RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN BARACK OBAMA’S CAIRO SPEECH: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Hassan A. H. Gadalla
Assiut University, Egypt

ABSTRACT

This discourse analytical study aims at analyzing the rhetorical strategies employed by Barack Obama in his Cairo speech. It applies Zheng’s (2000) approach to the analysis of the political discourse of that speech. The author aims to answer two questions: a) What are the rhetorical strategies that Barack Obama used in his Cairo speech? and b) Is Zheng’s (2000) model sufficient for analyzing political discourse? The article is divided into five sections. The first section offers a theoretical background on critical discourse analysis. The second introduces rhetorical strategies and the model that will be applied. The third exposes the study aim and technique. The fourth applies the rhetorical framework to the selected speech. The last section summarizes the main findings of the study.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Discourse Analysis, Rhetorical Strategies, Targeting Strategy, Enforcement Strategy, Avoidance Strategy, and Barack Obama

INTRODUCTION

This discourse analytical study aims at analyzing the rhetorical strategies employed by Barack Obama in his Cairo speech. It applies Zheng’s (2000) approach to the analysis of the political discourse of that speech. The article is divided into five sections. The first section offers a theoretical background on critical discourse analysis. The second introduces rhetorical strategies and the model that will be applied. The third exposes the study aim and technique. The fourth applies the rhetorical framework to the selected speech. The last section summarizes the main findings of the study.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

According to van Dijk (2001), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political
context” (p. 352). He shows that its concentration on language and discourse started with the
“critical linguistics” that emerged at the end of the 1970s, particularly with the work of
Fowler et al. (1979).

The most famous writers on CDA are Fairclough (1995, 2003) and van Dijk (1995, 2006). The main tenets of CDA, as reported by Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80), are:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

Fairclough (1996) sees CDA as “concerned with mapping connections between texts and
the social order. … A critical perspective on discourse is … concerned with showing up often
opaque connections between language and other aspects of society and culture” (p. 286). In
Fairclough (2001), he considers discourse as one of the elements of social practice and
explains the relation between discourse and other elements:

By 'social practice' I mean a relatively stabilised form of social activity. … CDA is
analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (including language but also
other forms of semiosis, e.g. body language or visual images) and other elements of
social practices. (p. 231).

In laying down the principles of CDA, van Dijk (1993) focuses on “the role of discourse
in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (p. 249-50). He defines dominance as “the
exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality,
including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality.” Then, he asserts that
his “critical approach prefers to focus on the elites and their discursive strategies for the
maintenance of inequality” (Ibid). Emphasizing the social and political perspective of CDA,
he states:

Critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit sociopolitical stance. … Their hope
… is change through critical understanding. Their perspective … [is] that of those who
suffer most from dominance and inequality. Their critical targets are the power elites that
enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice” (p. 252).

CDA is closely related to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday
and Hasan (1976/1989). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 139) believe that SFL has much
in common with and much to offer to CDA.

A collection of papers exploring the links between SFL and CDA is that edited by Young
and Harrison (2004). Many research works are related to the critical analysis of political
discourse, such as those of Nimmo and Sanders (1981), Chilton (1985), Chilton and Lakoff
(1995), as well as Obeng and Hartford (2002).

At the end of his study, Zheng (2000) gives several features of political discourse, three
of which are:
Rhetorical Strategies in Barack Obama’s Cairo Speech

It is comprised predominantly of slogans and propaganda, rather than statements of truth or facts. It contains many acceptable and unacceptable lies and empty promises. It merely tries to persuade rather than summon and guide the public. It utilises and develops classical rhetoric techniques with modern information technology such as sound, graphics, and texts to maximise its persuasive function.

According to Obeng (2002: 7-8), political actors employ various discourse strategies including rhetoric, circumlocution, euphemism, evasion, intertextuality, political pronouns, analogies, metaphors, similes, personifications, paradoxes, parallelism, creativity, etc.

Rhetorical Strategies

The term ‘rhetoric’ refers, as reported by Billig (2003), “both to the persuasive character of discourse and to the long-established tradition of studying oratory. Political speeches, for example, are instances of rhetoric in the first sense because they are communications designed to persuade.” Political rhetoric, according to Cos (2008) is “an art of articulating and promoting one’s political interests through influence in the public sphere by symbolic manipulation of signs and symbols, including language, images, and the staging of events.” Obeng (2002) asserts that one of the important aspects of political communication is “the art of persuasion or rhetoric,” and he defines it as “the ability of politicians to communicatively ‘sell’ themselves, their ideologies, or their policies to an electorate” (p. 8).

