

PROSODIC AND LINGUO-RHETORICAL DIMENSIONS OF CHARISMA IN DONALD TRUMP’S PERSUASIVE DISCOURSE

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The study examines the rhetorical style of Donald Trump through linguistic, prosodic, and psychological analysis. It explores how repetition, syntactic parallelism, and lexical contrasts contribute to the persuasive power of his speeches. Special attention is given to prosodic features that intensify rhetorical impact and reinforce ideological messages. The study concludes that D. Trump’s communication strategy effectively mobilizes supporters by combining populist appeal with a distinctive and emotionally charged delivery.

Key words: *rhetorical style, prosodic means, presidential speech, persuasive communication.*

Donald Trump’s rhetorical style represents a multifaceted combination of personality traits, lingual and stylistic devices, and political strategies that together render his speeches highly recognizable and impactful for mass audiences. His discourse merges direct confrontation with simplicity of delivery, appeals to emotions and narratives relatable to ordinary people, and actively employs rhetorical figures designed to amplify the effect of his words. This distinctive communicative approach played a crucial role in his 2016 presidential campaign and continues to shape his political image, eliciting a wide range of responses from genuine admiration to outright rejection.

At the core of this rhetorical style lies a specific psychological profile. As demonstrated by the personality analysis conducted by A. Immelman (2020), Trump’s rhetoric is characterized by a combination of high extraversion and low agreeableness, the traits that manifest in his assertive presentation of ideas and aggressive attacks on opponents, both key features of a confrontational and populist communication style characterized by bold statements. Extraversion drives his need to be the center of attention and to engage constantly with his audience, while low agreeableness accounts for his tendency toward conflict and his use of harsh or provocative language. This becomes particularly evident in his public speaking, where D. Trump’s communication is marked by a direct, unfiltered manner. He is unafraid to call things by their name, to label people or situations bluntly, and to refer to his opponents as «fake» or a «disastrous». Such rhetoric resonates strongly with segments of the electorate who value boldness and honesty, while at the same time it provokes discontent among those who prefer a more measured and politically correct tone in presidential discourse (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2021).

One of the key techniques that enhance the persuasive power of Donald Trump's speeches is his active use of repetition, particularly through rhetorical figures such as anaphora and epistrophe. When D. Trump begins several consecutive sentences with the phrase «*We will...*», he not only imposes a clear structure and emphasizes a central action or promise but also instills in listeners a subconscious orientation toward the future. The recurring phrases «*We will build... We will bring back... We will make...*» function as rhetorical markers that, while simple in form, frame each promise as a solution to a large-scale societal issue.

These overtly populist promises are often accompanied by rhetorical opposition to his political adversaries, allowing Trump not only to outline his own agenda but also to discredit his competitors. For instance, in the statement: *My op\ponent | would \rather pro\tect \bureaucrats | than /serve | A/merican | \children.|| And \that's \up\what she is /doing | and \that's \up\what she's \done.||* (Trump, 2016), a clear communicative strategy of polarization can be observed – constructing a dichotomy between «us» and «them», «right» and «wrong».

Naturally, this opposition is reinforced through prosodic means that provide strong emotional contrast. Specifically, the use of a falling-rising nuclear tone in the initial intonation group immediately draws attention to the opponent, followed by an increase in tempo and loudness, which then subside toward the end of the segment. In this final portion, the speaker deliberately fragments what could have been a syntactically unified intonation group into separate segments, each marked by moderately raised rising nuclear tones (*than /serve | A/merican |*), culminating in the word (*\children*), where a falling nuclear tone effectively highlights the semantic weight of this lexical item. Further narrowing of the tonal range in subsequent intonation groups, combined with accidental rises (*\up\what ... /doing | \up\what ... \done*), serves to intensify the accusatory effect – enhancing the emotional impact and reinforcing the contrast between the speaker's position and that of the opponent.

Such rhetorical opposition is often followed by a communicative shift toward accusation, realized through the use of lexical units with invective semantics, as illustrated in the statement: *We will re\peal | and re\place | di/sastrous O\bamacare. || You will be \able to \choose \xi your \own \doctor a\gain. ||* (Trump, 2016).

Here, we observe a deliberate activation of negative evaluation through the adjective «*disastrous*», which reinforces the image of the opponent as the root cause of societal issues. The intensification of rhetorical impact is achieved through a strategic variation of prosodic parameters, including heightened loudness and fine segmentation of intonation groups, where each semantic unit is marked by high rising nuclear tones with rapid directional shifts (*re\peal | and re\place*). Meanwhile,

the negatively charged adjective and the politically loaded eponym «*Obamacare*» are marked by a divided rising-falling nuclear tone (*di/sastrous O\bamacare*), which serves to emphasize their evaluative and ideological significance.

