An Analysis of Personification as a Rhetorical Device in the US Presidents' Speeches in Four Decades

การวิเคราะห์บุคลาธิษฐานในฐานะกลวิธีในการใช้วาทศิลป์ ในสุนทรพจน์ของประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกา ใน 4 ทศวรรษ

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to analyze personification as a rhetorical device in political speeches and to find out the frequency of personification in the inaugural speeches of the US Presidents in the year 1981-2021. It was the analysis of the rhetorical feature of personification used in the eleven speeches by seven US Presidents in 4 decades in order to express the conceptual framework of the American leaders' rhetoric. The descriptive qualitative method has been applied, and the rhetorical strategy of conceptual personification has been used in order to scrutinize sentences of the speeches**.** The finding revealed that the seven US Presidents, all quite frequently, use the rhetorical device of personification with the aim to make the American people understand their concepts, beliefs, and goals for America, and the rhetorical device of personification was mostly found in the speech of President Barack H. Obama in the second inaugural speech in 2013.

Keywords: Personification, Rhetorical Device, Persuasion, Inaugural Speech

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์บุคลาธิษฐาน (personification) ในฐานะที่เป็นกลวิธีในการใช้วาทศิลป์ (rhetorical device) ในการเมือง และเพื่อหาความถี่ของการใช้บุคลาธิษฐานในสุนทรพจน์ในพิธีสาบานตนเข้ารับตำแหน่งของประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกา ในปี 2524-2564 งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิเคราะห์ลักษณะสำคัญเชิงวาทศิลป์ของบุคลาธิษฐานที่ใช้ในสุนทรพจน์ 11 ครั้งโดยประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกา 7 คน ในห้วงเวลา 4 ทศวรรษ และเป็นการอธิบายกรอบแนวคิดของการใช้วาทศิลป์ของผู้นำชาวอเมริกัน โดยใช้วิธีการเชิงพรรณนาเชิงคุณภาพและใช้กลยุทธ์เชิงวาทศิลป์ของบุคลาธิษฐานที่เป็นกรอบแนวคิดเพื่อกลั่นกรองประโยคของสุนทรพจน์ พบว่าประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกาทั้ง 7 คนใช้กลวิธีในการใช้วาทศิลป์ในแบบบุคลาธิษฐาน โดยมุ่งหมายเพื่อให้ชาวอเมริกันเกิดความเข้าใจในแนวคิด ความเชื่อและเป้าหมายเพื่อประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกาของพวกเขา และกลวิธีในการใช้วาทศิลป์พบมากที่สุดในสุนทรพจน์ของประธานาธิบดีบารัค เอช. โอบามา ในพิธีสาบานตนเข้ารับตำแหน่งประธานาธิบดีสหรัฐอเมริกาครั้งที่สอง ในปี 2556

คำสำคัญ: บุคลาธิษฐาน, กลวิธีในการใช้วาทศิลป์, การโน้มน้าว, สุนทรพจน์ในพิธีสาบานตนเข้ารับตำแหน่งประธานาธิบดี

Introduction

Figures of speech are rhetorical devices used by writers and speakers to give the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence beyond their usual, literal definition. In politics, language plays an essential role because all political actions are prepared, attended, and influenced by language. Consequently, language and politics are closely harmonized. In other words, language and politics are intimately linked at a fundamental level. Politicians wish to enhance people's interest and to strengthen their image, to make people share their opinions, and to agree with their ideas or concepts to inform the general public of their ideology and message. The core of political speech is the capability of the politician to utilize language and symbols that clarify obscure tendencies among the messages. The main objective of political speech is to get the corresponding effect through persuasion. Therefore, political persuasion is an important part of any society where communicators try to convince the others to change their beliefs or behavior in considering a political issue via messages with a sense of free choice (Perloff, 2003, p. 34).

The rhetoric skill is imperative as the power to persuade the target audience. In other words, the idea of persuasion or rhetoric is a strong tool to persuade, motivate, and inspire the target audience. Many rhetorical devices are used by politicians because

they want to differentiate themselves from ordinary people (Devlin, 2008, p. 42). An inaugural speech, as one kind of political speech, is an important event for a president to address the public. The speech is mostly delivered in the atmosphere of celebrating the victory. It is an excellent opportunity for the president to persuade and share the ideology with the nation (Shaw, 2017, p. 80).

