Lady Gaga’s speech on Elle Women award: Theme and stylistic levels

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Abstract

This study aims at conducting a stylistic analysis in terms of theme or intention of one speech uttered by Lady Gaga at Elle Women Award and explicating four stylistic levels including graphology level, morphology level, lexical level, and syntax level deployed in its making. In an attempt to uncover the theme or picture of the speech, the writer employed content analysis for this study. The theme of the speech was revealed by analyzing the core content of the message of Gaga’s speech to determine the linguistic substance and semantic indication that directed to main message of the speech. The results of the analysis show that the stylistic levels play its important part in the effective use of words in speech delivery. Further, these elements also contribute well in delivering the speaker’s intention to the audience. This study recommends that the speaker must select the choice of words and structure they use in their speech before they deliver the speech to the audience.

Keywords: speech; style; stylistic levels; theme

INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool used by human to communicate with other. Leech (1981) as cited in Zheng (2014) stated that language performs a number of different functions and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional levels. In relation to that statement, a speaker or writer decides her own linguistics choices adjusting to what purpose she wants to achieve in her speech. Before deciding to write the speech, a speaker or writer must take the theme or subject of the speech as her main consideration. Theme is the key point of the speech. What a speaker or writer write about is greatly affected by audience. If one always considers theme in delivering the speech, she will communicate the ideas more effectively (Blanchard and Root: 2004. p.8). In writing a speech, how she conveys her thought is known as style. It is the way how language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on (Leech and Short, 1981: 10). To know the ‘how’ a speaker or writer puts her ideas is by systematically examining the text. Basically, stylistics sets to answer the question of how a text is configured in relation to why it is thus structured (Murana: 2017). In line to this, Salman (2013:114) as cited in Murana (2017) further explains that the how focuses on ‘the form, the architectonics’, while the why concerns with the ‘axis of interpretation and speculation’. Stylistic analysis functions as an analytical devices to
uncover the textual patterns and observe its significance. It validates how language, diction, and sentence structures are interconnected to create interpretation. Rhetorical terms and syntactical devices are two devices employed in the language to create expressive style.

Stylistic analysis on speeches have attracted some linguists interpretative curiosities. Horvart (2009), Kulo (2009), Adamec (2011), Hamid and Ahmed (2015) have done their works about stylistic analysis on speech focusing on speech strategies and characteristics. The main concern of this study is to pinpoint the core message of the speech and to find out the specific elements that mark the speech identity through the analysis of four stylistic levels: lexical level, graphology level, morphology level and syntax level. So, when a text is analyzed, its linguistic features are of prime importance (Varghese, 2012).

METHOD

The research design that the writer proposed to analyze the theme and stylistic level of the speech delivered by Lady Gaga and presented at Elle Women Award is descriptive research. The decision for taking descriptive design is under this consideration. This research is about a language research in which the data of the research is taken from the internal structure of the language called morphosyntax. Qualitative design is proposed in this study because the writer needed to gather data taken from the internal structure of a language such as phonology, morphology, syntaxis, discourse structure, and semantic structure (Chaer, 2007:09). Since this study is presented in qualitative form, which means the results of analysis is presented in the form of words not number, the writer herself is the main instrument. She herself observed the phenomenon, collected data, analyzed data, and reported the results of the analysis. In this case, the writer is the decision maker of the research process. Lady Gaga’s speech script is considered as second instrument. The speech script was then analyzed to unfold the theme expressed in the speech through the author’s language choice and to reveal the style in presenting information in terms of graphology, lexical, morphology, and syntax features.

The object of this study is the script of the speech delivered by Lady Gaga at Elle Women Award. This speech was chosen because this speech is phenomenal. She emotionally delivered the speech containing touchy and heart-breaking message. It grasped million people’s attention and became a highlight in all media soon after the speech delivered. The subject of this study is the theme and stylistic levels of the speech.

