Persuasion Strategies Used in Kurdish and English Religious Speeches

Kavi Shakir Mohammed, Nyan Kamil Ghafour

College of Basic Education/ Salahaddin University, College of Education and Human Sciences/ Halabja University

kavi.muhammad@su.edu.krd, nian.ghafor@halabjauni.org

doi: 10.23918/vesal2017.a21

ABSTRACT

Oratory is an art of delivering speech; it is "the rationale and practice of persuasion public address" (Baird, 1974: 641). As a form of spoken speech or oral communication, it is immediate in its audience relationships and reactions. An oration is the delivered speeches; a type of oration common to Kurdish and English is the sermons delivered on Fridays and Sundays in mosques and churches respectively. This paper examines the persuasive strategies used in Kurdish and English religious speeches. Therefore, it investigates the persuasive side of language in speeches delivered in the field of religious oratory. It investigates the techniques mula/priest follow to apply the persuasion strategies in their sermons (Fridays and Sundays) respectively. It also investigates whether the same techniques are used to present the strategies in both languages. This is done from an Aristotelian point of view, meaning that it focuses on how religious men utilize Aristotle's three means of persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. The analysis is basically performed through personal observations guided by previous studies within the frame of Aristotelian's rhetoric. The results indicate that Mulas and Priests try to move audience mostly by: firstly; arousing the emotion of people fear mongering, evoking anger using repetitions and metaphor, secondly; showing himself a credible person by appealing to authority, and thirdly; bringing logical reasons and proofs (evidences). In short, repetition and rhetorical questions have a great role in collaborating ethos, pathos, and logos in their remarks.

Keywords: Ethos, Logos, Pathos, Persuasion, and Rhetoric.

1. INTRODUCTION

Oratory, in general, is "the art of making speech and delivering it," (Abbey, 1973: 213). It is an art cultivated for itself; it serves many fields like politics, law courts, and religion. A religious oration, generally, (a Friday/Sunday sermon in particular) expresses the fears, hopes, and attitudes of people who attractively hear or listen to it. It helps men to understand the content of their faith and how to live according to its instructions. A Friday sermon is concerned with importing knowledge to the congregation concerning religion in worship places on a fixed weekly worship day. The objective of any sermon is to meet some need of people and to present the religious point of view in connection with some current social and political affairs. The religious orator delivers his sermon with the greatest fidelity to that objective. When he comes to deliver his speech, he must be aware of the people’s needs and problems. Taking all these points into consideration, the
paper aims at exploring the three persuasive strategies proposed by Aristotle to know the extent in which these strategies are applied and observed through analyzing their speech: mula and priest.

To achieve the aim various strategies are used by the orators. Despite of the linguistic and social differences between the Kurds and the English, it is believed that the requirements of persuading human beings are similar in both languages. Moreover, in spite of the differences between Islam and Christianity, the similarity of the occasion and of the atmosphere in the mosque and the church in addition to the purpose of the orator, whether mula or priest is to influence the thought and behavior of people. This will bring certain strategies which can point to the existence of language universals in the field of religious oratory.

Here it is worth to mention that the paper is limited to studying and analyzing Fridays and Sundays sermons only not other forms of religious orations like Eid sermons in Islam, and Easter sermons in Christianity. Furthermore, the paper limits itself, in the analysis, to the three Aristotle's persuading strategies: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Kurdish and English religious sermons.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this paper, there is a focus on the persuading function of religious discourse and the kind of persuading strategies employed by orators in their speech in both Kurdish and English languages. The theoretical framework for the analysis is the Aristotelian approach. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, divided the means of persuasion into three categories: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Here, a revision of the theoretical function and the definition of the key words that make the analytic component of the paper will be made.

2.1 PERSUASION

The study of rhetoric is important in all fields of life, a part of it is religious speech. Rhetoric is defined as “an ability in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, trans. 2007: 37). It teaches people how to speak well, present ideas in a persuasive discourse and communicate their thoughts and impressions effectively. Accordingly, "Aristotle's Rhetoric points out that we all employ rhetoric, the persuasive use of language, generally in trying to demonstrate the rightness of what we want the other person to accept" (Joseph, 2006:110). This means that the power of rhetoric is using persuasive discourse to convince an audience about what is said or to draw attention to a particular part of the message.

