

Why So Emotional? A Cognitive Rhetorical Analysis of the Use of Pathos in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's Speech on Ghana's Republic Day

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the use of pathos, Aristotle's emotional appeal, in Dr Kwame Nkrumah's speech delivered on the day Ghana gained the status of a republic state by adopting Oakley's (2009, 2011) theoretical framework of attention. It is found that Dr Kwame Nkrumah used the elements of attention to fill the mental spaces, control the attention of the audience, and direct them to subjects that appeal to their emotions, namely, happiness, hope, and motivation. This study will not only shed light on Nkrumah's rhetoric but also contribute to the building of the communicative prowess of individuals and add to the existing limited literature on cognitive rhetorical analysis of Nkrumah's rhetoric.

Keywords: Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Political Speech, Pathos, Attention, Persuasion

1. Introduction

The first decades of the 20th century witnessed the eruption of the fight for political freedom and independence in many African nations. This brought together such prominent figures as Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana from across the continent to discuss political independence and freedom from colonialism. The elite and the chiefs were championing this course in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly on the Gold Coast. Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who had just completed his studies at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, was sent to the Gold Coast to assist in this struggle in the 1940s. He was a founding member of Africa Unity and a significant figure in 20th-century Pan-Africanism. In 1963, he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize for advocating for and strengthening peace (Arhin, 1992). Under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's leadership of the Gold Coast, Ghana was the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve political independence, demonstrating the decision to bring him back to Ghana in the first place was right. In his fight for political independence, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah delivered a great number of inspiring speeches, mostly to garner as much support from the populace as he possibly could. His remarkable speeches did not end with the victory of political independence, which made him a famous political figure. In his political speech, Dr Kwame Nkrumah used a lot of emotional language. This paper intends to analyze the use of one of Aristotle's (1984) rhetorical appeals, namely, pathos, in Dr Kwame Nkrumah's speech to shed light on how he persuades and inspires the audience.

2. Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetoric is the ability to observe the various persuasion techniques in any particular situation (Aristotle 1984: 2155). According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of proofs that are furnished by speech. The projected characters, including the author's or speaker's reliability and dependability, are what make up ethos (Higgins and Walker, 2012). An argument presented with logical clarity, rationality and integrity is known as logos or rational persuasion. The third and final proof of Aristotle's rhetoric is an emotional appeal, known as pathos, the art of persuasion that can move a listener to take action (Higgins and Walker, 2012). To Hamilton (2003: 355), ethos (character), pathos (emotion), or logos (logos) – based appeals are the three approaches to strengthen an argument (reason).

According to Aristotle (1984:2155), persuasion may come through the hearers when the speech stirs their emotions; as our judgment when we are pleased is different from those when we are pained and hostile.

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Gabrielsen and Christiansen (2010) specify these emotions or passions as love, honour, security, greed, pity, and guilt. To influence the audience, Mshvenieradze (2013) also included the emotions of wrath, insult, empathy, fear, and perplexity. Browse (2018:181) argues that making an emotional appeal is possibly the most effective approach to making an argument stick and consequently, persuasive speech needs to be emotionally resonant long after the speech event. This is because the other appeals deal with discourse elements that are subject to change from one discourse setting to another, such as the speaker's identity and what they say.

Researchers have studied the use of rhetorical appeals in several political speeches. For instance, Nurkhamidah et al. (2016) studied President Biden's use of rhetorical appeals in his inaugural address as the 46th president of the United States. The study revealed that though Biden uses all of the Aristotelian rhetoric strategies, he mainly used emotional appeal in the address in his quest to gain the support of the people. In Arofah's (2018) discussion of hate speech related to religious blasphemy accusations that drag Ahok to jail, it was found that the hate speech mainly focused on the use of pathos to trigger anger and negative emotions from its audience. Darminto's (2019) rhetorical analysis of Oprah Winfrey's commencement speech on graduation day at the University of South California in 2018 revealed that all three rhetorical proofs were employed in the speech. Oprah appealed to the emotions of the graduates as part of her bid to show appreciation and to arouse their joy and excitement for the achievement. Fanani et al. (2020) analyzed how President Donald Trump grammatically composed ethos, pathos, and logos in his persuasive, yet controversial speech on Jerusalem from the perspective of mood analysis. The study revealed that all three rhetorical appeals of Aristotle were employed with the use of grammar. Particularly, Trump appealed to the emotions of the people by implementing declarative and imperative moods to arouse both positive and negative feelings in his audience. The study also found that the high use of declarative moods indicated that he positioned himself as an information bearer to shorten the gap between himself and his audience. This notwithstanding, the rhetorical appeals in Nkrumah's political speeches have not been extensively studied, even though they are so potent and influential that they should not be ignored.

