

# THE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF'S INAUGURAL SPEECH AS THE FIRST AFRICA'S ELECTED FEMALE PRESIDENT

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Doktora: Muzafalu KATAMBA**

Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü

kataffalu09@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-9000-2303

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**Abstract:** Africa is one of the poorly governed continents due to poor leadership and dictatorial governance as a result of the desire to overstay power (Botha, 2012). We have experienced constitutional amendments by governments in some countries of Africa purposely to help presidents to rule for life. They rule their countries on orders and decrees instead of laws in a bid to satisfy their wills (Botha, 2012). Meanwhile, although the use of the military and unconstitutional acts are at the forefront, the languages used by African presidents in their speeches, and how they use their speeches should not be undermined as one of the factors that enable them to persuade their citizens to control them. Therefore, this paper intended to analyze Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidential inaugural speech as the first female president in Africa to see how she persuaded convinced the people of Liberia on political, social, and economic policies to make them believe in her content to consolidate power. Specifically, the focus is on the rhetorical and persuasive strategies she applied in her speech. Rhetorical discourse analysis methodology was used, and Ellen's textual inaugural presidential speech was quantitatively analyzed by both Neo-Aristotelian and feminist methods of rhetorical analysis to discover, identify and describe how Ellen used rhetorical devices, rhetorical appeals, and other rhetorical tactics. Results indicate that various rhetorical tactics were found in her speech, and were well applied which helped her to effectively accomplish her intended objectives as an orator.

**Keywords:** Ellen Johnson, Rhetoric, presidential rhetoric, Africa, inaugural speech, and rhetorical devices.

## Afrika'nın ilk kadın başkanı olan Ellen Johnson Sirleaf'in Açılış konuşmasının retorik analizi

**ÖZ :** Afrika, gücü aşma arzusunun bir sonucu olarak zayıf liderlik ve diktatörce yönetim nedeniyle kötü yönetilen kıtalardan biridir (Botha, 2012). Afrika'nın bazı ülkelerindeki hükümetlerin, başkanların ömür boyu ülkeyi yönetmesine yardımcı olmak amacıyla kasıtlı olarak anayasal değişiklikler yaptığını gördük. İradelerini tatmin etmek için ülkelerini kanunlar yerine emir ve karamaamelere yönetmektedirler (Botha, 2012). Bu arada, her ne kadar ordunun ve anayasaya aykırı fiillerin kullanılması ön planda olsa da, Afrika devlet başkanlarının konuşmalarında kullandıkları dil ve konuşmalarını kullanma biçimlerinin, vatandaşlarını kontrol etmek için ikna etmelerini sağlayan unsurlardan biri olduğu da göz ardı edilmemelidir. Bu nedenle, bu makale, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf'in Afrika'daki ilk kadın cumhurbaşkanı olarak başkanlık açılış konuşmasını, Liberya halkını iktidarı pekiştirmek için içeriğine inandırmaya siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik politikalar konusunda nasıl ikna ettiğini görmek için analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle, konuşmasında uyguladığı retorik ve ikna edici stratejilere odaklanılmaktadır. Retorik söylem analizi metodolojisi kullanılmıştır ve Ellen'in metinsel açılış konuşması, Ellen'in retorik araçları, retorik çağrılar ve diğer retorik taktikleri nasıl kullandığını keşfetmek, belirlemek ve açıklamak için hem Neo-Aristocu hem de feminist retorik analiz yöntemleriyle niceliksel olarak veriler analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, konuşmasında çeşitli retorik taktiklerin bulunduğunu ve iyi uygulandığını, bu da onun bir hatip olarak amaçlanan hedeflerini etkili bir şekilde gerçekleştirmesine yardımcı olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Ellen Johnson, Retorik, başkanlık retorisi, Afrika, açılış konuşması ve retorik araçlar.

## Introduction

Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world and is characterized by several coups due to poor leadership, dictatorial governance, and presidents who focus more on protecting and retaining their powers than serving their nations (Botha, 2012). To avoid being overthrown, these despotic leaders use the army and police to weaken their opposition leaders and to disperse protests. They amend constitutions to rule for life and they rule their countries on orders and decrees instead of the laws in a bid to

overstay power (Botha, 2012). However, the language used by political leaders should not be undermined as one of the factors that enable some African presidents to persuade and promise change to their citizens to control them.

By looking at the powers of language, different scholars have defined language in many ways but according to (Alshami, 2019), language is a means of communication through which people transmit ideas, emotions, feelings, and thoughts to others. Although languages are conveyed in many ways, politicians mostly depend on the language of spoken words, text, videos, and audio among others to communicate, inform, mobilize, and influence citizens and followers about the benefits of their leadership (Alo, 2012) and any political action is driven and influenced by language (Wiredu, 2021). The political language was termed as a communication channel through which political leaders share views with the audience about what is "good and evil, useful and harmful, and just and unjust" (Chilton, 2004:199 as cited by Dadugblor, 2016).

