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Rhetoric and Rhetorical Devices, History and Usage

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Abstract:

Rhetoric - as a persuasive medium for convincing crowds in public speeches, especially political - is deeply rooted in the human heritage.

It is the art of speaking publically and winning the attraction of audience by touching their minds and sentiments, leading to changes in the directions of the public opinion and political trends.

Achieving this target is carried out by using different figurative expressions and techniques to in-fix the concepts and ideas of the speaker.

مستخلص:

إن فن الخطابة والإقناع ضارب الجذور في الإرث الإنساني، وباستخدامه ضروب البلاغة المختلفة لتقريب المعاني وربطها بالصور التي ترسخها في ذهن و وجدان المتلقي واتجاهات تفكيره، ما يجعل من هذا الفن وخصوصاً في الخطابة السياسية أداة قوية في التأثير على الرأي العام واتجاهاته.

Introduction:

Rhetoric is the persuasive speech of someone to attract people to follow, support and agree with his opinions. It's a technique used for persuading and influencing others; therefore, rhetoric and persuasion are correlative since any definitions of rhetoric inevitably include the idea of persuasion. The

main difference between them is that rhetoric refers to the act of communication from the audience's perspective, whereas persuasion refers to both the intentions of speaker and successful results (Charterls Black, 2005: 8-9). Therefore, audiences will only be persuaded with the speaker's successful rhetoric.

Rhetoric emerged as a method for argumentation in ancient Greece in the 5th century B.C., in which a huge progress from oral to literate culture was experienced by Greece. Undoubtedly, this progress contributed to the emergence of rhetoric (Ilie, 2006). During that era, three distinguished methods of classic rhetoric emerged, specifically: (a) the Sophistical; (b) the Aristotelian; and (c) the Platonic. The Sophists were teachers that got the chance to educate people how to effectively participate in a new democratic system. Their instruction included knowledge about argument, reason and critical thinking. The Sophists are thought to be the pioneers in utilizing rhetoric in their discourse, they used it as a strategy to change a weaker argument into the stronger one through utilizing creativity and experimenting with the language. This method was frequently elucidated as a deceptive act of reasoning instead of ethical argumentation (Crick, 2014, p.4). obviously, Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, was the first one to depict this notion in his book *Rhetoric*. He considered rhetoric to be an art instead of a study (Ilie, 2006). Besides, he claimed that rhetoric's goal is to persuade: "rhetoric is the capability of discovering in any given case the available means of persuasion" *(*Aristotle, 2006, p.18). Plato considered rhetoric (as cited in Ilie, 2006) as "the art of winning the soul by discourse". Nonetheless, he also believed that rhetoric was misleading since the message is created in a way to fit the reader's brains. Aristotle was the one who brought back the rhetoric's position. He contended that persuasion was a vital part of speech in civic lives, which allowed people to take part in discussions about their civil rights. Subsequently, rhetoric contributed to the creation of the democratic system. Moreover, as indicated by Aristotle, rhetoric was thought to be something that could be developed. Rhetorical skills could be acquired in debating contests which stimulate authentic circumstance (Charteris- Black, 2014, pp. 1-5).

Rhetoric is considered as a systematic study of the means of persuasion, and it incorporates both speaking and writing. Applying rhetoric in speeches or writings is called oratory. Transmission of information i.e. communication refers to spoken and written language (Charteris-Black, 2014, pp. 1-5). Another definition of rhetoric is "the art of addressing public concerns through employing deliberate persuasive methods before an audience at a particular event so as to change some part of a problematic condition by encouraging new forms of idea and action" (Crick, 2014, p.2). In general, rhetoric engages a speaker in a political struggle who needs to change the way an audience feels, thinks and behaves through by utilizing language as his symbolic power.

Classic Rhetoric:

The eloquence that Nestor, Odysseus, and Achilles display in the *Iliad* by the Greek poet Homer led many Greeks to look upon Homer as the father of oratory. The establishment of democratic institutions in Athens in 510 BC imposed on all citizens the necessity of public service, making skill in oratory essential. Hence a group of teachers arose known as Sophists, who endeavored to make men better speakers by rules of art. Protagoras, the first of the Sophists, made a study of language and taught his pupils how to make the weaker cause in a speech or discussions appear the stronger argument. The actual founder of rhetoric as a science is said to be Corax of Syracuse, who in the 5th century BC defined rhetoric as the "artificer of persuasion" and composed the first handbook on the art of rhetoric. Other masters of rhetoric during this period included Corax's pupil Tisias, also of Syracuse; Gorgias of Leontini, who went to Athens in 427 BC; and Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, who also taught at Athens. Antiphon, the first of the so-called Ten Attic Orators, was also the first to combine the theory and practice of rhetoric. With Isocrates, the great teacher of oratory in the 4th century BC, the art of rhetoric was broadened to become a cultural study, a philosophy with a practical purpose.

The Greek philosopher Plato satirized the more technical approach to rhetoric, with its emphasis on persuasion rather than truth, in his work *Gorgias,* and in the *Phaedrus* he discussed the principles constituting the essence of the rhetorical art. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his work *Rhetoric,* defined the function of rhetoric as being, not that of persuasion, but rather that of "discovering all the available means of persuasion," thereby emphasizing the winning of an argument by persuasive marshaling of truth, rather than the swaying of an audience by an appeal to their emotions. He regarded rhetoric as the counterpart, or sister art, of logic. The instructors in formal rhetoric in Rome were at first Greek, and the great masters of theoretical and practical rhetoric, Cicero and Quintilian, were both influenced by Greek models. Cicero wrote several treatises on the theory and practice of rhetoric, the most important being *On the Orator* (55 BC); Quintilian's famous *Institutio Oratoria* (AD95?; *The Training of an Orator,*1921-1922) still retains its value as a thorough treatment of the principles of rhetoric and the nature of ideal eloquence. School exercises, called declamations, of the early empire are found in the existing *suasoriae* and *controversiae* of the rhetorician Seneca, the former term referring to exercises in deliberative rhetoric, the latter term referring to exercises dealing with legal issues and presenting forensic rhetoric. During the first four centuries of the Roman Empire, rhetoric continued to be taught by teachers who were called Sophists, the term by this time used as an academic title.

Modern Rhetoric

In the early 18th century, rhetoric declined in importance, although more on its theoretical than on its practical side, since the political arena and the debating platform continued to furnish numerous opportunities for effective oratory. For the next half-century, the art of rhetoric had increasingly fewer exponents. The *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783) by the Scottish clergyman Hugh Blair achieved considerable popularity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as did the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) by the Scottish

theologian George Campbell and the *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828) by the British logician Richard Whately. In the first half of the 20th century, a revival of the study of formal rhetoric, encouraged largely by the exponents of the linguistic science known as semantics, occurred throughout the English-speaking countries of the world. The modern educators and philosophers who made notable contributions to this study included the British literary critic I. A. Richards and the American literary critics Kenneth Duva Burke and John Crowe Ransom.