The study of rhetoric is very crucial in CDA since, as stated by Zheng (2000), “rhetoric can be seen as … the skills and methodologies brought into play in shaping the convictions of particular audiences – it is also a powerful weapon in the struggle of community against community, worldview against worldview.” He also asserts that rhetoric is “the tool of particular interests, and therefore … a linguistic means for improving a politician’s life.” He has analyzed the speeches of three Australian political leaders to show how they “use political language rhetoric as a powerful tool in gaining political advantages.”

Zheng (2000) has demonstrated how politicians manipulate three rhetorical strategies to win public support: targeting, enforcement, and avoidance, with each strategy composed of a number of techniques and devices. He argues that the targeting strategy means that the speaker tries to win the support of the greatest number of listeners using techniques such as “the inclusive technique”. He also supposes that the enforcement strategy signifies the speaker’s attempt to show his sincerity to the audience by employing devices like the testimony technique, citing historical speeches, inversion technique, fear technique, logical fallacies, religious citation, emotion technique, discourse coherence and cohesion. Furthermore, he indicates that the avoidance strategy refers to the speaker’s trial to avoid responsibility for bad deeds and sayings by utilizing tools like never mentioning any negative side of self, special categories of words, anaphora, and contrasting expressions.

Study Aim and Technique

This study aims to answer two questions: a) What are the rhetorical strategies that Barack Obama used in his Cairo speech? and b) Is Zheng’s (2000) model sufficient for analyzing political discourse? I have retrieved the text version of the speech from the White House
website and the video version from the YouTube website. The method of analysis runs as follows: First, the discursive features in the chosen speech will be identified and the frequency of occurrence of each feature will be counted using a computer program called “Word Count Machine 2.5.1” from Count Machine. Then, how these features contribute to the rhetoric of the speech will be explained. Finally, the results of the analysis will be provided to help the reader have an overall picture of the discursive features identified.

**Rhetorical Strategies in Obama’s Speech**

This section applies the analytical framework proposed by Zheng (2000) to Barack Obama’s Cairo speech. This speech was delivered at Cairo University in Cairo, Egypt, on June 4, 2009. The speech was supposed to be a new beginning in the American-Muslim relations after the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. That is why Obama says at the outset of his speech: “I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world.”

By analyzing Obama’s speech, it is likely to see how he uses rhetorical techniques in gaining Muslim public support or feeling of reconciliation after the feeling of bitterness they have acquired from the discourse and deeds of his predecessor, George W. Bush. My CDA of the speech may also reveal Obama’s shirking of responsibility for the bitterness the Muslims felt at the time of the speech. The speech represents a change in the U.S. rhetoric. That is why Kumar (2009) asserts:

Obama’s Cairo speech heralds a decisive shift in the rhetoric of U.S. imperialism. It marks a recognition that the virulent Islamophobic rhetoric of the Bush regime has failed, and that it is necessary to begin a process of rebuilding the U.S.’s image in Muslim-majority countries.

Analysis of Obama’s Cairo speech reveals that he has utilized three rhetorical strategies: targeting, enforcement and avoidance. Each strategy will be discussed in turn. The results of the analysis will be provided in the conclusion.

**The Targeting Strategy**

Targeting is achieved by the inclusive technique, as stated by Zheng (2000). However, as will be shown below, it can also be achieved by two other more important devices which have not been mentioned by Zheng, namely arousing the feeling of national and religious identity and giving promises.

*Arousing National and Religious Identity*

To win the support of the Arab and Muslim audience, especially the Egyptians, Obama started his speech by drawing upon symbols of national and religious identity, as in:

(1) a. I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo.
In (1a), Obama draws upon the symbol of Cairo, the capital of Egypt, which he describes as being “timeless” to show that it is a city with a very long tradition. In (1b), he refers to two institutions that are important for the Muslims and the Arabs, respectively: Al-Azhar, a symbol of Islamic learning for all Muslims in the world and Cairo University, a symbol of Egyptian and Arab advancement, since students come to learn at this university from most Arab countries. In (1c), Obama mentions a characteristic of the Egyptian people which they are always proud of, that is, their hospitality.

Furthermore, to arouse the sense of religious identity, Obama elevates Muslims’ history, traditions, and contributions to world civilization:

(2) a. As a student of history, I also know civilization’s debt to Islam. It was Islam…that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe’s Renaissance and Enlightenment.

b. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.

Obama also glorifies Muslims’ contributions to world culture as well as their tolerance and equality:

(3) a. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation.

b. Throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

By using these tactics, Obama disarms his audience and eventually sways them in favor of support for his ideas.

