


The Composition and Communication of Political Discourse: A Methodological Approach¹

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Abstract: This article examines the composition and communication of political discourse through a detailed, seven-part structure. The first part offers a brief introduction. The second part explores the characteristics of text and discourse. The third part focuses on the historical development of rhetoric, including its contemporary branch-cultural rhetoric. The fourth part analyzes the role of metaphor and the *metaphorical engine* in shaping political discourse. The fifth part discusses the influence of context on the composition of political discourse, while the sixth part evaluates the credibility of political leaders and the methods of communicating political discourse. Finally, the seventh part provides a bibliography of referenced works.

Keywords: political discourse; text; discourse; rhetoric; cultural rhetoric; metaphor; *metaphorical engine*; context; credibility; communication.

ENG La Composición y Comunicación del Discurso Político: Un Enfoque Metodológico

Resumen: Este artículo describe y analiza las formas de composición y comunicación del discurso político. Se estructura en siete partes. La primera parte ofrece una breve introducción. En la segunda, se describen las características del texto y del discurso. La tercera parte está dedicada al desarrollo histórico de la Retórica y su nueva dimensión: la Retórica cultural. La cuarta parte analiza el papel de la metáfora y del *motor metafórico* en la composición del discurso político. La quinta parte aborda la influencia del contexto en la composición del discurso político, mientras que la sexta evalúa las nociones de credibilidad del líder político y las formas de comunicación del discurso político. Por último, la séptima parte presenta la bibliografía utilizada.

Palabras clave: discurso político; texto; discurso; retórica; retórica cultural; metáfora; *motor metafórico*; contexto; credibilidad; comunicación.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Text and discourse. 3. Rhetoric and cultural rhetoric. 4. Metaphor and metaphorical engine. 5. Context. 6. Credibility and communication. 7. Conclusions. 8. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

This article explores the composition and communication of political discourse, focusing particularly on the relationships political science maintains with other disciplines. Specifically, it examines its connections with linguistics, which provides the textual foundation for discourse composition, and rhetoric, which offers the tools and strategies necessary for its construction and communication. Special attention is given to the cultural role of metaphor in shaping political discourse. As such, this paper aims to provide a theoretical and methodological foundation for studies in political science.

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Before delving into these topics, I would like to briefly outline my perspective on the role played by Ancient Greek philosophers in the development of political discourse. Their contributions were instrumental not only in advancing rhetorical and political science as theoretical disciplines and forms of *techné*, but also in shaping their ideas within the specific socio-cultural context of their time. It is essential to recognize that their concepts were deeply rooted in their historical circumstances, influenced by their views of the world and humanity's role within it.

While some of their perspectives, such as those on slavery or their prioritization of majority opinions over minority voices, are no longer acceptable today, the enduring relevance of their ideas lies in their classical nature. This quality allows for their reinterpretation across different eras and contexts. Acknowledging this adaptability is crucial for understanding the significance of Greek Antiquity in the modern world. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1986) once emphasized the necessity of engaging in a dialogue with Aristotle. Perhaps this methodological approach offers the best foundation for the discussion presented in this paper.

In his discussion of the historical role of rhetoric in social life, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy highlights that, in ancient Greece, rhetoric was synonymous with power. Rhetoricians were both admired and feared (O'Shaughnessy, 2014). Reflecting on Plato's and Aristotle's perspectives on rhetoric, O'Shaughnessy observes that, among Aristotle's triad of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*, only the latter –emotional appeals– is predominantly evident in the contemporary political sphere. This dominance might suggest a reduction of rhetoric to a limited activity. However, O'Shaughnessy challenges this notion, arguing that the essence of rhetoric is simultaneously visible and invisible, serving multiple purposes within government.

Far from being merely a medium for ideological clashes or policy promotion, modern rhetoric also functions as the official language of government. It is a tool for refutation and a professional instrument for justifying governmental actions. Using the administrations of David Cameron and Barack Obama as examples, O'Shaughnessy illustrates how rhetoric in these contexts was not transformed into philosophy or a guiding principle. Instead, contemporary rhetoric is described as formulaic, epigrammatic, and less memorable. This lack of spontaneity, he argues, reduces politicians to performers of pantomime rather than authentic communicators.

