

Stylistic Analysis of Donald Trump's Inaugural Speech: Lexical, Syntactic, and Rhetorical Features

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Keywords	Abstract
Stylistic analysis Donald Trump inaugural speech political discourse	This study conducts a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Donald Trump's inaugural address delivered on January 20, 2017, focusing on its lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features. As the first U.S. president without prior political or military experience, Trump's language was intentionally crafted to reflect a populist identity and connect with a broad audience. The analysis reveals that Trump's speech is marked by lexical simplicity, frequent repetition, and emotionally charged vocabulary. Syntactically, the address relies heavily on short, declarative sentences, parallel structures, and high-modality constructions. Rhetorically, devices such as anaphora, antithesis, vivid imagery, and direct audience engagement play central roles in shaping the speech's persuasive force. These stylistic elements work cohesively to project a clear, assertive message and to perform a political identity rooted in populism and anti-elitism. The findings underscore the strategic nature of Trump's stylistic choices, contributing to the understanding of political discourse in contemporary American rhetoric.

Introduction

Donald Trump's inaugural address, delivered on January 20, 2017, has drawn significant attention for its distinctive style and tone. As the first U.S. president without prior political or military office, Trump used his inaugural speech to establish a populist, "outsider" persona through language. The speech's stylistic characteristics are crucial to understanding how Trump communicated his message of political change and nationalistic vision. Previous studies have noted that Trump's oratory is markedly different from traditional presidential rhetoric, often characterized by simplicity, repetition, and directness (Markham, n.d.). Some analysts initially viewed his speaking style as a "mishmash of disjointed statements" symptomatic of an unconventional communication approach. However, others argue that Trump's language reflects a deliberate strategy rooted in oral culture, designed to connect with "the forgotten men and women" through plain and impassioned talk (Markham, n.d.; Rong, 2023). Indeed, Trump's campaign and inaugural speeches have become a subject of stylistic inquiry in linguistics and discourse analysis (Astuti, n.d.; Purba, 2022; Rong, 2023).

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In stylistics – the study of linguistic style – analysts examine how lexical choices (vocabulary), syntactic structures (sentence grammar), and rhetorical devices (figures of speech) shape meaning and persuasion. Trump’s inaugural address provides a rich case for such analysis, as it employs a range of linguistic techniques to achieve its persuasive goals. This article conducts a detailed stylistic analysis of Trump’s inaugural speech, focusing on its lexical features, syntactic structures, and rhetorical devices. The aim is to characterize Trump’s linguistic and rhetorical style in this address and discuss how these features contribute to the speech’s communicative impact. By examining the speech at multiple levels of language, we can better understand the mechanisms through which Trump’s words resonated with his audience. This study builds on prior research into Trump’s discourse (Derakhshani, Qaiwer, Kazemian, & Mohammadian, n.d.; Kazemian, Derakhshani, Qaiwer, & Mohammadian, n.d.; Rong, 2023) and situates the inaugural address within the broader context of political stylistics.

Methodology

This analysis adopts a qualitative stylistic approach supplemented by quantitative observations. The data for analysis is the official transcript of President Donald J. Trump’s inaugural address (January 20, 2017), obtained from the public domain White House archives and verified with the American Presidency Project transcript. The speech text (approximately 1,450 words) was examined on three levels of style: lexical choices, syntax, and rhetorical devices. Following stylistic analytical frameworks (Leech & Short, 2007; Rong, 2023), the study first inspects **lexical features** – the vocabulary and word-level patterns in the speech. Key items of interest include word frequency (common versus rare words), word complexity (e.g., simple vs. advanced vocabulary), use of pronouns, and emotionally charged or evaluative terms. Basic frequency counts were conducted for prominent words and pronouns to quantify certain patterns (e.g., the prevalence of “we” and “our”).

Next, the **syntactic structures** of the speech were analyzed by reviewing sentence types and grammatical constructions. Each sentence was classified (e.g., simple, compound, complex) and examined for length and complexity. Elements such as the use of coordination vs. subordination, modal verbs (e.g., *will*, *must*), and sentence fragments were noted. This syntactic analysis was informed by prior studies that identified Trump’s frequent use of simple sentence constructions (Jegede, 2020).

