

Characteristics of Australian Political Language Rhetoric: Tactics of gaining public support and shirking responsibility

Tongtao Zheng

School of Asian Languages and Studies

University of Tasmania

GPO Box 252-91, Hobart, TAS 7001, AUSTRALIA

E-mail: Tongtao.Zheng@utas.edu.au

Abstract

The article explores how language can be used as a resource of cultural value and creative power in Australian English. The paper reveals how Australian politicians use political language rhetoric as a powerful tool in gaining political advantages. Several segments of so-called "public discourse" have been analysed, but the author mainly focuses on two areas of speech: how politicians use their language skills in gaining public support, and how they shirk responsibility. Special discursal features of these speeches have been compiled and categorised. The speeches are studied from the various angles of discourse analysis and political rhetoric techniques.

keywords: public discourse, Australian political discourse, discursal features, political rhetoric techniques, targeting strategy, enforcement strategy, avoidance strategy.

Introduction

Language is a weapon and a powerful tool in winning public support, especially during the current information revolution period. Rhetoric can be seen as a cultural tradition, the linguistic self-consciousness, the skills and methodologies brought into play in shaping the convictions of particular audiences – it is also a powerful weapon in the struggle of community against community, worldview against worldview. Rhetoric thereby comes to be viewed as the tool of particular interests, and therefore as a linguistic means for improving a politician's life.

Political discourse is a mixed product of personal development and the relevant social environment in which an individual grows. Any individual political discourse is the result of personal development in certain social settings. Personal development is affected by such factors as the impact a cultural environment has upon the process in which the individual develops his/her personality, the individual's educational experiences, parental influence, social circles, political party, economic status etc. Nevertheless, these "traces" can be found in the individual's speech patterns many years later, even when the same individual becomes a dominant public figure who has the obligation of "suppressing" or hiding these "traces" for the sake of the survival of his/her political party. Thus it is still possible for one to find out what constitutes the underlying influences of the speech patterns of such public figures. Discourse analysis has large volumes of records to testify to this. Australian English is no exception in this regard.

Data and Background Information

Three speeches were selected for this study. One speech is taken from the Prime Minister, John Howard, one speech from the Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, and the third speech is from the One Nation Party leader, Pauline Hanson. The speech given by Prime Minister John Howard was delivered in Sydney during his official launch for the 1998 federal election on September 20, 1998. The speech made by Opposition Leader Kim Beazley was given during the Labor Party's main policy launch on September 23, 1998 in Brisbane. The third speech is Ms Pauline Hanson's maiden speech which was presented by the leader of One Nation in the Australian Parliament House in 1997, in the capital city of Canberra.

These speeches were transcribed by newspapers. The author recorded these speeches, and then compared them with the newspaper transcriptions to verify their authenticity.

The reasons for selecting these political speeches are very simple. In terms of meeting electoral expectations, the three parties share both a number of common and unique features. For example, though each party has its own target audience, a certain degree of overlapping also exists. Also, the three speakers can be seen as typical representatives of three different social groups of people in Australia. During the Federal election campaign, each speaker used his/her different strategies and rhetoric techniques to appeal to the public. Although their speech patterns underwent numerous revisions, their original essence remained unchanged. By analysing these different speeches, it is possible to see how Australian politicians use rhetoric techniques in gaining public support, and in avoiding responsibility.

The Coalition government comprises of two parties – the Liberal and National parties. The majority of Liberal party supporters come primarily from the middle and upper-middle classes such as businessmen and bankers. National Party support is centred mainly in rural areas. The federal coalition regained power in the 1998 election with the support of 48 per cent of the national population.

The Australian Labor Party has its origins in the trade union movement. Today a large number of party members can be found amongst trade union activists and supporters. Its basic supporters are therefore middle and lower-middle income voters such as public servants and workers. The Medicare system, social security system and industrial relations' regulations (which protect worker's rights), are established or supported by the Labor Party. This party has lost the previous two national elections, including the 1998 federal election. It regained more than ten seats in this election, but still did not have enough numbers to form a government. More than 51% of voters supported this party in the election.

