INTERACTION AND PERSUASION
An analysis of the use of rhetorical devices in Gordon Brown’s speech to the Labour Party Conference, on September 25, 2006

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ABSTRACT

This essay has identified and analysed rhetorical devices in Gordon Brown’s speech delivered at the Labour Party conference on September 25, 2006. The aim of the study was to identify specific rhetorical devices which are described as interactional resources, analyse their uses and discuss possible effects that they may have when included in a political speech. The results are based on my own interpretations but are supported by information provided in current literature by analysts and researchers of rhetoric use. The result findings could probably serve as evidence of the need for better understanding of the devices used by politicians in their relentless endeavours to influence audience decisions.
# Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................. 3  
   1.1 Background .............................................................................. 3  
   1.2 Aim ....................................................................................... 4  
   1.3 Method .................................................................................. 5  

2. THE STUDY OF RHETORIC .......................................................... 8  
   2.1 Metadiscourse ....................................................................... 11  
   2.2 Rhetoric and its uses .............................................................. 12  

3. ANALYSIS  
   3.1 Ethos, Pathos, Logos ............................................................... 14  
   3.2 Person Pronouns ...................................................................... 14  
   3.3 Boosters ................................................................................ 16  
   3.4 Transitions  
   3.5 Self Mention .......................................................................... 18  
   3.6 Engagement markers .............................................................. 20  
   3.7 Three-part statements ........................................................... 23  

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ................................................. 24  

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................. 27  

APPENDICES .................................................................................. 28
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There has been a lot of media speculation since British Prime Minister, Tony Blair announced his intention to resign. Naturally this created a lot of interest, not only in Britain but all around the world. Possibly the most important speculations centred on the question of who would be the next Prime Minister of Great Britain. The man predicted as being the most likely successor to Tony Blair is Gordon Brown.

Being the Prime Minister of one of the world’s most influential countries paves the way for the examining and analysing of one’s character, political ambitions and background. Ever since Tony Blair announced his resignation, all eyes have been on Brown. Public attention, not only in Great Britain but all over the world, makes it even more important and necessary for Brown to get his intentions across through his message to a wide and varied range of readers and listeners. Millions of people started to look closely at the information available on Gordon Brown “the man”. Brown on the other hand, in accepting the challenge and stepping forward as a candidate, needed to present a picture of himself -a picture of a man who was trustworthy, confident and, probably even more importantly a picture of a man for and of the people of Great Britain.

How does Brown get his message across? Is his message more persuasive and convincing through the use of persuasive language in his particular style of political discourse? Does he provide a clear convincing argument of his political intentions, aspirations and observations? Life world, which is the term used by Norman Fairclough (2005:164) to mean everyday speech, and the usual traditional political discourse are combined to produce effective and strong results.
1.2 Aim

The language used by politicians is carefully selected to persuade and impact upon audiences. Linda Thomas et al. write that “Politicians throughout the ages have owed much of their success to their skilful use of rhetoric, whereby they attempt to persuade their audience of the validity of their views by their subtle use of elegant and persuasive language” (Thomas et al: 2004:39). How and where linguistic features are used and how they are positioned alongside other linguistic features affect how people interpret the message.

The aim of this essay is to identify, analyse and discuss some examples of rhetorical devices used in Gordon Brown’s speech to show how their choice, structure and organisation can affect the arguments of persuasion in the text. This essay will identify a number of different rhetorical devices concentrating on those devices functioning as interactional resources in one speech. How do rhetorical devices affect the message in a text? What function do these devices have in a text? Why do writers include rhetorical devices in a text? What particular devices does Brown use in his speech?

1.3 Method

Gordon Brown has been the Chancellor of the Exchequer since 1997 and has delivered many speeches during his career. These speeches have dealt with economic matters and decisions but have not always included general political issues. Therefore this paper will not include a study of any of the previous speeches made by Brown prior to media reports of his intention to run as a candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

However, Brown’s address to the Labour Party Conference is an important speech. Therefore, attempting to interpret and understand the message Brown presents
in this speech is a significant step towards increasing our awareness of some rhetorical
techniques, and their role in persuasion.

