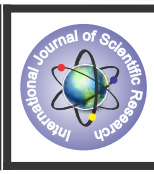
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Stylistic and linguistic Analysis of Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam's Speech Teachers Should be the Role Models



English

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of speeches by researchers is not a common trend in India. Though reactions, comments and responses by the listeners to the speeches come frequently but there is a dearth of detailed analysis of the speeches of famous orators of our country. The people like Dr. Shashi Tharoor, N. R. Narayan Murthy, Mahatma Gandhi, J. L. Nehru, Swami Vivekanand, Swami Sukhbodhanand, Chetan Bhagat etc. have been famous internationally for their oratory skills yet there is lesser and lesser work found on their speeches regarding stylistic and linguistic analysis. Rare work has been done in the field of analysis of speeches by such great orators of India. Present study is an effort to analyse a speech which Dr. Abdul Kalam delivered on teacher's day i.e. 5th September 2003. Though this speech was addressed particularly to the teachers yet it is of great importance for the students and other listeners for its inspirational tone, for propagating moral values and for dedicating oneself to the work. Moreover comprehension exercises have been developed for the students of graduate and undergraduate level to make them understand the worth of speech in comparison to that of a stanza or a passage.

Introduction

The stylistic analysis of a speech reveals the style of an orator in delivering the speech, in its content matter, structure of speech, figures of speech used and other literary elements while linguistic analysis reveals the language usage, lexical and grammatical elements of language and finding figures of speech. The stylistic features of one speech differ from that of the other. They are not introduced by a speaker deliberately; rather they are a matter of appropriateness. Such elements of different speeches can be evaluated through a comparison and contrast with other aspects of analysis as said by Vachek, "no element of language can be duly evaluated unless its relations to the other elements of the same language can be taken into account." (Vachek 1976: 177)

The stylistic and linguistic analysis of present speech in the present paper is based on M. A. K. Halliday's theory and principles of 'Systemic Functional Linguistics' where 'Systemic' refers to the view of language as "a network of systems or interrelated sets of options for making meaning", 'Functional' refers to Halliday's perception that "language is as it is because of what it has evolved to do." (Halliday 1971: 334) Halliday, much influenced by the work of Saussure, J.R. Firth, and Benjamin Lee Whorf etc. concluded that language is metafunctionally organized. He refers to the functions of language as metafunctions upon which this analysis is based i.e. ideational, interpersonal and textual functions.

A man of letters Dr. Kalam weaves a common theme of learning moral values and educating the people through his own experiences in this speech. A detailed analysis of speech finds the use of a number of pithy and impressive sentences which elevate the height of the speech. Many of these sentences have become universal such as, "To succeed in your mission, you must have single minded devotion to your goal." Similarly, Steve Jobs also speaks in the same tone with the same type of thematic similarity where individual expressions of Steve Jobs come out as universal sayings. As in case of Dr. Kalam, Jobs' pithy sentences also attain universal heights even when they are read out of context. While addressing the students of Stanford University Jobs utters the words strongly "your work is going to fill a large part of life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work", also he says "keep looking until you find it. Don't settle."(Steve Jobs 2005) Not only have this seemingly universal truths also run throughout the speech. Through his personal examples Kalam touches the height of universal teachings.

DISCUSSION:

In the very opening of the speech Abdul Kalam uses rhetoric and persuasive style by recalling about three teachers who helped him in shaping his life. First of all he gives due respect to the great educationist Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan by quoting his line, "Teachers should be the best minds in the country." Not only to Radhakrishnan but to all the teachers he gives due credit by saying "the teachers lay the foundation for creating enlightened citizens for the nation." (Dr. Kalam 106). In a narrative style he tells that his father was elected as Panchayat Board president. His father had never beaten him. But one day he got a thorough beating for accepting a gift in the name of his father. His father advised him quoting an Islamic, heditch "when the almighty appoints a person to a position, he takes care of his provision. If a person takes anything beyond that, it is an illegal gain." (Quote from Quran quoted in Kalam) Then Kalam himself said that the words used by his father regarding the gift – "A gift is always accompanied by some purpose and a gift is a dangerous thing. It is like touching a snake and getting the poison in turn." Kalam feels that this incident taught him a very valuable lesson in his life. Lastly he quotes a line from Manu Smriti regarding gifts that "by accepting gifts the divine light in the person gets extinguished." He gives the crux of what is said about gifts in Manu Smriti that by accepting gifts we have to feel obliged and do the things which, otherwise are not permitted according to law.

