Rhetorical and Literary Analysis of Hyperbolic Expressions in Arabic Political Speeches

التحليل البلاغي والأدبي للعبارات المبالغ فيها في الخطابات السياسية العربية

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الملخص

غالبا ما تركز المناهج اللغوية لدراسة البلاغة والأساليب الأدبية بشكل كبير على استخدام اللغة لخلق تأثير أسلوبي خاص لخدمة بعض المصالح الخاصة أو العامة. ولعل هذا هو السبب في أن اللغويين يهتمون أكثر بالبحث في المجازات من المخططات لأن الوظيفة الرئيسية للغة هي نقل المعنى والشدة. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تحليل الأدوات البلاغية والأدبية للتعبيرات المبالغ فيها في الخطب السياسية العربية للفترة من (1950–2000). تتكون العينة من ستة خطابات سياسية ألقاها عبد الكريم قاسم (1959–1960) وجمال عبد الناصر (1967) وأنور السادات (1978) والملك حسين بن طلال (1978–1996).

وقد استنتجت الدراسة أن السياسيين العرب يتأثرون بالاتجاه العام للمواضيع التي يتناولونها في خطاباتهم، أي كلما تحدثوا عن الحرب أو عواقبها أو طلبوا من الناس دعم قرارهم، فإنهم يميلون عادةً إلى استخدام التعبيرات المبالغ فيها من أجل تحقيق أهدافهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية : البلاغة، المبالغة، الخطابات السياسية، الوسائل الادبية

Abstract

Linguistic approaches to the study of rhetoric and literary devices often place heavy emphasis on using language to create distinctive stylistic effect and serve some private or public interest. This is, perhaps, why linguists are more interested in the investigation of tropes than schemes for the principal function of language is to convey meaning and intention. The current study aims to analyse the rhetorical and literary tools for hyperbolic expressions in Arabic political speeches.

The sample comprises six political speeches (1950-2000) delivered by Abdul-Kareem Qasim (1959-1960), Jamal Abdul-Nasir (1967), Anwer Al-Sadat (1978), King Hussein Bin Talal (1978-1996). It has been concluded that Arabic politicians are influenced by the general tendency of topics which they tackle in their speeches, i.e., whenever they talk about war, or its consequences, or ask people to support their decision, they usually tend to use hyperbolic expressions in order to carry out their aims.

Key words : rhetoric, hyperbole, political speeches, literary devices.

1) Introduction

Hyperbole is usually defined as a form of extremity, an exaggeration that either magnifies or upscales reality. Hyperbolic expressions have traditionally been thought of as overstated simulacrums of reality.

Although the bulk of research has almost exclusively concentrated on the comprehension process, the production of figures and tropes seems at least equally important, since it may account for the existence of figuration in human communication by addressing the discourse goals fulfilled by indirect forms. Rather than focusing on the theme of comprehension, this study will concentrate on the production process and usage of hyperbolic constructions, since these fields of research have been largely ignored in the literature on the subject.

Arab linguists have paid little attention to the role of hyperbole in political discourse. They have studied hyperbole according to its role in the field of rhetoric. Needless to say, no analytical study of this linguistic phenomenon has been carried out to investigate the role and area of hyperbole within the scope of rhetorical and literary devices. This is a gap in the relevant literature that this research is hoped to bridge.

Underlying this study is an attempt to provide a general framework for describing, classifying and understanding hyperbole. It aims at exploring the ways in which this figure is used in Arabic political speeches mainly from a production viewpoint.

2) Theoretical Background

2.1 Hyperbole in Rhetoric: Definition and Classification

Hyperbole has been, since late antiquity, one of the many figures of speech discussed within the general framework of rhetoric. Since rhetoric has traditionally been associated with the production of persuasive speech (Dascal and Gross 1999: 107), it has a long history of study, going back to Aristotle, as a rhetorical figure in written texts.

Within the rhetorical historiography of hyperbole, the emphasis has been primarily laid on defining and classifying this classic trope in relation to other rhetorical figures. Defining and classifying figures of speech and thought have been among the more important tasks of rhetoricians and grammarians for more than two millennia. This explains the wide diversity of definitions and typological classifications that can be found in the literature on exaggeration.