First, a brief discussion of the terms ‘ethos’, ‘pathos’ and ‘logos’ will be presented followed by an explanation of the term metadiscourse and a short discussion of the various definitions of rhetoric. The analysis of Gordon Brown’s speech will then be done and will involve the study of linguistic features such as conjunctions, modals and pronouns, to show how they function in a text and how they can be used in combination with rhetorical devices. Conjunctions, modals and pronouns in a text may appear to an audience to be simple linguistic items fulfilling basic grammatical functions; however it is the use of these features in language which help us to better understand the content of the message being delivered. Other rhetorical features studied will include boosters, transitions, self mention, engagement markers and three-part statements. These features, in combination with the other lexical items mentioned above, will be analysed to show how they function in and impact on the message in the text.

Since Brown’s speech was an oral presentation, there are many other factors which could have been considered. These include characteristics such as a low or high pitch in the speaker’s voice, head movements, facial expressions, and eye contact and so on. No one can dispute the fact that these factors are important contributions to the overall quality and impact of the speech. However, in the interest of time this paper will not comment on these features but will instead concentrate on the written text. For this study, the decision to analyse the text alone used by the speaker greatly minimises the risk of the message content being altered through the use of different reporting techniques.
Another important factor which could affect the content of a speech before it reaches the audience is the use of indirect speech. Fairclough writes that “An important variable in the representation of discourse is the degree to which boundaries are maintained between the presenting discourse and the represented discourse – between the voices of the reporter and the person reported” (1995:81). Furthermore, “Direct quotations also preserve the original wording, not, for instance, changing the tense of verbs, the person of pronouns, or ‘deictic’ words such as this and here.” (1995:81). The reporter may simply paraphrase what is said in the speech instead of providing the audience with the actual words used by the speaker. The reporter may also “transform and translate” (Fairclough 1995:81) the words to suit the style of the person or organisation reporting. Therefore, political speeches can sometimes be interpreted as being complex and fragmented messages.

In analysing a text there is a risk that the analyst, just like anyone else reading or hearing the text, can never be completely objective. Therefore it is very difficult to avoid personal interpretation when conducting a study of a text, since our background knowledge and attitudes always influence our decisions as to what information is relevant or reliable from the evidence provided in the text.

2. THE STUDY OF RHETORIC

2.1 Metadiscourse

Political discourse includes a variety of rhetorical resources. However for this essay, the features of what is termed metadiscourse are used. Metadiscourse basically represents the idea that communication is more than just our exchanging information, but also involves our personalities, attitudes and assumptions as communicators. In addition metadiscourse represents a speaker’s or writer’s attempts to guide the receiver’s
perception of a text. As we speak or write we are negotiating with others and making decisions about the effects we are having on our listeners or readers.

Two defining characteristics of communication in metadiscourse terms are *interactive* resources and *interactional* resources. Interactive resources are used to organise propositional information. Propositional information is information containing suggestions or offers. These suggestions or offers signal the speaker’s attempts to organise the arguments in a text so that they meet the reader’s understanding of the content of the suggestions. In addition these suggestions guide the reader towards the speaker’s preferred goals (Hyland: 2005:44-49). Interactional resources involve the audience in the discourse by alerting them to the speaker’s perspective towards both propositional information and the audience themselves (Hyland: 2005:3). Resources which can be classified as interactive are *transition markers*, *frame markers* and *endophoric markers* while interactional features include resources such as *boosters*, *attitude markers*, *three-part statements* and *self mention*. Examples of interactive and interactional resources are provided in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactive Resources</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Interactional Resources</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition markers:</td>
<td>And, by the way, furthermore</td>
<td>Boosters:</td>
<td>Clearly, obviously, Demonstrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame markers:</td>
<td>First, then, to summarize, I argue here</td>
<td>Attitude markers:</td>
<td>Agree, hopefully, Appropriate (Hyland:2005:52-53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endophoric markers:</td>
<td>See Figure 2, refer to the next Section (Hyland:2005:50-51)</td>
<td>Three-part statements:</td>
<td>The Good, the Bad The Ugly, Unity, Unity, Unity (Thomas et al:2004:50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Hyland (2005:63) “Since people are not persuaded until they are convinced that something is true, the rhetoric involves demonstrating how something is true or how it can be shown to be true.” Hyland specifies the three major components of
communication as the speaker, the hearer and the content or the argument (Hyland: 2005:64). A speaker has to adjust the arguments of persuasion accordingly to accommodate the differences in these three major components.