*Inclusive Technique*

Zheng (2000) shows why the inclusive technique is utilized:

Politicians attempt to convince their audience that both themselves and their ideas are ‘of the people.’ The main function of this inclusive or ‘plain-folks’ technique is to assimilate the speaker himself/herself into a group or groups, and to then win the support of the members of these groups. … Though recent American presidents have been men of great personal wealth, they have still gone to great lengths to present themselves as ordinary citizens to the voting public.

According to Zheng (2000), “political discourse is a mixed product of personal development and the relevant social environment in which an individual grows. Any individual political discourse is the result of personal development in certain social settings.”
Thus, considering the social environment in which Obama grew up, being the son of a Muslim father and living in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country, for nearly five years, one can understand why he is keen on trying to win the hearts of the Muslims around the world. Obama himself explains how his own experience affected his beliefs and ideologies:

(4) a. My father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims.  
b. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan.  
c. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.

Obama uses the inclusive technique to pretend that he is an ordinary American who is trying to win the support of the Muslim audience. His use of this technique appears in the following examples:

(5) a. I’m … proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people.  
b. [I’m … proud to carry with me] a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: Assalaamu alaykum.

In (5a), Obama shows that the Americans are a people of goodwill towards Muslims, an idea which most Muslims at the time of the speech were questioning as a result of the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, he is trying to heal the wounds which these wars caused. In (5b), Obama carries a greeting from American Muslims to the Muslims around the world. This asserts that there are Muslim people in America who are similar to his audience in religion. In other words, he wants to say: “We are like you and you are like us.” Pronouncing the Muslim greeting in Arabic, the native language of the audience, has had a magic effect on this audience, as can be seen from the strong applause upon hearing it.

Obama’s employment of the inclusive technique is also represented in the following examples:

(6) a. America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles – principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.  
b. The interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

Example (6a) reveals that since America and Islam are not exclusive, they must be inclusive. Example (6b) shows that since Americans and Muslims have powerful mutual interests, they must be drawn together, rather than driven apart. In both examples, Obama speaks about the common principles and interests that are shared by Americans and Muslims, again to say we are similar in many respects.

The inclusive technique is also clearly displayed in these statements:

(7) a. There is a mosque in every state in our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders.  
b. Islam is a part of America. … All of us share common aspirations.
**Giving Promises**

This tactic has not been stated by Zheng (2000) in his model of rhetorical strategies. A politician gives a lot of promises to help the audience or their parties, groups, or countries in an effort to win their approval of his statements. Very interestingly, Obama gives 30 promises in his Cairo speech, some of which are:

(8) a. We plan to invest $1.5 billion each year over the next five years to partner with Pakistanis to build schools and hospitals, roads and businesses, and hundreds of millions to help those who’ve been displaced.

b. We are providing more than $2.8 billion to help Afghans develop their economy and deliver services that people depend on.

c. We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy.

d. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.

These four promises are targeting the major countries where Americans caused a lot of turmoil and destruction. They range from offering billions of dollars to Pakistan and Afghanistan, to developing Iraq’s economy, and to establishing a Palestinian state.

A fifth promise that Obama gave in his Cairo speech, but has not achieved is:

(9) I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year.

Obama was speaking in June 2009, which means that the infamous prison was to be closed in January 2010, but it has not been closed until the present moment (January 2013).

**Frequency of Targeting Tactics**

Obama’s use of the targeting strategy tactics is displayed in Table (1). The frequency of representative words is supplied in parentheses, and then the total frequency of related words is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeting Tactic</th>
<th>Frequency of Representative Words</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arousing National and Religious</strong>&lt;br&gt;Identity</td>
<td>Cairo (4), Egypt (3), Azhar (2), Arab (5), Arabian (1), Arabs (1), Islam (18), Islamic (5), Muslim (27), Muslims (19), mosque (1), mosques (1), zakat (1) azan (1), hijab (1), Koran (5), Bangladesh (1), Afghanistan (5), Afghan (1), Iraq (12), Iraqi (4), Iraqis (1), Pakistan (3), Pakistanis (1), Indonesia (4), Turkey (2), Morocco (1), Bosnia (1), Gaza (2), Dubai (1), Kuala Lumpur (1), Tripoli (1), Andalusia (1), Cordoba (1), Mohammed (1), Abdullah (1)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive Technique</strong></td>
<td>Inclusives: we (58), our (37), us (21)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Giving Promises</strong></td>
<td>‘will’ for promises (24), Present Progressive for future (5), plan (1)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Enforcement Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to prove the speaker’s sincerity. Zheng (2000) shows how this is done: “The effectiveness of delivery, proverbs, poetry of expression and emotional investment of the rhetorician gives the audience a gauge for determining the speaker’s sincerity.” In Obama’s speech, this strategy is achieved through the following ten techniques.