3. Theoretical Framework

The elements of attention, identified by Oakley (2009, 2011) and mental space theory, as introduced by Fauconnier (1985), provide the theoretical basis of analysis for the study.

Mental Space Theory

Introduced by Fauconnier (1985), mental space refers to the "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action". According to the theory, meaning construction refers to "the high-level, complex mental operations that apply within and across domains when we think, act, or communicate" (Fauconnier 1997, p.1). When people use language to communicate with each other, they constantly construct such domains triggered by linguistic information and current contexts, by which people accomplish meaning construction and realize mutual communication.

According to Fauconnier (1994), mental spaces are constructed from several sources, and they include; the set of conceptual domains we already know about, immediate experiences and what other people say to us.

Mental spaces are built up dynamically in working memory, but a mental space can become entrenched in long-term memory. For example, frames are entrenched mental spaces that we can activate all at once. A mental space may be organized by a specific frame such as boxing, a more generic frame such as fighting and a yet more generic frame such as competition.

To Oakley (2009), mental spaces theory provides a general semiotic model to give a real-time feel to the analysis that meshes nicely with defining elements of cognitive grammar, particularly the notion that mental spaces are models we build to interpret past, present, and future states of affairs, and, as such, each mental space construes these worlds in distinct ways, profiling some information over others. He continues that; generally speaking, mental space organization calls attention to the "invisible" (Fauconnier calls 'backstage') semantic constructs that guide meaning construction. In addition, in mental space theory, linguistic structures are cues that prompt discourse participants to set up elements in referential structure, elements which may or may not refer to objects in the world, as mental spaces contain representations of entities and relations of a given scenario as perceived, imagined, or remembered by the participants. Metaphorically, mental spaces are temporary "containers" for relevant information about a particular domain or schema.

The elements of attention, elaborated below, are alerting, orienting, sharing, selecting, sustaining, and controlling.

3.1 Alerting and Orienting

According to Oakley (2011), alerting is the process of keeping a general state of readiness to process novel information, whereas orienting is the set of circumstances that make a person choose one item over another. He goes on to say that alerting is typically demonstrated in a larger semantic and pragmatic context by the use of

prosodic techniques like syllabic stress, intonation peaks, and other suprasegmental elements drawing attention. Similar to spoken communication, written communication correlates alerting with typographic phenomena like ALL CAPS or boldface font. It is possible to think about orienting as a speaking pattern that conveys viewpoint and vantage point. Furthermore, according to Oakley (2011), the alerting and orienting mechanisms of attention depend on the particular architectures of public speaking platforms, auditoriums, and other shared spaces and artifacts.

3.2 Selecting

In general, it can be said that selective attention is the act of focusing on important stimuli while disregarding unimportant ones. In other words, the information that occupies mental space is the selection. A participant, a role, an artifact, an object, a happening, a movement, or an abstract idea could all fit the bill. Proper nouns, common nouns, first-person pronouns, noun phrases, indefinite articles, verbs, and prepositional phrases are typical linguistic constructions intended to choose entities.

3.3 Sustaining

The majority of daily tasks that have practical ramifications on academic outcomes (Isbell, Calkins, Swingler, Leerkes, 2017), safety, social interaction, and mental health depend on the capacity to maintain attention. According to Oakley (2011), this is the process of continuing to think about, reason about, plan, decide, or act on an entity, event, action, or relation. Add fresh but closely related information to the attentional budget by maintaining or focusing attention. Language structure features, including pronouns, reflexive pronouns, appositives, restricted relative clauses, prepositional phrases, and definite articles, are used to achieve coherence and cohesiveness by focusing on and elaborating on the chosen entity or topic. While all goal-directed tasks can be supported by selective attention, sustaining attention ensures task completion by using the majority of the attentional resources. Because it requires concentration, the requirement for focused attention distinguishes one aspect of attention from another, selection. Focused attention is dependent on the top-down framing of a scenario or scene with significant contributions from long-term memory, as opposed to selective attention, which is susceptible to the whims of bottom-up perception. Maintaining a focus of attention requires expanding the attentional budget with fresh, closely related information. The attentional budget is made up of the selection and maintenance of attention, which work together to build, finish, and elaborate the network of mental spaces used to represent and understand real or imagined thoughts and activities.