But, how does the speaker adjust the content so that the hearer can and will be persuaded? Hyland (2005:65) argues that there are three major means of persuasion which ensure response on the part of the reader. These, he writes, are ‘ethos’ which is concerned with the appeal of one’s character. ‘Pathos’ which involves “affective appeals and focuses on the characteristics of the audience rather than the speaker, considering its education level, ethnicity, gender, age, interest, background, knowledge, group membership and so on” (Hyland: 2005:65). Finally, ‘logos’ concerns the speech itself, “its arrangement, length, complexity, types of evidence and arguments and so on” in other words the appeal to reason. (Hyland: 2005:65). To better understand these three means of persuasion, a closer examination of what they involve and mean will be done in the analysis.

2.2 Rhetoric and its uses

The Oxford English Dictionary defines rhetoric as “The art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence”. Furthermore, “In the Middle Ages rhetoric was reckoned one of the seven ‘liberal arts’ being comprised with grammar and logic in the ‘trivium’ (Oxford English Dictionary. 2006). A very important part of what politicians do involves convincing audiences of the accuracy of the arguments they present in addition to their own personal conviction and ability to act upon these arguments. Therefore the definition of rhetoric as “using language so as to persuade or
influence others” is the most relevant description to be used in this study of rhetorical devices in a political speech.

Today, rhetoric use especially by politicians can be identified by “the identifiable habits of speech...which govern the linguistic structures and devices which they use to increase the impact of their ideas” (Thomas et al: 2004: 45). A writer is able to use a range of rhetorical techniques incorporated into the language used to persuade the reader. How the writer chooses to define problems, support claims, validate premises and state conclusions is crucial to whether an audience is likely to accept an argument. As Hyland points out "the logical connections used to elaborate an argument by adding, comparing, sequencing or explaining its elements are critical to a text’s overall persuasive force” (2005:75).

In the next section, some of the rhetorical devices used by Brown will be looked at, including his uses of connections between sentences, as well as certain specific words which invite reader-writer interaction by playing on readers assumed “comprehension capacities” “in addition to their understanding of related texts and need for interpretive guidance”( Hyland:2005:50). How does Brown invite reader writer interaction through his speech? Norman Fairclough writes that “a range of properties of texts is regarded as potentially ideological including features of vocabulary and metaphors, grammar, presuppositions and implicatures, politeness conventions, speech-exchange (turn-taking) systems generic structure, and style” (Fairclough:1995:2). This means that whichever words, phrases or grammatical structures that Brown chooses to include in the text content of his speech will be seen or perceived by readers as portraying his ideologies. Another very important factor for consideration by Brown must be the varying cultures of the reading or listening audience. Assumptions can be
made that speakers often portray their social structure which strengthens their positions, thus signalling what they know and how they relate to others.

Rhetorical techniques are many and varied. However for this paper, only some specific techniques have been analysed. To make the results more reliable, examples of the techniques studied are distributed throughout the entire paper. Because of the number of examples found in the text, some of these are included in the attached Appendix. These specific rhetorical techniques are highlighted using different sub-headings such as person pronouns, boosters, self mention, engagement markers and three-part statements. Examples of the above techniques found in Gordon Brown’s speech are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Ethos, Pathos, Logos

‘Ethos’ is concerned with the personal appeal of one’s character. Here, the assumption is that a writer may have a certain credibility prior to preparing or delivering a text, but Hyland continues they “must always re-establish it during the course of the discourse itself” (2005:64). Furthermore, people “do not see ‘ethos’ as a static quality or as an attribute to a person, but as the dynamic and interpretive result of the interaction between the writer and reader through the text itself” (2005:64). Examples of ‘ethos’ in Brown’s speech are shown in Table 2 below.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“And where did I learn these values?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“My father was a minister of the church”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He told me ‘you can leave your mark on the world for good or ill’.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And my mother taught my brothers and me that whatever talents we had, however small, we should use them”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t romanticise my upbringing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“But my parents were more than an influence, they were-and still are-my inspiration. The reason I am in politics”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Gordon Brown: 2006:3

Initial assumptions can be made that Brown being the persuader here uses these rhetorical devices to present his character through “ethos” or his own personal appeal. The arguments he chooses here can also be interpreted by the audience as being ‘ethically appealing’.