On contrary, Fleming (1998) said language only is not enough. He says that any language of communication should have an element of rhetoric for an orator to successfully achieve his or her intended goals of transmitting messages and influencing an audience. We might reflect on Fleming's statement of rhetorical elements in today's political situation where people call political speeches "rhetoric" whenever they listen to political speeches which are translated that the speech is just sweet and good on the surface but it lacks substance. Rhetoric means the use of persuasive language to convince others to believe in what is said whether it is bad or good (Fleming, 1998). Building to this, many political speeches are full of rhetoric just to convince and persuade the audience, society, or nation to believe in their plans, actions, and policies but they don't mean what they say (Alo, 2012).

Although generally much research has been conducted on various presidential rhetoric in Africa and the world, not much has been focusing on women, and few (if there are any) have been written about women as presidents, particularly in Africa. Therefore, the consideration is on the presidential inaugural speech of the first democratically elected female president of the African continent, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, which she made in her first term as the president of the republic of Liberia in 2006, to analyze how she used rhetoric in her speech to convince the citizens of her country, people at the continent and the world to rule Liberia amidst political challenges. This is intended to reduce the big rhetorical gap left between male and female orators.

## **Literature Review**

### **President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Yes, according to Africa, Faith, and Justice Network's list of female African presidents of 2021, it is true that Africa had female presidents as top leaders before President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, but these female presidents such as Sylvie Kinigi of Burundi (1993) and Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri of South (2005) ruled their countries as interim presidents after the death and resignation of their predecessors irrespectively. Therefore, Ellen Johnson was the first African female president to be democratically entrusted with the authority of the citizens to rule the nation (Liberia). She ruled for two terms from January 2006 to January 2012 and from 2012 to January 2018 after winning two elections in a row.

According to the Un.org website, Ellen Johnson was the wife of James Sirleaf and was born on 29th October 1938 in Monrovia, Liberia. She had her education in Liberia and at Harvard University in the USA where she obtained master's qualifications in economics and Business administration which enabled her to serve in different financial institutions both at local and international levels. She worked as assistant finance minister (1972-1973), finance minister (1980-1985), World Bank economist, and Citibank among others before being elected president of Liberia for the first term in 2005.

As the first woman to become Africa's head of state, Ellen Johnson led Liberia to recover from the effects of a long civil war like economic recession, disunity, and tribalism, as well as the Ebola Crisis in the country (Ellen, 2009). Ellen Johnson was seen winning international acclaim for achieving social, political, and economic change. Additionally, in their section on wise words of women in business, Heraherald said that as a global leader for women's empowerment, President Ellen was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Peace in 2011, and she is the recipient of the United State's highest civilian award- 'The Presidential Medal of Freedom for promoting and expanding freedom and improving the lives of people on the African continent. Her honors also include France's highest public distinction, the Grand Croix of

the Légion d'Honneur, and she was named one of Forbes's "100 Most Powerful Women in the World." She ruled Liberia for two back-to-back terms.

### **Rhetoric and Persuasion**

Rhetoric mainly means the science and art of using words effectively and purposely to persuade others (Suciati and Ambarini, 2018). Fleming (1998) added that rhetoric comes from the theory of how best a speaker or a writer can persuade by implementing the use of linguistic devices. Along the same line, according to Aristotle as he was cited in (Alo, 2012), rhetoric is the faculty of finding persuasive tools of using language to cause an effect on the audience. By the above understandings, rhetoric is mainly a use of communication tactics to convincingly deliver messages effectively to achieve intended goals. Generally, rhetoric is related to the ability of a speaker or a writer to make people believe his or her ideology through their speeches.

Traditionally, rhetoric has three main characteristics. Those are logos, ethos, and pathos. When describing the rhetorical analysis, an article in the Howe Center for Writing Excellence website (accessed, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022) articulated that Ethos has a relation with a speaker's capability to perform a personal character which enables his or her speech believable and trustworthy, Pathos is related to speaker's power of causing and inspiring feelings and emotions of the audience, and logos means the power to provide truth using persuasive and rational argument. The article continued that the classical traditions of rhetoric show the orator's act of communication until his qualities of character. Speaker is said to be good at giving rhetorical words at the point of ethos if he or she can use simple, direct, and emotive language, and chooses appeals by making careful decisions to persuade and impact behaviors of people".

