petro Poroshenko, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Presidents Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, and Viktor Yanukovich often use such rhetorical devices as gradation and antithesis.

The Rhetorical Figures in the Ritual Genres

First of all, it must be noted, that the development of a typology of genres of political discourse is one of the debatable issues in political linguistics. Secondly, as stated above, there are some types of ritual genres, that is, the inaugural speech, the anniversary speech, the traditional radio address, etc. In this paper, we consider the first two types. Inaugural speech constitutes the verbal component of an integral communicative event of a ritual nature, i.e., the inauguration of the President. In many countries of the world, the newly elected president comes into force as the head of state only after the inauguration ritual, which provides for the mandatory issuance of a ritual text, for example, the president's oath.

Because the inaugural speeches are considered to be perhaps the most famous texts in terms of all the US presidents, they are seen as a kind of action plan that the people's representatives proclaim to the country. For example, Barak Obama, in his inaugural speech, addressed the audience with the words '*My fellow Americans*' (Obama, 2013). This appeal immediately unites all listeners, representatives of the nation. Barak Obama thus encourages listeners to partner, which always contributes to a more effective solution to the outlined tasks. Later in the same speech, the President used another rhetorical device: '*You and I*', the address, which in our opinion, unites an even wider audience, in fact, all those who are in the country but do not have citizenship: "*You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time – not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals*" (Obama, 2013).

Anniversary speeches are a kind of the usual greeting genre, which we understand as a greeting on behalf of a political leader on a holiday or celebration. If we talk about the present President of Ukraine, the emotional Volodymyr Zelenskyy, for example, ultimately builds his New Year's speech on rhetorical questions (there are 62 of them) in combination with the anaphora 'Who am I?'. For example, "**Who am I?** A former photographer defending the country in the east? A former physicist who washes dishes in Italy? Or a former chemist who builds a skyscraper in Novosibirsk? **Who am I?** Anyone who has lived abroad for ten years and loves Ukraine on the Internet? The one who lost everything in the Crimea and started from scratch in Kharkiv? An IT guy who dreams of fleeing the country? Is he a prisoner who dreamed of returning home?" (

Zelenskyy, 2019). Fedoseev (2018) claims, that the speech figures act not just as a means of linguistic expression, but as a means of the structural and semantic organization of discourse. (p. 50).

In anniversary speeches, various rhetoric devices are often used. For example, in the address, we meet the technique which is called **hyperbaton**. This is the separation of related stories, the unusual order of words in a sentence to highlight its individual elements. For example, *“Today of all days, I want us to remember those Christians around the world who are facing persecution. For them, Christmas Day will be marked in private, in secret, perhaps even in a prison cell”* (Johnson, 2000). Anaphora, reflecting the emotional mood of a political leader, is actively used both in the inaugural speeches and in anniversary speeches. For example: *“Ukraine was known to the world. Ukraine has become popular. Ukraine has become desirable, even fashionable in the world”* (Yushchenko, 2006). Another example of anaphora is in Boris Johnson's speech: *“My job is to make your streets safer – and we are going to begin with another 20,000 police on the streets, and we start recruiting forthwith My job is to make sure you don't have to wait three weeks to see your GP, and we start work this week with 20 new hospital upgrades, and ensuring that money for the NHS really does get to the front line. My job is to protect you or your parents or grandparents from the fear of having to sell your home to pay for the costs of care ...”* (Johnson, 2019). Considering the examples of anaphora in the Greeting Easter speech, the fifth president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko quotes the lines from the Apostle Paul: *“One Lord! One faith! One baptism! And for us, it is another Motherland, because we are united by God and Ukraine”* (March, 2015). Anaphora, in this passage, helps to emphasize the emotional mood of the speaker, increases the persuasiveness of the statement about the practicality of unity. To structure the speech, a repetition of one syntactic construction is used at the beginning of the sentence. This contributes to the concentration of the addressee.

Very often, modern politicians somewhat metaphorize their speeches with the same aim of reinforcing what they say. Metaphor is the transfer of signs and characteristics of one phenomenon to another to reveal the essence of the latter and achieve a particular aesthetic effect, the imagery of language, for example: *“We believe that America's prosperity must rest upon the broad shoulders of a rising middle class. We know that America thrives when every person can find independence and pride in their work; when the wages of honest labor liberate families from the brink of hardship”* (Obama, 2013).

Metonymy is the replacement of one phenomenon by another, contiguous in essence. The third President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko was the only President to deliver the inaugural speech, not in the Verkhovna Rada (the building where the Ukrainian deputies meet for regular and ceremonial sessions), but on the Independence Square in Kyiv. That's why, the list of addressees has expanded significantly. In total, five appeals were submitted in one speech, ranging from the generalized official name ‘Ukrainian people’ to the specific metonymic request ‘Khreshchatyk’ and ‘Maidan’. Priority is given to the Ukrainian people as the most crucial addressee, after that, there is the appeal to guests, and in the last, there is the metonymic addresses. On the one hand, the choice of the metonymic form of the talk depersonalizes the addressees, that is, people who gathered during the inauguration on the Independence Square and Khreshchatyk

Street in Kyiv. On the other hand, the separation of such addressees highlights the role of the Orange revolution in 2004 and the participants of those political events.

A large number of inaugural speeches are built on the principle of gradation. The speaker starts from a neutral emotional level, which gradually increases and by the end of the address, it may acquire the character of an emotional appeal, for example: "...we close the opportunity gap, giving millions of young people the chance to own their own homes and giving business the confidence to invest across the UK because it is time we unleashed the productive power not just of London and the South East but of every corner of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the awesome foursome that are incarnated in that red white and blue flag who together are so much more than the sum of their parts" ..."(Johnson, 2019).

The use of **antithesis** (a rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect) is not very often in the speeches of Presidents. **Semantic oppositions** are usually used in anniversary speeches, for example: "*Dear nation, during my life, I was doing my best to make Ukrainians smile. I felt that it wasn't just my job; it was my mission. In the next five years, I will be doing everything, Ukrainians, for you not to cry*" (Zelensky, 2019).

Politicians also use various **comparisons, personifications**, for example: "*No one in the last few centuries has succeeded in betting against the pluck and nerve and ambition of this country. They will not succeed today. We in this government will work flat out to give this country the leadership it deserves, and that work begin now.*" (Johnson, 2019).

Depending on the purpose of the speech, the end should evoke certain feelings in the audience (anger, delight, hope, etc.), to confirm what the speaker said. For example: "*And whoever you are, wherever you are, and however you're celebrating, have a very happy Christmas, and I'll see you all again in the New Year.*" (Johnson, 2019).

All these rhetorical figures (and we have listed only the most effective and most commonly used ones), in principle, help enhance the impact of the politician's speech. Any of these techniques can be especially useful both in anniversary speeches and in inaugural addresses.

Conclusion

Thus, the analysis showed a wide usage of rhetorical devices (figures of speech) in the Presidents' speeches. We conclude that in the addresses of the Presidents of Ukraine, the President of the United States of America, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, rhetorical devices help to attract attention, diversify the presentation, help to highlight the main idea of the address. The most common are repetitions, anaphors, antitheses, ellipses, but rhetorical questions belong to the individual style of the speaker.

We see prospects for further comparative researching of the rhetorical devices in the political texts of orientation and agonal genres in Ukraine, the USA, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Such study reveals the way the politicians use the linguistics and stylistic constructions in the addresses.

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