Testimony Technique

Zheng (2000) defines this technique as one in which “politicians list a series of the achievements or deeds of individual parties.” One can add to this definition that politicians may list the achievements of their countries or even themselves. Obama glorifies the deeds of the American people in the following extracts:

(10) a. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire.
b. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words.
c. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation.

In these extracts, Obama states that America has been a great source of progress. It has been born out of a revolution against the British Empire. It has been founded upon equality. The Americans have suffered a lot for equality and fighting against segregation.

Citing Historical Speeches

Zheng (2000) shows why politicians cite historical speeches:

In order to enhance the illocutionary force of their speeches, and to avoid the responsibility for making allegations that may incur unexpected public feedback, politicians appropriate a range of historical speeches made by previous politicians to support their arguments. The citing of historical speeches is used as a means by which to increase the effectiveness of a speech, and to reduce the political risk of being branded an extremist.

Obama cites the historical speeches of very famous American presidents:
(11) a. Our second President, John Adams, wrote, “The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Muslims.”
b. We can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: “I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be.”

Obama cites Adam’s statement to prove that America is not hostile against Islam, and cites Jefferson’s saying to affirm that wisdom is as important as power. The two citations are utilized to hide the facts that America has committed so many hostile deeds against Muslims and that there was no wisdom at all in the invasion of Iraq.
Inversion Technique

The inversion technique, as stated by Zheng (2000), is “a means by which a speaker uses a particular expression in such a way that its commonly held meaning is inverted to mean the exact opposite of the original expression.” Obama uses this technique in the following examples:

(12) a. The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America’s goals. … We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity.
   b. The Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

In (12a), Obama says that America went to war in Afghanistan without any choice. This is contrary to the fact that the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was illegal under international law as the United Nations did not authorize the invasion of that country and that international public opinion was largely opposed to that war. In (12b), he states that Iraq is much better after Saddam Hussein. This is contradictory with the fact that nearly 1.4 million Iraqis have been killed in America’s war in Iraq (Just Foreign Policy, 2009), in addition to the millions who have been wounded and those who have been dislocated.

Fear Technique

Obeng (2002) shows the aim of using fear as a rhetorical device: “To manipulate an audience with a view to persuading them to support ‘unsupportable’ policies and issues, political actors may play on the audience's emotions by instilling fear in them” (p. 8).

In Zheng’s (2000) view, “this technique firstly produces some kind of potential threat to the public, and then provides solutions from which the public can then choose. In reality, however, these solutions constitute choices made by the politician, and not the public.” Obama uses the fear technique in the following:

(13) a. So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than … cooperation.
   b. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean.
   c. Muslim communities … are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.

In (13a), Obama indicates that differences between Americans and Muslims will strengthen hatred and conflict. In (13b), he claims that violent extremists pose a threat to all people in the world. In (13c), he asserts that Muslim communities are endangered and offers the solution to that danger by the eradication of extremists, even at the hands of Muslims. This choice may cause conflicts in Muslim communities between extremists and non-extremists, but this does not concern Obama, as long as America’s safety is guaranteed.
Logical Fallacies

As reported by Zheng (2000), “in order to push the public to accept their policies,” politicians use the technique of “logical fallacies” or “unwarranted extrapolation.” He explains how this technique works: “In this technique the speaker makes quite spectacular predictions about the future, based on only a few minor facts.” Obama gives the following predictions:

(14) a. I strongly reaffirmed America’s commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons.
b. The United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing.

In (14a), Obama predicts a world free of nuclear weapons contrary to the fact that America has the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world nowadays. In (14b), he promises to support girls’ education and women’s employment in the Muslim world, but the fact is that none of these promises has been achieved.

Religious Citation

Zheng (2000) asserts that “political discourse seeks to pacify the public in order to make an unpleasant reality more palatable. This is accomplished by using proverbs, idioms or biblical utterances to attack opponents.” Obama has used citations from the three major holy books: the Koran the Torah and Bible. From the holy book of Muslims, he cites these statements:

(15) a. As the Holy Koran tells us, “Be conscious of God and speak always the truth.”
b. The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent … it is as if he has killed all mankind. And the Holy Koran also says whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind.

Obama uses the citation from the Koran in (15a) to confirm that he himself is going to the speak the truth in his Cairo speech. In (15b), Obama cites the Koran’s statement about the prevention of killing innocent people. He gives that citation immediately after stating that Muslim extremists “have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths.” Thus, he uses a Muslim citation to denounce the deeds of some Muslim people. However, he does not mention the number of innocent people murdered by Americans in Afghanistan and Iraq.