Political discourse is inherently cognitive, incorporating discursive elements rooted in the social and political context of its composition (Van Dijk, 2003). In addition to its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic characteristics, the stylistic construction of political speeches plays a critical role. Key stylistic features include the use of short sentences and rhetorical questions (Wong & Yap, 2015), pauses and intonation (Bull, 1986), positive self-presentation, and the negative other-presentation (Van Dijk, 2013). Other significant elements are the extensive frameworks of actor analysis (Van Leeuwen, 2008) and discursive strategies of (de)legitimation (Reyes, 2011), along with techniques such as polarization, lexicalization, categorization, voice modulation, and gesticulation (Poggi & Pelachaud, 2008). Non-verbal expressions, such as facial cues (Bucy & Bradley, 2004) and hand and face gestures (Poggi, 2007), contribute to the development of a unique "rhetorical signature" (Frank, 2011).

Style is a crucial aspect of a political leader's self-presentation. It encompasses a broad spectrum of characteristics, ranging from dynamic, less rehearsed, and moment-based styles to more static and meticulously planned modes of self-expression. The concept of *indexicality* (Silverstein, 1976), which reveals the interconnections between history, culture, and politics (Reyes, 2014), is also essential for understanding political discourse. Additionally, indexicality facilitates the study of *intertextuality* (Fairclough, 2003).

The communicative dimension of speech transforms rhetorical political speech from mere text into discourse. This transformation is enriched by various rhetorical elements, such as metaphor and its related forms –simile, metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, allegory, anaphora, parallelism, and chiasmus. These features are integral to the study of political discourse, enhancing its depth and effectiveness.

The final point I would like to address is my use of two syntagmatic expressions with a unified meaning in this paper: *political discourse* and *rhetorical political discourse*. I treat these terms as synonymous because rhetorical discourse is inseparable from political discourse, and vice versa, as I will demonstrate in this article. In other words, any discourse that employs rhetorical figures and tools of composition to shape the social sphere can be considered to possess a degree of political character. The "colours" on this political palette may vary –ranging across literary, philosophical, educational, and other discourses– but they collectively form a framework that describes relationships within societies and between different societies and communities.

Given that the primary function of both rhetorical and political discourse is persuasion, rhetoric cannot exist without a political foundation, just as politics cannot operate without rhetorical elements. My perspective aligns with the observation that political studies are largely studies in rhetoric –that is, studies of how rhetorical political discourse is constructed and communicated (Bitzer, 1981; Graber, 1981; Swanson & Nimmo (eds.) 1990; Van Dijk, 1997; Chaffee, 2001). As Van Dijk notes, Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) "should not merely be a contribution to discourse studies, but also to political science and social science more generally" (Van Dijk, 1997: 11).

A rhetorical component is central to political discourse. Despite being addressed to varied audiences, its primary objective remains persuasion and the dissemination of political ideas. Political speeches analysed within political science frameworks, alongside other documentary materials such as manifestos, reflect a political party's stance on current issues and shape public attitudes toward specific political contexts. These texts legitimize political decisions and equip politicians with the confidence and conviction that their ideas will be widely accepted and embraced.

Politicians employ a range of platforms to achieve these goals, including party conferences, parliamentary and televised debates, forums where political leaders collaborate on joint action programs, and various social communication channels. These channels include newspapers, social media, and even the involvement of public figures outside the professional political sphere, such as writers, academics, bloggers, and influencers. Through these means, politicians construct a modern *Agora*—a space that connects and unites people in support of political decisions.

2. Text and discourse

It is impossible to envision political life—comprising political communication, the planning and implementation of political programs, and policies—without the use of language. Various forms of linguistic expression, including professional political speeches and addresses, the language of political media (Ayala, 1985; Albaladejo, 1991), and even communication among ordinary citizens, highlight the necessity of specialized skills for effective political communication. Politics, as a form of human activity, has captivated thinkers throughout history, from Plato to Hannah Arendt. Its significance is undeniable, and the ways in which it is realized are diverse and complex. Language, as the primary tool of political communication, is indispensable in all political processes.

However, possessing linguistic skills alone is insufficient for successful political communication, as language cannot be separated from the broader components of human cognition. Linguistic operations form the textual foundation for composing political discourse. Language serves to construct and communicate meaning (Fauconnier, 1999). What politicians require is the ability to transform text into discourse—adding a communicative dimension to the linguistic substrate. Discourse is a phenomenon that encompasses both semantic and pragmatic elements, which are essential for the analysis and decoding of a political message.

To achieve its goal—convincing the audience of the correctness of a political plan or action—a political discourse must be composed in a way that is understandable to its target audience. “Understandable” here means “acceptable” and to be acceptable, the discourse must be grounded in common values, or what Van Dijk (2006b) terms the “Cultural Common Ground”. This common ground is inherently fluid, evolving over time. Consequently, politicians must demonstrate flexibility, crafting discourse that can adapt to any foreseeable situation, whether tomorrow or in the near future.