Furthermore, political leaders in their speeches have the purpose of convincing their listeners based on their ideological foundations and orientation by selecting some rhetorical tools that immediately impact the emotions of their audience (Alo, 2012). According to Fleming (1998), rhetoric and persuasion always move together because rhetoric is the art of persuading others and both cannot be separated. This indicates that persuasion is all about the speaker's pre-speech arrangements and delivery plans for effective outcomes. The measurement of a speaker is about how successfully he or she delivers his or her rhetoric to show the ability to persuade an audience through speech. Therefore, there is a possibility that rhetoric may fail if it is implemented in a speech that is not persuasive. This means that successful rhetoric could persuade the audience if the speaker's behaviors meet with social approval since moral values and behaviors of people are crucial requirements in classical rhetoric (Fleming, 1998).

Therefore, politicians need to have the capability of being persuasive because many might have become great politicians through persuasive speaking. According to Suciati and Ambarini (2018), the ability to have good characters and to carefully use a selected number of rhetorical devices can have a big contribution to the ability to make a persuasive statement. Furthermore, the better the politicians use rhetorical tactics in their communications to persuade people to believe in them, the more democratic their societies or countries become (DiMaggio, A. R. 2015, Suciati and Ambarini, 2018). This means that not like any other communication, rhetorical language is very powerful to change the minds of people which also impact decision-making and actions in societies and countries. Language, politics, and rhetoric are linked together and scholars have many times emphasized the role of rhetoric and language as the way through which people come to understand the behaviors of politicians and the surrounding political environment (Dadugblor, 2016).

### **Presidential Rhetoric and Inaugural speeches**

Presidential rhetoric comes from political discourse as a theory and a style presidents use to communicate with the influence of media (Cart, 2014). Relating to the above definition of rhetoric, rhetoric in political speeches is an art to persuade through talks and texts produced by political leaders. Therefore, political rhetoric is generally a practical art of writing and speaking nicely in public (Dunmire, 2012). Furthermore, (Kane and Patapan 2010:372, as cited in Sekiguchi and Bouchebaba 2022) stated that *"because public discussion and debate are essential in a democracy, and because leaders are obliged to rule the sovereign people using constant persuasion, rhetoric is central"*. However, this was criticized by President Ronald Reagan who said that persuasive communication cannot make one a great president without other presidential features such as using rhetoric wisely and being charismatic enough to

capture and control a nation (Cart, 2014). This implies that only rhetoric may not be enough for a president to rule the nation, but his or her general characters, intellectual, language, and other political tactics also play a big role.

Therefore, presidential rhetoric might have become a research category because of the interest scholars, researchers and the public have in understanding it. The desire to understand rhetoric has opened up the door for studying presidential rhetoric and much has been written to define it because of its great importance in the spheres of life (Cart, 2014). For any orator to choose the right words is essential, and making a speech continuing with perfect and convincing words or phrases is exciting. Thus, an approach to applying rhetoric in a speech is about knowing how to use words or sentences perfectly in sequence by choosing the right words and considering their repetitions carefully (Dunmire (2012).

In addition, West (2014) said that Presidential rhetoric is an interdisciplinary subject that focuses on researching political speeches and communications of leaders for a sufficient understanding of their content. Political inaugural speeches, therefore, are established as part of the main events on which leaders make certain of their will to lead their countries, societies, or institutions and these speeches have been conducted by many leaders since the creation of the world. Other presidential speeches happen in times of disasters, pandemics, peace, and war, and people happily wait for these speeches because they recreate nations into a new chapter and they bring reconciliation to the world through the use of rhetoric (West, 2014).

West, (2014) added that by rhetoric, presidents also share their political principles with citizens through inaugural speeches because it is through these speeches that presidents set guidelines for their new administrations, call for thoughts rather than actions and announce their general political philosophy of leadership. Meanwhile, according to Campbell and Jamieson (2010), Aristotle would characterize inaugural speeches as epideictic rhetoric. They continued to define epideictic rhetoric as, "a form of rhetoric that blames and praises on ceremonial occasions, invites the audience to evaluate the speaker's performance, recalls the past and speculates about the future while focusing on the present, employs a noble, dignified literary style, and amplifies or rehearses admitted facts." With this claim, inaugural speeches are characterized by praising the audience, linking the future and the past based on the present observations and the speeches occur in an organized ceremonial moment which places them under epideictic rhetoric.

Additionally, four elements make presidential inaugural speeches in epideictic rhetoric, these include; "unifying the audience, rehearsing communal values drawn from the past, showing the political principles that guide the new administration and the last element inaugural speeches also demonstrate through a presentation that the president appreciates the requirements and limitations of executive functions," (Campbell and Jamieson, 2010:31).

