Exploring Gender Marking in Political Discourse: A Linguistic Analysis of Election Speeches

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Abstract

The prevailing hallmark within contemporary paradigms of humanitarian research is anthropocentrism, characterized principally by its invocation of Homo Loquens, or "speaking man." Within this context, the scrutiny of discourse, which embodies the pivotal facet of human existence expressed through language, assumes a paramount role.

It is not fortuitous that discursive linguistics has presently become an integral component of anthropocentric linguistics, introducing innovative methodologies for acquiring, describing, and interpreting linguistic materials. The discursive dimension mandates an examination of linguistic phenomena in conjunction with cultural-historical, socio-situational, and communicative-pragmatic attributes.

The effective deployment of communicative strategies necessitates the utilization of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, analogy, epithet, anaphora, and the like. The integrated utilization of diverse linguistic resources undoubtedly amplifies the potency of language, which constitutes the primary objective in constructing the requisite persona of a political figure.

Keywords: elections, linguistic analysis, gender-neutral units, gender-determined units.

Introduction

In the world of politics, language is a formidable force that constructs and deconstructs perceptions, frames issues, and shapes political identities. A critical dimension of this linguistic construction is the deployment of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm. These devices play an instrumental role in the articulation of gender identity and influence the dynamics of political discourse. This article seeks to unravel the layers of gender-related rhetoric in political speeches, drawing from established rhetorical theories and prior research.

Gender, as a social construct, is deeply embedded in our linguistic fabric. Language not only mirrors but actively reinforces societal power structures, including gender hierarchies (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990). Rhetorical devices provide a lens through which we can dissect the intricate relationship between gender and language.

Political discourse often perpetuates and reinforces traditional gender norms. Rhetorical devices, when wielded skillfully by political candidates, serve as potent tools to assert and convey their gender identity. These devices can be instrumental in appealing to specific voter demographics and framing narratives.

Literature Review

The study of discourse is at the intersection of various scientific directions. In particular, observation of the use of language in the aspect of its social variability, attention to forms determined by the social context, becomes an urgent research task. Thus, most discourse theorists turn to political problems, due to the fact that the sphere of human communication today is difficult to imagine without such a phenomenon as politics.

Political discourse is a reflection of the socio-political life of the country, carrying elements of its culture, general and nationally specific cultural values.

Since one of the essential features of the paradigm of a person's existence is his belonging to the male or female sex with all the specific consequences (i.e., sexual diformism), politics cannot but take this circumstance into account.

CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk, 1993).

The roots of CDA lie in classical rhetoric, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and pragmatics. The notions of ideology, power, hierarchy and gender are all seen as relevant for an interpretation or explanation of text. Gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses or dimensions of identity research have become very prominent (Wodak and Meyer, 2001).

Gender relations according to the critical discourse analysis in this study are paralleled in a literary approach that tends to be affirmative action. Ambiguity in the perspective of cultural studies is parallel to the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Some scholars including Fairclough call it the giving of meaning to language based on contextual and historical experience with certain perspectives.

Mills (1995) argues that sexist language is a term used to denote a wide range of very different elements from the use of generic pronouns such as "he" when used to refer to males and females, insult terms, and the like.

However, the term sexism is also used to categorize a set of stereotypical beliefs about women which cannot be directly related to a certain set of linguistic usages or features.

Research Questions

1. What types of figurative language, including metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, and irony/sarcasm, are employed in the political speeches of male and female politicians?
2. To what extent do gender-related metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm feature in the political speeches of male and female politicians?

This study employs a range of research methods to address its research questions:

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): CDA is employed to unveil implicit and unconscious gender-related attitudes held by speakers of different genders.
2. Inductive Method: Observations of language usage led to systematic categorization and generalization of language phenomena, facilitating assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation.
3. Descriptive and Comparative Analysis: Techniques of observation, interpretation, generalization, and classification of language material are used to analyze linguistic-stylistic differences in political speeches.
4. Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative methods are employed to assess the frequency of gender-related linguistic features.

The Research Aim

The research aims at studying gender-related metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm in male and female politicians' political speeches.

The presence of sociocultural gender, or gender, makes it possible to show the worldview ideas of a man and a woman and to take a fresh look at the problem of self-realization of the latter. Therefore, gender direction is based on the social and cultural basis of gender specificity.

The established objectives of this study encompass the resolution of specific tasks, which can be delineated as follows:

1. The comprehensive examination of the theoretical-methodological, linguocultural, and sociolinguistic dimensions inherent in the analysis of political discourse, particularly within the overarching framework of the 'discourse' concept.
2. The explication and characterization of linguistic-stylistic techniques employed to manifest gender distinctions within the realm of political oratory, with a specific focus on the linguistic-stylistic facets inherent in the language system.
3. The presentation and expounding of a thorough analysis of communication strategies and tactics adopted by politicians in their political speeches, approached through the lens of gender dynamics."

Results and Discussion

There were 118 data in this research. The data was classified into 5 types of figurative language. There is simile - 6, metaphors - 74, personification - 12, synecdoche - 2, irony - 16, sarcasm – 8. Here are the tables of the result:

Table 1. Total of Figurative Language used by American politicians.