The linguistic components that make up a political text include grammar, lexicon, and semantic elements. Grammatical and lexical components establish various levels of abstraction (Arduini, 2007). Rhetorical figures are crucial for the composition of political texts, with metaphors holding a prominent position alongside other forms of metaphorical series, such as similes, metonymy, synecdoche, symbols, allegory, anaphora, parallelism, and chiasmus. These rhetorical devices are important in both positive, legitimate forms of political communication (persuasion; Cockcroft & Cockcroft, 1992; O’Keefe, 2018; Suhay, Grofman, & Trechsel, 2020) and negative, illegitimate forms (manipulation; Riker, 1986). Thus, language serves not only as a medium but also as a tool for the thought process. It shapes the message, functioning as an instrument of persuasion and forming the basis for rhetorical tropes that facilitate successful persuasion (O’Shaughnessy, 2014). The relationship between Rhetoric and Text Linguistics has been extensively studied and documented (García Berrio, 1984; Albaladejo, 1989, 2019a, 2019b).

Language, culture, and cognition are studied from a linguistic perspective, with Cognitive Linguistics examining the role of each in communication. Metaphor plays a central role in this interaction, as its persuasive power, rooted in linguistic characteristics and cultural potential, can be effectively mediated through cognitive activity. Various theories provide new insights into the role of metaphor in shaping mental models that facilitate successful persuasion. One such theory is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson, which highlights the prevalence of metaphor in language and offers novel methods for metaphorical analysis.

The ways we use language and formulate arguments are products of our cognitive processes, which are based on specific knowledge structures that, in turn, are shaped by conceptual cross-domain mappings (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Gibbs (1999) focused on the role of cross-domain mappings in language use, emphasizing how metaphorical thought operates automatically and interactively. These mappings influence people’s understanding of metaphorical meaning, motivate linguistic meaning, and have the potential to alter the meanings of words over time.

Other theories include Mental Space Theory (Fauconnier, 1994), which suggests that words shape the construction of mental spaces without directly referencing entities, and Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), which explains the conceptual operations involved in discursive communication.

The repetition of a message that lacks a semantic foundation is a highly effective strategy for political leaders. If we imagine a situation where a political speech is delivered with extensive associative connections and logical reasoning, it becomes clear that a large portion of society, lacking the same analytical abilities that shape the political message, will struggle to retain it. Contrary to logical expectations, a speech composed of short, less connected, and more emotional sentences will be more easily absorbed and remembered.

3. Rhetoric and cultural rhetoric

Rhetoric and politics have been closely connected since ancient times.² They likely emerged together, or in such a short period that it is difficult to determine which preceded the other. The role of the sophists in the development of rhetoric for political purposes, including figures like Gorgias, who came to Athens as a

² On the presence of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece, see: Quintiliano, 1970; Kennedy, 1972; Jaeger, 1978; Hadot, 1980; Cole, 1991; Lopez Eire, 2002, 2005; Lloyd, 2010; on the presence of Rhetoric in Middle Ages, see: Murphy (ed.) (1986); López Eire, 1996.

political representative delivering speeches, as well as Hippias' creation of a mnemonic system, the use of rhythms in prose, and the focus on influencing the emotional sphere of the audience, all demonstrate the deep connection between rhetoric and politics (Encinas, 2012).

Two possible approaches to the development of rhetoric include the view that it originated as a political genre following the establishment of a republican government in Syracuse, and another perspective that links rhetoric to the development of the judicial genre, which emerged due to the political instability following the death of Hieron and the continuation of tyrannical rule under the Tracible. This political context partially shaped the evolution of the judicial sphere. In both cases, it is clear that rhetoric developed in response to political instability, aiming to achieve social stability and lay the foundations of democracy (Hinks, 1940; Encinas, 2012).

Traveling from Syracuse to Athens, rhetoric found itself in a democratic environment that further shaped its development. The presence of sophists (Kerferd, 1981; Gagarin, 2010), who were deeply involved in the intellectual life of the time, also helped advance rhetoric across various areas of human communication, including politics, history, philosophy, and education. The political activity of that period, as well as relations between countries, wars, and diplomatic interactions, led to the creation and delivery of political discourses. While most of these have not survived to the present day, those that have demonstrate the role rhetoric played in political communication and the skills possessed by rhetors for its execution (Wilcox, 1942; Goebel, 1983; Encinas, 2012). Rhetorical strategies helped shape collective consciousness, creating a clear distinction between "us" and "them", which fostered social cohesion and nurtured patriotic sentiments (Caballero López, 2012).