According to Tulis, (1988) as cited in Cart, (2014), rhetoric started with President Woodrow Wilson to be considered as a tool for governance, but today it is used at all levels of leadership through which leaders appeal to their followers to believe in their ideas and principles to make their leadership successful. People can behave differently with unique identities as per the nature of speeches they listen to from their leaders. Presidential speeches can shape audiences and make them more prominent within their country and the world over (Dunmire, 2012). Century presidents in America for example, have built a unique national identity for American citizens through rhetoric in their inaugural and state of the nation addresses through general beliefs presidents share with American citizens to unite them (West, 2014). Presidents in America put unique identities in their citizens by considering uniting factors like the concept of shared civil religion while organizing their speeches to encourage unity among the people.

Therefore, for presidents to win the hearts of the people, they should use phrases and words familiar to the audience as means of creating unity among the people. For example, during his presidency, President Barack Obama repeatedly used the word "together we can" which perhaps made America a united nation during his presidency. In addition, West (2014) argued that rhetoric is not only a popular appeal to audience but it is a system that is used both in political and social life to represent actions that can shape the minds of people to understand and believe in issues taking place in their communities or nations, and also to know the role of various political positions like the presidency. Not only persuading, but presidential rhetoric also can be an important motivational tool that brings people together to support the policies of their leaders as they campaign for leadership, and while in the leadership offices. Strong

rhetoric might keep an image of the president in the media positively and encourage the public to focus on policies and issues vital to them.

However, the world of research is being affected by the debates on presidential rhetoric and some research indicates that political rhetoric decreases in complexity during election season, there is an inconsistency in research as to whether simple or complex rhetoric is more successful in politics. Although rhetoric might be the key to reaching many audiences, some people perceive rhetoric as a weakness because of getting familiar with many unproductive political speeches. However, other research still recommends that a balanced and simplistic rhetorical speech is the most effective strategy to win an election (Dunmire, 2012).

### **Methodology**

Methodically, for genuine results and fulfilling the objectives of this work, rhetorical discourse analysis methodology was used in which a textual inaugural presidential speech of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former president of Liberia was quantitatively analyzed by using both Neo-Aristotelian and feminist methods of rhetorical analysis to discover, identify and describe how Ellen Johnson used rhetorical devices, rhetorical appeals, and other rhetorical tactics to create a strong and effective language of communication in her speeches. This method will also help to improve our understanding of persuasive techniques (Sekouchi and Bouchebbah, 2022).

### **Data analysis and Presentation**

In this chapter, a textual inaugural presidential address of Ellen Johnson was analyzed and results were presented based on rhetorical situations, rhetorical devices, and rhetorical appeals.

### **Rhetorical situation**

Rhetorical situations help in the overall analysis of the subject under review. It summarizes and helps to explore the arrangement of the text and gives a deeper understanding of the text and the entire situation surrounding the speech (Van Dijk, 2014). Therefore, this chapter summarizes the text of the inaugural presidential speech of Ellen Johnson and its surroundings. Ellen Johnson took an oath as the president of Liberia for her first presidential term on 16, January 2006 in the city of Monrovia, Liberia. She addressed the nation to thank them for entrusting her with power and to communicate her projected policies and goals to the audience (Ellen, 2009). In her presidential inaugural speech, Ellen Johnson recognized all the people present in the categories of; "Excellencies, Fellow Citizens, Ladies and Gentleman" and praised God for His almighty guidance to the nation of Liberia. She praised and thanked all presidents of different countries who participated in the restoration of peace in Liberia.

Firstly, results indicated that the exigency in Ellen Johnson's speech differs. In rhetoric, exigency in speech means finding out the desires that drive the speaker to produce a text or a speech (Sekouchi and Bouchebbah, 2022). Thus, she expounded on different exigencies across different fields like social, political, economic, and other spheres of life. Ellen Johnson talked about disunity and distractions caused by civil wars in Liberia, this was between 1989 and 2003 in which a lot of people lost their lives, went to exile, misplaced and some were imprisoned (Ellen, 2009). According to [peacebuildingData.org](http://peacebuildingData.org) website (2022), these wars were a result of corrupt political systems, economic disparities, ethnic divisions, and greedy elites who abused power. Therefore, Ellen Johnson called upon Liberians to forget about the past to come together to rebuild and heal their nation.

In her speech, Ellen explained her goals and policies as a president, and she among other things talked about efficient governance, and political renewal and promised a new era of democracy to solve contradictions among the citizens for peace, opportunity, liberty, justice, and equality for all. In a related quest, she ensured economic renewal and reduced corruption which she referred to as cancer that was eating the economy of Liberia, causing anger and hostility. By solving these, she promised to promote a healthy economy for growth and development by reviving and putting effective economic policies in place. Additionally, in her speech, Ellen Johnson also talked about bonding and reconciliation of citizens as a means of creating unity to solve post-conflict challenges together. While talking about foreign policy, Ellen Johnson encouraged heads of state around the world to continue maintaining unity and good relationships with Liberia at regional and international levels. Lastly, she promised to bring government to the people since "power is inherent in the people" and make the constitution a uniting factor for all.