The One Nation Party formed in 1997, with Pauline Hanson as its leader. In spite of the fact that it was a new party, One Nation initially received strong nationwide support. It posed a threat to both the Liberal, National and Labor parties during the 1998 election period. It did not have the capacity to launch an effective political platform, and its doctrines were mainly based on Ms Hanson's maiden speech. One Nation's supporters could be found amongst a widespread cross section of the community.

The following sections will demonstrate how the three speakers use two main strategies in their speeches – that is, targeting strategy and avoidance strategy – with each strategy comprised of a number of various techniques and devices.

Targeting Strategy

The three speeches all begin by drawing upon symbols of national identity. In all three cases, national identity serves as a means by which to target the widest possible section of supporters. Australian political rhetoric is seen as being increasingly personalistic and individually oriented. This phenomenon is best demonstrated in the 1996 Australian federal election in which the Labor Party lost government. When political discourse becomes dissociated from national identity and target groups, there is the danger that the symbols of national identity, which are bereft of any substance, become meaningless. This is why the three Australian politicians selected for this study all pay particular attention to the issue of national identity, and address it in the beginning of their respective speeches.

The Inclusive technique

The politician directs his appeal to groups held together already by common ties, ties of nationality, religion, race, sex, vocation. Thus propagandists campaigning for or against a program will appeal to us as Catholics, Protestants, or Jews...as farmers or as schoolteachers; as housewives or as miners. With the aid of all the other propaganda devices, all of the artifices of flattery are used to harness the fears and hatreds, prejudices and biases, convictions and ideals common to a group. Thus is emotion made to push and pull us as members of a group onto a Band Wagon (Propaganda Analysis).¹⁾

The above description of the politician illustrates perfectly the technique employed by the three politicians during the 1998 federal election. A targeting strategy directed towards particular sections of the community was adopted by all parties. Politicians attempt to convince their audience that both

themselves and their ideas are "of the people." The main function of this inclusive or "plain-folks" technique is to assimilate the speaker himself/herself into a group or groups, and to then win the support of the members of these groups. From the three speeches we can see that the respective party leaders all used this technique in the process of merging themselves into their target groups. The plain-folks technique is also used in other countries such as America. Though recent American presidents have been men of great personal wealth, they have still gone to great lengths to present themselves as ordinary citizens to the voting public. We can witness this phenomenon on our TVs all the time: Bill Clinton eats at McDonald's and reads trashy spy novels. George Bush hated broccoli and loved to fish. Ronald Reagan was often photographed chopping wood, while Jimmy Carter presented himself as a humble peanut farmer from Georgia. In the Australian context, however, leaders such as John, Kim and Pauline choose to not only present themselves as "humble farmers" and "wood choppers" to the viewing public, but also use inclusive techniques to pretend that they are ordinary Australians.

One significant difference that can be found between American and Australian politicians is that Australian politicians use more delicate techniques for assimilating themselves into the targeted communal group. They elevate the group(s) history, traditions and contributions to the creation of the nation. These tactics help politicians to "disarm" such groups, and to ultimately sway them in favour of support for the politician's policies. For instance, in his speech Beazley praises *all* ethnic groups for their roles in the founding of Australia:

*Nearly 100 years ago, our forbearers created a new nation on this continent - a land to which **people from all over the world** could come to make a contribution...Can we come together, and **put petty rivalries and differences aside**, and build a new nation for a new century? (Emphasis added)...The Labor Party has listened to the millions in our community who feel betrayed by a Government that has divided Australian against Australian, boss against worker, 'haves' against 'have-nots.'*

From the above passage we can see that Beazley attributes the formation of the Australian nation to all ethnic groups. He praises them for their equal contribution in the process of nation building. In the last section of the passage he opens fire at the current Government's incompetence in handling the race debate issue, and criticises the Government for its role in pitting Australian against Australian. By doing this he clearly seeks to include himself as a member of every ethnic and economic group in the country.

In his speech, John Howard sings the praises of Anglo-Saxon and European traditions, and glorifies the history of western civilisation.