In order to collect the data for this study, the writer downloaded the script of the speech from the internet and listened carefully to the speech for several times. The writer wanted to make sure that the script of the speech was exactly the same as it is written in the script downloaded from the internet. This study underwent two ways to analyze the speech delivered by Lady Gaga at Elle Women Award. Those two procedures were done to reveal the theme of the speech delivered by Lady Gaga and to
know the element of stylistic levels of the speech itself. First, in an attempt to uncover the theme or picture of the speech, the writer considers it pertinent to employ content analysis for this study. The theme of the speech was revealed by analyzing the core content of the message of the speech delivered by Lady Gaga presented at Elle Women Award to determine the linguistic substance and semantic indication that directed to main meaning of the speech. Second, the writer applied Leech and Short’s framework (1981) dealing with linguistics and stylistic categories. One speech uttered by Lady Gaga is subjected to four levels of stylistics covering lexical level, graphology level, morphology level and syntactic level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As it is stated in the previous discussion, the main concerns of this study are the theme in the speech and the stylistic levels of the speech itself. The speech was taken from one of the most famous and most influential public figures. It is the speech delivered by Lady Gaga presented at Elle Women Award. The writer analyzed the speech by specifying it to four levels of stylistic: lexical level, graphology level, morphology level and syntactic level as the foundation in doing the analysis of this study.

Theme of the Speech

The theme of Gaga’s speech defined as unifying support toward mental and physical pain survivors issues and justice for sexual assault survivors. The speech was delivered when Gaga was awarded as Elle Women in Hollywood honoree. Since it is a unifying support for the survivors, in her speech Gaga spoke through her wardrobe. She wore an oversize Marc Jacob suit to represent her way to “take the power back”. As she said:

“As a sexual assault survivor by someone in the entertainment industry, as a woman who is still not brave enough to say his name, as a woman who lives with chronic pain, as a woman who was conditioned at a very young age to listen to what men told me to do, I decided today, I wanted to take the power back. Today, I wear the pants. Today, I wear the suit”

At that time, she made her sensitive yet powerful moving speech as an occasion to arouse awareness and support for mental and physical illness survivor for people of all ages and justice for sexual assault survivors. She continued her speech in details about her traumatic miserable experience as a sexual assault survivor who was in dire need of help. She spoke at length about carrying the shame and the blame of the incident she experienced when she was 19 done by unnamed man in the entertainment industry which left her with long term depression and PTSD and Fibromyalgia battles. This is the excerpt of her speech:

“After I was assaulted when I was 19, I changed forever. Part of me shut down for many years. I didn’t tell anyone. I avoided it myself. And felt shame even still today standing in front of you. I feel shame for what happened to me. I still have days where I feel like
it was my fault. After I shared what happened to me with very powerful men in this industry, nobody helped me. No one offered my guidance or a helping hand to lead me to a place where I felt justice, they didn’t even point me in the direction of the mental health assistance I was in dire need of. Those men hid because they were afraid of losing their power. And because they hid, I began to hide. I hid for a long time until I started to feel physical pain. Then I had to go to the doctor because I didn’t know what was wrong with me. And then I was diagnosed with PTSD and Fibromyalgia, which many people don’t think is real, and I don’t even know what the fuck to say about that. But I’ll tell you what it is. It’s a syndrome that is essentially a cyclone of stress induced pain.”

Though the main theme of the speech is about Gaga’s terrible personal experience, but there are other sub themes in her speech. Those are commitment, sadness, allurement, hopes, dreams, personal future plans, and gratefulness. The speech itself is made up from several element orders structured to form the whole meaningful speech. These elements transfer the messages effectively to audiences. Some elements of plot structure are employed by Gaga to make up the whole speech. Those elements include (1) opening by giving special compliment for Jennifer Lopez who has inspired Gaga in her career, (2) convincing people that beauty is not defined by Hollywood standards and beautiful-branded wardrobe, (3) convincing people to be who they really are, (4) confessing her traumatic tragedy and her battles of mental and physical pain (5) empowering people to fight for justice for sexual assault, (6) gaining people’s assistance for people suffering from mental and physical illness, (7) showing facts about the sum of people suffering mental and physical pain in countries, (8) developing dream to plan to help the victims of sexual assault and physical and mental illness (9) inviting people to join foundation for empowering youth to create a better world, (10) forcing people to change and to stand for justice, and last closing her speech by showing gratitude for audiences and for people who supporting her.

Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Gaga delivered this acceptance speech in 2018 as she awarded as Elle Women. She aims to empower people to stand and speak up for justice to whatever sexual assault and mental as well as physical pain people ever experience in their lives. She added her purpose to persuade people to give a helping hand by joining foundation for providing any kinds of assistance for the survivors of sexual assault and mental and physical illness. She takes her speech as the opportunity to bring out those issues to make positive changes of the people’s lives and perspective. The analysis of the stylistic levels of her speech is elaborated below:

Graphology Analysis

Graphology focuses on word graphical process. In addition, Alibi (2007) as cited in Dorcas (2011) defines graphology as a graphological discussion of style among other features which entailed the foregrounding of structures, the full-stop, the colon, the comma, the semi-colon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letter, and bold print,
capitalization, small print, spacing, periods and full stops etc. In another words, graphology deals with a set of writing system on punctuating and spelling.

Capitalization

PTSD is an abbreviation and pronounced as it is abbreviated. PTSD is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

ELLE is capitalized to lay emphasis on one of the biggest influencers to society.

People’s name, brand, and places are also written in capital. For example, Gaga mentions some names and places in her speech. The capitalization lies on the first letter of each word. Those are: Calvin Klein, Ryan Murphy, Marc Jacobs, Lena Dunham, Hollywood, Golden Globe, and many more.

Numbers

Numbers are also used in the speech. For example, it can be seen in the paragraph 22. In paragraph 22, Gaga mentions number 10 to show the amount of dresses she has been trying to come to Elle award. While in paragraph 29, she mentions number 19 to show her age when she was sexually assaulted by unnamed person. In paragraph 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39 she mentions number 1, 300, 60, 23, 800, 76, 85, 35, and 50 to show the amount of people suffer from disease and commit to suicide.

Punctuation Marks

Apostrophes. She uses many Apostrophes as a contraction. An Apostrophe replaces the letter that is omitted. She mentions the word don’t, I’m, it’s, you’ve, she’s and many more. She also uses Apostrophes to show ownership. In her speech she mentions phrases like Anita’s speech and people’s.

Exclamation point. Exclamation point is used in Gaga’s speech to express emotion and importance of something. Paragraph 23 tells it all. It is stated in the sentence: “But the Raft Simmons for Calvin Klein was so stunning on you!”

Question mark. Question mark is used in some sentences. For example, it is existed in paragraph 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 24. Here are the examples:

Where are you? (par 8)

How does one rise to such an occasion? (par 14)

When maybe you don’t feel that inside? (par 15)

How does one accept where life has brought them, and what it all means? (par 16)
To be honest, I felt sick to my stomach and I asked myself, what does it really mean to be a woman in Hollywood? (par 17)

“But what about Brandon Maxwell?” “What about the Dior?” (par 24)

Dash. Dash is used to depict certain information to be more stressful or dramatic. Here are the examples:

Imitating you while we strengthened our bond – her name is Bo. And wearing white bandanas and hoop earrings draped over caramel colored hair. You brought us so much joy, where are- where are you? You brought us so much joy. Where – where are you? You brought us so much joy. (par 8)

In an age when I can barely watch the news I gasped at the unjust men and some women, quite frankly, that I see running this country, I had a revelation that I had to be empowered to be myself today more than ever, to resist the standards of Hollywood – whatever that means. To resist the standards of dressing to impress but to use what really matters – my voice. (par 28)

I still have days where I feel like it was my fault. After I shared what happened to me, with very powerful men in this industry – nobody helped me. No one offered me guidance, or a helping hand, to lead me to a place where I felt justice – they didn’t even point me in the direction of the mental health assistance I was in dire need of – those men hid because they were afraid of losing their power (par 29).

Period or full stop. Period or full stop is used to end every independent clause in the text. Here are the examples:

You give me hope.

I’ve known her since I was four years old.

Thank you for making so many memories for me and my friends that I will cherish forever in my heart.

We are not just objects to entertain the world.

We are not simply images to bring smiles or grimaces to people’s faces.

