

Neo-Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis of Rishi Sunak's First Speech as UK Prime Minister

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Abstract: *In the field of political discourse, persuasive communication is the cornerstone for leaders to shape their image and ideology. Guided by Aristotle's enduring rhetorical patterns - ethos, pathos, and logos - this paper examines the inaugural address of Lisi Sunak as a prime ministerial moment. Sunak uses ethos to enhance his credibility through professional knowledge, moral competence and ethical principles. By dealing with the aftermath of economic crises and pandemics, he uses pathos, evokes compassion and empathy, and presents rationality, applying logical reasoning to outline economically stable and pragmatic solutions. Sunak's talk shows how these patterns combine to create a persuasive speech. The introduction establishes the relevance of rhetoric, and the conclusion emphasizes the enduring importance of Aristotle's rhetorical framework in modern political communication. Sunak's presentation demonstrates that in the dynamic environment of political discourse, ancient wisdom remains indispensable to guide leaders in making meaningful connections and communicating effectively.*

Keywords: *Neo-Aristotelian rhetoric; Political speech; Persuasion*

1. Introduction

In the dynamic field of political discourse, the art of persuasion is a key tool for leaders to shape their image, spread their ideology, and gain public support. Rooted in the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, rhetorical strategies have stood the test of time as indispensable tools for effective communication [1]. Neo-Aristotelian rhetoric is a contemporary approach to rhetoric that draws inspiration from the classical works of Aristotle, particularly his *Rhetoric*. It focuses on the art of persuasive communication, emphasizing the three main components of persuasion: ethos, logos, and pathos. These three fundamental rhetorical strategies make speeches become powerful tools for wielding influence. Aristotle's modes of persuasion -- ethos, pathos, and logos -- provides a comprehensive framework by which a speaker can establish credibility, evoke emotion, and make sound arguments to engage the audience [2].

The inaugural address of a political leader is an important moment that clarifies their vision and sets the tone for their tenure. Rishi Sunak, a towering figure in contemporary British politics, seized the opportunity to set out his agenda and aspirations for his rise to prime minister. In this speech, Sunak employed the powerful tools of ethos, pathos, and logos to engage his audience, elicit emotional resonance, and provide logical insights into his governance strategy.

This paper makes a comprehensive analysis of Sunak's inaugural speech, and explains his speech from the perspective of Aristotle's rhetorical model. By delving into the strategic integration of ethos, pathos, and logos, we attempt to decipher the rhetorical complexity that underpins Sunak's speech. This exploration reveals not only the methods he uses to cultivate credibility, emotional connection, and rational persuasion, but also the broader implications of the use of classical rhetoric theory in contemporary political communication.

2. Ethos

Ethos is based on the speaker's credibility, moral competence, personal charm, expertise, or knowledge. It involves presenting a person as a trustworthy and knowledgeable one with the expertise and integrity which is needed to speak on a particular subject. Demonstrating expertise is crucial to building ethos. If the audience believes that a speaker has a deep understanding of the topic, they are

more likely to believe his opinions and arguments. This can be done by demonstrating qualifications, experience and research in the field. The speaker's reputation and status in a particular field or community also plays an important role in building ethos. If the speaker is known for his contributions, accomplishments, and integrity, his words will carry more weight. Ethos also includes presenting information in a fair and balanced manner. A speaker should stay objective and acknowledge opposing points of view, even if he ultimately disagrees with them, and show that he respects the complexity of the issue. These can boost your credibility. Ethos is closely related to moral competence. Demonstrating the speaker's commitment to ethical principles and values can enhance his credibility. This means the speaker tries to be transparent about his intentions and avoid any manipulation or deception. The purpose of ethos is to create a sense of trust and rapport between the speaker and the audience, convincing the audience that the speaker's intentions are noble and that his arguments are worth considering.

Following the 2019 general election, Sunak was promoted to Chancellor of the Exchequer. This signals not only his expertise in economic matters but also his competence to address complex financial challenges[3].

Sunak has excellent leadership skills and has contributed during difficult times. He has played a significant role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic impact and various crises. His involvement in the development and implementation of programs such as Coronavirus Job Retention and Eat Out to Help Out underscores his expertise and experience in managing complex issues, as well as his active involvement in addressing pressing national issues. This history of responsible governance enhances his credibility as a leader who understands the complex challenges facing the country.

In addition, his involvement in initiatives such as the Coronavirus Job Retention and Eat Out to Help Out demonstrates his proactive approach to mitigating the economic impact and supporting people. All of this highlights his moral competence, his responsibility, and his dedication to addressing issues that directly affect people's well-being and quality of life. Portraying Sunak as a responsive and caring leader adds to his ethos and portrays him as someone who is truly committed to the well-being of his people.