As a good orator, Ellen Johnson recognized her present audience, the audience “*across the country, from Cape Mount in the West to Cape Palmas in the East, from Mount Nimba in the North to Cape Montserrado in the South, from Mount Wologizi in North central to Mount Gedeh in the Southeast*” who were listening to her via radio, watching Television, and some on the internet. Understanding your audience in communication helps to think about the kind of content people are interested in which makes an effective message delivery (Drunmire, 2012). She concluded by praying for the people and the nation.

### Rhetorical devices

Rhetorical devices are a way of using language to increase the persuasiveness of the speech. The effectiveness and importance of any speech depend on the power of that particular speech to persuade (Fleming, 1998). Persuasion is always known as the way through which a speaker tries to convince the audience to believe and work according to the information delivered. Therefore, the perfect selection of words and sentences is one of the techniques on which persuasion relies (Drunmire, 2012). In the results, it was discovered that Ellen Johnson used rhetoric as a technique to strengthen the impact of her speech on the audience. In other words, Ellen Johnson suitably used different rhetorical devices to appeal to the minds and emotions of the people. For example, Alliteration, rhythm, analogy, similes, and metaphors among others were used in her speech.

Ellen Johnson repeatedly used alliterations words of the same vowel or consonant sound in her speech. She used this in a phrase where she said, “*I re-echo my appeal to all of you to please come home!! Please make the sacrifice, for your country needs you and needs you now!!!*” These alliterations not only beautified the speech but also created a strong emotional appeal to the audience which led to successful message delivery and a positive response from the audience (Jasinski, 2001).

Not like alliteration which is based on the selection of vowels, the above phrase also involves rhythm which is known by the selection of the same words or words with similar sounds. The rhythm was experienced in the beat and the pace of words like “*.....please come home... Please make...your country needs you and needs you now!!!*. In addition, Ellen Johnson also used rhythm in the phrase when she said, “*Our challenge, therefore, is to transform adversity into opportunity, to renew the promises upon which our nation was founded: freedom, equality, unity, and individual progress*”. In another paragraph, the rhythm was used when she said, “*Our record and experience show clearly that we are strong and resilient people...and able to forge a new beginning, forgiving if not forgetting the past*”.

The metaphor was also another rhetorical device experienced in Ellen Johnson's presidential inaugural speech. This means making comparisons between things that seem to be different (Wiredu, 2021). For example when one says 'Time is Money' means time and money are different things but one can be used to create meaning for the other. Therefore, in Ellen Johnson's speech metaphors were used in the sentence where she explained the danger of corruption and said, “*...Corruption is national cancer that creates hostility, distrust, and anger*”. Relating corruption to cancer, Ellen Johnson wanted to show and emphasize the danger of corruption and to make corruption familiar to the audience by using a disease people know very well which helps the audience to understand the message hence its effectiveness.

Ellen Johnson also used Similes. In rhythm, we relate two different words or things with no similar features to look familiar, but simile means to relate two different words or things that resemble each other with at least some similar features. In her speech, for example, Ellen Johnson used a simile in a sentence by saying, “*After all, some of the underlying factors of our current problems are as deep and old as the history of our country*”. By using this simile, Ellen Johnson intended to add art to her inaugural speech (Jasinski, 2001), and relating their current problems to the history of the country was to explain to the audience that the problems of Liberia seem to be new but have been in a place like Liberia itself. Therefore, this makes people understand the deep meaning of some messages by thinking deeper about their history to compare it with the current situation.

Additionally, amplification is another device of rhetoric used in Ellen Johnson's speech. This is used in speeches to add more emphasis on certain issues to persuade the audience to understand the message better. Ellen Johnson said, “*Times were hard before. Times are even harder today.....Under my Administration, we will work to change that situation*”. In this statement, Ellen Johnson emphasized showing the people how hard it was to change the situation before and how harder it is today. Comparing the two situations means that people should not judge her much if some things do not go well because she

took power in the hardest situation ever. This rhetorically makes the audience remember where they were and as well focus on where the country is going which encourages them to unite for a better nation.

The tone was also used in Ellen Johnson's first inaugural presidential speech as the first female president on the African continent. In rhetoric, tone indicates the attitude a speaker has toward the audience (Meyer and Cushman, 1982). In her speech, therefore, Ellen Johnson used a tone of anger, warning of happiness, and also showed sadness in her speech. For example, she experienced that, *"I know of this struggle because I have been a part of it. Without bitterness, anger, or vindictiveness, I recall the inhumanity of confinement, the terror of attempted rape, and the ostracism of exile. I also recall the goodness and the kindness of the many who defied orders and instructions to save my life, give food to the hungry, and give water to the thirsty".* In the above statement, Ellen Johnson used the tone of anger to show how hard the situation was and how people suffered as they fought to bring peace to the country. She also used a tone of joy when she expressed her feelings happily towards those who helped them in that difficult moment. With this, she pulls people's minds to sympathize with her and others for what they went through and also be happy with them because they had survived all difficulties to succeed.