A rhetorical device uses words in a certain way to convey meaning or to persuade. It can also be a technique used to evoke emotions within the reader or audience. Skilled writers use many different types of rhetorical devices in their work to achieve specific effects. Some types of rhetorical devices can also be considered figurative language because they depend on a non-literal usage of certain words or phrases. Here are some common, and some not-so-common, examples of rhetorical devices that can be used to great effect in your writing:

Alliteration refers to the recurrence of initial consonant sounds. The phrase "rubber baby buggy bumpers" is one example you might remember from your childhood. Alliteration is often associated with tongue twisters for kids, but brand names commonly use this technique too, such as American Apparel, Best Buy, and Krispy Kreme. **Allusion** is a reference to an event, place, or person. For example, you might say, "I can't get changed that quickly, I'm not Superman!" Referring to something well known allows the writer to make a point without elaborating in great detail. **Amplification** repeats a word or expression for emphasis, often using additional adjectives to clarify the meaning. "Love, real love, takes time" is an example of amplification because the author is using the phrase "real love" to distinguish his feelings from love that is mere infatuation.

An **analogy** explains one thing in terms of another to highlight the ways in which they are alike. "He's as flaky as a snowstorm" would be one example of an analogy. Analogies that are very well known sometimes fall

into the categories of idioms or figures of speech. **Anaphora** repeats a word or phrase in successive phrases. "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?" is an example from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. The use of anaphora creates parallelism and rhythm, which is why this technique is often associated with music and poetry. However, any form of written work can benefit from this rhetorical device. **Antanagoge** places a criticism and a compliment together to lessen the impact. "The car is not pretty, but it runs great" would be one example, because you're referring to the vehicle's good performance as a reason to excuse its unattractive appearance.

Antimetabole repeats words or phrases in reverse order. The famous John F. Kennedy quote, "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country" is a well-known example. **Antiphrasis** uses a word with an opposite meaning for ironic or humorous effect. "We named our chihuahua Goliath" is an example because a chihuahua is a very small dog and Goliath is a giant warrior from the famous Bible story.

Antithesis makes a connection between two things. Neil Armstrong said, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." This pairs the idea of one man's individual action with the greater implication for humanity as a whole.

An **appositive** places a noun or noun phrase next to another noun for descriptive purposes. An example would be, "Mary, queen of this land, hosted the ball." In this phrase, "queen of this land" is the appositive noun that describes Mary's role.

Enumeratio makes a point with details. For example, saying "The hotel renovation, including a new spa, tennis court, pool, and lounge, is finally complete" uses specific details to describe how large the renovation was.

Epanalepsis repeats something from the beginning of a clause or sentence at the end. Consider the Walmart slogan, "Always Low Prices. Always." The repeated words act as bookends, driving the point home.

An **epithet** is a descriptive word or phrase expressing a quality of the person or thing, such as calling King Richard I "Richard the Lionheart." Contemporary usage often denotes an abusive or derogatory term describing race, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics of a minority group.

Epizeuxis repeats one word for emphasis. A child who says, "The amusement park was fun, fun, fun" is using epizeuxis to convey what a wonderful time he had at the park.

Hyperbole refers to an exaggeration. Saying "I have done this a thousand times" to indicate that you're very familiar with a task is an example of hyperbole because it is unlikely you've really performed the task a thousand times.

Litotes make an understatement by using a negative to emphasize a positive. In this rhetorical device, a double negative is often used for effect. So saying someone is "not a bad singer" actually means you enjoyed hearing him sing.

Metanoia corrects or qualifies a statement. "You are the most beautiful woman in this town, nay the entire world" is an example of metanoia because the speaker is further clarifying the extent of the woman's beauty.

A **metaphor** is a type of implied comparison that compares two things by stating one is the other. "Your eyes are the windows of your soul" means you "see" someone's emotional state by looking into their expressive eyes- eyes are not literally windows.

Metonymy is a type of metaphor where something being compared is referred to by something closely associated with it. For example, writers often refer to the "power of the pen" to convey the idea that the written word can inspire, educate, and inform. A pen has no power as an inanimate object, but the writer's words can reach a broad audience.

Onomatopoeia refers to words that imitate the sound they describe, such as "plunk," "whiz," or "pop." This type of figurative language is often used in poetry because it conveys specific images to the reader based on universal experiences. We are all familiar with the "squeal" of tires as a vehicle stops abruptly or the "jingle" of car keys in your pocket.

An **oxymoron** creates a two-word paradox-such as "near miss" or "seriously funny." An oxymoron is sometimes called a contradiction in terms and is most often used for dramatic effect.

Parallelism uses words or phrases with a similar structure. "Like father, like son" is an example of a popular phrase demonstrating parallelism. This technique creates symmetry and balance in your writing.

A **Simile** directly compares one object to another. "He smokes like a chimney" is one example. Similes are often confused with metaphors, but the main difference is that a simile uses "like" or "as" to make a comparison and a metaphor simply states the comparison.

An **understatement** makes an idea less important than it really is. "The hurricane disrupted traffic a little" would be an understatement because hurricanes cause millions of dollars in damage and can lead to injuries or fatalities.

As with all fields of serious and complicated human endeavor (that can be considered variously as an art, a science, a profession, or a hobby), there is a technical vocabulary associated with writing. *Rhetoric* is the name for the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion, and though a writer doesn't need to know the specific labels for certain writing techniques in order to use them effectively, it is sometimes helpful to have a handy taxonomy for the ways in which words and ideas are arranged. This can help to discuss and isolate ideas that might otherwise become abstract and confusing. As with the word *rhetoric* itself, many of these *rhetorical devices* come from Greek. Now we see how these different examples of rhetorical devices work, you can use rhetorical devices in your

own writing or speeches to create more **interesting** or **persuasive** content that sticks in the mind.

Effective Use of the Devices

In order for all the rhetorical devices to work well, one has to know one's audience. Before doing anything, you need to know who you're speaking to. Different audiences will require different vocabulary and different methods of speaking. A group of scholars is likely going to be looking for different words than a group of businessmen.

As an example, let's say the person you're speaking to is a friend. Here, you'd be free to use more familiar language than if you were speaking to strangers. Next would be to think about what this particular friend is like. If he's a pretty sensitive guy, appealing to his emotions might work better; if he's skeptical, using logic and credibility is more likely to bring him to your side.

Figuring out what makes your audience tick is relatively simple when focusing on just one person, especially if that person is someone you know well. You'll have to think a little more broadly and make a few more generalities when talking to larger groups.