For Aristotle, rhetorical discourse consisted of three components: the speaker, the content being communicated, and the audience for whom it was delivered. Based on the role of the hearers in the communication process, rhetorical discourse was classified as epideictic or demonstrative (when the audience does not make a decision after the discourse is delivered), judicial (when the audience decides on past events), and deliberative (when the audience makes decisions about future events) (Aristóteles, 1971: 1358a36-1358b8). Naturally, political discourse is primarily deliberative, as its main goal is to persuade the audience and bring about concrete political changes in the near future. This represents the social function of rhetoric, which developed over centuries and reached its fullest expression in democratic societies, where it is most evident (Vives, cited in Albaladejo, 2012). Based on this function, rhetoric is a social and cultural tool that facilitates relations between groups and individuals in society (Albaladejo, 2012). At the same time, political discourse also includes demonstrative and judicial elements, as it takes into account the referential and contextual foundations that underpin its composition. This should be considered when composing, analyzing, and interpreting rhetorical discourses (Vilches Vivancos, 2012; Albaladejo, 2012).

The further development of rhetoric is observed in Rome, beginning around the mid-second century B.C. The role of Cato the Elder, to whom a lost tractate on rhetoric is attributed (Atkins, 1961), as well as the anonymous work *La Rhetorica ad Herennium*, often attributed to Cicero (Grube, 1968), and Cicero's own set of works on rhetoric, alongside Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (Quintilian, 1970), collectively form the *Rhetorica recepta*—a theoretical corpus that outlines the fundamental categories and characteristics of the rhetorical system (Albaladejo, 1989). This period continued until the 5th century A.D., during which the contributions of minor Latin rhetoricians further shaped the development of rhetoric (Halm, 1964; Murphy, 1982).

The development of rhetoric continued through the Middle Ages (De Bruyne, 1958; Curtius, 1981), when rhetoric became closely connected with poetics, leading to the "rhetorization" of poetics and the "poetization" of rhetoric (García Berrio, 1977: 23). In the Renaissance (Weinberg, 1961; García Berrio, 1977, 1994; Murphy, 1994), rhetoric was separated from poetics (García Berrio, 1977: 22). During French Classicism, rhetoric evolved into the science of *elocutio*, focusing primarily on style and neglecting other aspects, resulting in the formation of what is known as *rhétorique restreinte* (Genette, 1972; Ricoeur, 1980). It was only in the 20th century that rhetoric was revived in its original form, giving rise to three distinct dimensions: rhetoric of argumentation (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1989), structuralist rhetoric (Grupo μ , 1987), and general textual rhetoric (García Berrio, 1984; Pozuelo Yvancos, 1988).

Different rhetorical operations influence the effectiveness of political discourse composition and communication. Rhetorical operations that contribute to discourse formation, such as *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*, alongside those that assist in the delivery and communication, like *memoria* and *actio/pronuntiatio*, rely on the pre-operational phenomenon of *intellectio*. This element is crucial as it establishes a cultural-communicative horizon (Arduini, 1991), facilitating rhetorical communication and forming part of the rhetorical operations of poietic activity (Albaladejo & Chico Rico, 1994). *Intellectio* determines which parts of the speech the orator should memorize to achieve successful persuasion (Vilches Vivancos, 2012). It enables the orator to identify the *status* of the question, which may either be general (*quaestio infinita*—a domain of philosophy) or specific (*quaestio finite*—a domain of rhetoric). This distinction characterizes the reason as either dialectic, when lacking status, or firm, when it provides a solid foundation for constructing a rhetorical discourse (Albaladejo, 1989).

Inventio is the phase in which concrete ideas are sought to form the foundation for the construction of a rhetorical discourse. It serves to identify key concepts aimed at persuading the audience (Capdevila, 2002). The definition and realization of rhetorical strategy, as well as the formulation of rhetorical argumentation, are essential components of this operation (Vázquez & Aldea, 1991). These elements assist a political leader in discovering and organizing ideas for effective persuasion (Vilches Vivancos, 2012). *Inventio* is a process of textual elaboration—an extensional-semantic operation that leads to the identification of the extensional *res* that should be incorporated into the discourse (Albaladejo, 1989).

Dispositio serves the function of organizing the internal structure of the text, including both the semantic-intentional and syntactic components, based on the extensional-semantic material provided by *inventio*. This process transforms the textual material into a macrostructure (Albaladejo, 1989). Macrostructures are “higher order propositions subsuming underlying propositions” (Van Dijk, 1995: 389). As macrostructures consist of sections of the *partes orationis*, Heinrich Lausberg suggests that *dispositio* should be viewed as a constituent part of *inventio*, as the latter is oriented toward the *partes orationis*.

