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The Impact of Political Rhetoric Language on Public Opinion

Research Project

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Outline

Abstract.....	4
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Definition of political language.....	5
1.2 Types of political rhetoric language.....	6
1.2.1 Using emotional language.....	6
1.2.2 Using of metaphors and symbols.....	6
1.2.3 Employing deceptive or misleading communication.....	7
1.2.4 Repetition and slogans	8
1.2.5 Using logical reasoning, evidence, and persuasive arguments	9
1.3 Public opinion.....	10
2. The impact of political rhetoric language on public opinion.....	10
2.1 Shaping political belief and values.....	10
2.1.1 Symbolism and metaphors.....	11
2.1.2 Consistent messaging	12
2.1.3 Rhetorical persuasion techniques: Repetition, persuasive language, and compelling storytelling	12
2.2 Influencing Voting Behavior.....	14

2.2.1 Emotional language and voter connection: How emotion rhetoric influences voter empathy and decision-making.....	14
2.2.2 Impact of metaphors and symbols on voter perception: How visual and metaphorical implements affect voter understanding and choices.....	15
2.2.3 Ethical Considerations in Manipulation and Misinformation: The potential negative impact of unethical rhetorical tactics on voting behavior.....	16
2.3 The impact of political rhetoric language on creating or reinforcing political ideologies.....	16
2.3.1 Symbolism and metaphors	17
2.3.2 Rhetorical persuasion techniques: repetition, alliteration, and persuasive Language	18
3. Conclusion.....	19
References	20-23

Abstract

Rhetoric, an ancient form of communication, is essential alongside logic and grammar. Discourse, the exchange of ideas, lets people share their views. Rhetoric helps persuade and gather support in everyday and academic settings.

In politics, rhetoric is crucial as politicians use strategies like emotional appeals and persuasive language to win elections. In democracies, winning public support is vital, highlighting the importance of connecting with voters.

This research aims to explore how political rhetoric influences public opinion by analyzing politicians' language. It seeks to understand how rhetorical strategies shape societal attitudes and perceptions, providing valuable insights into political communication and its impact on democratic discourse.

1.Introduction

In this introduction, we outline the following subheadings: the definition of political rhetoric language, types of political rhetoric language, the use of emotional language, the use of metaphors and symbols, the employment of deceptive or misleading communication, repetition and slogans, the use of logical reasoning, evidence, and persuasive arguments, and the role of public opinion.

1.1 Definition of political rhetoric language

Political rhetoric is the art of persuasive speaking or writing used by politicians to influence public opinion. It shapes our understanding of issues, policies, and leaders. Mastering this craft can sway elections and policy decisions. Rhetoric is the persuasive art of addressing pressing public concerns before a public audience in order to transform some aspect of a problematic situation by encouraging new forms of thought and action. Different rhetorical techniques are often applied by politicians, and these are designed to encourage the audience to agree with their points. Diversion is one technique often used in political rhetoric, and this can be applied in a variety of different ways. One advantage of thinking about public speaking as a rhetorical practice is that it focuses attention on how the art of persuasion functions as a response to a situation. Rather than beginning with the personal interests and desires of the speaker, rhetoric begins with a study of a situation and its relationship to an audience. Politicians manipulate their image to create a more trustworthy, righteous, and intelligent version of themselves, which is presented to the public (Johnson, 2024).

1.2 Types of political rhetoric language

The political rhetoric language has several types which include emotional language, metaphors and symbols, deceptive or misleading communication, repetition and slogans, logical reasoning, evidence, and persuasive arguments, and public opinion.

1.2.1 Using emotional language

Politicians use emotional resources in their speeches in parliament depending on the type of debate and use emotive rhetoric strategically and selectively, mainly to attract voters. Emotive language usually refers to a style of communication that arouses an emotional response from the listener, thus evoking positive or negative reactions that go beyond the specific meaning of the word or phrase used. So, it can be a powerful tool to convince people of the validity of a particular message, Emotive language can be a powerful tool for persuading people of the validity of a particular message. For instance, experimental research has shown that individuals who feel happy are more likely to be persuaded, independent of the strength of the argument (Osnabrügge, Hobolt, and Rodon, 2021).

