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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO RHETORICAL DEVICES IN
BRITISH AND AMERICAN POLITICAL SPEECHES: A
SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL APPROACH**

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

For years, language and politics have been of interest to many researchers because of their close relationship. As Joseph (2006) states in "Language and Politics" that language and politics interact well with one another and are independent. According to Charteris-Black (2005), successful speakers, especially in political contexts, need to appeal to attitudes and emotions that are already within the listeners. Thanks to its uniqueness from other kinds of talk and strong influence on audiences, many people, especially politicians usually take full advantage of it to convince their targeted audiences to achieve their political ends. It is a very effective way to change the mentality of large number of people or strengthen their beliefs in speakers. However, a successful speech depends not only on the speaker's eloquence but also on the other factors such as the mood of the crowd, the topic of the speech and the use of language in which many skills are used. Among them are rhetorical devices added to the speech in accordance with the specific situation of communication, which sounds more attractive, persuasive and makes the speaker's arguments more memorable.

According to Charteris-Black (2014: xii), the main purpose of a political speech is to "satisfy emotional, moral and social needs", and rhetorical devices are known as persuasive devices and techniques used to convey a point or convince an audience. Accordingly, almost all of politicians applied them in their speeches, and the speeches they

made have always created huge influence on the audiences, which is the reason why there has been much attempt made to research on rhetorical devices in political speeches

For these reasons, I decided to carry out a study on *"An investigation into rhetorical devices in British and American political speeches: A SYSTEMIC functional approach"* as my master thesis.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTS

The study aims at to look at rhetorical devices in the light of SYSTEMIC Functional Linguistics (SFL) that British and American leaders use in their speeches. However, this MA thesis focuses on analyzing the use of three rhetorical devices including metaphor, simile and hyperbole. To achieve the aims mentioned above, the study concentrates on the following objectives:

- To classify and describe types of rhetorical devices under the umbrella of SYSTEMIC functional linguistics used in political speeches made by British and American politicians.

- To examine and highlight the meaningful function and contribution of rhetorical devices applied in specific contexts in British and American political speeches.

- To have a comparison between the similarities and the differences in the use of rhetorical devices between British and American politicians in their speeches.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the three rhetorical devices contribute to conveying politicians' messages and creating a persuasive effect on the audience?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the use of rhetorical devices between British and American political speeches?

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study mainly investigates the three kinds of rhetorical devices: metaphor, simile and hyperbole in British and American political speeches in a certain range of time from 1982 to 2011 in the view of SYSTEMIC Functional Approach through two authentic research corpora.

1.5. SIGNIFICAN OF THE STUDY

The findings from the study will firstly provide a deeper look into how to use rhetorical devices in every aspect of life in general and in political speeches in particular more effectively. Also, the Vietnamese as well as English learners will be provided a useful reference for a variety of ways of using rhetorical devices to aware and catch the beauty of using language so as to produce special effects in public speech and persuade the audience. Moreover, my research is expected to contribute a valuable source of rhetorical devices to teaching and learning English, especially for those who are really interested in political discourse analysis.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Apart from the abstract, the appendix, the thesis is composed of five main chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implication

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Literature Review

So far, a number of studies related to the research on the use of rhetorical devices have been conducted.

In a corpus-based analysis, political speeches of warfare by Bush and Obama was carried out by Trailovic (2014), in which lexical entries including pronouns, modal auxiliaries, metaphors and euphemisms in certain 9/11 and warfare speeches are delivered by the two American presidents, George Bush and Barack Obama, from 2001 to 2013. Hoang Thi Kim Cuc (2018) does a research on epistemic modality expressions as mitigation markers in British political speeches. The main aim of the study is to concentrate to analyze lexical entries and syntactic structures of mitigation markers in British and American political speeches in a certain range of time through two authentic corpora through the method of corpus-based approach. In a discourse analysis of political speeches Widyawadani (2016) conducted a study on rhetorical analysis of Donald Trump's presidential candidacy announcement speech with the findings related to the three rhetorical proofs based on Aristotle's theories. Sherwani (2010) investigated rhetoric broadcast applied in political speeches, in which the relation between discourse and rhetoric, metaphor in political rhetoric and rhetoric in mass media are analyzed. Kazemian and Hashemi did a research on critical discourse analysis of Barack Obama's 2012 five speeches, from the point of frequency and

functions of nominalization, rhetorical strategies, passivation and modality.

