
Syntactical Analysis: Sentence Types and Patterns in Michelle Obama's 2024 Democratic National Convention Speech

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Article Info

Article History:

Received September 2025

Accepted October 2025

Published November 2025

Keywords:

Sentence types;
sentence patterns;
persuasion; syntax;
political rhetoric

This research aims to analyze Michelle Obama's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention with a focus on syntactic structure, particularly sentence types and patterns, and their contribution to persuasive strategies in political rhetoric. Using qualitative descriptive methods and syntactic analysis based on Fromkin's (2011) sentence type theory, Verspoor and Sauter's (2000) sentence pattern theory, and Perloff's (2003) persuasion theory. The data were analyzed in the form of speech transcripts to determine the distribution of simple, complex, compound, compound-complex sentences, as well as sentence patterns containing linking verbs, monotransitive and ditransitive verbs. We found that Michelle Obama relied on simple sentences (46%) in her speech as a strategy to convey her message clearly, directly, and emotionally to the audience, as well as complex sentences (25%) that showed moral contrast, while compound and compound-complex sentences unified the persuasive narrative and call to action. In terms of sentence patterns, linking verbs (22%) and monotransitive verbs (20%) support the construction of abstract concepts of hope and unity, and their use also reinforces direct calls to action. Our findings confirm that syntactic structure not only shapes grammatical meaning, but also effectively enhances political rhetoric. In addition, when combined with rhetorical devices or methods such as rules of three, the use of syntactic clarity strengthens 'ethos, pathos, and logos' in Michelle Obama's speeches. This study suggests that the success of persuasive speech depends heavily on the speaker's skill in addressing the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of the audience.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a very important role in conveying messages persuasively throughout the world, regardless of time and era. In the political context, persuasive rhetoric serves as the primary tool for instilling ideology, building image, and influencing public opinion on certain issues. As emphasized by Almahasees & Mahmoud (2022) “Political speeches are full of persuasive strategies to support the speaker’s vision and agenda.” Therefore, analyzing persuasive rhetoric is important in order to understand how language structure, word choice, and sentence style influence the audience and reinforce political messages. Speeches delivered by professional and well-known speakers are usually more attention-grabbing, especially if the topic is related to hot political and social issues, which are often the subject of academic study. The exploration of persuasive rhetoric in public speeches is critical because rhetoric not only strengthens the power of persuasion but also increases the emotional and cognitive engagement of the audience with the message being conveyed (Mohammed, 2025). Thus, examining persuasive rhetoric in political speeches is very important, because through in-depth linguistic analysis, we can understand how language acts as a strategic tool in shaping image, legitimacy, and political power in the public sphere.

One of the most influential public figures in the world, Michelle Obama known for her ability to convey political and social messages with powerful rhetoric, wife of the 44th President Barack Obama, who participated in the 2024 Democratic Party campaign. Popular as the *First Lady* of the United States at the time, she played an important role in shaping social and political discourse, particularly on gender equality, moral leadership, and education (Dahal, 2024; María & López, 2025); Salma, 2025). Her reputation is globally recognized, with TIME magazine in 2019 crowning her one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World” in the *ICONS* category, written by Beyoncé Knowles- Carter as an expression of deep admiration through public statements and collaborations. Based on a 2018 Gallups News survey, she was named the “Most Admired Woman in America”. In terms of academic studies, Alharbi (2023) show that Michelle Obama uses powerful linguistic strategies through expressive and emotional sentence structures, which strengthen

her persuasiveness in front of audiences. Through a variety of global influences and her distinctive communication style, Michelle Obama has become a worthy subject for linguistic research because her speeches reflect a combination of linguistic power, persuasion strategies, and human values that are also relevant in modern political discourse.

The theoretical framework in this research is based on two main foundations. Through a syntactic analysis approach, this research applies syntactic theory Chomsky (1965) to identify and classify the types and patterns of sentences used in speeches. The concept of *transformational-generative grammar* explains that every sentence has a *deep structure* and a *surface structure* that represent the relationship between linguistic form and the meaning produced. This provides a scientific basis for analyzing sentence patterns and types in political speeches, as variations in syntactic structure can create different effects on the audience's interpretation. This is also in line with Beard (2000), in *The Language of Politics*, which emphasizes that political language not only serves to convey information, but also to control meaning, build image, and influence public perception. States that language structure plays an important role in constructing persuasive messages in political linguistics studies. Thus, the combination of Chomsky and Beard's theories is relevant to this study, as it allows for analysis of both the grammatical aspects and the rhetorical functions of the language used by Michelle Obama.

