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RHETORICAL FEATURES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

ABSTRACT

Based on the analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural speech, the article analyses the use of different persuasive strategies by means of such rhetorical devices as ethos, logos and pathos. Among most often used strategies were such ones as persuasion, self-presentation, legitimization, delegitimization while the most often used rhetorical devices were ethos, and pathos. The study showed that in modern political discourse the appeal to emotions prevail over rational argumentation. Though rhetorical means of persuasion are effectively used to mobilize and unite supporters, the existence of the opposition "us vs them" shows that political discourse is not neutral but ideologically polarized, aimed at persuasion, mobilization of supporters and discrediting opponents.

Key words: political discourse, inaugural address, rhetorical strategies, ethos, logos, pathos.

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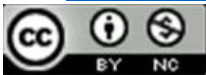
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ՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆ ԽՈՍՈՒՅԹԻ ՀՌԵՏՈՐԱԿԱՆ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒ-
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Հիմնվելով Դոնալդ Թրամփի 2025 թվականի երդմնակալության ելույթի վերլուծության վրա՝ այս հոդվածը ուսումնասիրում է տարբեր հռետորական ռազմավարությունների և համոզման մեթոդների (էթոս, լոգոս, պաթոս) օգտագործումը։ Առավել հաճախ օգտագործվող ռազմավարությունների շարքում էին համոզումը, ինքնաներկայացումը, լեգիտիմացումը և ապալեգիտիմացումը, մինչդեռ ամենատարածված հռետորական հնարքներն էին էթոսն ու պաթոսը։ Ուսումնասիրությունը ցույց է տվել, որ ժամանակակից քաղաքական դիսկուրսում հուզական կոչերը գերակշռում են ռացիոնալ փաստարկների նկատմամբ։ Չնայած համոզման հռետորական միջոցները արդյունավետորեն օգտագործվում են կողմնակիցներին մոբիլիզացնելու և միավորելու համար, «մենք-նրանք» հակադրության գոյությունը ցույց է տալիս, որ քաղաքական խոսույթը լինելով ոչ թե հեզոք, այլ զգաջափարապես ընեռացված, ուղղված է համոզելուն, կողմնակիցներին մոբիլիզացնելուն և հակառակորդներին վարկաբեկելուն։

Բանալի բառեր՝ քաղաքական խոսույթ, երդմնակալության ելույթ, հռետորական ռազմավարություններ, էթոս, լոգոս, պաթոս։

РЕЗЮМЕ
РИТОРИЧЕСКИЕ   ОСОБЕННОСТИ   ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО
ДИСКУРСА

На основе анализа инаугурационной речи Дональда Трампа 2025 года в статье анализируется использование различных риторических стратегий в контексте таких методов убеждения, как этос, логос и пафос. Среди наиболее часто используемых стратегий были стратегии убеждения, самопрезентации, легитимизации, делегитимизации, а наиболее часто используемыми риторическими приемами — этос и пафос. Исследование показало, что в современном политическом дискурсе эмоциональные призывы преобладают над рациональной аргументацией. Хотя риторические средства убеждения эффективно используются для мобилизации и объединения сторонников, существование оппозиции «мы-они» показывает, что политический

дискурс, будучи не нейтральным, а идеологически поляризованным, нацелен на убеждение, мобилизацию сторонников и дискредитацию оппонентов.

Ключевые слова: политический дискурс, инаугурационная речь, риторические стратегии, этос, логос, пафос

The study of the rhetorical features of political discourse is one of the priority areas of modern linguistics, political communication and critical discourse analysis. The relevance of the subject is highlighted by the growing influence of political discourse in shaping public opinion, legitimizing power, and constructing political reality. One of the important forms of political communication that aims to profoundly influence people is the inaugural address, a formal speech given by a newly inaugurated leader (like a President) at the start of their term, outlining the vision, goals, and the tone for the new administration, often addressing national challenges and aspirations and setting future agendas. It serves as an initial, powerful tool for unifying a diverse audience, shaping public opinion and building support.

Based on the analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural speech, the article investigates the use of different persuasive strategies in the context of such rhetorical appeals as ethos, logos and pathos.

Rhetorical appeal of ethos is related to the creation of trust, credibility and a positive image of the speaker. The following sentence from Trump's inaugural speech can serve as an example of ethos through self-presentation: "I return to the presidency confident and optimistic that we are at the start of a thrilling new era of national success". Here he demonstrates confidence and

personal readiness for leadership. Using the strategy of self-presentation, Trump positions himself as a strong and confident leader capable of leading the USA to a "new era of national success". He builds a positive image of himself and his leadership, strengthening the trust of the audience

Logos is connected with logical arguments, facts, argumentation. Trump uses arguments about the domestic situation in the country and the need for change, appealing to rational arguments. He criticizes the previous government for its inability to cope with domestic crises (fires, hurricanes, illegal immigration, inflation) and promises to restore security and sovereignty. In particular, he said: "Next, I will direct all members of my cabinet to marshal the vast powers at their disposal to defeat what was record inflation and rapidly bring down costs and prices. The inflation crisis was caused by massive overspending and escalating energy prices, and that is why today I will also declare a national energy emergency. We will drill, baby, drill. America will be a manufacturing nation once again, and we have something that no other manufacturing nation will ever have — the largest amountof oil and gas of any country on earth — and we are going to use it. We'll use it. We will bring prices down, fill our strategic reserves up again right to the top, and export American energy all over the world".