Although many previous studies have been done on rhetorical devices different discourse aspects, those studies have less concentrate on types of rhetorical devices and their primary functions in political speeches. Hence, this is the land for the research *"An investigation into rhetorical devices in British and American political speeches: A SYSTEMIC Functional Approach"*

2.2. Theoretical Background
2.2.1. Definition of political speech

Charteris-Black (2014: xii) defined a political speech as "a coherent stream of spoken language that is usually prepared for delivery by a speaker to an audience for a purpose on a political occasion". According to Obeng (1997:58), "a political discourse is full of conflicts and synergy, contestations and acquiescence, praise and dispraise, as well as delicate criticism and unmitigated support". Besides, political speeches are normally designed to serve the speaker's specific political goals. As Schaffner (1977) claimed that this type of discourse has its particular functions which depend on specific political activities and communicative purposes. Therefore, orators must be good at eloquence and making flexible use of speeches strategies in order to make expected effects on the audience and achieve their specific political goals. However, whatever the goal is, persuading the audience and making them strongly believe in what is being said is the major function of political speeches.

2.2.2. Definition of SYSTEMIC Functional Linguistics.

SYSTEMIC Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language with the main source from the work of Firth and his colleges in London. SFL is, then, wholly developed by Halliday who is best known for developing SYSTEMIC Functional Linguistics, in the work on the Grammar of Chinese. This is considered the more comprehensive linguistic approach, which distinguishes because the concern of SFL with the great importance and the use of language is placed on the function of language such as what language is used for, rather than what structure is all about and the manner by which it is composed (Matthiessen and Halliday, 1977). Besides, SFL stated at a social context, and look at how language both acts upon and is constrained by this social context.

In the view of SFL, any analysis of language in use necessitates the discussion of some key concepts including context of culture, context of situation, field, mood, tenor and genre.

2.2.3. Definition of rhetoric.

As Aristotle in "The art of rhetoric", Winterwood (1953), John Locke - an English philosopher of the 17th century, Huang Ren and Liu Yameng (1999), Meanwhile, Oxford English Dictionary (1993), the most relevant description used in this study is rhetoric as the art of speaking in an elegant and powerful but hidden way to influence, impress and convince the audience.

2.2.4. Rhetorical devices in tradition approach vs SFL

In traditional view, a rhetorical device is a use of language that is aimed at having an effect on its audience through spoken or written

forms. Especially, in traditional grammar, rhetoric is the study of style through grammar and logical analysis.

However, in SFL, any rhetorical device must be understood in relation to context as any linguistic choice is decided by context.

2.2.5. Types of rhetorical devices

In scholars' view in the world, rhetorical devices have been classified into different types.

As Samuelsen (2011), twenty-six rhetorical devices classified into four categories: devices of association, emphasis, balance and restatement, and decoration and variety. Similarly, in a handbook of rhetorical devices, Harris divided rhetorical devices into more than sixty types which fall into three categories: those involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus; those involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement; and those involving decoration and variety. Moreover, many theoreticians such as Taylor (1981), Little (1985), Lyons (1995), Thomas et al (2004) and Fahnestock (2011) kept discussing about rhetorical devices. However, the way these scholars define and classify the rhetorical devices are almost the same in "A handbook of Rhetorical Devices" by Robert A. Harris (2010)

In this paper, because of the limitation of time and my own ability, three rhetorical devices including metaphor, simile and hyperbole will be studied to figure out lexical characteristics and functions in the discourse of political speeches. Moreover, the context-

dependent aspects of what the speakers mean is concentrated on rather than the other factors.

Metaphor

As Robert A. Harris (2010) stated in "A handbook of Rhetorical Devices", "metaphor compares two different things by speaking of one in terms of the other. Unlike a simile or analogy, metaphor asserts that one thing is another, not just that one is like another". In addition, metaphor compares the different degree of direct identification between tenor and vehicle and the concept of metaphor is that A is B. In this case, a metaphor is frequency invoked by the verb *to be.*

[1]   […] Tyron, ***your music will be the music of angles.***

[by Reagan, 1986 in the conference]

In addition, Harris (2010) explained that "like simile and analogy, metaphor is a profoundly important and useful device". Therefore a metaphor is not a way of explanation by making the abstract or unknown concrete, but it also enlivens by touching the audience's imagination. In fact, the implied images or the comparison is clear enough that the A is B is not necessary. Here is an example.

[2]   […], but it would also have broken ***the one bridge*** still connecting him to his mother and the part of him most like her. [by Reagan, 1986 in the conference]

Simile

Simile is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In formal prose the simile is

a device both of art and explanation, comparing an unfamiliar thing own as to the reader (Harris, 2010). According to Literary Devices (http://literarydevices.net/simile/) "a simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things". Unlike metaphor, the direct comparison indicated by a simile will typically contain the words "as" or "like", which makes the intended message much easier to understand.