*There is no nation on the earth that has been gifted with the special combination of such assets. We are **in every sense of the word a projection of western civilisation** in this part of the world. We have taken the **good things from Europe**, the **Liberal political traditions**, and the civility of our public life and thankfully we have **rejected the bad things of Europe**. The stultifying class divisions built on tribal prejudice (emphasis added).*

There is clearly no need for John Howard to remind the country's Anglo-Saxon and European communities where their origins lie. The sole aim of Mr Howard in invoking the glories of Western civilisation is to emphasise the role played by these groups in the process of nation formation, and to voice his recognition of the contribution made by these groups. In addition, here Howard seeks to rebuff the claim made by the Labor Party and certain ethnic groups that Australia is part of Asia. This claim is widely rejected by supporters of the Coalition, and stands in complete contradistinction to three decades of Coalition policy.

Turning now to Ms Hanson's speech in which she describes herself as an ordinary small fish and chip owner:

I come here not as a polished politician, but a woman who has had her fair share of life's knocks... mother of four children, a sole parent and businesswoman running a fish and chip shop.

Hanson's speech assimilates herself with special interest groups who insist that the country should be compromised of only those inhabitants that are descended from European stock. She goes to even greater lengths than the Liberal and National Parties to exclude certain ethnic groups from her speeches. In this way, Hanson is deliberately attempting to stir up anti-multicultural sentiment for her own political gain.

A truly multicultural country can NEVER be strong or united and the world is full of failed and tragic examples, ranging from Ireland to Bosnia, to Africa and closer to home, Papua New Guinea. America and Great Britain are

currently paying the price.

From Hanson's speech we are able to infer that for One Nation, any given society, be it Australian, American, or African, should only be comprised of the one race. Immigration and multiculturalism are anathema to such an attitude, and should therefore be abolished. As for the indigenous peoples of Australia, however, Hanson fails to offer any feasible solutions as to how they may be dealt with or excluded by mainstream society, in order to successfully achieve the "strong or united" nation that she so desires.

In all three speeches, the speakers also use similar phrases by which to address the Australian public. For example, Beazley employs the phrase "the Australian people," Howard uses "my fellow Australians," while Hanson adopts the phrase "all Australians." By invoking peoples' sense of national identity, these three politicians are in fact deploying the so-called "transfer" device ²⁾ to garner public support. Since democracies are based on majority opinion, those who claim to represent the will of the majority increase the probability of gaining public support. This is because

Transfer is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept. For example, most of us respect and revere our church and our nation. If the propagandist succeeds in getting church or nation to approve a campaign in behalf of some program, he thereby transfers its authority, sanction, and prestige to that program. Thus, we may accept something which otherwise we might reject.³⁾

Though they all deploy the "transfer" device in their speeches, the three leaders apply the device within different contexts. Take for instance, the way in which Howard uses the "transfer" device to launch his party's GST package. Or the way that Hanson invokes the image of the nation to call for the abolishment of multiculturalism, to set up tariffs, and to withdraw funding for indigenous peoples.

It is interesting to note that while Howard and Beazley link themselves to their constituents in a manner that is both indirect and implicit, Hanson seeks to identify herself with supporters in a direct and explicit way. The approach adopted by Howard and Beazley is not only a politically sophisticated and effective one, but also reflects the social status of both leaders and the parties that they represent. The method utilised by Hanson, on the other hand, reveals her social background and lack of political maturity.

Enforcement strategy

Public discourse receives the concerted attention of linguists, political analysts, and others involved with language as a persuasive tool of communication. Yet an often-ignored fact is that the impact of much modern political communication derives from aesthetic attributes. The effectiveness of delivery, proverbs, poetry of expression and emotional investment of the rhetorician gives the audience a gauge for determining the speaker's sincerity. The following techniques were used in the three speeches.

Testimony technique

One of the most common techniques employed by Australian politicians is that which can be referred to as the "testimony" technique, in which politicians list a series of the achievements or deeds of individual parties. Take for example, the following claim made by Beazley:

Too few campaign launches in recent years have done what campaign launches used to do - what Ben Chieffly, and even Bob Menzies, used to do - and that is launch comprehensive, detailed plans for the nation. Today, Labor releases that plan - in 263 pages of detail - a plan for jobs, security and opportunity for all our people.