3.4 Controlling

While all goal-directed tasks can be supported by selective attention, sustaining attention ensures task completion by using the majority of the attentional resource. Because it requires concentration, the requirement for focused attention distinguishes one aspect of attention from another, selection. Focused attention is dependent on top-down framing of a scenario or scene with significant contributions from long-term memory, as opposed to selective attention, which is susceptible to the whims of bottom-up perception. Maintaining a focus of attention requires expanding the attentional budget with fresh, closely related information. The attentional budget is made up of the selection and maintenance of attention, which work together to build, finish, and elaborate the network of mental spaces used to represent and understand real or imagined thoughts and activities.

The purpose is to present the elements of attention as the phenomenology of rhetorical engagement as applied in Nkrumah's speech on Republic Day to appeal to the emotions of the audience. Deduced from the various definitions of rhetoric among theorists like Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, and Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, rhetoric is the practice of one individual or group directing the attention of another individual or group about a past, present, future, or imagined situation. James (1998: 403) asserts that attention is the taking possession by the mind, in a clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously present objects or trains of thought. Parasuraman claims that when human beings attend, they perceive. When human beings attend and perceive, they remember. When human beings attend, perceive, and remember, they learn. When human beings learn, they can act deliberately and with forethought (1998: 3). Hence, to get control over the attention of the audience by an orator is very important to get the audience to act in the direction desired by the orator. To achieve this purpose, the orator/author needs to take into account the necessary elements of attention.

4. Rhetorical Analysis

This paper analyzes the speech that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah delivered to the Ghanaian people on July 1, 1960, about the accomplishment and the route forward for the nation and its citizens. The speech comes from the first volume of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's selected speeches (Obeng, 1997). Dr Kwame Nkrumah's speech was analyzed in terms of how he seized, sustained, and directed the attention of the audience in a bid to appeal to their emotions. The examples have been italicized and analyzed individually.

4.1 Alerting and Orienting Attention

In analyzing the alerting and orienting of attention situations in the speech delivered, the event organized where the audience converged at a common ground in itself alerted the audience to anticipate what the speaker has for them. The grounds prepared for the occasion at the then Independence Square readies the mind of the audience toward the speaker.

Aside from the physical structures prepared and the significance of the day, which automatically alerted the audience, Dr Kwame Nkrumah alerted the audience to a variety of subjects throughout the speech. He did so mainly with the introductory statements, which began the paragraphs. These instances put the audience at the disposal to select certain subjects over others to attend to.

(1) *Countrymen, I am happy to be able to speak to you this evening.*

The above statement is the first sentence in Dr Kwame Nkrumah's speech. The statement alerts the audience and hints to them about the emotions surrounding the event. The sounds, coupled with the kind of language (English) used, make it easier for the audience to be alert and biased to select what the speaker is saying over any other sound since humans are more disposed to select speech sounds and also the audience were generally more familiar with the English Language.

With the statement, Dr Kwame Nkrumah draws attention to himself with the use of the first person pronoun "I" and also to his feelings about the communication taking place. With Nkrumah's expression of happiness about the event to the audience, he appeals to the feelings of happiness of the audience. He prepares the audience's mind to be happy for the occasion, too. Thus, he appeals to the emotions of the audience to be happy with him and for the occasion.

(2) *But what do we mean by economic and social reconstruction?*

(3) *What are our prospects?*

Dr Kwame Nkrumah asked the above question to begin the seventh paragraph of his speech. With the question (which always goes with a rising tone), he intends to alert the audience to their future and the future of the nation as a whole. With the nature and significance of the event and its impact on the future of the people, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah intends to use alerting and orienting elements of attention to put the audience's mind into a state of imagination of their future. With the feelings of happiness surrounding the occasion and linking it to the nation's future prospects, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah appeals to the people's emotions to be excited about the future.

