

RHETORIC IN TIMES OF CONFLICT: A STUDY OF FAMOUS WAR-TIME SPEECHES

Alina-Elena ONET

“Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania

alinaonet@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This article focuses on the profound impact of rhetoric in times of armed conflict, with a special focus on some of the most famous war-time speeches throughout history. By means of a comprehensive analysis, the present study aims to shed light on the rhetorical strategies employed by leaders in order to inspire, unite, and mobilize people in times of war. By dissecting the language, structure, and delivery of these speeches, we analyzed the powerful role of rhetoric in shaping historical narratives and fostering collective action. Through the lens of communication theory and historical context, the paper explores the enduring influence of these speeches on public discourse and their significance in the annals of human conflict. War-time speeches have long served as powerful tools of persuasion, shaping the course of history. From the compelling rhetoric of Winston Churchill during World War II to the impassioned calls to arms by leaders throughout the ages, these speeches have forged bonds of solidarity and fortitude in the face of adversity. Therefore, this article embarks on a journey through time to analyze the rhetorical competence of leaders in times of crisis, dissecting the linguistic devices and strategic appeals that have defined some of the most iconic war-time speeches in history.*

Keywords: rhetoric, wartime speeches, linguistic devices, imagery, language

1. Introduction. The Power of Persuasion: Analyzing Linguistic Devices

In the domain of communication, the art of persuasion holds significant sway over people's interactions. By focusing on the intricate world of linguistic devices, one can uncover the tools that hold immense power in shaping opinions and influencing decisions. From the subtle nuances of tone and emphasis to the strategic placement of rhetorical questions and lively imagery, these devices serve as the foundation of compelling arguments. Metaphors convey life to abstract concepts, while repetition inscribe ideas deep within the human soul. Furthermore, the use of language may create

a sense of unity and belonging among audiences. Through a meticulous analysis of these linguistic devices, one can uncover the secrets behind the mesmerizing allure of persuasive communication. Moreover, persuasion is an important tool that individuals and speakers use to influence others and shape their thought processes, opinions, and actions. By carefully designing their language and using certain linguistic devices, speakers can effectively transmit their messages and move the audience towards almost any desired outcome. These linguistic devices may include persuasive techniques such as rhetorical questions, emotional appeals,

logical reasoning, anecdotes, and lively imagery. Apart from these, the use of pronouns, modalities, hyperbole, repetition, and metaphor can also be employed to enhance the persuasive impact of language [1]. By making use of a variety of rhetorical devices and schemes, politicians are able to increase the persuasive force and ideological function of their metaphors.

This strategic use of language helps politicians accomplish the discourse goals of their political speeches and contribute to how politics is performed and conceptualized [2].

2. Metaphor and Imagery: Painting Visions of Sacrifice and Triumph

In the overall pattern of language, metaphors and imagery act as the threads that create narratives of sacrifice and triumph. Like skilled artists, writers use these tools to create complex landscapes of emotion and experience. Metaphors, with their capacity to establish parallels between the known and the unknown, morph abstract notions into tangible realities. They breathe life into the ideological essence of sacrifice, painting it in shades of courage and resilience. Imagery, on the other hand, creates scenes of triumph, capturing moments of victory in complex detail. Together, these devices create a canvas where sacrifices become acts of valor and triumphs stand as monuments to the human spirit's unbreakable will.

According to Mitchell Green, metaphors and imagery are intimately linked: "Metaphorical utterances are constructed as falling into two broad categories, in one of which are cases amenable to analysis in terms of semantic content, speaker meaning, and satisfaction conditions, and where image construction is permissible but not mandatory" [3].

Metaphors and imagery are powerful instruments for creating lively visions of sacrifice and triumph. In literature and art,

they can express complex emotions and experiences that are difficult to put into words. Sacrifice can be shown as a flame that burns brightly, consuming everything in its path. It can be seen as a heavy weight that must be carried on one's shoulders, or as a wound that never entirely heals. Triumph, on the other hand, is often depicted as a rising sun, illuminating the darkness and bringing new hope. It can also be viewed as a soaring eagle, breaking through the chains of adversity and rising to new heights. Metaphors and imagery can transport us into a universe of sacrifice and triumph, helping us to feel and understand the stories that inspire us.

Metaphors and imagery are used for example in President John F. Kennedy's "I am a Berliner" speech, delivered during The Cold War. The Cold War was a global conflict that shaped international relations in the second half of the 20th century. One of the most iconic speeches of the Cold War was delivered by US President John F. Kennedy in Berlin on June 26, 1963. In a show of solidarity with the people of Berlin, who were living in the shadow of the Iron Curtain, Kennedy declared: "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner"). The speech affirmed America's commitment to freedom and democracy, and stood as a powerful rebuke to the repressive regimes of the Soviet Bloc. Kennedy's speech inspired a sense of hope and determination among the people of Berlin, and its message resonated around the world. The "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech is a testament to the power of leadership and rhetoric to shape the course of history, and a reminder of the importance of standing up for our values in the face of oppression and adversity [4].

