



A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE BARACK OBAMA POLITICAL SPEECH “A MORE PERFECT UNION”

Ni Wayan Pusparini¹, Ni Wayan Suastini², I G A Sri Rwa Jayantini³

University of Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Bali Indonesia

niwayanpusparini@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the rhetorical proof used in Barack Obama political speech. This paper related to public speaking skills as public figure especially as a politician. Basically the relationship between Public speaking and rhetorical defined as persuasive speaking in public oratory and rhetorical as an art of language kindly a figure of speech in order to persuade and create memorable speech. Rhetoric words usually use to avoid impolite statements and ruin the image of the speaker itself. The data were analyzed with descriptive qualitative method. This study used theory of rhetorical proofs by Aristotle in Griffin (2012) which consisted of three appeals such as logos (logical proof), ethos (ethical proof), and pathos (emotional proof). The result of this study showed that the most dominant rhetorical proof is pathos (emotional proof) especially in fear type. The highlight Barack Obama's political speech concerned racial tension happened which is the most serious problem in America. Fear types as dominant proof surfaces as the sadness of troubles that faced in America society and the chance of Barack Obama to give campaign to choose him as president.

Journal History

Submitted 11th November 2019

Revised 5th December 2019

Accepted 15th December 2020

Published 29th January 2020

Keywords:

Public speaking, rhetorical proofs, Barack Obama political speech, political discourse

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is kindly a method of communication in a circumstance which a single source sends a message to various of receivers, who give non-verbal and sometimes, question and answer (Pearson,



et.al,2011). Public speaking is an essential skill to every human resources quality. Public speaking learned by people with the ability to produce messages would persuade, engage, inspire, or do various other things to the audience.

Political discourse is a part of the study from Critical Discourse Analysis that aims to political approach and use a politician in political contexts such as government meetings and campaigns. Therefore, public speaking is related to political discourse because politicians are a public figure in society. Rhetoric or rhetorical is part in critical discourse means persuasion. As public speaker, especially politicians, always conveys their ideas with explicit and implicit language to get the audience's trustworthiness. According to Aristotle in Griffin (2012), Rhetorical proofs is one of implicit language that consists of three appeals namely *logos* (logical proof), *ethos* (ethical proof), *pathos* (emotional proof). The first part of *logos* means the of the argument comes from human logic. The second part is *ethos* or ethical proof, which means the speaker's character when delivered the message in the speech. The last one is *pathos* means emotional proofs and express while delivering the speech. this theory is suitable to the comprehension of rhetorical.

The researcher chooses this topic as the research because it relates to the public communication skills, convey messages or information and persuade the audience to achieve specific goals. The study about rhetorical techniques that Aristotle has developed cannot be separated while performing a practical public speaking or public communication context. The researcher chooses Barack Obama as the subject of the research because Barack Obama is the one politician that uses rhetoric as an implicit language in his speech. *A More Perfect Union* is a political speech regarding racial tension among society in America. Barack Obama is

RESEARCH METHOD

The data of this study were taken from the speech from Barack Obama entitled "A More perfect Union" March 18, 2008 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. This speech aims to respond to a controversy that threatened his presidential campaign, which many consider the topic of race. The transcript of Barack Obama political speech was conducted from www.npr.org. Political speech commonly used rhetoric as an implicit language and persuade someone or the listener. As a politician choosing words is important because a politician is a public figure, everything will become attention to citizen and worldwide.



The study was conducted by library research with documentation method and note-taking technique. Library research is a kindly one method used by researcher, and the subject is the scholarly research. The data were downloaded from internet site. Firstly, downloading video from YouTube about Barack Obama political speech, and second downloading the transcript of Barack Obama speech and taking note to find out the statement from the data categorizing as rhetorical proofs. And next to classifying the data of rhetorical proofs found in the speech. Finally rechecking, the collected data to be analyzed.

The theory used in this research focused on theory from Aristotle in Griffin (2012) which is related to political speech regarding rhetorical proofs used by speakers. In this part, the researcher more briefly to explain the subparts of rhetorical proofs. Firstly, *logos* or logical proofs consist of two parts: enthymeme means a deductive syllogism that comes from 2 lines probable premise and the conclusion of the premise; meanwhile, an example is a logical argument that shows from the analogy from the speaker itself. The second part of rhetorical proofs is *ethos* or ethical proofs consisting of three parts: perceived intelligence means the speaker's credibility when they deliver the speech, virtuous character means the character that surfaces when the speaker delivers their speech. Meanwhile, goodwill is a positive response the speaker toward audience while they deliver the speech. the last part is *pathos* or emotional proofs divided into 8 parts namely anger vs calmness, love or friendship.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

