

PERSUADING AN AUDIENCE: MARGARET THATCHER'S
SPEECH TO THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION
("THE WEST IN THE WORLD TODAY")

IRINA DREXLER*

The language of truth is simple.
(Euripides)

ABSTRACT. The firm attitude is what brought Margaret Thatcher the appellation of "Iron Lady", for she found herself in the position to act with toughness against the rights of the employees and unionists (in what internal politics was concerned) and to be actively involved in the war against Argentina for the Falkland Islands (in external affairs). The political figure of Margaret Thatcher is noted down in the history of the British people as the only woman to hold the position of both leader of the Conservative Party, as well as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for over a decade. Her unshaken rhetoric gained her the nickname the "Iron Lady", which explains much of the firmness of her speeches addressed to the public. The speech proposed for analysis in this present paper, addressed to the Foreign Policy Association on December 18th, 1978, having the subtitle "The West in the World Today", is given to the British in the form of a public statement of major importance. In its moderate length content it manages to tackle a number of political and economic *themes*, among which general discussions on foreign policy in the USA, Middle East, Africa, USSR and successor states and Commonwealth, economy, defence, society, terrorism, as well as European Union budget, religion, morality, socialism and so on.**

KEY WORDS: speech, structure, Thatcher, politics, audience

Any observable claim about the importance of rhetorical studies requires as a first step a clarification of the various definitions that the researches that have been conducted so far have provided. This attempt would, however,

* IRINA DREXLER (PhD) is affiliated to Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and the University of Vienna, Austria. Her main research interests cover debates on modern American and British diplomacy, and are related to the rhetoric of postmodern political treaties. E-mail: irina_drexler@yahoo.com.

** [Note. This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU / 107 / 1.5 / S / 76841 with the title "Modern Doctoral Studies: Internationalization and Interdisciplinarity".]

make it clearer once again for the researcher, the writer and the reader alike that no one single definition can be as concise and as elaborate at the same time to comprise the full meaning of rhetoric. Some might even go as far as to firmly state that not a single definition could *ever* pin rhetoric down. From the times of Aristotle's first major work on the topic, "The Art of Rhetoric", this field has been thought to have no specific territory or subject matter of its own, as rhetoric is so diverse and can be applied to everything that surrounds us.

The contrasting definitions of rhetoric, ranging from it being seen as an art of discourse to it being perceived as a study of its resources and consequences, have spread throughout time in the specialised literature from the Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and other classicist thinkers to the Middle Age rhetoric, Renaissance and Modern rhetoric of our days. In Ancient Greece, a rhetor was a speaker who possessed the skills of addressing the law courts and large gatherings of people with the purpose of persuading them in one direction or another. Rhetoric was thus the theory of how to best achieve this aim by employing carefully selected linguistic devices in both written and spoken speeches. In the beginning, the skill of using rhetoric was ascribed to the oratory of males and it was usually connected to the range of resources used for winning in politics, a dominant male activity. In our times, however, the emphasis is no longer on male orators, and the spectrum of rhetoric has extended as well, covering more than verbal communication—as we have seen two paragraphs before, such gestures as frowning, smiling or raising an eyebrow can be equally eloquent in sending a message across.

From the pre-Socratics until now rhetoric has been seen as at least one of the indispensable human arts (Booth, 2004: 4) and the relevance of studying it in a systematic manner was not denied, irrespective of its powers of destruction when in the hands of those whose minds are set on harming. Even Plato, considered perhaps the most negative critic of rhetoric before the seventeenth century (Booth, 2004: 4), believed the study of rhetoric was essential. Without considering an impediment of the status of rhetoric at the time being an "art of degrading men's souls while pretending to make them better" (Booth, 2004: 4), Plato did not deny the essential role of the study of rhetoric to any attempt to study the mechanism of thinking and expressing thoughts. The Greek philosopher from the fourth century BC, Aristotle, the Roman philosopher, orator and political theorist from the second century BC, Marcus Tullius Cicero, the theologian and rhetorician from the fourth century AD, St. Augustine and the first century AD Roman rhetorician from Hispania, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, usually referred to as Quintilian could not exclude *persuasion* from their definitions of rhetoric, although

their works are separated by centuries in time. It is one of the great continuing mysteries of rhetoric and related disciplines as well.

There is an undeniable truth that discourse has often had as a result and a potential force to move hearts and influence minds, to transform people and courses of action in remarkably powerful ways. The studies of rhetoric, that began many centuries ago, BC, have been trying to identify underlying principles of persuasion as a central point, one of the defining ends of rhetoric. The modern studies charted a road map to social-scientific work concerning persuasive communication, trying to answer such enduring questions as how people direct and shape belief, how consensus is achieved through dialogue, how words transform into actions and which actions. It has not always been an easy road. Despite the fact that the answers to such questions and other alike have sometimes confirmed intuitions and sometimes yielded remarkably counterintuitive findings (Sloane, 2001: 575), persuasion research is not pinned down under any single disciplinary or conceptual framework. As the many social sciences of the twentieth century have tried to shape a better image of what persuasion is, after research having been conducted in the respective academic fields there have not been enough efforts made to connect these findings, to find the common traits and paint a comprehensive, multi-angled image of persuasion. Nearly all the social sciences, including psychology, communication, sociology, political science, anthropology and so on, and other related applied endeavours with social-scientific questions and methods, as is the case of advertising and marketing for instance, have relevant research being conducted by specialists. This is to offer a smidgen of persuasion studies, an overview of which would be a difficult, yet useful endeavour.