Persuasion involves discourse and rhetoric to influence the receivers to adopt an attitude towards a particular issue (van Dijk, 1997, p. 11). In political speeches, persuasion is achieved by choosing a form of discourse that will appeal to supporters. Thus, an important aspect of political speeches is the rhetorical art of persuasive communication. The purpose of persuasive speech is to change the audiences' behavior or attitude toward something or even accept the speaker's opinion. This type of speech always has emotion involved, and the speaker always asks audience's support. The persuasive techniques are vital for politicians interested in manipulating others or getting people to accept or reject specific ideas or plans of action.

To arouse the target audience's attitudes, feelings and beliefs about a given subject, politicians should have audience's involvement and always employ personification, the attribution of human qualities to non-human things, to offer a livable picture and an expressive and emotional significance. These can be objects, events, ideas, or even living, non-human things (Kathryn, 2022). Personification happens all the time. We use metaphorical expressions in our daily language that appear to ascribe human traits to non-human objects. It helps us to relate to these and get some kinds of handle on them when they are otherwise too tricky to comprehend fully. (Incognito, 2021)

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 33), personification is a distinct linguistic phenomenon even though it belongs to the group of ontological metaphors. To be more precise, in personification, something non-human is spoken about as if being human. As politicians, they commonly use conceptual personification in politics to refer to the country or political movements as people.

Research questions are which of the seven US Presidents mostly used personification in his speech and how often personification is used in each of eleven speeches of seven US Presidents.

Objectives of the Study

To carry out this comparative analysis, the objectives of this study are (1) to analyze personification as a rhetorical device in political speeches and (2) to find out the frequency of occurrences of personification found in each of the speeches of the US Presidents in the year 1981-2021. Using the available means of persuasion in personalization, politicians generally refer to the country or political movements as people.

Scope and Method of the Study

The speeches of US Presidents in the year 1981-2021 were selected for this study because this precious period was four decades of changes when many important events of the United States of America occurred. This study has made people see how rhetorical devices used in speeches of US Presidents as powerful tool were formed. The analysis focused only on personification as one of the rhetorical devices, used in the eleven speeches of seven US Presidents in four decades of the year 1981-2021. Data collection was made by text analysis of each speech.

Table 1: Eleven Speeches of Seven US Presidents in the Year 1981-2021

President	Speech	Year
Ronald W. Reagan	The First Inaugural Speech	1981
	The Second Inaugural Speech	1985
George H. W. Bush	The Inaugural Speech	1989
William J. Clinton	The First Inaugural Speech	1993
	The Second Inaugural Speech	1997
George W. Bush	The First Inaugural Speech	2001
	The Second Inaugural Speech	2005
Barack H. Obama	The First Inaugural Speech	2009
	The Second Inaugural Speech	2013
Donald J. Trump	The Inaugural Speech	2017
Joseph R. Biden, Jr.	The Inaugural Speech	2021

Literature Review

This study focuses on language creation and language power in the use of personification, one popular type of rhetorical devices: assigning human attributes, such as emotions and behaviors, to a non-human entity or inanimate object to express a point or idea in a more colorful, imaginative way, in politics, particularly in the speeches by US Presidents.

Rhetorical Devices

Rhetoric is recognized as the art of utilizing the language for persuasion effects. It is an effective tool to give information, persuade and motivate the audience for particular purposes in specific situations (Murthy & Ghosal, 2014, p. 250). Rhetoric is the principle of training communicators, writers, speakers, auditors and readers. Originally, rhetoric was the systematic study of oratory and applied to the training of orators for debate and other forms of public speaking in the classical Greece and Rome (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994, p. 19). Rhetorical devices are used to trigger emotional responses in an audience by employing effectual articulation. These stylistic devices not only enhance the aesthetic quality of the text but also help the speakers to put forth a convincing argument and transmit the message intelligibly to their audience (KidSmart, 2020).