Hyperbole has generally been regarded as a trope within the category of figures of speech (Mayoral 1994: 243). In Lausberg (1969; quoted in Arduini 2000: 86), hyperbole is found within the category of tropes or ornatus in verbis singulis (i.e. in a single word) as a trope by limit shift, but also among figures or ornatus in verbis coniunctis (i.e. in multiple words) as a figure of thought per immutationem within tropes by limit shift. Jiménez Patón (1987: 197), by contrast, does not consider hyperbole as a trope, but as a figure of amplification within the category of figures of thought.

Modern rhetoric has correctly emphasized an aspect of this trope that somehow questions the classical trend of studying figures in straightforward taxonomies, namely the compound nature of hyperbole as a trope that may co-occur with other figures .

2.2 Hyperbole in Literary Studies

Among the five components of classical rhetoric, elocution, or the artistic use of language, gradually emerged as the major focus of interest, to such an extent as to virtually become a discipline of its own. Essentially, this single division of the classical rhetoric constitutes the field that today we call stylistics (Levin 1982: 112). The literary critic, as Turner (1973: 20) has noted, has long been concerned with style and artistic creativity, so the debt of modern stylistics to rhetoric is evident and accepted as such. Dubois et al. (1970: 25) have even claimed that rhetoric is the knowledge of language procedures characteristic of literature.

Thus, literature is always referred to as the paragon of standards, being poets, and in general literary writers, the best guarantors of exemplary usage. Tropes, in particular, have traditionally been treated as poetic tools. Since literary texts gradually became accepted as the most appropriate arena for speaking figuratively, it is not surprising that nowadays figuration is almost exclusively associated with literature.

The assumption that figurative language is exclusively ornamental has a long history in literary criticism. It has long been assumed that figurative language adds a rich aesthetic dimension to speaking and writing. Hence, literary writers employ figures of speech, such as hyperbole, to achieve certain aesthetic effects. It is commonly believed that figurative usage is not conceptually useful, but meant to "beautify prosaic ideas" (Pollio et al. 1990: 142). Thus, figures of speech are generally viewed as embellishments of ordinary literal language with little cognitive value of their own (Gibbs 1994a: 4). In literary studies, the emphasis has been primarily laid on poetic or stylistic devices, as opposed to non-literal language per se. Associated with each literary genre is a distinctive set of aesthetic devices

that enhance the aesthetic effect, including figurative language (e.g. irony, metaphor, hyperbole), shifts in perspective (e.g. points of view of narrator and characters, flashbacks) as well as phonological patterns (e.g. rhyme, assonance, alliteration). The type and density of these literary items predict the extent to which texts are regarded as literary (Graesser et al. 1996: 7).

Within this framework, hyperbole primarily becomes a form of ornamentation, which lends beauty and interest to writing. Unfortunately, the idea that figurative language can be interesting or beautiful, as Pollio et al. (1977: 17) remark, has come perversely to suggest that such expression is only ornamental and that ornament is neither functional, nor useful. Yet, they admit later on that, in literary criticism, hyperbole has been examined as a technique used to compel, ornament or interest, as well as a form of creativity, as the creative expression of some idea.

3) Methodology

This study is limited to the rhetorical and literary analysis of hyperbole in six randomly selected Arabic political speeches. These speeches, delivered between 1950 and 2000, were authored by prominent political figures in the Arab world in the form of presidential addresses. The sample includes speeches by Abdul-Kareem Qasim (1959–1960), Jamal Abdul-Nasir (1967), Anwer Al-Sadat (1978), and King Hussein Bin Talal (1978–1996). These politicians were selected based on shared characteristics, which include:

These politicians were selected based on shared characteristics, which include:

1) Leaders who have been warmongers and tend to exaggerate in order to:

    a. Justify their own aggressive or defensive actions.
    b. Explain their causes to their own people.
    c. Gain support from other officials, parties, or the general public.
    d. Attack opponents within their own governments or rival factions.

2) Political figures who exaggerate to:
    a. Secure victory over other political leaders.
    b. Establish credibility and authority within their societies.
    c. Gain admiration and loyalty from their supporters.