In one way or another, persuasion presupposes influencing the audience perception of reality or thoughts, which later transform into action. As the saying goes, “watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they will become actions. Watch your actions, they become habits. Watch your habits, they become character. Watch your character, it becomes destiny. What you think, you become.” In this simple way, this saying, sometimes attributed to Lao Tzu, other times to Christians or Muslims, summarizes the power that persuasion has; for, if something or somebody can influence the thoughts of the audience, they influence their actions as well.

The *audience* has long been central to rhetoric studies. An overview of available definitions on audience would show that this term usually refers to “a real person or collection of people who see, hear, or read an event or work” (Sloane, 2001: 59). A key consensus in rhetorical studies is that discourse is shaped having in view the people who will read or read it. The strategy of the rhetors is thus to meet or address the needs of their audienc-

es when they deliver a written or oral speech, which, depending on the intentions of the addresser, can prove to be the finest and most harmful way of manipulation. This concern for the audience dates back to the fourth century BC Plato's "Socrates", who noted that one must understand the nature of the audience if one hopes to be a competent speaker (Brickhouse and Smith, 1994). In time, the notion of the audience has expanded, from a merely face-to-face audience who "requested" competence in oral rhetoric, to a more distant audience, changing the medium of rhetoric to written speeches, nonverbal communication, visual messages, mass mediated strategic communiqués, virtual monologues or dialogues. In classical times, the audience was a physical gathering in a given space at a given time, with listeners witnessing an oratorical event. In earlier times these groups were more compact and the themes were mainly focused on social matters and cultural events, depending on class and status they could range from social problems being debated, to fights, races, games, comedies and circuses being on display or literary and musical works being performed in front of the educated high class groups. Contemporary theorists however extend the definition of audience to consider the many audiences that experience a text, i.e. individuals who witness a speech in real time as well as those who read, hear, or see a recorded version of that speech, in whatever form it may come. We are no longer experiencing communication, social, cultural, political or diplomatic, solely in its classic form, but new forms of communication have emerged as well as a natural consequence of the Internet almost monopolizing the way new generations interact and collect their information. Because of the advancement in communication technologies, the groups that were once compact and public are nowadays dispersed, fragmented and privatized.

According to Sloane and Smith (Brickhouse and Smith, 1994), the term "audience" first appeared in the English language in the fourteenth century and it was originally used to refer to a hearing. Etymologically, the term derives from face-to-face communication contexts, where a group of people would listen to someone delivering a speech. Over time, the word *audience* has grown to represent a group of listeners, not in the classical manner, but including readers or viewers of particular authors, speakers or publications as well. With the technological advent of the twentieth century and the public character of groups soon becoming a rather privatized one, the word *audience* expanded its meaning to include individuals behind a radio station, a TV set, a laptop or a smartphone, an individual in a cinema hall, a theatre or any other context that implies a distance between the broadcaster and the receiver.

In early twentieth century the rhetorical studies began to emphasize the training of students on how to communicate in an effective manner. As a

result of organized courses on the matter, corroborated with the works of philosophers and literary critics of the day, modern rhetorics began to shift its focus from the speaker or writer to the auditor at the other end of the communication situation. “New Rhetoric” of the fifties and sixties revived principles from the classical rhetorical theory inherited from Aristotle and moulded it with new insights from modern philosophy, linguistics and psychology, Sloane further argues. Theorists of the new rhetoric, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) that all argumentation should be adapted to an audience and based on beliefs accepted by them if the argumentation should be approved and considered for support. The two authors describe three broad types of audiences in their text: self as audience (arguing or questioning oneself); a universal audience (an ideal audience); and a particular audience (a real audience). The first type of audience, on the one hand, is an easy concept to grasp and it requires no further explanation; the last two types of audience, on the other hand, have been of greater interest to rhetorical theorists. To distinguish the two, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca rely on Immanuel Kant’s notions of conviction (which resides in objectivity, being a judgement valid for most) and persuasion (a judgement grounded in the character of the subject). To continue in the same line of argument, the two authors suggest that the particular audience, which can be associated to character, persuasion and action, is subject to persuasion, whereas the universal audience, depicted by objectivity, conviction and competence, holds to its convictions. They both admit that the universal audience is, at the same time, ideal and unreal: ideal, for it encapsulates traditional reasoning, yet unreal, for it can never really exist. Rhetors can focus on constructing an ideal message and a universal audience to persuade a particular one (which will have some of the characteristics of the universal audience, but not all of them), having as guidelines the presumptions that are associated with it. Such a construct of a universal audience, the same authors believe, can be useful for rhetors in their quest for distinguishing good, reasonable arguments that this ideal, objective, universal yet unreal audience would reason to, from the bad arguments, with which the same group would disagree.