Beazley not only uses the testimony technique for his new and glorious vision for all of the Australian people, but as part of his new image for Labor, also refers to the fact that Labor had eaten humble pie on more than ten occasions. This implies that the technique can be used to declare whatever a politician wants his audience to hear about a given subject.

Howard uses a similar technique:

Labor left us...a deficit of 10.5 billion and we turned that into a surplus a year ahead of schedule...we have the lowest interest rates in 30 years...we have generated 320000 new jobs....

The only thing Beazley and Howard fail to explain is how their achievements are or were to be calculated. Beazley in no way clarifies how his plan is best for the country, while Howard neglects to enlighten the public as to how his party's impressive economic successes were calculated. (For instance, those people who are neither welfare recipients nor take part in any kind of employment are not regarded as being unemployed according to Coalition economic paradigms.) Testimonial technique can be used to construct a fair, well-balanced argument. However, more often than not it is used in ways that are unfair and misleading.

Citing historical speeches

In order to enhance the illocutionary force of their speeches, and to avoid the responsibility for making allegations that may incur unexpected public feedback, politicians appropriate a range of historical speeches made by previous politicians to support their arguments. The citing of historical speeches is used as a means by which to increase the effectiveness of a speech, and to reduce the political risk of being branded an extremist. Speeches made by Hanson provide us with excellent examples to demonstrate this. By using this technique, Hanson is able to increase the political mileage that can be made from her speeches, and at the same time minimises the risk of being criticised for creating a political and social disturbance. For example, in Hanson's maiden speech she quotes a speech made by Paul Haluch in 1955, but uses his words to convey exactly the opposite meaning to that which Haluch originally intended. In his 1955 speech, Haluch criticises the extreme discrimination of white Australians' against indigenous peoples. In her speech, however, Hanson uses Haluch's words to criticise the federal government's discrimination against white Australians by providing too much assistance to indigenous people:

Mr Acting Speaker, as Paul Haluch said in Parliament, in October 1955 (when he was Minister for Territories):

"The distinction I make is this. A social problem is one that concerns the way in which people live together in one society. A racial problem is a problem, which confronts two different races who live in two separate societies, even if those societies are side by side. We do not want a society in Australia in which one group enjoys one set of privileges and another group enjoys another set of privileges."

Hanson is aware of the fact that her speech would offend sections of the Australian community, as she openly admits in the latter part of her speech. She knows, for example, that indigenous people would be incensed that her speech was based on inaccurate information and ignored reality. For example, while the unemployment rate of indigenous Australians stands at around 38 per cent, the unemployment rate of non-indigenous Australians hovers around 9 per cent. And while 64 per cent of indigenous people earn an income of less than \$12 000 per annum, this figure drops to 45 per cent for non-indigenous Australians.⁴⁾ Because Hanson uses such inaccurate information, it could be inferred that she may harbour some fears concerning the credibility of her statements. Thus the most effective way to legitimate her claims is to refer to a well-known historical speech. This has the effect of making her outlandish claims more acceptable to the public, whilst simultaneously absolving her of any responsibility for the things she has said.

Inversion technique

Inversion technique is a means by which a speaker uses a particular expression in such a way that its commonly held meaning is inverted to mean the exact opposite of the original expression. In the following passage taken from Hanson's speech, for example, victims are transformed into aggressors, while the aggressors are represented as victims. Again, by referring to a historical speech, Hanson strives to enhance the illocutionary force of her speech, and to avoid taking any responsibility for her statements.

Arthur Calwell said and I quote, "Japan, India, Burma, Ceylon and every new African nation is fiercely anti-white and anti one another. Do we want or need any of these people here? I am one red-blooded Australian who says NO and who speaks for 90% of Australian". I have no hesitation in echoing the words of Arthur Calwell!