1.2.2 Using of Metaphors and Symbols

The metaphors in politics, to some extent, are partially effective because it lacks a strong emotional accusation of borrowing in imagination and cannot realize the privacy functions that are fully executed in imagination. The metaphor contains a wide range of use and gives you the opportunity to express your ideas live and emotional and summarize the listener. The metaphor is not a way to visit complete ideas and ways of thinking, but this is the daily reality of language (Sabir, 2015, p.3).

Metaphor refers to when a word or a phrase is used which establishes a comparison between one idea and another. When a politician is said to ‘take flak’ from an opponent, politics is being compared to warfare, with the politician metaphorically being shot at. On the other hand, it may be the politician who is ‘on the offensive, targeting’ his opponents by ‘launching an attack’ on their policies (Beard, 2014. p.19)

Political symbols are important because they simplify political structures and practices. It can help make the movement more harmonious. Politics confers social rank through symbolic signals of norms of social value. Symbols are the currency of status, much as material resources are the currency of power and of class. Laws, official rules, and the exercise of political office do not only confer power; they can also symbolize status (Willeck and Mendelberg, 2022).

1.2.3 Employing deceptive or misleading communication

Politicians who can convince a large swath of the public to believe their lies would have outsized impact in the shaping of public opinion. Politicians tend to be dishonest even when their preferences are aligned with those of their constituencies. Justifiable lies, lies to prevent embarrassment, and lies of policy deception, each having different consequences and effects on public trust. Some consider ambiguity to be a method of deception, such as when politicians have a policy preference but, for political gain, either attempt to obfuscate it or pretend they do not have a stance. Surprisingly, ambiguity in political rhetoric does not always repel voters and even may, on the contrary, attract them. The preference for an ambiguous candidate is a function of an individual’s risk orientation and preferences for candidates from one’s own party (Mattes, Popova, and Evans, 2023).

Communication strategies of deception: lying, bullshitting, and obscuring: The first strategy is flat-out lying. A candidate is lying when, to deceive her audience, she makes a claim that she does not believe. Lying is a potentially effective but risky strategy. ‘bullshitting’ means to

communicate to persuade irrespective of the truth. So the bullshitter's claims are masked as ordinary speech even though she does not really care whether the content of her claim is true or false. The third strategy is to speak in an obscure manner. This relates to how speech is delivered because it concerns how something is expressed (or left in the dark) (Mattes, Popova, and Evans, 2023).

1.2.4 Repetition and slogans

Repetition is often used as a way to emphasize or amplify a particular position or narrative. Repeating a word, phrase, or slogan can make it sound catchy and more easily remembered. In fact, research in the field of cognitive psychology suggests that seeing or hearing information repeatedly can often make it easier to remember versus seeing or hearing something once (Hartin, & Hendricks, 2023).

The use of political slogans is one rhetorical method by which a large group of people may express their collective ideas. Slogans act as a means by which the general public may express their opinions on public issues. The linguist, William Safire in *Social Dictionary* gives an introductory definition of slogan as "a rallying cry; catch phrase; a brief message that crystallizes an idea, defines an issue, the best of which thrill, exhort, and inspire." This is a wonderful rhetorical tool when the slogan well-characterizes a message that a political figure wants to be remembered. For example, U.S. President Donald Trump's 2016 "Make America Great Again", or, the so-called MAGA, political slogans have consistently proved to be an efficient instrument in pre-election campaigning (Tinceva, 2020, p. 57).

1.2.5 Using logical reasoning, evidence, and persuasive arguments

Motivated reasoning occurs when individuals appeal to preferences for models selectively and to serve a specific goal. These goals are generally classified as guidelines or directional targets. They are motivated with comprehensive concerns to create a short formationist. On the contrary, individuals for orientation goals are motivated to achieve certain conclusions that are compatible with this objective or support. The logic is possible to be included in the content of a message to achieve the right result (Bayes, Druckman, Goods. A & C. Molden, 2020).

Evidence has an important role in shaping people's lives and people's lives. Using evidence in general helps policy makers to identify problems, identify targets, design interventions, and evaluate whether policies have an intended effect. It helps to prevent implementation and pay attention to the problems that the government missed (Britchfield & Sasse, 2020, p.1).