Finally, the study identified and interpreted **rhetorical devices** used in the address. This involved a close reading to mark instances of classical rhetorical figures (e.g., repetition, parallelism, metaphor, anaphora) and other discourse strategies (e.g., direct audience address, inclusive language). The frequency and function of these devices were considered in context. For consistency, definitions of rhetorical terms follow standard literary and discourse analysis sources (Abrams & Harpham, 2009). Throughout the analysis, findings from the text were cross-referenced with insights from existing literature on Trump’s language style to support and contextualize the observations. The results are organized by lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features, presented with examples from the speech and cited scholarly interpretations.

Results

Lexical Features

Trump’s inaugural speech is characterized by a comparatively simple and blunt vocabulary, reflecting a **lexical simplicity** that has been noted by many observers (Markham, n.d.). The address predominantly uses common, everyday English words and short, straightforward phrases. For example, Trump favors basic adjectives and superlatives like “great,” “strong,” “proud,” and “safe,” as well as emphatic evaluative terms



such as “bad,” “sad,” or “very *sad*” to describe problems. Notably, the speech avoids highly technical or policy-specific jargon, opting instead for general terms that a broad audience can easily understand. An analysis of word frequency in the transcript shows an abundance of short, simple words. The most frequent content words include *America* (and *American*), *people*, *nation*, *great*, and *we* – all of which are relatively simple and carry strong patriotic or inclusive connotations. This aligns with Markham’s (n.d.) observation that Trump often relies on simple, monosyllabic words (e.g., “win,” “sad,” “great”) and catchy slogans in his rhetoric. Linguistically, the speech scores at a lower grade level of readability than typical presidential addresses, which is consistent with analyses noting Trump’s speeches mirror the level of everyday conversation to maximize reach (Markham, n.d.). By using uncomplicated vocabulary, Trump’s message is accessible to listeners of various backgrounds, fulfilling his populist ethos of speaking directly to “the people.”

Another hallmark of the speech’s lexis is **repetition and strategic word choice** for emphasis. Trump repeatedly uses certain keywords and phrases to reinforce his themes. For instance, the word “American” (or “America”) appears frequently throughout the address (“American carnage,” “America First,” “American hands,” “American labor”), constantly reiterating a nationalistic focus. The slogan “*Make America Great Again*” is saved for the speech’s climax, but the word “*great*” itself is used multiple times prior to that, setting a positive frame. Likewise, intensifiers and superlatives are pervasive – Trump speaks of “*total allegiance*,” “*complete eradication*” of terrorism, “*every breath*” in his body, “*never, ever*” letting people down. This kind of hyperbolic lexicon is a signature of Trump’s style (Rong, 2023; Markham, n.d.), serving to magnify the stakes and evoke emotion. Markham (n.d.) specifically notes Trump’s heavy use of intensifiers like “really,” “very,” or even double intensifiers (“very, very”) and extreme terms (“best,” “worst,” “tremendous”). In the inaugural, we see this in phrases such as “**very sad** depletion of our military” and promises that America will start winning “*like never before*.” The repetition of words – for example, “*America First*” stated twice in succession, or “*We will make America [X] again*” iterated in a list – functions as a rhetorical reinforcement of key points (Purba, 2022). By echoing the same words, Trump ensures they stick in the audience’s memory and signal the speech’s core messages.

