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license**STRATEGIES IN COMMUNICATING AND ENFORCING
COVID-19 MEASURES: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS****Nelson Ndiritu¹, Joseph Maina¹**¹Laikipia University, P.O. Box 1100, Nyahururu 20300, Kenya*Correspondence E-Mail: endiritu2013@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.30598/baileofisipvol1iss3pp293-301>**ABSTRACT**

This article investigates the rhetorical strategies used by national leaders in communicating and enforcing COVID-19 measures during the global health crisis. The study aims to analyze how persuasive language was employed to influence public behavior and ensure compliance with health protocols. Using a qualitative rhetorical analysis approach, the speeches of four prominent leaders—Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson, and Uhuru Kenyatta—were examined to identify the use of classical rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) and linguistic devices such as metaphors, enumeration, and authoritative tone. The findings reveal that each leader strategically adapted rhetorical techniques to their sociopolitical contexts, balancing emotional appeal, credibility, and logical reasoning to motivate collective action. The study highlights how language not only conveys information but also functions as a tool of power and influence, particularly in moments of crisis. The novelty of this research lies in its comparative cross-national approach and its focus on the intersection of rhetoric, leadership, and public health communication. This article contributes to the advancement of social sciences and humanities by offering a framework for understanding political discourse as a persuasive and performative act, and recommends incorporating rhetorical literacy in public communication strategies to enhance crisis response effectiveness in the future.

Keywords: Citizen Compliance, Covid-19 Pandemic, Government Response, Public Addresses, Rhetorical Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the COVID-19 virus began in December 2019, originating from the city of Wuhan, China (Mohan & Nambiar, 2020). Since then, it swiftly spread globally, leading to a devastating pandemic. As of the latest available data, the virus has caused millions of infections and hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide (Carbone et al., 2021). Countries across continents have been grappling with the significant toll of the virus, with regions such as Europe, the Americas, and Asia particularly affected. Despite extensive efforts to contain its spread and mitigate its impact, COVID-19 continues to pose a formidable challenge to public health systems and communities worldwide (Narayan et al., 2021). By the end of March 2020, the virus had reached Africa. In total, Africa had recorded 6555 cases, including 244 deaths and 456 recoveries

as of April 1st, 2020. The virus continued to spread rapidly, resulting in alarming global statistics by the end of December 2020, with the World Health Organization reporting over 79.2 million infection cases and 1.7 million deaths (Bamgboye et al., 2021; Maeda & Nkengasong, 2021).

The discussion of this disease has highlighted various linguistic aspects, including the widespread use of war metaphors, where healthcare workers are depicted as frontline personnel and the disease itself as a formidable adversary. Reports on infections have used the present tense 'have' when reporting the cumulative number of infections to maintain currency on the issue even when some of the infected individuals have passed away (Flaxman et al., 2020). Additionally, efforts have been made to distinguish between deaths directly caused by the coronavirus and deaths where the coronavirus was a contributing factor, referred to as "dying of the disease" and "dying with the disease." Language has become a critical tool in conveying administrative measures to control the spread of the virus. Governments have employed various linguistic strategies to encourage compliance with these control measures.

The word "persuasion" originates from the Latin word "persuasio", which is derived from the verb "persuadere". The Latin prefix "per-" means "thoroughly" or "completely", and "suadere" means "to urge" or "to advise". Thus, "persuasion" essentially means "the act of urging or advising thoroughly". In English, "persuasion" refers to the act of convincing or influencing someone to believe or do something through reasoning, argumentation, or other means of communication. It involves the intentional effort to change or shape someone's attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or behaviors toward a desired outcome. So, etymologically, "persuasion" involves the comprehensive process of urging or advising someone to adopt a certain viewpoint or course of action.

The theory of belief is a conceptualization that aids in understanding how individuals form, reinforce, and change their beliefs. It involves an understanding of how cognitive processes, social influences, and personal experiences impact the formation of one's beliefs (Higgins et al., 2022; Van Prooijen et al., 2020). In the context of persuasive speeches, the theory of belief becomes significant as speeches often aim to influence or change the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of the audience.

