Cross-cultural Stylistic Analysis of American and Arab Presidential Eulogies: A Contrastive Perspective.

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Abstract

In this paper the stylistic variations between some chosen western and Arab middle-east famous presidential eulogies of two languages and cultures are investigated. The languages in question are namely English as represented by the American memorial speeches and Arabic as represented by Arab presidential memorial speeches.

As an analytical model, Leech and Short (2007) is selected as an empirical reference of stylistic analysis where the categories to be applied on the texts under analysis are those, the relevant lexical as well as the figurative ones featuring the commemorative speeches. Frequency-based statistics are also conducted following the categories in the adopted model. The paper has come up with several conclusions, among which are: stylistic choices are highly controlled by the cultural context. In the case of American eulogies, the speeches have focus on clarity and personal legacy. It is also noted that Arabic eulogies represent a rich poetry tradition.

Keywords: Commemoration, Culture, Foregrounding, Memorial Speeches, Style

Introduction:

The analysis of values, emotions, and societal thoughts through language, particularly in the context of memorial speeches, gives a profound insight into the interaction of culture and stylistics. These speeches are famous for their emotive power as well as their ability to merge personal emotions with cultural norms, which is often shaped by rhetorical strategies along with linguistic choices.

The focus of the paper is on stylistic tools, the poetic invisible symbolism within language, as well as the universal features across Western and Middle Eastern contexts that are both timely and relevant. These elements not only mirror the hidden ideologies but also uncover how legacy and honor are celebrated by different communities of practice.

Literature review

As Leech and Short (2007, p. 11) explain, style refers to the unique way language is used in particular situations by specific individuals to create the desired impact. This concept is particularly important in formal settings like presidential commemorative speeches, where the effectiveness of the speaker's message largely depends on how they express emotions.

Key stylistic elements, such as the choice of words and use of figurative language, play a crucial role in conveying the speaker's intentions, meeting audience expectations, and reflecting the cultural context. For instance, in Middle Eastern commemorative speeches, there is often a strong emphasis on poetic imagery and collective values, which help reinforce a sense of unity and respect for tradition. These speeches typically draw on a long history of poetic expression and rhetorical techniques that highlight cultural symbols and shared experiences.

In contrast, Western speeches tend to focus on clear communication and the inclusion of personal stories or anecdotes. This style caters to a sense of individualism, where speakers aim to connect with the audience on a personal level by sharing relatable experiences. The use of straightforward language in Western speeches often aims to ensure that the message is easily understood by a broad audience, emphasizing rationality and directness. According to Leech and Short (2007, pp. 14-16), these differences in style reflect not only the speaker's objectives but also the cultural values that shape the way language is used in different parts of the world.

The term "style" is often described as the manner in which something is expressed or performed. In language, style refers to the distinct way a person uses words, structures sentences, and conveys meaning. Style encompasses everything from tone and diction to syntax and rhythm. For example, a writer's use of long, flowing sentences creates a different impression than short, choppy statements. The choice of words and their arrangement define the unique voice of an author or speaker.

Halliday (1978, p. 56) emphasizes that style is not just about linguistic choices but also reflects a speaker's social identity, cultural background, and intent. For instance, the stylistic features in a eulogy differ significantly from those in a political speech, as the former seeks to console and inspire, while the latter often aims to persuade or inform. Moreover, style is deeply influenced by the context in which language is used, whether formal or informal, written or spoken.

Style is what makes communication distinctive. It allows individuals to convey emotions, ideas, and attitudes effectively. In literature, for example, poetic styles differ greatly from prose, and each genre employs a range of stylistic techniques to achieve its desired effect. In public speaking, style can set the tone of an event—whether solemn, celebratory, or persuasive.

This comparative lens reveals how stylistic strategies adapt to cultural norms, underscoring the connection between linguistic choices and societal ideologies.

Stylistics, on the other hand, functions as a bridge between literary criticism and linguistic analysis. The tools needed to analyze how language is constructed in order to create special effects can be found in stylistics. Leech and Short (2007, pp. 23-27) state that analyzing manner of expression presupposes considering linguistic choices from a number of perspectives including pragmatics, phonology, syntax and semantics. This approach is particularly useful when studying memorial speeches which highlight the deceased virtues and evoke strong emotions through the use of stylistic devices like metaphor repetition and parallelism.