Importantly, Trump’s lexical choices also include a mix of **inclusive and emotive terms** that strengthen his populist appeal. He frequently uses first-person plural pronouns like “**we**,” “**our**,” and “**us**” throughout the address. In fact, *we* and *our* are among the top occurrences in the speech, far outnumbering the first-person singular “*I*.” This deliberate preference for inclusive pronouns has been highlighted by Rong (2023) as a means to establish solidarity with the audience. By saying “*we will determine the course of America*” or “*our country*,” Trump casts himself as part of a collective “people” working together, rather than as an elite figure separate from the populace. This inclusive language positions the audience as co-owners of the moment (“*this moment is **your** moment, it belongs to you*”) and of the nation’s future, which is a classic populist strategy to create an in-group mentality. Conversely, the speech uses third-person plural pronouns (they, their) to delineate a hostile or failing other – for example, “***their** victories have not been **your** victories*” draws a sharp us-vs-them contrast between ordinary citizens and the establishment. Such pronoun usage is a subtle lexical device that carries ideological meaning (Derakhshani, Qaiwer, Kazemian, & Mohammadian, n.d.). Indeed, **abstract nouns** and values-laden terms also appear frequently, as Trump evokes broad concepts like “*justice*,” “*allegiance*,” “*unity*,” “*freedom*,” and “*loyalty*.” Rong (2023) observed that Trump tends to employ abstract nouns to make his addresses more persuasive and generalized. In the inaugural speech, phrases like “*one glorious destiny*,” “*righteous public*,” and “*courage and goodness and love*” exemplify how abstract ideals are woven into the lexical fabric to inspire and appeal to emotions. Overall, the lexical profile of Trump’s inaugural address is one of simplicity and repetition on



one hand, and strategic emotional appeal on the other. These word choices work in tandem to convey clarity and urgency, aiming to ensure the message resonates with “everyone watching all across America.”

Syntactic Structures

The **syntax** of Trump’s inaugural speech is notably straightforward. The address predominantly consists of short, declarative sentences, often coordinated by simple conjunctions. A quantitative analysis of sentence types in the speech confirms that simple sentences make up a large portion of the delivery, with relatively few heavily subordinate constructions. Jegede (2020) found that Trump’s inaugural contained a mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences, but simple sentences were used most frequently to achieve a succinct, punchy effect. This is evident in the text: many sentences are brief and convey one idea at a time, for example: “*We will face challenges. We will confront hardships. But we will get the job done.*” Each of these is a short independent clause, or two clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction “and” or “but.” The average sentence length in the speech is only around 16 words, which is low for formal oratory and contributes to a more conversational rhythm. Such syntax makes the speech easier to follow for listeners and allows key statements to stand out clearly. It also gives Trump’s delivery a sense of determination and clarity – each sentence feels like a resolute declaration. This style corresponds to what Chen (2018) describes as Trump’s tendency to use “simple words, brief sentences and [a] declarative mood” to ensure his message is understood by everyone. Most sentences in the inaugural are in the declarative form (statements of fact or intent), and Trump seldom uses lengthy explanatory clauses that might dilute the immediacy of his points.

In addition to brevity, Trump’s syntax frequently employs **parallelism and repetition** in structure. Syntactic parallelism is evident when successive sentences or clauses share a similar form. For example, Trump says: “***We will** bring back our jobs. **We will** bring back our borders. **We will** bring back our wealth. And **we will** bring back our dreams.*” Here four sentences in a row start with “We will” followed by a verb phrase, creating a rhythmic parallel structure. This anaphoric construction (repeating the opening words) reinforces the promise-laden future orientation of the speech. Similarly, later in the speech he uses a series of clauses beginning with “**we all**”: “*whether we are black or brown or white, **we all** bleed the same red blood of patriots, **we all** enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and **we all** salute the same great American flag.*” This triple parallel structure underlines the theme of unity through syntactic mirroring. Such use of parallelism is a common rhetorical technique, and Trump employs it liberally to add emphasis and cadence to his ideas (Kazemian, Derakhshani, Qaiwer, & Mohammadian, n.d.). The coordinated list in the speech that describes problems facing America is another example: “*Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones...; an education system flush with cash but which leaves ... students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives....*” This long sentence is structured as a semi-parallel list of noun phrases (each depicting a problem), separated by semicolons. The parallel syntax here accumulates multiple grievances to paint a collective image of “American carnage.” The repetition of structure – each clause describing a different facet of societal decline – amplifies the overall impression of a nation in crisis. By stacking these clauses, Trump syntactically delivers a “pile-on” effect, a technique also identified by Haoming (2019) in his stylistic analysis of the address.