One way to do this is to create an audience persona. Simply speaking, this is a sketch of the speculated core members of your audience, used to help understand how people think. For example, to create a profile of your typical audience member, you can ask yourself any of the following questions:

- What is their socioeconomic level, education level, nationality and age?
- What is their status or role within their organization?
- What problem do they have that you can address?
- What is on their mind at the moment?
- What is their likely attention span?

- What level of interest do they have in the subject?
- What is their preferred learning style?

Good Knowledge of the Topic

Unsurprisingly, different topics will naturally lend themselves to different types of arguments. If you're giving a presentation on statistics, you're likely to focus more on logical aspects than you would if you were giving a presentation on abstract art. This doesn't mean to ignore other types of argument, just to know what your subject may be more inclined towards. What's more important is to be as informed as possible on your chosen topic. While this may seem like common sense, it's important to know your subject in enough depth so that you can be prepared for counterarguments. This usually involves learning about views that may oppose yours.

Say, for example, you're discussing the rather hot-button topic of abortion. You'd want to look at the arguments for the other side—why people either are for or against the subject—as well as arguments for your own belief before creating your argument, or else you risk being stymied by powerful arguments from opposition. Try to consider what your audience may ask. This functions much like creating an audience persona, as it allows you to prepare for answers ahead of time. Create a few questions that seem most likely to be asked--or get a friend to help by having them ask questions--and write down some potential answers to practice.

Effective word-choice

Word choice is stressed by professors and writers alike as incredibly important, and with due reason. Different words carry with them different weight, and so may affect audiences in different ways. While this relates very strongly to the previous two points, it is also important to consider the topic alone.

In rhetoric, there are considered to be two main types of language: connotative language and denotative language. Connotative language is

generally more symbolic and encompasses the emotional meanings behind words. An example would be to call someone who expresses extreme empathy a "bleeding heart." The phrase carries somewhat derogatory connotations, as it implies that the individual is easily moved to any cause that stirs their sympathy.

Denotative language focuses more on logic and appeals to an audience's knowledge rather than their emotions. Examples of denotative language include such statements as "the facts state" and "as you know." Denotative language usually revolves more around the textbook definition of a word, rather than what an audience might associate with it.

There are many words that have different connotative and denotative meanings. The word "shrewd" by a dictionary definition means "clever," but carries with it a negative connotation. Likewise, the word "gay" originally meant "happy," but modern audiences would latch onto the connotative meaning of "homosexuality."

Connotative language likely differs between audiences, so this acts as another aspect of "knowing your audience." For example, one audience may associate "liberal" with something negative, while another may associate the word with something positive. Keeping certain trigger words—or the connotative words that will produce an extreme reaction—in mind will help you understand what words to avoid or use for different audiences.

Even words like pronouns can have a profound effect. For example, using "I" less often expresses confidence, as the speaker seems to feel less need to refer to him- or herself to prove a point. Conversely, using "I" more often makes an individual seem more open, since the speaker is perceived as expressing deeply-held personal opinions.

Once you have these three elements in mind, it's time to decide how to make your argument. There are three different rhetorical appeals—or methods of argument—that you can take to persuade an audience: logos, ethos, and pathos.

Modes of Persuasion

- **Logos:**

Logos is most simply known as an argument from logic. In essence, you're taking a subject and giving the reasons why a certain position is positive or negative from the point of view of the facts.

Arguments from logic aren't necessarily restricted to the subjects you'd expect, such as math or science, but can appear just as easily in such subjects as morality or public relations. Environmental concerns use this method quite frequently when they compare energy-efficient methods like solar power with fossil fuels.

Take an example from the movie *Captain America: Civil War*. While many methods are applied throughout to debate whether or not to sign the Sokovia Accords, logos is used when the heroes are reminded that, whatever their intent, collateral damage *was* caused and, therefore, some measure of control should likely be exercised over the group. The character Vision uses it specifically when relating the increase of gifted individuals to increased damage (see video above).

Let's take a scenario and examine how you might argue it from a logical perspective. You are discussing a book series with your friend and wish to convince him that the stories have merit. To argue from logos, you might start by giving him statistics on how many books have sold and then point out the lingering popularity in pop culture. If a story has managed to stick around so long in the public mind, there has to be something in it that people find interesting, and that might be enough of a reason to take a look

- **Ethos:**

Ethos is, like the name suggests, an argument from ethics. Generally speaking, making an argument from ethos requires showing you have good

will for your audience, though it can also mean that you're using your own credibility to show why you have authority to speak on a topic.

Arguments from ethos pop up all the time with political campaigns. For example, in one of the Republican political debates in 2015, Senator Rubio states, "I'm not new to the political process; I was making a contribution as the speaker of the third largest and most diverse state in the country well before I even got into the Senate." Here, Rubio is using his previous experience to help support his bid for the presidential candidacy.

Arguing from ethos is likely something you're already familiar with through job applications. When writing cover letters, people often include their qualifications, trying to convince potential employers that they should receive a job through prior experience and their enthusiasm for the job. You've probably also been subject to this sort of argument, especially in the variety of movie commercials that state, "Critics are calling it the best movie of the year."

Let's take the same scenario mentioned under logos and argue it using ethos. You would probably start by reminding your friend of the times you've been right about similar topics, such as movie suggestions your friend later enjoyed. Maybe you'd add something like the rhetorical question, "Would I lie to you about this?"

Perhaps you've read a lot of books. Remember that ethos is also your authority to speak on a subject. Having read widely shows your knowledge of the book market in general, even if not all of the books have been enjoyable. Perhaps you are an *actual* authority on this subject—an author, an English professor, or something of the like. In an argument from ethos, this is the time to invoke that authority.

Another strategy would be to draw on the ethos of others to help support your claim. This is something often seen in research, such as a paper citing experts on a subject to help prove a point. To put this into the context of the

proposed scenario, you could show your friend reviews from professional critics.

- **Pathos:**

Pathos, the last form of argument, is argument from emotions. Here, rhetoricians appeal to the audience's emotions and try to elicit a response from them to win them over.

In the modern day, pathos tends to get the short end of the stick; basing arguments on emotions is usually believed to make the argument flimsy and less credible. However, emotions are powerful motivators and are incredibly useful in convincing others to see a subject from your point of view.

President Obama's speeches supply some examples of pathos. Take this example from his speech on Syria in 2013:

"The images from this massacre are sickening: Men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas."

The words have a heavy emotional impact. "Sickening" primes the listener to expect something horrible and repulsive, and then mentioning the people killed—especially children, who are usually seen as innocent—creates the automatic emotional reaction that this is wrong.

This is, of course, a rather brutal example, and not all appeals to pathos have to be so reliant on extracting negative reactions in the audience. A friendlier example would be appealing to an audience's sense of community.

You've likely seen pathos arguments used quite a bit in movies. The "You burn with us" scene from *Mockingjay: Part One* is an example of a scene based almost entirely on pathos.

Let's take the scenario examined under the previous two methods and examine it through pathos. A way to start might be to explain the emotions the stories evoked in you.