Based on a number of previous studies, research on sentence structure and persuasive rhetoric has been conducted in various fields and on various types of texts. In the field of media, Andriani and Bram (2021) in their research entitled "Syntactic Analysis of Sentence Patterns and Types of BBC News Articles" examined the patterns and types of sentences used in BBC news articles and found that the variety of sentence types in news texts affects the clarity and objectivity of the information received by readers. In academic perspective, Hidayah, Bochari, and Jamiluddin, (2024) in their research entitled "Analysis of Sentence Types in Affecting College Students' Writing Skills" emphasized that the use of appropriate sentence types not only plays a role in improving the quality of writing but also helps form more persuasive arguments. In the political context, Anggoro, Mukhrizal, and Sufiyandi (2022) identified that Joe Biden and Donald Trump's speeches were dominated by simple sentences that emphasized clarity and strengthened the

audience's emotions. Similar findings were also presented by Manossoh, Samola, and Olli, (2022) in their research “A Syntactical Analysis on Sentence Patterns Used in Barack Obama’s Speech” which analyzed the sentence patterns in Barack Obama’s political speeches and stated that sentence pattern variation strengthens persuasiveness. In addition, research by Addae et al., (2023) shows that sentence structure plays a role in shaping ideology and linguistic power.

The majority of previous research related to the topic of political rhetoric has focused on male figures such as Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and Donald Trump, while studies on female figures, particularly Michelle Obama, are still rare. They show a form of rhetoric based on empathy, solidarity, and hope that is characteristic of women in building humanistic political communication. The lack of research that syntactically examines how sentence structure plays a role in the construction of persuasion makes this research important. Therefore, this research aims to examine the types of sentences used in Michelle Obama’s speeches, identify the dominant syntactic patterns at the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC), and evaluate the role of language structure in supporting communicative goals based on the contemporary political context.

Furthermore, by analyzing these elements, this research can provide further insight into how sentence structure can be a means of shaping political image and ideological influence through language. In practical terms, the results of this research are expected to contribute new insights to linguistic studies and the role of women's language in effective and inclusive politics. As a result, this research not only enriches the study of linguistics and political communication but also strengthens the discourse on equality in language representation and leadership, especially since the transcripts of these speeches have never been analysed before.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the analysis based on linguistic aspects related to politics, it cannot be separated from two main areas of research, which focus on syntactic aspects and political rhetoric aspects. These two areas are interrelated and complementary, as syntax provides a framework for how sentences are formed, while political rhetoric

provides an explanation of how these sentences are used for persuasive purposes, describing how they are used for rhetorical purposes and effective political communication.

In an endeavor to understand sentence patterns and types. This research examines several fundamental works in the field of linguistics and focuses specifically on syntax to support the analysis of sentence patterns and types in English. There are three main sources that are relevant to the topic or theoretical framework in this research, which combines syntax in sentences and persuasion in political rhetoric, specifically Verspoor and Sauter (2000) in their book entitled "English Sentence Analysis" provide a comprehensive framework for the syntactic analysis of sentences in English to identify and analyze sentence patterns that appear in the data that will be the object of study. Furthermore, the book by Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011), entitled "An Introduction to Language", provides a basic understanding of language and syntax. This book also discusses various types of sentences and linguistic principles that contribute to sentence analysis in this research. These two fundamental works are very influential as the theoretical basis for this study. In addition, the theory of political rhetoric in this research is based on Perloff's theory, which is relevant to his book entitled "The Dynamics of Persuasion," which discusses persuasion in the political sphere, which is also related to the analysis of speeches on political rhetoric.

Verspoor and Sauter (2000) explain various sentence structures in English, from simple to complex sentences, as well as the grammatical patterns that form them. This concept helps researcher identify and classify five sentence patterns, including intransitive, linking, monotransitive, ditransitive, and complex-transitive, which appear in the data. On the other, Fromkin et al. (2011) provide a basic understanding of four types of related sentences, which are simple, complex, compound, and compound- complex sentences, as well as the linguistic principles that form the basis of these sentences. These two are the main references for establishing the basis of syntactic analysis in this research.

In addition to this syntactic theory, this study also uses Perloff (2003) theory of persuasion, which is primarily rooted in Aristotle's theory and developed in Perloff's book entitled "The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century." an Perloff (2003) explains that persuasion is a symbolic process carried out by communicators to influence the attitudes of their audience by forming, reinforcing, or changing their attitudes through messages that are consciously and strategically

constructed. In this framework, sentence structure is understood not only as a grammatical form, but also as a rhetorical tool used to achieve persuasive goals.