Fear technique

The fear technique is yet another feature of Australian political discourse. This technique firstly produces some kind of potential threat to the public, and then provides solutions from which the public can then choose from. In reality, however, these solutions constitute choices made by the politician, and not the public. In contemporary politics, the fear technique continues to be widely employed in Australian political speech. When a politician agitates the public's fear against immigration or crime, and proposes that voting for him/her will reduce the threat, s/he will use this technique. If we compare the speeches made by Hanson and Hitler, we can soon discover how in their endeavours to enforce their illocutionary force and gain popular support, these two leaders use the fear technique in a similar way.

The streets of our country are in turmoil. The universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting. Communists are seeking to destroy our country. Russia is threatening us with her might, and the Republic is in danger. Yes - danger from within and without. We need law and order! Without it our nation cannot survive. Adolf Hitler, 1932

Compare this now with Hanson's impassioned plea to the nation:

Mr Acting Speaker, time is running out. We may only have 10-15 years left to turn things around. Because of our resources and our position in the world, we won't have a say because neighbouring countries such as Japan with 250 million people, China (1.2 billion), India (1 billion), Indonesia (250 million) and Malaysia (300 million) are well aware of our resources and potential. WAKE UP AUSTRALIA BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

Here is yet another fear scenario concocted by Ms Hanson:

We now have a situation where a type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded industries that flourish in our society, servicing Aboriginal, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups.

The opposition leader Beazley also utilises the fear technique for similar purposes:

A tax from the cradle to grave...This is a tax Australia should never, ever have. And which we could never, ever, get rid of...if a tax looks like it is going to hurt, that is because it will.

The intention of all three speakers in the above passages is to instil and exacerbate the negative attitude of their audience towards such issues as tax reform, affirmative action, and racial tolerance.

Logical Fallacies

In order to push the public to accept their policies, Howard, Beazley and Hanson use a technique called "logical fallacies" or unwarranted extrapolation. In this technique the speaker makes quite spectacular predictions about the future, based on only a few minor facts. It is also one of the most common techniques used in the three speeches. For example, in his speech Howard ties the future of the Australian nation to the GST.

It [the taxation system] is failing the Australian community and unless it is renovated and changed we cannot deliver a stronger Australia for the 21st Century...because it will bring massive relief to many of our farmers and many of our fellow Australians who live in the bush. It will take \$3.5 billion off the cost of fuel in this country...(it) will also enable us to reach our dream, our goal, of becoming a major financial centre in the Asia-Pacific region.

A GST will enable Australia to become a major Asia-Pacific financial centre? Such a claim is overly simple, and pays scant attention to hard economic facts and realities. It is in this way that speakers use the logical fallacies technique in their efforts to gain popular support.

The opposition also employs the same tactics:

...that Australia will be the one with a Labor Government. Historians 50 or 100 years from now will write of this last election of the 20th Century as a contest between a vision for the whole nation, and a plan for a tax.

It goes without saying that 50 or 100 years from now, historians may not consider that Labor's plan was a "vision for the whole nation."

Political scientists refer to such predictions as logical fallacies, and warn that they must be used with caution. It is interesting to note, however, that this technique is freely used in Australian political

discourse, without much regard for such warnings.

Religious Citation

Politicians use proverbs in an attempt to arouse the public with vivid, emotionally suggestive words. In certain situations, however, political discourse seeks to pacify the public in order to make an unpleasant reality more palatable. This is accomplished by using proverbs, idioms or biblical utterances to attack opponents. For example, in order to rebuff Beazley's 5 per cent unemployment target, and to emphasise his political counterpart's incompetence in the handling of the unemployment problem during his term in office, Howard uses the following biblical utterance to ridicule him:

Mr Beazley says he's going to reach a 5 per cent unemployment rate. Mr Beazley had 13 years to do that. And now three weeks from the election he says: "Hallelujah brothers, I've found a way of solving it" (emphasis added).

Here Howard uses one utterance to propose a condition for his opponent, "*Mr Beazley says he's going to reach a 5 per cent unemployment rate,*" then uses another utterance to test it, "*Mr Beazley had 13 years to do that,*" and then draws a conclusion implied in his final utterance, "*And now three weeks from the election he says: 'Hallelujah brothers, I've found a way of solving it.'*" That is, it is impossible for Beazley to achieve his unemployment goal. Howard ridicules his opponent by employing a biblical utterance to emphasise how unrealistic Beazley's claims are. However, such a technique is only effective when the audience comprehends the unlikelihood of what is being suggested ever actually occurring.