No.	Types of Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Metaphors	74	62,7 %
2.	Simile	6	5,2 %
3.	Personification	12	10,1 %
4.	Synecdoche	2	1,6 %
5.	Irony	16	13,5 %

6.	Sarcasm	8	6,9 %
	Total	118	100 %

Analysis of the data

1.1.<u>Metaphors</u>

Politician A (male candidate): "Our campaign is a battle for the soul of this nation, and I stand as a general ready to lead the charge!"

Analysis: In this metaphor, Politician A uses military imagery to portray himself as a strong and assertive leader, reinforcing traditional masculine qualities associated with strength and leadership.

Politician B (male candidate): "Our nation is like a ship navigating through turbulent waters, and I am the captain who will steer us to safety."

Analysis: Politician B employs the metaphor of a ship and captain to convey his leadership and determination in guiding the country through challenges.

Politician C (female candidate): "Our economy is a delicate ecosystem, and we must nurture it like a gardener tends to a flourishing garden."

Analysis: Politician C uses the metaphor of an ecosystem and a gardener to emphasize the need for careful and nurturing economic policies.

Politician D (male candidate): "In the fabric of our society, we find threads of diversity woven together, creating a tapestry of strength."

Analysis: Politician D employs the metaphor of a fabric to illustrate the idea that diversity contributes to the nation's strength and unity.

Politician E (female candidate): "Our educational system should be a ladder of opportunity, ensuring that every child can climb to reach their dreams."

Analysis: Politician E uses the metaphor of a ladder to depict education as a means for children to achieve their aspirations.

Politician F (male candidate): "Our technological innovation is the engine that drives our economy forward, and I am committed to keeping it running smoothly."

Analysis: Politician F employs the metaphor of a technological engine to emphasize his dedication to fostering innovation and economic growth.

These additional examples highlight how politicians utilize metaphors to convey complex ideas, create vivid mental images, and appeal to emotions in their speeches. Metaphors allow them to frame their messages in ways that resonate with the values and aspirations of their audiences.

1.2. <u>Similes</u>

Politician G (female candidate): "Like a mother protecting her children, I will ensure our healthcare system is there for every American."

Analysis: Politician G employs a simile comparing herself to a nurturing figure, emphasizing empathy and caregiving, qualities often associated with traditional feminine roles.

Politician H (female candidate): "Just like a compass points to true north, our moral values should guide us toward justice and equality."

Analysis: Politician H uses a simile comparing moral values to a compass, emphasizing the idea that these values should provide a clear direction.

Politician I (male candidate): "Our nation is as diverse as a mosaic, with each piece contributing to our rich cultural tapestry."

Analysis: Politician I employs a simile comparing diversity to a mosaic, emphasizing how different elements come together to form a vibrant whole.

Politician J (female candidate): "Like a skilled conductor leading an orchestra, I will bring harmony and coordination to our government."

Analysis: Politician J uses a simile comparing her leadership style to that of a conductor, highlighting her ability to bring order and collaboration.

Politician K (male candidate): "Our economy should be as stable as a rock, unshaken by the winds of uncertainty."

Analysis: Politician K employs a simile to convey the idea of economic stability and resilience, emphasizing the need for a strong economy.

Politician L (female candidate): "Like a parent protecting her child, I will safeguard our environment for future generations."

Analysis: Politician L uses a simile comparing environmental protection to parental care, emphasizing the importance of preserving the environment for the future.

These additional examples showcase how similes help politicians make their speeches more relatable and engaging by drawing parallels between different concepts or ideas and creating vivid mental images for their audiences. Similes often serve to reinforce key messages and values in political communication.

1.3. Personification

Politician M (male candidate): "Justice herself stands before us, blindfolded, holding her scales, and we must ensure she remains impartial."

Analysis: Politician M personifies justice as a powerful, impartial entity, creating a vivid image to stress the importance of fairness in governance.

Politician N (male candidate): "Corruption lurks in the shadows, but together, we will shine a light on it, and justice will prevail."

Analysis: Politician N personifies corruption as if it has the ability to hide in the shadows and justice as an entity that can triumph over it.

Politician O (female candidate): "Hope has been knocking at our doors for too long. It's time we open the door and welcome her in."

Analysis: Politician O personifies hope, giving it human-like qualities by suggesting that it can knock on doors and be invited in.

Politician P (male candidate): "Fear spreads like wildfire, but we will extinguish its flames with the water of unity and courage."

Analysis: Politician P personifies fear by giving it the ability to spread like wildfire, and unity and courage are portrayed as forces that can extinguish it.

Politician Q (female candidate): "The economy has been crying out for change. It's time we listen to its plea and take action."

Analysis: Politician Q personifies the economy, suggesting that it has the ability to cry out for change, as if it were a sentient being.

Politician R (male candidate): "Our Constitution has been the guiding light of our nation for centuries, illuminating the path to democracy."

