**Study of similarity in techniques used by world leaders to manipulate**

Introduction

I chose to investigate the linguistic techniques used by world leaders in their speeches to inspire, persuade and manipulate their audiences. I chose to study this because democrats and dictators have different quantities of power, so in theory should a great difference in their approach to manipulation in their speeches.

I believe that although democrats and dictators should be completely different in their approach to speeches due to the different levels of power they have over their audiences, there will be many similarities in the linguistic techniques used by these leaders to manipulate.

Methodology:

Firstly, I obtained videos of my chosen speeches being performed by the leaders and transcribed the speeches myself. (I could only do this with the speeches performed in English) I then verified this data by finding the same speeches that had been transcribed by professionals and posted on the Guardian website and compared these speeches with mine, to highlight differences in our speeches so I could delete anything unnecessary, but also keep any things I thought the professional transcript lacked. This was a clear strength to my investigation because I obtained the most representative speech, which is important because tainted results would have greatly affected my linguistic analysis.

Afterwards, I analysed the speeches and outlined specific discourse threads that in no particular order, came up in every speech without fail. These discourse threads included “Addressing an enemy” which I related to one of Philip Collins’ theories (“the essential ingredient to speech is a sense of injustice or outrage”). “Unification” , where I looked at how Howard Giles’ “divergence” theory can be used to assert instrumental power and how his “convergence” theory can be used to create a deeper relationship. And finally “creating a new hope” for the people to believe in, this is where linked in Aristotle’s rhetoric appeals through his (“Pathos”) , as I was looking in to how the Language choice can affect the audience's emotional response, and emotional appeal can effectively be used to enhance semantics.. I applied these theories to my speeches and drew similarities in the techniques used by democrats and dictators to create these three discourse threads. I then further quantified my data by creating graphs to display the use of different linguistic devices used to in relation to my area of interest, so that I could compare similarities between them.

A prime weakness in my data is the translation of the foreign speeches to English, a factor that cannot be controlled. We must appreciate that the transcript is only an English interpretation of what the foreign leader is saying. For example there would be words that can’t possibly translate to English, so the transcribers would just use the closest word to it, and even something as small as this could mean the difference between it fitting a linguistic category or not, which could affect the reliability of my analysis. However the focuses of my analysis is discourse threads and semantic fields, which means translation isn’t as much of an issue as it would be with a purely lexical focus.

**Addressing an enemy.**

Following Collin’s assertion that “the essential ingredient to speech is a sense of injustice or outrage”. All my speakers create a sense of this, which suggests that regardless of the leadership style , using semantic fields such as these are crucial when it comes to manipulating a crowd. An example of this would be ..

*“Afghanistan’s people have been brutalized- many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to tend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.”*

It can be seen that Bush informs his audience of concepts that may seem extremely unfair to a western liberal society. He says (“*You can be jailed for owning a television”,)* in an attempt to shock his audience and cause outrage amongst the people, by informing them of something that would seem barbaric to them. Furthermore Bush uses abstract lexis and other verbs in a context which allows a semantic field of injustice to be created *(“Brutalize”, “jailed”, “dictate” “starving”).* Notice how Bush uses second person plural pronouns (“you can be jailed”) with abstract nouns like (“starving”) to make each individual audience member seem singled out and under threat; suddenly the statement seems more direct and personal. These devices serve effectively in projecting imagery of living in Afghanistan and the idea of suffering its evils into the minds of the audience as individuals. Bush does this to further amplify the enemy and sense of injustice he has already created, to further scare and outrage his audience into believing that war is the answer.

This contrasts with Saddam Hussein’s tactical use of semantics of injustice or outrage.

*(“Can fathers and mothers discharge their parental duties toward their children when they are placed in chains under the burden of servitude? Will the children be but ungrateful apostates, if they see their fathers and mothers in chains, enduring the heavy burden of oppression, and never move to save them, break their chains. Or surround them with their protective chests of faith, against all misguided evil aggressors?”)*

Similar to Bush, Saddam tries to scare his audience by clever use of projection. Instead of stating outrageous facts like Bush, Saddam uses figurative speech (“ if they see their fathers and mothers in chains, enduring the heavy burden of oppression , and never move to save them , break their chains”) and in this context the concrete noun (“chains”) in addition with abstract nouns (“burden”) , (“ oppression”) are the key lexical items with a semantic value of injustice , metaphorically used to project imagery of imprisonment of family in the minds of his audience in order to threaten them. Saddam knows of the importance of religion in his country better than most, so he makes use of the abstract noun (“ faith”) to thrust himself into a position of god, so that his war-crazed ideas seem more holy and right. He places invading forces in the position of crusaders, and by doing so creates a holy war narrative, so his audience are more likely to rejoice against (“all misguided evil aggressors”) for the sake holiness.