In the midst of the Cold War, on June 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy delivered his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in West Berlin. By declaring "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner"), Kennedy

expressed solidarity with the people of Berlin and reaffirmed the United States' commitment to defending freedom and democracy in the face of communist oppression. The speech served as a powerful symbol of Western unity and resolve during a tense period of the Cold War. Kennedy's words resonated not only with the people of Berlin but also with audiences around the world, reinforcing the message that the United States stood firmly with its allies in the struggle against tyranny and oppression.

3. Repetition and Parallelism: Fostering Unity and Resilience

Within the domain of rhetoric, repetition and parallelism stand as landmarks that fortify the foundations of unity and resilience. "Repetition and parallelism are stylistic devices used in many languages and cultures around the world in poetry, epics, songs, written prose, and speech. Repetition is the reuse of words, phrases, ideas or themes in your speech. Parallelism—a related device—is the proximity of two or more phrases with identical or similar constructions, especially those expressing the same sentiment, but with slight modifications" [5].

Through the rhythmic cadence of repeated words and phrases, speakers insert key concepts deep within the collective consciousness of their listeners. This relentless reiteration not only reinforces the main message but also creates a sense of unity among audiences, bringing them together in a common understanding. Parallelism, with its symmetrical structure and balanced phrases, conveys a sense of harmony and balance to spoken words. By mirroring ideas in parallel form, speakers evoke a sense of order and coherence, encouraging resilience in the face of adversity. Together, repetition and parallelism give birth to a symphony of language that creates unity and cultivates

resilience in the hearts and minds of all listeners.

Repetition and parallelism are powerful rhetorical devices that can create unity and resilience. By repeating certain words or phrases, writers can create a sense of rhythm and consistency that bring the text together. This unity can be quite important in times of crisis, when people need reassurance and stability. Parallelism, on the other hand, can create a sense of balance and symmetry that helps underscore key ideas. By structuring sentences or paragraphs in a parallel manner, writers can highlight important concepts and create a clear and thought-provoking message. Together, repetition and parallelism can help create both unity and resilience, granting people the strength and coherence they need to face difficult challenges and overcome adversity.

Repetition and parallelism were used in crafting Abraham Lincoln's speech known as "The Gettysburg Address" during the American Civil War. The American Civil War was a landmark moment in US history, marked by tragic loss of life and a fundamental struggle over the future of the country. One of the most famous speeches of the Civil War was Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address", delivered in November 1863 during a ceremony to dedicate a cemetery for Union soldiers who died in the Battle of Gettysburg. The speech lasted only two minutes, but it captured the essence of the struggle and celebrated the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for the cause of freedom. The "Gettysburg Address" is a powerful testament to the noble ideals of the American experiment, and a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who sought to build a more perfect union. Over 150 years later, the speech stands as an iconic moment in American history, and as a symbol of the ideological values that define the United States.

Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address", delivered on November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, is thus one of the most iconic speeches in American history. In just a few concise and powerful sentences, Lincoln eloquently expressed the principles of equality, liberty, and democracy that the United States was founded upon. He honored the sacrifices of those who fought in the Civil War and emphasized the importance of preserving the Union and ensuring that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." The "Gettysburg Address" is not only a tribute to the fallen soldiers, but also a timeless call for national unity, healing, and the pursuit of a more perfect union [6].

4. Emotional Appeals: Evoking Empathy and Determination

Emotional appeals in rhetoric serve as powerful tools for creating feelings of empathy and determination in the hearts of the audience. By crafting narratives rich in emotion, speakers can create profound connections with their listeners, appealing to shared human experiences to create feelings of empathy and compassion. These emotional bonds not only captivate the listeners but also inspire a feeling of determination, driving individuals to take action in the face of challenges. By means of powerful storytelling and emotional pleas, skilled speakers can kindle the flames of empathy and determination, igniting a powerful spark that propels audiences towards meaningful change and action.

Richard Katula argues that: "Since the mid-twentieth century, the study of emotion has burst onto the intellectual landscape. It is almost as though, having been banished since The Enlightenment as a faulty mode of thinking, emotion has regained prominence in human intellectual activity simply

because such activity may no longer be explained without it" [7].

Consequently, emotional appeals are a powerful tool for evoking empathy and determination in listeners. By appealing to their emotions, writers can create a meaningful connection that motivates individuals and communities to take action. Empathy can be evoked by telling personal stories that highlight the struggles and challenges faced by people in challenging situations. These stories can be quite effective in bringing people together and giving birth to a sense of community. Determination, on the other hand, can be created by appeals to our sense of justice and fairness. By evincing the injustices and inequities that exist in the world, speakers can inspire audiences to work towards a better future. Emotional appeals can be thus employed to great effect in manifold contexts, from inspiring social change to encouraging personal growth and transformation. When used effectively, they can move listeners to take action and make a positive difference in the world.