In the second half of the twentieth century attention shifted from the readers to the authors and the texts themselves. Expressivist scholars, interested in writing as self-discovery and the development of “authorial voice” and aesthetic scholars, concerned with stylistic devices, believed true and pure artists create for themselves, not others (Sloane, 2001: 61), and therefore it became acceptable in these circles to focus on intriguing authors or texts, or both, at the expense of audience. Later on, however, at the close of the twentieth century, audience was again the focus of scholar research, the same author continues, specifically from the perspective of reader-response

critics, who view the audience as playing an active role in constructing the meaning of a text; social constructionists, who look at the reality of truth as being created by the author, text and reader; mass communication and cultural studies scholars, who question and measure the effects of media on the audience; telecommunication scholars, who search into the size and scope of virtual audiences; and postmodern scholars, who encourage new conceptualizations of the audience as a community or forum. These angles for tackling the role played by the audience are different, yet such an interest manifested by these scholars shows that the audience is perceived as a powerful component of rhetorical studies and the effect of rhetoric itself, not merely a receptacle of rhetoric. However disputed the idea of a powerful audience might have been, this belief generated consistent research in this direction.

The studies on audience are further developed by theorists, yet at the same time students follow the steps of those who have been interested in the subject and assimilate what has been established as true so far, for audience analysis is of interest to both scholars and students of oral and written rhetoric. The exploration of this component of rhetoric studies, i.e. audience analysis, is systematically approached in student textbooks, the same editor notes. In them, the relationship between speaker and audience is often underlined, he further argues, as this relation determines the success of the speech. Whether the audience is hostile or receptive makes the difference between a successful and a failed speech. In making an audience receptive, the speaker's credibility must not be damaged in any way. It is not only a matter of substance, but also of perception and image, self-promotion and sometimes deliberate deception. Demographic aspects such as social status, age, sex, sexual orientation, family status, race, ethnic background, political beliefs, religious orientation, together with such issues as values, attitudes, ideologies, lifestyles and others as well can determine whether an audience is hostile to or welcoming the speech that is being delivered, in a direct relation with the degree of identification between the speaker and the audience, based on the afore mention criteria. Having these in view, one cannot refrain from asking the question of how ethical it is to take advantage of all this knowledge beforehand while crafting a message to obtain a certain effect on, as well as a reaction from the audience.

About identification, taking Aristotle's "common ground" concept further, Kenneth Burke writes (Burke, 1950) an account of why, in his view, persuasion occurs when rhetors connect with their audiences and address them in a language that speaks to them. He argues that the identification process actually changes the speaker. While the traditional approach to the relation between the speaker and the audience is unidirectional, from the speaker to the audience, with the signally aim of persuading the audience in a desired direction, Burke argues that the process of identification allows, at

the same time, the speakers to learn from the audiences, the relation between the two being thus, in fact, bidirectional. For him, the audience imprints on the speaker its moral values, in a process during which the rhetors, in an attempt to resemble the audience, internalises their words, beliefs and actions. Going deeper in his assumption, Kenneth Burke argues that persuasion is not a linear process, but a cooperative activity in which the speaker and the listeners become “one in being” or “consubstantial” (Burke, 1950).

As far as the ease with which identification takes place is concerned, it is easier done with audiences of oral speeches, for while audiences of oral rhetoric are regarded as “stable entities that speakers can analyse, observe and accommodate” (Sloane, 2001: 62), audiences of written texts are perceived as much less predictable. In the former case, on the one hand, the speaker is faced with a given audience, in a given place, at a given time. Needless to say that identification with every single member of the audience is impossible; however compact the group might be, as compared to the audience of a written speaker-audience interaction at least, the depths of every single person’s belief cannot be grasped. In the later case, on the other hand, the audience diversifies and expands in time. One cannot predict whom their words will reach to when they produce a written text. As the old Latin saying goes, *verba volant, scripta manent*, which is the ticket to future paths explorers of a given written text might take. It is for this reason, like Douglas Park notes down (Park, 1986: 487-488) that composition instructors should, as part of the challenges they are facing as teachers, encourage their students to avoid writing for their immediate readers (peers or teachers) and to push themselves to anticipate other potential readers and some of their sceptic question marks. Furthermore, students should not assume familiarity with the readers of their texts, nor should they make the mistake of not writing for a broader educated audience.

However important the audience is, and without doubt its role cannot be belittled, for a speech that has *no* audience is a wasted speech or, as Lloyd Bitzer (Blitzer, 1969: 1-15) put it, “because rhetoric is never about discourse in the abstract” and therefore the notion of audience plays a central role in rhetorical situations, theorists have not universally advocated writing for the audience or with the audience in mind. As we have shown before, expressivist scholars were interested in writing as self-discovery and in writers developing their own voice rather than creating texts by filling in the blanks with the desired ideas that would please some audiences. Other critics (Elbow, 1987: 50-69) believe that focusing on getting the insights of a group and anticipating the likes and dislikes of an audience can perturb the writing process itself by paralyzing and compromising the integrity of the writer. Constantly thinking about how to please an audience increases the author’s

stress level, for striving for perfection or universal acceptance is similar to chasing a chimera, an attempt that when it eventually ends, it ends in disappointment or resignation—neither perfection, nor universal acceptance can be achieved. At the same time, chasing such utopian goals interferes with the writing flow and, at times, can encourage writers to rely stereotypes of specific demographic groups, compromising thus the quality of the written text, the same author believes. He goes on offering a possible alternative to relying on these type of stereotypes, namely to conceptualize the audience as capable of playing many different roles during the reading of the text (or while they hear a speech being delivered). If the writer doesn't think of the audience as a fixed category, then he cannot write with a particular audience in mind, therefore his text will have the chance to be authentic.