Based on what is stated in Perloff's book, there are two message processing pathways, which are *the central route* (logical and deep processing) and *the peripheral route* (rapid processing based on emotional cues). Complex sentences tend to encourage the audience to process deeply (central route), while simple sentences often utilize the emotional route (peripheral route). According to Perloff's book, which is an extension of Aristotle's theory, persuasion has three main ingredients: ethos (the nature of the communicator), pathos (the emotional state of the audience), and logos (message arguments). Recognizing that speakers had to adapt to their audiences by considering in their speeches those factors that were most persuasive to an audience, this idea aligns with Aristotle's rhetorical framework, which emphasizes the balance between logos, ethos, and pathos as the core of persuasion, as well as the need for a speaker to adapt their speech style to the audience's disposition. This right is relevant to the important concept of analyzing how Michelle Obama constructed logical and emotional appeal while strengthening her credibility through the choice of sentence types and patterns. Thus, the persuasion theory from Perloff's book complements Verspoor and Fromkin's syntactic theory in understanding how language structure is used not only as a means of communication but also as a persuasive strategy in political rhetoric.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of describing and understanding linguistic phenomena in depth in the context of political discourse. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret the meaning behind the use of language structures and how these structures form persuasive messages. Mack et al., (2005) explain that qualitative research serves to gain an in-depth understanding of complex realities in a particular social context. The source of data for this study is Michelle Obama's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention, taken from the official video on the YouTube platform. This speech was chosen because it represents a strong political rhetorical style and is rich in linguistic meaning. The data collection process was carried out by transcribing the content of the speech into text (.TXT) using an automatic video or YouTube-to-text conversion site.

The transcription results then need to be checked manually to ensure that the transcript is accurate in terms of syntax, spelling, and punctuation so that it matches the original video. The data collection process was carried out by transcribing the video into text using a website dedicated to converting YouTube videos into text. The data analysis process was carried out using the syntactic analysis method, in which the data was categorized based on the types and patterns of sentences used in the speech which is line with the theory of Verspoor et al. (2022) as well, from a different or another but related book entitled "English Sentence Constructions", focuses on four main categories of sentence types, which are simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. Each sentence in the data is classified based on its syntactic structure and the relationship between clauses. In addition, sentence patterns are analyzed by identifying core components such as (S-V; S-V-O, S-V-C, S-V-O-C, and S-V-O-A) to determine the variety of structures used by speakers. The frequency of occurrence of each type and pattern of sentence is then calculated to determine the most dominant form and its function in the rhetorical context. The next step is to link the results of syntactic analysis with persuasive message theory. Aristotle's classical rhetorical foundation is used to interpret syntactic functions in building ethos, pathos, and logos (Aristotle, trans. Kennedy, 2007)), which is then reinforced by Perloff's (2003) modern concept of persuasion. Thus, this research assesses how sentence structure plays a role in strengthening the credibility, logic, and emotion that shape the persuasive message in Michelle Obama's speech.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of Michelle Obama's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention reveals various types and patterns of sentences that were strategically used to convey a persuasive and effective message. This research found that syntactic structure plays an important role in reinforcing the main message of the speech, building a deep emotional connection with the audience, and enhancing the speaker's credibility as a trusted figure. By choosing specific sentence types, Michelle Obama was able to emphasize important ideas, while well-structured sentence patterns helped create a cohesive and easy-to-follow narrative. The results of this study provide a new perspective on how rhetorical strategies can be supported by the use of planned language structures, creating a stronger impact in political speeches to influence audiences emotionally and intellectually. The results of this data analysis will be

presented in detail in the form of tables as follows:

A. Sentence Types

Table 1. The Frequency sentence types used by Michele Obama in 2024 DNC.

Simple Sentence	2	46%	<i>“We feel good.”</i>
Complex Sentence	1	25%	<i>“When they go low, we go high.”</i>
Compound Sentence	1	17%	<i>“We fight hard, but we never give up.”</i>
Compound-Complex Sentence	7	12%	<i>“We hope for change, and when it comes, we must embrace it.”</i>

In general, simple sentences convey brief, clear, and memorable messages to the audience, such as “We feel good,” which consists only of a subject and predicate. Although simple, this pattern provides emotional strength by directly touching the audience's feelings.