At the end of his speech, Obama offers three citations from the three major holy books:

(16) a. The Holy Koran tells us: “O mankind! We have created you male and female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.”
b. The Talmud tells us: “The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace.”
c. The Holy Bible tells us: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

These three religious citations are provided by Obama at the end of his speech to stress the fact that all three major religions called for peace.
Emotion Technique

Zheng (2000) affirms that political speakers constantly use the emotion technique “in their bid to appeal to the viewing public.” After that, he shows how this technique is employed: “When speakers talk in hushed or ringing tones, and use exaggerated body language and facial gestures, they are using [the] emotion technique.” He also indicates that leaders “raise their voices at key points in their speeches and gesticulate vigorously with their arms and hands.” Watching Obama’s speech, it can be noticed that he uses these tactics to arouse the emotion of his audience: talking in ringing tones, head and face gestures as well as arm and hand gestures. For example, he raises his arm straight out with palms up and open when he greets the audience before he launches his speech. He has been successful in arousing his audience’s emotion to the extent that they applauded 42 times during his speech, and one audience member shouted, “Barack Obama, we love you!” The emotions which Obama is trying to convey through his words are virtually tangible in the following:

(17) a. I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear.
   b. The United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab and to punish those who would deny it.

Discourse Coherence and Cohesion

Though Zheng (2000) does not clearly show how discourse cohesion supports the rhetoric of political speech, he illustrates how political speeches manipulate discourse coherence for rhetorical purposes:

[Political speeches] use several devices to order the various parts of the texts, establish causal links, sustain topic continuity, determine relations among discourse entities, and to bridge distinct parts of discourse. As these three speeches were designed specifically for the federal election, they are highly refined, well structured, and are marked by a high level of coherency.

Obama mentions the topic of his speech in the opening of that speech:
(18) I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world.

After that he alludes to that “new beginning” several times throughout his speech. This serves the coherence of his talk. It is obvious that all the paragraphs in Obama’s speech are linked either directly or indirectly to that central issue of the American-Muslim relationship.

Using Metaphors

This is a significant rhetorical tool that has not been stated by Zheng (2000). It has been treated by Obeng (2002) as one of the devices of expressing indirectness in politics. He indicates why and how politicians use it:

In employing metaphors, political actors use a word or phrase to establish a comparison between one idea and another. The comparison is achieved through direct reference, by saying for example, that X is Y. For example, a person or state may be conceptualized as
an object, as another person, or as an animal with certain characteristics that help to
describe the mental picture the speaker wants to put across. (p.11).

Obama uses metaphors at least ten times in his Cairo speech, two of which are:
(19) a. Palestinians must abandon violence. … Violence is a dead end.
b. All of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st
   century.

In the first metaphor, Obama pretends to be a sincere and honest adviser to his audience.
He wears Mahatma Gandhi’s clothes and advises the Palestinians to abandon violence
picturing it as a road that is closed at one end, implying that it is not useful at all. In the
second metaphor, he compares education and innovation to the system of money that a
country uses, suggesting that it will be accepted by a lot of people in the world as a very
important factor of progress.

Summarization

This is also an important strategy that has not been referred to by Zheng (2000). It simply
means that a politician summarizes the ideas he wants to convey at the end of his speech.
Obama has talked about seven issues in his speech: violent extremism, the situation between
Israelis and Palestinians, nuclear weapons, democracy, religious freedom, women's rights,
and economic development. At the end of his speech, he summarizes these issues in one long
sentence:

(20) We have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world that we seek – a
world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come
home; a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own, and
nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes; a world where governments serve their
citizens, and the rights of all God's children are respected.