Lakoff (1982) defines persuasion as the non-reciprocal attempt or intension of one party to change the behavior, feelings, intentions, or viewpoints of another by communicative means. Advertising, propaganda, political rhetoric, court language and religious sermons are clear examples of persuasive discourse, however, persuasion may also occur in conversation.

Similarly, Charteris- Black (2005) notes that rhetoric is the art of persuading others, therefore rhetoric and persuasion are inseparable since any definition of rhetoric necessarily includes the idea of persuasion. The essential difference between the two is that rhetoric refers to the act of communication from the hearer's perspective while persuasion refers both to speaker's intentions and to successful outcomes. Hearers are only persuaded when the speaker's rhetoric is
successful. In brief, persuasion is a very important part of influence. It is ultimately all about a result which is otherwise known as getting your audience to do what you want them to do.

2.2 ARISTOTELIAN RHETORIC

The study of rhetoric dates back through history. In Europe, as shown by Bloor and Bloor, the first description of rhetorical devices attributed to classical Greece in which there were schools of rhetoric and students were taught the art of persuasion and argument, particularly with respect to public speaking (2007). In this paper, the focus is on Aristotelian's rhetoric, though he was not the first of the Greek rhetorician but can be regarded as the most important one as it is still applicable to modern communication. He opened his own school, the Lyceum, in Athens in the year of Isocrates’ death (338 B.C). For Aristotle, rhetoric should not be a discipline simply aimed at training speakers in verbal skills; nor should rhetoric permit falsehood or distortion (Richardson, 2007:156). In its wide sense, ‘rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion’ (1355b: 27-28) cited in (Richardson, 2007: 156).

Bloor and Bloor explain that the importance of Aristotle was not only in his interest in teaching public speaking but in two other concerns: the first was to consider rhetoric as an intellectual field of study in its own right, not just as a part of a general skill of oratory and he saw it as a branch of philosophy. The second was to see rhetoric as a component of communication. This means that he was not interested in the productive aspect of rhetoric but also the receptive: the way audiences interpret discourse and the extent to which they are persuaded by stylistic devices (2007). Thus, the rhetoric described by Aristotle still seems to have great significance in the world of persuasion in the way that many people still refer to Aristotelian rhetoric when discussing and analyzing the subject of persuasion (Beard, 2000). Here, the orator has to then consider the style and arrangement of his speech. Therefore, the messenger needs enough rhetorical knowledge to be able to convince and catch the attention of the audience. The basic frame for Aristotle's view on the persuasion process is set in his three means of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos that will be explained below.

2.2.1 ETHOS

Ethos is the first mode of persuasion. It is the ethical appeal which depends on the character credibility or writer’s reliability. The word ‘ethos’ is a Greek one originally meaning ‘accustomed place’, ‘custom, habit’ equivalent to Lain mores. Ethos “forms the root of ethikos, meaning “moral, showing moral character”. To the Greeks, ancient and modern, the meaning is simply “the state of being”, the inner source, the soul, the mind” (Mountainman, 2017:2). Thus, it depends on how well the speaker convinces the audience that (s)he is qualified and knowledgeable while speaking about a specific subject.

In other words, it involves making the speaker seem credible because by doing so, it puts the speakers in a position where they can more easily persuade the audience about their case. Here, the speaker speaks to appear as a credible person by displaying a practical intelligence and a virtuous character as well. These points make the speaker to have credible suggestions. Therefore, ethos is to persuade your audience through personality and stance (Beard, 2000). For example: Commercials that try to sell a product using famous actors and models as their spoken people.
Porter (2014) states that Aristotle regarded ‘ethos’ as the most important mode of persuasion. He presented three points that contribute to ‘ethos’ as: good sense, good moral character and good will.