***Good vs. Evil.***

I have discovered that world leaders often declare themselves the “good” and the enemy the “bad” so it follows the simple fairy tale theme of good versus evil, in a narrative discourse that everyone is familiar with. It appears in some form in every speech I have looked at. I earlier mentioned how Saddam talks about (“faith”) to make his ideas seem more holy. Similar to Saddam , Churchill also plays with the idea of biblical struggle. Bear in mind when Churchill performed this speech in 1940, it was his first speech. He had just been elected prime minister and was doubted amongst the people. Britain had just suffered a huge loss in France and the people of Britain all saw an end to life as they know it and an inevitable defeat. This explains Churchill’s choice of words (“with all our might and with all the strength god can give us , to wage war against a monstrous tyranny.”) he recognises a sense of oncoming Armageddon or final battle lingers in his audience, and builds on this before using apocalyptic lexis such as “god” and tyranny” . Like Saddam, Churchill says this to make himself seem God-sent, as if he is the chosen “good guy” to step up out of nowhere and vanquish the evil against all odds. A discourse as fictional as this may be used intentionally to leave his audience feeling like they exist in a Narnia inspired novel, where a final battle is inevitable and will decide the fate of their future. I believe Churchill and Saddam use this not only to further insinuate a threat, but to make the idea of war and battle seem more normal, like it has to happen in order for the happy ending. This way people won’t hesitate about making an enemy and going to war with them.

This contrasts with the way Kim Jong Un plays with the idea of faith in his speech .It is important to note that unlike Bush and Churchill, Kim is not at war with anyone, so although he mentions the US , he mainly addresses an abstract enemy. He does so in an indirect way, where he continuously refers to this abstract idea of (“the revolutionary spirit of Paektu”). The spirit of Peaktu was created Kim Il Sung after the North Koreans defeated the Japanese on mount Peaktu. From that day on the people of North Korea were said to be infused with this spirit. Because of this, when Kim Jong un says (“ the whole society came to pulsate with the spirit and mettle of Paektu”)he is effectively stating that everybody has this war-spawned God running through their veins, and that fighting and conquering an enemy is innate. It is also interesting to note how unconcealed his attempt at doing this really is, he constantly repeats the idea of this spirit, so in effect is constantly projecting the idea that the nature of North Koreans is to have war and enemies. Kim Jong Un can do this so ruthelessly because ever since his grandfather Kim Il sung came into power in 1948, the country had been taught and bred to see their leader as a god. Kim Jong Un is now leading the resultant generation of people that believe he is the messiah.

**Analysing creation of unity**

The results show that both democrats and dictators use first person plural pronouns such as “we” , “us” , “our” . Although the results show that the usage is relatively similar for both democrat and dictator, every democrat has a higher overall usage than any dictator, with Mandela having a the highest value at 4.4% , and Jong Un having the lowest at 2.3%.

Use of first person plural pronouns such as “we” “us” “our” helps create a sense of unity of vision and purpose through shared values, which is why both democrats and dictators use it so much; they need it in order to make a nation feel as one, acting toward a greater cause.

It is no surprise to me that democrats such as Mandela have the highest usage of these pronouns, not only because their power lies more in the hands of the public than dictators, but because the speech of Mandela’s that I chose to analyse happened to be the first speech he made as the president. Bearing in mind he was stepping up to the leadership of a war-torn country that had recently pushed past a civil war, so it goes without saying he thought he had to unite the country as one by the pull of inspiring values.

Mandela’s speech demonstrates clear repetition of “we “and “our”…

“*we, the people of south Africa, feel fulfilled that humanity has taken us back into its bosom, that we, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil.”*

*“We thank all our distinguished international guests….”*

*“We trust that you will come to stand by us...”*

*“We deeply appreciate the role that the masses of our people…”*

The position of it the start of successive clauses is to emphasize the pronoun, to make his crowd understand that they all stand united as one and that they all share the same vision of a better future. It is important for Mandela to present this healing process, not only because it is his first speech in power, but because he wants to stay in power and he wants to manipulate the crowd into thinking he is the voice of a united country, so that they are less hesitant in following him into decisions.

