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*Linguistic Intelligence a Path Towards  
Effective Communication (The Case of  
Politicians' Speeches)*

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**ABSTRACT**

Language and society are complementary elements, their coexistence is prominent for the everlasting of ideas, point of views, beliefs, and convictions. Society is the barrel which embraces people, culture and language. In fact, language is regarded as one of the persistent means of communication which guarantees the constant relationship between people belonging to the same society. However, the use of language varies according to the place, the circumstances, and the different goals. The study of these variations in use is the domain of sociolinguistics. In this investigation, a set of extracts from different speeches of American and British leaders have been selected and analyzed. Actually, the different critical situations as political challenges, decision-making, lockdown and social restrictions because of Covid-19 are the reason behind such a choice. The principal targets of these leaders were persuasion and recommendations, therefore; a clever choice of words and rhetoric devices to gain the audience's mind and feeling was necessary. The selected extracts in use exhibit a wide range of this linguistic tool which reveals linguistic intelligence reflected in the wise use of language and the appropriate combination that serve the goals of the orators themselves.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric device -Linguistic intelligence- discourse analysis – politicians- speech – Orators

## INTRODUCTION

Communicating is the soul of any society because it guarantees its existence and eternity. In fact, it establishes relations, sets up new ones and plays myriad roles. It is also based on human interaction directed by a specific goal. This track needs language which is generally the main medium in any communication. In reality, if we live in the world without language we would be limited to non-verbal communication. However, we live in the world full of useful tools for communication, and language is a powerful means to express our thought and knowledge to other people.

Language permits building a bridge between people's mind and provides vital features to set up a social life. Language is at the service of many fields and disciplines as Psychology, Medicine, Computer Science, and Sociology. An effective use of language will reflect the extended power of man, provides him a position in society, and more than that it reflects his ability to affect and be affected too. Indeed, the ability to effectively use language is known as the verbal linguistic intelligence. It is the kind of intelligence that has been developed over history for both personal and professional goals.

When a lawyer addresses the audience, he relies on language, the same case is for teachers, managers, advertisers and mainly politicians. Leaders who gain a great impact on people are the ones who enclose verbal linguistic intelligence which has been forged in the course of their professional expedition. A wise use of language leads to manage and control people just through words. The appropriate choice of language helps to be political party's leader, member of parliament and even president. It also enables to set up new ideas, to adopt new decisions and set up new laws.

The main objective of this study is describing and identifying politicians' linguistic intelligence and exploring how language is used to achieve goals in the field. The present study is conducted to investigate the following research questions:

- 1- What are the objectives set by orators through linguistic intelligence?
- 2- What are the main language exponents which constitutes a political speech?

The above research questions will be amply answered through the analysis of the selected extract from political speeches of three leaders: Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and Barack Obama. The rationale of this choice is the critical political and social situation where the speech were delivered and the challenges these leaders faced to improve the conditions by involving their citizens. A persuasive discourse including rhetoric devices which serve and assist the leaders in their mission will be revealed forward.

In order to achieve this research, a descriptive qualitative method is adopted since the data are in form of words. It also relies on discourse analysis of some extracts which embed language exponents serving verbal linguistic intelligence. In political discourse, rhetorical figures have a specific purpose to create a particular rhythm of a phrase or a whole piece of text, to highlight the most successful semantic elements of speech, to mobilize attention, and increase emotional influence. Language in use reflects what is used for, it is more than a system and symbols since it has a social function which reveals the origin of people, the social function and status, besides the ethnic groups and their

culture. Actually, this is the sociolinguistics concern, it studies the sociological aspects of language which plays a vital role in maintaining the social status in a community.

## **2. Linguistics Vs Sociolinguistics**

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language at different levels which include core areas such as Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, and Pragmatics. As (Corder,2002) explains: “Linguistics is concerned with the nature of human language, how it is learned and what part it plays in the life of the individual and the community.” P.32. In fact, it is a field of research which investigates the language of the written and non-written. Yet, it is a subject that keeps changing according to languages changes since it is intertwined with other disciplines as Psycholinguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Sociolinguistics.

When the study is based on the language in sociocultural context, it is the matter of Sociolinguistics. In fact, this discipline deals with the study of the relationship between language and society in myriad social contexts as Hudson (1996) refers to. It does not deal with the system and structure of language; in reality, it scrutinizes how language is used among people. It also explains why people speak differently in distinct social contexts (Holmes, 2013). Actually, language is governed by various factors as gender, age, ethnicity, social classes, environment, and social position. Language and society affect each other, people belonging to the same discourse community have a shared knowledge which permits an effective and constructive communication.

