Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor

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Published online: 12 Oct 2016.

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BOOK REVIEW

Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor. Jonathan Charteris-Black. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 274 pages, $39.27 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-23-027439-6

Political speech is a pervasive longstanding political genre. It received profound academic attention throughout the centuries and many linguistic, rhetorical, semiotic, and psychological methodologies have been developed to approach its various aspects. The goal of Charteris-Black's *Analysing Political Speeches* is to introduce a mixture of these methodologies to his readers. He combines traditional textual and rhetorical analysis with recent critical approaches and makes use of qualitative and quantitative methods to reach an integrated methodology.

The target readers of the book are students and researchers interested in the disciplines of rhetoric, linguistics, discourse analysis, political communication, and political sciences. It is structured to enable students to grasp political speech analysis and to be familiar with its tools and theories. The basic concepts and features are clearly identified, defined, and illustrated with many well-analyzed examples. Whole speeches by Barack Obama, Tim Collins, John F. Kennedy, Rory Weal, Tony Blair, David Cameron, Michael Howard, as well as many excerpts from other British and American political speeches are studied in detail. It is disappointing that the author does not include any female or no non-Anglo politicians, although he analyzed speeches of Thatcher in his book on *Politicians and Rhetoric* (2nd ed. 2016, Palgrave) and speeches by non-Anglo politicians *in The Communication of Leadership* (2007, Routledge). Still, the investigated data are contemporary and their contexts are quite familiar to readers with an Anglo-American political background, which results in an easy processing of the data analysis. Furthermore, 28 exercises are given throughout the book to enhance the analytical capabilities of its readers. Additionally, Charteris-Black devotes a relatively long section (pp. 241–259) of his book to provide comments on exercises that include some key answers, clues, and extra explanations. Moreover, a short list of essential readings is cited at the end of each chapter plus a glossary including concise definitions of the key terms at the end of the textbook.

Analysing Political Speeches is divided into three parts. The first introduces traditional approaches to political oratory, whereas the other two parts present contemporary critical approaches to political discourse (part 2) with a particular emphasis on political metaphor (part 3). Each part consists of three chapters, except for the last chapter, which applies five previously illustrated approaches to a speech by David Cameron.

Part 1 explores traditional linguistic and rhetorical approaches to political speeches. Its first chapter focuses on classical Greek philosophy to explain how classic rhetoric enhances our understanding of political speeches. Specifically, Charteris-Black revisits Aristotle's everlasting contribution to oratory to illustrate its branches, artistic or rhetorical proofs (ethos, pathos, and logos) and rhetorical canons. Referring to various examples, he differentiates between deliberative, epideictic and forensic genres, connecting them with Aristotle's three concepts of Logos, Ethos, and Pathos. Among the famous five canons of rhetoric, a particular interest is given to Arrangement, which comes in order after Invention and is followed by Style, Memory, and Delivery.

The second chapter introduces the readers to the comparatively vague concept of Style. Charteris-Black widens the scope of the Style to refer to "semiotic forms of expressions—mainly, but not exclusively, verbal ones—that create an impression of uniqueness but also accommodate to social identities" (p. 54). However, the analyzed data shows a focus on the verbal aspect of style and figures of speech. Otherwise, the third chapter makes use of a historically more recent contribution by text linguists. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework of coherence is employed to relate a political speech to its sociocognitive circumstances. Similarly, grammatical and lexical cohesion shed light on

syntactic features such as reference, deixis, and repetition. The text linguistic approach to political speeches could be seen as a bridge between normative classical approaches on the one hand and the contemporary critical approaches that are discussed in the second part of the book on the other.

Charteris-Black paves the way for introducing the critical approach by defining the concepts of power and persuasion, with chapter 4 outlining the key objectives, concepts and analytical stages of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Two main features of discourse, agency and modality, are discussed in some analytical detail in chapter 5. The choices of names and adjectives as well as systems of modality are critically analyzed in various excerpts and a whole speech by Tony Blair is analyzed in detail. Among various approaches relating to the framework of Critical Discourse Studies, Charteris-Black devotes chapter 6 to the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). He summarizes its main claims and methodologies, giving particular attention to two discursive strategies, namely nomination and argumentation. He sums up and addresses some of the most crucial critiques that are directed at the DHA (i.e., the effect of the analyst's ideological position on their work and the ambiguity of some key concepts such as "topoi" and "fields of action."

The author's critical approach to discourse could have been rooted in a more rhetorical tradition to match part 1. Plato's critique of political discourse is based on moral and epistemic reasons, with Critical Rhetoric as a recent approach that emerged as a response to Plato's critique. Critical Rhetoric, as well as CDA, emerged in the late 1980s and share many of goals and practices, such as aiming to show the discursive abuse of power through textual critical analysis.

Charteris-Black continues his inspiring previous work on metaphor in part 3. He provides a general introduction to researching metaphor in public communication in chapter 7, and identifies and illustrates four principle stages of critical metaphor analysis in chapter 8. These stages include contextual analysis and metaphor identification, interpretation and explanation. Furthermore, he clarifies his methodology by analyzing two speeches by Obama. In chapter 9, he explains in detail seven different purposes of political metaphor: general rhetorical, heuristic, predictive, empathetic, aesthetic, ideological and mythic, and he analyzes multiple excerpts to demonstrate the characteristics of each purpose.

The cover of the book shows a modern rostrum with many spotlights and some audience members just appearing out of the darkness. It might suggest that considerable attention is given to the interactional and audio-visual aspects of the studied speeches when in fact only minimal attention is given to the various ways of interaction between a speaker and his/her audience. Audience reception and their responses are excluded from the analytical framework (see Abdul-Latif, 2011). Moreover, crucial audio-visual features such as symbols, images, colors, motion, gestures, tone, and so on were hardly considered by the author. The political speeches discussed throughout the book are minimized to their linguistic component. Therefore, it is not surprising that Charteris-Black defines a political speech in the first line of his book as follows: "A political speech is an orderly sequence of words delivered by an individual to a physically present audience assembled for a specific social purpose" (p. xii). It would be expected that a more multimodal approach would have been developed throughout the book if the author had recognized the other nonverbal components of a political speech.

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