***“Deeper Unity”***

Mandela says (“*humanity has taken us back into its bosom*”) he does this, not only to extend the feeling if unity throughout the country, but to extend the feeling of unity throughout the world. He talks about humanity taking his people into its *(“ bosom”),* as if it is some sort of parent cradling a child. By doing this, Mandela asserts authority by placing himself in an almost motherly position, where everything he says must be right and must be listened to, ( a device you may not expect to find in the language of a democrat) and most importantly it makes the audience feel like family , as if they are related through the blood in their veins, as daughters and sons to Mandela. Mandela acknowledges that there is no relationship closer than family, so uses this trope to unite his audience as something stronger than inhabitants of the same country.

Bashar al-Assad takes a similar approach to this technique, this could be because of the events occurring in Syria at that time, there was a civil war happening, and at the time of the speech the death toll was just under 190,000 due to Islamic state militants. Toward the beginning of his speech he would occasionally address his audience as *(“Ladies and gentlemen”)* By addressing them this way he subtly distances himself from the audience : not only does he assert instrumental power by doing so , he also makes the audience feel more separated and alone in the initial threat which I earlier discussed. However he then converges by addressing the audience as (“*brothers and sisters*”) the audience feel like their unity and relationship have grown in the duration of the speech; they are now left feeling like a strongly bonded family, standing against the threat as one. As well as this “brothers and sisters” has strong semantic links with the same religion, Assad recognises the religious devotion of his country, so uses this pragmatically to associate it with unity and create a feeling of inclusion. This data supports Howard Giles’ “convergence” theory, as it clearly shows a change in language to get closer and “converge” with his audience to create unity.

It is interesting to note how Assad and Mandela are so similar in their approach creating deeper unity by using Family semantics. Both Leaders have a country with fairly recent history of war and violence, suggesting the idea of family is an effective way to bring people through rough times, maybe because it shows that they are all equal in the suffering and loss caused by this war.

Although these leaders make effort to create a feeling of equality, they also assert instrumental power by doing the exact opposite and distancing themselves from their audiences by “divergence” as suggested by Howard Giles. Kim Jong Un shows us a good example of this…

He refers to himself in the third person as the (" Supreme leader") and continuously addresses him and his government as (" the great party"). By doing this, Kim isolates himself and his government from his audience; he makes it clear they are below and of another class to him and in doing so diverges immensely for instrumental power. This clearly shows Kim Jong Un disregards the idea of equality and supports Giles’ divergence assertion. The reason for this could simply be because the people of North Korea are taught to see their leader as a God, not a human, because of this Kim needs not to worry about any elections or revolutions, just because of how innate it is for his audience to submit.

**“Creating hope”**

As shown earlier in my investigation, both dictator and democrat use semantics that may induce a sense of injustice or outrage amongst the audience, in order to create a public enemy in common. These devices are cleverly introduced to threaten and intimidate the audience. Once the audience have been united as one ,the leader can then go on to present a solution to it all in an attempt to present themselves as heroes. And they do so by connecting with the emotions of his audience in a way that will make everything seem like it will be okay. This is where I will follow Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals of “Pathos”.

For example the extract from George Bush’s speech I used earlier was later followed up by..

*“The* *advance of human freedom - the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of  
every time - now depends on us. Our nation - this generation - will lift a dark threat  
of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our  
efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not  
fail.”*

Bush does this to create an illusion of heroic resolution to the enemy threat that he earlier announced. He uses lexis associated with combat such as (“rally”, “courage”, “advance”) to make him seem like some sort of Valiant King of the medieval ages, leading his army to certain victory and creating a new hope for his audience, this therefore supports aristotles assertion of “pathos” as it appeals to the emotions of his audience, in an attempt to convince them that they are safe under his leadership, and that the threat he earlier introduced will be resolved, he uses the old advertising trick of providing a problem and a solution.

Similar to this Churchill uses lexis associated with resilience , such as ("empire" "strength" "buoyancy" "hope") to create a feeling of stability. A possible explanation for this could be because of the state Britain were in at the time of this speech; after taking a great loss in France the British may have felt exposed, weak , vulnerable. It goes without saying Churchill may have felt it important to induce a sense of security amongst his audience, to make them feel as if he had them under his wing. Knowing this, Churchill’s use of “empire” may have been used to create a sense of others fighting too; he knew if he enforced this idea of the world vs. Germany, the future would not look as bleak and hope would begin to grow.

