

AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN BARACK OBAMA'S SPEECH

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Abstract: This research aims 1) to analyze the types of figurative language contained in the speeches, 2) to determine the most frequently used types of figurative language, and 3) to understand the purpose of using figurative language by Barack Obama in his speeches. The research method is descriptive qualitative with a semantic approach. The data sources were from five of Obama's speeches in 2011. The data collection was through document and content analysis by downloading the text and video of Obama's speech from the official White House website. The researcher then listened and read the text of the speech, identified the figurative language contained in the text, and recorded and classified the types of figurative language. The data analysis technique employed Spradley's theory, which includes domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, and cultural theme analysis. The results show that 1) there are seven types of figurative language found in Obama's speech, namely metaphor (66%), simile (2%), personification (26%), hyperbole (11%), metonymy (23%), irony (6%), and symbolism (2%). 2) Metaphor is the most dominant figurative language used by Barack Obama during his speech. 3) Obama's use of figurative language aimed to strengthen the message, create a clearer image, and engage the audience.

Keywords: figurative language, metaphor, speech, Barack Obama

INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool that allows us to share ideas, feelings, and emotions both orally and in writing. According to Herman (2016:1), language serves as a tool to share experiences, ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Communication involves understanding and context between sender and receiver, essential for building interpersonal relationships. Effective communication involves the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings that result in attitude change and good relationships.

Speech is considered the most natural form of communication. According to Anggreni et al. (2022), speech involves speaking skills and the ability to convey ideas through body movements and sound. Figurative language is often used in speeches to make them more interesting and persuasive. According to Perrine (1963) and Crystal (1999), figurative language is a way of speaking that uses speech images and is not meant to be taken literally. Christopher Russell Reaske (1966) states that figurative language is often used to express ideas in a creative way. It is used to produce a strong emotional response from the listener and clarify abstract concepts. Figurative language includes

various types such as simile, metaphor, personification, and onomatopoeia that writers and poets use to build imagery and give power to words.

This research highlights the use of figurative language in speeches, especially those delivered by President Barack Obama. Obama often uses figurative language to emphasize the meaning of his statements. For example, in Obama's 2011 speech to the Australian Parliament, he used the metaphor "Dreamers who toiled with hearts and hands to lay railroads and to build cities," which describes visionary hopefuls who worked hard to realize their dreams. This shows the dedication and great effort put in by these dreamers. Obama used figurative language to convey deep meaning in his speech, which is the reason why this research chose Obama's speech as the source.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because the data used was text. According to Bog and Biklen (2007), qualitative descriptive research is conducted to describe the nature of the phenomenon or data collection. The focus of this research is to find the types of figurative language and analyze the types of figurative language most frequently used in the text of Barack Obama's speeches. In addition, researchers also focus on the purpose behind Barack Obama's use of figurative language in each of his speeches.

This research uses a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the types of figurative language in Barack Obama's speech texts. The main data is the text of Obama's speeches downloaded from the official Obama White House website, while secondary data is taken from various media, books, e-books, e-journals, and articles. The research instruments include the researcher himself and field notes. The data collection technique was conducted through document analysis which includes the steps of downloading, reading, finding, recording, and classifying figurative language in the speech text.

FINDINGS

This study aims to explain the types of figurative language contained in five speeches of Barack Obama during 2011, the meaning of each figurative language contained in the speeches of Barack Obama and the purpose of Barack Obama using figurative language in each speech. To make it easier for readers to understand, researchers try to display the results of data analysis in the form of tables.

Table 1. Table of Data Finding

No	Types of Figurative Language	Σ	%
1.	Methapor (M)	100	66%
2.	Simile (S)	3	2%
3.	Personification (P)	40	26%
4.	Hyperbole (HP)	17	11%
5.	Metonymy (MT)	36	23%
6.	Irony (I)	9	6%
7.	Symbolism (SM)	3	2%
	Total	208	100%

From the table above, we can draw several conclusions about the figurative language used in Barack Obama's speeches delivered in 2011. There are seven distinct types of figurative language identified: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, irony, and symbolism. Among these, metaphors were the most prevalent, accounting for 66% of the instances. This high percentage suggests that Obama frequently used metaphors to convey complex ideas and create vivid imagery in his speeches. Personification was the second most common type, making up 26% of the examples, indicating his tendency to attribute human characteristics to abstract concepts or inanimate objects to enhance relatability and emotional appeal. Irony, although less frequent at 6%, was used to highlight contradictions and emphasize his points subtly. Similes, hyperboles, and symbolism each constituted 2% of the figurative language, showing their specific but limited use in adding variety and emphasis to his rhetoric. Metonymy, although mentioned, was not quantified in this summary.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussion is the main part of this research. Here, the researcher presents the results of his analysis in finding the types of figurative language contained in Barack Obama's speech based on the theory. The researcher provides data containing the types of figurative language, the meaning of each figurative language, and the purpose of Barack Obama using figurative language in each of his speeches. The detailed explanation is as follows:

Methapore

According to Abram (1999), metaphor is a type of figurative language used to describe something by relating it to something else. Metaphors describe something by giving in

the nature or characteristics of something else, thus forming an indirect relationship between the two concepts. By using metaphors, language users can create a clearer and more interesting picture of something, even if it is not literally true. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that there is one sentence in a speech paragraph that contains a metaphor. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 6 paragraph
"But we are countries with a willingness to face our imperfections, and to keep reaching for our ideals."

