Lingua Inglese II

The Language of Politics

Unit 3

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Unit 3

Making speeches
Speeches...

... are a vital part of the politician’s role in announcing policy and persuading people to agree with it
Rhetoric: different views

rhetoric ⇔ the art of persuasive discourse
(Persuading people, Cockcroft and Cockcroft 1992)

the ‘art’ of rhetoric ⇔ an important part of human activity

THE SKILLS OF RHETORIC CAN REINFORCE OUR GOOD INTENTIONS
Aristotle 384-322 BC

rhetoric ⇔ the manipulation of an audience by people who are essentially insincere in their motives

THE SKILLS OF RHETORIC ARE PLACED ABOVE THE VALUE OF HONESTY
Plato 427-347 BC
Rhetoric

Not concerned with government only.
A factor in all human communication, both written and oral.
The term *rhetoric* = to refer to “speech” and more specifically to a certain type of “formal public speaking”.

![Rhetorical Triangle Diagram](image)
Rhetorical skills

Persuasive public speaking: part of the curriculum in many schools, colleges, and universities in the USA and in the UK.

Formal debating competitions: teams are given a topic and are told which side they must argue.

Students/teams are judged on their rhetorical skills and their ability to speak persuasively, rather than on the honesty of their views and opinions. Insincerity is acceptable.
Forms of public speaking

There are many forms of public speaking or formal speeches in which rhetorical skills are needed if the audience is supposed to pay attention and to be persuaded:

- debating
- the social club annual general meeting
- the law/a trial
- political speeches
- college lecture
- electoral speeches during campaigns
- religious sermon
Politicians argue that they wish to put forward policies that they honestly believe in.

Listeners argue that the real purpose is to manipulate the audience into agreeing with policies which serve only the politician’s desire to gain or keep power.
Persuasive devices

- What are the most common persuasive devices?
- What are the effects of modern media on the way politicians make speeches?
Aristotle’s classification of the means of persuasion

1) **Ethos**: Persuasion through personality and stance. The attempt to establish the credentials to justify why you should be listened to.

2) **Pathos**: Persuasion through the arousal of emotions. The attempt to appeal to the audience’s emotions.

3) **Logos**: Persuasion through reasoning. The attempt to present a reasonable argument in a logical way.
Aristotle’s classification of the means of persuasion

Ethos, Pathos and Logos

All three categories can be used by the speaker as part of his/her performance. The way in which they are constructed and the way in which the audience responds to them will influence the way in which a politician is seen (sincere or manipulative).

Studying rhetoric means studying the perlocutionary intent of utterances, i.e. the effect speakers wish them to have on their audience (see also Partington: 3-5)
Persuasion through reasoning

Persuasion through emotion

Persuasion through personality

Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle

LOGOS
Logic

PATHOS
Empathy

ETHOS
Credibility

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The most frequent adjective which modifies the word *rhetoric* in the British National Corpus is *political*, followed by *public* (Chrateris-Black 2013).

The three distinctive meanings of RHETORIC:

1) the art of persuasion in the attempt to influence the behaviour of others (Aristotle)
2) the manipulation of an audience for personal ends. (Plato)
3) grandiloquence, or the use of high-sounding but empty language
The soundbite age

- Politicians nowadays tend to make their **public speeches** in front of their own supporters- as in **party conferences** and **party rallies**.

- **In the past** (up to the 1960s), political speeches tended to be more numerous and were delivered in front of anyone who wanted to attend.

- Today the **real audiences** are the **millions** who will read about the speeches in **newspapers** or hear/see them on **radio and television**.

- The speeches are often written for the speakers/politicians by a team of **speech writers** who prepare the material for them.

- Speeches are distributed in advance to **the press** so that newspapers and **broadcasters** can cover the speech in evening news bulletins.
The speeches must contain highlights/best parts/key points/focal points which are often called **soundbites** (*brevi frasi dal forte impatto mediatico*): transmitted on radio or on TV or used as headlines in newspapers.

**soundbite**

†

a short sentence or phrase that is easy to remember, often included in a speech made by a politician and repeated in newspapers and on television and radio

Soundbites require **economy of expression**: brief, and with language structures easy to repeat and to be remembered.
sound bite  noun

: a short recorded statement that is broadcast on a television or radio news program

Full Definition of SOUND BITE

: a brief recorded statement (as by a public figure) broadcast especially on a television news program; also: a brief catchy comment or saying

See sound bite defined for English-language learners »

Examples of SOUND BITE

• His campaign relies on catchy sound bites.

First Known Use of SOUND BITE

1972

http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/soundbite
THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T MAKE CHANGES JUST "FOR THE SAKE OF IT" ... WE MAKE CHANGES SO THAT WE CAN HAVE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF POPULIST SOUNDBITES FOR THE MEDIA!
INAUGURATION EXTRA

The Boston Globe

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

‘Hope over fear’
"Se andiamo al voto e vinciamo poi torniamo al Quirinale e ci dicono che non possiamo andare al governo.