The next means of persuasion which Hyland proposes, ‘pathos’ involves “affective appeals and focuses on the characteristics of the audience rather than the speaker, considering its education level, ethnicity, gender, age, interest, background, knowledge, group membership and so on” (2005:65). So then, people who listen to Brown make a speech will listen to what he has to say about himself, how his dynamism is portrayed, how his text allows for interaction between himself and those listening. Another point is that of appealing to the audience with emphasis on their characteristics and knowledge.

When Brown delivers a speech, audiences can interpret the text in many different ways. Therefore, Brown must not only be concerned with the propositional content of the text, but also be aware of the audience and be able to appeal to their knowledge of the world, their emotions and their needs. Examples of ‘pathos’ in Brown’s speech can be seen in Table 3:

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Table 3

To be continued...
"And we cannot leave public services as they were, we must build them around the personal aspirations of the individual".

"And we must support Tony Blair and Margaret Beckett-and their proposals for a political and economic plan to underpin a lasting Middle East peace".

"And as Hilary Benn has said we must now make the promise of Gleneagles come alive in the right to schooling for all the world’s children, and meet the Millennium Development Goals”

Gordon Brown’s speech: 2006:2

Assumptions here are that Brown acknowledges the needs of the audience or ‘persuadee emotion’ through “pathos”. Brown uses phrases and expressions such as ‘public service’, ‘personal aspirations of the individual’ ‘right to schooling for all the world’s children’ and ‘lasting middle east peace’ with the awareness that these are topics of concern for most audiences. Trying to make sure that everyone sees the content as credible will not always be possible. However, appealing to as many as possible is the goal.

The final means mentioned above, “logos”, concerns the speech itself, “its arrangement, length, complexity, types of evidence and arguments and so on” (Hyland: 2005:65) in other words the appeal to reason. To fulfil the requirement of evaluating persuasive arguments is to look at the places where people may or may not be persuaded. Discussions below will deal with how certain sentences may allow the reader or hearer to feel that it appeals to their sense of being a part of the process or their sense of membership in the political framework.

One example of “logos” in Brown’s speech is shown in Table 4:

Table 4

| “You can buy raw materials from anywhere, You can borrow capital from anywhere, You can engage |  
| You can buy raw materials from anywhere | You can borrow capital from anywhere | You can engage |
The basic fundamental components of rhetoric have been looked at and discussed. The speakers awareness of and use of the elements of the three above-mentioned means, are important attributes for a balanced and more effective persuasive argument or statement. People use their interpretations of the speaker’s character presentation, his appeal to reason, and the given types of evidence provided to be persuaded.

### 3.1 Person pronouns

One of the most used set of pronouns noticed when reading Brown’s speech are the person pronouns, in particular third person plural, **we** and **us**. By using **we** and **us** throughout his speech, he creates an atmosphere where the reader is welcomed into the text. The reader is not only drawn in but is connected to the speaker through these inclusive pronouns. In addition Brown “claims an equality with his audience” (Hyland: 2005:71) thus creating a sense of reader-writer combination towards common goals. Brown’s credibility is also strengthened in this case. Let us look at the examples presented in Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And let <strong>us</strong> congratulate business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We</strong> must never forget that <strong>we</strong> must always be in tune with the aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I believe</strong> that <strong>we</strong> have real achievements together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only reason any of <strong>us</strong> are here is that <strong>we</strong> are in politics as servants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brown uses *we* sometimes inclusively as in “*we* will do so best” to include the reader or listener. In other instances such as “and as *we* listen to and seek…” he uses *we* exclusively. In the latter instance, Brown refers specifically to the Labour party. There are even situations where Brown uses *we* in a somewhat ambivalent way. He states that “And while *we* do not today have a written constitution it comes back to being sure about and secure in the values that matter”.

