

**A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF VERBAL PARALLELISM IN MICHELLE
OBAMA’S SPEECH AT HILLARY FOR AMERICA CAMPAIGN
IN NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Written by : Maulida Fitriyanti
 First Supervisor : Titik Sudartinah, S. S., M. A.
 Second Supervisor : Nandy Intan Kurnia, S. S., M. Hum.

English Literature Study Program
 Faculty of Languages and Arts
 Yogyakarta State University
 maulidafitriyanti@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to identify the types and functions of verbal parallelism in a speech delivered by Michelle Obama at Hillary for America campaign in New Hampshire, October 2016. This research also aims to describe the themes which can be inferred from the use of verbal parallelism in Michelle Obama’s speech at Hillary for America campaign in New Hampshire. This research applied descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research were taken from the speech given by Michelle Obama. The results of the research are as follows. (1) Among eight types of verbal parallelism, there are only seven types of verbal parallelism found in Michelle Obama’s speech at Hillary for America campaign in New Hampshire, namely anaphora, epistrophe, symploce, anadiplosis, epanalepsis, polyptoton, and homoioteleuton. (2) All four functions of verbal parallelism based on the theory proposed by Tannen are found, i.e. production, comprehension, connection, and interaction. (3) There are five themes that can be inferred from the speech. They are women’s rights, women’s insecurity, opponent’s misbehavior, gender equality, and persuasion to voters.

Keywords: verbal parallelism, types, functions, themes, Michelle Obama’s speech

INTRODUCTION

As a means of communication, language plays an important role in society. Each individual expresses themselves verbally and through written language with their own style. For instance, language style in literary writings is written to yield an aesthetic effect which is particularly more

noticeable. The language of literary writings is more difficult to understand than that of non-literary writings language. Although the basic structure of both types of language is the same, they are different in their working areas. Literary writers have unlimited ways to use the language creatively. They enjoy a unique freedom to range over all their communicative sources.

Various stylistic devices are used by the writers such as deviations, parallelism, figurative language, and so on. They use such devices to point out some ideas and give the readers or listeners distinctive emotions while reading the works. They sometimes tend to put their ideas by using some over-regularities or irregularities of a particular choice within the system. One obvious example in applying the over-regularity is called verbal parallelism. Those stylistic devices including verbal parallelism are studied under the field of stylistics. Leech (1969: 1) states that stylistics is the study of the use of language in literature. Since stylistics concerns with the variation of language use, it

belongs to linguistic studies. Language allows any types of lexical and grammatical repetition. However, not all kinds of repetitions take place within the framework of verbal parallelism. Only some certain types of repetition can be categorized into verbal parallelism. Verbal Parallelism also has important values, as much as any other stylistic devices, to the writings in defining the language style of the writer.

Since the advent study of language and style, many linguists have recognized the relationship between language style and non-literary works. Verbal parallelism as one of stylistic devices can also be found in non-literary texts, such as news reports, newspapers, speech, or advertisements. Therefore, this research focuses on analyzing verbal parallelism which is found in speech. By analyzing a certain stylistic device in a speech, it would be possible to establish the characteristics of the speakers, to understand the speaking style of the speakers whether they are political leaders or celebrities. This research

focuses on a speech given by Michelle Obama since she is considered as one of the most notable people in the world. One of the most considered powerful speeches by Michelle Obama which was delivered in front of the people of New Hampshire as a part of a rally campaign for Hillary Clinton which was taken as the object of this research.

This research has three objectives: to identify the types of verbal parallelism, to describe the functions of verbal parallelism in the speech given by Michelle Obama in at Hillary for America campaign in New Hampshire, and to describe the themes which can be inferred from the use of verbal parallelism in the speech delivered by Michelle Obama.

To answer the three objectives, some theories are used. The first objective is answered by applying Leech's theory of verbal parallelism as the basic theory of this research. According to Leech (1969), there are eight types of verbal parallelism including anaphora, epistrophe, symploce, anadiplosis, epanalepsis,

antistrophe, polyptoton, and homoioteleuton. As for the functions, the theory proposed by Deborah Tannen (2007: 58) is used. It is stated that there are four functions of repetition which are production, comprehension, connection, and interaction. The themes in the speech itself are analyzed by identifying the plot structure of speech, especially on the sequence of recurrent elements making up the whole speech.