Kalam's advice is universal particularly to the young ones; he says "do not be carried away by any gift which comes with a purpose and through which one loses his personality greatly." By asking questions he suggests that we must follow the practice of not accepting the gift.

In the second story Dr. Kalam tells about his teacher who became a role model for him. His approach of teaching the children could never vanish from his brain. The practical scene of birds' flight left a permanent impression upon his mind and that was the turning point for Dr. Kalam in choosing a career for himself. One incident of visual life example shaped Kalam's profession. He says, "that one incident of my teacher teaching the lesson, showing the visual live example proved to be a turning point in my life which eventually shaped my profession."(Dr. Kalam 108).

In the third story Dr. Kalam talks of the help that he sought for clearing his doubts about contra rotation propellers and he got this help from professor Dhawan a senior scientist from ISRO. This is an example for the teachers to maintain such a good relation between the teacher and the taught. Devotion to work from prof. Dhawan inspired Dr. Kalam a lot. As a result he was able to achieve his goal and got the title "missile man."

These three stories account for the learning from experience, learning from pragmatic approach and learning from firm determination. Dr. Kalam proved himself a real leader of the country by giving such

messages in almost all of his speeches. Through their speeches at such different occasions, leaders like Kalam act as icons for the people and think philanthropically. In this speech delivered particularly for the teachers Abdul Kalam seems to "have relied on the spoken word to convince others of the benefits that arise from their leadership." (Charteris Black 2005)

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

Stylistics is an approach to the analysis of text using linguistic description. Stylistic analysis helps "to foster interpretive skills and to encourage reading between the lines of what is said" (Carter, 1996: 5). Stylistic analysis of the speech of Dr. Kalam includes the analysis of his style, the way he delivers the speech in a cohesive way, systematic utterance of three experiences one after the other, finding use of figures of speech etc. It also analyses lexical and grammatical elements used in the speech.

The stylistic analysis of the speech of Dr. Abdul Kalam finds his unique style of speaking. Usually stylistics is concerned with "the study of style in language" (Verdonk, 2002: 3). According to Verdonk "style" in language is the distinctive linguistic expression. The style of a speaker arises from his unique and individual use of words and expressions that are later interpreted by the readers. This fits to Kalam's style in the present speech taken for analysis. With the introduction of three real experiences of his life, knowingly or unknowingly Kalam has introduced a number of stylistic devices such as simile, metaphor, antithesis, alliteration, anaphora etc.

The three stories are linked to each other through cohesive elements. The coherence of the passages and the cohesive ties tell us how to fuse one idea or thought into another. The cohesion in the speech has been achieved with frequent use of cohesive devices such as coreference pronouns, adjectives, participles and conjunctions.

Modern stylistics uses the tools of formal linguistic analysis coupled with the methods of literary criticism. It is "the practice of using linguistics for the study of literature" (Simpson, 1993:3). In stylistic analysis some figures of speech have been traced from the speech with speakers' style of using other stylistic devices like persuasiveness, parallelism etc.

The simple vocabulary used in the form of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and non-finites enriches the scope of understanding the speech for the common man. All types of nouns have been used throughout the speech. A few abstract nouns such as: occasion, qualities, dream, independence, nobility, incident, status, permission, information, ability, alert, problems, solutions, opportunity, etc. reflect the moral values required in our behavior. All these words have been used with a positive wave of expressions.

Many adjectives which qualify nouns have been used in the speech to enhance the power of nouns and pronouns such as; special occasion, great educationist, best minds, great lessons, young boy, beautiful place, good human being, pleasant evening, future career, rocket engineer, live example, visionary teacher, moral qualities, entire course etc..