[3]   Above all, our foreign policy is more hard-headed in this respect. It will focus *like a laser* on defending and advancing Britain's nation interest. [by Cameron in the conference, 2010]

According to Harris, a variety of ways exists for invoking the simile as listed in the following table:

Table 2.2: Forms of simile listed in Harris' theory

X is like y	X is not like y	X is the same as y
X is more than y	X is less than y	X does y; so does z
X is similar to y	X resembles y	X is as y as z
X is y like z	X is more y than z	X is less y than z

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is defined in Cambridge dictionary as a way of speaking or writing that makes someone or something sound much bigger, better, smaller, worse or more unusual, etc, than they are. Besides, Robert A. Harris (2013) described a hyperbole as a deliberate

exaggeration, used for emphasis and dramatic effect. Let's analyze the following example:

[4]   Everything – from bank lending to skills, green tech to high tech, competition to innovation, international trade to local growth – ***will be put under the microscope***. [by Cameron, 2010 in the conference]

In a speech given by Mr. David Cameron at CBI, he utilized the hyperbole "will be put under the microscope" with the exaggerated meaning of "microscope" to emphasize that every detailed plan will be gone through with the careful consideration.

In conclusion, hyperbole is a kind of figurative language used to express exaggeratedly beyond human expectation.

Chapter Three: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Methodology

The research methods in this thesis bases on a comprehensive view of corpus linguistic and the corpus-based methodology.

In this study, the software package of Wordsmith 5.0 is applied as a tool to provide statistical data of linguistic figures for analysis for the first time in general. Because many rhetorical devices are not only realized by using only Wordsmith, for instance the words "like" and "as" are not always referred to simile, they must be put in the context of the situation. Therefore, the method of the study is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative method for a deeper analysis of the research topic. While quantitative approach provides statistical information such as calculation of occurrence, findings of rhetorical devices in particular categories thanks to the keyword lists and concordance line tools, qualitative research is employed to select specific utterances to gain an in-depth understanding of the general distribution of categories of rhetorical devices. In addition, these analyses also provide the basis for a comparative analysis of the use of rhetorical devices between British and American politicians in political speeches.

3.2. Research design

3.2.1. An introduction to research corpus design

In corpus-based study, the most important thing in design a research corpus is to meet the two important criteria including the size of corpus and how to select materials as Aston and Bumard (1998)

concluded or the four principals in delivering a research corpus including size, content, balance and representativeness stated by Hunston's (2002).

For my research of corpus-based analysis, the size on corpus of British and American politicians is 40 speeches (shown in 3.2.2 below), which are presented by native speakers. It can be seen that the corpus is both authentic and valid, large enough to serve the purpose of the research.

3.2.2. Collecting texts and building the research corpora

The table 3.1 and 3.2 below show details of the two text corpora used in this study.

Table 3.1: Data the corpus of the US presidents' speeches (The USC)

N0	Speeches	Date range	No. of words	% of the corpus
1	USB01	20/01/2001	1,652	1,759
2	USB02	10/01/2002	3,939	4.195
3	USB03	20/11/2002	1,779	1,895
4	USB04	07/01/2003	3,777	4,023
5	USB05	20/01/2004	5,252	5,593
6	USC01	24/01/1995	9,256	9,859
7	USC02	23/01/1996	6,363	6,778
8	USC03	04/02/1997	6,828	7,273
9	USC04	27/01/1998	7,368	7,848
10	USO01	28/06/2006	4,607	4,907

11	USO02	20/11/2006	4,353	4,636
12	USO03	28/04/2007	2,784	2,965
13	USO04	28/08/2008	4,690	4,995
14	USO05	20/01/2009	2,408	2,565
15	USR01	26/01/1982	5,236	5,577
16	USR02	25/01/1983	5,624	5,990
17	USR03	04/02/1986	7,696	8,197
18	USR04	11/02/1988	4,299	4,579
19	USR05	20/01/1990	2,626	2,35
20	USR06	25/11/1992	3,341	3,504
Total running words			**93,877**	**100%**

US Presidents

B: Bush   C: Clinton

O: Obama   R: Reagan

Table 3.2: Data on the corpus of the UK Prime Ministers' speeches
(The UKC)

N0	Speeches	Date range	No. of words	% of the corpus
1	UKBL01	01/10/2007	3,223	3,443
2	UKBL02	02/10/2001	4,136	4,402
3	UKBL03	07/01/2003	7,411	7,889
4	UKBL04	01/11/2007	1,772	1,886
5	UKBL05	03/11/2007	3,496	3,721
6	UKBR01	26/01/2005	4,525	4,816
7	UKBR02	20/09/2007	7,590	8,079