4) Rhetorical Analysis of Hyperbole

This section is concerned with the analyses of hyperbole in terms of the rhetorical strategies followed by Arabic politicians for overstating their ideas. Classification of the following types is carried out following Al-Hsoon 2009 and Matloob 1980.

4.1 Notification (التّبليغ)

It is the hyperbole which is possible both logically and conventionally. Instances of notification are represented 11 times and stand at 9.24% out of the total types of hyperbole in the data (119), as displayed in table (10). For instance:

Example (1):

ولقد شاركت مع جمال عبد الناصر فى عملية اعادة بناء القوات المسلحة، ثم شاءت لي الاقدار ان أتحمل مسؤولية استكمال البناء، ومسؤولية القيادة العليا لها، ان القوات المسلحة المصرية قامت بمعجزة على أعلى مقياس عسكري، لقد أعطت نفسها بالكامل لواجبها، أستوعبت العصر كله تدريباً وسلاحاً، بل علماً وأقتداراً.............

I have taken part with Jamal Abdul-Nasir in the process of rebuilding our armed forces then it was destined that I should

take the responsibility of completing the task and be the supreme commander. The Egyptian armed forces have worked a miracle by all the highest military measures. They have fully dedicated themselves to duty and have fully assimilated their age by training and armament and even knowledge and omnipotence.

(Text 4)

The underlined sentence stated by Al-Sadat is an example of notification as he exaggerates the idea that the achievement of the Egyptian military troops is a miracle on the highest military scale.

4.2 Intensiveness (الإغراق)

It is the opposite of notification where the type of hyperbole is possible logically but not conventionally. The analysis has revealed 12 instances which stand at 10.08 out of the total (119). Consider the following example:

Example (2):

وكان أفراد قوتنا المسلحة نموذجا مشرفاً للانسان العربي فى كل زمان ومكان، لقد دافعوا عن حبات الرمال فى الصحراء الى أخر قطرة من دمهم، وكانوا فى الجو — وبرغم التفوق المعادى – أساطير للبذل والفداء وللاقدام ، والاندفاع الشريف الى أداء الواجب أنبل مايكون أداؤه.

The tropes of our armed forces are honourable example of Arab humans at any time and place. They have defended every grain of the desert sand with the last drops of their blood. Despite the supreme act of the enemy in space , they have been legends of giving, scarifying, and courage.

They have honest enthusiasm to carry out duty in a most honourable and possible way.

(Text 3)

Abdul-Nasir, in this example, shows his exaggerated feelings towards the bravery action done by his military troops in defending their country on grounds and in sky.

4.3. Excessive Overstatement (الغلوَ)

It is the hyperbole which is improbable practically and logically. The analysis has revealed eight instances which stand at 6.72 out of the total (119).

Example (3)

وأريد أن أقول لاخوتنا في الجبهة الشرقية انكم عاهدتم وكنتم الاوفياء للعهد، وصادقتم وكنتم الأصدقاء وقاتلتم وكنتم اشجع المقاتلين..أنكم حاربتم حرب رجال وصمدتم صمود أبطال

…..And I want to say our brothers at the Eastern front that, you have vowed and kept loyal to your promises. You offered friendship and have been true friends. You have fought (the enemy) and you have been the bravest fighters. You have fought as true men and remained firm as heroes. (Text 4)

Here, the hyperbole is not practically and logically applicable, since Al-Sadat described the bravery, faithfulness, friendship, honesty, and steadfastness of his army in an extraordinary manner.

4.4. Impossibility (الاستحالة)

Instances of impossibility occur four times making up 3.36% out of total (119) . In such type of hyperbole, writers/speakers try to use metaphoric expressions because what they want to say is virtually impossible. This use of metaphor, here, helps readers/listeners to accept the impossibility of what is actually said.

Example (4)

أن قلبى كله معكم، وأريد أن تكون قلوبكم كلها معى، وليكن الله معنا جميعاً.

My heart is with you and I want that all your hearts be with me and May God be with all of us. (Text 3)

The above mentioned example shows clearly the case of impossibility in which Abdul-Nasir stated that his heart is with them and he wishes that all the hearts of his people will be with him.