In this case a persuasive strategy is used within the framework of logos as it is based on the assessment of current problems and proposed solutions to convince listeners of the need for a new course policy. Here a logical explanation and action plan (e.g. to solve inflation and cost of living problems) is provided.

Pathos is associated with emotional impact and appeal to the feelings of the audience. In the sentence "The golden age of America begins right now" the strategy of legitimization, through pathos is used, strengthening the emotional legitimacy of the new course.

Strong emotional images are designed to unite the audience and strengthen their belief in the overall project. Trump talks about an American renaissance, the beginning of golden age, "a tide of change" which is sweeping the country, and that the Americans "will live proudly", "will dream boldly, and nothing will stand in our way ". All these are emotional formulas for inspiring patriotic feelings, instilling confidence and emotionally uniting listeners around a national idea.

Together with the strategy of legitimization, the strategy of delegitimization (undermining trust in opponents or the previously existing order) is often used, In his inaugural address Trump uses rhetoric that questions the legitimacy of the previous government and its policies. He effectively accuses the previous government of failing to cope with crises and at the same time criticizes their foreign policy orientation. This delegitimizes previous leaders as ineffective, thereby strengthening his own position. The following extract from his speech can serve as an example of the strategy of delegitimization: "For many years, a radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens while the pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete disrepair."

Here he openly criticizes the previous government as corrupt and incompetent which is a direct delegitimization of opponents within a dichotomy "us – them".

The existence of the "us–them" opposition in political discourse shows that political language is used not only to describe reality but to construct social divisions, identities, and power relations. The opposition defines who belongs to the political community ("us") and who is excluded ("them"). This helps create solidarity, unity, and shared values among the in-group. It reflects and reinforces ideological boundaries and polarization. "Us" is typically associated with positive traits (legitimate, moral, rational). "Them" is associated with negative traits (threatening, immoral, irresponsible). The "us–them" divide enhances persuasion by appealing to emotions such as fear, anger, pride, or loyalty. "They" may be framed as a threat, while "we" are positioned as victims or defenders. By portraying "them" as a danger or problem, political actors can justify restrictive policies or confrontational, aggressive actions and legitimize their own authority as protectors of "us".

It should be noted that rhetorical appeals of different speech acts depend on how they promise are framed and supported. For instance, at its core, a promise, which is often used in political discourse, primarily appeals to ethos. The speaker is asking the audience to trust their credibility, authority, and competence. "I will do X" signals leadership, commitment, and responsibility. Without evidence or emotion, a bare promise is mainly about who the speaker is and whether they can be believed.

A promise functions as logos when it is supported by arguments, evidence, or feasibility claims, or is explained through cause-and-effect reasoning.

But a promise becomes pathos-driven when it Is framed to evoke hope, fear, anger, or pride, when it is emotionally charged and uses emotionally loaded language, when it works by stirring emotions, not by explaining how or why.

For instance, Trump's promise contained in the sentence "And I will send troops to the southern border to repel the disastrous invasion of our country" primarily expresses an appeal to pathos (emotional appeal). It is so because emotionally charged language is used: words like "disastrous" and "invasion" are designed to evoke fear, alarm, and urgency.

Describing migration as an "invasion" frames it as a hostile, militarized threat, which can trigger emotions related to national security and survival. "I will send troops" positions the speaker as a defender, appealing to emotions of safety and reassurance.

There are also secondary appeals: a) to ethos (to a lesser extent): the speaker presents himself as a strong, decisive leader capable of taking action: b) Logos (weak): there is no evidence or reasoning offered; the claim relies more on emotional framing than logical argument. So, rhetorically, the sentence is dominated by pathos, using emotionally loaded language to persuade the audience rather than factual justification.

The analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural speech shows that the most often used strategies are the strategies of ethos and pathos which also

prevail in modern political discourse to the detriment of rational argumentation. Donald Trump's speech demonstrated the dominance of the strategy of persuasion where rhetorical means are effectively used to mobilize and unite supporters. The rhetoric of exceptionalism, struggle, victory, and justice is widely used to strengthen his image as a leader capable of restoring the country's leading position. Donald Trump's inaugural speech can be considered a vivid example of modern political discourse, where emotional influence and the leader's personal authority play a more significant role than rational argumentation.

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