Stylistics is the scientific study of language style, focusing on how elements like vocabulary, sentence structure, and figures of speech contribute to meaning and effect. Widdowson (1992, p. 5) describes stylistics as a bridge between literature and linguistics. Literature often looks at the emotional and artistic impact of language, while linguistics focuses on its technical aspects. Stylistics merges these two perspectives, offering a way to appreciate both the creative use of language and its structural components.

By analyzing how different language elements work together, stylistics helps us understand how meaning is created and how it affects the audience. For instance, it might explore how repetition in a eulogy emphasizes central themes or how metaphors in a speech evoke emotional responses. Stylistics also identifies cultural and contextual factors that influence language use, making it a useful tool not only for literary analysis but also for studying speeches, advertisements, and everyday communication.

Crystal (1997, p. 31) explains that stylistics provides methods to examine how language varies across different settings, helping us understand why the tone of a eulogy is formal and respectful while an advertisement aims to persuade. Through stylistics, we can uncover the underlying patterns and choices in communication, allowing us to appreciate the complexity and adaptability of language.

The principles of stylistics can also be applied to non-fictional discourse such as political speeches and ceremonial addresses in addition to the study of literary works (Wales 2011 p. 121). Thus, stylistics offers an ideal perspective for examining the stylistic and societal elements of presidential commemorative speeches in the Middle East and the United States. In contrast to Western commemorative speeches which usually use simple language to convey leaders' achievements. Middle Eastern commemorative speeches are characterized by rich metaphors and intricate diction reflecting the regions literary traditions (Crystal 1997 p. 220) (Al-Rawi 2012 p. 85).

Turning to presidential commemorative speeches, they occupy a unique position at the intersection of personal remembrance and public speech. According to Lyndon B. Johnson's tribute to John F. Kennedy which lauded Kennedy`s vision for America as a beacon of liberty recall speeches in the United States often blend individual opinions with national objectives. These commemorative speeches primarily use rhetorical strategies like parallelism metaphor and allusion to unite the audience and promote collective grieving (Fairclough 2001 pp. 112-114).

At the intersection of public discourse and individual remembrance presidential commemorative speeches occupy a unique position. According to Lyndon B. John F. Johnsons eulogy. Kennedy which lauded Kennedys vision for America as a beacon of liberty recall speeches in the United States often blend individual opinions with national objectives. These commemorative speeches primarily use rhetorical devices like parallelism metaphor and allusion to encourage communal grieving and to unite the audience (Fairclough 2001 pp. 112).

While both traditions aim to honor the deceased, the visual differences reflect broader social values. In contrast Middle Eastern commemorative speeches tend to emphasize societal context and collective identity (Al-Rawi 2012 pp. 90–92) Western commemorative speeches tend to focus more on public values and individual accomplishments (Richards 1936 p. 78. These variations highlight how important it is to situate the study of modes of expression within both historical and social contexts.

A eulogy is a speech or piece of writing that pays tribute to someone who has passed away. Its primary purpose is to honor the deceased's life, achievements, and character, offering comfort to the grieving audience. Allen (1998, p. 78) describes a eulogy as "a ceremonial speech that reflects on the life and legacy of an individual, combining personal anecdotes with broader

reflections." This definition captures the dual role of eulogies—both personal and universal.

Eulogies are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions. For instance, in Western cultures, eulogies often highlight individual accomplishments and moral virtues, while in Arabic cultures, they frequently emphasize collective identity and the deceased's contributions to their community. These differences reflect broader cultural values, as noted by Bassnett (1998, p. 101).

Structurally, eulogies often blend storytelling, rhetorical devices, and emotional appeal. Metaphors, such as describing the deceased as "a guiding light," are commonly used to evoke feelings of admiration and loss. Hyperbole might be employed to emphasize their impact, while anecdotes make the speech relatable and heartfelt. Crystal and Davy (1969, p. 54) argue that the effectiveness of a eulogy lies in its ability to balance formality with personal sincerity.