Emotion technique

All three speakers constantly use what can be referred to as the "emotion" technique in their bid to appeal to the viewing public. Emotion can be seen as a type of investment from which speakers expect to receive a generous return. Emotion technique is employed in various ways. For example, when speakers talk in hushed or ringing tones, and use exaggerated body language and facial gestures, they are using emotion technique. The speeches of the three leaders are replete with examples of this technique. For instance, they all raise their voices at key points in their speeches and gesticulate vigorously with their arms and hands. Indeed, they almost look as if are "fighting" for their audience. This observation particularly applies in the case of Beazley and Hanson.

Emotional agitation is a most favoured technique of the propagandist because "any emotion may be 'drained off' into any activity by skilful manipulation." ⁵⁾ In the following passages belonging to Beazley and Hanson respectively, the emotions which the speakers are trying to convey through their words are virtually tangible:

A tax from cradle to grave. And a tax...and a tax that will snake down every suburban street, every day: into the mailbox in the envelope with the telephone bill, into the shopping bag every week on the supermarket docket, through the coinslot at the railway station, at the turnstile at the football or the cricket.

Hanson's speech is even more emotionally charged:

I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by taxpayer money under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia...I am fed up with being told, "this is our land." Well, where the hell do I go?

Note Hanson's repetition of the expression "*fed up,*" and her use of the emotive "*Well, where the hell do I go?*" Such emotional grandstanding holds great resonance with those that subscribe to a similar point of view.

Discourse coherence and cohesion

The three speeches use several devices to order the various parts of the texts, establish causal links, sustain topic continuity, determine relations among discourse entities, and to bridge distinct parts of discourse. As these three speeches were designed specifically for the federal election, they are highly refined, well structured, and are marked by a high level of coherency. As it has already been stated, each

speaker is heavily influenced by his/her education and economic background. Howard's speech provides us with a prime example of this.

Howard deliberately inserts the word "taxation" in the opening of his speech: *"Election campaigns are never held in a vacuum, they are not dry comparisons of neat policies, be they economic, **taxation** or otherwise..."* By doing this he establishes taxation as one of the important issues of the federal election. This serves to both prepare the audience for, and influence their views about the taxation issue: an issue that Howard refers to throughout the speech. In the next section Howard declares that leaders should *"present their values and their priorities to their fellow Australians,"* before going on to link the words of "taxation" and "priority." In the next section of the speech, he pontificates that taxation is a wonderful opportunity that the Australian people cannot afford to miss. He also praises western culture, claiming that *"we have an opportunity to leave a mark as the Australian people of the 21st Century..."* In the following three sections he paints a vivid picture of the worsening global economy and the challenges it poses to the nation, and warns of the dire consequences if the government fails to initiate tax reform. In this way, Howard attempts to generate positive support for the GST, although at this point he has still not actually mentioned the tax in his speech. Through all these words and statements, Howard is laying the foundation for the introduction of the controversial GST issue later in his speech. After the Coalition's GST policy is finally introduced, Howard then moves on to attack Labor's incompetence in economic management, implying that only the Coalition government is capable of leading Australia through the challenges posed by the new century. It is abundantly clear that all of the paragraphs in Howard's speech are linked either directly or indirectly to the central issue of the GST.

Avoidance strategy

Until now this study has concentrated on the numerous techniques and devices that comprise targeting and avoidance strategy. The focus of the study will now be directed towards the way in which the techniques of avoidance strategy are employed by the three speakers.

Never mention any negative side of self

One of the most common techniques embraced by politicians is to ignore any positive attributes found in opponents and to loudly decry their negative traits and failings, whilst simultaneously denying the existence of any flaws or negative aspects present in one's own character or set of beliefs. Australian politicians are also forever attributing failed or unpopular policies to the folly and mismanagement of their opponents, while at the same time they proudly sign their names to successful (or seemingly successful) policies. For example, in his speech Howard posits that the blame for the current economic recession can be laid entirely at the feet of the previous Labor government, while the budget surplus can apparently be attributed solely to the endeavours of his own government.