At the same time, the final part of the utterance is characterized by truncated pitch scales combined with an increased tempo, narrowing the tonal range within these shortened scales. This tonal compression stands in stark contrast to the expanded pitch range used for the nuclear syllables conveying a positive vision, lending particular prominence to the high falling tone on (*choose*) and the moderately raised nuclear tone on (*doctor*). This contrast not only strengthens the emotional coloring of the message but also enhances its memorability and rhetorical explosiveness. In this way, it is precisely the prosodic subsystems of speech that enable Trump not merely to highlight key ideas, but to emotionally charge his utterances – rendering them strikingly vivid, even explosive, in the minds of his audience.

The use of repetition in Donald Trump’s speeches is inextricably linked to syntactic parallelism, a structure that not only facilitates comprehension but also amplifies the rhetorical impact of his utterances. A typical example is a series of phrases that begin with a fixed construction such as «*be going to*», as in: *To |make |life \safe | for |all of our \citizens, | we must |also a\ddress the |growing ↑threats we face | from |outside the \country. || We are /going | to de\feat | the bar/barians § of \ISIS. || And we are /going | to de\feat them § \fast. ||* (Trump, 2016).

This repeated syntactic pattern creates an impression of momentum, determination, and a clear sequence of actions. Each subsequent statement seems to reinforce the previous one, cultivating in the audience a sense of confidence in the future and in the speaker’s effectiveness as a leader. The result is a speech rhythm that functions almost musically, maintaining the audience’s attention and helping them focus on key points.

At the prosodic level, this effect is achieved through the use of truncated pitch scales and the segmentation of intonation groups, which direct focus toward those elements of the speech that most effectively realize its persuasive-semantic potential. In addition, the widening of tonal range, along with the alternation of rising (*/going*) and falling nuclear tones (*de\feat*), culminates in the noun *\ISIS*, where a high falling nuclear tone creates a sense of urgency and tension. This prosodic design enables the audience to feel emotionally involved and to respond positively to the speaker’s proposed actions.

Another powerful rhetorical device frequently employed by Donald Trump is gradation i.e. the deliberate escalation of alarming, dramatic, or emotionally charged

statements in order to achieve a climactic effect. This technique enables the speaker not only to intensify emotional impact, but also to construct a sense of the inevitability of the threats he describes. Typically, such gradation begins with a specific example or a relatively minor issue, followed by a depiction of escalating severity, ultimately culminating in a worst-case scenario that is presented as an unavoidable outcome should no action be taken.

In addressing the issue of crime, D. Trump uses this escalatory pattern, progressing from general trends to increasingly dire statistics until the audience is left with the impression that the situation is critical and immediate change is necessary:

Decades of progress made in bringing down crime are now being reversed by this administration's rollback of criminal enforcement. Homicides last year increased by 17% in America's fifty largest cities. That's the largest increase in 25 years. In our nation's capital, killings have risen by 50 percent. They are up nearly 60 percent in nearby Baltimore. (Trump, 2016).

A similar structure is observed in the following utterance: *|This is the |legacy of ↑Hillary \Clinton: | death, | dest/ruction, | 'terrorism | and \weakness.||* (Trump, 2016). Here, rhetorical gradation is constructed through a chain of threat-related semantics substantives (*death* → *destruction* → *terrorism* → *weakness*), which is fully actualized through rising nuclear tones of increasing pitch span (*death*, | *dest/ruction*, | *'terrorism*). Nevertheless, in stark contrast to this emotionally charged initial segment, it is the downward curved low falling nuclear tone with slow pitch movement on *\weakness* that achieves the greatest prominence of the key information. This effect is reinforced by a simple rhythmic structure, a slowed tempo, and relatively moderate loudness.

It is noteworthy that such gradual escalation often culminates in such an assertion as *I will stop it* or *We will never let this happen again*. These declarations function to position Donald Trump as the last hope, the decisive figure capable of averting disaster and restoring order.

In conclusion, Donald Trump's rhetorical style stands out for its strategic fusion of lingual, psychological, and prosodic elements that together amplify his communicative power. His use of repetition, contrast, emotional appeals, and gradation contributes to the creation of a highly persuasive and emotionally charged discourse. His distinctive personality profile, marked by high extraversion and low agreeableness, positions him as a political and decisive leader who skillfully provides his speeches with prosodic modulations and in this way maximizes their memorability and emotional resonance.

References

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