4.5. Excessiveness (التفريط)

It is the praise which seems exaggerated but it is not, excessiveness realisation of hyperbole in the data has been revealed in terms of four instances making up to 3.36 % out of the total (119).

Example (5)

وفي أطار الخطة العربية الشاملة ينبغي تنظيم كل عمل يستهدف مكافحة العدوان والنضال من أجل الحقوق الفلسطينية والقضية الفلسطينية والاهداف القومية العربية المشتركة.

Within the frame of the comprehensive Arabic plan, we should organize every action that calls for eradication of Israel aggression and striving [hard] for the rights of the people of Palestine, the Palestinian issue and the joint goals of the Arab Nation. (Text 5)

King Hussein presented his view concerning the Arab plan towards the Palestinians' issue. He overstated that, as part of the comprehensive Arabic plan, any work planned to fight aggressiveness and to strive for the sake of the Palestinians' rights should be organized.

4.6. The Occurrence of the Improbable (إيقاع الممتنع)

It has been revealed from the analysis that this type of rhetoric occurs three times and stands at 2.52%. Consider the following example:

Example (6)

لقد قدم الىّ أمر الكلية في هذه اللحظة التاريخية وثيقة مكتوبة بدماء ابناء طلبتنا الزاهرة، التي أنا أحد افرادها، قدموا هذه الوثيقة يعرضون فيها خدماتهم الى هذه البلاد ويعلنون اخلاصهم الىّ بالذات.

The commander of the college has submitted in his historical, a document written in blood of our glorious students of whom I was a member. They submitted this document to offer their services to this country and to declare their loyalty exclusively to me. (Text 1)

Abdul-Kareem Qasim exaggerated the description of the written document by all graduated officers who wrote it in their blood and declared their loyalty exclusively to him.

4.7. Metonymy (حصر الجزئي وإلحاقه بالكليّ)

It is the use of a part of an entity (name, attribute, etc.) in place of that entity. This type of rhetoric has occurred twice making up 1.68 out of the total (119)

Example (7)

أننا قمنا بالثورة ونحن من الشعب وان هذا الشعب اندمج في هذه الثورة وتأسس هذا الكيان

We have carried out the revolution and we are part of this nation. This nation has merged with this revolution and thus how this [solid] entity has been founded. (Text 2)

Here, Abdul-Kareem Qasim, as a member in the society, has praised his individual deeds in making the revolution and later made an equation of his revolution and how people joined and indulged in this action.

4.8. Repetition (التكرار)

Through the analysis of the data, the category of repetition has been mostly signified by various forms: emphasis, symmetry of statements, increasing the awaking of desire in something, desired repetition, grief and sorrow, attachment repetition, become conscious, and intimidation. All are used in 59 instances making up 49.57% out of the total occurrences of repetition in the data (119), as displayed in table (10) below. Emphasis comes with the highest frequency. Consider the following example.

Example (8)

أنني أنا المخلص اليكم ايها الجيش، أنني انا المخلص اليكم ايها الجيش وانني أنا الذي أقدم أخلاصي وولائي وخدمتي الى هذا الجيش في سبيل الله والشعب والوطن.

Oh [our] army, it is I who is loyal to you. Oh [our] army, it is I who is loyal to you. And it is I who offer my loyalty, obedience, and services to this army for the sake of [my] God, people, and country. (Text 1)

The repeated utterance shows the emphasis in which the speaker tried to present his loyalty, devotion, and services to his military institution. Table (10) is a breakdown of the frequency of repetition of the hyperbolic expressions.

Table (1) Frequency and Percentage
of Repetition of Hyperbolic Expressions

	Fr.	Pc.
Emphasis	22	37.93%
Symmetry of statements	9	15.51%
Increasing the awaking of desire in something	6	10.34%
Desired repetition	7	11.86%
Grief and sorrow	4	6.89%
Attachment repetition	2	3.48%
Become conscious	3	5.17%
Intimidation	3	5.17%
Abundance	3	5.17%
Total	**59**	**100%**

4.9. Objection (الاعتراض)

Cases of opposition in the data appeared with a frequency of nine times making up 7.56% out of the total (119). Objection is realized by different means as prayer and invocation, surplus emphasis, extravagant exaggeration, and appealing the basic sentence by another. Extravagant exaggeration comes with the highest frequency, see the following example.

