

AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES: LINGUOSTYLISTIC FEATURES

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The present paper investigates linguostylistic features peculiar to celebrities' award receiving speeches - a public discourse variety of modern English which is popular not only for its social importance but also for its linguistic and stylistic significance. The results of the analyses carried out on the basis of linguostylistic and case study methodology show that emotional colouring and expressiveness are the most typical characteristics of award acceptance speeches. The impact on the listener or reader is achieved through the usage of different literary-stylistic devices. The award receiving speeches also make a strong emotional impact on the listener during celebrations and through them, while the length (conciseness or wordiness) does not minimize the strong influence on the audience.

Key words: *public discourse, award acceptance speeches of celebrities, literary-stylistic devices, emotional impact.*

Introduction

It is an accepted truth that there are different ways of demonstrating someone's viewpoints referring to others. Stylistically, we deal with numerous alternatives of linguistic expression through stylistic devices and expressive means. A stylistic device may be defined as a pattern according to which the peculiarities of language are materialized (Simpson, 2004, p.5). Hence, stylistic devices have a principal part in the examination of any kind of text. They reproduce the author's thoughts and feelings and make the reader think and feel what the author wants us to think and feel. This is especially important in award acceptance speeches of celebrities and is achieved through a masterful choice of words and devices in which the words appear. At large, the mentioned

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speeches are dramatic, emotional and inspirational at the same time as they aim at penetrating into the minds, hearts and souls of the audience, of every person who hears them. Hence, the abundant use of stylistic devices that make a strong impact on the listeners in such a speech is not by chance. We consider that the analysis of the material – the award receiving speeches and the definition of stylistic devices used in them – will contribute to our comprehension and interpretation of a piece of verbal expression.

Stylistic devices in celebrities' speeches

The public register of language, differing from other discourses has two oral variations, specifically the oratorical and the radio and TV commentary. Other typical sub-styles are the essay, journalistic articles, travel writing, autobiographies and diaries. The proliferation of English public discourse today and the emergence of new popular genres in it are the result of the present socio-political developments in the world in general, and extra-linguistic modifications of speech in particular. Although public discourse may be highly imaginative and fictitious (like in award acceptance speeches) its specific function also demands selection of elements belonging to informative and factitious realms. Functional stability is achieved both through factitiousness (a high frequency usage of certain speech situations, linguistic structures, terms) and fictitiousness (expressiveness of linguistic units, various shades of connotative meanings, rhetorical devices). The given discourse at large is identified by rational and objective syntactical structure with an enlarged order of connectives and cautious paragraphing. Its sensitive attraction is realized by the utilization of linguistic units with expressive meanings. When the aim of the speaker is to gain support and trust, s/he has to use rhetorical devices to gain desired results (Salkie, 1995, p.35).

Public discourse also has features such as terseness of expression. In its spoken variant, straight connection with the auditors allows a blend of lexical, phonetic and syntactical features which may also characterize the written variety. In straight addresses to the public the utilization of shrinking and non-literary words may prevail. As the listeners rely solely on memory, the prolocutor frequently turns to repetitions to let the audience go after the speaker and hold on to the main spots of the talk (Galperin, 1977, p.140).

As already mentioned, the fictitious, emotional aspect is an important feature in public discourse, including celebrity speeches. It is doubtless that celebrities usually present their public speeches while being excited and

overwhelmed with emotions. It seems natural that such emotional speeches are full of expressive means and stylistic devices.

As O. Akmanova states figures of speech are those unusual arrangements of words, those syntactic constructions which are aimed at enhancing the expressiveness of the utterance (Akhmanova, 1997, p.15). There exists an extensive and, perhaps, subconscious use of stylistic devices in award acceptance speeches. Such stylistic devices as climax, repetition, hyperbole, simile, metonymy and personification are widely used in celebrities' public speeches.

