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Five Canons of Rhetoric in Trump's Campaign Speech

The speech chosen to be analyzed, through the five canons of rhetoric, is Donald Trump's first campaign speech in New York City on June 16, 2015. This speech was when Trump announced his candidacy for president of the United States as a Republican presidential nominee. He focuses on two main issues in this speech: American foreign policy and the American economy. Trump announced his candidacy at the Trump Tower with a live audience as well as having it be aired on TV. This speech allowed Trump to begin to campaign for the primary elections which would then lead him to become a nominee for the Republicans in the general elections. The rhetorical strategy Trump incorporated into this campaign speech was the five canons of rhetoric. This concept is important to his speech, as it may be to other campaign speeches, because it was what allowed his campaigning to start off strong and lead him to become president, despite his controversial statements he made along the way.

The five canons of rhetoric include: invention, style, arrangement, delivery, and memory. Invention is the ideas someone comes up with for their speech. Invention can be broken into three key elements that are used to formulate useful material. These are ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos involves creating credibility and building character so the audience can form a relationship with the speaker. Logos is the logic, evidence, and data that the speaker uses to appeal to reason, lead to a valid argument, and persuade the audience. This audience is more prone to trusting what the speaker says if the speaker uses logos correctly (Hendriks, 2018). Pathos is the appeal

to emotion, which places the audience into a specific state of mind that works in favor of the speaker.

The second canon of rhetoric is style. Style is the choice of words that are thought of when formulating a speech. This includes creating a specific tone, audience, grammar, figure of speech, etc. Invention provides the content, whereas style provides the form and how things will be said (Hendriks, 2018). The third canon of rhetoric is arrangement. Arrangement is the organization of the speakers ideas. If the ideas are organized well, then it provides logos. There should be a clear structure of beginning, middle, and end. To break this down further arrangement should follow this layout: introduction, statement of facts, division, proof, refutation, and conclusion (Burton, 2016).

Fourthly, the speaker must memorize the speech before it can be delivered. Memory is being able to memorize a speech so it can be spoken to an audience in a natural way that allows the speaker to be able to deliver it with confidence to the crowd, leading to a more powerful and conveying message. Rather than reading to the audience from notes, a speaker should stay looking at his/her audience while talking, it gives the impression that they are speaking to the crowd. Lastly, delivery is when the speech is performed by gestures and tone. This includes: appearance, gesture, position, eye contact, articulation, pronunciation, dialect, pitch, volume, pauses and rate (Hendriks, 2018). When delivering a speech, all these elements should be used to have the most impact on a crowd.

Taking a look at Donald Trump's presidential announcement speech, the first canon of rhetoric to be analyzed in his speech is invention. The ideas Trump focused on were American Foreign policy and the American economy. In order for his position, on these issues, to resonate

with the audience Trump uses ethos, pathos, and logos. Trump begins his speech by using ethos. He wants to establish himself as trustworthy and credible. By comparing himself as superior to his competitors, he portrays himself as credible at the expense of others. Trump says in the beginning, “They didn’t know the air-conditioner didn’t work. They sweated like dogs” (Time Staff, 2015), Trump is referring to the other candidates when they gave their speeches. Trump uses the tactic of establishing himself as someone who is determined and willing to get the job done when he says, “Well, you need somebody, because politicians are all talk, no action. Nothing’s gonna get done. They will not bring us - believe me - to the promised land. They will not” (Time Staff, 2015). Since Trump is a businessman, he differentiates himself from the rest of the candidates and criticizes the history of having a politician be elected as president.

Pathos is placing the audience in a state of mind and being able to persuade the crowd’s emotions through a speech. Trump creates emotion between him and his audience by using repetition of the phrase “us vs them”. ‘Us’ represents the supporters of Trump and ‘them’ refers to politicians, donors, and the threatening foreign countries. This divide automatically brings the audience into the ‘us’ group making them feel as though they can work as a unit to accomplish their goals. This is seen when Trump says, “When do we beat Mexico at the border? They’re laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me” (Times Staff, 2015). The divide Trump creates between the audience and the other group, lets the audience feel united.

Logos is a logical argument or point made throughout a speech that supports the candidate's position on an issue. Trump’s main issues are American foreign policy and the American economy. To support his stance on what should be done to resolve these topics, Trump

uses statistics as evidence. As Trump talks about the economy he states, “Our labor participation rate was the worst since 1978. But think of it, GDP below zero, horrible labor participation rate. And our real unemployment is anywhere from 18 to 20 percent. Don’t believe the 5.6” (Times Staff, 2015). This data shows the audience the downward slope the economy is on, and strengthens Trump’s reasoning for caring about this issue. When talking about foreign policy, Trump describes qualities a person should have in order to solve the trade matters. Qualities such as intelligence and business expertise are mentioned and though he does not state he is the perfect person for this, he implies it by describing himself as having these traits (Hendriks, 2018). This is a logical tactic because it increases his credibility through the use of evidence.