In Conclusion, this paper affirms that although she used few rhetorical devices in her speech, President Ellen Johnson tried to select and use them perfectly in a manner of supporting her speech to effectively appeal to the audience to make them understand her address (Fleming, 1998). I cannot say that these techniques were used to exaggerate the speech but to create feelings and empathy among the audience to change their minds to support and believe in the leadership of President Ellen Johnson (Dunmire, 2012). This is because rhetorical devices were used as persuasion tactics at the right time towards the right audience and were linked directly to the situation being talked about. These at the same time helped Ellen Johnson to simplify her complex speech to easily appeal to the feelings and emotions of the people which enabled them to understand her message hence achieving her intended goals effectively.

### **Rhetorical appeals**

The elements of rhetorical situations are interconnected with each other for effective communication. However, there is no way you can think about the effectiveness of communication and the influence of rhetorical elements on each other without talking about the rhetorical appeal (rhetorical triangle). The rhetorical triangle is made up of three corners: ethos, pathos, and logos. These avenues of rhetoric must be understood by the speaker which makes him or her a successful orator because every successful orator needs to be a skillful rhetorician (Sekouchi and Bouchebbah, 2022). This indicates that one to build a strong communication career must understand, master, and know how to use these three of Aristotle's rhetorical appeals. Thus, we are going to see how Ellen Johnson used them to persuade and win the minds of her audience.

### **Logos**

Logos is mainly known as the use of reasoning or logic to persuade the audience. One can use logic by involving reality, and truth, or appear in speech. Therefore, like any other rhetoric, Ellen Johnson appealed to the audience by relating to their history. In her argument, she said, *"Our recent history teaches us that violence diminishes our nation and ourselves, not just within our borders, but more importantly in our dealings with other nations and peoples"*. In the statement, Ellen Johnson appealed to the people by reminding them how violence affected their nation, themselves, and their neighboring states. In line with historical facts, she added, *"In the history of nations, each generation is summoned to define its nation's purpose and character. Now, it is our time to state clearly and unequivocally who we are, as Liberians.....From the establishment of our National Politics 158 years ago through the period of integration which helped to shape our society several decades ago ....."* Referring to these historical facts attracts people's attention to the speech to know about the previous situation and perhaps to use it to determine the future (Sekouchi and Bouchebbah, 2022). She also reminded them that they can achieve development and good relations with other nations without violence.

*"Our nation's foreign policy has historically been rooted in our core values as a nation and people in the practices of good neighborliness, non-interference in the affairs of other nations and peoples, peaceful co-existence, regional cooperation and integration, and international bilateral and multilateral partnership"*. This was also another logo statement in Ellen Johnson's presidential inaugural speech. In this, therefore, Ellen Johnson appealed to the international community and neighboring countries to maintain their good relationship with Liberia as it was before. She reminded them of the good relationship, peace,

cooperation, and integration Liberia has with other nations which must be maintained and improved. On the same, she assured the international community that her government was ready to support democracy for a strong developed nation.

*"I assure all Liberians and our international partners and friends that our Government will recognize and support a strong democratic and loyal opposition in Liberia".* Ellen said. With this statement, she sought to show that she was ready to use her political power to contribute to the restoration of democracy in which the people of Liberia and the international community in Liberia can prosper. In another example of logos, Ellen Johnson also used statistics and figures. *"We will formulate a multi-year economic reconstruction plan tied to a Poverty Reduction Strategy Program that relieves our country from a staggering US\$3.5 billion external debt and paves the way for acceleration in our national effort to make more progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,"* she said, adding that, *"With 12% of our population now affected by HIV/AIDS, my administration will tackle this national scourge by updating and reinvigorating our HIV/AIDS policy within our first 150 days".* The use of statistics in these paragraphs showed evidence of poverty in the country alongside huge external debt that needed a strong strategic program to reduce them for development. In using statistics on HIV, she also intended to appeal to the audience to know the number of HIV patients in the country and to send a warning to the citizens to be careful with the disease. She, however, promised to revive the HIV policy within 150 days which was also another slogan in the statement. According to Zulkipli and Ariffin (2019), statistics do not only show reality in the speech but also create emotional awareness in the minds of the people, and with Ellen's speech, they were used to verify facts and create awareness about poverty and HIV disease in the country.