2.2.2 PATHOS

This is the second mode of persuasion which strongly focuses on the role that emotions play in the persuasive process. Lumen (2017) explains that ‘pathos’ draws on the emotions, sympathies, and prejudices of the audience to appeal to their non-rational side. It can be described briefly as the process of creating positive emotions and connotations by the speaker to effect on the mind of listeners (audience) (Halmari, 2004). When an orator employs this strategy, the listeners/audience are more easily persuaded, ready to accept, believe and act upon the given information. Moreover, (Mountainman, 2017:3) adds that emotional appeal can be accomplished in several ways like: metaphor, simile, storytelling, a general passion in the delivery or using emotional items in his speech. For example: telling the story of a single child who has been abused may make for a more persuasive argument than simply the number of children abused each year because it would give a human face to the numbers.

Therefore, Porter describes pathos as a way to persuade the audience by appealing to their emotions seeking to excite them or otherwise arouse their interest. For this, Aristotle suggested seven emotions and their opposites that can be used by the speaker including: anger and calmness, friendship and enmity, fear and confidence, shame and shamelessness, kindness and unkindness, pity and indignation, envy and emulation (2014). For example: advertisements that try to sell a product by increasing feelings of happiness, anger, fear ...etc.

2.2.3 LOGOS

It is the third mode of persuasion which mainly concerns with the logical appeal, or ‘the appeal to reason’. The term ‘logic’ is derived from it. This mode is usually used to describe facts and figures that support the speaker’s topic (Mountainman, 2017:3). In other words, it depends on arguments that appear to be reasonable or logical. For example: advertisements that try to sell a product by offering evidence of its quality. According to Aristotle, persuasion is mainly achieved through logical argumentation since the appeal to logic is the most effective way of persuading, and because if an argument appears to be logical, it would be illogical to oppose it (Beard, 2000).

Here, an orator can persuade his/her audience by using logical and rational explanation as well as demonstrable evidence. For this, Brett and McKay(2010) state that Aristotle believed logos to be the superior persuasive appeal and that all arguments and speeches should be won or lost on reason alone. On the other hand, he clarifies that at times an audience would not be sophisticated enough to follow arguments based solely on scientific and logical principles and so the other appeals needed to be used as well.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data for the analysis, in the paper, is based on the text of religious speeches of orators. The Kurdish speech was entitled “Teacher’s Role and Duty in the Society” and was delivered by Mala Tahir Ahmad Bamoki at Omer Kuri Xatab’s Mosque in Halabja Provence- Iraqi Kurdistan on September 13th, 2013. While the English speech was entitled “Christ is our Unity”
and was delivered by Rev. Doug Martindale at Young United Church, Winnipeg, MB in Canada on June 8th, 2013.

3.1 ETHOS APPLIED

Ethos is the first mode of persuasion. When the religious man takes the stage, he will either have ethos or need to earn it. Therefore, when a speaker wishes to persuade he needs to establish credibility and authority with his audience. A man may have the most logical and well-thought-out argument but if his audience does not think that he is trustworthy or even worth listening to, all his reasoning will be for naught.

It can be said that the selected speeches are delivered with confidence, persistence, clarity and logical reasons as they are regarded as the main features which make the speeches more persuasive. In addition to the speaker’s credibility and reputation among the audience (as it can be indicated through the number of the audience that they have during the Friday and Sunday sermons). The more reputable the source of the speech, the more persuasive the argument will be. And the reputable feature is found in the speakers of both languages as they are religious men and have their own reputation among the audience. This shows that the strategy of ethos is available as it refers to character of the speaker generally, and different from other strategies as they can be applied on specific quotations said by them.

3.2 PATHOS APPLIED

This strategy is applied when the speaker tries to persuade the audience by making them not only listen but also take the next step and act in the world they live in. Pathos is applied in the selected Kurdish speech through the following techniques:

A: Repetition

(Teacher is the heir of the prophets)"ماموستا جينشين وميرانطروث ثيغةمبتراانة"

(The teacher is the first person in the region, Iraq and the world)"ماموستالياروى ياكه م لهترزم ولهعيراق ولهعالاام"

(The greatest figure in the world is the teacher, no one is greater than him, neither president nor minister or doctor.)"کسس نية لماموستا طاويرتربيت ناطرنيس نفترزيرىنادكتور"

(The teacher should know how valuable his message is and what is he asked to do in his society).