Trump’s syntax also demonstrates a preference for **coordination over subordination**. Many sentences link ideas with coordinating conjunctions like “and” or “but,” rather than embedding one clause within another. For instance: “*Washington flourished – **but** the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered – **but** the jobs left, and the factories closed.*” Each clause could stand alone, but they are joined by *but* (and



by a dash for dramatic pause) to highlight contrast. The effect is a series of balanced statements that are easy to parse. There is relatively sparse use of complex subordinating conjunctions (such as “although,” “because,” “while”) in the speech. One of the few subordinate clauses begins with “because” in the line: *“Because today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another... but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the people.”* Interestingly, this “Because...” clause is actually presented as a sentence fragment in the transcript (starting a sentence with *Because*). This kind of fragment is atypical in formal writing, but Trump’s speechwriters use it likely to create a dramatic pause and then deliver the consequence. The subordinate clause *“because today we are not merely transferring power...”* sets up the justification, which is then completed after the dash. The usage of a fragment here mirrors Trump’s known tendency to speak in sentence fragments for emphasis (Markham, n.d.). While the inaugural address was prepared, it still carries traces of Trump’s extemporaneous style, such as occasional non-standard sentence boundaries for effect. Another syntactic feature is the use of **imperatives and direct addresses**. Though most sentences are declarative, Trump does issue a few imperative statements: *“Do not allow anyone to tell you that it cannot be done. No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America.”* These commands and prohibitions (“Do not allow...”) involve the audience directly, employing an understood “you” as the subject. This syntactic choice creates a sense of dialogue and engagement, as if the President is giving instructions or encouragement to the people. It also breaks up the monotony of statements with a call-to-action, which is rhetorically effective at rallying listeners.

Modal verbs, especially **future tense modal “will,”** dominate the speech’s verb phrases. The repeated use of “will” (appearing dozens of times) constructs a strong forward-looking modality, conveying certainty about future actions and outcomes. Phrases like *“we will make America strong again”* or *“we will not fail”* are simple in structure but powerful in illocutionary force – they function as firm commitments or predictions. The modal “must” also appears in calls to action (e.g., *“We must protect our borders...”* and *“we must speak our minds openly...”*), adding a tone of necessity and urgency. The heavy reliance on *will* gives the speech a consistent grammatical mood of determination and promise. Syntactically, this contributes to cohesion: nearly every paragraph contains at least one “We will...” statement, binding the speech together under the umbrella of a collective future plan. As Chen (2018) points out, the combination of frequent personal pronouns and high-modal expressions in declarative form makes Trump’s speech straightforward and emphatic. It leaves little ambiguity about his intentions, which is likely intended to instill confidence in the audience. Additionally, the speech employs some **passive constructions and nominalizations** strategically. For example, *“The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world”* uses the passive voice (“has been ripped”) without specifying an agent, which indirectly blames abstract forces or previous leaders without naming them. Similarly, *“This American carnage stops right here”* nominalizes the destruction as “carnage,” a thing to be stopped, rather than explicitly stating who caused it. Such structures can be a way to focus on outcomes and victims rather than perpetrators, aligning with the speech’s populist framing of people versus a vague establishment. Derakhshani et al. (n.d.) note that agentless passives and nominalized processes in Trump’s rhetoric serve to obscure specific agents of blame while still evoking a sense of grievance. In summary, the syntactic style of Trump’s inaugural address is marked by simplicity, parallelism, and directness. Short, declarative sentences and coordinated clauses make the speech easy to follow and quotable, while the repetitive “we will” future constructions and occasional fragments give it a distinctive rhythmic and urgent quality. These syntactic choices reinforce the speech’s themes by making promises and problems starkly clear and by engaging the audience as active participants in the vision being presented.