For example, you might call the works “action-packed” or “moving,” two popular pathos buzzwords. If you are truly enthusiastic about the series, this is the point where you would most likely want to allow that enthusiasm to overflow.

The best method for argument, generally speaking, isn’t just one of these but a combination of all three. It’s up to the individual to decide what combination to use.

These are just the basics; there are many more rhetorical topics, and even the ones mentioned can be explored in greater depth. However, mastering the basics will start you on the way to giving more persuasive presentations, and from there you can learn what methods work best for you.

Speech Acts Production

The foundation for the study of speech acts was laid by Austin (1962) and Searle (1971; 1975). A departure from Chomskyan linguistics, their work situated language within a social context, providing us with a greater awareness of the importance of sociolinguistic knowledge in the production of speech. By focusing on speech acts rather than on isolated sentences, Austin found that a class of verbs, called performative verbs, functions as the accomplishment of an action by their being spoken. That is, by uttering "I apologize," the act of apologizing is performed. Contributing to the development of speech act theory, Searle (1971) defined speech acts as the smallest units of rule-governed meaningful communication.

Researchers such as Manes (1983) and Wolfson (1983) have drawn from Austin and Searle's development of speech act theory and applied it to the analysis of a specific speech act - the compliment. The studies by Manes and Wolfson reveal that American English speakers compliment on appearance, new acquisitions, and effort. These serve the functions of maintaining solidarity and reinforcing social values.

Wolfson's 1983 study further demonstrates that the status relationship between the participants plays an important role in the topic of the offered compliment.

Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, and Huber (1983) investigated the sociocultural rules of invitations in middle-class white American society. Their study demonstrates that interpreting this speech act may be troublesome for non-native speakers since invitations are ambiguous much of the time.

Unambiguous invitations are produced when the speaker refers to a time and/or place/activity as well as requests a response from the addressee. The invitation, "Do you want to go to the movies tomorrow night?" contains all three components that make up an unambiguous invitation. However, Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, and Huber found that these unambiguous invitations occurred in only one-third of the data. Ambiguous invitations, on the other hand, which provide for negotiation between interlocutors, were found to be more representative of how native speakers of English arrange for social commitments. These invitations contain a "lead" that is a question or comment that opens up the possibility for an unambiguous invitation to follow. For example, "Are you busy tomorrow night?" is a lead that serves to establish the availability of the person before the issuance of an unambiguous invitation. Thus, although leads often precede invitations, they do not in themselves constitute an invitation. Consequently, the distinction between leads and full invitations may result in misinterpretations between native speakers and non-native speakers.

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) expanded the concept of the speech act in their analysis of apologies. They found that semantic formulas, whether in combination or alone, can be used to perform an act of apology. For example, a speaker may express an apology, "I'm sorry"; acknowledge responsibility for a perceived wrong, "It's my fault"; offer a repair for the wrong, "I'll pay for it"; promise forbearance, "It won't happen again"; or explain the situation, "There was a traffic jam." Because each of these formulas is in itself a speech act, they make up the speech act set of apology. In another study, Olshtain (1983) used this apology speech act set as a

framework for her intercultural research. She discovered that some cultures preferred one or another formula, or combination or formulas, to express an apology. American English speakers, for example, tend to express an apology and follow it with an explanation of the situation whereas Hebre'Y speakers tend to give an explanation only. Furthermore, Olshtain noted that these language-specific preferences may cause a second language learner to sound inappropriate in the target language. By providing just an explanation and no apology, Hebrew speakers who transfer this formula will undoubtedly sound rude in English.

While Cohen and Olshtain referred to the speech act *set,* Ferrara (1985), drawing on van Dijk (1977) explained the need to talk about macro speech acts. Although these studies concentrated on a single speech act, Ferrara (1985) has argued that speech act theory must be extended to capture' the core action of discourse. He claims that there is a distinction between understanding the text semantically (what the talk means) and understanding the text pragmatically (what the talk does). According to Ferrara, capturing "what the talk does" involves identifying the set of macro speech acts that "underlies the entire text and insures its pragmatic coherence" (1985: 149).

Although the macro speech act is composed of myriad single speech acts, it can only be determined by reference to the dominant speech acts in the text. Ferrara (1985) thus argues for a broader unit of analysis, the macro speech act, as a way of more effectively investigating the relationship between language and action. Second language investigators have more commonly referred to the "speech act set," a term that appears synonymous with Ferrara's macro speech act and van Dijk's 1977 use of "macrostructure."

Speech Acts Acceptability Judgment

To ascertain whether the language-specific preferences noted by Olshtain result in socially inappropriate utterances, native speaker judgments are needed. To concentrate only on the productive aspect leaves the researcher with a partial picture of the consequences of speech act performance. In fact, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) highlight the importance of sociolinguistic acceptability judgments in their discussion of methodological issues

concerning the study of speech acts. They argue that native speakers' judgments of non-native speakers' performance are needed to determine whether or not communication has been successful. In a later article, Cohen and Olshtain (1985) again focus on the use of acceptability judgments as one way of capturing and examining speech act behavior more effectively. The study reported in this chapter has used acceptability judgments as a critical component necessary to expand our understanding of how and when non-native speakers fail to communicate effectively. Cohen and Olshtain discuss ways in which non-native speakers' performances of the apology speech act set may be deviant.

They say that this deviance may be due to "a lack of compatibility between [the] speaker's intent and [the] hearer's standards of acceptability" (1985: 178). The conclusion is that we must investigate performance both from the speaker's perspective and from the listener's as well.

Although few in number, some studies have concentrated on how nonnative speakers' production is perceived by native speakers. Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985), for example, conducted a study in which 172 native speakers of English, 160 native speakers of Hebrew, and 124 non-native speakers of Hebrew judged the appropriateness of request and apology strategies in Hebrew. They found that as the length of stay in the target speech community increased, non-native speakers' acceptability judg ments became increasingly similar to native speakers' judgments. Carrell and Konneker (1980) compared politeness judgments of American English native speakers and non-native speakers of English from different language backgrounds. The subjects judged and ranked eight different request strategies in English in three specially contextualized situations in terms of levels of politeness. Their study revealed that although there was a high correlation in their politeness judgments of native speakers and non-native speakers, the non-native speakers of English perceived a greater number of levels of politeness than did the native speakers. The researchers concluded that the English as a second language learners' greater number of politeness distinctions may be a result of their oversensitivity to syntactic-semantic features.