A different angle from which the audience is included in rhetorical studies is that offered by Edwin Black (Black, 1970: 109-119) who, instead of analyzing a speech for how well it moulds upon its anticipated audience, he does it in terms of who the intended audience might have been at the moment the speech was written, what audience is implied in the discourse. The language used, the references, the metaphors, the images created by the author, the depth of the arguments, the topic itself are some instances that can give an author away on who his intended audience has been. Philip Wander takes the analysis further, as the title of his article suggests as well (Wander, 1984: 197-216), by searching for those groups that are deliberately not a part of the intended audience or those who are purposely excluded, negated, alienated through linguistic devices, discriminated or reduced to silence. He believes that rhetors have a moral responsibility towards these groups as well.

Advancements in communication technologies and proliferation of media outlets and mediatic sources have challenged the classic scholars' belief that the mass media play a uniform presence in people's lives. It might have been the case in early twentieth century, when mass media meant less sources of information for the masses (Williams in Sloane, 2001: 68). Individuals have now the opportunity to rely on alternative sources of information and to create themselves the news they wish they saw broadcasted on television or written in online and offline newspapers. Via online social networks news travels even faster today than it did before, real time events news reaching an increasingly number of households every minute. The role of filter for this news is played by the user themselves, who can choose what he wants to read about, from whom, when and where, in accordance with what they find as most relevant. Whereas the audience of traditional media outlets is broader and, therefore, the content of the news

is shaped accordingly, the audience of modern media outlets is narrower, oftentimes a niche category.

Another lead for mass communication researchers, following the study of the influence mass media has on individuals, is the effects mass audiences wield on institutions. This relation stirred the interest of James Webster and Patricia Phalen (Webster and Phalen, 1997), who advanced the concept of the *presumed audience*, one that put pressure on public figures. It is no secret that public institutions are aware that they are being watched and, when the case be, held liable for their (lack of) (re)action—as they should be in any democratic society—which is why these institutions attempt to predict the positions this presumed audience holds. This is not to say that public institutions react in the manner the presumed audience wishes. A statement belonging to the President of the Romanian Senate, according to which “a nation cannot be governed by following the streets’ wishes, but nor can it be governed by ignoring them” (Hotnews, Sept. 9, 2013), points to the main role of democratic public institutions, that of serving the population and to the role of political leaders, that of representing the will of those who elected them in their positions. A corollary of this statement would imply that the pressure put on the public figures and institutions by this presumed audience that Webster and Phalen write about is a powerful democratic governance tool that, if handled by the right hands, can shape the relation between the audience and institutions and, subsequently, their public endeavours.

Post-modern research includes new terms for the audience, seen as sub-cultures, interpretive communities and taste publics (Sloane, 2001: 66). From this perspective, rhetors’ speeches are believed to be a set of borrowed ideas from the texts present in the various communities in which he or she resides. The discourse patterns in those communities, in turn, construct the rhetor, the editor Sharon E. Jarvis argues further. This interactive model offers a local truth and knowledge, created through social and contextual rhetoric, she believes. To perceive and address the audience as a community is a compromise between the views that separate the audience as individual beings and the audience as a homogenous group. This model can and it does, at the same time, offer an account of audiences from a general point of view, while being also aware of the differences between the individuals that make up these communities. This model, the editor continues, is praised for acknowledging differences between different types of groups but, at the same time, is criticised for being constraining, “because some communities have been known to be hegemonic and intolerant of minorities or dissenters.”

One such group is that of religious practitioners. “Some classicist saw rhetorical probing as the proper route to the right kinds of religious

thought,” Booth considers (Booth, 2004). Others, he continues, like St. Augustine, sensed there was a conflict between their religious beliefs and the training they had in rhetoric. No matter how much one might want to fight this idea, religion makes use of rhetoric perhaps just as much as any other field, for rhetoric is what one uses to spread religious methods and truths to the world. Many believe that religion, being mere irrational faith, makes use of a language that is nothing but rhetoric, oftentimes mere rhetrickery, the same author continues. Two ways of tying rhetoric to religion—as the dutiful altar boy or as forlorn doomed twin—have been used to tempt researchers to study further the deep relations between the two domains. However, Booth believes that neither one of these methods is effective. The pursuit of a deeper understanding of what is to be worshipped, how and, more importantly, why could, however, explain the existence of many discussions of rhetoric and religion as two inseparable topics, the author continues. Since Kenneth Burke’s “Rhetoric of Religion” the academic world has been flooded with such studies that aim at diving deeper into how rhetoric, under somebody’s definition, either serves or leads to somebody’s definition of religion.

Audiences are important also for theorists of democracy, as there can be no democracy without the *demos* or the public. Persuasive speeches have been determining public policies, have been tools for the implementation of laws and have played an incommensurable role in lending support or removing leaders (Booth, 2004). As etymologically democracy resides on the will of the people, public opinion has to be at the heart of all democratic endeavours. It is difficult an attempt, however, to gain insight into the thoughts and passions, both positive and negative, of the public, although sociologists have been working on developing surveys as accurate as possible. Polling, a practice that gained institutional legitimacy in the 1930s, has become the means of measuring opinion, but has not escaped critical voices that argue that the instruments meant to keep track of public opinion are not neutral. Cases of manipulative questions asked in surveys, strategic moments chosen for public referenda or even buying the answers or the survey interpreters to serve this or that momentary interest of a third party are not isolated and, unfortunately, are decreasing the credibility of these practices altogether. It has been argued that public opinion polls “give power to the already powerful” (Herbst in Sloane, 2001).