Rhetorical Devices and Strategies

Trump's inaugural speech employs a variety of **rhetorical devices** that amplify its persuasive effect and emotional resonance. Many of these devices are classical techniques of political oratory, adapted to Trump's unique style. A prominent feature is **repetition**, which appears at multiple levels of the speech. At the lexical level, as discussed, Trump repeats key words and phrases for emphasis (*"America"*, *"people"*, *"great again"*). At the phrasal and structural level, he uses anaphora – the repetition of a sequence of words at the beginnings of clauses. For example, the anaphoric *"We will..."* sequence at the start of successive sentences (noted earlier) is a deliberate rhetorical construction. This device creates a rhythmic momentum and reinforces the message through redundancy. Repetition in Trump's rhetoric is not accidental; it is a deliberate strategy to drive points home and make them memorable. As Markham (n.d.) observes, "when Trump wants to make a point, he makes it multiple times," leveraging repetition to aid memory and build trust. In the inaugural address, the refrain-like repetition of *"the people"* (e.g., *"January 20th 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again"*) and *"America"* serves almost as an incantation, continually refocusing the audience on the nationalist and populist core of the speech. By the closing lines, the repetitive cadence reaches its peak with the series *"Together, we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again... we will make America great again."* This climactic use of *epistrophe* and *epizeuxis* (repeating the word "again" and even the entire phrase "Make America Great Again") leaves the audience with a resonant final impression of the campaign slogan. Such patterned repetition exemplifies the **"power of three"** or **triadic structure** often effective in rhetoric (e.g., strong-wealthy-proud, then adding safe, then the famous slogan). By organizing promises into enumerations of three or more, Trump follows a time-tested oratorical technique that enhances memorability and impact (Derakhshani et al., n.d.; Taping et al., 2017).

Another key rhetorical strategy in the speech is **antithesis** – the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in parallel form. Trump frequently sets up contrasts between two groups or situations, a device that highlights change or conflict. For instance, he contrasts *"the establishment"* with *"the people,"* as in: *"The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country"*. Similarly, *"Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs."* This sentence uses parallel clauses to contrast *"their"* vs. *"your,"* creating a clear dichotomy. The antithetical pairing emphasizes the gap between the previous governing class and ordinary Americans, underpinning Trump's argument that power and benefits must be returned to the people. The speech also contrasts past vs. present/future: *"That all changes – starting right here and right now."* Here, *"that was the past... now the future begins"* is the implicit antithesis, marking a break with prior administrations. The use of **antithesis coupled with parallelism** is a powerful rhetorical trope that is evident throughout the address. It gives Trump's assertions a sharper edge and dramatizes the differences he wants to draw (e.g., failure vs. success, old vs. new, "American carnage" vs. American greatness). This trope aligns with what Kazemian et al. (n.d.) identified as a frequent strategy in Trump's political speeches: framing issues in black-and-white terms through contrastive rhetoric, which simplifies complex issues into clear choices for the audience.

Imagery and metaphor also play a role in the speech's rhetoric, albeit in a plain-spoken way. Trump's language, while simple, occasionally invokes vivid imagery to provoke an emotional response. The most widely noted example is the metaphor *"American carnage,"* a striking phrase depicting the nation's state as a scene of massacre or devastation. This metaphor, unusual for an inaugural address, painted a mental picture of America in crisis, resonating strongly with listeners who felt left behind. Additionally, Trump



uses a simile in the line “*rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation.*” This simile compares abandoned factories to tombstones, reinforcing the idea that previous leaders allowed American industry to die. Such imagery is visceral and easy to visualize, making abstract issues (economic decline, job loss) concrete and emotive. In a more positive vein, the speech uses imagery of unity and divine blessing: “*we all salute the same great American flag*” conjures the image of Americans unified under the flag, and “*infused with the breath of life by the same almighty Creator*” invokes a religious image of common creation. These images appeal to patriotism and faith, respectively, aligning with the values of Trump’s target audience. While Trump is not known for ornate metaphors, these instances show a tactical use of figurative language to underscore points. The contrasting dark and light imagery – “*tombstones*” vs. “*birth of a millennium*,” “*carnage*” vs. “*unity*” – complement the speech’s broader theme of a national rebirth out of decay.