Modes of Persuasion or Rhetorical Appeals

Zakariya (2018, p. 96) mentioned Aristotle (1991, as cited in Griffin, 2012) expressing his opinion about "modes for persuasion", known as rhetorical appeals, 'ethos', 'pathos' and 'logos', are tools for persuading others to a particular point of view. He used the three terms to explain how rhetoric works: "Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word, there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker (ethos: a means of convincing an audience using the authority or credibility of the persuader, whether it's a notable or experienced figure in the field or a popular celebrity); the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind (pathos: a way of convincing an audience of an argument by creating an emotional response to an impassioned plea or a convincing story); the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself (logos: a way of persuading an audience with

reason, using facts, figures and rationale). Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible."

Furthermore, for the three persuasive appeals of rhetoric, Moses (2012, pp. 87-100) described rhetoric as the practice in the use of the language of influencing others to achieve planned goals characterized by certain credibility (ethos), the ability to manage listener emotions (pathos), and the use of logic (logos). Similarly, Larson (1998, pp. 2-4, as cited in Altikriti, 2016, pp. 47-66) described rhetoric as the intelligent ability to use the means of language in the process of persuasion, which can be done using ethics (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos), or reason (logos).

Here are some examples of the use of the three persuasive appeals of rhetoric by politicians, particularly the Presidents of the United States on various important political agendas.

Ethos Appeal Examples in Political Speeches:

Barack H. Obama, 2012

"Now, the first time I addressed this convention, in 2004, I was a younger man — (laughter) — a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope, not blind optimism, not wishful thinking but hope in the face of difficulty, hope in the face of uncertainty, that dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward even when the odds are great, even when the road is long.

Eight years later that hope has been tested by the cost of war, by one of the worst economic crises in history and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still even possible to tackle the challenges of our time. I know campaigns can seem small, even silly sometimes."

Ronald W. Reagan, 1989

"I hope we once again have reminded people that man is not free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts."

Pathos Appeal Examples in Political Speeches:

Barack H. Obama, 2013

"Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the oppressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country...The situation profoundly changed, though, on August 21st, when Assad's government gassed to death over 1,000 people, including hundreds of children. The images from this massacre are sickening: men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas, others foaming at the mouth, gasping for breath, a father clutching his dead children, imploring them to get up and walk."

Ronald W. Reagan, 1987

"Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe...Yet it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly...Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar...

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Logos Appeal Examples in Political Speeches:

Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

"It's taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II. Millions of jobs have been lost. Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed. A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us."

Donald J. Trump, 2018

"So here are just a few statistics on the human toll of illegal immigration. According to a 2011 government report, the arrests attached to the criminal alien population included an estimated 25,000 people for homicide, 42,000 for robbery, nearly 70,000 for sex offenses, and nearly 15,000 for kidnapping. In Texas alone, within the last seven years, more than a quarter-million criminal aliens have been arrested and charged with over 600,000 criminal offenses. ... Sixty-three thousand Americans since 9/11 have been killed by illegal aliens. This isn't a problem that's going away; it's getting bigger."

Barack H. Obama, 2015

"But tonight, we turn the page. Tonight, after a breakthrough year for America, our economy is growing and creating jobs at the fastest pace since 1999. Our unemployment rate is now lower than it was before the financial crisis. More of our kids are graduating than ever before. More of our people are insured than ever before. And we are as free from the grip of foreign oil as we've been in almost 30 years."

According to Gooch (2021), Aristotle is the father of public speaking and had enormous influence on the art of rhetoric. He defines the rhetorician as someone who is always able to see what is persuasive. According to Aristotle, the end goal of persuasion is to use language to encourage both parties to flourish. A speech involves three parts: the speaker, the subject of the speech and the audience to whom the speech is addressed, and it is this last part, namely the audience, which determines the purpose of the speech. In classical rhetoric.

Aristotle divided speech into three branches or kinds of causes (Honeycutt, 2011).