Elocutio, as Quintilian noted, is the operation that transforms a discourse into an act (Quintilian, 1970). It is the verbalization of the semantic-intentional structure of discourse that follows *dispositio*, but may also be considered part of it, as well as of *inventio* (Albaladejo, 1989). When rhetoric lost its political dimension in the first century, *elocutio* became the only operation practiced, marking the loss of the political dimension of political discourse. This shift resulted in the absence of the interpretative function of rhetorical discourse, as there was nothing left to persuade, and rhetoric was reduced to the transfer of cultural elements, leaving *elocutio* with a purely aesthetic function (Pujante, 2012). As observed, during Classicism, no special theories regarding poetic language were formulated. Instead, rhetorical concepts were applied to poetry (García Berrio, 1984; Pujante, 2012).

Inventio, *dispositio*, and *elocutio* participate in the formation of a rhetorical discourse, which is retained by the orator through the operations of *memoria* and *actio/pronuntiatio* before being delivered to the public (Gómez Alonso, 1997).

Memoria refers to the process of retaining the discourse in memory, ensuring the preservation of its syntactic and semantic structures for the successful delivery of the speech (Albaladejo, 1989).

Actio/pronuntiatio is the operation that distinguishes political discourse from other forms of discursive representation. It involves making the right emphasis on key topics, using pauses between sentences, varying tone modulation, and incorporating body language—particularly eye contact (Ekström, 2012)—and gesticulation. These elements make political discourse more impactful and memorable. Common strategies include simplifying the lexicon, using modal verbs and short phrases, and employing rhetorical devices like epanalepsis and anaphora, as demonstrated in the analysis of President N. Sarkozy’s speech (Sarmiento González, 2012). *Intellectio*, *memoria*, and *actio/pronuntiatio* are rhetorical operations that do not directly contribute to the formation of discourse but are essential for the realization of communicative-rhetorical activity (Albaladejo and Chico Rico, 1994).

Rhetoric has a political dimension, and politics carries a rhetorical one. In both cases, the goal of communication is persuasion, which means prioritizing the successful communication of a message over its absolute truthfulness. In political life, politicians explore rhetorical strategies not only for persuasion but also for manipulation, making it often difficult to distinguish the two. Political discourses play a crucial role in shaping and consolidating society, especially during moments of crisis when opposing political factions come together to resolve the situation (Albaladejo, 2012). Therefore, being a rhetor requires a strong sense of imagination, which allows one to transform the unreal into reality and, ultimately, to make this imagined reality both desirable and tangible. Political rhetoric can be categorized into different types, including electoral rhetoric, parliamentary rhetoric, and rhetoric related to other forms of political communication (Vilches Vivancos, 2012).

Rhetoric, as one of the classical sciences, evaluates the composition, analysis, and communication methods of discourses. It also studies various forms of discourse, including political discourse, their interpretation, and the relationship between different types of discourse, as well as their textual and cultural characteristics (Albaladejo, 2013a; Albaladejo & Chico Rico, 2022). Given this, it is no surprise that politicians are deeply invested in rhetoric. Effective communication requires a profound understanding of rhetorical operations, which are essential for political leaders (López Eire & Santiago Guervós, 2000). Alongside Pragmatics (Van Dijk, 1976), rhetoric provides the tools necessary to realize three key approaches for successful communication: significance, communication, and context (Levinson, 1983; Clark, 1987; Eco, 1987; Carillo Guerrero, 2009). As noted, rhetoric is not merely a catalogue of figures but a worldview that incorporates philosophical, political, linguistic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, literary, and other types of discourse (Siles Ruiz, 2012: 25). Rhetoric is closely related to Dialectic, as Aristotle (1971: 1354a) stated, arising from the coexistence of pre-existing ideas that form the foundation for rhetorical discourse. The dialectical opposition between different ideas shapes the approach to reality and serves as the basis for creating arguments that must carry sufficient weight to persuade listeners of their validity. Rhetoric also intersects with Pragmatics (shaped by the linguistic characteristics of rhetorical discourse; Heilmann, 1983), Grammar (which ensures correct language use, a crucial element for successful communication; Albaladejo, 1989), and Semiotics (which involves the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components of discourse composition, linking Rhetoric with Text Linguistics and the Theory of Literature; Albaladejo, 1989).