Most speeches aim to persuade the audience to believe something or take a certain action. For example, public speakers employ emotional language and a variety of strategies to draw our attention, build trust, and pique our interest in their product or policy in order to persuade us that they are correct (Ghasemi, 2020).

1.3 Public Opinion

The culmination of individual viewpoints that reflect people's sentiments toward a certain topic at a particular moment is known as public opinion. Since not everyone has an opinion on every subject, another approach to characterize public opinion is as the opinions of regular people that they feel comfortable sharing in public (Rom, Hidaka, and Walker, 2022, p.156).

Thought plays a vital role in the emergence of some critical solutions. Duygu or vision production is a method used to eliminate the thoughts or emotions of the total population. The public effect is not limited to politics and elections. It is a strong force in many other areas such as public relations.

Public opinion occurs when a large group in society indicates opinion, with a mixture of different opinions, because the public is important to act in the interest of voters. The future elections are unlikely. When a politician strays too far from what the general public wants and public opinion shifts, it is unlikely that he or she will win future elections.

2. The impact of political rhetoric language on public opinion

Political rhetoric language has three impacts on public opinion: shaping political belief and values, influencing voting behavior, and creating or reinforcing political ideologies.

2.1 Shaping political belief and values

It is a proven fact that political action and public opinion are influenced by values. There are several areas of disagreement in the study of mass politics and values. First, many academic groupings place emphasis on certain sets of ideals. Researchers make a fundamental distinction between fundamental human values and fundamental political principles. Abstract views on the state of the nation, society, and public affairs comprise core political principles. This field of

study originated in political science. Fundamental human values are trans-situational, abstract ideas about ideal states of affairs and behavior patterns that are ranked according to relative importance. Social and cross-cultural psychology study is linked to human values. The presence of two distinct streams of research raises questions about the conceptual, methodological, and theoretical differences between core political values and core human values (Westen, 2007).

2.1.1 Symbolism and Metaphors

Metaphors are used in political discourse just as often as they are in other discourses and functions. In reference to political metaphors, there are multiple perspectives. Metaphors in political discourse serve three main purposes: they help to explain complex ideas, support arguments, and engage with the audience. They make it easier for politicians to discuss sensitive topics by using indirect language, which can protect them from being held accountable for their words (Sabir .2015, p.3).

For example, Chilton and Lakoff. (1995, p. 195) highlights the metaphor of the nation as a family, which is often used in political discourse to frame discussions about government policies and societal responsibilities. Conservatives tend to employ a "strict father" metaphor, where the government is seen as a disciplinarian figure that enforces moral values and individual responsibility.

2.1.2 Consistent Messaging

Political campaigns need a strong campaign strategy and key message to draw in potential voters and connect with their Target audience. Whether the candidate belongs to the Republican or Democrat party and is engaged in a national presidential campaign or a local congressional campaign, developing a strategy to convey a clear and cohesive message is paramount. Elections involve making choices, and the campaign argument is the main reason given by a candidate for why voters should pick them. The campaign argument helps to make sure that all messages and communications are in line with the main appeal to voters, creating consistency. (MasterClass,2021).

2.1.3 Rhetorical persuasion techniques: repetition, persuasive language, and compelling storytelling

Repetition, or using the same words, sounds, or phrases again in a message, is a typical rhetorical strategy. A stance or story is frequently emphasized or amplified by repetition. A term, phrase, or slogan might seem catchier and be easier to remember if it is repeated. Numerous writers have emphasized how ubiquitous repetition is and how it actually structures all discourse. Political and commercial advertising frequently employs the deliberate use of repetition to ingrain slogans and concepts into the public consciousness and influence attitudes and actions. Repetition is a common technique used to spread even true and widely accepted knowledge. For example, Donald Trump used repetition when he said: “We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams” (Al-Saeedi, 2017, p.722).

Since political communication seeks to persuade listeners that they have made the correct decision, it is typically categorized as a persuasive speech (Nusartlert, 2017). An exceptionally powerful method for attaining objectives is through persuasive speech. Individuals utilize various communication techniques within this form of speech to influence or advocate for specific beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes.