(a)	Political speeches	to advise political assemblies
(b)	Forensic speeches	to accuse or to defend someone in law court

(c)	Ceremonial speeches	to praise or to censure someone or sometimes, to blame others for current situations or during ceremonies

In each of these branches, there is a persuasive element, trying to persuade listeners of something to produce an intended effect. Particularly, politicians have been trained in rhetoric to produce their effective statements because the essence of political speech, aiming at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action, urges the audience either to do or not to do something. Moreover, political speeches often make any concession short of admitting that they are recommending their audience to take an inexpedient course or not to take an expedient one (Rapp & Christof, 2022).

During the speech, the speaker should weigh each possible technique and potential data or evidence for the audience's reaction. In addition, a good public speech should have clear sense of purpose. The speech that the speaker presents will depend on the specific purpose, such as persuasive speech and ceremonial speech (Osborn and Osborn, 2003, pp. 7-8). In a ceremonial occasion for public speaking, personification is used to impress the audience. Appropriate thought, feeling, style, and delivery will contribute to the desired effect. If the audience feel that the speaker is sincere, he should be able to manage his facts, language, and organization to create a response of genuine appreciation.

Here are ten commonly used rhetorical devices with their definitions (Allee, 2021).

Alliteration	to reflect repetition in two or more nearby words of initial consonant sounds
Analogy	to create a comparison by showing how two seemingly different entities are alike

Anaphora	to feature repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences, phrases, or clauses
Epiphora	a word or a phrase repeated at the ends of successive clauses
Chiasmus	two or more clauses balanced against each other by the reversal of their structures
Euphemism	to replace a word or phrase related to a concept which might make others uncomfortable
Idiom	a set expression or a phrase comprising two or more words to mean something quite different from what individual words of the phrase would imply
Metaphor	to make a comparison between two unlike things
Personification	**Inanimate objects and ideas given human attributes**
Similes	two essentially dissimilar objects or concepts expressly compared with one another through the use of “like” or “as”

Rhetoric is the art or study of using language and the skill of using language effectively and persuasively, and it makes someone’s communication credible and engaging. A rhetorical device is a linguistic tool that employs a particular type of sentence structure, sound, or pattern of meaning in order to evoke a particular reaction from an audience. Each rhetorical device is a distinct tool that can be used to construct an

argument or make an existing argument more compelling (Somers, 2019). Consequently, rhetorical devices are the ways in which we influence each other or hearers by exchanging ideas, sentiments, feelings and possible programs of action through the artful use of verbal and nonverbal symbols.

Personification

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 33-34) define personification as an ontological metaphor, "where the physical object is further specified as being a person". Personification is a type of rhetoric in figure of speech or a type of figurative language used as a literary device in order to make a piece of speaking or writing more vivid and descriptive, in which an inanimate object or abstraction is given human qualities or abilities. In other words, personification is characterized by the assumption that non-human beings have a gesture, characteristic, and feeling like human beings.

According to Richard Nordquist (2020), personification is a trope or figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is given human qualities or abilities. There are 2 types of personification. One refers to the practice of giving an actual personality to an abstraction. This practice has its origins in animism and ancient religion, and it is called 'personification' by modern theorists of religion and anthropology. The other meaning of 'personification' . . . is the historical sense of prosopopoeia. This refers to the practice of giving a consciously fictional personality to an abstraction, 'impersonating' it. This rhetorical practice requires a separation between the literary pretense of a personality and the actual state of affairs.

Originally, the idea was pretending that an inanimate thing, or imaginary being was speaking. In personifying nonhumans or inanimate objects as humans, a non-living thing is treated as if it were a living entity, and this tool of language is used to create sensation, emotion, desires, and the power of speech. Therefore, personification can create any gesture, characteristic, and feeling, allowing listeners or readers to make surprising connections and experience messages more deeply, creating a clearer picture and strong impact in the listeners' and readers' mind, and helping to add more value or meaning to messages.

In the case of things, animals or plants, personification makes it easier for people to have access to them. Certainly, it can make spoken or written descriptions or messages more vivid. These are all examples of personification.

Examples of Personification in General Use

Personification in Poetry and Books:

(a) The grey-eyed **morn smiles** on the **frowning night**,
Chequering the eastern clouds with streaks of light.
(Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare: Act II. Scene III.)