Persuasion

Persuasion has intrigued researchers since antiquity; yet, it is a topic which continues to have immense relevance in all human interaction. To quote Robin Tolmach Lakoff (2000: 7), the question is: "Why do we late-twentieth-century sophisticates, after a century's barrage of advertising, still find ourselves bedazzled by the language of persuasion, economic and political?" The present volume is dedicated to investigations of the interactive process of persuasion at the dawn of the new millenium. Choosing to focus on the linguistic manifestations of this process, we highlight its several different dimensions, which interact with one another in intriguing ways. Further, we investigate aggregates of the linguistic exponents of persuasion across a number of different genres. These have been selected to represent the use of language which people generally associate with persuasion in the public sphere, such as advertising, the language of politics, and media discourse. But our concern is also with modern sites for persuasion within and across professional discourse communities as manifested in business negotiations and legal documents. While other genres could profitably be added to the repertoire we are offering (see, e.g., Mulholland 1994: xiii), the genres in focus in this volume originate in very different areas of public life, thus permitting us to detect similarities and differences across them.

All language use can in a sense be regarded as persuasive (cf., e.g., Miller 1980). However, in this context we limit the definition of persuasion to all linguistic behavior that attempts to either *change* the thinking or behavior of an audience, or to *strengthen* its beliefs, should the audience already agree. Yet, the audiences – visible and invisible, actual and implied, interlocutors and onlookers – also contribute to the process of persuasion. We are committed to the view that the persuasive process is affected by the situational and socio-cultural context in which it takes place, and at the same time it helps construct that very context in important ways.

Even though genres will always be tied to time and culture – i.e. they emerge, persist, change, and disappear through time and in given sociocultural settings (Swales 1990:34–37) – persuasion is such an integral

part of human interaction that learning to understand it better will always be meaningful.

Learning more about persuasion, we believe, is learning more about human nature. In the present volume we undertake this task by defining and discussing its concrete linguistic realizations in data that come from the last two decades of the twentieth century. In doing so we also raise the issue of what is typical of modern-day persuasion as compared to persuasion at earlier times.

The purpose of the present volume is to address and answer the following questions: What are the common denominators of persuasive language that can be found across genres which are inherently persuasive? What different linguistic forms does persuasion find in these genres? Can the features of "successful" persuasion be described? What type of restrictions does the genre impose on the features of persuasive language; in other words, how do the linguistic features of persuasion differ from genre to genre? How do inherently persuasive words indicating beliefs and attitudes behave in texts? How does implicit persuasion differ from explicit persuasion? To what extent and in what way do genres hybridize for persuasive purposes? Can persuasion be taught? The discussion is essentially built on an intertextual and interdiscursive model of persuasion across genres (see, e.g., Todorov 1976; Fowler 1982; Swales 1990). All through the book we give due attention to the implicitness inherent in the process.

What counts as persuasion?

In speech act terms, persuasion is a perlocutionary end result, a process that has already taken place and is attested by the fact that the target has taken the desired action or admitted to a change of attitude. *Attempts* at persuasion are not the same thing, but for most discourse it is the on-line process that is our analysis material. Any speaker-based definition of a perlocutionary concept begs the question of effectiveness: even if phrases with obvious rhetorical intent can be isolated, they may be counterproductive. Thus professional negotiators are completely unlikely to be attracted by stereotypical market sales-talk; smug self-evaluations like

"This is a very fair offer" are on the list of "irritators" isolated by Rackham and Carlisle (1978) and "high-risk elements" (Hiltrop & Udall 1995). If negotiators suspect they are being persuaded, they will concentrate on thinking up counter-arguments (Lewicki et al. 2003). Nevertheless, since such utterances are made in the hope of presenting an offer in a good light, we shall have to treat them as persuasive.

The term *persuasion* is broadly used about utterances that seek to elicit compliance (for recent overviews, see Hargie & Dickson 2004; Wilson 2002). In dealing with negotiations a restriction is helpful: persuasion is found in utterances where it can be reasonably assumed that one partner (let us call her A) *seeks to show the other side* (let us call him B) *his interest in a suggestion that will ultimately* (*also*) *benefit A*. In some cases, the interest is easy to see; thus B will presumably recognize an offer that builds on a *need* that he has and proceeds by rational argument, e.g. "So you want to own your own home? You'll save up for the down payment more quickly with a high-interest account. We can give you a better interest if you move all your accounts to us." However, because of the personal relationship involved, A may also have to persuade B, through various affective inducements, to take her perspective (e.g. "I know the warranty has lapsed, but I'd be grateful if you could help me out, since we have done business together for so long"). In this case, the "offer" is that of status, since is being asked to take on the role of a generous high-status partner.

Negotiation is characterized by the need to accommodate both sides, in order to attain a result that is preferable to both starting positions; if either party had the power to dictate, it would no longer be a negotiation. It is therefore perfectly arguable that *all* negotiation discourse is persuasive in the broad sense: "The task of a bargaining party is to convince its opponent that it controls resources, that the opponent needs the resources, and that it is willing to use power" (Bacharach & Lawler 1981: 51). It is this broad sense that is used when the negotiation literature discusses leverage: Persuasive power factors include a reputation for implementing threats, the authority to take decisions, and options, i.e. that the negotiator has viable alternatives to agreement. Such factors are apparently independent of the communicative

process; but on the other hand, power must be perceived to be effective: it needs to be expressed. The analysis of persuasion proper takes place at the level of expression, with a distinction between "a helpful offer" and "a helpful presentation of an offer."

Successful Political Persuasion

Since the time when Aristotle wrote his *Politics* and *Rhetoric*, political rhetoric has been considered one of the typical areas of persuasion; more recently it has been joined in this field with the language of advertising (see, e.g., Jucker 1997: 121). Robert Denton (1996: ix) writes that "politics is 'talk' or human interaction. Such interaction may be formal or informal, verbal or nonverbal, public or private but it is always persuasive, forcing us consciously or subconsciously to interpret, to evaluate, and to act." In search of the recipe for successful political persuasion, in this chapter I will investigate the public language of two U.S. presidents: Ronald Reagan, whose rhetoric dominated the 1980s, and Bill Clinton, whose verbal artistry prevailed during the last decade of the twentieth century. Looking for any shared rhetorical strategies used by these two presidents, I will here investigate their State of the Union addresses. But, of all U.S. presidents, why choose these two? My rationale is fairly simple:

First, one of the aims of the present volume is to investigate how persuasion is realized in our times, and these two politicians can certainly be regarded as modern persuaders.

Secondly, Reagan and Clinton are good candidates, because they both managed to be "popular enough" to be re-elected. "Success," of course, is a tough term to define, and not everyone agrees about the success of these presidents; however, it is a fact that both have been widely praised for their rhetorical skills (Erickson 1985; Stuckey 1990; Smith 1994; Gelderman 1997). Reagan was referred to as the "Great Communicator" (e.g., Denton 1988: 10–12; Maltese 1994: 179) and the "Teflon President" to whom no dirt ever stuck. My favorite description of Clinton was written by a *Washington Post* reporter David von Drehle; it dates back to the times when

Clinton was running for president for his first term, and it captures Clinton's multisided persuasive charm: "He's Elvis Presley with a calculator on his belt, an outsized candidate with a drawl as big as his brain, a would-be president of both pie charts and Moon pies" (von Drehle 1992: A1). In this chapter, I will focus on a subgenre of political persuasion in the public rhetoric of Reagan and Clinton: their planned, pre-written (team-written1), and extremely well rehearsed State of the Union addresses from 1988 (for Reagan) and 1998 (for Clinton).