Cultural rhetoric (Albaladejo, 2013b, 2016; Gallor Guarín, 2019; Chico Rico, 2020; Luarsabishvili (eds.) 2023, 2024) represents a new dimension within the framework of Neo-Rhetoric (Chico Rico, 2015). It builds upon General Textual Rhetoric (García Berrio, 1984) and aims to distinguish both the rhetorical dimension of culture and the cultural dimension of rhetoric. All rhetorical operations integrated into the cultural environment, along with the cultural values embedded in rhetorical political discourse, serve to convince the audience of the truthfulness of a political message. These operations also help establish the foundation for the existence of society within historical and temporal contexts. The composition and analysis of different types of discourses, as well as the relationships between them—referred to as *interdiscursivity* (Gómez-Moriana, 1997; Albaladejo, 2005a, 2008)—enable varied interpretations of discourses, known as *polyacrosis* (Albaladejo, 2009, 2012), and contribute to successful communication. Cultural elements embedded in rhetorical discourse are also present in other discourse types, such as literary, philosophical, educational,

and political discourses. These discourses complement one another, facilitate communication, and help navigate human reality as represented through discourse, exchanging cultural components that shape and develop cultural practices.

Political discourse activates cultural elements in the consciousness of society members, forging connections between the discourse's semantic message and the values that form the cultural episteme of a particular society. Chilton (2005) emphasized that discourse is a product of human interaction, highlighting the role of all social factors —relations, objects, etc.— that contribute to the discursive exchange of social practices. This underscores the necessity of understanding the social foundations that shape values at specific moments in human history.

4. Metaphor and metaphorical engine

The use of metaphor in language aims to conceptualize expression, transforming conventional meanings into unconventional ones. These unconventional interpretations, inherently subjective, give metaphors their meaning. Metaphors are not confined to language alone; both linguistic (less asymmetric) and non-linguistic (more asymmetric) forms represent events or objects in an unconventional way. In addition to metaphors, similes, analogies, and models are also employed to define an object. These involve the process of comparison (as in similes), similarity (as in analogies —simple, proportional, and predictive), and modeling (as in the case of models) (Indurkha, 1992).

The primary goal of a political message is to achieve political objectives through persuasion (Janoschka, 2010). The role of metaphor in political discourse is twofold: on one hand, metaphor helps construct a convincing discourse —one that the audience perceives as an intellectual product, leaving a strong impression of truth. The way the message is delivered and composed may not always be fully understandable, yet it can appear sophisticated, creating the impression of the orator's professionalism. A skilled political speaker is one who creates an impression, not necessarily meaning. This impression is reinforced by a network of metaphorical meanings activated once the message is delivered. An interesting study on the use of metaphors for political legitimization by President Bush is provided by Hobbes (2008). Metaphor, along with humour and myth, is among the rhetorical strategies commonly employed by politicians (Charteris-Black, 2011).

Another role of metaphor in political discourse is its ability to create an image in the audience's consciousness. On one hand, metaphors enhance trust in the meanings they convey, thereby influencing the credibility of the politician. On the other hand, metaphors help to construct a picture that reflects the essence of the political message. This process transforms the audience from mere listeners into participants in the creation of the message, connecting it to a broader cultural narrative known as the cultural memory of a nation. When a new detail aligns seamlessly with this established picture, the audience experiences a sense of pleasure and gratitude toward the politician who guided them into this cultural context. Thus, the audience is not necessarily grateful for the semantic core of the message itself, but for the aesthetic and cultural resonance it evokes.

Metaphors play a significant role in the creation of discourse by a political leader. By labelling opponents with negative adjectives and contrasting them with a positive portrayal of their own achievements, the political leader constructs a discourse that navigates between reason and emotion. In this discourse, reason is often replaced by a historical narrative —an aspect that cannot be easily verified and, in many cases, evokes pride among people. Emotions are intensified, rhetorically supported, and connected to widely shared societal values, such as religious rights, moral behaviour, or patriotism. Additionally, if the leader possesses physical attractiveness, it can further enhance their appeal and contribute to gaining fame within society.

The concept of the *metaphorical engine* was recently introduced to describe the semiotic projection of metaphorical meaning across different spaces of discourse, such as syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic domains. This term is used to explain the phenomenon of meaning transference during communication (Albaladejo, 2019c, 2023). This phenomenon can be observed at all stages of discursive activity: creation, transmission, analysis, and interpretation of discourses. It allows the receiver to grasp the encoded meaning in the message and, after successful analysis, interpret it based on the semantic equivalence and polyvalence of the metaphorical composition. The metaphorical engine also helps define metaphor as an integral part of the communicative code, enabling receivers who possess specific cultural traditions to recognize metaphorical meanings. Furthermore, the *metaphorical engine* is a component of a broader *figure engine*, which includes other tropes and figures (Chico Rico, 2019).

5. Context

Context is a space that holds historical and cultural dimensions, within which the self-realization of human society occurs. The term can be explored from various perspectives, and much has been written to describe its characteristics and constituent elements (Coseriu, 1967; Mignolo, 1978; Wellek & Warren, 1993; Chico Rico, 2007; Escandell, 2008; Van Dijk, 2008; Jiménez, 2018). In this discussion, we will focus briefly on one specific type of context: the social context in general terms, and the political context in particular, which forms a crucial part of the broader social context.