(b) The moon was shining sulkily,
Because **she thought the sun**
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done
(The Walrus and the Carpenter by Lewis Carroll)

(c) **The teapot sang** as the water boiled
The ice cubes cackled in their glass
The teacups chattered to one another.
While **the chairs were passing** gas
(Dinnertime Chorus by Sharon Hendricks)

(d) **The night was creeping** on the ground!
She crept and did not make a sound.
(Check by James Stephens)

Personification in Advertising:

(a) **The car** that **cares** (Kia car)

(b) Acer. **We hear you**. (Acer computers)

(c) **Nothing hugs** like Huggies (Huggies diapers)

(d) **Kleenex says** bless you (Kleenex facial tissues)

Personification in Daily Life:

(a) I could hear **Hawaii calling** my name.

(b) The computer **argued** with me and **refused** to work.

(c) The tornado **ran through town without a care**.

(d) My heart **jumped** when my daughter entered the room in her wedding dress.

Examples of Personification in Lakoff & Johnson (1980, p. 33)

(a) Life has **cheated** me.

(b) Inflation is **eating up** our profits.

(c) The computer **went dead** on me.

(d) This fact **argues** against the standard theories.

(e) His theory **explained** to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.

It is true that things, animals or plants cannot communicate by using human language, but only if a speaker or author assumed that they had characteristics like humans, it would allow a listener or reader to have a better listening or reading experience, make speaker's or author's descriptions more unique, and help the listener or reader better relate to their speaking or writing. Even though people know that it is impossible for a living thing like an animal, plant, or thing that was definitely not a human to feel that way, using personification is a way to create a sentence or message to be more interesting and attractive.

Persuasion and Personification in Political Speeches

The main rhetoric purpose of personification is persuasion to change the thinking or behavior of an audience or to strengthen its beliefs. Charteris-Black (2011, pp. 13-51) had an observation about the role of personification in political language. He mentioned that personification is used in political speeches in order to move the audience. He analyzed Bush's, Churchill's, Thatcher's and Blair's speeches, and found that they had a strong inclination towards using personification in order to evoke the audience's emotions.

Persuasion is the product of rhetoric. It is defined as one party convincing another with a particular point of view through the means of language. Persuasion refers to the intention, act and effect of changing an audience's thinking. In term of the process, it is the process of persuasion relying on different methods that can be referred to as 'rhetoric'. Rhetoric refers to the methods used by the speaker to achieve persuasion apart from his/her "intention, action and effect" (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 13). It is a complex multi-layer process, and it is the outcome of the interaction between intention, linguistic choices and the context (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 51). In the overall persuasive methods of political discourse, personification is commonly used to draw a mental picture or a way of understanding 'us' and 'them' (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 32).

Even though personification is a powerful weapon of persuasion, the way people respond to it depends on how personally relevant the message is to the audience. Generally, politicians use personification in politics to refer to the country or political movements as **PEOPLE**. Moreover, politicians commonly use personification in politics, acting as if the entire United States were **ONE PERSON**.

Examples of Personification of Barack H. Obama (2016)

- ...we respond to the changes of our time with fear, **turning inward** as a nation, and **turning against** each other...
- ...we **face** the future with confidence in who we are, ...

- Surveys show our **standing** around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office, ...
- When you come after Americans, we go after you. It may take time, but we have long memories, and our **reach** has no limit.
- That's the America I know. That's the country we love. **Clear-eyed. Big-hearted**.
- ...Social Security and Medicare are more important than ever; we shouldn't **weaken** them; we should **strengthen** them.