Moreover, stylistics is the main approach used in this research to analyze the speech as the object of the research. Simpson (2004:2) states that stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language. Stylistics devices play a prominent role in analyzing any kinds of texts from its linguistics features. Linguistic features attribute a notably large portion in the amount of aesthetic interest in writings (Leech and Short, 2007: 23).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied descriptive qualitative method which analyzed a specific language phenomenon. Van

Maanen (in Merriam, 2009: 13) defines qualitative research as an interpretive technique to describe, decode, and discover the meaning, not the number of occurrence, of the phenomena observed. The result of this qualitative method is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009: 16). Descriptive qualitative method was employed in describing the data in words or making interpretations on the findings.

Since this research employed descriptive qualitative method, the data in this research were in the forms of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences in which verbal parallelism is used by Michelle Obama in her speech at Hillary for America Campaign in New Hampshire.

To collect the valid data, there were several steps taken in by the researcher. After watching the video of the speech, the researcher looked for the official transcript to match with the video and read it several times. The next step was analyzing all the utterances in the speech. After that, the researcher applied the experts' theories

of verbal parallelism to classify the data.

As previously noted, this research employed qualitative method; one of the main characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the main instrument for collecting and analyzing the data (Merriam, 2009: 15). Therefore, in conducting this research, the researcher herself was the main instrument to investigate, to collect, and to analyze the data. Another instrument which was used in this research was a data sheet to help the researcher get precise data.

The method of triangulation was applied to ensure the validity of the research. The researcher discussed and consulted the research to her two supervisors. In addition, the researcher also asked some of her linguistics fellow to triangulate the data in order to ensure the validity and suitability between the theory and the result of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Leech's theory (1969), there are eight types of verbal parallelism. However, only seven

types of verbal parallelism are found in Michelle Obama's Speech at Hillary for America Campaign in New Hampshire. They are anaphora, epistrophe, symploce, anadiplosis, epanalepsis, polyptoton, and homoioteleuton. Antistrophe does not occur since there is no repetition of units in a reverse order. The speaker of the given speech tends to repeat the words, phrases, or clauses in a forward order to emphasize her messages.

As for the functions based on Tannen's theory (2007), all four functions can be inferred from Michelle Obama's speech. Those four functions include production, comprehension, connection, and interaction.

In addition to the types and functions of verbal parallelism in Michelle Obama's speech, there are five themes found in the speech delivered by Michelle Obama. They are women's rights, women's insecurity, opponent's misbehavior, gender equality, and persuasion to voters.

1. Types of Verbal Parallelism in Michelle Obama's Speech at Hillary for America Campaign in New Hampshire

The explanations of the seven types of verbal parallelism are presented below along with the examples.

a. Anaphora

Anaphora is a form of verbal parallelism in which the same word or word combination is repeated in the beginning of each consecutive clause or sentence. The example is in the following.

We teach our kids the value of being a team player, which is what Hillary exemplified when she lost the 2008...

We also teach our kids that you don't take shortcuts in life, and you strive for meaningful success in whatever job you do...

And finally, **we teach our kids** that when you hit challenges in life, you don't give up, you stick with it.

(Datum No. 33)

These long sentences are delivered by Mrs. Obama as she summarizing the biography Hillary Clinton. She intentionally repeats the initial words of each sentence which are **we teach our kids**. By repeating those words and listing out Hillary Clinton experiences in political field, Mrs.

Obama tries to give away the positive points of Hillary Clinton that can be used as a motivation for younger generation. By repeating those words, she also points out that characteristic of a person can be shaped from experience.

b. Epistrophe

The second type of verbal parallelism is called epistrophe. This type of verbal parallelism is marked by the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive lines, clauses, or sentences. The first example of epistrophe from Michelle Obama's speech is presented below.

last week, we saw this candidate actually **bragging about sexually assaulting women**. And I can't believe that I'm saying that a candidate for President of the United States has **bragged about sexually assaulting women**.