Emotional appeal was one of the primary stylistic devices employed by Winston Churchill in his war-time speeches. At the beginning of June 1940, Great Britain had its back to the wall. The German war machine had overrun Denmark and Norway and crushed the Allied armies in the west. France was on the verge of collapse. Although the British managed to bring back to the island the majority of their troops who had been encircled by the Wehrmacht in northern France –an event called the "Miracle of Dunkirk" - they had to leave almost all of their equipment behind on the continent. Now the battered Empire could only counter the impending German invasion with the Royal Navy - still the most powerful fleet in the world - and the Royal Air Force. In the British War Cabinet, which Winston Churchill had headed as Prime

Minister for only three weeks, the appeasement politicians around Lord Halifax and Neville Chamberlain were once again pushing for negotiations with Nazi Germany. Morale among the population had fallen to a low point; many expected that Great Britain would no longer fight.

In this threatening situation, war-time Prime Minister Churchill addressed Parliament on June 4th. His speech, which was read out on the radio shortly afterwards and was aimed at the British population and the world public, was intended to fire up the British will to resist and make it unmistakably clear to the world that there would be neither a British surrender nor negotiations with Hitler's Germany. "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" is one of the masterpieces in the history of rhetoric and is one of Churchill's most famous speeches.

Churchill, masterfully using alliteration and suggestive repetitions, went on a rhetorical flight and urgently invoked the unconditional will to resist: "We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender" [8].

5. Structure and Delivery: Crafting Messages for Maximum Impact

The art of rhetoric hinges not only on the content of a message but also on its structure and mode of delivery. A well-structured message, organized with clarity and coherence, has the power to resonate deeply with its listeners and make a lasting and powerful impact. By structuring ideas in a logical order and using effective transitions, speakers can guide listeners through a seamless journey of understanding.

Moreover, the delivery of a message – including tone, pace, and emphasis – plays an important role in capturing and keeping the audience's attention. Through thoughtful structuring and impactful delivery, speakers can make sure that their messages are not only heard but also remembered long after they are delivered, making a meaningful impact on those who listen [9].

Thus, when creating oral messages, it is important to consider both structure and delivery to have the maximum impact. The structure of a message should be clear and concise, with a logical flow that makes it easy for the audience to follow. Delivery is also highly important, as the tone and style of the message can affect how it is received. It is of paramount importance to consider the audience and tailor the message to their specific needs and interests. Furthermore, making use of compelling language and visual aids can help to capture and maintain the audience's attention. By considering both structure and delivery when crafting messages, speakers can ensure that the message has the maximum impact and effectively conveys the intended message.

Many well-crafted speeches were delivered during World War II. This was a pivotal moment in history, marked by numerous acts of bravery and heroism. One of the most well-known figures of World War II was Winston Churchill, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945. Churchill became famous for his speeches, particularly his June 1940 speech in which he declared that it was Britain's "finest hour". The speech rallied the British people during a difficult moment in the war, inspiring them to stand firm in the face of Nazi aggression. Churchill's leadership and rhetoric were instrumental in the Allied victory, and his speeches remain powerful symbols of courage and determination in the face of adversity. Churchill's "Finest hour" speech is a

testament to the power of rhetoric and leadership during times of crisis, and serves as a reminder of the courage and sacrifice of those who fought in World War II.

Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, delivered his famous speech known as the “Finest Hour” address on June 18, 1940. In this iconic speech, Churchill rallied the British people during a critical moment in the war, emphasizing the need for resolve, courage, and determination in the face of adversity. He inspired the nation to stand firm against the Nazi threat and assured them that victory was not only possible but inevitable. Churchill’s eloquent words and unwavering leadership played a significant role in boosting morale and galvanizing support for the war effort, ultimately contributing to the Allied victory. The “Finest Hour” speech remains a powerful symbol of resilience, unity, and the indomitable spirit of the British people in the darkest days of the war [10].

6. Conclusions

Rhetoric was defined in ancient times as the art of persuasive argumentation. Its subject matter was texts that were oral and which found their use in public language. These were political utterances, court texts and occasional speeches that are considered a form of expression of ancient Greek democracy. Both rhetoric and linguistics view language as a means of communication and the focus of interpretative efforts in both cases is the deliberate use of rhetoric as its own tool of human interaction. Then as now, rhetoric is based on the knowledge that effective persuasion, influencing opinions or even manipulation is achieved not only with factually correct arguments, but also, to a large extent, through appropriate and appealing representation. War-time speeches are prime examples of this function of rhetoric, serving to sway public opinion and masterfully manipulate the emotions of their listeners, thereby ensuring resilience and success in times of armed conflict.

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