It is quite difficult to decide whether *we* here is referring to the nation, the Labour Party or both. So not only does he use *we* in rhetorically different ways in his discourse but he makes sure that all areas of political persuasion are covered through these combinations. *We* can be interpreted, on the one hand, as Brown’s attempts to place everyone under one umbrella, while on the other hand placing him in a leadership role as one who can speak for the people. Through these vague and shifting uses of *we*, he “claims the right to speak for the people as a whole” argues Fairclough (1995:181).

Brown continues in his language use with attitude markers in the form of the pronoun *us*. In one example he states:

“If you believe, like *us*, in equal opportunities in education, support my priority for the future: invest in education first.”(5) Here, Brown uses *us* as a very important strengthener to *we* thus increasing the persuasiveness in his message. He is even
claiming solidarity with his audience which creates closer speaker/audience relationships. In addition, the less frequently used inclusive third person our is included in the statement, for additional impact.

Another point of importance is that these pronouns, together with auxiliary modals appear in clauses at the beginning of the sentences. Therefore, the assumptions that are drawn here, are that Brown is someone who includes and values audience participation in the thinking and decision process. He creates a sense of togetherness with his audience through his use of rhetorical devices. Furthermore, he seems to recognise the relevance and necessity of combining the different rhetorical tools in this message to achieve his goal of convincing the audience.

Boosters

Boosters allow readers to make different choices in a text as they function as ‘sorts of modals’ This means that boosters can be described as “elements that modify the force of a statement” (Talbot: 2003:33) The speaker uses boosters while at the same time presenting views which may be conflicting to those of the audience and inviting dialogue with the audience, the speaker creates a situation where the audience feels a part of the discussion and perhaps solidarity with the speaker. In addition, Talbot writes that “boosters serve as intensifiers and are used in expressions of interest or enthusiasm.”(Talbot: 2003:33) which is one of subjectivity.

Brown uses boosters which can be statements which allow the speaker to predict conflicts and disagreements which may come from the audience and provide assurance through his message. Brown deliberately strengthens his argument by placing emphasis on mutually public concerns. This paves the way for the reader to arrive at the same resulting conclusion. Look at the following examples in Table 5
To add even more weight to the persuasiveness of his message, the uses of *booster* s are distributed throughout the entire message, portraying a confident, decisive and commanding image of the speaker. In the eyes of the reader, Brown can be seen as a forthright leader totally committed to particular views while inviting his audience to share his commitment and join in his condemnation of the negative factors in society.

Does Brown use only pronouns to increase persuasiveness in his message? No he doesn’t. The presences of modals around the pronouns are not only linguistically necessary but contribute to an even more convincing speech. One of the functions of modals or ‘structure words’ is that they contribute to that section of a sentence which is termed its ‘modality’, which means that lexical items such as *must, could,* and *will* either appeals to probability, volition or obligation in audience interpretation.

Parallel to the use of certain vocabulary is the use of other linguistic features which opens up for dialogue with the reader. In addition the reader is invited to understand, interpret and dispute. Combining different linguistic items allows a mixture of rhetorical features which signal interactional agreement. The use of the subjective
modality marker I believe in the above examples not only provides Brown with excellent self promotion opportunities, but also guides the reader towards the speaker’s view.

Transitions
Another very noticeable technique used by Brown to persuade the reader to understand, accept and agree with his viewpoint is through the use of the interactive resource feature transition. Transition denotes “how the writer intends the connections between elements of the discussion to be understood” (Hyland: 2005:76). Transitions are realised through the use of conjunctions such as (and or but). But, when analysed semantically, is restricted to linking two clauses, while and can link more than two clauses.

A very important point however is that whenever and is used as a coordinator in a sentence, the clauses should have enough content in common to justify their combination. For example Brown connects two related arguments seen in the following statements in Table 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t romanticise my upbringing” and “But my parents were more than an influence, they were-and still are my inspiration. The reason I am in politics”(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And all I believe and all I try to do comes from the values I learned from them”(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gordon Brown’s speech: 2006:3

Here and is used as a coordinator while at the same fulfilling the pragmatic requirement of each clause containing information which supports or completes the other. Clearly, but is not only functioning as a link, but erases whatever negative connotations the first part of the statement may carry. Thus the second part of the statement is perceived as providing a positive contrast to the first part.
Brown also seeks to explain some past events, justify actions taken and discuss proposals and plans for the future. Every argument, it is said, is seen to be good only from a certain point of view. The way the writer presents his argument is one step in the process of helping to create this point of view. Furthermore, transition markers such as those seen in Brown’s speech indicate “additive, causative and contrastive relations in the writer’s thinking, expressing relationships between stretches of discourse” (Hyland:2005:50).