In the above three quotations, the speaker repeats what has already been said about the teachers and their duty in the society not only to make the audience remember but also to clarify his message and focus on it. This may encourage the acceptance of the idea.
B: Figurative Language

1. "ماموسنا نتوهارمیا كاكری كاكراین مومن نآوسنین وەک حک موستن نیبەرکنەنی دەوومبەرتەکە ی روکان نەکەتەکە بە توکانوکەی خۆی.

(Teacher is the one who is burning just like a candle to lighten the surrounding by melting himself.)

2. "کاس نیه لە مەزەل بەرزترینیبب کاس نیه لەسەوەنەبەرکتەب تەریبیەنە.مەکتەر خۆی ڕێبەر خۆی نەکەتەکەی خۆی.

Sooknatonبکه نینیات.

(There is one greater, or higher in position than a teacher, unless he himself doesn’t respect himself or so light that can be transferred by wind).

In the above quotations, the figurative language is used. The first example is simile as he compares a teacher with a candle, how it is burning and melting itself to lighten the surrounding. Teacher is the same as a candle who tires himself a lot for others sake. And the second one is metaphor as he talks about the real weight of the teacher but his personality and reputation among people.

C: Story Telling

1. "ماموسناتەک وەک لەکەرتیزیکی زەستەن دا سەرد بەبەرمی کەرد وەک دەوام نیه وەک فوتوکاتەکەی زەستەنە بەبەریکەی زەستەنەیبین.کەوتووەکەی دەوام بەدەوە نەکەتەکەی خۆم وەکیروە دەوام بەدەوە دەوام.مەکتەر خۆییەکە ناو قەریبیا لەکەویویزیۆنیزیکی وەک "بۆلا ەکتەر".

(The main idea of this story is that once a student came to school and it was holiday and a snowing day. The student felt cold and the teacher took him home and made him felt worm and returned him to his home. Now that student is a doctor and sends me messages full of sense and love.)

2. "کەسکاکەی لەکەردەبەریکی بەڵە کەردەبەریکی زەستەن دا لەسەوەنەبەرکتەب ی دەوام نیه وەک فوتوکاتەکەی زەستەنە وەک دەوام نیه وەک فوتوکاتەکەی زەستەنە بەبەریکەی زەستەنەیبین.کەوتووەکەی دەوام بەدەوە نەکەتەکەی خۆم وەکیروە دەوام بەدەوە دەوام.مەکتەر خۆییەکە ناو قەریبیا لەکەویویزیۆنیزیکی وەک "بۆلا ەکتەر".

(My daughter was in the second class of primary stage, once she returned and was crying. I told her why; she said one of our teachers says bad words to the students that cannot be used anywhere.)

3. "زەمتەنە حەکمەتەکەی سەلێنگە 83ماموسناتەک بەتەلەبیاکەیاتەکەی وت دەنیشی تەوە وێنەیەکەوتوو وەکو وەک "بۆئەتەبەریکی وەک

نەرەبیتەبب بەتەلەبیاتەکی وەک "بۆئەتەبەریکی وەک (in 1983 at the time of regime a teacher told a student ‘sit’ but the student got angry and said to the teacher ‘I would shoot you’.)

In these quotations the speaker narrates stories so as to take the audience on a journey, leaving them feeling inspired and motivated so as to pay attention to the speech because stories
lead the audience follow every single word till they get the result. Stories also strengthen the speech as they support what you have said.

D: Appeal to Authority

1. “نَبِيُّ ثَلَاثِي مَامَوْسَتَا بَتَرُزَكِينَقُوِةَ بَمَعَاشِي، بِتَارَرَنْةَ دَخْفُوُدِي، بِخَوْشِ تُوُزْرُانِي، بِتَرِيْزِلِثْرِنِ.”
   (Teachers should be given a high rank and position by sending them abroad and giving the best salary and media should keep the name of teacher high.)

2. “دَثْرَكَرَنْي يَا بُو مَامَوْسَتَا كِتَابَ ثَيَيُ نَقَلِيْنِ (حَصَائِقَ دِبْلُومَاسِ) مَامَوْسَاتَا خَانِتِخَرْتِي لِي نَقْرِيْتِ.
   (There should be diplomatic immunity rule for teachers, they should not be injured and attacked.)