(Datum No. 09)

Each sentence of the example above is ended by the same word combination which shows the occurrence of epistrophe. In the middle of her speech, Mrs. Obama comes to the point where she points out the bad qualities owned by Hillary Clinton's opposition. Mrs. Obama repeats the

words **brag about sexually assaulting women** as she voices out her opinion. She could not contain her feelings as she is upset about the opposite candidate. She highlights the point of assaulting women as something that cannot be ignored. That is also her reason why she brought up that issue into her campaign speech.

c. Symploce

The combination of both anaphora and epistrophe forms the type of verbal parallelism called symploce. Symploce is an initial and a final word or set of words that are repeated in successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. The following example is taken from Michelle Obama's speech at Hillary for America campaign.

We are validating it. We are endorsing it.

(Datum No. 39)

In this example, the words **we are...it** are repeated at the beginning and the end of each sentence. Those words happen to be repeated because Mrs. Obama talks about if Hillary Clinton's opponent won the election. She states that if Trump who bragged about sexually assaulting women on public

won the election, means that the people of America are okay with such misbehavior towards women. She says that the public agreed with such action to be done to women.

d. Anadiplosis

Anadiplosis happens when there is repetition at the beginning of a phrase or a clause of a word (or words) with which the previous phrase or clause ended. Below is the example of anadiplosis found in Michelle Obama's speech at Hillary for America campaign.

In fact, someone recently told me a story about their six-year-old son who one day was **watching the news** -- they were **watching the news** together

(Datum No. 25)

These sentences are uttered by Mrs. Obama when she talks about the anecdote of a boy who was watching the news about Trump's misbehavior towards women on TV. The repetition happened on the words **watching the news** which ended the first sentence and repeated in the near beginning of the next sentence. Mrs. Obama repeats those words because it was what actually happened to the boy. Even

from watching the news, a six year old boy could have a thought that Hillary Clinton would be the next President of the U.S.

e. Epanalepsis

Epanalepsis happens when there is a repetition at the end of a clause of the word or word combination that occurred at the beginning of the clause. The following example shows the occurrence of epanalepsis in Michelle Obama's speech.

no one could be more qualified for this job than Hillary -- **no one**.

(Datum No. 37)

Here, Mrs. Obama mentions directly that Hillary Clinton is the only person qualified to be the next President of the United States between the two candidates. She insists the message by repeating the word **no one** in the beginning and end of her sentence. That word brought the speech's message came to the light. The message of the campaign speech should resonate to the audience.

f. Polyptoton

The definition of polyptoton is the repetition of a word, within successive clauses or sentences, in a different

form but from the same root. An example of polyptoton is shown below.

See, on Tuesday, at the White House, we **celebrated** the International Day of the Girl and Let Girls Learn, and it was a wonderful **celebration**. It was the last event that I'm going to be doing as First Lady for Let Girls Learn.

(Datum No. 02)

In the beginning of her speech, Mrs. Obama talks briefly about the event she attended before the campaign. As that event was closely related to what she was going to talk about in her speech, which was women. She happens to repeat some similar words which categorized as polyptoton in her sentences when she talks about the International Day of the Girl celebration. Polyptoton found in that speech was marked by the words **celebrated** and **celebration** which came from the same root. She marks the celebration event as the occasion where she could talk to women from all around the world. She mentions how precious and valuable women are.

g. Homoioteleuton

Homoioteleuton is the repetition of similar endings in two or more

adjacent words, clauses, or lines. An example of homoioteleuton is presented below.

And now here I am, out on the campaign trail in an election where we have consistently been hearing **hurtful**, **hateful** language about women--language that has been **painful** for so many of us

(Datum No. 06)

In response to Trump's comment about how he sexually abused women in the past, Mrs. Obama reacts by saying that his comment was such a pain for women in general. Not only that Trump has sexually abused women, but also he bragged about it in public. Hearing those comments about how he treated women, Mrs. Obama gives her honest opinion. She says that his comments were hurtful, hateful, and also painful. The repetition of the word -ful in the sentence above shows the occurrence of homoioteleuton.