As mentioned above, language and society have an interchangeable effect, these two features cannot be dissociated in any study because they are the masterpieces in communication stream. However, different situations, circumstances, and goals lead to different discourses which reflect the scenario of the language is used for. Many items are different and relevant to the speech community, and this is sociolinguistics’ field of research.

The analysis performed by sociolinguists on the existing distinctions unveil the characteristics of the components that make up any communication process. Many information can be attained thanks to language use in context as people’s origin, region, social status, occupation, and social class. In fact, social patterns influence the way people are interacting. Indeed, the discourse used by doctors is different than the one of teachers, of the businessmen, or of the politicians. Each of the above domains, have a specific register which take into consideration the interlocutor to make the message clear. As for politicians, the choice of words, phrases, and sentences is very important because their audience is the one who can contribute to the success and designates them as a leadership. The art of choosing words, phrases, sentences, and the way they are combined is not a frequent phenomenon for all speakers. Actually, some are gifted,

others are not, and this depends on the individuals' intelligence, which will be amply explained forward.

### **3. General Intelligence Vs Multiple Intelligence**

Human beings are distinguished from other species by their intelligence which is a psychological prospect permitting people to apprehend the environment they live in, deal with problems and assume embarrassing cases. In this respect, Gardner (1983) explains that intelligence has different separate set that each one is specialized for acquiring and solving problems in various field of cognitive activity.

In effect, we cannot define intelligence without referring to the theory of Multiple Intelligence which was first suggested by Howard Gardner in his 1983 book "Frames of Mind". This theory challenged the traditional notion which believes in the existence of one single type of intelligence known as "G" which stands for general intelligence. It focuses on cognitive abilities only, conversely, Gardner (1983) introduced eight different types of intelligence to broaden its notion. He has provided an ample definition and delineated several distinct types of intellectual competencies. Gardner has developed a series of eight prominent criteria when evaluating each person's intelligence. He explained that each individual has an amount of intelligence, but the profile may not be the same based on genetics due to biological endowment or personal experience. In fact, personal life history which involves experiences taken place with the surroundings besides existing cultural development when the person was born are features contributing in people's intelligence.

Gardner (1983) has distinguished many kinds of intelligence as:

- Logical-mathematical intelligence
- Spatial intelligence
- Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence
- Interpersonal intelligence
- Intrapersonal intelligence
- Naturalist intelligence
- Musical intelligence
- Linguistic intelligence

#### **3.1 Linguistic Intelligence**

It is among the eight kinds of intelligence, (Gardner, 1983), it is also known as verbal intelligence described in multiple intelligence theory as already mentioned. Simply, it can be defined as well-developed verbal and written skills and language is at the center of this intelligence, people with this kind of intelligence master rhythm and sounds of word. If you know someone who is good with words either spoken or written, it means that this person has a wide knowledge of language from words to phrases and

sentences. Mentalup (2019) mentioned that this kind of people are good with words, have a deep understanding of the denotative and connotative meaning and know in which context they can be used. They are more gifted than others at using words in a powerful way, this is revealed through their superior communicative skills. People with significant linguistic intelligence are often good at languages and enjoy reading and writing, they can well explain to reach conviction as well. According to Mentalup (2019), people with verbal linguistic intelligence generally have the following qualifications:

- Learning multiple languages
- Have a good memory
- Good use and choice of vocabulary
- Capacity in reasoning
- Admiring and mastering debates
- Eloquence
- Demystification

To sum up, linguistic intelligence is related to eloquent language use to achieve a goal and to be part of those people who have constant contact with people, and this is the case of politicians.

### **3.2 Politician's Linguistic Intelligence**

Politicians are among people who have been identified with linguistic intelligence because they are able to communicate clearly and explain any ambiguity that may occur in a discussion or argumentation.

Politics is often defined as the ingenuity of using words, this is displayed by politicians' activities, speeches, and orations. In fact, they are empowered by great communication skills, they usually espouse the right track to reach their target. Politicians' verbal linguistic intelligence is highlighted through various features guiding their speeches as breathing, choice of tone, postures, gestures, and what is more important is the language used. They are aware of the loaded meaning of words that can attain the audience's attention and influence their mind and position. In this respect, Beard (2000) opines: "Making speeches is a vital part of the politicians' role in announcing policy and persuading people to agree with it" P.35. Therefore, this is exhibited in the way of interacting with the electorates.