Audience analysis is of interest to businesses and public relations departments as well, which are aware that adaptation to audience is crucial to successful writing. Marketing scholars are studying the niches that are making their presence felt on the Internet and as such audience demographics is observed in order to offer informed consulting services. For their part, audiences have the opportunity to get involved in computer-mediated

communities and engage themselves in online chats, forums, polls and debates via e-mail and interactive web sites. The possibility of remaining anonymous online and having much knowledge at just a few clicks' distance while comfortably sitting behind the screen of a computer has made many to believe that the audience in cyberspace is more active than that of a Greek *polis* or *agora*.

In modern days, there has been a huge growth in audiences that are not unified in space, although unified in time, by simultaneously being connected to radio or television stations or to online news platforms. One and the same speech can reach recipients in both oral and written form, thanks to modern technology, therefore those specialists who write these speeches have to take into account this aspect as well, so as to be efficient. An interesting fact worth noting is that in computer-mediated communication there is no immediate sign of a messenger's status or expertise. This implies more things, the most important being that no person is judged before their text is read, when labels may, indeed, be attached according to the language they use, the arguments they bring to the attention of the *new* audience (the *new* speaker's audience), the knowledge and proficiency of language usage, attitude and so on. From a reader's perspective, any person posting might be as influential or as important as anyone else—and their messages, as well. No judgements are made on extra-textual circumstances. As long as they share a common language, the members of a virtual audience are brought together by common interests, despite geography and this adherence to the same interests, possibly same principles and beliefs, unites them. They start an online series of replies from the premises that everybody is following the same goal in what the topic that brought them together online is concerned. This kind of interactivity between members of the same audience, though miles away and, oftentimes, separated by long periods of time as well—for, as we have already shown, *verba volant, scripta manent*, making virtual responses more persistent in time—is perhaps one of the main differences between virtual audience and traditional audience.

The growing nature of the audience concept opens up dialogue across subfields, pointing to future theoretical development and revealing how the audience has long been an area of interest to both theorists of rhetorics and rhetoricians who practice rehearsed speeches. Because audience, i.e. that of a written text, expands over time, the idea of addressing worldwide audiences, ancient or modern, with differences in language, culture, social background and so on, has become somewhat utopian. Attempts to reach all the members of an audience are likely to end up by reaching only some of them, “the effort to conjure a mass (universal) audience at best yields a mix of segmented (particular) audiences”, editor John Durham Peters asserts (Sloane, 2001: 68). We find that the mass audience is not the same as an

audience of masses, he continues. Another type of audience that expands and is not limited by acoustic intelligibility (as is the case of listening audiences of dramas or oratories) is the case of participants to an open-air event, such as an organized cultural or political event or a street demonstration. What is interesting to note in the case of the latter is that, although thousands of protestors might fill a public square, they might be understood as rather being mass rhetors than mass audiences, for their aim is sending rather than receiving communication, the same editor remarks.

To understand the persuasion process, theories of attitude and voluntary action indirectly point to factors connected with influencing behaviour. As Fishbein and Ajzen conclude (Fishbein and Ajzen in Sloane, 2001: 577), a person's behavioural intentions are influenced by the person's attitude towards the action in question and by the person's "subjective norm", that is, the person's assessment of whether significant others desire performance of the behaviour, two factors that may weight differently in different situations, thus stimulating different behaviours.

The firm attitude is what brought Margaret Thatcher the appellation of "Iron Lady", for she found herself in the position to act with toughness against the rights of the employees and unionists (in what internal politics was concerned) and to be actively involved in the war against Argentina for the Falkland Islands (in external affairs). The political figure of Margaret Thatcher is noted down in the history of the British people as the only woman to hold the position of both leader of the Conservative Party, as well as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for over a decade. Her unshaken rhetoric gained her the nickname the "Iron Lady", which explains much of the firmness of her speeches addressed to the public.

The speech proposed for analysis in this present paper, addressed to the Foreign Policy Association on December 18th, 1978, having the subtitle "The West in the World Today", is given to the British in the form of a public statement of major importance. In its moderate length content it manages to tackle a number of political and economic *themes*, among which general discussions on foreign policy in the USA, Middle East, Africa, USSR and successor states and Commonwealth, economy, defense, society, terrorism, as well as European Union budget, religion, morality, socialism and so on.

The *structure* of the speech is given in the form of nine clear-cut subparts, each provided with a keyword-like title to summarise their content, namely: Introduction, Interdependence, Iran, Ideology, East / West Relations, Economic Problems, Rhodesia and South Africa, the Strengths of the West and, finally, Conclusion. Thatcher begins her dissertation on the role of the West in the world by setting the social context of that time. Being held in 18 December 1979, a few months after her winning the Cabinet's confidence in the General Elections on May 4th, the speech begins with a remark stating

that the previous 10 years had not been “a happy period for the Western democracies domestically or internationally”. It is for the same reason that the following sentences impel the need for action to change that reality of “unhappiness”, sentences that can be found throughout Thatcher’s whole speech. It is the role of a good leader to induce people to act, providing at the same time the proper direction to be followed. Linguistic structures such as “[t]he time has come when...”, “[but] now is a time for...”, “we all have a direct practical interest in...”, “[i]t is a time for action” are meant to sensitize the people and set their mood on getting involved in solving major issues affecting them all.