8	UKBR03	04/03/2009	3,359	3,575
9	UKBR04	17/12/2009	7,642	8,134
10	UKBR05	15/02/2010	6,622	7,049
11	UKCA01	25/10/2010	2,886	3,072
12	UKCA02	15/11/2010	5,077	5,404
13	UKCA03	06/01/2011	7,288	7,758
14	UKCA04	16/05/2011	3,999	4,256
15	UKCA05	25/05/2011	1,519	1,616
16	UKTH01	08/10/1982	4,976	5,296
17	UKTH02	14/10/1983	4,977	5,298
18	UKTH03	11/10/1985	3,847	4,095
19	UKTH04	14/10/1988	4,718	5,022
20	UKTH05	12/10/1990	4,877	5,189
Total running words			**93,940**	**100%**

UK Prime Ministers

BL: Blair   BR: Brown

CA: Cameron   TH: Thatcher

3.2.3. Data Analysis

Samples of rhetorical devices from the chosen corpora are collected. Then they will be clarified through the quantitative and qualitative methods. From that, the findings are classified, analyzed by using the tables, pie charts or diagram to discover the contribution of the rhetorical devices in persuading and making impressive effects on the certain audiences.

3.3. Validity and reality.

   Corpora are collected from reliable online sources and they are in electronic format. In fact, the research is a combination of a quantitative and qualitative method, the results of the research produce a qualified and quantitative study as well as provide other thesis related the theoretical background. Moreover, the findings of the study help both Vietnamese and English learners and researchers use stylistic devices more effectively. Therefore, this study is valid and reliable.

Chapter Four: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Overview

In this chapter, these three rhetorical devices – metaphor, simile and hyperbole - are realized and analyzed to clarify how they are used, how they contribute to convey the message and their effectiveness in the communicating with the audience as well. In addition, the similarities and differences in the use of these three rhetorical devices between British and American speeches are clarified.

The following figures presents the analysis of the three rhetorical devices

Table 4.1. Analysis of context of situation of the speeches

Context of situation	
Mood	Spoken discourse in the mood of conference, forum and campaign speeches.
Tenor	Speakers including American Presidents: Bush, Clinton, Obama, Reagan and the UK Prime Ministers: Blair, Brown, Cameron and Thatcher. Hearers: the audiences (other leaders and their people). The speaker always drops an appropriate tone
Field	Foreign policies and American and English policies of education, economy, health

	care, alliance, arm and ones against terrorism.

Table 4.2. The Frequency of occurrences of rhetorical devices in
British and American political speeches

Occurrences of rhetorical devices	British	American	The total
Metaphor	264 (33%)	216 (27%)	480 (60%)
Simile	113 (14%)	70 (9%)	183 (23%)
Hyperbole	74 (9%)	66 (8%)	140 (17%)

As can be seen from the table 4.1 that rhetorical devices are used in the context of specific situations in which the speakers as roles of American Presidents and the UK Prime Ministers gave the speeches in the conference, forums or campaigns in a persuasive and accordant way. Audiences were from various social status and occupation with different political perceptions. In fact, the fields were from global issues to national aspects as mentioned above.

It can be seen from the table 4.2 that metaphor is the most popular rhetorical device, simile is far less popular, and hyperbole is the least.

From the table 4.2, the frequent appearances of the figurative devices between British and American political speeches are clearly realized. Rhetorical devices are used in British political speeches more commonly than in American political speeches.

4.2. Metaphor

Politicians have frequently used metaphor because of its great contribution to conveying the message, convincing the audience, inspiring them to take actions or changing their beliefs.

In American and British political speeches, metaphor is often used in two forms including A is B and the other ones are not in the form of A is B, in which an implied comparison is mentioned for rhetorical effects.

From the findings presented the table 4.3, it is clearly that metaphor is more popularly used in British political speeches than in American ones.

Table 4.3. The frequency of occurrences for metaphor between British and American political speeches

Forms	British	American	The total
A is B	29 (4%)	25 (3%)	54 (7%)
The others	235 (29%)	191 (24%)	426 (53%)

4.2.1. Metaphor with the form A is B

4.2.2. Metaphor with other forms

4.3. Simile

In this research, simile is estimated to be one of rhetorical devices common-used in political speeches and politicians use the structures *more/ less ...than, as, as….as, such, neither, so, the same, similar to*, with a clause, a noun phrase, a verb phrase, an adjective phrase to make a comparison between two different things basing on their similarities. The details are showed in the following figures:

Table 4.4. The frequency of occurrences for simile between British and American political speeches.