*Bisogna mettere in Stato di accusa il Presidente.*

Bisogna parlamentarizzare tutto anche per evitare reazioni della popolazione".
Italy's Salvini vows to end migrant arrivals by boat

Interior Minister says pregnant women, children and refugees will remain in Italy.

*Al Jazeera, 5 July 2018*
Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" (R. Reagan, 1987)

A volte le lacrime sono gli occhiali per vedere Gesù.
Great speeches have always had great soundbites. The problem now is that the young technicians who put together speeches are paying attention only to the soundbite, not to the text as a whole, not realizing that all great soundbites happen by accident...

(Peggy Noonan)

Margaret Ellen "Peggy" Noonan (born September 7, 1950) is an American author of seven books on politics, religion, and culture, and a weekly columnist for The Wall Street Journal. She was a primary speech writer and Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan.
Making political speeches memorable and exciting to the audience

- Three-part list (tricolons)
- Contrastive pairs
- Pronoun reference
- Binomials
- Bicolons
- Oxymorons

They all appeal to the human fascination for creative repetition and creative contrast, similar to our fascination for rhythm and music. They exploit what Jakobson (1960) called the poetic function of language, playing with the sounds and rhythm of language because it is pleasing to us. In a political context, the poetic function can be allied with ideas to produce a striking effect on the audience (see also Partington: 97-117)
Three-part list (1)

- one of the most common means of eliciting approval
- gives a sense of unity and completeness
- Each of the three parts has a similar lexical and syntactic structure with a degree of variation
- can be simple repetition
- repetition but with different prepositions
- different words with a similar meaning
- spoken aloud
- **prosodic features** (tempo, rhythm, pitch, rhyme, alliteration, non-verbal features) play an important role
«American cars will travel the roads, American planes will soar in the skies, and American ships will patrol the seas» (Trump 2016)

- Beginning of each phrase
- Mode of transport
- Will+verb of movement
- Along or through a physical medium (pl)

(Logical crescendo, almost like a syllogism:)

«You can fool some of the people all the time. You can fool all of the people some of the time. But you can’t fool all of the people all the time» (A. Lincoln)
“two occurrences of a phrase structure are sufficient to set up an expectation that there will be a third”

1) Ask me my three priorities for government and I tell you: Education, Education, Education.

2) Defence, diplomacy and development.

3) Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all.
1) Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
2) Government of the people, by the people, for the people.
3) Impresa, Internet, Inglese.
4) Maggie, Maggie, Maggie. Out, out, out.
5) Veni, vidi, vici.
Our two countries have joined together as a force for peace, prosperity, and progress. (Hillary Clinton, 20 February 2009)

Investing in the potential of the world’s women and girls is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability and greater prosperity for women- and men- the world over. (Hillary Clinton, 8 March 2010)
What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility - a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world...

(Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, 2009)
Dear brothers and sisters, do remember one thing. Malala day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights.

(Malala Yousafzai, Speech at the United Nations, July 2013)
"The rock of our family, the love of my life, the nation's next first lady Michelle Obama" – The tribute to his wife

(Barack Obama, Victory speech, 2008)
Contrastive pair

- Called **antithesis** by classical Greek and Roman writers.
- Contains two parts which are parallel in structure, but in some ways are in opposition. In other ways they may use repetition to make the overall effect.

  “One small step for man:
  one giant leap for mankind”.
  (Neil Armstrong, 1969)

1) identical syntactic structure, but small contrasts in meaning
2) phonological repetition
3) rhythm and stress
4) lexical repetition
Where there is **discord**, may we bring **harmony**. Where there is **error**, may we bring **truth**. Where there is **doubt**, may we bring **faith**. And where there is **despair**, may we bring **hope**.

(Margaret Thatcher, victory speech 1979, from St Francis of Assisi)
“I stand before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people... We have waited too long for our freedom. We can no longer wait.”

(Nelson Mandela's first speech on his release from prison in 1990, Cape Town)
I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

Nelson Mandela
"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"
"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Martin Luther King Jr.

SEE ALSO PARTINGTON 2018: 104
“For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government, while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs, and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land”

(Trump’s Inaugural address, 2017):

A series of contrasts to set the tone of his speech, the so-called political elite against ‘you, the people’

(Partington: 103)
CHIASMUS: A special type of contrastive pairs where the elements of the first part are switched around in the second:

“The press take Trump literally, but not seriously. Voters take him seriously, but not literally ” (The Atlantic, 2016)

“Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to manking” (J. Kennedy)
Pronoun reference is very important in political persuasion.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun Reference</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>you / your</strong></td>
<td>- the reader is being addressed personally</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>you</em> is not just the single reader but also everyone in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>we / our</strong></td>
<td>- politicians are trying to persuade us to a point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- we already agree with them</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- <em>we</em> gives a sense of collectivity, of us being all together</td>
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We are a grandmother

When Margaret Thatcher announced on the steps of 10 Downing Street that her son and his wife had had a baby, she said “We are a grandmother”: she was seen as giving herself royal airs, as considering herself too important, especially because she was talking about family news, not talking about anything which affected the whole country.
The *royal we*: traditionally, kings and queens of England have used this pronoun to refer to themselves. It is *formal* and suggests that in their role as monarch they are talking for their people as well as for themselves.