Many adverbs have been used throughout the speech to specify the mood of the verb as in: I was reading the lessons loudly. It is deeply embedded. He touched my shoulder lovingly, if you practice this sincerely, gratefully, reading lessons loudly etc.

Use of Anaphoric elements, as in sentence "Teacher's Day is very important for all our people, for our students and even for all the parents.....for the nation," enriches the emphatic style of the speaker. Anaphoric elements also find a place when Kalam says, "among the listeners there may be many parents, many teachers and a large number of students."

Parallelism is another style adopted by Dr. Kalam in many sentences throughout the speech. Similar type of structure has been found in many sentences such as, "I was reading the lessons…", "I was reading loud…"

Alliteration in many sentences gives rhythm to the speech as in "This lesson stands out always in my mind even when I am in my seventies". Also Kalam says, "Among the listeners, there may be many parents, many teachers and a large number of students." Another good example: "This light let it light many lamps."

Another figure of speech simile has been found in sentences such as; "a gift is like touching a snake and getting the poison in turn." Such a comparison reflects the internal abhorrence of Dr. Kalam.

Rhetoric style adds beauty to the speech as in the expressions; "How nice it was!" and "Every one of us in this planet creates a page in human history." Dr. Kalam, rhetorically introduces many questions during the speech. Very eloquently he speaks in rhetoric style of language, "My father taught me a great lesson when I was a young boy. What was that lesson?", "Where the engine is and how it is powered?", "We all understood the dynamics from this practical example. How nice it was! Our teacher was a great teacher. The three teachers in my life, what did they give me?" All these statements show a hidden answer and the answer given by Kalam himself, sometimes hidden in the text while sometimes explained by Kalam himself.

Passivisation is another style of an orator which is used to emphasize the object and to show it in action. Use of passive sentences exhibits the importance of object as in: "The bird is powered by its own life.", "The bird flying exercise given by my teacher." "His life is more influenced by the teachers."

Many sentences during the speech have been used in the form of direct narration as in; "He said, "I have brought something for him, can I keep it here?" He asked me, "What is this? Who has given that?" I told him, "Somebody came and has kept it for you", "That was the time I realized that.....", "This was the first design in my career when.....", "I was the first pilot for this hover craft."

Many simple sentences of indirect narration have been used in the speech. These sentences have been spoken in a conversational style as if Dr. Kalam is talking to someone and telling him a story, such as: "Some of my friends told me that I could approach.....", "Professor Dhawan asked me what the problem was that I wanted to discuss", "Prof. Dhawan told me that he would teach me", "Somebody opened the door, came in and asked me where my father was?", "I told him that father had gone for evening walk." Such sentences teach us the use of conversational style in a speech.

Dr. Abdul Kalam emphasizes the following phrase related to 'time' which signifies that he enjoyed doing anything for the first time. While analysing the speech a special feature of Kalam's personality can be observed that he never hesitated in breaking the ice for any of the work. That highlights his tempo of taking risk and doing the things first time. Moreover if we observe keenly the phrase 'first time' has been used 4-5 times in the speech: "That was the first time that.....", "That was the first design in my career when.....","I was the first pilot for this hover craft.....", "That was the time I realised that…", "I was at that time studying in school."

Non-finites find a good place in the speech of Dr. Kalam. Infinitives, gerunds and participles all find a place in Kalam's speech. Some infinitives have been used purposefully for the teachers and students to inspire them for taking big challenges of life e.g. "I am going to talk to you.", "We used to study under Kerosene lamps.", and "I asked the person to leave the item.", "get permission to receive the item."

Gerunds have also been found during analysis, which act as key words in a sentence such as: "Teachers lay the foundation for creating enlightened citizens.", "Teachers who helped me in shaping my life."; "I used to learn by reading aloud in my younger days."

Past participles have been used frequently during the speech. The analysis teaches the learners the use of past participle and how to differentiate between Gerund and Participle "Hovercraft design needed development of a ducted contra-rotating propeller for creating a smooth flow balancing the torques."