2. Functions of Verbal Parallelism in Michelle Obama's Speech at Hillary for America Campaign in New Hampshire

The four functions which are found in Michelle Obama's Speech at Hillary for America campaign in New Hampshire are explained in the following.

a. Production

The first function is called production. By this function, verbal parallelism can be used as a source of producing sufficient talk. Repetition allows the speaker to set up a slot for additional information. Below is the example.

This is not normal. **This is not** politics as usual.

(Datum No. 19)

These sentences are uttered by Mrs. Obama as she clearly stated her opinion to the people of New Hampshire that what was done by Hillary Clinton's opponent was something that should not be done. As she emphasizes her speech on the words **this is not** in which she repeated, she voiced out her disagreement to such misbehavior. By repeating those words, she produces language in a more efficient way.

b. Comprehension

The second function is comprehension. Since the production function is more advantageous for the speaker, the comprehension function is more beneficial to the audience or the

hearer. The example is presented as follows.

This is not something that we can ignore. **It's not something we can** just sweep under the rug as just another disturbing footnote in a sad election season.

(Datum No. 10)

These sentences are uttered by Mrs. Obama as she stated her feelings towards Trump's action in which he bragged about sexually assaulting women. She says that she could not stop thinking about that. That was why she talks about that on her campaign speech. She repeatedly says **this is not something we can**. Those words were referred to Trump's action. She repeating those words because she wants to make sure that the audience understood about her opinion. She wants the audience to think the same way as she did. She tries to get the audience to know that assaulting women is not an appropriate thing to do.

c. Connection

Repetition also serves a referential and tying function. Repeating the same words shows how utterances are linked to each sentence and how the ideas are

presented. The example is presented below.

It's that feeling of terror and violation that too many women have felt when someone has grabbed **them**, or forced himself on **them**.

(Datum No. 14)

This example shows how repetition functioned to tie the idea of the clauses above. The word **them** is repeated as a reference to women. In this case, Mrs. Obama is talking about how women must be felt when someone acts aggressively towards them. She is indicating that women must be felt terrified on such actions. She ties her ideas by mentioning women as she did not want people to put down women. She implies the importance of appreciating women's feelings.

d. Interaction

In spoken communication, the interaction between the speaker and the hearer plays an important part for developing effective communication. In other words, repetition also links the individual speakers in a conversation to bond with the audience or the hearer. An example of interaction is presented in the following.

then **how can we** maintain our moral authority in the world? **How can we** continue to be a beacon of freedom and justice and human dignity?

(Datum No. 41)

Mrs. Obama brings back the issue of what if a President routinely degrades women and brags about sexually assaulting women to stress her persuasive message. She asks the audience what they could do if such President is elected. She repeats the question words as form of interacting with the audience. She tries to hold the audience's attention all the way to the end. This kind of repetition functioned can be seen as the interaction that happened between the speaker and the hearer.

3. Themes in Michelle Obama's Speech at Hillary for America Campaign in New Hampshire

a. Women's rights

Michelle Obama as the speaker of the campaign speech brings up the issue about women. It is inevitable that the theme of her speech would be related to women. Mrs. Obama states over and over in her speech that women deserved to be treated the right way.

I wanted them to understand that the measure of any society is how it treats its women and girls. **And I told them that they** deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, **and I told them that they** should disregard anyone who demeans or devalues them, and that they should make their voices heard in the world.

(Datum No. 05)

Talking about Let Girls Learn celebration event, Mrs. Obama mentions that she tries to encourage those young women to be brave. She tell those young women that they deserved to be treated with dignity and respect. The use of repetition on the words **and I told them that they** emphasizing the message that Mrs. Obama wants to convey. By repeating those words, she also attempts to convince the audience to work together on how women should be treated. She insists what women deserve as the rights that women posses. Women's voices deserved to be heard by the society.

b. Women's Insecurity

The next theme is still closely related to women. As Michelle Obama brings up the issue of Hillary Clinton's opponent who bragged about sexually

assaulting women, she tried to deliver her message in her speech in the theme of women's insecurity. Below is the example.

And now here I am, out on the campaign trail in an election where we have consistently been hearing **hurtful, hateful** language about women--language that has been **painful** for so many of us.