Never let any Australian forget that Labor had 13 years to provide protection against the ravages of what we now experiencing. And what did Labor leave us? Labor left us, despite all the protestations of Mr Beazley and Mr Keating, a deficit of \$10.5 billion and we turned that into a surplus a year ahead of schedule.

Labor gave the Australian people the highest interest rates since the 1930s, and in the two-and-a-half years that the Coalition has been in office we have reduced interest rates to the tune of \$320 a month for the average Australian family buying a home.

The only thing Howard neglects to mention here is that the budget surplus was achieved as a result of thousands of job losses, and massive cuts to government spending on education, health and other such key areas. Instead, he concentrates only on foregrounding the positive side of his government's economic achievements.

Beazley also makes full use of the political opportunities this technique provides.

Our opponents like to call themselves good economic managers. It is just as well they think so, because no-one else would, with annual economic growth down by 1% on average, a \$30 billion increase in foreign debt, and job creation in their first 30 months running at less than half the level achieved in Labor's last 30 years.

Here Beazley lavishes attention upon the nation's slower economic growth under the Coalition government, but completely ignores the impact that the current world economic situation has upon the national economy. Despite the education and experience of both leaders, they choose not to tell the truth, but to resort to cheap political opportunism and scapegoating.

Special categories of words

Lexical choice can be used to enforce or attenuate illocutionary force. This is because certain types of words can, for instance, activate particular presuppositions, reveal speaker attitudes, and require reader agreement for interpretation. Some special "positive governing words" ⁶⁾ as well as "name calling words" ⁷⁾ are also used in political speeches.

This study uses statistics from the speeches to show how Australian politicians use special categories of words in order to achieve thematic emphasis and topical development throughout the entire duration of the speeches. These words are used to either praise one's own party, or to attack the political enemy.

The following data come from John Howard's speech.

Table 1. Most frequently used words in John Howard's speech

<i>Word</i>	<i>Word Freq. Ranking</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
OUR	7	82	1.75
TAX	10	58	1.24
AUSTRALIA	16	37	0.79
WE	18	35	0.75
GOVERNMENT	19	33	0.70
COALITION	21	29	0.62
WILL	22	28	0.60
LABOR	30	22	0.47
AUSTRALIAN	31	20	0.43
REFORM	32	20	0.43
ECONOMIC	36	19	0.40
BUSINESS	38	18	0.38
PLAN	39	18	0.38
POLICY	40	18	0.38
INCOME	42	16	0.34
FUTURE	43	15	0.32

AUSTRALIANS	47	14	0.30
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In his speech, Howard attacks the opposition 22 times, and praises his government 62 times. He also states that his government "*will*" carry out certain plans of action on 18 occasions, and speaks of future government promises 35 times. Moreover, he calls for the Australian people to support his government's economic vision for the future 51 times. Howard also praises his government's deeds during the 30 months in which they were in office 68 times (we + government). From this table the importance of the issue of the GST also becomes patently clear. The word "*tax*" is used 72 times, the second most frequently used word in his entire speech.

The following statistics are based on Kim Beazley's speech.

Table 1. Most frequently used words in Kim Beazley's speech

<i>Word</i>	<i>Word Freq. Ranking</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
WE	1	100	6.13
WILL	14	16	0.98
BECAUSE	19	10	0.61
LISTENED	20	10	0.61
LEARNED	22	9	0.55
OUR	24	9	0.55
POLICIES	25	8	0.49
CAN	28	6	0.37
THEM	31	6	0.37
AUSTRALIAN	36	5	0.31
LAUNCH	40	5	0.31

In his speech, Beazley uses the words "*listened*" (10 times) and "*learned*" (9 times) in an effort to counter the negative image of the Labor Party as being a party out of touch with the people – an image that led to Labor's defeat in the 1996 federal election.