Trump’s direct style also includes **audience engagement strategies** as a rhetorical device. Throughout the address, he directly addresses the crowd with second-person pronouns (“*you*” and “*your*”) and inclusive statements. For example: “*This is your day. This is your celebration. And this... is your country.*” By repeatedly telling listeners that the moment belongs to *them*, he heightens the personal stake of the audience in his presidency. Such direct address, often used in campaign rallies, is somewhat less common in formal inaugural speeches, but Trump employs it to break the barrier between speaker and audience. Additionally, the speech contains calls to action or rallying cries, such as “*hear these words: you will never be ignored again*” and imperatives like “*Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done.*” These elements function as **rhetorical exhortations**, energizing the audience and inviting their participation in the vision he’s outlining. They help transform the speech from a one-directional proclamation into a two-way interaction, at least rhetorically, positioning Trump as the voice of the people. This strategy of direct engagement is tied to Trump’s populist rhetorical style, which seeks to forge an emotional bond with his base (Astuti, n.d.). It also exemplifies “**sales talk**” or promotional rhetoric identified by Markham (n.d.) – Trump often speaks in a motivational register, as if selling his vision to the public with phrases that resemble slogans and calls reminiscent of a rally or even a marketing pitch.

Lastly, the speech’s rhetoric is marked by **certainty and totality**, conveyed through both language and devices. Trump makes extensive use of **absolute terms** and **superlatives**, which in a rhetorical sense leaves little room for doubt or nuance. Words like “everyone,” “no longer,” “no one,” “never,” and “always” are scattered through the address, constructing an absolute worldview. For instance, “*The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer*” – the phrasing eliminates any ambiguity about the claim. Similarly, “*When America is united, America is **totally unstoppable***” uses an absolute quality (“totally”) to drive the point. This absoluteness is a rhetorical device aimed at inspiring confidence and resoluteness. It complements Trump’s use of **hyperbole**, exaggerating for effect – e.g., claiming “*the likes of which the world has never seen*” or “*trillions and trillions of dollars*” to describe trade deficits. These extreme formulations are designed to shock or awe and thereby persuade the audience of the gravity of issues or the magnitude of future success. Derakhshani et al. (n.d.) found that Trump’s speech is “*abound[ing] with deliberate deployment of... rhetorical devices*” and that these choices make his language appear both influential and, at times, equivocal. In the inaugural, the reliance on superlatives and hyperbole can indeed be double-edged: it bolsters the rallying cry, but also skirts precise details. Nonetheless, as a rhetorical strategy, it clearly serves to leave a strong impression and to heighten the emotional pitch of the speech.

In summary, the rhetorical devices in Trump’s inaugural address — repetition (anaphora, epistrophe), parallelism, antithesis, vivid imagery, direct audience address, and hyperbolic absolutes — all function to



make the speech memorable and impactful. These devices are executed in Trump's characteristic style: blunt, emphatic, and geared toward rallying "*the people*" behind a grand narrative. The findings here echo those of Kazemian et al. (n.d.), who noted that Trump's speeches use "vigilant lexical choices" and a high density of rhetorical tropes to convey his intended ideologies. The inaugural address is no exception; it is carefully crafted (despite its plain language appearance) to persuade the audience of Trump's message that a new era is dawning. By focusing on a few simple, resonant ideas and using powerful rhetorical reinforcement, Trump's speech achieves a kind of persuasive simplicity – it may lack the eloquent flourishes of some predecessors, but it makes up for it in clarity, rhythm, and emotional appeal.

Discussion

The stylistic features identified in Donald Trump's inaugural speech reveal how language was used to construct a compelling populist narrative and to solidify the speaker's connection with his audience. Lexically, the speech's simplicity and repetitive emphasis were not signs of unsophisticated thought, but rather deliberate choices aligned with Trump's communication strategy. The use of common vocabulary and catchphrases mirrors everyday conversation, which likely made many Americans feel that the new President was speaking *to* them rather than *at* them. This finding supports Markham's (n.d.) argument that Trump's lower linguistic "grade level" and conversational style may have been an asset in winning over supporters. The frequent use of inclusive pronouns ("*we*," "*our*") and direct address ("*you*," "*your*") in the speech cultivated a sense of collective identity, effectively blurring the line between the President and the public. Rong (2023) notes that such pronoun usage makes the audience feel involved and acknowledged. In an inaugural context – traditionally meant to unify the nation – Trump's language of inclusion ("*we are one nation*") and unity ("*their pain is our pain... their success will be our success*") served to broaden his appeal beyond his base, at least rhetorically. At the same time, the sharp lexical contrasts (e.g., "*forgotten men and women*" vs. "*Washington flourished*") underscored a populist framing of conflict between the people and the establishment. This dichotomy, rendered in plain terms, resonated with those who felt disenfranchised, essentially validating their grievances through language. In this way, Trump's lexical style in the inaugural can be seen as **performative** of his political stance: it not only conveyed his policies but enacted the very anti-elite, pro-people stance that defined his campaign.