Margaret Thatcher’s newly elected Cabinet is at a bridge point in time between the 1970s and 1980s, giving her reason enough to consider that her role as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is even more important in the opening of a new decade, which she calls to be a “dangerous one.” She refers to the challenges to be faced in the 80s later in her speech, upholding however a positive, encouraging attitude towards the chances to overcome the difficulties the new decade threatens to bring along: “[t]he problems are daunting but there is in my view ample reason for optimism”, she ends her Introduction.

At every point in her speech, Margaret Thatcher uses the first person pronoun “we” with reference to the British Government and the British people, a sign that she identifies herself with the British, considering herself as being one of them: it is *we* who “face a new decade”, it is *our* security that is challenged, it is *we in Britain* who have “supported with calmness President Carter’s resolutions”, it is still *our* “democratic systems that have made possible” healthy political relationships and so on. As long as she is one of the British, Thatcher’s position gives her the authority to speak in the name of the people whose interests she represents, a fact which is linguistically highlighted by the use of the inclusive, and not exclusive first person pronoun, plural.

It is not a novelty that language has an impact on social relations and that popularity is greatly influenced by the words chosen to express realities. That is why politicians pay special attention to *word choice* and tend to adopt a note of formality when holding a speech, inserting at the same time structures that speak in the language of the audience. It is thus a fine line that has to be kept intact so as not to speak too formal (and thus running the risk of not being understood or credible in the eyes of the simple citizen), or too informal (and thus diminishing authority). In this respect, when Margaret Thatcher uses in her speech to the Foreign Policy Association words that she considers to be jargon, she immediately apologises to the public for doing so (“I apologise for the jargon”), showing what Norman Fairclough calls in his study on “Language and Power” (Fairclough,

2001:98) “the concern from participants for each other’s face”, a desire to be liked by the ones we talk to. Another linguistic device that Thatcher uses to appeal to the public is *irony*. When speaking about the 200 years ago fights in India and along the Great Lakes in America, she makes a comment that the purpose for those fights was “as Macaulay put it, [for] the King of Prussia [to] [...] rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend.”

Then, to explain in more detail what the concept of “interdependence” is, Thatcher makes a parallel between a “then” and a “now”. Years before, when, as she says, “she was in her teens”, countries could still be referred to as being “far-away” lands, whose problems would not affect the others, the British included. She offers the example of the then Czechoslovakia and its quarrels, and the difficulties the American President Franklin Roosevelt still experienced when trying to convince his people “of the need to concern themselves with a European war.” Such a difficulty would, in Thatcher’s opinion, not emerge nowadays, when, as she states, “no country is an island.” Issues such as the price of oil in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, the size of grain harvest in Kansas and the Ukraine are “of immediate concern to people all over the world” and, sooner or later, “the bell tolls for us all”, Thatcher concludes her point on Interdependence.

When speaking about Iran and the events that had taken place in Tehran the previous weeks, the tone is a negative one, supported by words such as “anger”, “dismay”, “hostages” and the negative pronoun “nothing” that, even though associated with an affirmative verb, could still induce the disapproval of the treatment applied to Iranians. The disapproval comes from a large community, for it was “[*the world* [that] has watched with anger and dismay the events in Tehran”, alluding to a sense of unity when it comes to expressing condemn towards an unjust situation. The following paragraph however, making reference to “we in Britain” has, not surprisingly, positive connotations: “[we in Britain] have *respected* and *supported* the *calmness* and resolution with which President Carter has handled an appalling situation.” Other words that give confidence in the rightness of the Britain’s and its allies’ officials are those such as “our partners in Europe”, “full public and private support”, “his efforts to secure”, “[we] will continue to support and help”, “we have admired the forbearance.” Through such sentences Margaret Thatcher applauds the initiatives and ways of dealing with difficult situations President Carter has adopted.

Regarding Ideology, Thatcher appears to be the defender of religious traditions that define the identity of a nationality or community: “There is a tide of self-confidence and self-awareness in the Muslim world [...]. The West should recognise this with respect, not hostility. [...] It is in our own interests, as well as in the interests of the people of that region, that they build on their own deep religious traditions.” Manifesting her support of

the differences between the Muslims and the West, she makes no concession however when speaking about the frauds of imported Marxism. She points out that Marxism “failed to take root in the advanced democracies”, “failed to provide sustained economic or social development” in those countries where it did take root, such as backward countries or authoritarian ones. It is no secret that Margaret Thatcher constantly expressed herself in public speeches to be against the Soviet Union and even though she is aware of the faults Marxism had in practice, she publicly admits in the speech under analysis in this present paper that there is still a “technique of subversion” left which, together with “a collection of catch-phrases”, “is still dangerous”. Using this very same word, she points to one of the challenges to come in the new decade, as announced in the beginning of her speech. She then goes on to clarify her point of view by using a simple *comparison* structure (element A is like element B): she draws an analogy between the technique of subversion and terrorism, which is, in Thatcher’s view, “a menace that needs to be fought whenever it occurs.”