When delivering persuasive speeches, individuals often employ the concept of the theory of belief to understand how the audience forms and maintains their beliefs (Alkhawaldeh, 2021; Arora et al., 2022). Persuasive speeches may attempt to influence beliefs by presenting convincing arguments, providing strong evidence, or aligning the message with values or beliefs already held by the audience. Persuasive speakers can also utilize the principles of the theory of belief to build their credibility as speakers and strengthen the connection between themselves and the audience (Maricchiolo et al., 2020; Prafitri & Nasir, 2023).

This paper investigates the linguistic persuasive techniques employed by four national leaders in persuading their citizens to comply with Covid-19 protocols. The study aims to identify the types of strategies used in their statements and evaluate their effectiveness. Several scholars have explored the concept of persuasion, finding that there are various persuasive language

elements that can appear at different linguistic levels, including semantics, morphology, syntax, and phonology. Additionally, persuasive techniques aim to align individuals with the speaker's viewpoint, which is crucial in social influence. Researchers also assert that individuals consciously choose their words when interacting with others.

Additionally, research on language and power indicates that authoritative language plays a primary role in persuasive communication, especially when conveyed through audio and video channels. Previous findings suggest that the use of authoritative language in audio and visual messages tends to elicit more positive attitudes compared to the use of less authoritative language, and speakers are more successful in persuading when employing authoritative language. Similarly, other studies indicate that individuals with lower social status tend to use less authoritative language, characterized by verbal and non-verbal hesitations, qualifiers, and tag questions. Meanwhile, these indicators are not found in the speech of individuals with higher social status.

RESEARCH METHOD

The Language Expectancy Theory (LET) explains how language serves as a demonstration of social power, with individuals conforming to socially and culturally expected linguistic norms during verbal communication (Clementson et al., 2023; Costello & Lee, 2022). LET posits that deviations from these norms may elicit positive or negative responses, as people have expectations regarding both socially and culturally acceptable behavior and the linguistic strategies used for persuasion (Du et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023). These linguistic expectations influence whether a message will be positively or negatively received and may lead to rejection if not met. LET underscores the close relationship between language and social power, suggesting that individuals with credibility or social power can freely employ persuasive linguistic strategies, while those with lower credibility or social power are limited to more neutral linguistic behavior.

Aristotle (350 BCE) delineated the art of oration by outlining three pillars of persuasion: logos, ethos, and pathos (Donavin, 2023; Palash, 2021). Logos involves the logical aspect of persuasion, grounded in reasoning and rationality, and often includes evidence, analogies, quotations, and authorities on a subject. Ethos entails efforts to influence the audience's perception of the speaker's credibility or authority by emphasizing character, expertise, and goodwill towards the audience. Conversely, pathos aims to evoke emotional responses from the audience.

This paper examines speeches delivered by four heads of state—American President Donald Trump, Russia's Vladimir Putin, Britain's Boris Johnson, and Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta—during the first five months of 2020. It focuses on their rhetorical strategies, directives regarding Covid-19 control measures, and the use of persuasive strategies such as logos, ethos, and pathos popularized by Aristotle.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

President Trump's Address: Combating the Pandemic and Ensuring American Safety

On March 11, 2020, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, delivered a speech to his people. He referred to them as 'fellow Americans,' affirming his solidarity. Trump conveyed that the World Health Organization had declared the virus a global pandemic. His administration had made maximal efforts to protect the American people, which he claimed to be the most comprehensive in modern history. Trump also detailed the swift actions taken by his government in response to the pandemic. These measures included travel restrictions from China and the implementation of quarantine. He also proposed a series of additional steps based on consultations with top health officials. Among these were temporary halting of travel from Europe and assurance of healthcare coverage for coronavirus treatment. Trump urged his people to comply with government guidelines. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining hygiene and seeking assistance when needed. Trump highlighted the country's economic strength and proposed financial support measures. He also asked Congress to provide tax relief. Trump reiterated his willingness to take any action to protect the lives and safety of the American people. All of this reinforces the impression of a leader who cares about the nation's interests.

This President Trump's speech on March 11, 2020, underscores the intricate interplay between rhetorical strategies and persuasive theory in effective communication. Through the strategic use of rhetorical techniques such as ethos, logos, and pathos, Trump adeptly navigates the complexities of addressing a nation in crisis, establishing credibility, appealing to reason, and evoking emotional responses. By framing his administration's response to the pandemic within the context of comprehensive measures and expert advice, Trump harnesses the persuasive power of logos, while his appeals to solidarity and reassurance resonate with pathos. Furthermore, Trump's call to action and assurance of support for the American people reinforce his ethos as a leader committed to their well-being. This analysis highlights the importance of understanding and employing rhetorical strategies in persuasive communication, demonstrating their efficacy in shaping public perception and mobilizing collective action in times of crisis.