A eulogy is not merely a farewell but a celebration of life. It is a unique genre of discourse that reflects the shared grief and hope of those left behind, serving as both a memorial and a source of comfort. While the tone is often solemn, eulogies can also be uplifting, inspiring the audience to honor the legacy of the deceased by continuing their values or mission.

Hypotheses

1. Western presidential commemorative speeches manipulate style like plain language and personal anecdotes as well as allusions which mirror individual identity and democratic thought while Middle Eastern presidential commemorative speeches emphasize collective identity and societal flexibility via poetic imagery like hyperbole and metaphor.

2. Western presidential commemorative speeches prioritize emotional reinforcement in order to evoke shared future aspirations while Middle Eastern presidential commemorative speeches emphasize the historical heritage of the person commemorated and use rhetoric along with intertextual references to foster pride and enduring unity.

2. Methodology

Regarding the methodological framework of analysis, the data are examined both qualitatively and quantitatively using the lexical and figurative categories model adopted by Leech and Short (2007). Only complete words are included in the lexical categories. E. Adjectives verbs and nouns are examples of figurative language whereas figures of speech are all those that have the capacity to convey connotative meaning

As for data selection, the speeches are chosen based on socio-societal reflecting power which means that the commemorative speeches chosen are chosen because they are well-known and serve as well-known representations of presidential memorials. For each of the languages being studied, five commemorative speeches have been chosen. The primary linguistic stylistic and socio-societal distinctions between Western and Middle Eastern cultures that are pertinent to the genre of commemorative speeches are sorted out by a quantitative analysis of all of them.

3.   Qualitative Analysis

3.1 Western Presidential Commemoration

Barack Obama (2018)

"John McCain believed in honesty. He believed in the honesty of our public servants and the honesty of our institutions. He saw something of himself in the Western idea, a nation that is stronger together. John was a man of contradictions: a warrior who yearned for peace, a politician who could not stand the petty cruelty of politics. He showed us that it's possible to have a public life that's not transactional. He taught us to love this country through its imperfections."

The words service honor and sacrifice which highlight shared values are used by Obama to highlight McCains patriotism. Repetition is a key component phrases like he served his country bolster McCains standing as a public servant. In addition to metaphors like a restless warrior that describe McCains character and dedication references to Western values tie his journey to the broader national narrative. The tone is hospitable and reflective promoting unity despite political differences.

Ronald Reagan (1986)

"We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them this morning as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye. They 'slipped the surly bonds of Earth' to 'touch the face of God.' We mourn seven heroes who gave their lives so others could reach for the stars. We mourn the loss of brave men and women, but we also celebrate their dedication to breaking barriers, to pushing humanity forward. They will inspire us to continue."

Reagan's eulogy which includes statements like they slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God emphasizes the astronauts' incredible bravery. Using terms like exploration courage and sacrifice demonstrates their creativity. A sense of national grief is evoked by the frequent use of inclusive pronouns like we and our. Reagan's citation of John Magee`s poem

High Flight gives the astronauts mission a poetic and spiritual touch elevating it to a universal quest for progress.

Bill Clinton (1995)

"Shalom, chaver. Yitzhak Rabin was a warrior for his nation's freedom and a martyr for his nation's peace. His memory calls out to us to continue his work, to let his sacrifice be not in vain. He stood firm in the belief that the enemies of peace must not prevail. His loss is not only Israel's but the world's. May the fragile flower of peace be nurtured by all of us who share his vision. Let us honor him by completing his mission."

By drawing a distinction between Rabin`s duties as a soldier and a mediator Clintons eulogy emphasizes his transformative journey. The phrase A warrior for freedom who became a martyr for peace sums up Rabin`s heritage quite well. Metaphors like fragile flower to describe peace emphasize the delicate nature of Rabin's efforts even as words like visionary courage and commitment show his leadership. Clintons second-person comments You are gone but your dream lives on heighten the poignancy of the homage.

Lyndon B. Johnson (1963)

"Our fallen leader embodied our nation's dreams and ideals. He lifted our eyes to the stars and showed us how to reach them. We can honor John F. Kennedy's memory by continuing his work, striving toward peace, and ensuring justice and equality for all Westerns. His torch burns on in each of us. Let this loss unite us, for in mourning, we are reminded of the path he charted, one of courage, hope, and an unyielding commitment to a better future."