The syntactic simplicity and clarity of the speech likewise had important implications. By using short, declarative sentences and repetitive structures, Trump ensured that his points were delivered unambiguously. The analysis suggests that this syntax made the speech more easily quotable and the key messages more digestible. This is significant in an era of media soundbites and viral quotes. Phrases like "*American carnage*" or "*The time for empty talk is over*" stand out starkly when they are not buried in complex sentences. The prevalence of the future tense "*will*" in the speech gave it a prophetic tone – it was forward-looking and promise-heavy, which is typical for inaugurals, but Trump's unvarnished phrasing made those promises feel concrete to listeners. One effect of the straightforward syntax is that it projects confidence and decisiveness. There is little hedging or nuance in Trump's grammatical constructions; statements are made categorically (e.g., "*We will not fail.*" "*You will never be ignored again.*"). This syntactic decisiveness can inspire optimism and trust among supporters who desire clear, strong leadership. However, it can also polarize or alienate others who might expect more acknowledgement of complexity – a trade-off inherent in Trump's style. Interestingly, the simplicity of syntax does not mean the speech lacked rhetorical sophistication. On the contrary, as the results indicate, devices like parallelism and antithesis were embedded in the sentence structure to amplify the message. This demonstrates that one can have a relatively



low reading-level text that is nonetheless rich in rhetorical technique (Chen, 2018). Trump's inaugural exemplifies this balance: it is linguistically accessible but strategically composed.

The rhetorical devices used by Trump served multiple persuasive functions. Repetition and parallelism made the speech **cohesive** and **rhythmic**, which likely helped in rallying the live audience (who periodically applauded in agreement, especially at repeated lines) and in making the message stick in the public consciousness. The "call and response" quality of some repeated phrases (for instance, the crowd might respond to "America First" or join in cheering "Make America Great Again") harks back to campaign rally techniques carried into an inaugural setting. This blurring of campaign style into the traditionally lofty inaugural genre was unprecedented in some ways, and it highlighted Trump's rhetorical choice to prioritize connection with his base over convention. The bold imagery and stark contrasts painted in the speech also fulfilled a persuasive aim: by describing the status quo in bleak terms and the future in glowing terms, Trump created a clear emotional logic for his presidency. It's a classic **problem-solution** narrative structure (the nation is in carnage; therefore, we need drastic change), but executed with a blunt force that was uniquely Trumpian. Derakhshani et al. (n.d.) found that Trump's speeches frequently carry "cynical and negative attitudes" toward opponents or prior conditions, paired with optimistic, even grandiose solutions. This was evident in the inaugural: the first half catalogues national ills in unflinching language, and the second half pivots to an almost utopian promise of renewal. Rhetorically, this approach is effective in instilling both a sense of urgency (through fear of decline) and hope (through bold promises of revival). The risk of such rhetoric is that it can come across as divisive or overly simplistic, a criticism that many commentators leveled at Trump's speech for its "dark" depiction of America. Yet from a stylistic perspective, the clarity of the contrast left no ambiguity about the narrative Trump was advancing. It was a deliberate choice to break with the usually more congratulatory and unifying tone of inaugurals, underscoring that Trump intended to govern as he campaigned: with blunt, populist language and an anti-establishment posture.

