

## Summary

### **Rhetorical question in political speeches**

Language is an element of social communication, an instrument used to describe the world, transmit information and give meaning to the reality surrounding us. Politicians are often excellent speakers, and language is a critical tool in politics. Every language, including the language of politics, is an excellent device for language users and discourse participants to act and achieve their goals. This paper seeks to show rhetorical questions in speeches delivered by German politicians. An attempt was made herein to (i) classify rhetorical questions in terms of linguistic realization of illocutionary act and (ii) examine the intentions of the speaker, the illocutionary value of rhetorical question that serves the speaker's purposes and makes it possible for him/her to take some actions.

Political speeches, especially speeches delivered by party leaders, are carefully prepared and considered important public appearance. They capture the greatest attention of mass media and society. Speeches given by leaders of the largest political parties are also often analysed and cited by commentators. Sometimes, several specialists are involved in writing them. Public utterances are usually persuasive, emotional and charismatic. Parliamentary speeches of German politicians from 2014 to 2015 were analysed herein. The analysis of examples coming from the following web pages with collections of political speeches, has taken considerable part of the paper: [www.bundesregierung.de](http://www.bundesregierung.de), [www.frank-walter-steinmeier.de](http://www.frank-walter-steinmeier.de), [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de), [www.prag.diplo.de](http://www.prag.diplo.de), [www.spdfraktion.de](http://www.spdfraktion.de), [www.gruene-bundestag.de](http://www.gruene-bundestag.de), [www.uni-hohenheim.de](http://www.uni-hohenheim.de).

The paper also focuses on current reflection on the issues of speech acts and rhetorical questions. The following authors are cited herein: Austin, Bonacchi, Searle, Meibauer, Schwitalla, Wierzbicka and other researchers analysing the structure and the meaning of speeches and functions of rhetorical questions. The main models used to describe rhetorical questions, alongside those developed by the classics of pragmalinguistics and language philosophy (such as Austin, Grice, Searle), include Meibauer's model of rhetorical questions

(1986) developed by the following authors: Schwitalla (1984), Schreiber (2009) or Bąk (2012).

The main purpose of the dissertation was to classify rhetorical questions based on the relationship between linguistic realization of such questions and the speaker's intention, i.e. hidden meaning of rhetorical questions. The dissertation is also intended to find out whether the motive of a person asking rhetorical question – regardless of whether it is clear or secret – is going to directly or indirectly affect the audience.

Based on rhetorical question definition, it can be stated that this is a type of statement, an indirect act of speech, which often appears in public discourse, in various speeches and utterances addressed directly to the audience. This is a question asked to make a point rather than to elicit an answer as an answer would be obvious and therefore redundant. The conventional meaning of rhetorical question differs from the pragmatic meaning of the speech by which the speaker pursues his/her own pragmatic, persuasive and political goals. Such a question is clear, it leads the audience to a thought which is expressed or presupposed. This is an important feature as it enables the speaker to convince the audience to his/her arguments by referring to common knowledge shared by discourse participants and presupposing what is often obvious, and from the speaker's point of view – important. In this respect, the paper also refers to the assumptions of discourse theory based on Foucault's thought.

Rhetorical questions are often used to emphasize reflection. This may be the speaker's reflection, a phrase that is meant to provoke reflection, or make the audience fall into a reverie. Such questions are often used to introduce a topic to be addressed later in the speech. People who write speeches often reach for rhetorical questions because they add variety to the text and make the audience members more focused on the topic. Political speeches have become sort of a political ritual subject to certain conventions. Rhetorical questions may take the form of commands or appeals to the public; they may also impart the desired sense to the speech.

The dissertation was divided into theoretical and research parts, but none of these parts were formally distinguished. In theoretical chapters, the political speech category and the rhetorical question definition and its status in the literature were presented. The main research purpose

was to classify rhetorical questions, identify them, and examine characteristic features of a given group of illocutionary acts.

Other issues relevant to this dissertation, such as media, discourse, language of politics, were also raised at the beginning hereof. These issues were presented from the theoretical point of view. They are of vital significance to the discussion on the language of politics and rhetorical questions themselves, and they allow the rhetorical question issue to be discussed in relation to other areas of life that such questions affect, largely through mass media.