Example (9):

ولقد كانت النتيجة المحققة لذلك ان قواتنا البرية التي كانت تحارب أكثر المعارك عنفاً وبسالةً في الصحراء المكشوفة، وجدت نفسها في الموقف الصعب، لأن الغطاء فوقها لم يكن كافياً أزاء تفوق جوي حاسم للقوى المعادية،بحيث أنه يمكن القول– بغير أن يكون في ذلك أي أثر للانفعال أو المبالغة– أن العدو كان يعمل بقوة جوية تزيد ثلاث مرات عن قوته العادية.

The cause behind what happened [the defeat of the land forces] was that our land forces which were fighting on of the most violent and brave battle in open desert found themselves in a very critical situation because they were not fully covered from the sky against the total supremacy of the enemy air forces to the extent that it is [quite] possible to say, without any sense of overreaction or exaggeration, that the enemy air forces were fighting three times more than their usual capacity.(Text 5)

King Hussein, in this example, elucidated his exaggerated feeling towards the fight between his army and the Israeli army. This is clearly shown by single hyperbolic words like "most", "violent" , "bravery", and "three times" in relation to what follows.

Table (2) Objection of Hyperbolic Use

Prayer and invocation	Surplus emphasis	Extravagant exaggeration	Appealing the basic sentence	Total
1	2	4	2	9
1.12%	2.22%	4.44%	2.22%	1005

4.10. Approximation of distant things for emphasis

It occurs twice and stands at 1.68% out of the total (119) . In these instances, the speaker tires to please his audience through announcing an impending event, information, etc. in an exaggerated manner to elevate their morals or warn them against something, etc. Example 49 is a typical example of such instances.

Example (10)

تنتظرنا في هذا العام احداثاً جساماً مفرحة تسر الشعب ويفرح لها الصديق ونحن لانضمر العداء لاحد.

This year great and cheerful events are awaiting to please our people. Events which please our friends. We do not have any grudge for anybody. (Text 2)

Adul-Kareem Qasim, in this extract, wants to express his overstated manner in describing the enormous pleasant events that would happen in that year.

4.11. Inclusive matters

It occurs only once making up 0.92 out of the total (119) as in the following example in which Al-Sadat overstated the need for the nation to discover itself by participation willingly in struggles and challenges that they might face them within the passage of time.

Example (11)

وكان رايي ان الامم لاتستطيع أن تكشف نفسها او جوهرها الا من خلال ممارسة الصراع وبمقدار ما يكون التحدي كبيراً بمقدار ماتكون يقظة الامة واكتشافها لقدراتها كبيرة لست انكر وجود خلافات فكرية فذلك مسار حركة التاريخ.

In my view point, nations cannot have [full] exposure of themselves or their potentials but through exercising struggle and the greater the challenges save the greater wakefulness and self-discovering of nations will be, I cannot deny that there is some ideological disagreement [among us] and this has been valid through history. (Text 4)

4.12 Rhetorical Question

It has been revealed from the analysis that this type of rhetoric occurs four times and stands at 3.36%. Consider the following example:

<div align="center">Example (12)</div>

هل ستسمر الامة العربية في مشاهدة أجزائها تتأكل .. وأطرافها تتقطع ورقعتها تنحسر وكرامتها تهان دون أن تكون قادرة على منع ذلك أو أيقافه أو على الاقا مواجهته بمحاولة جادة لمنع أنتشار المرض ومقاومته....

Will the Arab nation keep on watching its parts fading, its borders getting deprived, its land shrinking, and its dignity disregarded, without being able to stop all these, or at least fighting such a disease preventing it from spreading out?