Language is a wide system; it embeds rhetorical devices which characterize the discourse used in a given context. In this study, our concern is about rhetorical devices in politicians' speeches. If you know someone who is good with words whether spoken or written, they likely have strong linguistic ability; indeed, linguistic verbal intelligence means having complete knowledge of language from words to phrases and sentences.

People with such ability make excellent teachers, authors, lawyers, orators, and leaders. Barack Obama is the exemplary orator in history who has made a lasting impression on people, there is no doubt that good command of language comes from linguistic intelligence.

### 3.3 Rhetorical Devices

The word rhetoric is derived from the Greek word “rhètorikè” which reflects the skill or art of using language effectively and persuasively. Politicians with such skill may describe a problem and make it sound like it is not. Flowerdew (2002) explains: “Politicians are expected to demonstrate their political skills via their rhetorical ones, and to prove their charismatic nature via their verbal performance and use of creative skills” P.149.

Politician leaders always rely on a specific way of communicating relevant to their position in the society they represent in the community. As Griffin (2012) explains that communication is the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response, this is the case of politicians who often establish a close relationship with their audience. They want sharing information, more than that, they wish attracting, directing, and persuading people to serve a cause or an idea. This latter, would be adopted as a mutual agreement then transformed into a law. In order to succeed in such mission, politicians must choose their words, the structure, and the mould they are put in. In this respect, Joseph (2006) mentions that the qualities that make a successful politician include the ability to lead a given audience by articulating a clear cause and inspiring vision for a better future. Language is at the service of politicians since a wide range of rhetoric devices make up the discourse of political speeches.

Some of these rhetorical devices are stated by the writer and the editor Brockway (2016):

- Allusion: is when an event or a historical figure is mentioned to invoke specific feeling or action.
- Antiphrasis: the use of words or phrases to denote their opposite meaning.
- Apophasis: highlighting a subject and denying its importance, by bringing it up and saying that it should not be mentioned.
- Aporia: a situation where the speaker expresses hesitation and doubt.
- Aposiopesis: it is when the speaker purposely breaks off the sentence leaving the ending to the listener’s imagination.
- Analogy: the comparison of two things which are similar to provide better understanding, simile and metaphor are types of analogy.
- Hyperbole: the exaggeration in speech with the intention of emphasizing or highlighting something.
- Sententia: stating what others have said to support an idea.
- Pleonasm: the use of multiple words to emphasize an idea.

- Epizeuxis: the repetition of a word or phrase in a rapid way to accentuate the meaning.

The prototypes of great leaders are also great orators such as Margaret Thatcher, Martin Luther king. Christopher (2008) believes that Obama's speeches are a big reason he has become the Democratic presidential nominee then became the first Black President of United States. In this study, we will shed light on some rhetoric device used by American and British leaders, it includes anaphora, syntactic parallelism, antithesis and expletive as well as a careful use of pronouns.

#### **4. Analysis of rhetoric devices in politicians' speeches**

Let start with British leaders as Theresa May and Boris Johnson from the conservative party of the United Kingdom. These two leaders faced great challenges, May's concern was the Brexit and Johnson's one was the lockdown because of covid-19 pandemic.

##### **4.1 Use of Pronouns**

May as UK's second female minister, one of her great challenges in her political life was to convince and attain parliamentary support and adopt EU withdrawal Agreement Bill.

Pronouns as rhetoric device, are the means which signal relationships and construct groups.

*"It's why **we** will put the preservation of our precious Union at the heart of everything **we** do. Because it is only by coming together as one great union of nations and people that **we** can make the most of the opportunities ahead."*

The plural pronoun "WE" refers to the government and May herself. It is a symbol of unity between the government and party for the division created during Brexit and Conservatives' subsequent leadership resist. It is also used to refer to a group consisting of the British people, the government, and herself. This is to emphasize on the entirety of Britain as United behind her version of Brexit.