Hyland writes further that, even though these transition markers, in this case, the conjunctions (and and but), may not contribute to ‘syntactic co-ordination’, they must fulfil the requirements of discourse, meaning that they perform a role internal to the discourse rather than the outside world, thus helping the reader interpret links between ideas. The many different ways of presenting a speech, to persuade audiences involves the careful use of words and phrases and their arrangement in order to impact on readers’ interpretation, understanding and acceptance.

3.3 Self mention

A text always contains information about the person who produced it. Brown’s text is no exception; however he goes even further to project himself through the use of first person pronouns. Some examples are presented in Table 7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve worked with Tony Blair for almost 10 years” (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My father was a minister of the church” (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t romanticise my upbringing” (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And all I believe and all I try to do comes from the values I learned from them” (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And as I grew up surrounded by books, sports, music and encouragement, I saw at school how some flourished and others denied these opportunities, fell behind” (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And is not our history the story of yes, progress through the unfulfilled talents even genius, of some but, yes, also of the wasted potential of millions for too many, their talents lost and forever unfulfilled?” (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Most of all my parents taught me that each of us should live by a moral compass” (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“...In nine years I’ve learned that these new challenges can be met only by government and people working together…” (4)

“…I’ve spent all my political life defending the unity of Great Britain against narrow nationalism” (7)

“Let me say I am proud to be Scottish and British” (7)

“When I made the bank of England independent…” (8)

Gordon Brown’s speech: 2006:1-8

There can be no doubt in the reader’s mind that Brown is present in the message. When the “frequency” of first person pronouns is noted, the revelation is that Brown provides many expressions of his own personal beliefs. The views expressed in his message when connected with him as a person strengthen the image of someone “determined”, positive and capable of leading Great Britain. A very strong example of this self-mention strategy being combined with boosters in an effective way can be seen in the following statements:

“And as I grew up surrounded by books, sports, music and encouragement, I saw at school and beyond how some flourished and others denied these opportunities, fell behind.” (Brown: 4) Further “And is not our history the story of yes, progress though the fulfilled talents even genius, of some but, yes, also of the wasted potential of millions for too many, their talents lost and forever unfulfilled?” (Brown: 4)

As mentioned above, Brown’s text makes specific use of combinations of rhetorical devices. This provides the maximum desired effect on the reader. It is entirely up to the reader to determine how much of the message is persuasive enough to illicit trust and confidence in the writer. In the above-mentioned examples Brown appeals to the assumption that “readers will experience” the discourse in the same way he does. In other words, they will recognise and share a common set of understandings that apply for everyone.

Hyland (2005:52 ) makes mention of the use of “interactional resources in texts” and writes: “Whenever a writer involves the reader in the text, the opportunity for
interaction is great. The perspectives and ideas put forward by the writer captures the attention of the readers, not only with second hand information or suppositions but even speculations about the readers themselves. Interactional resources help the speaker to guide the audience through the arguments and reasoning” presented, bringing their uncertainties to the fore and assisting in their interpretations.

Furthermore the strategy combining popular political discourse with religious information allows the speaker to portray politeness and a positive attitude. Religion is presumed by the speaker to be somewhat of a ‘common or neutral ground’ and of concern to everyone (Fairclough: 2005:54). This strategy serves to bring the audience together in unity with the speaker. Brown’s tactics are clear. He introduces the Labour party, highlights their achievements, emphasises the need to continue and invite the involvement of all sections of society. His background and upbringing are mentioned, including his personal encounters with ordinary citizens sharing ordinary everyday problems, the concerns of companies, the achievement of the government and in addition he outlines his future plans for tackling the challenges facing the country.