For example, "I Have a Dream," (Staake, 2022) stands as one of the most remarkable speeches in American history. Delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington, it serves as a compelling call to action for racial equality and envisions a fairer society where African Americans experience the same freedoms as their White counterparts. The speech, which was given by Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington, it is a potent call to action for racial equality and a more just and equal society where African Americans will enjoy the same freedoms as White Americans.

Prominent politicians have been used political storytelling as a tried-and-true method of swaying voters for decades. Numerous people are profoundly affected by stories, and academics have demonstrated how well they can sway our thoughts. It is quite reasonable to assume that stories will remain a useful weapon for politicians running at all levels of office. It's all about making an emotional connection with people, and storytelling is one of the most effective methods to do this. For example, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign is a prime example of this. He often spoke of his own background and experiences, weaving his personal story into the broader narrative of hope and change. This made him relatable to a wide range of voters and allowed them to connect with him on a personal level (School of Politics, 2023).

2.2 Influencing voting behavior

2.2.1 Emotional language and voter connection: How emotion rhetoric influences voter empathy and decision-making

The use of emotion is generally classified into one of two techniques. First, it has long been assumed that a description of a person's consistent and distinct features, particularly his or her unique approach to decisions and actions, must include emotion as a personality trait.

Broadly speaking, research on political leaders and their decision-making processes has traditionally focused on their inherent emotional characteristics. Another common approach examines variations in people's emotional reactions to ongoing events. This shift in focus moves from analyzing emotions rooted in an individual's personality to exploring emotional responses triggered by external factors such as events, symbols, circumstances, individuals, or groups, aiming to evoke specific reactions from the audience (Marcus, 2000, p. 222).

Democrats and Republicans do not differ much in their use of emotional language. However, members of the minority party are systematically more emotional than members of the majority party, a striking trend that we see consistently flip as the party in control flips. During the long term of Democrat control in the second half of the 20th century, Republicans consistently used more emotional language (Gennaro & Ash, 2022).

2.2.2 Impact of metaphors and symbols on voter perception: How visual and metaphorical implements affect voter understanding and choices.

One of the reasons why conceptual metaphor theory suggests that the use of metaphors is one of the most fundamental forms of reasoning is that different conceptual metaphors are thought to promote different considerations about any topic under discussion. Metaphorical framing has been used in political rhetoric to influence political decision-making. (Brugman & Burgers, 2019, p. 44).

One specific kind of framing that aims to sway judgment by describing the attributes of one notion in terms of another is called metaphorical framing. By projecting the qualities of an abstract or complex source onto the features of a simpler or concrete target, metaphorical framing aims to translate an abstract or difficult idea into language that is easier to understand.

Metaphorical framing is more effective when the metaphor is introduced first before a text or speech. This is because introducing the metaphor first allows people to use the metaphorical framing to think about the information that would be coming next, metaphorical framing allows people to interpret ambiguous information in terms of the metaphor. Moreover, metaphorical framing is also more effective when the metaphor itself is generative. Metaphorical framing has been used in political rhetoric to influence political decision-making.

Although violent metaphors are frequently used by political politicians, little is known about how they affect voter behavior. Using psychological studies on metaphors and aggression, demonstrate how the electoral impact of metaphorical frames depends on how well they resonate with the political and personal characteristics of the audience. For example, during the 2010 midterm election campaign, President Barack Obama rallied students at the University of

Wisconsin with a speech using a dozen violent metaphors, like “I am going to get out there and fight as hard as I can – and I know you are too.”.

2.2.3 Ethical considerations in manipulation and misinformation: The potential negative impact of unethical rhetorical tactics on voting behavior

Rational choice approaches to negative voting understood mainly it as a special case of retrospective voting in elections involving incumbents (Kernell, 1977). Yet, the rational choice paradigm was also instrumental in the development of a political psychology perspective that envisaged negative voting as a rationalization mechanism. (Garzia & Da Silva .2021. p.2).