Simple Sentence

For this analysis of the speech, simple sentence appears to dominate, with around 28 sentences used (46%). For Example: “We feel good”. This sentence consists of a Subject (S) and a predicate in the form of an Intransitive Verb (IV). Although simple, this structure can create a strong emotional effect as it emphasizes the collective mood.

Complex Sentence

Furthermore, for the analysis of complex sentences in the speech, it can be seen that they are the second most dominant type after simple sentences, with a total of 15 sentences used (25%) For Example: “When they go low, we go high.” This sentence consists of the subordinate clause “When they go low” and main clause “we go high”. This structure emphasizes the moral contrast between two behavioral choices. In the

complex sentence “When they go low, we go high”, there is a subordinate clause “when they go low” that functions as a conditional subordinate clause, and a main clause “we go high” that expresses a moral response. The structure of this sentence shows a cause-and-effect relationship as well as contrast, where the negative behavior of the opponent (go low) is contrasted with the dignified choice to maintain positive values (go high).

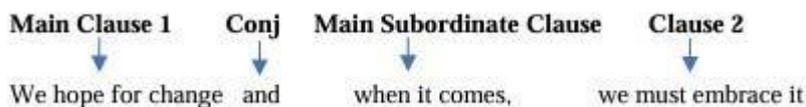
Compound Sentence

For the analysis of compound sentences, there is not much difference with the use of complex sentences in Michelle Obama's 2024 DNC speech, with a percentage range of 17% found in 11 sentences that she used. For Example: “*We fight hard, but we never give up.*” This sentence connects two independent clauses with a conjunction *but*. This pattern creates a rhetorical effect by demonstrating a consistent fighting spirit.

Compound-Complex Sentence

The last sequence, or one that is rarely used in the speech, is the compound-complex sentence, which is found in only about 7 sentences (12%). For Example: “*We hope for change, and when it comes, we must embrace it.*” This sentence combines two independent clauses (“*We hope for change*” and “*we must embrace it*”) with the subordinate clause “*when it comes*”. The structure is complex, but effective in conveying layered ideas.

Figure 1. Example structure of Compound-Complex sentence



From the speech that the researcher has examined, the following statements are appropriate:

[1] Simple sentences are used to build clarity and emotional connection.

[2] Complex sentences emphasize moral contrast.

[3] Compound sentences reinforce the message with repetitive rhythm.

[4] Complex compound sentences are used for long arguments that remain structured. In contrast, **complex sentences** serve to emphasize moral comparisons, such as “*When they go low, we go high.*” This sentence contains a main clause and a subordinate clause that are combined to show contrasting values. Compound

sentences are used to bring together two equal ideas, while complex compound sentences are used when Obama wants to convey a longer but still logical argument.

B. Sentence Patterns

In addition to sentence types, Michelle Obama's speech also displays variations in sentence patterns based on syntactic function. Five main patterns were found in the data, with the following distribution:

Table 2. The Frequency sentence patterns used by Michele Obama in 2024 DNC.

Intransitive Verb	(S + V)	8	18%	<i>“We feel good.”/ “More people came.”</i>
Linking Verb	(S + LV + C)	0	2%	<i>“America, hope is making a comeback.”/ “Our fate is in our hands.”</i>
Monotransitive Verb	(S + V + DO)	0	0%	<i>“We must do everything in our power to elect them.”</i>
Ditransitive Verb	(S + V + IO + DO)	0	0%	<i>“My mother showed me the meaning of hard work.”</i>
Complex-Transitive Verb	(S + V + DO + OC)	1	1%	<i>“They made her president.”</i>

Table 3. Explanation of abbreviations of the formulas

Found in such as structure

S Subject

LV Linking verb

C Complement

V Verb

IO Indirect Object;

DO Direct Object

OC Object Complement

Intransitive verb pattern (S + V)

simple sentences that do not require an object, “*We feel good*” or “*More people came.*” This consists only of a subject and an intransitive verb. The simplicity of this intransitive pattern actually gives it emotional power, because it directly conveys a collective state or condition without additional explanation. Obama uses this pattern to build a sense of togetherness and optimism that is easily understood by the audience.

Linking Verb Pattern (S + LV + C)

Connects the subject with a complement in the form of a noun or adjective. Clear examples of this are “*America, hope is making a comeback*” or “*She became a teacher.*” In this structure, the subject hope is connected with the linking verb is and the complement making a comeback. The function of this pattern is to emphasize abstract concepts such as hope or unity, then connect them with concrete images that foster optimism. The linking pattern is often used when Michelle Obama wants to reinforce moral values or emphasize the collective identity of his audience.