For example, in a popular Best Pop Performance award-talk Lady Gaga addressing the audience, tells them why she was touched to participate in the film *A Star is Born*, said:

I'm so proud to be a part of a movie that addresses mental health issues. They're so important. A lot of artists deal with that, and we've got to take care of each other. (Recording Academy/GRAMMYs, 2019a)

Here we see an example of a metonymy. The main function of metonymy is to provide mental, cognitive access to a target entity that is less readily or easily available: typically a more concrete or salient vehicle entity is used to give or gain access to a more abstract or less salient target entity within the same domain (Kovecses, 2002, p. 148). In the above example Lady Gaga is not *a part of a movie* and physically cannot be as she is just one of the actors who feature in the film. By the assertion that she is *a part of a movie* the actress expresses her pride and happiness – she is featuring in the film and the film has an important mission to carry out by addressing mental health issues and trying to support mentally challenged people. Actually, Stephanie Joanna Angelina Germanotta known as lady Gaga created a character that came to shock the public with her unique style and performance. The role in the film *A Star is Born* was her first lead role, and she also co-wrote most of the songs of the movie. We may conclude that she really felt being a part of the movie and perhaps subconsciously she used a metonymy to express her emotion of pride at this.

In the following example Ed Sheeran uses a metonymy in his speech at the American Institute for Stuttering Benefit Gala 2015 to express his fascination with music which started at an early age when he first received

the record album of the famous American rapper Eminem. Actually, Eminem is not an album but a rapper, record producer and actor who had created the album and who is considered one of the most controversial and best-selling artists of the early 21st century. While reminiscing his past, Ed uses another metonymy in which Eminem is presented as *the next Bob Dylan* – the American folksinger who moved from folk to rock music infusing the lyrics of rock and roll.

*But I got heavily into music at a young age, and got very, very into rap music - **Eminem was the first album** that my dad bought me. I remember my uncle Jim told my dad that **Eminem was the next Bob Dylan** when I was—say what you want, it's pretty similar, but it's all just story-telling. So my dad bought me the Marshall Mathers LP when I was nine years old, not knowing what was on it. And he let me listen to it, and I learned every word of it back to front by the age I was ten, and he raps very fast and very melodically, and very percussively, and it helped me get rid of the stutter. And then from there, I just carried on and did some music, but it's I think the one thing I actually wanted to convey in my speech today for not so much the adults here because I feel like the adults are fine—you're solid, everybody's got a lot of money and everyone's chillin'. (American Institute of Sluttering, 2015)*

The speech ends up with a climax which is a figure of speech in which words, phrases, clauses are arranged in order of increasing importance (Smyth, 1920, p. 677). By *be yourself, embrace yourself, embrace your quirks, and embrace your weirdness* the artist persuades the audience to be true to themselves focusing on the positive aspects of this characteristics.

*And just be yourself, embrace your quirks—being weird is a wonderful thing. But I think, you know, I'm not very good at speeches, I don't really do a lot of speeches but I think the one thing I want to say is **be yourself, embrace yourself, embrace your quirks, and embrace your weirdness.***

In the given speech we may also see the use of a hyperbole, a rhetorical device which includes exaggerated statements or claims not to be taken literally:

*If you'd have told my 11-year-old, five-year-old self - or any age - that I would have received an award from Stevie Wonder, then **I'd be chuffed.***

Joaquin Phoenix in his Oscar winning speech 2020 intentionally uses within close proximity climatic repetitions (*queer rights or indigenous rights or animal rights; one nation one people, one race, one gender, one species; when we educate each other, when we guide each other*) to stress the tension, add emphasis to the speech and to make a stronger emotive impact on the audience.