Questions and Evasive Strategies

During press conferences, the presidents are often confronted with topics that they would rather not discuss. In these situations, they need to resort to distancing strategies and evasive strategies (Simon Vandenbergen 1996; Clayman 2001; Scott 2002), including euphemisms and other means of associative engineering, and abrupt shifts of topic – all examples that I include under the umbrella term "persuasion," provided that the intention of the president is to mold the opinion of his audience in his favor. As an example of distancing strategies, we can look at Clinton's infamous denial "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky" (*WCPD* = *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 1998: 129), where Clinton uses the distal demonstrative *that*, calls Monica a *woman*, and adds her last name, with the title *Miss*, as an appositive. The employment of an evasive strategy is illustrated in the following exchange between Jim Lehrer and Clinton during a PBS *News Hour* interview, as published in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* (1998: 104; italics are added; compare also Lehrer's use of the proximal pronoun *this* and the adjective *young* in front of *woman*, with Clinton's use of *that woman* above):

Jim Lehrer: You *had* no sexual relationship with this young woman?
Clinton: There *is* not a sexual relationship – that is accurate.
(*WCPD* 1998:104)

While appearing to answer Lehrer's question, Clinton in reality avoids answering it. This he accomplishes in a subtle way by a change of tense

from the past tense in Lehrer's question (*had*) to the present tense in his answer (*is*). In other words, he does not answer the question of whether there *was* a sexual relationship or not. In addition, the antecedent of the pronoun *that* in the clause "that is accurate" is unclear: It can refer either to what Clinton himself just said ("There is not a sexual relationship," which evidently was the case at the time of the interview), or it can refer to Lehrer's question, in which case the truth value of "that is accurate" would become questionable. Since the former interpretation is available, Clinton, while he certainly can be accused of being evasive, cannot be accused of downright lying. The use of euphemism can be seen as a special instance of evasive strategies. Euphemisms manipulate associations – they are a form of associative engineering (Leech [1977]: 50–62). For instance, when Jim Lehrer in his *News Hour* interview with Clinton asked about his relationship with Lewinsky, referring to this relationship as *an affair*, Clinton, in his answer denied this affair, referring to it euphemistically as an *improper relationship*: "There is no improper relationship" (*WCPD* 1998: 104).

While Clinton certainly had reason to euphemize his relationship with Lewinsky, Reagan, defending the arms race that he was waging against the Soviet Union, needed to resort to euphemizing as well in order to defend the expensive weapons systems that this arms race required. In the early 1980s, in question-and-answer sessions with the representatives of the press (who often seemed to question Reagan's military spending), bombers and nuclear warheads transformed into *our technology, the ultimate technology* (*PP* = *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* 1981: 952), *deterrent for protection* (*PP* 1982: 681), *our potential capacity* (*PP* 1981: 957), *strategic force* (*PP* 1981: 892) or, simply, *equipment* (*PP* 1981: 952) (Halmari 1993). And when a reporter asks Reagan about the Iran-Contra Aid controversy, referring to it as a *scandal*, Reagan refuses to call it a scandal – it becomes a *so-called scandal*: "The whole so-called Iran scandal – I find it hard to think of scandal in connection with it" (*PP* 1988: 390).

In the encounters with the press, there are abrupt shifts in topic as well. Clinton answers several of the questions by the reporters regarding the

Lewinsky incidents by a reminder directed to the questioning reporter (and to his whole audience) – an aversion – implying that the president has more important things to do than discuss "such a trivial issue": "But I have got to get back to the work" and "But meanwhile, I've got to go on with the work of the country" (*WCPD* 1998: 105). And, of course, there are downright denials. Comparing the tactics that the two presidents used in dealing with their respective problems, it is interesting to note that in January 1988, when a reporter asked Reagan about the Iran-Contra Aid controversy, Reagan denied that there had been a scandal: "I did not see any – what I considered lawbreaking that was taking place on the part of anyone in the administration" (*PP* 1988: 20), and ". . .but that was not against the law" (*PP* 1988: 21). Ten years later, in January 1998, in an interview with Jim Lehrer, Clinton answers "There is no improper relationship" (*WCPD* 1998: 104; see also example (1) above). I argue that the question-and-answer sessions call for different strategies of persuasion since the presidents are forced to address topics they would rather not discuss.

In those political speeches where the presidents get to choose their topics, State of the Union addresses being a case in point, the persuasive strategies will be different.

The choice of persuasive strategies is a part of the interactive process – the mediated discourse between the speaker and the audience (Scollon 1998). And, despite the fact that their topics were different, despite their differing ideologies, and despite certain idiolectal differences in rhetorical strategies, both presidents, in these written-to-be-spoken speeches show surprising similarity in relation to audience-engagement strategies, lexical cohesion, and rhetorical organization. The audience dictates the choice of strategies, some of which are well-known, others less transparent and more subtle.

For a political analyst, the information in their speech is interesting insights into the relative importance of certain concepts for the policies of the presidents. For instance, Reagan's preferred concept is that of a *family*, while Clinton prefers to evoke the concept of *children* more often. Reagan evokes the concept of *freedom* more often than Clinton but talks about *work*

slightly less often. From the point of view of a theory of persuasion, this information is not particularly interesting. In this subgenre of political speeches, the presidents are expected to evoke certain concepts, such as *government*, *Congress*, and *democracy*, or *world* and *nation*. Words like *new* and *now* evoke positive associations and currency. A phrase like *let's*, with its hortative force, is expected to occur. Also, the word *God* is included in both presidents' addresses three times. A selection of shared words, including *God*, appearing in both addresses is presented .While the frequency of these words per one thousand words is not very high, it is interesting that these mainly positive concepts are evoked.

The shared words with clearly positive associations are *better/best*, *community*, *consensus*, *future*, *hope*, *opportunity*, *peace*, *strong*, *together*, and *values*. Also, function words such as *more* and *most* are often used by both presidents. *More* and *most* allow flattering references to the accomplishments of the presidents, and even though in themselves they carry little content, in combination with the nouns that follow, they give a positive picture of the presidents' achievements. Other shared "peaks" are also clear markers of this persuasive genre. Words such as *together*, *tonight*, and *today* refer to the presidents' awareness of current issues and the idea that the present time is the time to approve the president's agenda for the union *together*.