Results of the Study

The results showed the rhetorical devices of personification found in the US Presidents' speeches during 1981-2021 as follows:

Figure 1: Comparison of Occurrences of Rhetorical Device of Personification Found in the US Presidents' Speeches in the Year 1981-2021

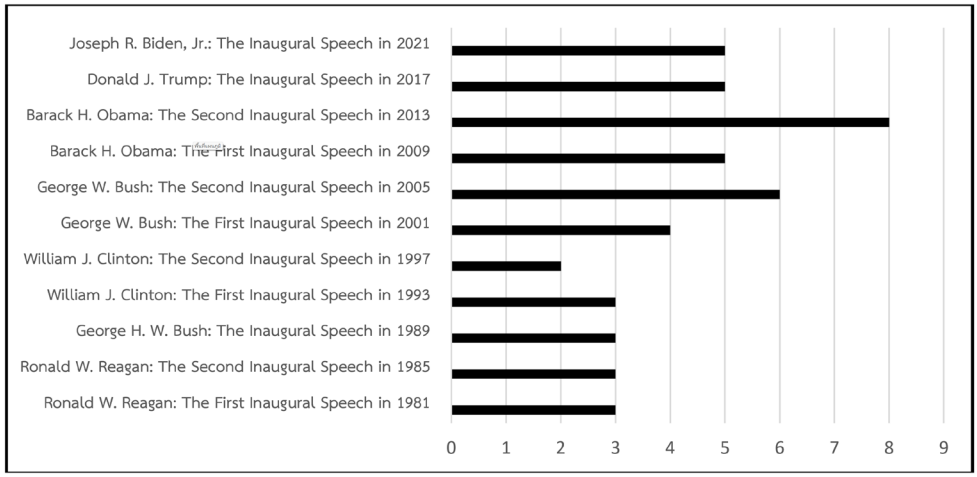


Figure 1 shows the comparison of occurrences of rhetorical device of personification found in the eleven inaugural speeches by seven US Presidents in the Year 1981-2021. The occurrences of rhetorical device of personification in each inaugural speech are: Ronald W. Reagan in the First Inaugural Speech, 1981 (3), Ronald W. Reagan in the Second Inaugural Speech, 1985 (3), George H. W. Bush in the Inaugural Speech, 1989 (3), William J. Clinton in the First Inaugural Speech, 1993 (3), William J. Clinton in the Second Inaugural

Speech, 1997 (2), George W. Bush in the First Inaugural Speech, 2001 (4), George W. Bush in the Second Inaugural Speech, 2005 (6), Barack H. Obama in the First Inaugural Speech, 2009 (5), Barack H. Obama in the Second Inaugural Speech, 2013 (8), Donald J. Trump in the Inaugural Speech, 2017 (5), and Joseph R. Biden, Jr. in the Inaugural Speech, 2021 (5).

In four decades (1981-2021), the data of occurrences of rhetorical device of personification found in the eleven inaugural speeches by seven US Presidents can be separated into the first two decades (1981-1997) in Figure 2 and the second two decades (2001-2021) in Figure 3 in order to make it easier to understand how the occurrences differ over the two periods of four decades.

Figure 2: Comparison of Occurrences of Rhetorical Device of Personification Found in the US Presidents' Speeches in the First Two Decades (1981-1997)

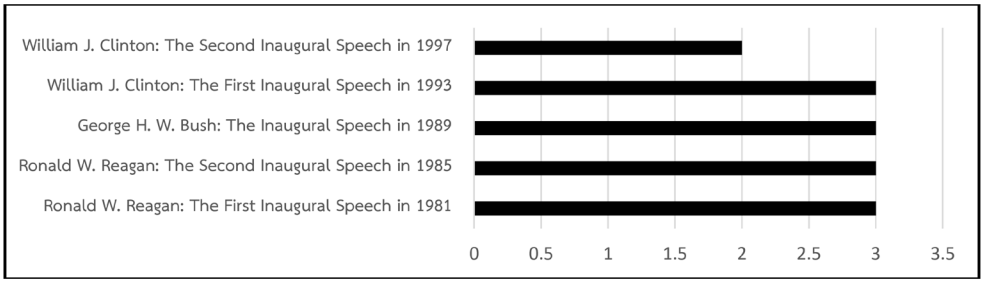


Figure 2 shows the occurrences of rhetorical device of personification used in the speech of each US President in the first two decades (1981-1997).

Ronald W. Reagan: The First Inaugural Speech in 1981 (3 occurrences of personification)

1. "...**a tax system** which **penalizes** successful achievement ...."
2. "Putting **America** back to **work** means putting all Americans back to work."
3. "Is it time to **reawaken** this industrial **giant**, ..."