3.4 Engagement markers

Engagement markers provide a very important rhetorical tool in the persuasiveness of a text. The combination of vocabulary, an awareness of the audience and their knowledge of the world along with allowing audience involvement at critical points allow for the effective functioning of persuasion in the message being forwarded. Hyland points out that “readers always have the option of re-interpreting propositional information and rejecting the writers’ viewpoint, which means that writers have to anticipate and respond to potential objections to their views” (Hyland: 2005:54). Brown combines pronoun use such as my, we, you and I with obligation modals such as must, conjunctions such as
and and but to make sure that the rhetorical impact of persuasion is maximised. Some examples from his speech are: “And I make this challenge to all parties – if you believe, like us, in equal opportunities in education, support my priority for the future: invest in education first” and “And I don’t want our children to say to us: ‘You knew what needed to be done, you had the political power but you lacked the political will” (Brown: 2006: 5). “But we must also remember what for successive governments have been…” “And I believe we must now examine how elsewhere we can separate the decisions that in a democracy, elected politicians must make from the business of day to day administration” (Brown:2006: 8)

In addition the speaker may use interjections such as “you may notice” or “by the way” in addressing the audience. These can be interpreted as invitations to the audience from the speaker to participate in the argument being presented. Brown uses engagement markers such as: “And let me say that the renewal of New Labour must and will be built upon these essential truths…” (2) “And let us be clear; the renewal of New Labour will be founded on that essential truth…” Here Brown uses both the first person pronoun me and the inclusive third-person us in booster statements containing lexical items such as clear, to not only develop a relationship with the audience, but also to emphasize his personal views. Van Dijk writes that “…even if the listener or reader has understood perfectly well what we meant-semantically or pragmatically-this is half of the intent of communication. We also want him or her to accept what we say, that is believe our assertion, perform the actions requested and execute our commands” (VanDijk:1988:82).

Brown goes even further in his quest to quell any doubts the audience may have about his intentions by introducing questions at strategic points throughout his message. Examples are: “So these times challenge us to ask-what kind of society do we together
want to become? (6) “Why is it that I care so much about this idea of Britishness?” (7) Yet another strategy worth mentioning here is use of what could be interpreted as a rhetorical question in one of the examples.

The use of questions in a text in this way rhetorically positions the audience, which means the audience is drawn into the discourse even as they interpret the signals in the message and formulate eventual answers to these questions. Audience participation in the dialogue helps Brown to influence and guide the audience to the conclusions that he prefers. An even more effective rhetorical feature comes when Brown provides the response formulated in a particular way in the following example: “I believe the answer is that we the British people must be far more explicit about the common ground on which we stand, the shared values which bring us together, the habits of citizenship around which we can and must unite. Expect all who are in our country to play by our rules.” (6) This is Brown’s reply to the first question mentioned above “So these times…”. The use of obligation modals such as must greatly contributes to the meaning in the sentence. Audience obligation is challenged as Brown’s use of the obligation modal in the first clause of the sentence makes it much more difficult for the audience to ignore. The next section will look at some structural aspects and their effectiveness in Brown’s speech.

3.5 Three-part statements

According to researchers, one of the best-known structural devices in political rhetoric is the use of the ‘three-part statement’. “Audiences and speakers seem to find linguistically grouped features and especially those in threes, aesthetically pleasing.” (Thomas et al:2004: 49). Brown’s use of three-part statements is, therefore, not unusual. Some examples are: “You taught our party – you saw it right, you saw it clearly and you
saw it through – that we can’t just be for one section of society we’ve got to be for all of society.” (2) “…the need for global cooperation in the fight against terrorism, never anti-Americanism, recognising that the values of decent people everywhere are for liberty, democracy and justice not just for ourselves but for everyone…”(2) “And our economic strength has allowed us to do what no government has ever achieved so quickly: to double investment in health, in education, policing and transport. (2) “They believed in duty, responsibility, and respect for others” (3)

Assumptions about three-part statements can be many and varied. However conclusions are usually similar after analysing their function in a text. Three-part statements do not seem to have any grammatical explanations, but are often interpreted as providing clarity in the text, or as a rhetorical strategy which provides better order or structure in a text. These two interpretations are relevant when an analysis of Brown’s use of three-part statements is done, as here again he fulfils a basic fundamental requirement in the effectiveness of his appeal to the audience- that of ‘pathos’. Further arguments for the use of three-part statements could even consider the repetitive nature of the linguistic features, since repetition is, according to some researchers, a “major rhetorical strategy for producing emphasis and amplification” (Talbot: 2003:23)