In this sentence, countries are described as having the will to face their imperfections and continue to reach for their ideals. This is a metaphor because it connects human nature (the ability to deal with imperfections) with countries, which are not actually human entities. The use of this metaphor gives the impression that the countries have human-like characteristics, which can face challenges and continue to strive for goals, thus creating a more vivid and relatable image for the listener.

Simile

Simile, according to Abrams (1999:97), is a type of figurative language that compares two objects using words such as "like" or "as". Similes, like metaphors, describe something by comparing it with another to show things that are the same even though they are clearly different. The words as, than, as if, seems, so, appears, and more than are usually used to describe simile. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 7 paragraph
"Australia's fallen sons and daughters."

In this sentence, Australian war dead are described as "fallen children", giving the impression that they are part of the national family. This is a simile because although there are no explicit comparative words, the comparison is very vivid and evokes an emotional image. This use of simile emphasizes the sense of loss and sacrifice in a very personal and touching way, making the listener feel more emotionally connected to the victims.

Personification

Personification is when inanimate objects or abstract concepts are considered to have life or have human characteristics or feelings, according to Abrams (1999:99). Personification

describes something that is not human as if it has feelings, thoughts, behaviour, life, or death that are similar to humans. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 7 paragraph
"Our progress come without great sacrifice."

In this sentence, progress is described as if it can come without great sacrifice, giving the impression that progress is an entity that can experience or require something. This use of personification helps the listener understand an abstract concept like progress in a more concrete and humanized way, thus reinforcing the message conveyed.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a type of figurative language in which exaggeration is created to create a strong effect. According to Abrams (1999:120), hyperbole can be defined as an exaggeration or exaggeration of facts or possibilities. Like the other two figures of speech, hyperbole often relates to personal values and feelings; that is, by making subjective but exaggerated claims (Leech, 1969:168). The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 3 paragraph
"I really do love that one and I will be introducing that into the vernacular in Washington."

In this sentence, the speaker expresses his immense love for something and intends to introduce it into the vernacular in Washington. This is a form of hyperbole as it implies a very high level of enthusiasm and intention, which may not be entirely literal. The use of hyperbole in this context aims to show an exaggerated sense of admiration and appreciation for something, thus reinforcing the speaker's statement.

Metonymy

The type of figurative language known as "metonymy" includes changing names, combining concepts with related terms, and using one word for another. Abrams (1999:98) states that in metonymy, which means "change of name" in Greek, a literal term for one thing can be applied to another thing that is closely related because of the repeated connection in the same event. For example, the name of a place can be used as a metonymy to describe the people who live or work there. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 14 paragraph
"delivering justice to Osama bin Laden."

In this sentence, “justice” is used instead of the act of killing Osama bin Laden, which is considered a form of justice. This is metonymy because it uses the name of one thing (justice) to replace another action that is closely related to it. This use of metonymy gives a more subtle and meaningful impression to the action, thus avoiding the impression of direct violence and emphasizing the aspect of justice.

Irony

Irony is when words are used to say something that is contrary to what is actually said. According to Abrams (1999:135), most uses of the term "irony" still have the same meaning, namely hiding what actually happened, not to deceive, but rather to achieve a certain artistic or rhetorical effect. This happens when people speak or write something while the meaning is different. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 3-paragraph
"As an eight-year-old, I couldn't always understand your foreign language."

In this sentence, the irony lies in the fact that the speaker, who now uses the same language, used to find it difficult to understand as an eight-year-old. This use of irony creates a moment of humor while emphasizing the change and growth the speaker has experienced, making the statement more interesting and entertaining.

Symbolism

According to Abrams (1999:311), symbols are only used for words or phrases that signify objects or events which in turn signify something or have a range of reference outside themselves. Everything that functions as a sign is a symbol in the broadest sense. For example, in literary language, symbols can describe emotions or phenomena indirectly and optionally. The details are as follows:

Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament in the 2 paragraph
"bonds between the United States and the Commonwealth of Australia"

In this sentence, the word “bonds” is used as a symbol to describe the strong relationship and cooperation between the two countries. This use of symbolism gives a deeper and more significant picture of the relationship between the countries, making the statement richer in meaning and impact.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher concluded that metaphor is the most dominant type of figurative language, covering 66% of the total use of figurative language. Metaphors are used to describe indirect relationships between complex concepts, providing a vivid and compelling image for the listener. Personification comes second with 26%, giving human nature to abstract concepts that reinforce the message emotionally. Hyperbole, which accounts for 11%, is used to provide dramatic effect and emphasis on key points, while metonymy (23%) provides deeper meaning by replacing concepts with related terms. Irony (6%) is used to create a contrast between the literal meaning and the intended meaning, often to highlight a paradox or discrepancy between expectations and reality. Simile and symbolism account for only 2% of figurative language use each, but both remain important in conveying powerful comparisons and profound symbols.

Obama's use of figurative language not only enriches his rhetorical communication but also deepens the meaning and impact of his message to the audience. Obama's purpose of using figurative language is to enrich and deepen his rhetorical communication. By using metaphors predominantly, Obama can describe complex relationships or concepts in a way that is clearer and more appealing to listeners. Overall, Obama's use of figurative language in his speeches not only enriches his rhetorical communication but also deepens the meaning and impact of his message to the audience. By portraying his relationships, values and vision in a more creative and meaningful way, Obama managed to effectively influence and inspire listeners through his careful and strategic use of figurative language.

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