To conclude with Logos, we have seen the use of logos in the above examples in which Ellen Johnson appealed to strategies like history, suggestions, statistics, figures, and normal arguments. Therefore, she successfully applied logical arguments in her speech to express facts and reality that could be believed by everyone. With this, logos strengthened her stand on the issues she talked about which made her speech well effective. It also showed how well-prepared she was with researched arguments.

## **Ethos**

Ethos is commonly known in rhetoric as the credibility of the author. The speaker must convince the audience that what she or he gives in the speech is well-verified, reliable, and true. Thus, in this part, we analyzed how Ellen Johnson exhibited credibility, reliability, and truth in her presidential inaugural speech for her first term as the president of Liberia.

Firstly, in using ethos, Ellen Johnson revealed to the audience that the struggle for good governance was a process in which she took part together with other citizens of Liberia. *"And in the process of resolving the numerous contradictions that have underpinned this struggle, a high price has been paid by many Liberians of diverse backgrounds and social status. I know of this struggle because I have been a part of it. .... I recall the inhumanity of confinement, the terror of attempted rape, and the ostracism of exile",* said Ellen. In the above statement, Ellen Johnson disclosed what she experienced when she physically took part in the struggle for democracy. She outlined all the bad acts that happened to them and her in particular which point out that she was knowledgeable about what she was talking about. This openly revealed the hardships she went through, and this painted her as the right person who could solve Liberia's glitches such that people don't go through the same in the future. Therefore, the expressed credibility and reality in her speech made her a trustworthy orator since she saw and experienced whatever she was talking about.

In another ethos, Ellen Johnson stated, *"I want you to know that I understand what you, our ordinary citizens go through each day to make ends meet for yourselves and your families. We must have a new understanding. Your job, as a citizen, is to work for your family and your country. Your country's only job is to work for you. This is the compact that I offer you today".* Here Ellen Johnson first assured the audience that she knew whatever the people of Liberia were going through economically, and this showed the experience she had with the economy of the country. Therefore, it was on this background that she skillfully encouraged the citizens to work for the betterment of their lives and their families and vowed for her government to play its role in a favorable economic working environment.

Ethos was also seen while she was talking to women when she said, *"... I would like to talk to the women, the women of Liberia, the women of Africa, and the women of the world. Until a few decades ago,*

*Liberian women endured the injustice of being treated as second-class citizens. During the years of our civil war, they bore the brunt of inhumanity and terror. They were conscripted into war, gang raped at will, and were forced into domestic slavery".* At first, she talked to all the women around the world in her speech to indicate that it is every woman's responsibility to contribute to the happiness of a fellow woman. This also intended to create unity among women. With much focus on the mistreated Liberia women, she revealed to the world what was needed to help women in Liberia who were in domestic slavery, in exile, and living poor life. Since she is also a woman, and a woman underwent the same situation, she appealed to women in her speech that she was a good Samaritan who could solve problems for women as a president.

She also showed her association with children, "*.....whenever I met and shook their hands that they voted for me. Indeed, they voted with their hearts. To those children and all other Liberian children across this nation, I say to you, I love you very, very much. I shall work, beginning today, to give you hope and a better future.*" The ethos here is that she appealed to the emotions of the children, their parents, and guardians to strengthen the bond between her government and the young generation. Therefore, she extended herself to children which was a sign of a mother and evidence that she was able to help them for a better future for Liberia since the future is bound to children (Ellen, 2009).

In her inaugural speech, Sirleaf reminded the audience that she was the president of the people of Liberia. This indicated that she had all the powers given to her by the constitution to fulfill the desires of the citizens. She said, "*I am President for all of the people of this country. I, therefore, want to assure all of our people that neither I nor any person serving in my Administration will pursue any vendetta. ....There will be no policies of political, social, and economic exclusion*". In the statement, she appealed to the people to have confidence in her qualifications to solve their problems and vowed for her government not to tolerate any kind of incompetence. Her title as the president influenced the audience and amplified their trust in her because the message persuaded their beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes which strengthened her values as a leader to the citizens hence the effectiveness of ethos.

In addition, Ellen Johnson also included herself in some statements more so when she talked about problems facing people by using the term "we" and "our". This was a sign of togetherness, and that she is not too special compared to the citizens. "*We have all suffered. The individual sense of deprivation is immense. It is therefore understandable that our people will have high expectations and will demand aggressive solutions to the socio-economic and societal difficulties that we face.*" The statement in her speech reads. "*Our record and experience show clearly that we are a strong and resilient people, able to survive; able to rise from the ashes of civil strife..... We are a good and friendly people, braced for hope even as we wipe away the tears of past suffering and despair.....Our challenge, therefore, is to transform adversity into opportunity, to renew the promises upon which our nation was founded: freedom, equality, unity, and individual progress.*" She added. In associating herself with the people, she tried to tell the audience that it is their responsibility altogether to achieve their goals as a country. This creates unity and togetherness among the citizens since the words used complies with the imagination, desires, and needs of the audience (Alo, 2012).