Social context is a space defined by the social characteristics of everyday life. Economic, healthcare, demographic, migration, psychological, and other factors that influence the well-being of human society make up the social context, which is inherently dynamic and subject to change. Significant changes in one area often lead to modifications in others; for example, increased migration can affect public health systems, and economic difficulties may alter demographic trends. One of the key components of social context is political life, which plays a crucial role in shaping the fluctuations in the social well-being of any society.

Political context is shaped by a set of characteristics that influence various aspects of a society, nation, or community. One of the foundational elements of political context is historical experience (Oakeshott, 1958, 1983, 1991). Questions such as where we come from, what we have achieved, and how we plan to realize ourselves in the future must be answered through the lens of our historical background. This experience may be shared by neighbouring countries, which we refer to as *collective historical experience*, or it may be unique to geographically distant countries, which we call *individual historical experience*. Historical experience can also be collective when countries within a region, such as European nations, have engaged in shared political or cultural activities in the past, potentially bridging the gap between geographically distant nations. Both collective and individual historical experiences can lead to social crises at various stages of societal development (Valdivia, 2019, 2020).

However, historical experience is not the only component of political context. Another crucial element is the cultural episteme, which is shaped during the realization of a particular historical experience. Culture is composed of values—shared beliefs about various aspects of everyday life. These values may be universal, accepted by most of human society, or non-universal, specific to particular societies. In both cases, values serve as fundamental elements in the formation of cultures, determining the role of traditions and their continuity or disappearance over time or across epochs.

Political context arises from both the historical and cultural dimensions of the social context. Different countries have distinct traditions for organizing political life. For instance, some countries have a predominance of democratic or republican governments, while in others, social programs shape the formation of parliaments and assemblies. Political context is structured based on both historical experience and the current political situation. Some countries have not participated in military conflicts for several centuries, and this experience influences their political context. In contrast, other countries are consistently involved in military operations around the world, driven by their political agendas, which also shape their political context. In both cases, political context is shaped by historical and cultural dimensions.

Political discourse, which is inherently rhetorical, is entirely shaped by contextual peculiarities. The speech delivered by U.S. President Joe Biden on the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine³ is grounded in both the general international political context and the specific situation in Ukraine. In his speech, President Biden connects two distinct contexts: one rooted in the past and the other in the current political landscape. By doing so, he creates a cohesive narrative that draws the audience into the political arena and intensifies the emotional impact of his message. Therefore, for the formation of a concrete political context, both global and local factors must be considered. Without this, the political rhetorical discourse risks being disconnected from its context and failing to persuade the audience.

Politics is a focal point for various disciplines, including social and biomedical sciences. Social sciences examine politics from a range of perspectives—economic, judicial, psychological, philosophical, educational, and historical. Biomedical sciences, on the other hand, focus on the political aspects of the organization of biomedical fields, scientific research, and approaches to public health and global humanitarian issues. In all of these cases, politics has something to say for today of mankind and, to a certain extent, determines the future of humanity.

6. Credibility and communication

Credibility refers to the quality of being accepted or trusted. In the case of a political leader, it signifies the ability to inspire trust. Truthfulness, on the other hand, is often associated with expertise in a given field. Politicians, as experts in the realm of social negotiations, identify the challenges society faces in a particular context and propose solutions. However, politicians often exaggerate or even *create* non-existent issues.

Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) add another dimension to credibility: the intention toward the receiver. Indeed, a politician must be—or at least appear to be—an expert in order to legitimize their intervention. The intervention should contain elements that inspire trust in the receiver or, at the very least, convince them of the truthfulness of the political discourse. This effort, aimed at making the event a success, is realized through persuasion. In this way, reputation and competence are established (Haiman, 1949), with the politician being perceived as a leader who possesses authority and character (McCroskey, 1966).

Popularity is the way a political leader acquires credibility. When a leader is popular and consistently delivers messages that align with public expectations, they become memorable. Over time, everything the leader says is perceived as absolute truth, not based on the content of the message, but on the activation of a part of the consciousness that recalls previous messages. Credibility is formed over a period and becomes strongly fixed in memory. To undo or reverse this credibility by attaching a negative meaning to it requires a long time. This can occur if a politician remains on the political stage for decades or acts against established norms of political and social behavior. In most cases, however, once credibility is acquired, it is rarely lost.