*I think at times we feel or are made to feel that we champion different causes. But for me, I see commonality. I think, whether we're talking about gender inequality or racism, **queer rights or indigenous rights or animal rights**, we're talking about the fight against injustice.*

*We're talking about the fight against the belief that **one nation, one people, one race, one gender, one species**, has the right to dominate, use and control another with impunity. I have been a scoundrel all my life, I've been selfish. I've been cruel at times, hard to work with, and I'm grateful that so many of you in this room have given me a second chance. I think that's when we're at our best: when we support each other. Not when we cancel each other out for our past mistakes, but when we help each other to grow. **When we educate each other, when we guide each other to redemption.** (Oscars, 2020b)*

At the 2017 Golden Globe Meryl Streep refers to bullies:

***Disrespect** invites disrespect, **violence** incites violence. And when the powerful use their position to bully others, we all lose. (MariiVicky, 2017)*

She uses personification, i.e. an inanimate object (disrespect; violence) is presented as one which has animate features and can *invite* or *incite*. Personification is connected to allegory as where personification is used allegories come into being (Bloomfield, 1963, p. 161-171). Allegoric associations are found not only in fiction but also in cinematography. This is perhaps the reason why we can come across personifications used by the actors rather frequently. Meryl Streep has a reputation of a brilliant technical actress, and her name is typically associated with serious films. She has also received a number of honorable awards and she holds the record of 32 Golden Globe nominations and 21 Academy Awards nominations. She is quite often cited in different social platforms, and in the given example of her speech she makes it more influential making the public be more attentive to avoid disrespect and violence.

Mike Lee when getting his Oscar (2019) for *Parasite*, presents the following personification:

*Hi everybody. I really like to thank director Bong. Thank you for being you. And I like everything about him: his smile, his crazy hair, the way he talks, the way he walks, and especially the way he directs. And what I really like about him is his sense of humor. And the fact is he can be really making fun of himself and he never takes himself seriously. Thank you, thank you very much. And I'd like to thank everybody who's been **supporting "Parasite,"** and who's been **working with "Parasite,"** and who's been **loving "Parasite."** And I'd like to thank my brother who's been always supporting our building our dreams, even when it looked impossible dream. Thank you, Jay. I want to thank my brother Jay. And especially, I really, really, really want to thank our Korean film audience, our moviegoers, who's been really supporting all our movies and never hesitated to give us straightforward opinion on what they feel like their movies. And that made us really never be able to be complacent and keep pushing the directors, the creators, keep pushing the envelopes. And without you, our Korean film audience, we are not here. Thank you very much. Thank you!* (Swain Hwang, 2020).

In Mike Lee's speech, though *Parasite* is the title of the film, the parallel to the primary meaning of the word which denotes an animate being, is quite evident. If we try to find the connection between the given speech and the plot of the film, we'll see that by *Parasite* the authors mean the people who have done their best to create the film.

Selena Gomez won the award for Favorite Female Artist, and in the last part of her speech she repeats the word *love* twice in one sentence to stress her gratitude to people loved by her for the opportunity to share with them what she loved.

I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to be able to share what I love every single day with people that I love.
(Dailymotion, 2016)

Billie Eilish, accepting an award in American Music Awards, also uses repetition in her speech aiming at attracting attention, impressing people and presenting herself as part of the whole, as part of the same society which has exactly the same feelings as everybody else:

My parents are here tonight, and they would listen to 'Tapestry' and all your other records in high school and then they took those records with them, packed them up in boxes and took them to college with them. Then when they met and they got their own house, they took those records with them there. And then when they had my brother and I, they played those records for us.

*This industry is really weird where sometimes people who do what we **do feel like** and I'm sure as some of you **feel like** this too with your lives, like you **feel like** your stock is either up or down and people either like you or they don't or you're feeling bad about yourself but the people who hang in there for you are the ones that you will never forget.* (ABC, 2019)

Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez and Billie Eilish are idols for a great number of youngsters all over the world. Every step taken by them, every speech and every appearance both in real and in virtual life becomes a subject of discussion for millions of fans. It's difficult to say whether the use of the stylistic devices

is planned and thought over or whether they simply express their emotions. Yet, they influence the audience greatly.