**Morphology Analysis**

Morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed Mark and Kirsten (2005, p.1). Morphological level of analysis deals with the prefix, suffix and the root words, coining, back formation etc.
Suffix

It is a process of forming word by adding morpheme or a group of morphemes at the end of the word to form new word. Here are some of the suffixes found in the text:

- Continually → continual +ly
- Quietly → quiet + ly
- Inspiration → inspire + tion
- Entertainment → entertain + ment
- Introduction → introduce + tion
- Actually → actual + ly
- Purely → pure + ly
- Immensely → immense + ly
- Revelation → revelate + tion
- Guidance → guide + ance

There are still many other derivative suffixes in the text. Above are just some of the examples selected to help in understanding the speech. The writer only found suffix in the speech text.

Lexical Analysis

Lexical analysis deals with the vocabulary; the choice of words and phrases that make up a language.

Monosyllabic

In the analysis, the writer found many words considered as monosyllabic. Monosyllabic is a word containing one syllable. These are the examples:

- Say, wrote, speech, hope, force, bond, joy, gown, wear, age, brought gave, mind, bond, joy, help, world, bring, doubt, rise, asked, mean, life, smile, sad, felt, say, watch, they, pay, like, change, help, dream, great, hold, hand, great, men, fight, and still many more.

The result of the analysis shows that most of the monosyllabic found in the speech is material process.

Polysyllabic

Polysyllabic words are also found in the text. It is a word containing many syllable. Here are the examples:

- Revelation, fibromyalgia, ability, priority, plutonium, microscopic, introduction, teleprompters, evening, imagined, privileged, occasion, beautiful, Hollywood, honest, grimaces, performer, and many more.
The result of the analysis shows that most of the polysyllabic words found in the speech is speech function.

Vocabulary

Common words

English vocabulary is made up of different kinds of words with different criteria following it. In line with this statement, Zhang (2004) as cited in Zheng (2014) states that vocabulary is divided into common words, literary words, colloquial words, slang words and technical words. In her speech, Gaga employed simple and everyday-use vocabulary to help audiences from different classes with different background understands the messages she is trying to convey in her speech.

Figurative expression

There is an indication that figurative expressions are also employed in Gaga’s speech. The excerpts extracted from the speech below illustrate how figurative expressions are used in the speech. Figurative expressions are words or expressions that differ from the customary everyday conversational use of such expressions for the purpose of assigning them a special meaning (Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, 2008).

The people in the room and the people that you have in your network have the power to turn kindness into plutonium and change the world.

The expression plutonium in that excerpts indicate that kindness turns into something great and brings deep impact for the sake of others and humanity. The figurative expression goes on to the following expression:

For both children and adults to provide for a better future and make up in whatever small way that we can, - microscopic maybe – for the pain those have suffered in the past.

Microscopic is simply understood as something very tiny and almost invisible. What Gaga meant microscopic here is the form of help, no matter how tiny it is, it brings many benefits and boost the survivors of sexual assault and mental as well as physical pain to continue living and rise up.

Figurative expression is also found in the sentence below:

There is no doubt in my mind that you will be loved forever as the powerhouse of a performer and woman that you are.

It can be seen in the above sentence that Gaga used the word powerhouse before the word performer to elevate the person (Jennifer Lopez) to the superb position.
where Lopez is considered as an extraordinary performer. *Powerhouse* in the context of the above sentence is a well-coined metaphor meant that Jennifer Lopez is energetic, passionate and in a way powerful.

**Syntax Analysis**

Syntax deals with how sentence is constructed. It focuses on types of sentence used in the speech. Simple sentence, including expanded simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentence are usually employed in the speech. Speeches are also written in everyday grammar in order to make the audience easily comprehend the messages transferred by the speaker.

The syntactic structure of this speech is made up of a mixture of simple sentence (including expanded simple sentence), compound, and complex sentence. Some paragraphs are longer than others; they were written using long sentences. Periods and commas were used to break the sentences into smaller parts. This speech is comprehensive because Gaga used familiar vocabularies to deliver the messages and to make it easy to understand.