We do not approve of people who say ‘I’.
The royal ‘we’

I'm sooooooo excited that we're having a royal baby !!!! Congratulations to Kate and Wills !!!!!!
The pronoun “one”: it is still used by the members of the royal family and by others in high offices; it has a distancing effect so it is no longer popular with politicians who are trying to communicate that they stand with the people.
Five ways to introduce a measure...

1) Today I intend to reduce taxes by 20 per cent.

2) Today we intend to raise takes by a mere 5 per cent.

3) The Chancellor/Government must raise taxes for the long-term good of the nation’s economy.

4) Today it has been found necessary to raise taxes by 20 per cent.

5) This budget will help all those on low incomes.
There are 5 ways politicians use to introduce a new policy:

1) first person singular *I, me, myself, mine*
2) first personal plural *we, our, ourselves, us*
3) they can refer to their position
4) they can use the passive, to avoid giving direct responsibility for action to anyone
5) they can use a form of metonymy
What woman have?

While you were hunting, I was gathering—parts of speech. Here, try a pronoun.
The first person singular forms

I/me/myself/mine

- show **personal involvement** on the part of the speaker
- useful when good news is delivered
- they show too clearly where **blame** lies if something goes wrong
- they are not used to deliver bad/negative news
- are seen as too self-important, because speaker places himself/herself **above or outside the collective responsibility** of the colleagues
The first person plural forms

we/us/ourselves/ours

- help **share the responsibility** when the news is uncertain or negative
- show the politician as being **in touch** with all the country, the whole world
- the individual politician **does not gain much credit** when things go well
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<thead>
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<th>I</th>
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<th>one other</th>
<th>= we</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>minister/politician</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Prime minister</td>
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<tr>
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<td>government/political party</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>the people of Britain/the USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>minister/politician</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>the people everywhere</td>
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Inclusive ‘we’ includes the addressee (that is "we" means "you and I").

Exclusive ‘we’ excludes the addressee (that is "we" means "he/she and I, but not you").
There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody would have done it but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Anybody thought Everybody would do it but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.
BINOMIALS – BICOLONS

Salt and pepper, man and wife, one and all (both literal and figurative)

BINOMIALS are semi-fixed phrases common in language in general: Two or more words belonging to the same grammatical category, having some semantic relationship and joined by such particles as and or so. Very popular in legal language, and quite a popular feature in political language: Government and Parliament; political and monetary (union)

BICOLONS are expressions containing two parallel phrases. They are longer than binomials:

“The South Africa so many have sacrificed so much to achieve is within sight. Together let us walk this last, long gruelling mile to reach a non-racial, nonsexist society, where all our people will be equal before the law [...]. Together we have it in our power to defeat those who continue to kill to maintain the old order. We have it in our power to transform our country into the peaceful and prosperous homeland to all our people. Let us work together to achieve these goals. Let us vow never to celebrate another Christmas in chains. We have a right to be free, and we shall be free!” (N. Mandela 1990)
OXYMORONS

A deafening silence, noble savage, bittersweat

Two apparently contradictory elements are combined in a single work, phrase or epigram.

    Extreme moderate, left-wing fascist, radical conservative
    Fighting for peace; Peace-keeping force; Great Depression; Diplomatic offensive
    (http://www.english-for-students.com/Government-and-Politics.html)

The term oxymoron is often used to make an argument by negatively evaluating someone, or something, by suggesting that the two components are incompatible:

Following the Brexit Referendum, in which a slim majority voted to leave the EU:
    The United Kingdom is an oxymoron

(See Partington 106-107)
1) What does the term *rhetoric* mean?
2) Summarize the different opinions of Plato and Aristotle regarding how rhetoric is generally used.
3) What exactly are *soundbites* and why have they become important in the modern age, with modern means of communication?
4) *Three* is a perfect number. Why are *three-part lists* used so often by public speakers? What is the effect on the listeners? Give some examples of three-part lists in political language or in another language area.
5) **Contrastive pairs, bicolons and binomials** are often used in speeches. Give some examples of well known phrases and say where they were heard (if on one specific occasion) or where they can be heard (if they are associated with a particular event).

6) What determines the choice of a politician in the use of the *personal pronouns* ‘I’ or ‘We’? What ways are there to introduce a new policy or measure?