Another example of repetition can be seen in Olivia Colman's speech at the Oscar when she won the best actress award in 2007. By the repetition of *Thank you*, she renders her profound gratitude to people (her husband, the cast and the crew) who have been with her and supported her in the creation process of the film.

My husband, Ed, my best friend, I love you so much. 25 years and you've been my best supporter. He's gonna cry! I'm not. Thank you so much – Fox, everybody, the cast and crew. Thank you. Argh, thank you so much. Lady Gaga! And Melissa! Thank you. (Oscars, 2019)

This extensive use of repetitions during award acceptance ceremonies can be well explained with the help of a definition given by J. Vandres: "Repetition is also one of the figures having its origin in the emotive language. Repetition when applied to the logical language becomes simply an instrument of grammar. Its origin is to be seen in the excitement accompanying the expression of a feeling being brought to its highest tension." (Vandries, 1937, p. 147).

Dua Lipa at the Grammy 2019 won best new artist, and she used climax in her speech emphasizing the fact that although she is overexcited and nervous she does not stop being thankful to everybody for appreciating her work so highly:

Oh my goodness. Thank you so much. I guess, oh my God I don't even know where to begin. I guess where I want to begin is by saying how honoured I am to be nominated alongside so many incredible female artists this year because I guess this year we've really stepped up. I want to say a really big thank you to my fans who have allowed me to be the best version of myself, I love you guys very much. I want to say thank you to my team who have been by my side. I want to say thank you to my family who's here with me tonight and Oh my God I'm so nervous and I'm so excited and so grateful. (Recording Academy/GRAMMYS, 2019b)

Billie Eilish wins Song of the Year (2020 Grammy), and we may see a lot of interjections in her speech demonstrating her feelings to people and especially to her parents, her team and her best friends, getting the attention of the audience and making an emotional impact on them.

*Why? **Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow!** Oh my God. So many other songs deserve this. I'm sorry. Thank you so much. This is my first Grammy's. I never thought this would ever happen in my whole life. I grew up watching them and this is my brother, Finneas, and he's my best friend. I feel like I joke around a lot and I never take anything seriously at these kinds of things, but I genuinely want to say I'm so grateful and I only want to say that I'm grateful and that I'm so honored to be here amongst all of you. I love you to my core. I grew up watching all of you. Thank you to **my mom, my dad, my team, my best friends!** Drew and Zooey for keeping me alive to this day, Justin, Danny, Brandon, Michelle, Chelsea, Spencer, you say some please. (Recording Academy/GRAMMYS, 2020)*

Renée Zellweger won the Oscar for the film *Judy*. Climax (*her legacy, her music, her books, her interviews, her television show*) is used in her speech to attract attention, impress the audience and to express admiration.

I loved you in Judy. I have to say that it's, I mean, absolutely amazing performance and amazing film. So, basically, you became an extension of Judy in the film. It's almost like she transcended with you in the film. And what I want to know is, how did you connect? What was it about Judy that connected you so closely by so in heart that you basically became her? I know you've done a lot of research, but was there anything else that you felt very close to with her that you were able to deliver such an incredible performance and become her, essentially? [...] We just appreciate the importance of her legacy, and who she was as a person and we all wanted to celebrate her. And every day we came to

*work and we just tried things, we just kept trying things. And the director, Rupert Goold, called it "mining for treasure." We were all digging around in sort of the materials of **her legacy, her music, her books, her interviews, her television show**. You know, just everything that we could find that seemed essential in conjuring her essence to tell the story. And that was everybody's work, you know. And it was, you know, the partnership with every single department throughout. And it really was a celebration. We just came to work every day. You could feel the love, the love for Ms. Garland, and that was what we had hoped, so -- And I thank you for your question. (Oscars, 2020b)*

Elton John and Bernie Taupin won the Oscar for the song *I'm Gonna Love Me Again* from *Rocketman*. They use such rhetorical devices as parallel construction, climax, alliteration and repetition.