President's Proactive Response to Pandemic: Safeguarding Health and Economy

On March 25, 2020, the President of Russia addressed his nation about the ongoing pandemic, emphasizing its widespread impact on countries and the global economy. He highlighted his government's proactive measures to contain its spread, emphasizing the deployment of healthcare workers as evidence of their commitment. Encouraging citizens to heed advice from health experts, he appealed with logic by portraying the pandemic as a global threat. Additionally, the President acknowledged an upcoming referendum but proposed its postponement, prioritizing safety and health while logically reasoning about the potential risks involved. Taking directive action, he declared the following week as a non-working period, ensuring wages would still be paid to citizens. Emphasizing discipline, he warned of the potential impact of the pandemic, in line with logical reasoning. In response to economic concerns, the

President outlined various government measures aimed at protecting jobs and incomes, including social benefit updates and assistance to affected businesses. These decisions were based on the need to protect livelihoods, appealing to logic.

Furthermore, initiatives such as consumer loan and mortgage holidays, along with adjustments to bankruptcy laws, reflected a pragmatic approach to reduce financial burdens. Seeking to generate revenue, the government proposed higher interest rates on foreign accounts and taxes on large bank deposits and debt securities, all based on the logic of job preservation. The President of Russia has demonstrated proactive and responsive leadership in addressing the ongoing pandemic. In his speech on March 25, 2020, he clearly outlined the broad impact of the pandemic on countries and the global economy, and highlighted specific steps taken by the government to limit its spread. The emphasis on the crucial role of healthcare workers and recognition of the risks involved in conducting the referendum demonstrate the government's concern for the safety and well-being of its citizens. The economic measures outlined, such as social benefit updates and assistance to affected businesses, also indicate concrete efforts to protect jobs and incomes. However, the success of these actions still needs to be evaluated based on their implementation effectiveness and overall impact on society.

Britain: Prime Minister's Address on Pandemic Challenges and National Unity

On March 23, 2020, the Prime Minister of the Britain delivered a speech that highlighted the escalation of the coronavirus pandemic as the greatest challenge in decades, emphasizing its damaging global impact. In a solemn tone, the Prime Minister depicted the severity of the situation and the urgent actions required from all parties. The purpose of the speech was to provide updates on the specific measures taken by the government to address this crisis. Additionally, the Prime Minister underscored the importance of active citizen participation in combating the pandemic, stating that everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the fight against the outbreak.

In his speech, the Prime Minister effectively utilized logic to connect the government's handling strategies with the global reality of the pandemic. He clarified how these measures were based on scientific evidence and the experiences of other countries facing similar challenges. Furthermore, the Prime Minister bolstered ethical character by portraying citizens as partners in the struggle against the pandemic. By emphasizing solidarity and interdependence, he evoked a sense of unity and commitment in confronting this crisis together.

The Prime Minister also emphasized the importance of compliance with stay-at-home rules and social interaction limitations. In this context, he acknowledged the sacrifices required from each individual to adhere to these rules, while ensuring that the government would provide full support to overcome this challenge. Through these encouragement and assurances, the Prime Minister aimed to build trust and calm amidst the uncertainty experienced by the public. As the speech concluded, the Prime Minister expressed his confidence in the nation's ability to overcome the pandemic. By inspiring optimism and confidence, he emphasized the importance

of cooperation and solidarity in facing this difficult time. He urged every individual to play their respective roles in the collective effort to address this crisis and achieve success together.

The speech by the Prime Minister of the Britain on March 23, 2020, demonstrates the effective use of several rhetorical strategies to influence and mobilize the audience. Firstly, he employed ethos by emphasizing the active role of citizens as partners in the fight against the pandemic, building an image of the government as open and supportive of the public interest. Additionally, the Prime Minister utilized logic by referring to scientific evidence and other countries' experiences in handling similar situations, strengthening his arguments about government policies. Moreover, he used pathos by acknowledging the sacrifices required from the public and emphasizing the importance of solidarity and unity in facing this crisis, aiming to stimulate emotions and motivation among the audience.

