

Title: **The style of (political) speeches: some problematic aspects in existing methods**  
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**Abstract** (282 words)

Speeches provide an interesting area of research for stylistics. The importance of paying attention to the question how politicians and other public speakers effectively construe their message, has been acknowledged since classical antiquity. However, compared to literary stylistics, stylistic analyses of speeches are few, also internationally. And although there is a longstanding tradition of stylistic analyses of presidential speeches in America, much is still to be done on methods of analysis and their application. In my paper I will focus on a few problematic aspects in existing methods of stylistic analyses of speeches, and illustrate these points by using representative examples.

Most existing stylistic analyses of speeches focus on one or two specific speeches and provide interesting observations. However, an explicitly formulated method of analysis is often lacking. This not only raises questions about the consistency and validity of these analyses, but also poses a problem for the generalizability of the results (i.e. the analysis of other speeches). Moreover, the few methods for analyzing style in speeches that *are* explicitly formulated, are unsatisfactory, as I will illustrate on the basis of a method used by Antoine Braet – one of the few Dutch scholars who has focused on the rhetorical analysis of speeches.

The final issue I want to address, is that in most stylistic analyses a lot of attention is (rightly) paid to classical rhetorical figures of speech. However, judgments about the use of these figures often have a subjective character, and little attention is paid to the underpinning of those judgments. Can we describe the function of classical rhetorical figures in a more intersubjective way? I would like to argue we can, by giving a (cognitive) linguistic underpinning to rhetorical analyses.