There are some sentences and phrases which have been repeatedly used in the speech for a good impact upon the listeners and the readers such as; the phrase 'a gift' in sentences like; "A gift is always accompanied by some purpose and a gift is a dangerous thing." This repetition expresses speaker's emphatic style so that the listeners and the readers of the speech may learn a moral lesson.

Exercises based on the speech

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

Para – (1)

I am talking……Panchayat board.

Q.1 Whom is Dr. Kalam talking to and why?

Q.2 For whom is the teacher's day very important acc. to Dr.Kalam

Q.3 Why was his father elected as Panchayat Board President?

Q.4 Change the following words into nouns: elected, narrate

Q.5 Change the following into adjectives and use them in your own sentences: president, religion.

Para – (2)

I was at……my mind.

Q.1 How did Dr. Kalam study in those days?

Q.2 Why did father give a thorough beating to Kalam?

Q.3 How did father define a gift?

Q.4 Find at least two past participles from the passage and use them in your own sentences.

Q.5 What is the moral of the passage?

Para – (3) I would like……a committed teacher.

Q.1 How does Manusmriti warn acc. to Dr. Kalam?

Q.2 What was the approach with which the teacher taught and Kalam got much impressed?

Q.3 How did the birds set Kalam's goal?

Q.4 We noticed closely and found that the birds……

Replace the underlined word from the following

a. nearly b. keenly c. side by d. finely

Q.5 Write the opposites of the following:

theoretical peasant

Para – (4)

Our teacher……my profession.

Q.1 That evening the students enjoyed

a. roaring b. boating c. knocking d. flying

Q.2 Find out the gerunds and the present participles in the given paragraph and make a separate list.

Q.3 Use the most suitable word from the passage in the blank; Human beings are ……by their thoughts.

Q.4 …….. I have reached my goal.

Q.5 Which incident shaped his life as a turning point?

Para – (5)

A student……next six weeks

Q.1 What is the opposite of ignited

a. lighted b. cool c. subdued d. submissive

Q.2 The synonym of rotating is……

a. moving b. rounding c. oscillating d. hovering

Q.3 The student must be alert to…….

a. build himself with best of qualities b. get ignited with a vision

c. both the above d. none of the above

Q.4 Aeronautics is the study of

a. aircrafts b. aeroplanes c. spacecrafts d. all

Q.5 The verb form of engineering is

Para – (6))

He was a……will sparkle.

Q.1 Prof. Dhawan told me that……

a. I was ready b. I was developing

c. both d. none

Q.2 Why did Prof. Dhawan prepare the schedule?

a. For reference b. for entire course

c. for books d. for himself

Q.3 What happened first time in Kalam's life?

a. it was the first design

b. he was the first pilot for that hovercraft

c. first launch of SLV-3

d. all the above

Q.4 Fill in the blanks with suitable words from the passage According to Dr. Kalam Nature has…….

a. good greenery b. has its own way

c. both d. none

Q.5 What are the maxims used in the passage?

Conclusion

In line with the above analysis a reader's perception is that the speech was delivered by a skillful orator. The linguistic ability of the orator makes the speech fit into the frame of the occasion on which it was delivered. After a detailed analysis it is found that this speech is not merely an expression of thoughts by telling the stories but a purposeful address to the makers and builders of the nation suggesting them how to work, how to explain, how to prepare for teaching and how to set example for others through their own examples. The use of linguistic and rhetoric devices has been highlighted for a long lasting and permanent impact of his address. The speech also reflects that the high level of education of the speaker has been helpful in bringing together various tools of persuasiveness, so that the speech has produced a desired effect. Regarding his style, Kalam adopted a very simple narrative technique which throws opportunity for the analyst to find out various elements of cohesion, figures of speech, grammatical and lexical elements.

Lastly, the exercises devised on the basis of speech paragraphs provide the learners opportunity to learn how to comprehend the paragraphs and answer the questions that follow. The practice of solving the experiences adds new style of comprehension for the learners.

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