It is also of great interest to note that the most frequently used word in Beazley's speech is "*we*" (100 times). Howard, on the other hand, displays a preference for the word "*our*" (82 times). By using the word "*our*" Howard creates a more intimate association with the Australian people by including them in his government's plans and policies for the future.

Anaphora

One of the more interesting rhetorical devices Beazley uses is the anaphora technique, though he uses this technique in a rather different sense than classic rhetoric. In classic speech, the anaphora technique is only used within a paragraph. In Beazley's case, however, he employs the repetition of phrases throughout his whole speech. For instance, he repeats the contrite utterance "we have listened to those voices, and we have learned" 10 times in his speech. In this way, Beazley attempts to project the image of

a "born again" Labor Party which has learned from the mistakes of the past and disassociated itself with the mistakes of the previous Labor Party that had lost the 1996 federal election.

By repeatedly using the same utterances, Beazley seeks to enhance the positive impact of his speech, and at the same time to attenuate the negative effect of the old Labor Party image:

- *We got out there and we listened. We listened and we learned.*
- *The Labor Party has listened to the millions in our community.*
- *We have listened to those voices, and we have learned.*
- *We got out there and we listened.*
- *We listened and we learned.*
- *We listened and we learned. And what we have learned...*

Contrasting expressions

In numerous cases, both Howard and Beazley extensively use contrasting expressions to disparage their opponents and elevate themselves. The use of contrasting expressions is a technique used to retrieve information from the collective memories of the audience for the benefit of the speaker. The following passage from Beazley's speech provides us with an excellent example of the way in which contrasting expressions are used for political gain.

Labor's plan is for an Australia where children get the best education we can give them, and the best opportunities to get the skills they need to enjoy secure employment for life; John Howard has a plan to tax textbooks. Labor has a plan to make our health system stronger and look after all Australians when they are sick, no matter how wealthy or poor; John Howard has a plan to tax aspirin. Labor has a plan to re-invest the profits of our most successful public asset, Telstra, in building a stronger nation for the future; John Howard just wants to sell it. Labor has a plan to deliver tax relief directly to those who need it, and reward them for hard work; John Howard may have a plan to cut business taxes, but he's going to make families pay for it. And Labor's plan will deliver jobs for Australians without work, and greater job security for those in work; John Howard has a plan to tax employment services.

Conclusion

In general, Australian political discourse consists of the following features:

- It is a privileged language; only certain groups of people are allowed to use it. Access to and the performance of language are restricted and profoundly reflect social rank and privilege.
- It is comprised predominantly of slogans and propaganda, rather than statements of truth or facts. It contains many acceptable and unacceptable lies and empty promises.
- It differs from classical oratory tradition in terms of locutionary and illocutionary force, in that it merely tries to persuade rather than summon and guide the public.
- It utilises and develops classical rhetoric techniques with modern information technology such as sound, graphics, and texts to maximise its persuasive function. For example, in Australian political history including the 1972 federal parliamentary campaign, the ALP used the entire range of IT.⁸⁾ (This subject is dealt with in another article.)
- It is not oratory by nature, but is generally "read," and goes through a continual process of modification and refinement.
- It is based on logical referential algorism, and largely supported by dialectic methodology.

Because they target different sections of the Australian community, Howard, Beazley and Hanson all use a different range of strategies and techniques in their speeches, to help them achieve their political objectives. Howard's speech, for instance, is generally directed towards the upper-middle classes and business community. His style of speech is rather "abstract" or vague in terms of spoken style. Beazley,

on the other hand, targets those members of the public that belong to the middle and lower-middle classes. Accordingly, his style of speech is very different to that of Howard's. On average, his utterances are shorter, while his words are easier to understand and more expressive. This style of speech conveys stronger illocutionary force, and is more readily accepted by ordinary Australians. As for Hanson, in her speech she introduces a new style into modern Australian political discourse. She competently uses many classical rhetoric techniques including citing historical speeches, conversion technique, exaggeration, fear and logical fallacies. She uses such extreme devices to satisfy the ten per cent of disenchanted voters in the country, that mainstream governments have consistently failed to satisfy in any way.

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