The fifth part of the speech held by Britain’s then-newly elected Prime Minister deals with the East vs. West relations. It is, among the nine parts of the speech, the one that is devoted the most attention, succeeded in terms of length by that focusing on the “Strengths of the West”. The concern Margaret Thatcher manifests regarding USSR is mainly directed at its military rather than ideological power. She considers this to be another immediate threat of the new “dangerous” decade. In her view, the threat might have consequences not only on the security in the West, by proxy or directly, but also on the Third World. The section checked against BBC Radio News report 2200, 18 December 1979 contains Thatcher’s concern with the military challenge the West was facing at the time. Her concern being given expression on more than one occasion, it had been subject to speculations coming from those opposing Thatcher’s political views. She had often been, as she puts it, “deliberately misunderstood”, especially by “her enemies, who had labelled her «the Iron Lady»”. In order to confirm her aggressiveness and combatant attitude, she admits that she really is the Iron Lady and then laughs ironically, obviously addressing this way to her enemies. The following paragraphs draw a line between “them” and “us”, which stand for the East and the West, by repeatedly using the third person plural “they” and the first person plural “we” when describing positions opposed to one another. “They” are the ones to be blamed, for while *they* “expand their armed forces on land, sea and air”, “continually improve the quality of their armaments”, “outnumber us in Europe”, “appear more regularly in parts of the world where they had not been seen before”, *we, the West* are facing the obligation to respond. Britain, the USA and the European members of NATO must reach a consensus in this problem and Margaret Thatcher ad-

vises for both sides to “seek agreements on arms control which preserve the essential security of each”: no-one benefits from totally destructive and highly expensive modern weapons being piled up unceasingly. It is again the “we in Britain” who appear to have a more peaceful and positive view on the power of the politics. In short, whenever she is referring to “them”, words allude to negative situations, whereas “we” is associated with positive feelings and actions.

To give a more personal note to her speech, besides apologising for the jargon when the case, talking about the times when she was in her teens and countries were still seen as “islands”, Thatcher introduces information regarding her own experience with the Soviet government: “I have been attacked by the Soviet government”, “I am not talking about...”, “[w]hat I am seeking is...” Her view seems fairly argumentative, seeking no more than equilibrium in status and power between the East and the West, eliminating from the start the idea of superiority or inferiority of the one over the other, appealing therefore to the common sense of the common citizen. She makes negotiation from a position of balance between East and West a personal issue; when the balance will be maintained at lower levels, “I shall be well content”, she further declares.

Due to the interdependence of states’ affairs, economic problems make no exception from being a key element in a Domino-like set of issues that appear on the horizon. If ten years before those days when Thatcher addresses the public this speech only 5 percent of oil was imported in Britain, in the late 70s the number has multiplied by ten. “But it is not just oil”, Margaret Thatcher says, “this has obvious consequences for your foreign policy.” To be noted here, from a linguistic point of view, is the use of the second person pronoun “you”, in an attempt to strike a sensitive chord and raise awareness in the people in the audience. However, looking beyond the linguistic level, the message delivered by Thatcher is unsettling: if the management of the relations between not only the East and the West, but also between individual countries is poor, along with emergences of price rises, refusals to continue offering a product or a service, ineffective negotiations between states—they will all lead to a precarious balance of the world economy. One might find similarities between such a situation and the results of Russia’s Gas Market Reforms in 2009. In these circumstances, as a leader, Thatcher once again uses language to induce the British the appetite for getting involved by supporting their elected ones in “the orderly settlement of political disputes”.

The partnership Britain had previously established with the USA is once and again sustained by Thatcher, who openly thanks President Carter once more for his “timely support”, especially in the final stages of the negotiations for a ceasefire, free and fair elections and a new constitution for Zim-

babwe-Rhodesia. Clarity, awareness and the sense of reality (“We have no illusion about...”) never seem to leave Mrs. Thatcher, as she manifests her concerns regarding implementing this agreement on the ground. Despite the obstacles she foresees, she impels people to seek reconciliation, to take the initiative and to persevere, the ultimate goal to be achieved in this issue being a progress towards an ending of the isolation of South Africa in world affairs.

Focussing so far on the variety of problems the new decade seems to bring along, Thatcher leaves for the finale of her speech what she believes could give people a reason to be confident and action-oriented. It is thus the moment to present the Strengths of the West, a section of the speech that is reserved, as stated above, the second longest paper coverage. Pursuing the reinforcement of the idea of a strong West, the choice of *categorical modalities* such as “must” and “must not” is most appropriate. The West has “immense material and moral assets”, to which clarity, will and confidence must be added to use them with precision, she says. Thatcher further uses a negative pronoun used with an *imperative sentence* and praises the power of the West in the world in “Let us never forget that despite the difficulties to which I have referred, the Western democracies remain overwhelmingly strong in economic terms.” These nations leave the impression of a team, agreeing on steps to be taken, starting from the basic requirements—the need to defeat inflation, to avoid protectionism and to make best use of the limited resources available. Thatcher’s first economic reforms aimed at lowering inflation. She managed to reduce inflation and to strengthen economic growth by taking a stubborn and risky initiative of increasing indirect taxes. The downside of her success however was the increasingly unemployment figure and the dropping of manufacturing output.