Another word used by both presidents was the word *child/children* .It was the fourth most frequently used content word in Clinton's speech; it occurred altogether 43 times, or 5.9 times per each one thousand words. In Reagan's speech, the word occurred eight times, or 1.6 times per one thousand words. The use of this word is clearly persuasive; it evokes an association with the future, and allows the presidents to infer that their proposed agendas will make the future of the audience's children – a matter everyone cares about – a better one. In example (1), Reagan is speaking for his economic plan and uses the phrase *to give our children a future of low inflation and full employment*, using this phrase as an adverbial of purpose. In (2), Clinton uses *our children* as the beneficiaries of his environmental agenda:

(1) [. . .] steps we can take this year to keep our economy strong and growing, **to give our children** a future of low inflation and full employment. (Reagan)
(2) Tonight, I ask you to join me in launching a new Clean Water Initiative, a far-reaching effort to clean our rivers, our lakes, our coastal waters **for our children**.

Of course, not all the words Reagan and Clinton use in their addresses are shared, and not all the words they use more than once are shared either. Table 6 presents the percentage of those words that occurred more than five times in both State of the Union addresses and the percentage of the words that occurred more than five times only in either Reagan's or Clinton's speech.

Rhetorical Questions

The basic feature of a rhetorical question is that it is used to create an effect by engaging listeners and making them think, and it is not intended to elicit a reply. Spurgin (1994: 303) points out that "[T]he rhetorical question, because it invites assent, can provide a persuasive conclusion to the argument." Since the format of the State of the Union address is that of a monologue, which does not sanction the audience members to address the president verbally during the talk, I have here defined all question forms asked by the presidents during their State of the Union addresses as rhetorical, following Crowley and Hawhee's characterization of rhetorical questions as questions asked when the speaker "does not expect a reply" and uses the question to "emphasize a point" (2004: 299). Copi and Burgess-Jackson point out that rhetorical questions do not seek information; they function informatively as "an oblique way of communicating information" (1995: 77).

It would also be legitimate to call some of the questions asked by the president's *topical questions* when they introduce a new topic. While topical questions have a textual function, the function of rhetorical questions is interpersonal. According to Crowley and Hawhee (2004: 298–299), rhetorical questions belong to those "figures of thought that enhance ethos"

by ”manipulating the flow of discourse” and by “decreas[ing] distance between the rhetor and and audience.” Whether called topical or rhetorical, we can argue that all the questions asked by the presidents exemplify rhetorical means of involving the listener. Reagan asked six questions, Clinton five. Examples (3–5) illustrate:

(3) **How can we help?** Well, we can talk about and push for these reforms. (Reagan)

(4) Instead of a Presidential budget that gets discarded and a congressional budget resolution that is not enforced, **why not a simple partnership, a joint agreement that sets out the spending priorities within the available revenues?** (Reagan)

(5) **What we have to do in our day and generation to make sure that America becomes truly one nation – what do we have to do?** We’re becoming more And more diverse. **Do you believe we can become one nation?** The answer cannot be to dwell on our differences, but to build on our shared values. [. . .]We are many; we must be one. (Clinton)

In example (3), Reagan is talking about school reforms. He asks a rhetorical question, “How can we help?” and proceeds to answer this question himself. In (4), he delivers a hortative rhetorical question starting with “why not [. . .]?” in which the answer is suggested. In example (5), Clinton applies the same strategy. He poses a rhetorical question and proceeds to answer it himself in nineteen sentences, finishing with “We are many; we must be one.”

The rhetorical strategy of asking a question to which the speaker himself provides the answer has been popular since antiquity. It reflects and imitates the Socratic method of inducing agreement by involving the audience member in a thinking process, leading to the idea that the answer, while here provided for the audience, is somehow a product of a mutual agreement between the speaker and the audience. The use of rhetorical questions is a subtle yet quite persuasive means to make the audience agree with the solutions provided.

Appeals to Authority

In order to justify their points of view and their actions, both presidents resort to authorities; Reagan refers to "an ancient Chinese philosopher" (example 6) and "Jefferson" (7). Clinton resorts to Generals such as Colin Powell (8):

(6) And as an ancient Chinese philosopher **Lao-tzu**, said: "Govern a great nation as you would cook a small fish; do not overdo it." (*Reagan*)

(7) In the spirit of **Jefferson**, let us affirm that in this Chamber tonight there are no Republicans, no Democrats – just Americans. (*Reagan*) (8) I'm pleased to announce that **four former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – Generals John Shalikashvili, Colin Powell, and David Jones and Admiral William Crowe** – have endorsed this treaty. And I ask the Senate to approve it this year. (*Clinton*) Appealing to authorities such as ancient philosophers, the founding fathers, and high military officials is thus used by both presidents to back up their ideas, policies, proposals, and decisions. When Clinton needs to justify the American presence in Bosnia (example (9)), he resorts to his opponent and presidential rival, Bob Dole, and cites him verbatim:

(9) [. . .] Bosnia's fragile peace still needs the support of American and allied troops when the current NAT Omission ends in June. I think **Senator Dole** actually said it best. He said "This is like being ahead in the 4th quarter of a football game. Now is not the time to walk off the field and forfeit the victory." (*Clinton*)

By framing his citation of Dole by "I think Senator Dole actually said it best" and thus presenting not only his own, but also Dole's view, with which he agrees on the issue of Bosnia, Clinton ensures that his view and decisions regarding Bosnia cannot be criticized by the Republicans. Resorting to one's opponent's authority – in other words, backing up one's own ethical appeal with somebody else's – exemplifies a clever persuasive strategy, which is likely to disarm the opposition.

Appeal to Logic

For Aristotle, rhetoric, the art of public speaking is "the counterpart of Dialectic," the art of logical discussion. As opposed to *syllogisms*, rhetorical arguments (Aristotle's *enthymemes*) "are the substance of rhetorical persuasion" (Aristotle [1984]: 19–20). Hence it is not surprising that in both State of the Union addresses we can see a clear, systematic, and logical organization of ideas – a strong appeal to logos, which yet *implies* the premises rather than states them explicitly. (For definitions and examples of enthymemes, see, e.g., Copi & Cohen 1990; Corbett 1965: 61–68; Crowley & Hawhee 2004: 141–146.) In example below, Reagan divides his speech into four topics, numbering these from the first to the fourth and summarizing at the end: "This is a full agenda":

[. . .] we have **four basic objectives** tonight. **First**, steps we can take this year to give our children a future of low inflation and full employment. **Second**, let's check our progress in attacking social problems [. . .] Our **third** objective tonight is global [. . .] **Fourth and finally**, [. . . w]e must protect that peace [. . .] **This is a full agenda**.