Given Sunak's previous accomplishments, responsibilities, and actions, Sunak is positioned as a reliable and knowledgeable figure with a record of responsible governance. The audience was more likely to see Sunak as a trusted leader with the expertise and integrity to tackle the multifaceted challenges he outlined in his speech. Ethos then becomes a powerful tool in building Rishi Sunak's credibility, creating a foundation of trust and rapport for the audience. This credibility, in turn, enhances the persuasiveness of his words and makes his audience more receptive to his intentions and arguments.

3. Pathos

Pathos is based on emotion. Pathos seeks to elicit emotions such as reason, sympathy, anger, joy, fear, etc. By triggering these emotions, the speaker can create a strong emotional connection with the audience, making the message more impactful. It has a persuasive effect by arousing emotions in the audience to induce them to make the judgements desired. Aristotle believes that different emotions will produce different judgments, and the speaker can predict and even control the emotions of the audience by perceiving their emotional state, and then make the speech develop in the direction he expects. The speaker must evoke the emotions of the audience, which means that the speaker needs to analyze different psychology and emotions [4]. This is the key to successful persuasion. Pathos can be very effective if used properly, especially if the speaker agrees with the audience on certain values. The purpose of pathos is to connect with the audience's emotions, values, and personal experiences in order to generate a deeper, more resonant understanding of the message being conveyed.

"Right now our country is facing a profound economic crisis. The aftermath of Covid still lingers. Putin's war in Ukraine has destabilized energy markets and supply chains the world over. Addressing the Economic Crisis and Covid Aftermath...There are always limits, more so now than ever, but I promise you this: I will bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today." By addressing audience's concerns about the economic crisis, the lingering effects of pandemics, and the global energy instability caused by war, Sunak taps into their emotions. These issues have given rise to public anxiety, uncertainty, and even fear. For the public, the most important thing is the stability and happiness of life, and their most longing is that leaders can solve these existing difficulties and improve their quality of life. Sunak's acknowledgement of these challenges demonstrates his empathy and

understanding of his audience's plight, creating a shared emotional resonance. Sunak skillfully uses emotional language to engage the audience and align their emotions with the issues he is concerned about. This emotional connection fosters a sense of relevance and trust, captures the audience's attention and empathy, enhances the persuasive power of his speech, and makes the audience more receptive to his subsequent arguments and promises.

Besides, he also uses many emotional words to elicit audience's emotions. "Profound economic crisis" creates a sense of urgency that underscores the gravity of the situation and draws the attention and sympathy of the audience. When he refers to the difficult decisions ahead, he says "difficult decisions to come," acknowledging the challenges ahead and evoking compassion and understanding from his audience. When he promises that his government won't leave future generations with unbearable debts, he refers to "your children and grandchildren." This reference to future generations inspires a mood of protection that appeals to the viewer's sense of responsibility. At the same time, the idea of avoiding passing on the burden to the next generation resonates with the audience's desire for a better future.

Indeed, Sunak's inaugural address skillfully uses a series of emotive words and phrases that elicits a strong response from the audience. Through careful choice of language, he taps into the emotions of his audience and cultivates a deep resonance throughout his speech.

The phrase "profound economic crisis" is an example of Sunak's strategic use of emotional language. The word "profound" carries inherent weight and can immediately convey the seriousness and depth of the challenge at hand. This choice of language creates an immediate sense of urgency that forces the viewer to recognize the gravity of the situation. With this statement, Sunak effectively draws attention to the dire state of the economy while evoking concern and sympathy from his audience. This approach not only catches their attention, but also underscores the need for prompt and effective action to resolve the crisis [5]. Moreover, when Sunak speaks of "difficult decisions to come," he acknowledges that there are huge obstacles ahead. By publicly acknowledging these challenges, he builds an honest relationship with his audience. The phrase "difficult decision" resonates with the audience's understanding of the complexities involved, thus eliciting empathy and understanding. This acknowledgement of upcoming difficulties also helps to humanize leadership, presenting a relevant picture of a leader who is ready to face tough choices head-on. This acknowledgement of upcoming difficulties also helps to humanize leadership, presenting a relevant picture of a leader who is ready to face tough choices head-on. This vulnerability appeals to the audience's emotions, making them more receptive to the strategies and solutions he intends to propose.

Sunak's pledge to ensure that the government does not saddle "your children and grandchildren" with insurmountable debt carries a deep emotional burden. By confronting the descendants of his audience directly, he taps into a deep-rooted instinct for conservation and stewardship. The phrase "your children and grandchildren" conjures up images of inheritance and intergenerational responsibility. This stirs up a mood of concern and underscores the seriousness of fiscal decisions, underscoring the long-term impact on the well-being of the country's future residents. Sunak's commitment, aligned with the audience's inherent desire for a prosperous and secure future, resonated deeply on an emotional level. Moreover, the concept of avoiding shifting the financial burden is consistent with the collective desire for a brighter tomorrow. Sunak skillfully channels the mood, tapping into the audience's hopes for a better future. By highlighting the government's commitment to alleviating potential hardship for future generations, he portrays his leadership as one driven by empathy, integrity and a deep understanding of the concerns of his audience.