Credibility helps to convince, but what exactly is being convinced? It is the acceptance of certain characteristics by the audience. As Jeffery Scott Mio put it: "Among their many uses, metaphors are applied to convey policies, convince, or persuade the public of a plan of action, or to characterize political opponents" (Scott Mio, 1996, p. 127). These two approaches—convincing the audience of the correctness of a plan and negatively characterizing political opponents—are two sides of the same phenomenon. If a political message lacks a clear semantic core, it should be built on an emotional foundation to be convincing. Characterizing

³ The transcript is available on the official page of The White House: Remarks by President Biden Ahead of the One-Year Anniversary of Russia's Brutal and Unprovoked Invasion of Ukraine | The White House

political opponents with metaphorical expressions, often sophisticated in nature, creates an illusion of truth. Logical opposition, which may not be evidence-based but is easily formulated, can persuade the audience of the orator's truthfulness, thereby enhancing the politician's credibility.

Credibility is a pathway to popularity. A political leader's increasing popularity is almost entirely based on the credibility that makes leader an attractive orator. When a politician first enters the political scene, s/he is less attractive; becoming a leader takes time. If leader's appearances are frequent and tied to significant national events—such as elections, reforms, economic crises, educational advancements, or public health emergencies—the audience associates the leader's presence with critical moments, viewing them as an expert in the key aspects of societal life. This connection leads to the leader's increased popularity and credibility. Only a major scandal can lead to the loss of credibility and the complete collapse of a political leader's reputation.

To communicate in everyday life, humans have a cognitive ability to conceptualize the surrounding world using figurative terms. This involves constructing possible meanings, which organize our communicative faculties (Arduini, 2007). Politics, being so integral to our daily lives, must also be communicated. Indeed, political development is unimaginable without political communication, which should be regarded as one of the most vital forms of modern communication. Political discourse, which conveys political messages and aims to communicate political attitudes towards human plans and actions, is among the most ideologically driven forms of discourse. It can be formulated, reformulated, and recomposed many times. In all cases, the composition of political discourse is shaped by the specific contextual characteristics that necessitate its creation. Political communication, by nature, can be *informative* (providing information of interest to society), *persuasive* (connecting political leaders with their electorate), and *competitive* (where one political option triumphs over others; Vilches Vivancos, 2012).

Political communication is a mode of political activity that formulates political objectives based on voters' expectations and serves the function of constructing identity through symbolic practices (Sarmiento González, 2012). Symbolic, because what we hear or read is, by nature, a product of imagination—both when politicians speak about the past and when they discuss a future rooted in the present. This imagination must align with our expectations; otherwise, what we hear will not resonate with us. As a result, a political leader loses the ability to convince us with a message that forms the semantic foundation of their success.

A political orator must possess what is known as *active rhetorical competence* (Albaladejo, 1989), a communicative-textual skill that governs the creation of a text and determines how it should be delivered—whether through oral or written communication—ultimately with the goal of persuasion. This competence is essential for constructing rhetorical political discourse, which relies on rhetorical operations involved in its creation, as well as on operations like *memoria* and *actio/pronuntiatio* that, while not directly part of discourse formation, are crucial for its delivery. In addition to *active rhetorical competence*, there is a clear need for *passive rhetorical competence* on the part of the audience. This competence enables the audience to properly perceive and assess the rhetorical political discourse presented by a political leader (Albaladejo, 1989).

When discussing the communication of a political text, we must consider two key approaches to the topic: first, the nature of the political text itself, which is often *future-oriented* (Triadafilopoulos, 1999); second, the fact that political speeches are usually crafted by assistants or a group of individuals who shape a particular political ideology. This process turns political speech into a planned or pre-planned discourse (Ochs, 1979; Capone, 2010), enabling political leaders to anticipate the potential effects of their speeches (Reyes, 2014).

7. Conclusions

Political discourse has its own distinct mechanisms of composition and communication. Its composition relies on the linguistic and rhetorical resources of a given society, while its communication depends on both the *active* and *passive* rhetorical competences of politicians and their audiences. Additionally, political discourse is often *future-oriented*, characterized by promises that shape its communicative nature.

Based on cultural components, metaphors enrich political discourse, making it more persuasive and facilitating the effective acceptance of its semantic meaning. The activation of the *metaphorical engine* is crucial not only for the transmission but also for the interpretation of political discourses.

Context shapes the semantic foundation of a discourse. Built upon memory and historical experience, context not only creates a space for discourse but also imagines and predicts the scenarios that may influence the ways in which political discourse is created and communicated.

Credibility and popularity share a bidirectional relationship in achieving political success. Both factors contribute to the revitalization of political activity, establish a presence in the electorate's consciousness, and help shape the image of a strong, brave, and successful political leader.

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