By drawing a distinction between Rabin`s duties as a soldier and a mediator Clintons eulogy emphasizes his transformative journey. The phrase A warrior for freedom who became a martyr for peace sums up Rabin`s heritage quite well. While words like visionary courage and commitment show Rabin`s leadership metaphors like fragile flower to describe peace draw attention to how delicate his efforts are. Clinton`s remarks in the second person You are gone but your dream lives on add poignancy to the homage.

George W. Bush (2004)

"Ronald Reagan believed that America's best days were always ahead. He saw the shining city on a hill and brought it closer to us. He was a great communicator who spoke to our hearts and reminded us of our strength. He gave us confidence in ourselves and inspired us to believe in the power of freedom. As we say goodbye to this gentle and courageous leader, we also remember his humor, his optimism, and the hope he instilled in all of us"

Bush expresses his optimism by using phrases like a shining city on a hill and a great communicator to characterize Reagan. Word choices such as freedom hope and confidence demonstrate Reagan's prominence. Additionally, it should be mentioned that this eulogy frequently incorporates anecdotes to blend emotions and patriotism. Bush`s use of parallelism such as in He brought America hope and he brought America together exemplifies Reagans unifying legacy by striking a balance between formal dignity and emotional familiarity.

3.2 Middle Eastern Presidential Commemorations

Anwar Sadat (1970)

"لم يكن جمال عبد الناصر مجرد زعيم، بل كان تجسيداً للوحدة العربية وصوت آمال ونضالات شعبنا. كان القلب النابض لأمتنا، والنجم المرشد للأجيال. إن فقدانه يشكل جرحاً عميقاً في العالم العربي، لكن حلمه ما زال حياً فينا جميعاً. وعلينا أن نواصل مسيرته في القوة والعدالة ومقاومة الظلم. إنه خالد، وسيظل إرثه خالداً في سجلات التاريخ."

Using lengthy metaphors Sadat represents Nasser as the beating heart of Middle Eastern nationalism and a guiding star (كان القلب النابض ́ والنجم، أمتنا، المرشد ́لأجيال). Lexical selections such as eternal immortal and خالد demonstrate Nasser's enduring impact. Important phrases like unity (الوحدة) and strength (القوة) are regularly used in ways that exaggerate Nasser's leadership. The use of high rhythm and diction also clearly reflects the influence of traditional Middle Eastern rhetoric.

King Abdullah II (1999)

"كان والدي عملاقاً بين الرجال، وحصناً منيعاً ومنارة أمل لشعبه. كان أباً للأردنيين ورمزاً لوحدتنا. كان حبه لشعبه بلا حدود، وحكمته لا مثيل لها. إن إرثه محفور في رمال الزمن، وستظل رؤيته للأردن المزدهر والموحد دليلاً لنا إلى الأبد. فلنكرمه بالتمسك بقيمه ومواصلة الرحلة التي بدأها."

This eulogy which uses creative language and powerful metaphors portrays King Hussein as a fortress (حصنا منيعا) and a guiding light (منارة امل). He is a moral leader and a stabilizing force as evidenced by lexical choices like visionary (حكمته) and symbol (رمزا). His accomplishments are so potent that they are symbolically described as being etched in the sands of time (محفورا في رمال الزمن). Using rhythmic parallelism in harmony with traditional Middle Eastern rhetorical techniques heightens the emotional impact.

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (2004)

"كان الشيخ زايد أبا لأمتنا، ومهندس ازدهارنا، ورمز وحدتنا. وكشجرة نخيل شامخة، قدم الظل والقوت والقوة للجميع. ولم يعرف كرمه حدوداً، وحكمته شكلت مصير دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. وسوف نتذكر جهوده الدؤوبة في البناء والتوحيد والقيادة بعطف وتعاطف. فليكن إرثه منارة نهتدي بها ونحن نمضي قدماً معاً كشعب واحد."

Sheikh Zayed is described as the father of the nation (ابا لامتنا) and a towering palm tree (كشجرة نخيل شامخة) in this eulogy which uses honorific language and a lyrical tone to symbolize his growth-oriented and compassionate leadership. Lexical choices such as benevolence wisdom benevolence (بعطف وتعاط) and heritage (الارث) demonstrate his influence on the United Middle Eastern Emirates. Terms like unity (الوحدة) are used frequently demonstrating how important these ideas are to his leadership. Middle Eastern societal symbols serve as metaphors that link Sheikh Zayed's life to the history of the United Arab Emirates.