Combining these emotional phrases, Sunak gives a vivid and relevant narrative that touches the hearts of his audience. The emotional language he uses resonates with their fears, and desires, effectively building a bridge of connection and reinforcing the impact of his message. By evoking emotions of urgency, compassion, protection, and hope, Sunak creates an emotional undercurrent that runs through the speech, further enhancing its resonance and persuasiveness.

4. Logos

Logos is based on logic, reasoning, and rationality. Logos emphasizes the use of logical arguments, facts, and inferences to make speech or writing more convincing. It depends on constructing a clear and well-organized argument. The speaker presents a series of interrelated ideas that logically lead to a conclusion that makes it easier for the audience to understand the progress of the ideas. Providing factual information, data, and statistics can add credibility to an argument. Strong evidence from

reliable sources adds weight to the speaker's claims and helps convince the audience that the information is based in reality [6]. Explaining cause and effect can help viewers understand the meaning of certain actions or decisions. This type of reasoning indicates a clear understanding of the subject and its potential consequences. A clear introduction, clear points and a strong conclusion also contribute to the coherence of the argument. A logical structure guides the audience through the presentation and helps them understand the focus of what is being done. Logos can build trust and support through sound argument and logic, thereby making the audience more receptive to the speaker's ideas or arguments.

In his first speech as British Prime Minister, Sunak effectively used logos to appeal to the audience's sense of logic, reason and pragmatism. "I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda. This will mean difficult decisions to come. But you saw me during Covid, doing everything I could, to protect people and businesses, with schemes like furlough." Sunak employs logos by outlining a clear and logical plan for his government's priorities. He made a fiscal commitment to ensure that the government does not leave future generations with too much debt that cannot be repaid. He also pledged to strengthen the UK's post-Brexit economy by increasing business investment, innovation and job creation. These decisions are pragmatic and logical, as the stability of the economy is the people's top concern, and Sunak's commitment to addressing this issue is in line with their rational expectations of effective governance. This emphasis on stability appeals to the audience's rational desire for security and a thriving economy.

Furthermore, Sunak acknowledges that the commitment may require difficult decisions to reinforce practicality and reasonableness. The recognition of the challenges shows a sound understanding of the situation, while the commitment to overcome the difficulties strengthens the prime Minister's resolve. He then backed up his case with evidence from his own actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, referring to programs such as furlough that aimed to protect both individuals and businesses. By citing these specific examples, Sunak backs up his logical arguments with real examples that resonate with the audience's understanding of his abilities.

Sunak gives a clear assessment of the country's situation and uses evidence-based logical reasoning to articulate his plans and priorities. He uses evidence-based logical reasoning to articulate his plans and priorities. By presenting a coherent and practical strategy, Sunak appeals to the audience's sense of reason and logic to make his message more convincing and persuasive. He also promises greater transparency and improvement, all of which contributed to the logical appeal of this message.

5. Conclusion

In short, Sunak's inaugural address as British Prime Minister is a powerful illustration of the power of neo-Aristotelian rhetoric in modern political discourse. By using three modes of persuasion -- ethos, pathos, and logos -- Sunak skillfully communicates the message he wants to convey. It is clear that the art of persuasion remains as important as ever in shaping public opinion and consolidating leadership. The strategic fusion of these patterns has the power to turn an ordinary speech into a compelling narrative that resonates deeply with the audience. Sunak's use of ethos makes him a credible and authoritative figure, and backs up his commitment with a history of responsible governance. The infusion of pathos triggers an emotional resonance that creates a shared sense of purpose and empathy between the leader and his constituents. His logical reasoning is rooted in reason, and he draws a practical grand blueprint for solving the nation's challenges, harnessing the power of rational argument to articulate his vision.

As the political landscape continues to evolve, speeches like Sunak's underscore the enduring relevance of classical rhetorical principles in shaping effective and impactful communication. Based on the three modes of Aristotle's rhetoric, this paper analyzes the language skills of Sunak's inaugural speech, and shows the effective application of Aristotle's rhetoric's persuasive function in political speeches, which is conducive to the in-depth understanding of Aristotle's rhetoric. A successful speech needs ethos to win the audience's trust, pathos to engage the audience's emotions, and logos to convince the audience to accept the message the speaker is trying to convey. These three elements are essential to successful speaking. Rishi Sunak's presentation clearly embodies these three elements. It shows his political speaking skills.

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