Frequency of Enforcement Tactics

Obama’s employment of the enforcement tactics in his Cairo speech is shown in Table
(2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement Tactic</th>
<th>Frequency of Representative Words and Expressions</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testimony Technique</td>
<td>America (34), American (11), Americans (3), United States (16), I (61), my (16), me (6), Exclusives: we (40), our (31), us (2)</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing Historical Speeches</td>
<td>Adams (1), Jefferson (2), E Pluribus Unum (1)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Inversion Technique      | - America didn’t go to war in Afghanistan by choice  
- Iraq is better off after Saddam  
- America is not at war with Islam  
- Americans reject the killing of innocent people  
- Iran defined itself by opposition to my country | 5               |
Table 2. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement Tactic</th>
<th>Frequency of Representative Words and Expressions</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear Technique</td>
<td>extremism (2), extremists (9), Al-Qaeda (3), Taliban (1), Iran (6), Iranian (1), Hamas (2), fear (6), risk (2), threat (1), threatened (1), threatening (1), dangerous (1), endangered (1), violence (10), violent (6), attack (2), attacks (2), Opponents: they (10), their (4), them (2)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical Fallacies</td>
<td>- America's commitment to seek a world [without] nuclear weapons - U.S. will support literacy for girls and women employment - America is not and never will be at war with Islam - America will align our policies with those who pursue Peace</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Citation</td>
<td>Koran (6), Talmud (1), Torah (1), Bible (1)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion Technique</td>
<td>arm and hand gestures (roughly 1262), head and face gestures (roughly 202)</td>
<td>1464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Coherence</td>
<td>Islam and related words (140), America and related words (220), new beginning (3), tension (7), relationship (2)</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Metaphors</td>
<td>- those who sow hatred rather than peace. - this cycle of suspicion and discord must end. - We were born out of revolution against an empire. - When innocents … are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience. - &quot;Nine-eleven was an enormous trauma to our country. - America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. - the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history. - violence is a dead end. - We can't disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretense of liberalism. - education … will be the currency of the 21st century.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Avoidance Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to shun responsibility for any negative deeds or bad sayings. According to Zheng (2000), this is achieved by never mentioning any negative side of self, using special categories of words, anaphora, and contrasting expressions. As will be shown below, a rhetorical tactic that has not been mentioned by Zheng is exaggerating negative sides of others. Moreover, a tactic mentioned by Zheng, but not discussed in detail, is name-calling.

Never Mentioning Negative Sides of Self

As reported by Zheng (2000), one of the most common techniques embraced by politicians is “denying the existence of any flaws or negative aspects present in one’s own character or set of beliefs.” Van Dijk (2006) calls that strategy “positive self-presentation” and indicates that it operates in such a way that “our good things are emphasized and our bad things de-emphasized” (p. 126). Previously, in van Dijk (1995), he indicates that generally
“ingroups and their members, as well as friends, allies, or supporters, tend to be described in positive terms” (p. 143). This avoidance tactic is utilized by Obama in the following excerpts:

(21) a. America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire.
   b. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations.
   c. America is not – and never will be – at war with Islam.

In (21a), Obama negates the belief of many people around the world that America is a self-interested empire and considers that belief as a mere “crude stereotype.” In (21b), he speaks of the threat of nuclear weapons without mentioning that the United States is the most dangerous nuclear power in the world, that it was the only country that used such weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki or even that its ally, Israel, has 200 nuclear bombs. In (21c), he claims that America is not fighting Islam, without stating how many Muslims have been killed by the Americans in their wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Obama also uses the avoidance tactics in these examples:

(22) a. Al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 people on that day [9/11].
   b. When it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point…It’s about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

In (22a), Obama states the number of people killed by Al-Qaeda, but he never mentions the number of people whom the Americans murdered all over the world. In (22b), Obama speaks of the prevention of nuclear arms in the Middle East without mentioning that Israel, an American ally, has the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the region.

**Exaggerating Negative Sides of Others**

This strategy has not been mentioned by Zheng (2000), though it is a very important strategy. It is simply about exaggerating the mistakes and bad deeds of others. Van Dijk (2006: 126) treats it as an ideological strategy under the label “negative-other presentation” and indicates that it operates in such a way that the bad things of the others “will be enhanced” and their good things “will be mitigated, hidden or forgotten.” Then, he gives an example to show how this works in both meaning and form:

We may enhance the negative properties of terrorists by reporting gruesome acts of them (a question of meaning or content), but then do so at great length, on the front page, with big headlines, with grisly pictures, repeatedly so, and so on, which are formal characteristics. (p. 126-27).

Obama uses this device in the following statements:

(23) a. Al Qaeda chose to ruthlessly murder these people … and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale.
   b. Palestinians must abandon violence. … It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus.
c. Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians.

**Special Categories of Words**

Zheng (2000) indicates why the choice of words is an important rhetorical tactic: Lexical choice can be used to enforce or attenuate illocutionary force. This is because certain types of words can, for instance, activate particular presuppositions, reveal speaker attitudes, and require reader agreement for interpretation. Some special “positive governing words” as well as “name calling words” are also used in political speeches.

A statistical analysis of Obama’s Cairo speech reveals how he uses special categories of words in order to achieve thematic emphasis and topical development throughout his speech. Table (3) displays the most frequently used words in Obama’s speech. Similar and related words are counted together. The percentage of related words is provided in the last column, taking into consideration that Obama has used 6,040 words in his speech.