Forms	British	American	The total
As and as…as	82 (10,5%)	41 (5,5%)	123 (16%)
Like	10 (1%)	13 (1,5%)	23 (2,5%)
Than	9 (1%)	12 (1,5%)	21 (2,5%)
Other forms	12 (1,5%)	4 (0,5%)	16 (2%)

From the table 4.4, it is said that simile appears more frequently in Bps than in Aps. Politicians use simile to portray the situation vividly to create an atmosphere which allows the audience to live through the experience of the speakers, which influences thoughts as well as actions of the audience.

4.3.1. Simile with *as, as…as*

4.3.2. Simile with *like*

4.3.3. Simile with *than*

4.3.4. Simile with others

4.4. Hyperbole

Table 4.5: The frequency of occurrences for hyperbole
between British and American political speeches.

The total of Hyperbole	British	American
140 (17%)	74 (9%)	66 (8%)

As illustrated in table 4.5, hyperbole shows a dramatical decrease like simile when taking up only 17 percentage with 140 occurrences in the total amount of analyzed rhetorical devices. It is clearly that British speakers used hyperbole and metaphor as well as simile more often than American speakers, they both used rhetorical devices with the same purpose in contribution conveying the message to the audiences.

Chapter Five: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Through the four previous chapters, the three rhetorical devices including metaphor, simile and hyperbole have been analyzed and clarified. On the basis of the theories stated in chapter two and the methods mentioned in chapter three, chapter four has investigated the realization of the three rhetorical devices and examined the use of them so as to answer the two research questions in chapter one.

From the findings of the study, chapter five provides the conclusions and summarizes all the main points of this research, then suggests some implications in learning and teaching English, practicing oratorical skills as well as for further researches.

5.1. Summary

The study is conducted by analyzing two corpora including 40 speeches made by British and American leaders from 1982 to 2011. The main aim of the study is to work out how metaphor, simile and hyperbole are employed and their respective functions in political speeches as well as to make a comparison between these rhetorical devices used in British political speeches and in American political speeches. After analyzing the 40 speeches made by British and American leaders from the theorical basis of SFL and language rhetoric, some conclusions are formulated in the following points:

In the total of 40 speeches with 803 times of the three rhetorical devices realized and analyzed, metaphor ranks the highest with 480 occurrences, then simile with 183 times and the last position is hyperbole with 140 sayings. However, the occurrences for the three rhetorical device in British political speeches is more frequent than

that in American political ones. In detail, British politicians used 264 metaphors throughout the 20 chosen political speeches while American leaders only used 216 metaphor throughout the same equal corpus. Similar to simile, there were 113 similes employed by British speakers and 70 similes by American speakers. There is not much difference in the frequency of occurrences for hyperbole used in British and American political speeches as British speakers used 74 hyperbole sayings and American speakers used 66.

As observed from the data of this study, the use of the three rhetorical devices in British and American political speeches is all looked through the context of situation including the topic and the types of the speech, and the relationship between the speakers and the audiences. Undoubtedly, the three rhetorical devices used by both British and American leaders helped the intended message expressed in a more comprehensive, impressive, vivid and visual way, which creates the persuasive effect on the audiences. Above all, with the use of these rhetorical devices in political speeches, especially about political problems the speakers create rhythmical effects making their words more powerful and persuading. It is apparent that employing rhetorical devices makes political arguments not only more attractive but also more forceful, informative and effective. Moreover, using rhetorical devices builds up the persuasiveness of the speeches, which increases the support from the audiences.

5.2. Implication for teaching and learning.

It can be not denied that rhetorical devices play an important role in making the presentations more convincing and winning the support from the audiences. To some extent, this thesis is investigated

hopefully to make a contribution to the teaching and learning English stylistics in general and the use of rhetorical devices in speaking skills, especially in improving presentation skills in particular. For teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam, I would like to put forward some suggestions and implications in several ways:

Firstly, regarding language teaching, it can be seen that although each kind of stylistic device has its own effectiveness, whatever kind of rhetorical device is applied, the presentations become far more vivid, inspiring and impactful. Therefore, the findings of the study are very valuable and useful in teaching speaking skills, especially presentation skills.

Secondly, regarding language learning, it is not easy to master a language as well as its stylistic devices. Consequently, the findings of the result are very beneficial to English learners and help them enrich their knowledge of rhetorical devices which is one of the most beautiful figures of language. Through the thesis, the students will be more sensitive to the beauty and power of the rhetorical devices, which help them have a better understanding of how to make a presentation much more effective.