(*Reagan*)

In his speech, Clinton resorts to the same logical organization pattern. Following Aristotle's example, Clinton, in (11) below, is not arousing emotions (Aristotle [1984]: 20); he is appealing to the audience's logical thinking. Starting by an appeal to the authority of "[o]ur founders" he frames the campaign finance reform, an item on his agenda, as "first. " He proceeds to state that "Everyone knows elections have become too expensive," and that they fuel "a fundraising arms race." The use of *everyone* in the phrase *everyone knows* is a clear appeal to logic: *everyone* includes even those who might oppose Clinton's campaign finance reform. If *everyone knows* that elections have become too expensive, they should, if they are logical thinkers, agree with Clinton's campaign finance reform; if they do not, the implication is that they are not logical. The use of the metaphor "fundraising arms race" exploits another persuasive strategy; it evokes negative, aggressive associations with the Cold War – a notion that should belong to

the past even as a metaphor. Clinton then equates a "vote against McCain and Feingold" with "a vote for soft money and for the status quo" and frames this not as his opinion but as a fact: "Let's be clear." The hortative "let's" and "I ask you" directly involve the audience:

Our founders set America on a permanent course toward "a more perfect union." To all of you I say it is a journey we can only make together [. . .] **First**, we have to continue to reform our government – the instrument of our national community. **Everyone knows elections have become too expensive** fueling a **fundraising arms race**. This year, [. . .] the Senate will actually vote on bipartisan campaign finance reform proposed by Senators McCain and Feingold. **Let's be clear**: A vote against McCain and Feingold is a vote for soft money and for the status quo. **I ask you to strengthen our democracy and pass campaign finance reform this year.**

(*Clinton*)

In the final sentence in above, Clinton does not just ask the audience to "pass campaign finance reform"; he asks them to "strengthen our democracy" – something that every logical audience member would see as a positive action, whether they agree with the campaign finance reform or not. The ordering of the phrases presupposes that "passing campaign finance reform" will lead to "strengthen[ing] our democracy." Apart from political speeches, the persuasive strategy exemplified in the final sentence in (11) can be heard in everyday indirect requests such as "Be an angel and bring me a cup of coffee!" This request implies that the addressee will deserve the title of an angel if he/she brings the coffee. Note that we would not say, "Bring me a cup of coffee and be an angel!" Similarly, even though Clinton's sentence means "I ask you to pass campaign finance reform this year," the added implied consequence following from the passing of the reform – the strengthening of democracy – makes this request more persuasive; the implied consequence is one with whose positive nature everyone has to agree.

The quote in example (12) below from Clinton's address is an example of careful associative engineering. The verb *heal* evokes positive associations:

Something that needs healing has been in bad shape, sick, and the logical thing to do is to support the process of healing. Not only is it illogical to oppose the process of healing but also, if you do oppose it, you are called a *pessimist*.
Every time we have acted to **heal** our environment, **pessimists** have told us it would hurt the economy.

(Clinton)

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle ([1984]:32–33) wrote of political orators:

> The political orator aims at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action; if he urges its acceptance, he does so on the ground that it will do good; if he urges its rejection, he does so on the ground that it will do harm[. . .].

The two examples indicate a careful appeal to logic of the audience, along the lines already posited by Aristotle, is still today one of the hallmarks of political persuasion.

Superlatives and "nice numbers"

Superlatives may exaggerate, but the presidents do not avoid their use, especially when they can package the superlatives around convincing factual information. This factual information often involves the use of numerical data – facts backed up by numbers (see also Virtanen this volume). In example (13), Reagan uses the superlative *fastest*, surrounded by *4 straight years* and *more than10 years*. In (14), Clinton's superlatives *lowest unemployment* and *lowest core inflation* are accentuated by *in 24 years* and *in 30 years*. The "ultimate" superlative, *the highest homeownership in history*, is saved for last. Note also the use of the comparative *more than 14 million more new jobs*, where the information of what this number *14 million* is compared to is left unspecified:

(13) [. . .] family income has risen for **4 straight years,** and America's climbed out of poverty at **the fastest rate in more than 10 years**.

(*Reagan*)

(14) We have **more than 14 million more new jobs**, **lowest unemployment in 24 years, the lowest core inflation in 30 years**; incomes are rising; and we have **the highest homeownership in history**. (*Clinton*)

Poetic aspects of persuasion

Campbell and Burkholder (1997: 5) write that "rhetorical discourse is frequently poetic"; it has "ritualistic, aesthetic, dramatic, and emotive qualities." In their State of the Union addresses, both presidents resort frequently to the use of alliteration. Personification of America is another poetic means that both president's use.

Alliteration

The tradition of using alliteration in the Anglo-American world goes back to the great poetry of Old English. Examples in (15) and (16) comprise a selection of alliterative phrases in Reagan's and Clinton's speeches, respectively:

Reagan's alliterative phrases:

courage to **c**onfront
freedom **f**ighters
a **f**uture **f**ree of [. . .] **t**otalitarianism and **t**error
great halls of **g**overnment and the **m**onuments to the **m**emory of our **g**reat **m**en **p**revents a **p**aralysis of American **p**ower
protected and **p**assed on lovingly this **p**lace called America **sh**ining **sh**ores
soaring **s**pending
sorry **s**tory

(16) ***Clinton's alliterative phrases:***

deadly **d**iseases
defect and **d**efer
face and **f**uture of America

family and **f**aith, **f**reedom and responsibility
finger pointing and **f**ailure

crack down on **g**angs and **g**uns and drugs
offer **h**elp and **h**ope
peace and **p**rosperity
police, **p**rosecutor, and **p**revious
A strong nation **r**ests on **r**ock of **r**ules
weapons of **w**ar

The use of alliteration cannot be seen as directly persuasive; there is nothing in alliteration *per se* that would lead the audience to sympathize or agree with the speaker. Yet, if we take the classic view of Isocrates, who points out that "the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding" ([1988]: 48), it is easy to see how alliteration fits in with an overall persuasive style. Skillful use of alliteration is part of ethical appeal; alliteration does not attract attention by being overly decorative; it is a modest and subtle way of sending the audience the message that the speaker is a powerful speaker and, therefore, a man "of a sound understanding."

Reference to America

The frequencies of the word *America/American* were already discussed above. For both presidents, *America (n)* was the most frequently evoked concept: 11.3 out of every one thousand words for Reagan, and the almost identical 11.2 for Clinton were occurrences of this word. However, the same concept was evoked by the use of other phrases as well. Both presidents refer to America as *nation*, and both, by subtle choices of determiners make the concept closer, dearer – Reagan, by the proximal demonstrative pronoun *this* ("this nation") and Clinton, by the first person plural possessive pronoun *our* ("our nation"):

Reagan*:* This nation,
not a graveyard but a birthplace of hope
a city of hope in a land that is free
this shining city on a hill

Clinton: Our nation,
an America which leads the world to new heights of peace and prosperity.

Conclusion:

Rhetoric is a literary-politic method to change attitudes of the audience addressed, and to make people choose to adopt ideas and opinions of the speaker. It is an effective instrument used by politicians and leaders to win the side of the people and their support.

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