<div align="center">

Table (3): Frequency and Percentage of Rhetorical Devices

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Fr.		Pc.
Notification	11	9.24%
Intensiveness	12	10.08%
Overstatement	9	7.56%
Impossibility	4	3.36%
Excessiveness	4	3.36%
The occurrence of the improbable	3	2.52%
Metonymy	2	1.68%
Repetition	59	49.57%
Objection	8	6.72%
Approximation of distant things	2	1.68%
Inclusive matters	1	0.92%
Rhetorical question	4	3.36%
Total	119	100%

5) Literary Analysis of Hyperbole

The literary level of hyperbole is investigated in terms of four devices: metaphor, simile, contrast, and personification. . Metaphor has 19 instances making up 79.16% out of the total (24) as in the following example:

Example (13)

وبنى السد العالي ليفرش الخضرة الخصبة على الصحراء المجدبة.......……

The High Dam has been built to set bed for verdancy and fertility to prevail in the …… (Text 3)

Example (14) Simile

……...ولا نتوقع بعد قيام الثورة أن نسير على ارض بسيطة انها نصادف كثيراً من العقبات كالتلال والوديان والوهادأواننا سوف نذللها بصبر وحكمة وسوف لانتعدي على أحد.

We do not expect, after revolution, to walk on a plain ground, but face serious obstacles like mountain and valleys and we will illuminate them by patience and wisdom, and we will not assault anybody. (Text 2)

Example (15) Contrast

لقد تعودنا معاً فى أوقات النصر وفى أوقات المحنة.. فى الساعات الحلوة وفى الساعات المرة؛ أن نجلس معا وأن نتحدث بقلوب مفتوحة، وأن نتصارح بالحقائق، مؤمنين أنه من هذا الطريق وحده نستطيع دائماً أن نجد اتجاهنا السليم، مهما كانت الظروف عصيبة، ومهما كان الضوء خافتاً.

We have been accustomed, during both victory and hard times, in sorrow and joy, to sit and speak frankly to each other with our heart open displaying all facts, believing it is the only way through which we can find the straight path, no matters how the circumstances are hard, and no matter how the light was weak.

Example (16) Personification

ذلك الغرور وتلك الحماقة اللتين تمادى فيهما عدوناأليس فقط خلال السنوات الست الاخيرة. بل خلال السنوات الخمس والعشرينأي منذ قامت الدولة الصهيونية باغتصاب فلسطين....

This arrogance and foolishness which have been exaggerated by our enemy not in the last six years, but since last twenty years, i.e., since the Zionist regime has usurped Palestine.

Table (4): Frequency and Percentage of Literary Devices

	Metaphor	Simile	Contrast	Personification	Total
Fr.	19	2	1	2	24
|Pc.	79.16%	8.13%	4.16%	8.13%	100%

6) Conclusions

It has been concluded that literary and rhetorical devices are widely used by Arabic politicians. The rhetorical part of hyperbole consists of twelve devices which vary in use in the Arabic political speeches. The most frequent use is realized in terms of repetition which has 59 instances out of (119) which is considered to be an effective distinctive feature in the Arabic political discourse. While for the literary level, four types have been distinguished namely; metaphor, simile, contrast, and

personification. Arabic politicians show a great interest in the use of metaphor in their speeches. Arabic politicians are influenced by the general tendency of topics which they tackle in their speeches, i.e., whenever they talk about war, or its consequences, or ask people to support their decision, they usually tend to use hyperbolic expressions in order to carry out their aims. Arabic politicians vary in preference for the use of hyperbole. This variation is maintained on the bases of interlingual and intralingual levels of analysis, where the former presents the variation of using hyperbolic expressions in Arabic political speeches. The later presents the variation in the choice of the type of hyperbole to suit the pragma-rhetoric purposes.

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Appendix : Political Speeches

- Text 1 President Abdul Karim Qasim's speech in 1959 at the graduation of the Military College officers' course.
- Text 2 Speech of President Abdul Karim Qasim in 1960 on the anniversary of the death of the poet Ma'ruf al-Rusafi
- Text 3 President Gamal Abdel Nasser's speech 3/7/1967 (resignation speech)
- Text 4 President Sadat's speech at the opening of the extraordinary session of the People's Assembly on October 16, 1973
- Text 5 King Hussein's speech to the people regarding the Israeli attack on southern Lebanon. March 18, 1978
- Text 6 Speech by Hussein bin Talal at the opening of the fourth regular session of the 12th Jordanian Parliament, November 19, 1996