**Table 3. Most Frequently Used Words in Obama’s Speech**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Individual Words</th>
<th>Frequency of Related Words</th>
<th>Percentage of Related Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America (34), American (11), Americans (3), United States (16)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1.06 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (61), my (16), me (6)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.21 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusives: we (58), our (37), us (21)</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1.92 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusives: we (40) our (31), us (2)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.21 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam (18), Islamic (5), Muslim (27), Muslims (19)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (18), your (5)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremists (9), extremism (2), Al-Qaeda (3)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.23 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proponent: they (18), their (19), them (6)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.71 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent: they (10), their (4), them (2)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran (6), Iranian (1), Hamas (2)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel (12), Israeli (2), Israelis (9), Jew (1), Jews (5), Jewish (3)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine (2), Palestinian (10), Palestinians (10)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will (42), can (33), must (32), should (11)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.95 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his speech, Obama speaks about himself and his country, America, 210 times, but mentions Islam and Muslims 92 times. This pictures America as a powerful and dominant nation and the Muslims as a weak population. He uses the first person singular pronouns ‘I,’ ‘my,’ and ‘me’ 73 times, but uses the second person pronouns ‘you’ and ‘your’ only 23 times. This helps to define the speaker as an authoritative source of information and knowledge;
whereas, the audience is defined as subordinate, uninformed, and less knowledgeable. Obama speaks about Israel and the Jews 32 times, but mentions Palestinians 22 times, which may be indicative of his bias toward Israel. He attacks extremists and opponents 39 times.

Looking at Obama’s use of modal verbs, it can be noted that the highest frequency verb is ‘will,’ which reveals that he makes a lot of promises about his own and his government’s future actions. The second high frequency modal is ‘can,’ which shows America’s ability to do things around the world. The third high frequency verb is ‘must,’ which illustrates that he is a powerful leader of a powerful country that tells others what they must and must not do. The last high frequency modal is ‘should,’ which demonstrates that he is giving his Muslim audience various pieces of advice on what they should and should not do.

According to Obeng (2002), “The use of inclusive pronouns (we and our) and exclusive pronouns (you, your, their, and they) is a common phenomenon used by politicians to show allegiance to their group and to convey their prejudice about other politicians” (p. 11). The most frequently used pronoun in Obama’s speech is ‘we’ and its related forms, ‘our’ and ‘us,’ with a total frequency of 189 times. However, we must distinguish between inclusive ‘we’ that means ‘both Americans and Muslims’ and exclusive ‘we’ that means ‘Americans only’. Inclusive ‘we,’ ‘our,’ and ‘us’ have been stated in Obama’s speech 116 times. Exclusive ‘we,’ ‘our,’ and ‘us’ have been stated 73 times. This is indicative of Obama’s trial to create an intimate association with Muslim audience by including them in his country’s plans and policies for the future rather than to praise his country and people’s plans and policies.

Moreover, one must distinguish between the forms ‘they,’ ‘their,’ and ‘them’ when used to refer to opponents and when used to refer to proponents or simply non-opponents. When referring to opponents, they are stated 16 times. When used generally or in reference to proponents they are mentioned 43 times. This signals that Obama is trying to alleviate his statements to make a reconciliation between America and the Muslim world.

**Anaphora**

Anaphora is used here in its rhetorical meaning of the “repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses especially for rhetorical or poetic effect.” (Merriam-Webster Online). One of the interesting rhetorical tactics that Obama deploys in his speech is the anaphora technique. He uses the repetition of phrases throughout his whole speech, as is apparent in these examples:

(24) a. Too many tears have been shed. Too much blood has been shed.
   b. You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities; … you must place the interests of your people … above your party.

In (24a), Obama repeats the same structure: too + many/much + noun + passive verb. He uses the same lexical items in the two structures with the exception of ‘tears’ and ‘blood’. In (24b), he uses the same structure: You must + verb + direct object + complement.

Obama’s use of anaphora is also apparent in these examples:

(25) a. On education, we will expand exchange programs, and increase scholarships. …
   On economic development, we will create a new corps of business volunteers to partner
with counterparts in Muslim-majority countries. … On science and technology, we will
launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries.
b. It’s easier to start wars than to end them. It’s easier to blame others than to look
inward. It’s easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share.

In (25a), Obama repeats the structure {Prepositional Phrase (‘on’ + Noun), ‘we will’ +
Verb + Object + Complement} to stress his many promises that America will help Muslim-
majority countries. In (25b), he repeats the structure {‘It’s easier to’ + Verb … ‘than to’ +
Verb} to show his wisdom and understanding of the world. In sum, by repeatedly using the
same utterances or structures, Obama seeks to enhance the positive influence of his speech
and to also attenuate the negative impact of America’s image.