To conclude, amidst her busy times in campaigns, results from the analyzed content have indicated that Ellen Johnson conducted research for credible and true speech. Understanding the ethics and human behaviors of the people based on her experience, credibility and moral character helped her to guarantee her policies and programs as the president and to show her persuasive uniqueness in her presidential inaugural speech which perhaps convinced the audience to trust and believe in her words hence an effective speech.

### **Pathos**

Pathos is known to be emotional appeals orators use to call on the emotions of the audience to make the speech loved and effective (Zulkipli and Ariffin, 2019). The orator appeals to the emotions of the people by expressing his or her feelings through fear, sympathy, or sorrow. The orator may also need the audience to feel love, anger, sadness, courage, fear, happiness, and sadness among others. According to Fleming (1998), although pathos is commonly shown by body language during the speech, the same can also be applied in written speech or audio. In this part, we are going to look at how Ellen Johnson used pathos in her presidential inaugural speech.

Persuasive speaking goes beyond logos and ethos because good speakers must also know how to convince the audience to love and believe in their speeches. This is done by influencing the feelings of

the audience to make them believe and accept the speech without thinking twice (Dunmire, 2012). From the start of her speech, Ellen Johnson tried to influence the emotions of the audience by using different pathos techniques and words. She repeatedly used words like, "*Fellow Liberians, Ladies, and Gentlemen*" whenever she referred to the citizens of her country. By using these words, she wanted to appeal to the feelings of the people by making them feel the same and equal to each other since such words don't discriminate against poor, rich, orphan, lame, illiterate, and educated among others. Words of togetherness can convince the audience to feel the same as the orator which leads to effective speech.

In talking about other nations, Ellen Johnson repeatedly used words such as "*my dear brothers and sister*" which is a rhetorical tactic she used to appeal to the emotions of foreign audiences to believe that they are one people regardless of their border separations. This ensures peace, security, and good international relations among nations since it reflects an image of brotherhood and unity. In addition, in her opening remarks, Ellen welcomed all the people fairly and argued with them to praise God without mentioning any religious sect but only the word "God". Since everyone believes in God regardless of his or her religion, uniform religious words convinced the audience to believe that Ellen was perhaps referring to their particular religions which could lead to united feelings among the people because they together share something in common as Liberian citizens (Campbell and Jamieson, 2008). In addition, Ellen Johnson also spared some time to remember and pray for His Grace Archbishop Michael K. Francis whom she titled the conscience of Liberia. This influenced people and attracted their attention and emotions toward her speech since they all believe in the power of God hence the effective use of Aristotle's rhetorical tactics.

Ellen Johnson also attracted people's sympathy when she asked for a moment of silence to pray in memory of the people who had lost their lives in the previous conflicts in the country, this was a unifying factor to the people and a sign of citizenship even to the dead. This appealed to people's emotions towards the speech and influenced them to believe Ellen was a president who respects the norms and cultures of the country. Ellen Johnson also convinced the emotions of the audience that her grandparents were illiterates. Illiterate parents to produce an educated person who became a president was an indirect argument to parents to educate their children even when they are not educated. Ellen Johnson also used pathos to remind citizens of Liberia about the beauty of their country, to love their country, and to believe that they should work together with her to protect their beautiful nation. "*This occasion, held under the beautiful Liberian sunshine, marks a celebration of change...*" Ellen said.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to analyze President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's inaugural presidential speech to see how she persuade her audience about her plans, policies, and actions to rule the nation. I can say that Ellen Johnson used various rhetorical tactics in her speech which helped her to effectively accomplish her intended objectives as an orator. The role of rhetoric in her speech might be witnessed in her capability to rule Liberia for that entire term without any big political challenge such as a military coup that convinced people to elect her again for the second consecutive term in office.

Therefore, rhetoric played an important role in her political oratory and her state affairs since rhetoric is seen as one of the major factors in successful governance as well as a basis for any powerful political performance (Sekushi and Bouchebbah, 2022). Being the first female president on the African continent, this rhetorical analysis was desirable to test her persuasive skills, human nature, language, and political tactics because sometimes these are not obvious in women. Some people have a physiological belief that women cannot make good leaders but this has been refuted by the results of this work and proved to society that if Ellen could lead her country for two terms then gender is not something we are born with, but is what we do (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and people should not be judged by their sexual gender or appearance but by their capability and skills to do something. And finally, women can also become good leaders who depend on using rhetoric as orators.

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