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this essay was to analyse the use of some rhetorical devices in Gordon Brown’s speech which he delivered to the Labour Party conference on September 25, 2006. Tony Blair’s decision to step down as Prime Minister of Great Britain started speculations as to who would be his successor. As mentioned in this essay, Gordon Brown, the man predicted to take over after Blair, became even more interesting to audiences all over the world. His first address to the Labour Party Conference in the
capacity of Prime Minister hopeful has been analysed in this essay as it is one of the most important speeches in Brown’s attempts to gain public support. There are many different strategies which politicians use in their bid to influence audiences. The use of rhetorical features as a strategy of persuasion has been studied in this essay. This essay has suggested that, even though rhetoric use began with the ancient Greeks, its devices are still being used today and is especially prevalent in political speeches.

The analysis involved identifying rhetorical devices and discussing their role through linguistic features in sentences, and how their use affects sentence structures and what the resulting rhetorical impacts can be. The method used in this essay does allow for some amount of free interpretation as, before the analysis of the speech was done, being aware of the fact that political speeches almost always contain rhetorical devices may have affected the intensity of the interpretations of some areas of the text. Measuring the effectiveness of the use of rhetorical features or devices in a speech is a difficult process as rhetoric use allows for interaction and exchange between speaker and audience. This interaction involves speaker expectations and audience interpretations which cannot be predicted, but are available for interpretation through a study such as this. The interpretations and the resulting explanations given in this essay have been supported by studies done by many researchers and analysts in the field of rhetoric. The devices analysed do not represent all rhetorical devices identified in the essay; however this was mainly due to the limitations of the essay.

Analysing Gordon Brown’s speech revealed that each rhetorical device identified revealed the presence and combinations of even more. Their combined functions made the analysis even more interesting and complex. The analysis of Brown’s use of rhetorical devices in his speech revealed that isolated linguistic features such as we must and I believe, person pronouns, such as I, we, and us which may appear
to be performing grammatical and even aesthetic functions carry more meaning than meets the eye. In addition the essay suggests that linguistic features included in the speech were carefully selected and structured in deliberate ways to fulfil the basic fundamental and necessary requirements of effective rhetorical features.

Linguistic features used by Brown appeal to the audience through his choreographed inclusion of character or background, ‘ethos’, his audience awareness, ‘pathos’, and his presentation of logical information or evidence, ‘logos’. There are many different ways in which a political speech can be analysed. However for this essay, the focus on rhetorical devices represented only one way. Another study could involve other rhetorical devices of a more interactive nature which would involve analysing features such as frame markers and evidentials. The interactional features which were studied in this essay focused more on the audience and the speaker as participants in the interactional opportunities which became available through the speech. This choice of focus increased the possibility of the analyses being more on a community level, that is, it shows the speaker’s awareness of anticipated audience interpretations combined with the personal appeal of the speaker and also the provision of evidence in the text being presented. However some drawbacks in this essay have been the absence of an analysis of the human factors involved in the presentation of the speech, that is, direct audience responses, the tone of the speaker’s voice, body language and so on. As mentioned in the essay, these can be interpreted as being inextricably combined with the text, when a study of the overall presentation of the speech is being done. Therefore the exclusion of these human factors from the analysis done in this essay may be seen as a detriment to the results of the study.

Finally, conclusions drawn from Brown’s speech are that there is evidence of rhetorical devices included in the text. This evidence coincides with the established
devices as suggested by analysts and researchers. It is difficult to confirm whether Brown’s use of rhetorical devices is deliberate or not but the strong possibility exists that Britain’s Prime Minister hopeful is very much aware of the impact carefully selected and structured linguistic features have on an audience. The ordinary citizen may not pay close attention to the uses of person pronouns such as I, we and us, boosters such as must, engagement markers such as “And let us be clear…” and three-part statements such as “liberty, democracy and justice” in a political speech but this may be the premise on which Brown’s message was formulated.
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