Jalal Talabani (1979)

"لم يكن مصطفى بارزاني مجرد زعيم للأكراد؛ بل كان روحنا وأسدنا وقوتنا التي لا تلين في مواجهة الطغيان. كان رمزاً للمقاومة وأباً لشعب يتوق إلى الحرية. لقد مهدت نضالاته وتضحياته الطريق أمام تحررنا. ورغم أن جسده يستريح، فإن روحه تنهض، وسيظل إرثه مصدر إلهام للأجيال القادمة. فالجبال تردد اسمه، وحلمه بكردستان الحرة لن يتلاشى أبداً."

Barzani is depicted in this eulogy as a lion (اسدنا) and the symbol of Kurdish resistance (رمزا للمقاومة). Word choices like freedom struggle and sacrifice (التضحية) reflect Barzani's symbolic role as a former leader of the Kurdish independence movement. Barzani's enduring influence is frequently demonstrated by the use of phrases like resistance (المقاومة). With a tone of both defiance and reverence the eulogy calls for the preservation of Barzani's memory.

Yasser Arafat's (2008)

"لم يكن محمود درويش صوت فلسطين فحسب، بل كان صوت الإنسانية التي تتوق إلى العدالة والحرية. لقد حملت كلماته ثقل آلام شعبنا وأمل تحررنا. ومن خلال شعره، بنى جسور التفاهم وحفر النضال الفلسطيني في ضمير العالم. وبينما نحزن على رحيله، دعونا نتذكر روحه التي لا تزال حية في أبياته، وهي نور هادٍ لكل من يتوقون إلى الكرامة والسلام."

In this tribute to Mahmoud Darwish evocative words and highly metaphorical language are used to highlight his many roles as a national and international icon. whereas the humanity voice is longing for justice (كان صوت الإنسانية التي تتوق إلى العدالة) enlarges his concerns to include hopes for justice and freedom worldwide the voice of humanity (صوت الانسانية) escalades him as the embodiment of his country`s identity. Building bridges of understanding (بنى جسور التفاهم) emphasizes his capacity to use art to bring people together. The phrase etched into the conscience of the world (وحفر النضال الفلسطيني في ضمير العالم) also uncovers the idea that his influence is continuous and extremely moral. His enduring inspiration is symbolized by the phrase a guiding light (نور هاد) and the eulogy`s lexical choices.

4. Quantitative analysis

4.1 The Western commemorative speeches

The stylistic features of the Western speeches are analyzed statistically in this section.

Table (1) Statistical analysis of the English data

Eulogy	Category	Freq.
Barack Obama for John McCain	Nouns	16
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	7
Ronald Reagan for Challenger	Nouns	16
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	7
Bill Clinton for Rabin	Nouns	15
	Verbs	10
	Adjectives	6
Lyndon Johnson for JFK	Nouns	17
	Verbs	8
	Adjectives	7
George W. Bush for Reagan	Nouns	15
	Verbs	10
	Adjectives	7

Table (2) Table (2) the frequencies of figures of speech in the English data

Eulogy	Figures of Speech	Frequency
Barack Obama for John McCain	Metaphor	2
	Personification	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Contrast	1
Ronald Reagan for Challenger	Metaphor	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Personification	1
	Imagery	1
	Symbolism	1
Bill Clinton for Yitzhak Rabin	Metaphor	1
	Symbolism	1
	Contrast	1
	Personification	1
Lyndon Johnson for JFK	Metaphor	1
	Imagery	1
	Symbolism	1

	Contrast	1
	Personification	1
George W. Bush for Ronald Reagan	Metaphor	1
	Imagery	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Symbolism	1

4.2 The Middle Eastern commemorative speeches

Statistical analysis is carried out here based on the relevant frequencies.