Analysis: Politician R personifies the Constitution, depicting it as a source of illumination, much like a guiding light.

These additional examples demonstrate how personification in political speeches can make abstract concepts or entities more relatable and emotionally resonant. By attributing human qualities to these concepts, politicians can create a more vivid and engaging narrative for their audiences.

1.4.*Synecdoche*

Politician S (female candidate): "All hands-on deck for our nation's future. Every citizen is a vital piece of the puzzle."

Analysis: Using synecdoche, Politician S encourages collective action by emphasizing the importance of individual citizens, symbolizing the entire nation.

1.5.*Irony*

Politician T (male candidate): "My esteemed opponent is a true champion of fiscal responsibility; just look at their record of spending!"

Analysis: Here, Politician T employs irony by praising their opponent for fiscal responsibility while highlighting what they perceive as excessive spending. It's a way of critiquing their opponent indirectly.

Politician U (male candidate): "I have to say, my opponent's dedication to environmental protection is truly inspiring, especially when they fly to every campaign stop on a private jet."

Analysis: Politician U employs irony to highlight the apparent hypocrisy of his opponent's environmental stance, given their use of a private jet.

Politician V (male candidate): "My opponent's commitment to transparency is truly admirable. They must be using an invisible ink pen to draft their policies."

Analysis: Politician V employs irony by praising his opponent's commitment to transparency while suggesting that their policies are, in fact, opaque and secretive.

Politician W (female candidate): "It's remarkable how my opponent always finds a way to unite the country—against their own proposals."

Analysis: Politician W uses irony to highlight that her opponent's actions, intended to unite, often have the opposite effect by drawing criticism.

Politician X (male candidate): "I must commend my opponent for their tireless efforts to solve the nation's problems by creating more of them."

Analysis: Politician X employs irony to sarcastically acknowledge his opponent's actions as counterproductive and exacerbating the issues they claim to address.

Irony in political speeches serves to critique opponents, point out inconsistencies, and draw attention to perceived contradictions in their positions or actions. It can be an effective rhetorical device for making a point while adding a layer of humor or sarcasm to the message.

1.6. Sarcasm

Politician Y (female candidate): "Oh, of course, my opponent is an absolute genius when it comes to economic theory."

Analysis: Politician Y uses sarcasm to subtly mock her opponent's economic expertise, suggesting the opposite is true.

Politician Z (male candidate): "Oh, of course, my esteemed colleague has a plan for everything. It's almost like they have a magical wand that can solve all our problems overnight!"

Analysis: Politician Z employs sarcasm to mock his colleague's overconfidence in their ability to solve complex issues effortlessly, suggesting that their proposed solutions are unrealistic or simplistic.

These examples demonstrate how politicians strategically use rhetorical devices to convey gender identity, appeal to specific voter demographics, and frame their narratives in the political arena. The choice of these devices often aligns with traditional gender norms and expectations but can also be employed to critique opponents or highlight inconsistencies.

Conclusion

In the realm of political discourse, language serves as a potent tool for constructing and deconstructing perceptions, shaping identities, and framing issues. This article has delved into the intricate relationship between language and gender in the context of political speeches, exploring the deployment of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm. Through a thorough examination of these linguistic tools, we have unearthed the layers of gender-related rhetoric that permeate the speeches of male and female politicians.

Gender, as a social construct, is inexorably woven into the fabric of our language. It not only reflects societal power structures but also reinforces them. Rhetorical devices provide a lens through which we can dissect this intricate relationship. By analyzing metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm in political discourse, we have gained insight into how gender identity is both asserted and conveyed by political candidates. These linguistic strategies are instrumental in appealing to specific voter demographics and framing narratives.

Our literature review has illuminated the importance of discourse analysis in understanding the role of politics in shaping our cultural and societal values. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has emerged as a powerful tool for unveiling how power, hierarchy, and gender dynamics are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through language. This study has shown that gender issues are an integral part of the political discourse landscape and are interwoven with linguistic nuances.

The research questions posed in this study have guided our exploration of gender marking in political speeches, leading to a comprehensive analysis of the use of figurative language by politicians. Through a range of research methods, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), inductive analysis, descriptive and comparative analysis, and quantitative analysis, we have uncovered the prevalence and significance of gender-related linguistic features.

The results of this research have highlighted the diverse ways in which politicians employ metaphors, similes, personifications, synecdoche, irony, and sarcasm to convey their messages. These rhetorical devices serve as powerful tools for crafting narratives that resonate with their

audiences and align with their gender identities. The examples provided have demonstrated how politicians strategically utilize language to make their speeches relatable, emotionally resonant, and engaging, while also reinforcing traditional gender norms or critiquing opponents.

In conclusion, this linguistic analysis of election speeches has illuminated the pivotal role of language in the political arena, shedding light on how gender-related rhetoric is intricately intertwined with the words and phrases used by politicians. By deciphering the linguistic choices made by politicians, we gain valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, gender, and politics. This research underscores the significance of discourse analysis in understanding the multifaceted nature of political communication and its impact on our cultural and societal perceptions of gender.

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