Here, the speaker appeals to authority as he asks for the rights of teachers and the authority has to do for the teachers as providing diplomatic immunity.

E: Salutation

"إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ، نَحْمَدُه وَنَسْتغِفِرُه وَنَسْتَعِينُه وَنَسْتَهْدِه وَنَعْوَدُ بِلِلَّهِ ﻟَا مَضِلَّ لَهُ وَلَا يُضِلُّ ﻟَهُ إِلَّا قَدْ نَشَأَ ﻟِهِ ﻟَهُ "
   (There should be a starting point and greeting in the Friday sermon through the use of some Qur’anic verses or prays with showing respect to the prophet and the audience also. This is general and used by all the Mulas to affect on the emotion of the audience and attract their attention to the speech.)

F: Closing Statement

"أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهِ لَيْ وَلَكَ وَلِسَائِرِ المُسْلِمِينَ، رَبِّي أَتَانَا مِنْ لَكِنَّ رَحْمَتَكَ وَفَاتِيْنَا مِنْ أَفْرَنَا رَضِيْناً، آمِينَ.
   (This is the closing statements in a form of pray where the speaker asks God mercy, forgiveness, and a haven in the other world for himself and all Muslims all over the world.

In the English speech, ‘pathos’ is applied through the following techniques:

A: Rhetorical Question

1- “So what does the CCC do anyway?”
2- “How do we, as a Christian community, understand and respond to the issues of genetic technologies? When Faith is Genetics Meet is a curriculum that considers the opportunities and risks of genetic sciences.”
3- “Why would we do this? Because Canadian churches are long time advocates for human rights and peace building and play a leading role in the resettlement of refugees in Canada.”

In the above quotations, the speaker uses rhetorical questions, questions that are asked without expecting an answer, it might be the one that does not have an answer or have an obvious answer,
they are asked as persuasive devices to make a point to persuade the audience and to appeal their emotion.

**B: Repetition**

1. “We cooperate because "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all".

   It is the repetition of what is said to describe that there is one Lord, one Faith, and one God. Here the purpose is to emphasize on the significance of how Great and Faithful God is to arouse the audiences’ emotion and make them follow what he is going to say.

**C: Appeal to Authority**

1. “We have some homeless people on our streets because the federal and provincial governments are not doing enough to combat homelessness or poverty. The federal government has no national housing strategy and the provincial government has provided only minimal increases in rent of allowances for people on welfare since taking office in 1999. There is also a lack of supports of people with mental health problems, which affects the majority of people who are homeless.”

   2- “If we changed our priorities as a nation and diverted money from defense procurement into productive uses, we could put a lot of people into social housing and provide supports for them.”

   These are two examples of appealing to authority. Since a religious person has the position in the society to criticize and suggest solutions for the problems that arouse, as he does for the homeless people like putting a lot of people into social housing and providing supports for them.

**D: Figurative Language**

1. “Walls that divide have been broken down, because Christ is our unity. "the truth we seek" as the CCC "unites us in a common quest for self and world made new". Walls that divide have been broken down, because "Christ is our unity". Amen.

   The speaker clarifies how the walls broken down. Here, the figurative language is used as he symbolizes ‘Christ’ as a symbol of ‘Unity’ and ‘walls’ to indicate difficulties and separation.

**E: Salutation**

1. “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all”.

   This is the starting points where the speaker begins the speech.

**3.3 LOGOS APPLIED**

   This strategy is applied in different ways to describe facts and figures that support the speaker’s topic.

   The techniques used in the Kurdish selected speech are:

**A: Qur’anic Verses**

1. "وقل ربي زدنى علمًا" (And say oh my Lord, increase my knowledge.)
2. (And teach you unless you learn)
3. (His knowledge is very strong)
4. (but God fears His servants scientists)

B: Prophetic Hadith

كلكم راع وكلكم مسؤؤل عن رعيته "
(You are all a shepherd and you are all responsible for your flock.)