Table (3) statistical analysis of word choice in the Arabic data

Eulogy	Category	Freq.
Anwar Sadat's Eulogy for Gamal Abdel Nasser	Nouns	11
	Verbs	8
	Adjectives	7
Abdullah II's Eulogy for King Hussein	Nouns	11
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	8
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's Eulogy for Sheikh Zayed	Nouns	9
	Verbs	8
	Adjectives	7
Jalal Talabani's Eulogy for Mustafa Barzani	Nouns	11
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	6
Saddam Hussein's Eulogy for Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr	Nouns	11
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	7
Yasser Arafat's Eulogy for Mahmoud Darwish	Nouns	12
	Verbs	9
	Adjectives	7

Table (4) the frequencies of figures of speech in the Arabic data

Eulogy	Figures of Speech	Freq.
Anwar Sadat's Eulogy for Gamal Abdel Nasser	Metaphor	2
	Personification	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Symbolism	1
Abdullah II's Eulogy for King Hussein	Metaphor	1
	Symbolism	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Imagery	1
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's Eulogy for Sheikh Zayed	Metaphor	2
	Hyperbole	1
	Imagery	1
	Personification	1
Jalal Talabani's Eulogy for Mustafa Barzani	Metaphor	2
	Symbolism	1
	Personification	1

	Hyperbole	1
Yasser Arafat's Eulogy for Mahmoud Darwish	Metaphor	2
	Personification	1
	Hyperbole	1
	Imagery	1

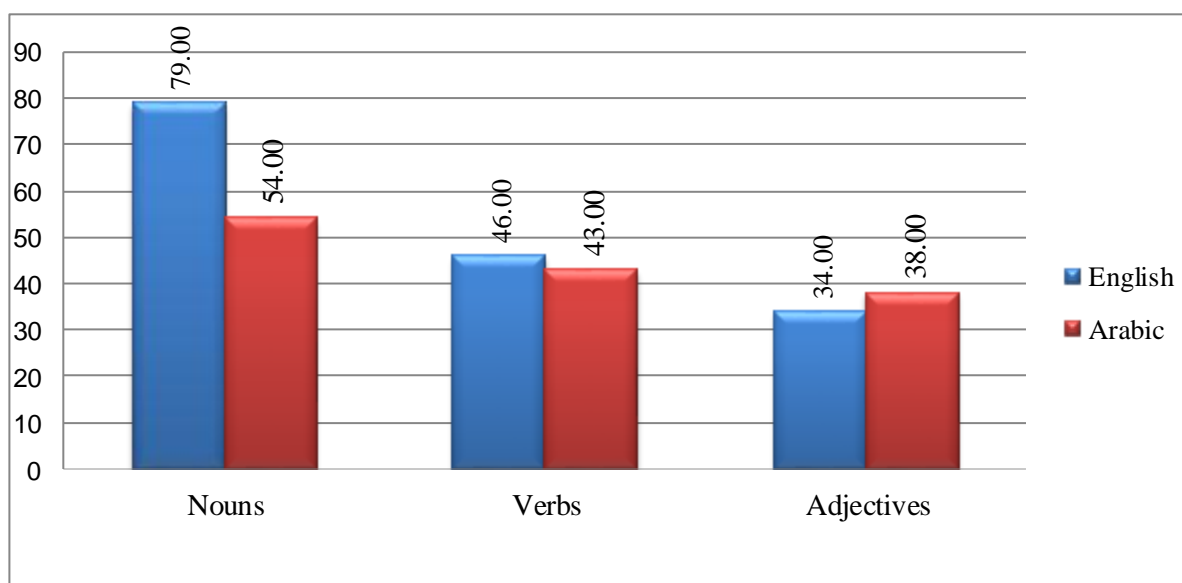**Below are the two figures illustrating the contrastive values in this research:**