*Elton: This is for him. This is for my partner of 53 years. **Without him, I wouldn't be here. He starts the process. He gives me the lyrics, and then I go ahead. Without the lyrics, I'm nobody.** This is the man who started the journey, and we are still together after 53 years. I have one of these already, but I so wanted to get one for everybody involved in the film. I just Face Timed them. They're in Australia, and I'll be Face Timing in the car when I leave. They're so happy. I love them so much. They love their daddy. They were so excited about the Golden Globes, but this one is -- you know, an award is an award. But as I say, it's the thing that matters most in my life is I have a **wonderful husband and great children and great family and great friends and great health**. That is the most important thing. But when you work on something for 12 years as a team and you work really hard and you really it comes out the way you want to want it to, it's this is a nice affirmation.*

*Bernie, please, what does this mean to you, 53 years working with **this guy through**, as we saw in the film, the good **times** and the **tough**, what's this like for you tonight?*

*Bernie: Well, what you see in the film is what you get. I mean, the basic whole underlying storyline in that movie is the real thing. You know, even though there are fantasy elements to it. The basic theme of the whole movie is love and trust and believing in the person you are working with. I mean, it's like a marriage, you know? It really is. And one of the things that makes it work is being **different**, having **different** lives, leading **different** lives, and – but we always come back together for the music, and the music is the thing that has run through the bloodline of our veins ever since we first met. Thank you. (ET Canada, 2020)*

As already mentioned, climax is an arrangement of sentences (or of the homogeneous parts of one sentence) which secures a gradual increase in significance, importance, or emotional tension in the utterance. A gradual increase in significance may be maintained in three ways: logical, emotional and quantitative. As we can guess, and that can be proved by the examples, the emotional variant is prevailing in celebrities' speeches. The use of climax is undoubtedly connected to the speaker's wish to increase the emotional influence on the audience by building excitement and anticipation.

Taylor Swift just giving one of the biggest speeches of her career at the American Music Awards while accepting the Artist of the Decade Award uses climax and repetition.

*Guys, we've had fun, **incredible, exhilarating, extraordinary times together**, and may it continue. Thank you for being the reason why I am on this stage, from the very first day of my career until tonight. I love you with all of my heart. **Thank you** for everything. **Thank you, AMAs. Thank you, just thank you, I'm so lucky to get to do this. Thank you.** (4Music, 2016)*

It should be noted that actors and singers are masters of exaggeration. Hence the use of hyperbole, either conscious or subconscious, can be seen in many public speeches. The desire to make an impact on the public is realized through exaggeration of most possible notions. For example, Taika Waititi,

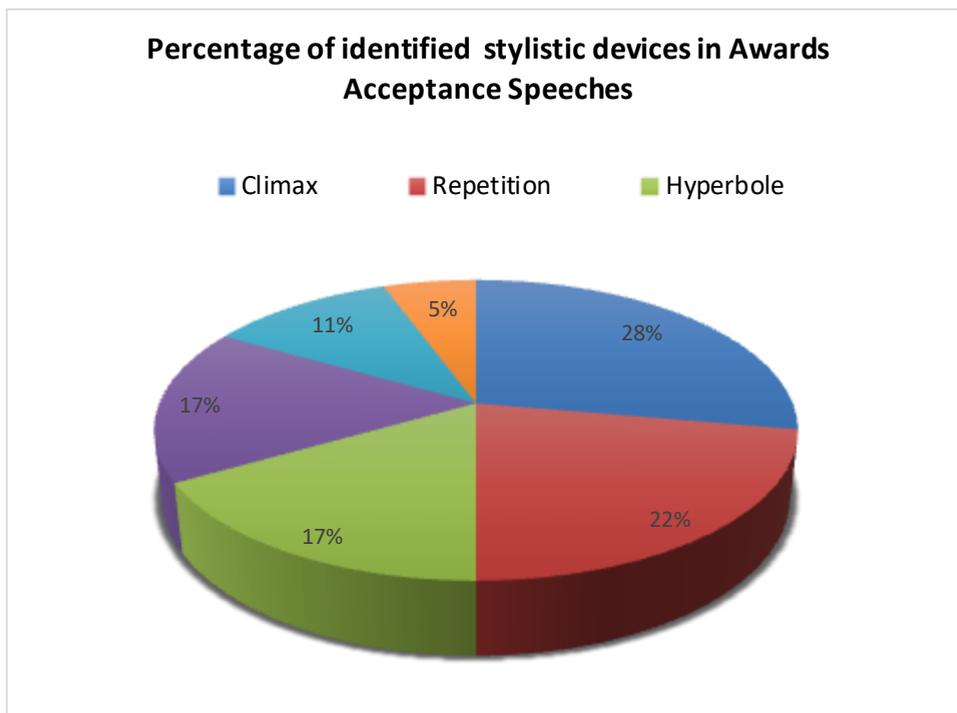
getting Oscar for *Jojo Rabbit*, presented a speech which among other devices such as climax, simile, metonymy, included hyperbole as well.