*“A little over six months ago, the British people voted for change”*

*“**They** voted to shape a brighter future for our country”*

*“**They** voted to leave the European Union and embrace the world”*

*“And **they** did so with their eyes open: accepting that the road ahead will be uncertain at times, but believing that it leads towards a brighter future for their children- and their grandchildren too.*

Using the pronoun “THEY” is to over pass the disruptive reality caused by the close nature of the referendum. She tends to hide and conceal the disagreement concerning the Brexit, she wants to group the entire nation together, with the pronoun “they” here, she tends to ignore this disagreement. It represents the British people as being unified, and here the wise use of pronouns is a great enabler.

#### **4.2 Repetition**

It is a rhetoric device more common in oral discourse (Tannen,1987), it actualizes and fixes the key-words in the mind of the addressee. It is a tool that attracts the audience and influences the perception of the content as well. Moreover, it is considered as a stimulator device for the public since it increases an effective response.

The rhetoric of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson (2019) is often correlated with topical challenges and issues which concern most of the British population as for Covid - 19 pandemic.

*“It is now almost two months since the people of this country began to put up with restriction of their **freedom**-your **freedom**- of a kind that we have never seen before in peace or war” (Johnson, 2020)*

Here, the repetition of the word “freedom” is used to make the appeal more convincing, since it is a case that British people did not cease to complain about. In the following example, we have a case of anaphora where consecutive sentences start with the same word:



*“We **must** protect our NHS. We **must** see sustained falls in the death rate. We **must** see sustained and considerable fall in the rate of infection... We **must** sort out our challenges in getting enough PPE to the people who need it, and yes it is a global problem, but we **must** fix it (Johnson, 2020)*

The same case is detected with American politicians, mainly for Barack Obama:

*“The **time** has come to set aside childish things the **time** has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit”*

*“In reaffirming the **greatness** of our nation, we understand that **greatness** is never a given. It must be earned”*

*“Our challenges may be **new**, the instruments with which we meet them may be **new**”*

Items are used over and over again for emphasis. The repetition of a given word illustrates an idea, this process helps the audience to assimilate and keep the word in mind. Actually, politicians often repeat the same words to attract the addressee, promote clarity and lead to the acceptance of the fact exhibited by the orator. The repetition provides a rhythmic sound which embellishes and makes the speech more handsome.

#### **4.3 Parallelism**

It concerns the arrangement of words in a given set of phrases in an identical order which helps the speaker to be as expressive as possible. Moreover, it shows the deeper meaning and enhances emotions to the speech. Actually, parallelism is a product of “balance arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic form” (the Oxford Dictionary of Literary terms, 2008). This phenomenon provides an ample, lengthy and detailed description.

In his inaugural address, Obama uses this device to create balance, rhythm, and clarity as it is already explained, it also Provides strength and power to the message.

*“We **will build** our defences beyond challenges, least weakness invites challenge **we will confront** weapons of mass destruction so that a new is spared new horrors. We find the fullness of life not only in options but in commitments. And we find that children and community are the commitments that set us free”*

Whatever the topic is, important, more important, less important; the wise choice of the language exponent will transform the simple idea into a loaded one. In fact, the problem will no more appear as one, a dilemma will be a simple fact, and the obscure future will be a promised one.

#### 4.4 Antithesis and Expletive

Juxtaposition of two opposing elements via parallel grammatical structure is the definition for the rhetorical device antithesis which means absolute opposite. It is an effective rhetorical device that pairs opposite or contrasting ideas. Cuddon (2012) defined as the contrasting idea sharpened by the use of opposite or noticeably different meanings, it is usually used to contrast their “correct” actions or qualities with “wrong” actions or qualities of their opponent to influence the decisions of voters. In the following extract from President Obama, speaking at the Pentagon, this phenomenon is exhibited:

*“Over the next 10 years, the **growth** in the defence budget will **slow**, but the fact of the matter is this: It will still **grow**, because we have global responsibilities that demand our leadership. In fact, the defence budget will still be larger than it was toward the end of the **Bush administration**”*

#### 4.5 Rule of Three

The rule of three has been explored and employed by famous orators and presenters throughout ancient, modern and contemporary history. Recall British P.M. Winston Churchill’s stirring triplet from the speech he delivered to parliament on June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940.

*“We **shall fight** on the beaches, we **shall fight** on the landing grounds, we **shall fight** on the fields and in the streets.”*

Politicians over time, have proved that eloquent speech is always the ornament of any idea, rhetoric is a form of mental or emotional energy imparted to a communication, to affect a situation in the interaction of the speaker, in this respect Yoos, 2009 explains: “Rhetoric is a much more comprehensive art, especially as one finds it going on in the art of negotiation in politics that aims to bond and interact with others in shaping a community.” P, 55. The re-elected. U.S. president Barack Obama is famous for the use of this figure of rhetoric.

*“That’s the future we hope for. **That’s** the vision we share, **that’s** where we need to go”*

*“Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. Along campaign is now over.”*

*“I **have listened** to you, I **have learned** from you, and you’ve **made** me a better president.”*

*“The courage to **keep reaching**, to **keep working**, to **keep fighting**”*

Using the power of three better informs the audience and motivates them. It makes the message concise and over loaded, it conveys three ideas at the same time without beating around the bush. In fact, the first word is considered as an introduction, the second is the core of the message, and the third is the conclusion. The audience is a continuous listener and aware that the third idea is following. Rule of three grasps the audience’s attention who always wait for other new ideas and can take part in the speech and predict what is coming next. This rule helps the message stick, be everlasting and converts words into action.

To sum up rule of three is a powerful speech writing technique, it helps to express concepts concisely, highlights the most important facts and increases the memorability of the message. Other techniques are used as rhetorical questions to enhance the expressiveness of speech; actually, it is regarded as one of the universal sociolinguistic method of influencing the addressee. Asking questions involves the audience and maintains the track between the speaker and the listener, this latter may contribute in enriching speech and set up a vivid conversation. This situation will increase emotions and therefore influence the audience’s position and attitudes towards leaders. Tangible and vivid language is possible through adverbs and adjectives; they beautify the content of the message. In reality, this rhetorical device is necessary to ornament the speech and make it extremely interesting and charming.

Politicians’ attention usually quests the audience’s attention and make her in a constant interest and a vital follow up. Countless rhetoric devices are at the service of politicians, a wise use and a careful consideration for the audience will establish a close relationship between the orator and his listeners since this latter will witness that their beliefs are being talked about and taken into consideration.

The analysis above reveals the wise choice of various linguistic and rhetoric devices for the efficiency of the address. Politicians face great challenges besides national and international issues to be solved through the establishment of new laws or adopting new social situations. In fact, Theresa May has been struggling to get parliamentary approval for the legislation to be adopted to carry out the agreement with the EU on the procedures the UK would espouse to leave the alliance. Regarding Boris

Johnson, he was supposed to convince British people to respect the lockdown and safety measures, however; this latter considered this appeal as a restriction and constraint for citizens' freedom. In November 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American president in the history of the United States. It was a time of incredible adversity because of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, unifying the goals of the American citizens and contributing in rebuilding the nation's defence were the main targets. Actually, the politicians cited above have the same denominator that is convincing the addressee to accept and comprehend the exposed ideas. For these reasons, they make use of linguistic intelligence which means the ability to persuade others using words and structures.

The results of the analysis performed by the researcher revealed a set of rhetoric devices as the choice of pronouns which involves the audience besides the repetition, parallelism, antithesis, and rule of three intended to attract the audience and consider them as decision makers. In such situation, language is more than a system of letters and sounds, appropriate choice of words, sentence structure and relevant combinations is imperative in political discourse. In fact, the results answer the research questions concerning the objectives set by orators through adopting linguistic intelligence and shed light on the main language exponents which constitute a political speech.

This study aims at highlighting the situation in which politicians use language and go deeper in its system to reveal the social function. The language used in political speeches divulges politicians' linguistic intelligence which serves political communication that concerns the creation and exchange of ideas and opinions between citizens, public officials, and the media. This is done through a discourse with specific rhetoric to achieve political goals.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Language and society are complementary elements, their coexistence is prominent for the everlasting of ideas, point of views, beliefs, and convictions. Society is the barrel which embraces people, culture, and language, this latter, is one of the persistent means of communication which guarantees the constant relationship between people belonging to the same society. However, the use of language varies according to the place, the circumstances and the different goals. The study of these variations in use is the domain of sociolinguistics. The description and discourse analysis of the extracts revealed that a specific set of language is designed as a rhetoric device, the use of repetition, parallelism and the rule of three are part of the language system which allow politician influencing the audience.

This study has some limitations, we have not dealt with non-verbal tools as body language and its role in attracting the audience and making them interested. Body language has a great impact on the success in any communication, it transmits a state of mind, emotions, and even explains what words cannot do. For these reasons, body

language deserves to be amply investigated in a solely study, that is why it could be the topic of forward articles.

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