**Simple sentence**

A simple sentence is one independent clause (Oshima and Hogue, 1999:155). Simple sentence is one of types of sentence employed in the speech. Here are some examples of simple sentence extracted from the speech:

*You give me hope*

*On the train I thought about you*

*We are not just objects to entertain the world*

*They were all dresses*

*I avoided it myself*

*I want to see mental health become a global priority*

*It means I have a platform*

*I have a chance to make a change*

*I pray we listen and believe, and pay closer attention to those around us, to those in need (expanded)*

*So what I would like to say, in this room of powerful men and women, today, is let’s work together to beckon the world towards kindness (expanded)*

*And we can also try to find the strength, in the best way that we can, to ask for help if we need it (expanded)*
I pray we listen and believe, and pay closer attention to those around us, to those in need (expanded)

How does one accept where life has brought them, and what it all means?

Those examples above are simple sentences the writer extracted from the speech. From the sentences above, sentences number 1, 2, 5, 8 has only one subject and one verb, and it is called single verb. Each of those sentences consist only one independent clause. Sentences number 9-12 are included as expanded sentence. Those sentences consist of one independent clause with more additional phrases.

Another example of simple sentence in the speech is written in the question form. This interrogative sentence is employed to create atmosphere of empowering by questioning the core: How does one accept where life has brought them, and what it all means? This interrogative sentence is not merely a rhetorical, but it tells the speaker’s intention to give new insight through the speech and provokes people’s thoughts to make people see and understand why they must lend their hands to the social problems. Gaga emphasize the force of her speech as an effort to not only empower but also persuade people for doing kindness for others. Moreover, the simple sentence is employed to strengthen the arguments in the speech.

Compound sentence

A compound sentence is two or more independent clauses joined together with coordinator, conjunctive adverb, and a semicolon (Oshima and Hogue, 1999:155). These are some of them:

We want kids to learn about mental health and the importance of kindness at a very young age, and it is my personal dream that there would be a mental expert, teacher, or theraphist in every school in this nation.

I was an outcast and you believed in me, and I wouldn’t be here without you.

From those two sentences, a compound sentence is formulated by two independent clauses joined by and (coordinate conjunction). And is used by Gaga to fit the meaning of those two independent sentences.

Complex sentence

Oshima and Hogue (1999: 160) formulated complex sentence from the combination of independent clause and one (or more) dependent clause(s). In complex sentence, one idea is placed higher than the other one. Independent clause is the important one, and dependent clause is considered as the less important. Dependent clause consists of three kinds of clauses: adverb, and adjective, and noun.
In some parts of the speech, Gaga employed complex sentences to create tension to the minds of the readers and to emerge people’s awareness to the problems Gaga shared in her speech. Here is an example taken from paragraph 20. “After I shared what happened to me, with very powerful men in this industry, no body helped me.” In the sentence, the sub ordinate conjunction after can be seen at the beginning of the paragraph. It shows time frame. This time frame confirmed promptly the clause what happened to me. After the clause was released to the audience, audience’s awareness emerge (Gaga told what has happened to her in the previous sentences in the same lane of the paragraph). From that sentence the independent clause is no body helped me. And the dependent one is after I shared what happened to me with very powerful men in this industry. That dependent clause is considered as adverbial clause.

CONCLUSION

This speech is fulfilled with stylistic elements. This study underwent four levels of stylistic analysis including graphology level, morphology level, lexical level, and syntax level. Each of the elements contribute to effective communication and to transfer messages delivered by the speaker to targeted audience. Basically, the language employed by the speaker in her speech is empowering, strengthening and persuasive. Gaga reaches her purpose of empowering people to use their voice for justice to help survivors of sexual assault and mental and physical illness and arousing people’s attention and awareness to spread kindness to help those who have experienced traumatic tragedies through the use of artful stylistic tools. She manipulated and embellished those tools to create vibrant atmosphere and to give extra effect on people’s mind and simultaneously grab people’s attention to the survivors and their recoveries. Finally, this study looks at how public figure uses language to empower and convince people to gather assistance and use their voice for justice for the sake of others who are suffering from traumatic tragedies.

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