*And especially as the computers - as the laptops get newer and newer, here's **the latest, the latest one, the latest new iMac**, the keyboards are worse. And I've got very - I've got some shoulder problems, I've got, **like a sort of loose** -- I don't know what you call it over here, this thing here, which is that tendon that goes from, **like the forearm down into the thumb**. You know what I'm talking about, you guys who are writing. And what happens is you open the laptop and you're like this. [...] **I have lived in a little bubble** for six weeks to where any spare moment I would curl up under a table and go to sleep. I understand that the movie was just adopted **as an educational tool** by the USC Shoah Foundation. **Apple** needs to fix those keyboards. (BAFTA, 2020)*

Hyperbole also occurs in the acceptance speech delivered by Tom Hanks when taking best actor for Philadelphia. It should be added that the war-comedy *Jojo Rabbit* itself can be perceived as an exaggeration and the use of hyperbole in Waititi's speech is expectable and even logical.

The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels. We know their names. They number thousand for each of the red ribbons we wear here tonight. (BAFTA, 2020)

Summing up the results of the examination of award acceptance speeches by celebrities, we may present the following chart:



Conclusion

As a result of the examination of stylistic devices in award acceptance speeches by celebrities, we can state that the general characteristics of award receiving speeches, is the highly emotional colouring and expressiveness. The length of the award receiving speech does not affect its influence on the audience. The most frequently used stylistic devices proved to be climax (28%), repetition (22%), hyperbole (17%), simile (17%), metonymy (11%) and personification (5%). Such an abundant use of stylistic devices is quite common, as the winners are in a state of excitement when they receive the award. Structurally, there are five steps for composing a great thank you speech: starting with an expression of gratitude; talking about the esteem for the people honoring the winner; telling a funny story or poignant story; mentioning the names of people who helped and ending the speech on a high note.

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Քրիստինե Հարությունյան

Սույն հոդվածում աստղերի մրցանակաբաշխության ելույթների քննության միջոցով ուսումնասիրվում են այն լեզվաոճական առանձնահատկությունները, որոնք բնորոշ են հրապարակախոսական դիսկուրսին: Արդյունքները վկայում են, որ մրցանակաբաշխության ելույթները ընդհանուր առմամբ բնութագրվում են բարձր զգայական գունավորմամբ և հուզարտահայտչականությամբ, ինչն էլ խոսքում դրսևորվում է ոճական հնարների կիրառությամբ: Այս ելույթները մեծ հուզական ազդեցություն են գործում ունկնդիրների վրա:

Բանալի բառեր՝ հանրային դիսկուրս, հանրահայտ մարդկանց մրցանակաբաշխանության ելույթներ, ոճական հնարներ, ներազդում: