


Lingua Inglese  
II  
Political Science

The Language of Politics  
Unit 3

Michela Giordano



Unit 3

Making speeches



Speeches...

... are a vital part of the politician's role in announcing policy and persuading people to agree with it



Rhetoric: different views

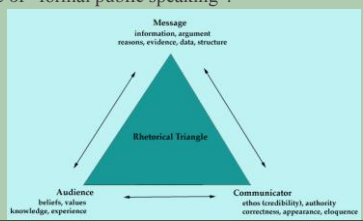
rhetoric ⇒ *the art of persuasive discourse*  
(Persuading people, Cockcroft and Cockcroft 1992)

the 'art' of rhetoric ⇒ *an important part of human activity*  
**THE SKILLS OF RHETORIC CAN REINFORCE OUR GOOD INTENTIONS**  
Aristotle 384-322 BC

rhetoric ⇒ *the manipulation of an audience by people who are essentially insincere in their motives*  
**THE SKILLS OF RHETORIC ARE PLACED ABOVE THE VALUE OF HONESTY**  
Plato 427- 347 BC

Rhetoric

Not concerned with government only.  
A factor in all human communication, both written and oral.  
The term *rhetoric* = to refer to "speech" and more specifically to a certain type of "formal public speaking".



The diagram illustrates the Rhetorical Triangle with three vertices and three connecting arrows:

- Message** (top vertex): information, argument, reasons, evidence, data, structure
- Audience** (bottom-left vertex): beliefs, values, knowledge, experience
- Communicator** (bottom-right vertex): ethics (credibility), authority, correctness, appearance, eloquence

Arrows connect Message to Audience, Audience to Communicator, and Communicator to Message.

Rhetorical skills

**Persuasive public speaking:** part of the curriculum in many schools, colleges, and universities in the USA and in the UK.

**Formal debating competitions:** teams are given a topic and are told which side they must argue.

Students/teams are judged on their **rhetorical skills** and their **ability to speak persuasively**, rather than on the honesty of their views and opinions. Insincerity is acceptable.

## Forms of public speaking

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There are many forms of public speaking or formal speeches in which rhetorical skills are needed if the audience is supposed to pay attention and to be persuaded:

- debating
- the social club annual general meeting
- the law/a trial
- political speeches
- college lecture
- electoral speeches during campaigns
- religious sermon

## Dilemma

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**Politicians argue** that they wish to **put forward policies** that they honestly believe in.

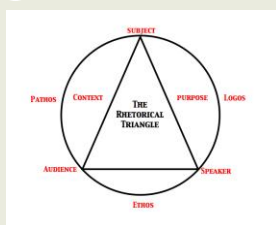


**Listeners argue** that the real purpose is to **manipulate the audience** into agreeing with policies which serve only the politician's desire to gain or keep power.

## Persuasive devices

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- What are the most common persuasive devices?
- What are the effects of modern media on the way politicians make speeches?



## Aristotle's classification of the means of persuasion

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- 1) **Ethos: Persuasion through personality and stance**
- 2) **Pathos: Persuasion through the arousal of emotions**
- 3) **Logos: Persuasion through reasoning**
  - All three categories can be used by the speaker as part of his/her performance. The way in which they are constructed and the way in which the audience responds to them will influence the way in which a politician is seen, (sincere or manipulative).

Persuasion through reasoning

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## The soundbite age

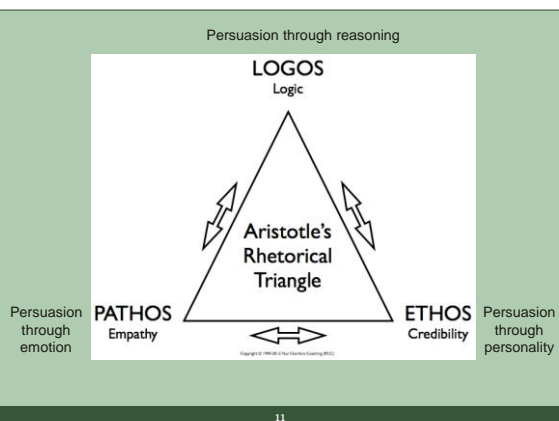
Politicians nowadays tend to make their **public speeches** in front of their own supporters- as in **party conferences** and **party rallies**.

**In the past** (up to the 1960s), political speeches tended to be more numerous and were delivered in front of anyone who wanted to attend.

Today the **real audiences** are the **millions** who will read about the speeches in **newspapers** or hear/see them on **radio and television**.

The speeches are often written for the speakers/politicians by a team of **speech writers** who prepare the material for them.

Speeches are distributed in advance to **the press** so that newspapers and **broadcasters** can cover the speech in evening news bulletins.



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## Soundbites

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The speeches must contain highlights/best parts/key points/focal points which are often called **soundbites** (*brevi frasi dal forte impatto mediatico*): transmitted on radio or on TV or used as headlines in newspapers.

### soundbite

⇕

a short sentence or phrase that is easy to remember, often included in a speech made by a politician and repeated in newspapers and on television and radio

Soundbites require **economy of expression**: brief, and with language structures easy to repeat and to be remembered.

### sound bite *noun*

: a short recorded statement that is broadcast on a television or radio news program

Full Definition of SOUND BITE [Cite!](#) [G+](#) [Like](#)

: a brief recorded statement (as by a public figure) broadcast especially on a television news program; also : a brief catchy comment or saying

See [sound bite](#) defined for English-language learners »

Examples of SOUND BITE

- His campaign relies on catchy *sound bites*.

First Known Use of SOUND BITE

1972

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/soundbite>

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## Grillo: media pagati per sputtanarci «Se falliamo noi, violenza in strada»



Attacco a tv e giornali  
E intervistato da «Time»:  
«Vogliamo il 100%  
nel Parlamento»  
Replica di Bersani:  
«Il Paese può morire, ora  
risposte serie» [Video](#)

di Marta Serafini

CONDIVIDI

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Great speeches have always had great soundbites. The problem now is that the young technicians who put together speeches are paying attention only to the soundbite, not to the text as a whole, not realizing that all great soundbites happen by accident...

(Peggy Noonan)

izquotes.com

Margaret Ellen "Peggy" Noonan (born September 7, 1950) is an American author of seven books on politics, religion, and culture, and a weekly columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*. She was a primary speech writer and Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan.

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## Three-part list (1)

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- one of the most common means of eliciting approval
- attractive to the speaker and listener
- gives a sense of unity and completeness
- the three parts complement each other
- can be simple repetition
- repetition but with different prepositions
- different words with a similar meaning
- spoken aloud
- prosodic features** (tempo, rhythm, pitch, rhyme, alliteration, non-verbal features) play an important role

Speechwriting and  
the Rule of Three



## Three-part list (2)

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“two occurrences of a phrase structure are sufficient to set up an expectation that there will be a third”

A. PARTINGTON, *The Linguistics of Political Argument. The Spin-Doctor and the Wolf-Pack at the White House*, 2003, p. 215.



1) Ask me my three priorities for government and I tell you: Education, Education, Education.

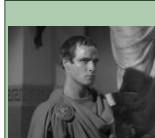
2) Defence, diplomacy and development.

3) Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all.



**Who said that?**

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**Who said that?**

1) Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.

2) Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

3) Impresa, Internet, Inglese.

4) Maggie, Maggie, Maggie. Out, out, out.

5) Veni, vidi, vici.



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Our two countries have joined together as a force for peace, prosperity, and progress. (Hillary Clinton, 20 February 2009)



Investing in the potential of the world's women and girls is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability and greater prosperity for women- and men- the world over.

(Hillary Clinton, 8 March 2010)

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What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility - a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world...

(Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, 2009)



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Dear brothers and sisters, do remember one thing. Malala day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights.



(Malala Yousafzai, Speech at the United Nations, July 2013)

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## Contrastive pair

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- Called **antithesis** by classical Greek and Roman writers.
- Contains two parts which in some ways are in opposition, but in other ways use repetition to make the overall effect.

*“One small step for man:  
one giant leap for mankind”.*

(Neil Armstrong, 1969)

- 1) identical syntactic structure
- 2) phonological repetition
- 3) rhythm and stress
- 4) lexical repetition

Where there is discord, may we bring harmony.  
Where there is error, may we bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, may we bring faith.  
And where there is despair, may we bring hope.

(Margaret Thatcher, victory speech 1979, from St Francis of Assisi)



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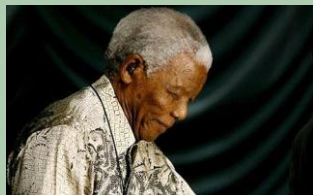
“I stand before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people... We have waited too long for our freedom. We can no longer wait.”

(Nelson Mandela's first speech on his release from prison in 1990, Cape Town)

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I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

Nelson Mandela

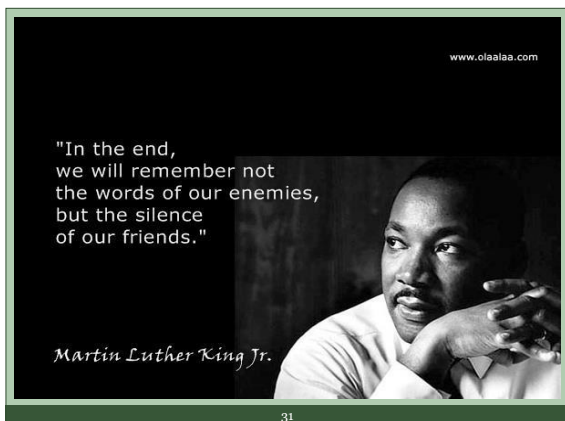


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**'Injustice anywhere  
is a threat to  
justice everywhere'**

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## Pronoun reference

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Pronoun reference is very important in political persuasion.

<i>you / your</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the reader is being addressed personally</li> <li><b>you</b> is not just the single reader but also everyone in the country</li> </ul>
<i>we / our</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>politicians are trying to persuade us to a point of view</li> <li>we already agree with them</li> <li><b>we</b> gives a sense of collectivity, of us being all together</li> </ul>

## We are a grandmother

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When Margaret Thatcher announced on the steps of 10 Downing Street that her son and his wife had had a baby, she said "**We are a grandmother**": she was seen as giving herself royal airs, as considering herself too important, especially because she was talking about family news, not talking about anything which affected the whole country.



The **royal we**: traditionally, kings and queens of England have used this pronoun to refer to themselves. It is **formal** and suggests that in their role as monarch they are talking for their people as well as for themselves.

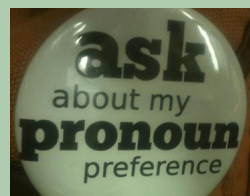
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## The royal 'we'



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The pronoun "**one**": it is still used by the members of the royal family and by others in high offices; it has a **distancing effect** so it is **no longer popular with politicians** who are trying to communicate that they stand with the people.



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## Five ways to introduce a measure...

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- 1) Today **I** intend to reduce taxes by 20 per cent.
- 2) Today **we** intend to raise taxes by a mere 5 per cent.
- 3) The **Chancellor/Government** must raise taxes for the long-term good of the nation's economy.
- 4) Today **it has been found necessary** to raise taxes by 20 per cent.
- 5) This **budget** will help all those on low incomes.

## Personal reference

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- There are 5 ways politicians use to introduce a new policy:
  - 1) first person singular **I, me, myself, mine**
  - 2) first person plural **we, our, ourselves, us**
  - 3) they can **refer to their position**
  - 4) they can use **the passive**, to avoid giving direct responsibility for action to anyone
  - 5) they can use **a form of metonymy**



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## The first person singular forms

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### I/me/myself/mine

- show **personal involvement** on the part of the speaker
- useful when good news is delivered
- they show too clearly where **blame** lies if something goes wrong
- they are not used to deliver bad/negative news
- are seen as too self-important, because speaker places himself/herself **above or outside the collective responsibility** of the colleagues

## The first person plural forms

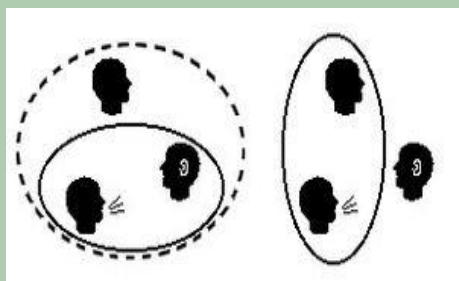
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### we/us/ourselves/ours

- help **share the responsibility** when the news is uncertain or negative
- show the politician as being **in touch** with all the country, the whole world
- the individual politician **does not gain much credit** when things go well

I	+	one other	= we
minister/politician	+	Prime minister	
I	+	a group	= we
minister/politician	+	government/political party	
I	+	the whole country	= we
minister/politician	+	the people of Britain/the USA	
I	+	the rest of humanity/world	= we
minister/politician	+	the people everywhere	

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**Inclusive 'we'** includes the addressee (that is "we" means "you and I").

**Exclusive 'we'** excludes the addressee (that is "we" means "he/she and I, but not you").

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### A Short Story

Characters:

- Everybody      ★ Anybody  
▲ Nobody      ● Somebody

There was an important job to be done and ■ was sure that ● would do it.

★ would have done it but ▲ did it.

● got angry about that because it was ■'s job. ■ thought ★ would do it but ▲ realized that ■ wouldn't do it.

It ended up that ■ blamed ● when ▲ did what ★ could have done.

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### Questions Unit 3 Making Speeches

6 cfu exam

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- 1) What does the term *rhetoric* mean?
- 2) Summarize the different opinions of Plato and Aristotle regarding how rhetoric is generally used.
- 3) What exactly are *soundbites* and why have they become important in the modern age, with modern means of communication?
- 4) *Three* is a perfect number. Why are *three-part lists* used so often by public speakers? What is the effect on the listeners? Give some examples of three-part lists in political language or in another language area.

### Questions Unit 3 Making Speeches

6 cfu exam

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- 5) *Contrastive pairs* are often used in speeches. Give some examples of well known phrases and say where they were heard (if on one specific occasion) or where they can be heard (if they are associated with a particular event).
- 6) What determines the choice of a politician in the use of the *personal pronouns* 'I' or 'We'? What ways are there to introduce a new policy or measure?