C: Poem

"قم للمعلم وفه التبجيلا كل المعلم أن يكون رسول" (Stand up for teacher and show him your respect and the teacher was almost a messenger)

In the above examples, the speaker uses Qur’anic verses, prophetic hadith and poems which are all concrete and reasonable examples. Here, the speaker deals with the mind and cognition of the audience through the use of such factual evidences to persuade them. And arguments from reason (logical arguments) make the speaker look prepared and knowledgeable to the audience.

The strategy of Logos in the selected English speech is applied through using the Factual Description as in the following quotations:

1. “Let me suggest three reasons: 1- because your mission and service contributions support the work of the CCC. 2- because what the CCC does is connected to your outreach ministry, West Broadway Community Ministry. 3- because the CCC is making a difference for peace and justice in the world, as well as fostering positive ecumenical relationships.”

2. “Let me tell you about several wonderful publications that the CCC has produced which, having read them, I can highly recommend. One is called when Christian Faith and Genetics Meet: a practical Group Resource.”

3. “Another wonderful resource is called “The Bruised Reed”: A Christian Reflection and on Suffering and Hope. There are personal stories and theological reflection on topics that affect all of us, such as: "Aging, Suffering, and Hope”

4. “The Canadian Council of Churches is addressing this in two ways. Project Ploughshares, an ecumenical coalition which is part of the CCC, does research, works with NGO’s and governments to advance policies and actions that prevent war and armed violence and build peace.”

5. “Recently, all the church leaders in Canada signed a letter to the Prime Minister about the civil war in Syria, and urged Canada to respond generously to the refugee crises.”

6. “Our concluding hymn today is "though Ancient Walls ", written by United church minister Walter Farquharson. We can rejoice that some of the walls that some of the walls that stood when he wrote this hymn in 1974 have come tumbling down. A good example is that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops joined the Canadian Council of Churches in 1997.”

The speaker uses factual description in the quotations mentioned above as he talks about the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and brings reasonable examples about how it works on the problems that people have. Logos is applied as he talks about the reasons that the CCC does with the government. He also brings resources like “When Christian Faith Genetics Meet” which a
practical Group Resource, “the Bruised Reed” a Christian Reflection on suffering and hope, and the last one “Though Ancient walls” which was written by united Church Minister. All these reasonable and logical examples will increase the degree of persuasion of the audience which is the main aim of the orator in the sermon.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through the analysis of the selected Kurdish and English speech, it is noticed that there are certain similarities and differences in the use of the techniques in applying the persuasion strategies in both languages as it is shown below:

1- Ethos

Since this strategy depends on the character and credibility of the speaker, they are similar in delivering the speeches. The analysis has shown that both of them establish common ground with their audience. This is mostly done by acknowledging values and believes shared by them on both sides.

2- Pathos

As far as using pathos, the speakers of both languages use the techniques of repetition, appeal to authority, figurative language, in addition to salutation. But they are different in some techniques as the use of rhetorical questions by English orator only, and storytelling by the Kurdish religious man.

3- Logos

As logos relies on making a logical argument, backed with reason or evidence to persuade the audience, the religious orators of both languages resort to the use of different factual descriptions through using different sources as Qur’anic verses, prophetic hadith, as well as poems by the Mula. While the priest has used different on ground cases and situations that are concerned with the current issues in the society as providing aids for the Syrian refugees, and the Canadian Council Churches’ attempts to help poor people.

4- CONCLUSION

Depending on the results of the paper, the following points are concluded:

1- The Aristotle’s strategies, ethos, pathos, and logos, are interdependent. The most persuasive speakers will combine these strategies to varying degrees based on their specific purpose and audience.

2- The results of the analysis have provided the evidence of the existence of features common to both Kurdish and English in the field of religious oratory.

3- Both speakers use the strategies to affect the emotion of the audience and bring rational and concrete examples to support what they deliver in their speech.

4- The similarity extends to include stylistic devices to make their messages effective as repetition.
5- The Kurdish speaker uses technical devices as the use of Quranic verses, prophetic hadith and poems.

6-The rhetorical question is used by the English priest while the Kurdish speaker (Mula) used story telling as a technical device to persuade their audience.

REFERENCES