Ronald W. Reagan: The Second Inaugural Speech in 1985 (3 occurrences of personification)

1. "Let history say of us..."
2. "...when the American Revolution was reborn."
3. "...when freedom gained new life."

George H. W. Bush: The Inaugural Speech in 1989 (3 occurrences of personification)

1. "...freedom deems reborn..."
2. "...Freedom works..."
3. "When America says something..."

William J. Clinton: The First Inaugural Speech in 1993 (3 occurrences of personification)

1. "A spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy..."
2. "While America rebuilds at home..."
3. "The scripture says, "And let us not..."

William J. Clinton: The Second Inaugural Speech in 1997 (2 occurrences of personification)

1. "The promise of America was born in the 18th century..."
2. "...American Dream alive for all her children..."

Figure 3: Comparison of Occurrences of Rhetorical Device of Personification Found in the US Presidents' Speeches in the Second Two Decades (2001-2021)

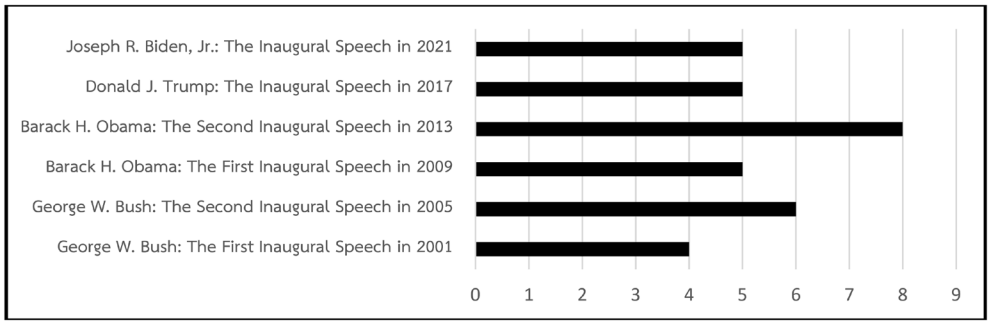


Figure 3 shows the occurrences of rhetorical device of personification used in the speech of each US President in the second two decades (2001-2021).

George W. Bush: The First Inaugural Speech in 2001 (4 occurrences of personification)

1. "...**ideals** that **moves us** beyond our backgrounds, **lift us** above our interests and **teach us** what it means to be citizens."
2. "**America** at its best is **courageous**."
3. "The **enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake**."
4. "**America** at its best is **compassionate**."

George W. Bush: The Second Inaugural Speech in 2005 (6 occurrences of personification)

1. "**America defended** our own freedom by standing..."
2. "And when the soul of a nation finally **speaks**..."
3. "...today, **America speaks** anew to the people..."
4. "...**America sees** you..."
5. "...and **America will walk** at your side..."
6. "Division among free nations is a primary goal of **freedom's enemies**."

Barack H. Obama: The First Inaugural Speech in 2009 (5 occurrences of personification)

1. "...the **market** can **spin out of control**."
2. "...we remain a **young nation**..."
3. "...**America is a friend** of each nation..."
4. "the **recriminations and worn-out dogmas** that have **strangled** our politics."
5. "...but that we will **extend a hand** if you are willing to unclench your fist."

Barack H. Obama: The Second Inaugural Speech in 2013 (8 occurrences of personification)

1. "...**America** cannot **resist** this transition."
2. "... **history tells us** that while these truths may be self-evident, ..."
3. "... knowing that **the failure** to do so would **betray** our children...."
4. "... all of us are created equal –- is **the star that guides us** still."
5. "as **it guided our forebears** through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall."
6. "as **it guided all those men and women**."
7. "... **the flag** that waves above and that **fills our hearts with pride**."
8. "... with passion and dedication, let us answer **the call of history** and ...."