The second canon is style. Style is the language a candidate chooses to place in their speech that affects how they will present their ideas. Trump uses simple language throughout his speech. He doesn’t include any profound words, but rather uses easily understood words so the audience can immediately grasp what he is saying. For example, Trump says, “We need— we need somebody— we need somebody that literally will take this country and make it great again. We can do that” (Times Staff, 2015). The words ‘literally’ and ‘great’ are informal words to incorporate in an announcement speech, but Trump does this purposely. Exaggeration is incorporated in the beginning of the speech when Trump says, “Wow. Whoa. That is some group of people. Thousands” (Times Staff, 2015). Repetition is used throughout the speech to remind people of an important negative or positive statistic/idea, that Trump feels strongly about. He repeats Obamacare’s website cost an abundance of times in one section, “And remember the \$5 billion website? \$5 billion we spent on a website, and to this day it doesn’t work. A \$5 billion website. I have so many websites, I have them all over the place. I hire people, they do a website.

It costs me \$3. \$5 billion website” (Times Staff, 2015). Since Trump believes Obamacare has a negative impact on citizens and is useless, he repeats the steep price of the website that doesn’t work correctly, over and over to the people so they can remember this startling fact. Lastly, rhetorical questions are used in the beginning of the speech to allow the audience to think, “When did we beat Japan at anything? They send their cars over by the millions, and what do we do? When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Tokyo? It doesn’t exist, folks. They beat us all the time. When do we beat Mexico at the border?” (Times Staff, 2015), the answers are negative to these questions which allows Trump to present the audience with his resolutions.

Arrangement is the third canon, and Trump displays a typical format speeches should follow. His introduction begins with acknowledging the crowd and presents a summary of what issues he will be highlighting in the speech. Trump includes a thesis statement at the end of his introduction, “The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else’s problems” (Times Staff, 2015). The only issue with his introduction is that he does not state that he is running for presidency until the middle of his speech. By talking about the economy and foreign policy after his introduction, Trump states facts such as, “Ford announces a few weeks ago that Ford is going to build a \$2.5 billion car and truck and parts manufacturing plant in Mexico” (Times Staff, 2015), and “Yesterday, it came out that costs are going for people up 29, 39, 49, and even 55 percent, and deductibles are through the roof” (2015). He presents logical arguments after displaying these facts such as, “So I would say... Every car and every truck and every part manufactured in this plant that comes across the border, we’re going to charge you a 35-percent tax, and that tax is going to be paid simultaneously with the transaction, and that’s it” (Times Staff, 2015), and his response to Obamacare, “We have to repeal Obamacare, and it can be—

and— and it can be replaced with something much better for everybody” (2015). Trump then concludes his speech with stating different topics he also plans to support such as, “Fully support and back up the Second Amendment,” “I will immediately terminate President Obama’s illegal executive order on immigration, immediately,” “Rebuild the country’s infrastructure,” and lastly, “Save Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security without cuts” (Times Staff, 2015). Following these rapid statements, on his position towards issues separate from the two he highlights in the beginning, Trump gives his inspirational last words at the end of his speech. These last words bring a sense of unity and power to his announcement of his running for presidency.

Delivery and memory are the last canons of rhetoric Trump uses. Trump delivers his speech with movements that match his tone of voice or subject he is talking about. When he becomes louder, his gestures emphasize what he is talking about and match his volume. Trump varies his pitch, volume, tone and gestures constantly throughout his performance of the speech (Hendriks, 2018). His memory throughout the 45 minute speech was consistent. He did not take a lot of pauses, he rarely looked down unless it was before stating a statistic. Also, he engaged with the audience through eye contact and he acknowledged cheers from the crowd. Overall, Trump had a strong memory of his speech.

This application of the five canons of rhetoric has revealed that Trump’s announcement speech was well-rounded and used all five canons thoughtfully and successfully. The communication was effective for a couple of reasons. First he established his credibility by comparing himself, a businessman, to the other politicians. He pointed out politician’s flaws when it comes to getting things accomplished, and compared their losses to his successes and victories. For example, “When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let’s say, China in a

trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time” (Times Staff, 2015). Trump portrays himself as more superior and reliable compared to his competitors. Trump establishing his credibility early on was essential because citizens were skeptical of him running, since he is not a politician. Trump’s style throughout his speech was simple which allowed the audience to not focus on figuring out what he was saying, but rather listen to his plans for the country. His boldness with claims, such as, “I’m using my own money. I’m not using the lobbyists. I’m not using donors. I don’t care. I’m really rich” (Times Staff, 2015), not only conveys his confidence but also shows his commitment if elected. The arrangement of Trump’s speech is successful at creating an easily followable structure for the audience. However, he does not bluntly state his running for presidency in the beginning, but rather towards the end, which does not follow the typical format of an introduction. The delivery was full of energy, Trump had great volume, eye contact, gestures to match his tone and the subject he was discussing, and he held a good memory of his speech by only looking down before stating a numerical statistic. Trump’s speech properly used all five canons to create an effective speech.

This analysis of the five canons of rhetoric in Trump’s announcement speech, accomplished showing how Trump established himself early on. He set the tone for the rest of his political campaign which was critical to do during this speech because it was an important milestone during elections. By Trump using all five canons of rhetoric effectively and thoughtfully for this announcement speech, made his speech have a persuasive appeal. By being able to properly use the five canons of rhetoric to his advantage, allowed the audience to be persuaded and moved by his speech.

References

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