Another point of discussion is how Trump's stylistic choices compare to established norms of presidential inaugural speeches (without direct comparison to specific predecessors). Inaugural addresses often aim to inspire and unify by invoking shared values in elevated diction. Trump's speech does invoke shared values like unity, patriotism, and faith, but it does so in a *plainspoken* register and interweaves combative populist rhetoric in a way that is atypical for the occasion. This indicates an intentional stylistic divergence to match his political outsider brand. The speech's style effectively communicated the message that a different kind of presidency was beginning – not just in content but in form. The lexicon saying "I stand with you, the common citizen," the syntax saying "I speak plainly and directly," and the rhetoric saying "I will fight for you and put America first" all worked together to reinforce Trump's persona. This synergy of style and substance is key: Trump's linguistic style in the inaugural was a vehicle for his political messaging. As Purba (2022) suggests in her analysis of Trump's speech, language style is deeply intertwined with how political identity and intentions are projected.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights that Trump's speechwriters (and Trump himself, who reportedly had input on the address) were skillful in deploying traditional rhetorical techniques within a non-traditional style. For instance, the speech uses **classical rhetorical appeals** in modern garb. Ethos (credibility) is established not by citing historical precedent or lofty principles, but by using "we" to create a collective ethos and by demonstrating Trump's alignment with the people's plight through plain language. Pathos (emotional appeal) is heavily targeted via the described plights (poverty, crime, loss) and the aspirational imagery of national greatness and divine favor. Logos (logical appeal) is simpler, often taking the form of



assertive claims and binary oppositions (if the establishment wins, the people lose, and vice versa) rather than intricate arguments. This approach to persuasion is aligned with the notion of “simplified demagoguery” that some rhetoricians attribute to Trump’s style – it’s emotionally potent and clear-cut, though not rich in policy detail or dialectic nuance. From a stylistic analysis standpoint, the inaugural speech exemplifies how form can be tailored to function: the linguistic simplicity and repetitive force were ideally suited to galvanizing a broad audience and cutting through a noisy media environment. As Kazemian et al. (n.d.) conclude in their critical discourse analysis, none of Trump’s phrasing in major speeches is accidental; rather, it is “intentionally charged” to convey predetermined ideas and shape audience perception. Our analysis of the inaugural speech strongly concurs with that view – the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical patterns all appear purposefully orchestrated to deliver a resonant political message.

Conclusion

Donald Trump’s inaugural address showcases a cohesive stylistic approach that marries simple, direct language with powerful rhetorical techniques. The **lexical simplicity** – characterized by common vocabulary, repetitive slogans, and inclusive pronouns – helped ensure the speech was widely comprehensible and emotionally engaging. The **succinct syntax** – dominated by short declarative sentences and parallel constructions – lent the address clarity and momentum, reinforcing Trump’s image as a straightforward, decisive leader. Meanwhile, the rich array of **rhetorical devices** – from repetition and parallelism to antithesis and vivid metaphor – amplified the speech’s persuasive force and memorability. Together, these features created a populist rhetorical style that was unconventional for an inaugural ceremony yet effective in rallying Trump’s audience around his vision of change.

The stylistic analysis reveals that Trump’s linguistic choices were integral to the substance of his message. By using language that was at once plain and potent, Trump was able to cast the inaugural moment as a turning point where political power was symbolically returned “to the people.” The speech’s style thus fulfilled a dual purpose: it communicated policy intentions (e.g., putting America first, combating “carnage”) in clear terms, and it also performed a political identity – that of a populist outsider speaking for the ordinary citizen. In this regard, Trump’s inaugural speech exemplifies how **linguistic style functions as political strategy**. The lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical patterns we have examined were not random quirks of Trump’s speaking, but calculated elements that reinforced his message of American renewal and solidarity under his leadership.

In conclusion, focusing solely on Trump’s linguistic and rhetorical style in the inaugural address (without comparison to other inaugurals) provides insight into the mechanics of his persuasion. The speech’s stylistic features – its words, sentence forms, and tropes – worked synergistically to create an address that was distinctive in tone and impact. For scholars and observers of political discourse, Trump’s inaugural is a case study in how a speaker can break with traditional oratorical norms yet still achieve communicative efficacy through a consistent and audience-tailored style. The findings from this stylistic analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of Trump’s rhetoric, affirming observations by prior researchers (Rong, 2023; Chen, 2018; Derakhshani et al., n.d.) that Trump’s seemingly simple language is underpinned by deliberate persuasive design. Future research might further explore how these stylistic elements influenced public reception of the speech, or compare Trump’s inaugural stylistics to his other addresses as president. Overall, this analysis underscores the importance of style in political communication and the powerful role it plays in shaping meaning and reception in public discourse.

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