Misinformation on political issues is especially concerning. Social media users with strong political beliefs may spread false information to benefit their interests. If this type of information is rampant, social media could do more harm than good in informing voters about political issues (Mukherjee & Rentschler ,2021).

Political broadcasting in a competitive media system increasingly follows news values such as conflict, negativism, and personalization. If there is in fact a change in journalists’ coverage of politics and politicians towards negativism and conflict, it may have an effect on the public perception of parties and political leaders (Garzia & Ferreira da Silva, 2021).

2.3 The impact of political rhetoric language on creating or reinforcing political ideologies

Ideology is coherent and sufficiently broad, yet sufficiently circumscribed, to meet the requirements of empirical application and research. Indicates the kind of ideas and beliefs that comprise ideologies rather than making claims about their causes, functions, or anything else that may or may not be empirically true about such ideas and beliefs (Hamilton, 1987, p.38).

Ideologies are linked to power hierarchies. Politicians want power. What they do with that power once they have it is influenced by their ideology as well as the social, economic, and political realities of the time. Indeed, the two cannot be separated. This applies even to people who deny having an ideology. Power is always exercised inside an ideological framework. (Harrison & Boyd, 2018, p.136).

There has all been a widely held view in politics and political philosophy that 'ideology' merely provides a cloak for the struggle for power, the real stuff of politics. To justify their power and to persuade the people to obey, follow and support them, rulers use ideologies of various kinds (Harrison & Boyd, 2018, p.137).

2.3.1 Symbolism and Metaphors

metaphor is a tool that enables people to use what they know about their direct physical and social experiences to understand more abstract things like work, time, mental activity and feelings (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

A strong ideological basis of metaphors allows their creators to influence the way we conceptualise certain concepts and phenomena, which makes them a powerful and dangerous weapon in the process of shaping opinions. Critical Metaphor Analysis, on the other hand, is an approach to discourse which "enables us to challenge existing ways of thinking and feeling about human behaviour and its relation to language" as well as to activate our own ability to be aware of the ideologies on which metaphors are grounded and to present "alternative ways of thinking and feeling about the world", which is "a fundamental aspect of human freedom." (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 252).

Lakoff (2009) highlights the role of metaphorical reasoning in shaping political ideologies. Political rhetoric language frequently employs metaphors and analogies to convey complex ideas and values in a persuasive manner. By using metaphorical language that evokes powerful associations and narratives, politicians and political actors can reinforce ideological positions and influence public opinion.

2.3.2 Rhetorical persuasion techniques: repetition, alliteration, and persuasive Language

Perloff (2009, p. 17) define persuasion as “a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice”. While previous literature reviews have confirmed meaningful differences in existing attitudes and behaviors of those with conservative versus liberal ideologies (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009).

The relation between ideology and repetition is decontextualized to reveal the different ways in which the politician portray constructs a frame for his underlying ideology. Repetition emphasizes crucial words or phrases in a text or speech, capturing the reader's or listener's attention. It denotes repeating sounds, phrases, expressions, clauses, and even sentences in a specific order to convey emphasis. For example ,” It is time to shake the rust off America’s foreign policy .It is time to invite new voices and new visions into the fold”. (Tramp's speech) (Chiad & Sallomi, 2019).

Alliteration is also a rhetorical device that can be used to enhance the impact and memorability of an ideology speech. For example, U.S. president Barack Obama used several alliterative phrases in his speech at the Fort Hood Memorial Service in 2009. First, he called the U.S. military the “finest fighting force the world has ever known,”. Alliteration can be a powerful tool in capturing the attention and engaging the audience, making your ideology speech more impactful (Metz, 2024).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, politicians use political rhetoric to shape public opinion and influence society. They use persuasive speaking and writing to influence how people see issues, laws, and leaders, which can affect elections and government decisions. They often use emotional appeals and metaphors to connect with voters and make their messages more memorable.

Politicians also use techniques like repetition, alliteration, and slogans to reinforce their messages and gain support. They may use language that reflects specific ideologies to appeal to certain groups of people. Understanding how political rhetoric affects public opinion is important because it helps us understand how political discussions influence society.

This research adds to our understanding of political communication by looking at how politicians use language to shape public opinion.

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