After the rhetorical proofs were classified in each type, the researchers found all types of parts in rhetorical proofs Barack Obama's political speech. The analysis of Barack Obama political speech 2008 showed that there are 18 data that found and categorizing as *logos* (logical proof), *ethos* (ethical proof), and *pathos* (emotional proof). Therefore, the table examined in details:

No	Categories	Subcategories	Occurrence	Total Percentage
1	Logical proofs	Enthymeme	1	5,5 %
		Example	1	5,5%
		Total percentage		11 %
2	Ethical proofs	Perceived intelligence	2	11,1 %



		Virtuous character	1	5,5 %
		Goodwill	1	5,5%
		Total percentage		22,1%
3	Emotional proof	Anger	1	5,5%
		Calmness	2	11,1%
		Friendship	2	11,1%
		Hatred	1	5,5%
		Fear	3	12%
		Confidence	1	5,5%
		Admiration	1	5,5%
		Envy	1	5,5%
		Total Percentage		61,7 %

The researchers concluded that, the most dominant occurrence of this research is *pathos* (emotional proofs) the percentage is 61,7% and the dominant types is fear, which is 12 %. A *More Perfect Union* speech is one speech that surfaces all the problem in America and focuses on racial inequality. Therefore, Barack Obama show his fear regarding this speech toward to audience.

DISCUSSION

Rhetorical proofs used in Barack Obama Political Speech 2008

In analyzing the data, Barack Obama's statement or expression is classified based on types that indicate each type of rhetorical proof. From 18 data, there are categories of rhetorical proofs found in this speech.

Logos (logical proof)

When the speaker delivered their speech, the logical statement will appear as the argument from the speech itself. Therefore, the subparts of logical proofs examined in details:

Enthymeme

Data 1:

1st premise: America can change

2nd premise: Our union can be perfected.

Conclusion: America can change and become perfected

In his statement, Barack Obama delivered his deductive syllogism about his hope toward America. Barack Obama proves he can change America to become better in various aspects and expects to become perfected through his hard work and American society.



Example

Example is another method to create logical reasoning in a statement. It is proving by analogy that makes the audience the speech that conveys by the speaker.

Data 2:

"I heard something else: At the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones".

In his speech, Barack Obama tells about an analogy that is comparing with this age about how to survive and get freedom as a human. Quotation above kindly stories from Christian Bible and the problem that faced Israel nation at that time. In this era this analogy represents how the black race fight for freedom. Barack Obama is the representative from the black race fight for racial inequality.

Ethos (ethical proof)

Ethical proof is important part in rhetorical proofs that aims to know the credibility of the speaker and character while they delivering their speech. thus, the sub parts presented as follows:

Virtuous character

Virtuous character comes from the personality the speaker itself. Spread positivity toward audience in the speech makes the speech more reliable, trustworthy and give positive image for the speaker itself.

Data 3:

" But the truth is, that isn't all that I know of the man. The man I met more than 20 years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another, to care for the sick and lift up the poor".

From the quotation above, Barack Obama shows his virtuous character as positive person and try to clarify his relationship between Rev. Wright and him. The word *man* above refers to Rev. Wright. Barack Obama tells about Rev. wright that has a significant role in his life as pastor and introduces his Christian faith, and Rev. Wright like family. Therefore, this statement categorizes as a virtuous character because it contains and shows the speaker's character implicitly.

Pathos (emotional proof)

Emotional proof comes from the speaker when they express their feelings toward the audience. The speaker's emotional expression is essential to make the speech more reliable. The researcher found several data



categorizing as emotional proof; the data presented as follows:

Anger

Anger expression came from the speaker, when they feel dissatisfied about something and emphasized it with the statement that conveys by them.

Data 4:

"The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress had been made;

From the quotation above, Barack Obama shows his anger expression through this statement regarding the controversial remarks made by Rev. Wright that underestimate the progress of American country. Therefore, Barack Obama shows his anger

Calmness

Calmness is one expression that shows from the speaker, settling down the anger expression from the statement. It usually surfaces first with anger statement and followed by calmness statement.

Data 5:

"Let us be our brother's keeper, scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well."

Let us be our brother's keeper, scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper, is reflected calmness statement of Barack Obama to keep to each other as a unity. The word *scripture tells us* it comes from the Christian Bible in Romans 14:23-23 and any other in the Christian Bible that says about love each other. The word that Barack Obama used based on the Bible emphasized the word 'keep' representing like a shepherd keeps his sheep. In genesis which part in the Christian Bible tells us about Cain and Abel's story, Cain was older, more mature, and seemingly more responsible to his brother. Therefore, the Bible says to keep each other as a human in unity. And perhaps politics can be a reflected of spirit as well as from the Bible.

Love or Friendship

Friendship expression comes from the speaker tell something about sake for the others.

Data 6:

"I chose to run for president at this moment in history because I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together, unless we perfect our union."