Donald J. Trump: The Inaugural Speech in 2017 (5 occurrences of personification)

1. "...of which **the world has never seen** before"
2. "From this day forward, a new **vision will govern** our land."
3. "...we understand that **a nation is** only **living** as long as it **is striving**."
4. "Now **arrives the hour of action**."
5. "We stand at **the birth of a new millennium**,"

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.: The Inaugural Speech in 2021 (5 occurrences of personification)

1. "A once-in-a-century **virus silently stalks** the country."
2. "**America** – **requires** more than words."
3. "Recent **weeks and months have taught us** a painful lesson."
4. "The **world is watching** today."
5. "...**democracy and hope, truth and justice**, did not **die** on our watch..."

The phrases or sentences of inaugural speeches of US Presidents as seen above are demonstrated as the rhetorical stylistics device in order to clearly show how personification existed and how personification was employed by each of the US Presidents in four decades of the year 1981-2021. In political discourse, the expressions of

personification are utilized to offer a livable picture and an expressive and emotional significance.

Conclusion

As a tool used in speeches, rhetoric is the language designed to motivate, persuade, educate, or inform the specific or intended audience who are people or groups of people the speaker has in mind as potential listeners for his speech. Rhetoric is especially useful in politics and crucial in changing perceptions, winning votes, and achieving political goals.

Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men - Plato

The process of persuasion is based on the persuader's awareness to influence someone else and change the persuadee's mind about something on conscious or unconscious decision. Persuasion is a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice (Perloff, 2003, p. 8). In political speeches, persuasion is achieved by choosing a form of discourse that will appeal to the politicians' audience.

For politicians, personification can be used to make their points more vividly or can help their audience understand, sympathize with, or react emotionally to the essence they want to impressively communicate to their audience. Better explaining concepts and ideas and forging a deeper connection with the audience are the purposes of personification in political speeches as the practice of showing a particular quality, which is inanimate objects or abstract concepts, in the form of person. Obviously, it is an essential rhetorical device that can be used for conceptualizing and understanding abstract ideas. The analysis showed how abstract ideas are portrayed as tangible entities that can be contained and physically been touched, by using emblematic expressions, such as "...**ideals** that **moves** us beyond our backgrounds, **lift** us above our interests and **teach** us what it means to be citizens." (George W. Bush: The First Inaugural Speech in 2001).

By looking deeper into how personification is used and what it is used for, we have learnt that it is a form of figurative language in which inanimate objects are given human traits, such as emotions, gestures, desires, speech and more. It is used generally in everyday language and also used frequently in politics, particularly in every inaugural speech. It is a way of making a description much more unique and vivid and aids the audience to better understand what is being described, such as "...**democracy and hope, truth and justice**, did not **die** on our watch..." (Joseph R. Biden, Jr.: The Inaugural Speech in 2021).

The conclusion is that all of the US presidents in the year 1981-2021, especially in the last two decades (2001-2021) of George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama, Donald J. Trump, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., frequently used personification in their inaugural speeches with the aims to make the American people be able to identify with and understand their beliefs, determinations, commitments, and goals for America, such as "... **the flag** that waves above and that **fills our hearts with pride**." (Barack H. Obama: The Second Inaugural Speech in 2013).

Through the employment of personification in their inaugural speeches, the US Presidents assisted the American people to develop a connection between an object and the feeling of sympathy or encouragement. According to the number of occurrences of rhetorical device of personification found in the US Presidents' speeches during four decades, this generation of the last two decades of US Presidents has significantly developed more aesthetic choices in using language to persuade or convince the audience. The atmosphere of sharing and togetherness needs to be established and the maintenance of social contact is really important (Cruse, 2002, pp. 290-291). Needless to say, politicians have been definitely trained in rhetoric to produce their effective statements. They express social relationships and personal opinions or attitudes using extra-linguistic cues, such as "We stand at **the birth of a new millennium**," (Donald J. Trump: The Inaugural Speech in 2017).

Furthermore, by giving human characteristics to a non-human object or concept, all of the US Presidents in the last two decades provided a more complete understanding and confidence of an object or concept which is difficult to comprehend. They used personification to explain something incomprehensible and provide vivid examples, images, or features for the American people. Personification also expands their knowledge and point of view about the political contents that the US Presidents in the year 1981-2021

tried to deliver. As a result, it can increase the American people's interest and keep their attentiveness to the speeches. Personification promotes humans to take a new look at our surroundings (Nordquist, 2012).

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