From the perspective of persuasive theory, the Prime Minister's speech includes several elements aimed at influencing the opinions and behaviors of the audience. Firstly, he used logic by detailing the specific measures taken by the government and linking them to the global pandemic reality, intending to convince the audience of the effectiveness of the implemented policies. Furthermore, the use of ethos is evident in the Prime Minister's efforts to build an image of the government as caring and open to the needs of the public, aiming to gain trust and support from the audience. Lastly, pathos elements were utilized by acknowledging the sacrifices required from the public and emphasizing the importance of unity in facing this crisis, aiming to evoke empathy and motivation from the audience.

Addressing the Nation: President Kenyatta's Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

On March 25, 2020, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta delivered a national address emphasizing the urgency of the coronavirus pandemic as the greatest challenge faced by the country and the world in this decade. In his opening statement, Kenyatta addressed the people of Kenya as 'fellow citizens,' showing emotional closeness and solidarity with them. He firmly stated that the pandemic is a global crisis that has reached over 40,000 cases worldwide, while appreciating the efforts of the Ministry of Health in limiting its spread. With twenty-eight confirmed cases in Kenya and one recovery, Kenyatta expressed optimism that the country can overcome this challenge.

Additionally, Kenyatta described the economic impact of the pandemic, including the anxiety felt by many families about possible job losses and future uncertainties. In response to this, he ordered a series of measures, such as tax reliefs, cash assistance for vulnerable groups, and the suspension of blacklisting with Credit Reference Bureaus. Kenyatta also announced salary reductions for senior government executives to support these financial commitments and foster solidarity within the government.

The Kenyan President also emphasized the importance of compliance with stay-at-home rules and social distancing, while expressing gratitude to medical workers and essential service providers for their dedication. By utilizing various communication strategies such as ethos, logos,

and pathos, Kenyatta sought to reinforce his message for better understanding and acceptance by the public. Through his address, he underscored the importance of cooperation and solidarity in facing this crisis, while affirming that Kenya has the potential to navigate through these difficult times together.

In his speech on March 25, 2020, President Uhuru Kenyatta employed various rhetorical strategies aimed at influencing and mobilizing the audience. Firstly, Kenyatta utilized ethos by addressing Kenyan citizens as 'fellow citizens,' demonstrating emotional closeness and solidarity with them. Consequently, he built an image of himself as a caring leader emotionally connected to the people. Furthermore, Kenyatta employed logos by presenting facts and statistics about the coronavirus pandemic, as well as concrete steps taken by the government to address the crisis. In this way, he aimed to convince the audience of the effectiveness of the government's policies. Lastly, he also used pathos by describing the economic and emotional impacts of the pandemic, aiming to evoke empathy and motivation from the audience.

From the perspective of persuasive theory, President Kenyatta's speech has several elements aimed at influencing the opinions and behaviors of the audience. Firstly, he employed logos by detailing the concrete steps taken by the government and linking them to the global reality of the pandemic (Newland, 2020; Pleyers, 2020). This was intended to convince the audience of the effectiveness of the policies implemented. Furthermore, the use of ethos was evident in Kenyatta's efforts to build the image of the government as a caring and open leader responsive to the needs of the people, aiming to gain trust and support from the audience (Bibri & Allam, 2022; Bieber, 2022). Lastly, the element of pathos was used by acknowledging the sacrifices required from the people and emphasizing the importance of unity in facing this crisis, aiming to stimulate empathy and motivation from the audience. Through a combination of rhetorical strategies and persuasive theory, Kenyatta sought to convey important messages in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic to the people of Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The article evaluates speeches from various selected leaders addressing Covid-19 management. Findings indicate that leaders frequently utilize rhetorical strategies like logos, ethos, and pathos, alongside other devices such as asyndeton, polysyndeton, antanagoge, anaphora, metaphor germination, metanoia, enumeration, and polysyndeton. Additionally, national leaders often issue direct instructions. Based on the Language Expectancy Theory, leaders have a duty to deliver formal speeches assessing situations and suggesting a course of action, utilizing culturally acceptable strategies and devices to convey messages more effectively. Moreover, they often accompany these messages with enforceable directives, supported by law enforcement. The paper emphasizes the relevance of Aristotle's classical strategies, noting their widespread contemporary application by heads of state as a means of exerting soft power rather than issuing strict orders and penalties.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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