



## A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN MODERN POLITICAL SPEECHES

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19390965>

**Keywords:** *persuasive strategies, discourse analysis, pragmatics, semantic framing, modality, speech acts, ideological representation.*

This research investigates persuasive strategies in modern political speeches through a comprehensive linguistic framework. The primary objective of the study is to examine how language resources are systematically employed to shape public perception and reinforce ideological positions. The analysis integrates semantic interpretation with pragmatic theory in order to reveal both explicit meanings and implicit communicative intentions.

Persuasive force in modern political speeches is not embedded solely in lexical choice but emerges from the interaction between *semantic structure* and *contextual activation*. Meaning in public address operates on *two interconnected levels*: the propositional content and the ideologically loaded conceptual framing that guides interpretation. As Lakoff (1980) argues in his theory of conceptual metaphor, *metaphor* is not merely stylistic ornamentation but a cognitive mechanism that structures perception and reasoning. When leaders employ metaphors such as "*journey*," "*battle*," or "*foundation*," they implicitly organize social reality into simplified cognitive schemas. From a semantic perspective, such metaphors function as conceptual constraints, narrowing interpretive possibilities while presenting complex realities as coherent narratives.

Beyond semantic framing, persuasion intensifies at the pragmatic level, where speaker intention and audience inference intersect. According to Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, meaning often exceeds literal expression, relying on shared assumptions and cooperative principles. In formal speeches, *implicature* allows speakers to imply evaluation or criticism without explicit articulation, thus preserving deniability while maintaining persuasive effect. Similarly, Searle's (1969) speech act theory explains how *declaratives*, *commissives*, and *directives* operate not only as linguistic forms but as social actions that construct authority and commitment. Through carefully calibrated modality ("*must*," "*will*," "*can*") and presupposition triggers, speakers present contested propositions as already accepted truths, subtly guiding audience alignment.

Discourse-level organization further amplifies persuasive impact by constructing collective identity and legitimizing institutional authority. Van Dijk (1998) emphasizes that ideology is reproduced through discourse structures that emphasize positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Repetition, parallelism, and evaluative lexis reinforce in-group solidarity while marginalizing alternative perspectives. From a critical discourse analytic viewpoint, persuasion is therefore not a surface-level rhetorical strategy but a structural phenomenon embedded in patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and emphasis. The cumulative effect of these semantic and pragmatic mechanisms demonstrates that persuasive



communication in modern political speeches operates as a multilayered system in which linguistic form, cognitive framing, and socio-contextual positioning converge.

Another crucial dimension of persuasive discourse lies in the strategic management of presupposition and information structure. *Presuppositions* function as backgrounded assumptions that are presented as already accepted or indisputable. As Levinson (1983) notes, presupposition triggers such as definite descriptions, factive verbs, and temporal clauses allow speakers to embed ideological assumptions within grammatically subordinate structures. By presenting certain *propositions* as taken-for-granted knowledge, speakers reduce the likelihood of critical evaluation. In this sense, persuasion is achieved not through overt argumentation but through subtle control of what is linguistically foregrounded and what is relegated to the background. The manipulation of theme - rheme structure and topicalization further directs audience attention, shaping interpretive priorities without explicit instruction.

In addition, *modality* plays a central role in constructing epistemic authority and projecting confidence. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), within the framework of *Systemic Functional Linguistics*, argue that modality expresses degrees of certainty, obligation, and inclination, thereby encoding interpersonal relations. High-value modal verbs ("must," "have to") signal necessity and inevitability, while medium or low-value forms ("may," "might") create space for flexibility or ambiguity. Through calibrated modal patterns, speakers simultaneously assert control and maintain relatability. This dual positioning strengthens persuasive impact because it balances institutional authority with interpersonal engagement. Thus, modality operates not merely as a grammatical category but as a strategic resource for shaping power relations in discourse.

Finally, *intertextuality and narrative construction* contribute significantly to persuasive effectiveness. Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that discourse is inherently intertextual, drawing upon prior texts, shared cultural references, and collective memories. By invoking historical events, national symbols, or widely recognized narratives, speakers align themselves with established value systems and legitimize present claims. Narrative sequencing - problem identification, moral evaluation, and projected resolution - further enhances coherence and emotional resonance. As Bruner (1991) suggests, narrative is a fundamental mode of human cognition, enabling audiences to interpret events within meaningful story frameworks. Consequently, persuasive discourse becomes effective not simply because of isolated linguistic devices but because it integrates semantic framing, pragmatic inference, modality, and narrative logic into a unified communicative strategy. This study reveals that persuasive strategies in contemporary speeches rely on the combined use of semantic, pragmatic, and discourse-level techniques. Speakers employ metaphors, evaluative language, presuppositions, and speech acts to shape meaning, influence audience interpretation, and project authority. Modality, repetition, and narrative structures further enhance engagement and reinforce ideological messages. Overall, effective persuasion emerges from the careful integration of linguistic form, context, and audience perception, highlighting language as a central tool for guiding understanding and shaping public opinion in modern communication.

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