Contrasting Expressions
Zheng (2000) states that politicians “extensively use contrasting expressions to disparage
their opponents and elevate themselves.” Then, he further explains the reason for using this
technique: “To retrieve information from the collective memories of the audience for the
benefit of the speaker.” Obama’s use of this technique is apparent in this extract:

(26) We [Americans] reject the same thing that people of all faiths reject: the killing of
innocent men, women, and children. … Al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 people on that day
[9/11]. The victims were innocent men, women and children.

Here, the contrast is obvious between America’s rejection of the killing of innocent
people and Al-Qaeda’s killing of a great number of innocent people in one day. However,
Obama has not referred to the bloody history of America in the killing of innocent people in
Germany, Japan, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. (Abu Farha, 2009).

Name-Calling
Though this rhetorical tool is referred to by Zheng (2000), it has not been discussed in
shows why and how name-calling is used:

Name calling is a political communicative strategy used by a politician to make an
audience form a judgment about his or her political opponent without the audience
examining the evidence on which the argument should be based. … It involves giving
“bad names” to individuals, groups, nations, races, policies, practices, beliefs, and ideals
which the politician would have his audience condemn and reject. (p. 15).

Obama has used name-calling at least once, in the following excerpt:

(27) I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of
Saddam Hussein.

Frequency of Avoidance Tactics
The frequency of Obama’s usage of the avoidance tactics in his Cairo speech is revealed
in Table (4).
Table 4. Frequency of Avoidance Tactics in Obama’s Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidance Tactic</th>
<th>Frequency of Representative Words and Expressions</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Mentioning Negative Sides of Self</td>
<td>- America is not … a self-interested empire</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- America is not … at war with Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We did not go [to war in Afghanistan] by choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- America will not turn our backs on … Palestinian[s]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- U. S. does not accept… Israeli settlements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerating Negative Sides of Others</td>
<td>See Table (2) under ‘Fear Technique’</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Categories of Words</td>
<td>See Table (3)</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaphora</td>
<td>too much/many (2), you must + V (3), we will + V</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21), they have + Past Participle (12), N’s interest (5), On + N (3), It’s easier (3), I am + Adj (7), As a + N (6), our + N (68), when + clause … clause (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasting Expressions</td>
<td>- We reject… the killing of innocent [people]…</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Al-Qaeda killed 3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- coexistence and cooperation… conflict and religious wars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hamas must put an end to violence… Israel must… ensure that Palestinians can live</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- U.S. played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government… Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- These are not just American ideas; they are human rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- knowledge and information… sexuality and… violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- wealth and opportunities… disruptions and change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name-Calling</td>
<td>- the tyranny of Saddam Hussein</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

This study has attempted to analyze the rhetorical strategies in Barack Obama’s Cairo speech on June 4, 2009. The researcher has applied Zheng’s (2000) framework to carry out such an analysis to answer two questions: a) What are the rhetorical strategies that Barack Obama used in his Cairo speech? and b) Is Zheng’s (2000) model sufficient for analyzing political discourse? The following results have been obtained.

Obama is a very competent political rhetorician. He uses a wide range of strategies and techniques in his speech to achieve his political objectives. He employs the three major rhetorical strategies that Zheng tackled: targeting, enforcement, and avoidance, each with several tactics.

In the targeting strategy, Obama employs the inclusive tactic as well as two other tactics not mentioned by Zheng: arousing the feeling of national and religious identity, and giving promises. In relation to the enforcement strategy, Obama uses the following rhetorical devices: the testimony technique, citing historical speeches, the inversion technique, the fear
technique, logical fallacies, religious citation, the emotion technique, as well as discourse cohesion and coherence. He also uses metaphors and summarization, two important enforcement tactics not discussed by Zheng.

As for the avoidance strategy, Obama deploys the following tactics: never mentioning any negative side of self, using special categories of words, anaphora, and contrasting expressions. Obama also uses an important avoidance device that has not been stated by Zheng, that is exaggeration of the negative sides of others. Moreover, he utilizes the tactic of name-calling that Zheng referred to, but did not discuss in detail.

Though Zheng’s (2000) model of critical discourse analysis is very helpful in analyzing political discourse, it needs to be supported by reference to important rhetorical devices like those added in this study. Two targeting tactics need to be augmented: arousing national and religious identity, and giving promises. Two enforcement tactics need to be referred to, namely metaphorization and summarization. Though Zheng mentions discourse cohesion and coherence as an enforcement tactic, he does not clearly show how cohesion supports the rhetoric of political speech. Finally, one avoidance tactic needs to be increased, namely exaggerating the negative sides of others.

REFERENCES