Mrs. Prime Minister shows confidence in political institutions, that “meet the aspirations of ordinary people”, “attract the envy of all those who do not have them” and “have shown themselves remarkably resistant to subversive influences.” Then again she uses words with positive connotations linked to the “us” side: “democratic”, “healthy”, “free people”, “frankly debated”, “debates are a sign of strength.”

Moreover, the members of the Community have “stronger interests that unite [them] than those which divide them.” She keeps her positive attitude and goes as far as to imply that the world depends on the West! (“A strong Europe is the best partner for the United States. It is on the strengths of that partnership that the strength of the free world depends.”) It is not only the free world that depends on the West, but also the Third World, which needs the experience, technology, markets, goods and contacts the Western partners have. It is in this part of her speech that Margaret Thatcher lets the public understand what the role of the “West in the World [Today]” is.

Resuming her opening remark of a “dangerous new decade”, the speech takes the form of a well-structured, round discourse and, as a well-structured speech could not end without Conclusions, Thatcher concisely presents hers. She states again her confidence in the strengths to overcome the difficulties and lists the main priorities she has set on her Prime Minister agenda. Choosing again strong modals, the list is a series of must’s: restore the dynamics to our economies, modernise our defence, continue to seek agreement with the East, help the developing countries to help themselves, work together to improve world’s economy through our international trading and financial institutions, conserve resources, reach an agreement with the oil producers, never fail to assert faith in freedom. She is aware that none of these solutions is new, but to all the cynics she only says sustained effort is what the challenge consists of.

Between all these grand goals there are two slips of the tongue, intentionally or not. The first, the lack of differentiation between “to affect” and “to effect” in “our economic welfare is increasingly *effected* by the operation on the market” and “increasingly *effected* by the growing demand of...” The second one is the use of a different preposition when referring to “our belief *on* the institution.” However, such slips of the tongue do not distort the targeted message and are rarely even noticed. The fact that Thatcher uses mainly *declaratives* when presenting the issues of the world and the strengths of the West, *imperatives* when calling for action (“[let us never forget...”, “[let us go down in history as...]”) and *no interrogatives* is another linguistic strategy she adopts to leave the British the image of a decided mind and, why not, of an “Iron Lady”.

This speech is a particularly special one. It is held by a new Prime Minister, a position held, for the first time in Britain’s history, by a woman. Her position was delicate and so was the time, therefore one could imagine how carefully her words had been chosen to reach the intended audience. Moreover, the speech was given at the crossroads between two years and two decades, which makes it a bridge-talk, a sort of “New Decade’s Eve Resolution”, with the wish to “go down in history as the generation which not only understood what needed to be done but a generation which had the strength, the self discipline and the resolve to see it through,” the wish to be the memorable people of the 80s. With this speech we, the audience, gain a little insight into the linguistic persuasion strategies that made up Margaret Thatcher’s unshaken rhetoric and undeniable toughness that were not abandoned during her time in office, accompanying her throughout her entire political career. With a critical eye and attention to common elements or, on the contrary, to distinctive rhetorical features, with our knowledge of her sometimes controversial approaches and being given the opportunity to enunciate an informed and objective opinion on (part of) her entire career

(after her recent death in April 2013), the speech proposed for analysis offers valuable insight into the choices of one prominent political figure of our times. An overview on more such speeches can only prove of even more substance for historians and linguists reuniting their forces to shaping knowledge for the future.

References

- Alburnus Maior. "15 Septembrie—Protestul continuă în întreaga lume." September 12, 2013. <http://www.rosiamontana.org/ro/stiri/-15-septembrie-protestul-continua-in-intreaga-lume>.
- Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1969): 1-15.
- Black, Edwin. "The Second Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 109-119.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Rhetorics. The Quest for Effective Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Brickhouse, Thomas C., and Nicholas D. Smith. *Plato's Socrates*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. New York, NY: Prentice-Hall, 1950.
- Elbow, Parker. "Closing My Eyes As I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience." *College English* 49 (1987): 50-69.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. Second Edition. Harlow: Longman, 2001.
- Fishbein, Martin, and Icek Ajzen. *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research*, 1975. In Thomas O. Sloane, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, 577. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Herbst, Susan. *Numbered Voices*, 1993. In Thomas O. Sloane, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, 577. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Hotnews.ro. "Declarație-surpriză a lui Crin Antonescu: Proiectul Roșia Montană trebuie respins. Nu se poate guverna după stradă, dar nu se poate guverna ignorând strada." (September 9, 2013). September 10, 2013. My translation. <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-politic-15542061-conferinta-presa-sustinuta-presedintele-pnl-crin-antonescu-ora-12-30.htm>.
- Margaret Thatcher Foundation—Complete list of 8,000 + Thatcher Statements & Texts of Many of Them." January 21, 2009. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=104199>.
- Park, Douglas. "Analyzing Audiences." *College Composition and Communication* (1986): 478-488.
- Perelman, Chaim, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Indianapolis, IN: Notre Dame, 1969.

- Sloane, Thomas O., ed. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Wander, Philip. "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn I Rhetorical Theory." *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 197-216.
- Webster, James G., and Patricia F. Phalen. *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1996.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*, 1985. In Thomas O. Sloane, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, 68. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.