***Creating an idea of future certainty***

Another technique incorporated to induce a feeling of reassurance and hope is the use of modal auxiliary verbs that may imply future certainty, in this case a positive future.

We must appreciate that not all modal auxiliary verbs recorded in this data are used to create hope, but the quantified data helps in outlining the leaders that make the greatest use of these verbs, and the ones that do are most likely the ones that use it for hope. Knowing this, it’s no surprise to me that Bush, Churchill and Mandela have the highest percentage used in total word count. Again this may be because they are democrats who want to stay in power, and whose power lies in the votes of their audiences more so than dictators. Therefore it is important that their audiences are fully convinced that they have elected the strongest and most reliable leader, who is certain in his decisions that will lead him to victory.

An example of one of the many times Churchill uses this is when he says (“I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men”) here Churchill uses “will” to highlight how certain he is that Britain will prevail, again it is important for him to do this as a newly elected leader when addressing a distressed audience; It will reassure them that victory is inevitable under his leadership and helps boost morale.

Kim Jong un on the other hand, favours other devices to keep the morale of his audience high. As you can see, his percentage of modal auxiliary verbs is by far the lowest, suggesting he doesn’t feel the need of reassuring his audience of his decisions. Again this may because his word is unquestionable because of his godly power. Kim Jong Un instead makes the use of repetition of abstract nouns with a semantic field of religion like (“fortitude”, “faith”, “spirit”) to give the impression that his country are already stronger and more enlightened than any other, so don’t need to worry about any impending threats. Kim Jong Un only has an abstract enemy, and the way he often brings up the “USA” as a potential enemy, and shows great respect for his grandfather (who won a war) suggests to me he is always in search of a concrete enemy, so it is important for him to use these semantics, so when he does find an enemy he has a country who believe they are strong and resilient, so won’t hesitate to follow him into it.

**Conclusion.**

In terms of creating an enemy, i found that all democrats and dictators with concrete enemies were similar in the sense they placed themselves as the good guy and the enemy as the bad guy, in an almost fairy tale discourse , and by making use of certain semantic fields such as apocalypse , religion etc. This is most likely used to threaten the audience and make the idea of an enemy easier to come to terms with, people will be less hesitant about making an enemy, if that enemy is jeopardising their future and freedom with "Evil". This therefore supports Philip Collins’ assertion that “the essential ingredient to speech is a sense of injustice or outrage?"

The leaders with abstract enemies would tend to remind their audience of past or potential conflicts to create an underlying threat. This is probably be

When it comes to creating an idea of unity, my data suggests democrats and dictators are very different in the techniques they use. It goes without saying that democrats tend to favour creating unity by providing a feeling of equality, and do so by using first person plural pronouns. This is because without their country completely backing them, they have no power. It is therefore important for them to feel as if they are under a fair leadership.

Dictators on the other hand tend to use the idea of religion and faithg more so than democrats to bind their audience; they can often be seen using semantic fields of faith to do so. this could be because the countries under dictatorship tend to be the countries where people are less educated in all aspects but religion, so accept religion without question as they know no better.

My data supports Giles Howard's "divergence" assertion" because all leaders diverge in some form to assert instrumental power, even the democrats who thrive in creating a feeling of equality. However dictators tend to diverge more prominently, especially Kim Jong Un, this could be because he doesn’t have to worry about separating himself from his audience too much, as it is innate for his audience to see him as a “godly” being.

When creating hope, i found that Democrats rely heavily on creating a feeling of future certainty more so than dictators. At first one may find this surprising, as replacing words like "should" with "will" adopts a very abrupt and dominant tone, however I think it should be looked at in terms of reassuring the audience; everyone wants a leader who is completely confident in their ability to keep their people safe, and using modal auxiliary’s like "will" is a good way of radiating that confidence.

George bush is the only democrat who used “will” in addition with imperatives to give orders, and in doing so adopted a dictator like tone

Dictators rely more heavily on semantics; they do not seem to favour the art of creating certainty in their tone. But this could just be because they don’t don't see light in reassuring their audience if their ability, would rather remind of the strength/might they already have.

Yet it must be taken into consideration that my conclusions and findings are not completely representative as my sample was very small. For more representative data I would need to use a more diverse selection of speeches, including ones performed by females etc.

**Word Count 3,178**