After the introduction and the general overview of the paper, its structure, method and characteristics of language material are presented. The first chapter provides the definition of the phenomenon under investigation. The main definitions cited (e.g. by Meibauer 1986) describe rhetorical question as an indirect act of speech, a statement that does not need an answer that it presupposes, thereby leading the audience to a certain thought. Rhetorical questions are counted among linguistic means of persuasion used in speeches to (i) urge the audience members on to draw conclusions or understand arguments, (ii) make them be more attentive and (iii) focus primarily on the topic so that the speaker can gain approval by finding a common ground for reflection with the audience. The second chapter deals with political discourse, and acts as an introduction to subsequent chapters of the thesis that focus not only on the phenomenon of rhetorical question, but also on the related speech act theories originated by Austin and developed further by Searle and other fundamental theories of linguistics and pragmalinguistics. The same chapter provides a detailed description of types of sentences, illocutionary acts, classification of speech acts and the concept of politeness according to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The second chapter also emphasises the importance of the concept of face introduced by Goffman and discusses the ritual equilibrium principle as speech acts are performed within social and cultural boundaries.

The third chapter describes the features of political speeches which form an integral part of political discourse. Special attention should be paid to the described phenomenon of mass media and its impact on society. The specificity of mass media discourse and the form of information transmission involves persuasion and manipulation, often equated to the specificity of the language of politics.

The pragmalinguistic approach to political speeches is discussed in the fourth chapter along with the assumptions of speech act theory, with special reference to Austin's and Searle's deliberations. In addition to detailed description of the above-mentioned concept, the third chapter also provides arguments for including speech act models developed by these authors into this dissertation. These aspects should play a significant role in linguistic and pragmalinguistic considerations. Critical approach to some issues draws attention to the complexity of persuasion and rhetoric. The fourth chapter deals with problems relating to the definition of basic concepts and pragmalinguistic approach to rhetorical question treated as an indirect speech act.

The last, fifth, chapter is devoted to the study of rhetorical questions in political discourse. With reference to the existing research methods, this chapter discusses the results of analyses performed based on the classification presented in 2012 by Bąk in the article entitled *Wie verdict für die Frage sein*, in which the author develops the Meibauer's (1986) and Bußmann's model (2002). Rhetorical questions are divided into types of sentences in which the illocutionary potential is positive (i.e. affirmative) or negative. They provide the best proof that the semantic value of a question as a sentence is not the same as the value of meaning in the pragmatic sense, i.e. the meaning of rhetorical question as an utterance. Rhetorical questions used in political discourse were examined in terms of the relationship between the question as a locutionary act and the illocutionary value. In addition to standard classification, research findings show that there is a group of rhetorical questions that have not yet been categorized. Based on the analysis, the following main types of rhetorical questions were identified:

- yes-no questions: negative illocutionary act and positive locutionary act,
- yes-no questions: positive illocutionary act and positive locutionary act,
- yes-no questions: positive illocutionary act and negative locutionary act,
- supplementary questions: negative illocutionary act and positive locutionary act,
- rhetorical question with an answer,
- rhetorical questions in the series,
- open rhetorical questions (to which there are several possible answers)
- rhetorical questions with meta-language elements (e.g. *I am asking..., the question arises...*),
- rhetoric questions with a particle,

- questions based on the *Who/When if not....* scheme.

The fifth chapter presents the analysis results and their compilation, and shows the correlation between different types of rhetorical questions. It also summarizes the purpose of the paper and proves that the use of rhetoric questions, and thus their illocutionary potential, affects the audience according to the speaker's motifs, intentions as well as contextual factors and language elements (the so-called rhetorical determinants) described herein.

The analysis of language material shows the importance of such factors as emotional values, gestures, facial expressions, intervals between sentences, negative statement cues, voice pitch, etc. in rhetorical questions. These factors are a form of auto-suggestion.

The purpose of the dissertation is to demonstrate what functions rhetorical questions fulfil. These functions primarily include: controlling emotions, making suggestions, increasing the meaning of words, instructing, manipulating the audience members, making them be more attentive, expressing doubts and irony, emphasizing the importance of the problem, embellishing the speech, expressing emotional state of the speaker and his/her approach to the topic.

To sum up, the material collected for the purposes of this dissertation and the conclusions drawn can be used for further investigation of this phenomenon in various discourses and different communication domains, in German and, for example, Polish language of politics. The classification and conclusions from the analysis of rhetorical questions show their importance in the language of politics. Rhetorical questions are also common in everyday speech and may be a part of other discourses.