4.2 Selecting Attention

Throughout the speech, Dr Kwame Nkrumah provided certain inputs (elements) to make the audience more inclined to select the subjects and ideas to attend to. He did so mainly with the use of first-person pronouns ('I', 'we', 'us'). In almost all the paragraphs of the speech, Dr Kwame Nkrumah used personal pronouns to draw the attention of the audience.

(4) *I personally do not and cannot believe, that all our efforts have been undertaken for the purpose of enabling a few persons to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority.*

In the example 1, Nkrumah used the first person singular pronoun "I" and the inclusive pronoun "our" as a means to disturb the mental space network of the audience. This puts the audience in a mental state to select two entities in the sentence, first, "the speaker", with the use of "I" and second, a group (in this situation, Ghanaians) where he identifies as a member, with the use of "our" to occupy the attentional budget for the time.

(5) *I believe that it is the best for us in our circumstances.*

Similar to example 1, Nkrumah used the first-person pronouns "I", "us", and "our" in the same sentence in example 2. As earlier indicated in example 1, the use of these first person pronouns are linguistic features that lean the audience's mental state toward selection into the attentional budget. It is also clear that though the audience are most likely to select "the speaker" and the group (Ghanaians) in which they identify, Nkrumah aims to direct the audience mind to select him, "the speaker", since he is the only entity that identifies in all of the first-person pronouns used, "I", "us" and "our".

Nkrumah used "I" which excludes the audience from talking about negative things he does not see happening once he is at the helm and things he believed to be the best in examples 1 and 2 respectively to emit emotions of confidence from the audience towards him. In addition, he used inclusive pronouns "us" and "our", where he identifies as belonging to a group that includes the audience. This buttresses his appeal for confidence and hope with him being a member of their collective group.

(6) *At that time, the nationalist effort had just started and the people were tense with excitement and expectation.*

In example 3, Nkrumah began the sentence with the adverbial expression “at that time”, which casts the minds of the audience back to a specific period in the past. With the use of this linguistic element, the audience were more inclined to select the period (the subject of the statement) being referred to for occupation in the attentional budget.

(7) *What was needed was the right type of leadership to achieve the best results.*

“What was needed” functions as a noun clause or a nominal clause. It serves as the subject of the sentence. The construction acts as a single unit that represents the noun or subject of the message. This introduces the idea of the needed elements or conditions. As the subject of the message, the noun clause used by the speaker (Nkrumah) engages the mental space of the audience to select the element needed to the attentional budget.

In this example, Nkrumah called on the audience to select “what was needed” for the attentional budget. As the subject (the right type of leadership), Nkrumah was indirectly talking about himself as the right person to lead them to a prosperous future. He therefore appeals to the feelings of hope and excitement of the audience to lead them.

4.3 Sustaining Attention

(8) *At that time, the nationalist effort had just started and the people were tense with excitement and expectation.*

Nkrumah, the speaker, weaved the linguistic features and structures to sustain the attention of the audience on a particular subject, in this context, a period in the past. Here, Nkrumah used carefully related clauses to construct a complex sentence that introduced and described the situation in the past period being mentioned. Nkrumah began the sentence with an adverbial phrase, “at that time,” which highlights the subject (focus) of the statement, that is, the beginning of the nationalist movement. He continued by coordinating (with “and”) two independent clauses, “the nationalist effort had just started” and “the people were tense with excitement and expectation,” which all provided information about the past period in question. In addition, Nkrumah used descriptive adjectives “tense”, “excitement”, and “expectation” to provide insights into what was happening at that period. Throughout the statement, Nkrumah sustained the audience’s attention on one subject (a particular period in the past) by adding more information after its introduction through different linguistic features: adverbial phrase, coordinator, and descriptive adjectives.

By sustaining the audience’s attention on a period when it all began, the descriptives that Nkrumah used characterize the situation. With this, Nkrumah subtly calls on the audience to analyze if people’s expectations in the past had been fulfilled. With him leading the course, if the expectations had been met, then he automatically appeals to the emotions of confidence from the audience to lead them to achieve future objectives.