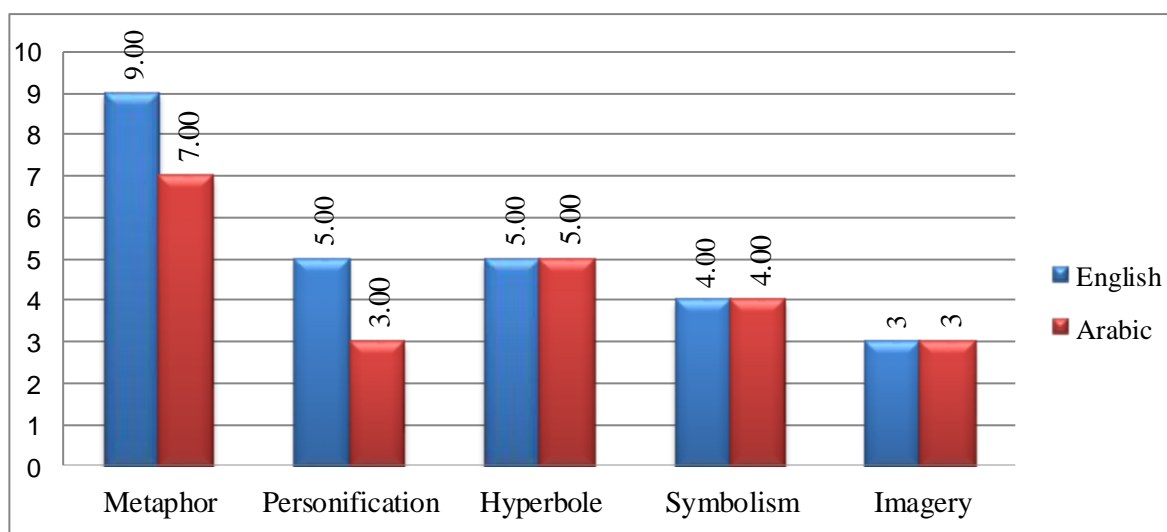**Figure (1) frequencies of American and Arab eulogies with respect to lexical choices**

Figure (2) Variation in American and Arab eulogies concerning figures of speech

Middle Eastern speeches often use emotional and poetic language, featuring words like "nation," "unity," and "martyr" to reflect shared cultural values and collective identity. This highlights their focus on connection and emotional depth. In comparison, English speeches tend to be more straightforward and personal, using terms like "courage," "vision," and "service" to emphasize moral qualities and individual achievements.

Middle Eastern speeches frequently use vivid metaphors and personifications, such as "the beating heart of our nation" or "his spirit rises," to craft powerful and moving narratives. These tools not only elevate the message but also reflect shared values. On the other hand, English speeches successfully balance emotional appeal with clarity, using phrases like "a giant among men" and "etched in the annals of history" to make their point.

This contrast shows a cultural difference: Middle Eastern speeches lean toward lyrical, symbolic storytelling, while English speeches focus more on reflection and practical themes.

Further Work

Detail any further work of future investigations that could be of interest to the reader. This is an optional section.

Acknowledgments

Here is the Acknowledgment section. This is an optional section.

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تحليل اسلوبي ثقافي للمرثيات الرئاسية الامريكية والعربية : دراسة تقابلية

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مستخلص البحث:

في هذه الدراسة يتم تقصي الاختلافات الأسلوبية بين بعض المرثيات الرئاسية الامريكية والشرق أوسطية العربية الشهيرة المختارة والممثلة للغتين وثقافتين. واللغتان المعنيتان هما اللغة الإنجليزية و تمثلها الخطب التابينية الأمريكية واللغة العربية وتمثلها الخطب التابينية الرئاسية العربية.

كنموذج تحليلي، تم اختيارليج وشورت 2007 كمرجع للتحليل الأسلوبي حيث الادوات التي سيتم تطبيقها على النصوص قيد التحليل هي تلك المعجمية ذات الصلة وكذلك المجازية التي تميز الخطب التابينية ويتم كذلك إجراء إحصاءات تعتمد على عدد مرات الاستخدام وفقًا للفئات في النموذج المعتمد. توصلت الورقة إلى عدة استنتاجات، من بينها:ان الاختيارات الأسلوبية خاضعة وبشكل دقيق للسياق الثقافي. في حالة الخطب التابينية الأمريكية، تركز تلك الخطب على الوضوح والإرث الشخصي. كما تجدر الإشارة إلى أن الخطب التابينية العربية تمثل تقليدًا غنيًا بالصورة الشعرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :الثقافة، الأسلوب، المرثيات الرئاسية، الاضهار، التابين

ملاحظة : هل البحث مستل من رسالة ماجستير او اطروحة دكتوراه ؟ نعم :   كلا : كلا