(Datum No. 06)

This example describes how Hillary Clinton's opponent action affecting women. Mrs. Obama reacts to by saying that his comment was such a pain for women in general. She regards Trump, even though she never mentions his name directly, has been delivering not appropriate comments about women. She says that his comments are hurtful, hateful, and also painful to be heard by women in particular. The words "hurtful" and "painful" show the women's feeling towards such action. Mrs. Obama addresses women must be feeling insecure by hearing such comments delivered by a candidate for President.

c. Opponent's Misbehavior

The next theme found in Michelle Obama's speech is about opponent's

misbehavior. As Mrs. Obama clearly addresses how Trump acts towards women in her speech, she wants the audience to understand the message she conveys. An example is presented in the following.

We have a candidate for President of the United States who, over **the course of** his lifetime and **the course of** this campaign, has said things about women that are shocking, so demeaning that I simply will not repeat anything here today.

(Datum No. 07)

This statement is the continuation of the previous statement about Trump given by Mrs. Obama. Here, she points out again how Trump has treated women. She emphasizes that Trump has been treating women wrongly, not only on the current campaign, but also on his whole life. She repeats the words **the course of** in each beginning of her clause to emphasize her message. By stating such sentences, Mrs. Obama tries to show the audience what kind of person Trump is seen from his actions in public.

d. Gender Equality

Gender equality becomes one of the themes in Michelle Obama's

speech. In her speech, she brings up the issue of gender equality.

They are loving fathers who are sickened by the thought of their daughters being exposed to this kind of vicious language about women.

They are husbands and brothers and sons who don't tolerate women being treated and demeaned and disrespected.

(Datum No. 23)

After talking about Hillary Clinton's opponent's misbehavior, Mrs. Obama starts to lay out the characteristics of men who appreciate women. Here, Mrs. Obama states her believe that men surround us do not treat women in a bad way. She repeats the beginning part of her sentences to emphasize that men in our life have good and proper behavior. She states her belief that men around us are disengaged to such inappropriate behavior towards women. By mentioning those characteristics, Mrs. Obama tries to point out that gender equality matters in society.

e. Persuasion to Voters

The last theme which can be reflected from Michelle Obama's speech at Hollary for America campaign in New Hampshire is none

other than persuasion to voters. As it is a campaign speech, the speakers will try to gain public interest to vote for the candidate they represent. An example in which persuasion to voters theme can be found is presented below.

People who are truly strong lift others up. **People who are truly** powerful bring others together. And that is what we need in our next President.

(Datum No. 30)

Nearing the end of the speech, Mrs. Obama comes to the point where she invites all of the audience to vote for Hillary Clinton. In these sentences, Mrs. Obama convinces the audience that powerful people would not treat others badly. By not mentioning Trump's name. Mrs. Obama emphasizes that the next President of the United States should act gracefully. Here, she indirectly drags down Trump and his inappropriate behavior. As known by others, Trump has been bragging about sexually assaulting women in public. By doing so, Mrs. Obama implies that she wants the audience to vote for Hillary Clinton.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, in delivering her speech, Michelle Obama tends to use nearly all types of verbal parallelism, except for antistrophe. Those seven types of verbal parallelism found in her speech carry their own functions. Since there are two functions that can be identified in almost all types of verbal parallelism, those functions can be stated as the main functions of verbal parallelism in Michelle Obama's speech. They are production and comprehension. Moreover, in carrying the types and functions, Michelle Obama also delivers two main themes of her speech. Opponent's misbehavior and Persuasion to voters can be categorized as the main themes because the speaker tries to make an appeal to the audience. As the speech is given in a political campaign event, trying to persuade the audience by calling on a particular issue can be very helpful.

REFERENCES

Leech, G.N. 1969. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. New York: Longman.

- Leech, G.N. and M. H. Short. 2007. *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (2nd Ed). Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Merriam. S.B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Simpson, P. 2004. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Tannen, D. 2007. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The White House. 2016. *Remarks by the First Lady at Hillary for America Campaign Event in Manchester, Nh.* <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/13/remarks-first-lady-hillary-america-campaign-event-manchester-nh>. Accessed on October 19th, 2016.