(9) *By economic and social reconstruction, we mean the development of our potential wealth and the cultivation of our social relations in such a way as to eradicate the causes of poverty and squalor, degradation and unemployment, depression and want; so as to raise the living standards of our people, ensuring economic and social security for everyone from birth to death.*

In example 2 for this section, Nkrumah sustained the attention of the audience on economic and social reconstruction. He began the sentence with a prepositional phrase, “by economic and social reconstruction” that directly introduced the subject of the statement. He continued with an exemplification of the subject by beginning with the phrase “we mean”. Nkrumah progressed with the statement by using a series of parallel phrases “eradicate the causes of poverty and squalor, degradation and unemployment, depression and want” that maintains a parallel structure that enhances clarity and rhythm in the sentence. Nkrumah connected to the successive clause with an infinitive phrase “so as to” to introduce the expected outcome. There were a series of parallel phrases that followed up “raise the living standards of our people, ensuring economic and social security for everyone from birth to death” to maintain consistency in the structure. It is clear that Nkrumah was consistent on the subject by providing more information that combined to explain “economic and social reconstruction”. Nkrumah, thus, sustained the attention of the audience throughout the statement.

In example 2, Dr Kwame Nkrumah directed and sustained the attention of the learners to their future as a country. Through the use of imagery (by providing insights about the potential future), he appeals to the audience’s feelings of excitement and hope as he detailed economic reconstruction and the future potential of the country. He paints in the minds of the audience a good image of their future to raise their feelings of hope, belief, and excitement for the future awaiting them.

4.4 Controlling

(10) *What was needed was the right type of leadership which could properly channel the forces of nationalism so as to obtain the best results.*

Looking at example 1, Nkrumah used the sentence to control the occupancy of the attentional budget of the audience. Through to the end of the cleft sentence, as provided in the example, Nkrumah had either subtly or directly highlighted three different elements, all of which he needed the audience to pay attention to at a point in the course of making the statement. With the cleft clause (functioning as the noun clause) “what was needed” at the beginning of the sentence, it could focus the attention of the audience on the solution that was needed for a situation in the past. The clause aims for selection of the subject which was later revealed with a definite article “the right type of leadership”. Nkrumah continued with a relative clause “which could properly channel the forces of nationalism” that passively placed a focus on the possible actions that the leadership could take. Here, the audience’s attention is redirected to focus on what the leadership that the speaker is talking about did in that past period. Nkrumah ended the sentence with an adverbial clause “so as to” which introduced what the activities of the right leadership were intended for or ended with. It connects the leadership’s role in channeling nationalism to the desired outcome. In summary, though Nkrumah aimed to achieve a focus basically on the leadership from the audience, he succeeded through the use of coordination and subordination in navigating the audience’s attention through what the leadership could do (properly channel the forces of nationalism) and the results that “the right leadership” could lead to.

In the example, Dr Kwame Nkrumah navigated the audience’s attention through what was needed a period ago, what actions the right leadership took, and the outcome of the actions of the right leadership. He explained the situation and what the country needed before he arrived. With the statement “right type of leadership”, he appeals to the feelings of hope, confidence, and belief of the people that he is the right character to lead them to their desired future.

5. Conclusion

It is thought that Aristotle’s rhetorical theory makes for effective persuasion. When included in a speech, pathos helps the speaker convince the listener. The study aimed at providing a cognitive rhetorical analysis on how Dr Kwame Nkrumah employed the elements of attention as proposed by Oakley (2009) to invoke the emotions of his audience with the aim of persuading them into supporting his ideas. The study provides insight into Nkrumah’s rhetoric, adds to existing literature on Nkrumah’s rhetoric and enhances the development of rhetorical strategies among individuals. According to the analysis, it was found that Nkrumah employed the use of the alerting, orienting, selecting, and sustaining elements of attention to direct the minds of the audience and appeal to their emotions (pathos). This was done with the use of varieties of linguistic features (mainly grammar), similar to what Fanani et al. (2020) found in their study where Donald Trump grammatically composed ethos, pathos and logos to persuade to achieve persuasion. Nkrumah used this technique to appeal to the emotions of excitement, hope, trust, inspiration and motivation of the people. One may argue that effective communicators use a variety of techniques to persuade their listeners, and those who want to be effective communicators must develop the use of elements of attention to appeal to the emotions of the audience. The study was however limited to Dr Kwame Nkrumah’s speech on Ghana’s republic day. Search for adequate relevant literature has been a limitation for the study. Further studies could be conducted on how the elements of attention are used to invoke ethos or logos among political speeches.

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