In his statement, Barack Obama shows his love or friendship statement that thinks for sake his country, therefore, he runs for president because he was really concerned to solve, survive, and fight for racism and others human rights trouble happened in America.

Fear

Fear is an emotional expression when someone feel sad and believe something in a situation likely will happen on the future.

Data 7:

“This time, we want to talk about the crumbling schools that are stealing the future of black children and white children and Asian children and Hispanic children and Native American children. This time, we want to reject the cynicism that tells us that these kids can't learn; that those kids who don't look like us are somebody else's problem.”

In this speech Barack Obama conveys fear statement as dominant occurrence that found by researcher in this research. It is related regarding the topic of this research about racial inequality that happen in America. From the quotation above, Barack Obama shows his fear toward all children in America. The word *crumbling* represents about the incident happen in school for all race children in there. Barack Obama shows the fear or the bad things that happen, and he aware for the problem that surfaces in his country, crumbling school is the one problem that represent others problem in America and not only for one race, but all race has same problem with it.

Confidence

Confidence is a personality of the speaker when they deliver their speech. as professional speaker it is important to build up confidence when delivered the speech. confidence as public speaker also defined as the ability of the speaker to persuade.

Data 8:

Throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity.

In his statement, Barack Obama shows his confidence expression through this speech. based on the statement above, the word *hungry* represents the confidence of Barack Obama that kindly think that all the society in America need this message conveys by him. This message regarding the unity, deliver by a lot of politician and senator in America. One of them is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s that deliver the speech “I have a Dream” on 1963 to civil rights marchers in Washington, D.C that one speech about race and well-known in the world.



Admiration

Admiration is one expression about likes, or admire something or someone by speaker in their speech.

Data 9:

"Let me begin by thanking Harris Wofford for his contributions to this country in so many different ways he exemplifies what we mean by the word citizen and so we are very grateful to him for all the work he has done and I'm thankful for the gracious and thoughtful introduction."

In this statement Barack Obama, admire Harris Wofford, for *his contributions to America. Harris Wofford was an American attorney, civil rights activist, and Democratic Party politician who represented Pennsylvania in the United States Senate. Therefore, Harris Wofford is an important person for Barack Obama, as the democratic party success team. According to www.washingtonpost.com, Harris Wofford is influence person for John F Kennedy in 1961, and he went on to a wide ranging career, waiving as president Kennedy's special assistant for civil rights. Therefore, Barack Obama admire him as important person for his victory as president*

CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed Barack Obama political speech "A More Perfect Union" delivered by Barack Obama in 2008 using rhetorical theory by Aristotle (Griffin 2012). Rhetorical theory by Aristotle in Griffin (2012) is an appropriate theory used in analyzing a public speaker deliver his speech. The rhetorical analysis specifically tells us about the types and category of rhetoric used from logical, ethical, and emotional sources. Those things are essential that used and intended by speaker to deliver the speech correctly. The study analyzed descriptively using library research conducted data from the source in the internet. From 18 data found by the researcher and analyzing each data into rhetorical, the most dominant proofs that surfaces in this speech are emotional proofs (pathos), which is fear type it is about 12 %. From the whole of text, Barack Obama mostly tells his fear about racial inequality problem that happen in America.

REFERENCES

Darminto, Wage (2019). *Rhetorical Analysis of Oprah Winfrey's Commencement Speech at the University of Southern California in 2018*. Thesis. Semarang: English Departement Faculty language and Arts, University of Semarang.



Fengjie Lie, Jia Ren & Yingying Zhang (2016). *Analysis of the Rhetorical Devices in Obama's Public Speeches*. Retrieved June 15, 2016 from [Http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/html/10.11648.j.ijll.20160404.11.html](http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/html/10.11648.j.ijll.20160404.11.html)

Griffin, E. (2012). *A First look at communication theory (8th ed)*. New York:McGraw-Hill.

Herrick, J.A. (2005). *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An introduction (3rd ed)*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Kennedy, G.A (1994). *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.

McCroskey,J.C.1997. *An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication 7th Edition*. Boston: Allyn &Bacon

Nikitina, Arina. 2011. *Successful Public Speaking*. Retrieved August 30, 2015,library.iyte.edu.tr/dosya/kitap/successfulpublicspeaking.pdf.

Sandra, M.S. (2015). *An Analysis of the Aristotelian Rhetorical Appeals of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in Selected Musical Plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein*. Denton, texas

Sellnow,Deanna.2005. *Confident Public Speaking second Edition*. USA: Thomson Learning, Inc.

Stensland, Ulrik.2015. *An Influential and Persuasive Speech; A Rhetorical Analysis on Barack Obama's " A More Perfect Union"*. Norway: University of Tromso