Monotransitive pattern (S + V + DO)

Furthermore, used to express an action directed at an object. Sentences such as “*We must do everything in our power*” or “*She carried a long whippy willow twig*” show a direct relationship between the agent and the object. In his speech, Obama used this pattern to reinforce his call to action. By placing the audience as the active subject that “*does something,*” monotransitive sentences serve as a call to action that demands direct involvement from the listeners.

Ditransitive pattern (S + V + IO + DO)

Involves two objects at once: an indirect object as the recipient and a direct object as the thing being given. An example in the speech is “*My mother showed me*

the meaning of hard work.” This structure presents an intimate personal experience, where a moral lesson is passed down from mother to child. Obama chose this pattern to build an emotional connection with the audience through family stories, making his political message more authentic, personal, and relatable.

Complex-Transitive pattern (S + V + DO + OC)

For the last part, found when the direct object is followed by an object complement that gives identity or explains a new role. The sentence “They made her president” represents this pattern, with her as the direct object and president as the object complement. This structure emphasizes a transformation of role or social status. In the context of his speech, Obama used it to show that major change can only happen through collective support that is capable of elevating someone to leadership.

These findings show that Michelle Obama utilizes a variety of sentence types (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex) and sentence patterns (intransitive, linking, monotransitive, ditransitive, and complex-transitive) to reinforce her rhetorical strategy. Simple sentences give a straightforward and emotional impression, while complex sentences emphasize moral contrasts. Transitive patterns, both monotransitive and complex-transitive, are used to build calls to action and demonstrate social transformation. Thus, the syntactic structure used is not merely a grammatical construction, but also an effective instrument of political persuasion.

DISCUSSION

The syntactic analysis of Michelle Obama's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention shows how the use of diverse sentence patterns and types plays an important role in strengthening the persuasive and emotional messages conveyed. The results of this research show that Michelle Obama tends to use simple sentences (46%) in her speech. From a syntactic point of view, this is in line with Fromkin et al. (2011), who state that simple sentences are the most effective way to convey ideas that are clear, direct, and easy for the audience to understand. In political rhetoric, the use of simple sentences also supports the clarity of the message while making it easier for the audience to remember the essence of the speech. This is in line with the principles of rhetoric, which emphasize that persuasive messages must be concise and easy to

understand in order to be effective.

The diversity in the use of sentence types also demonstrates the depth of this speech. In addition, one of the rhetorical strategies used is the rule of three. Perloff (2003) emphasizes that effective persuasion involving symbols, rhythm, and repetition demonstrates a rhetorical strategy that combines *moral contrast* and *collective reasoning*. In line with the Rule of Three principle, which is a classic rhetorical pattern that suggests the use of three words or three phrases in sequence to make the message more memorable and persuasive. Expressions in the speech such as “We feel good, we feel proud, we feel hopeful” or the famous quote “When they go low, we go high” show how repetition with a pattern of three builds emotional and cognitive strength. Thus, simple sentence structures combined with rhythmic repetition become rhetorical instruments that reinforce the existing political message. The analysis also shows that Michelle Obama uses the Three Elements Pattern principle to increase audience memory and evoke emotional resonance (Perloff, 2003, p. 87). In accordance with the Rule of Three Elements in this analysis, it also shows a parallel pattern consistent with the connecting and monotransitive structure.

The importance of sentence pattern variation lies not only in its structural strength, but also in its function to achieve different communicative goals in a speech. Furthermore, in terms of sentence patterns, Verspoor and Sauter's (2000) theory explains that variations such as linking verb patterns and transitive patterns play an important role in political rhetoric. As stated by Verspoor & Sauter (2000, pp. 66–72), variations in linking and transitive patterns not only serve a grammatical function, but also project interpersonal relationships. In the context of political speeches, linking patterns connect abstract values such as “hope,” “unity,” and “change” with national identity. On the other hand, monotransitive patterns emphasize *calls to action*, which are central to Obama's political rhetoric. Conversely, transitive patterns are used when the speaker wants to emphasize *concrete actions*, such as “We must do everything in our power.” By choosing this pattern, the speech not only builds emotion but also motivates the audience to take action.

The results of this study indicate that sentence structure in political speeches is not only focused on syntax, but is also part of a planned rhetorical strategy. The dominance of simple sentences shows that Michelle Obama prioritizes clarity in order to reach a wide audience, while the use of analysis in accordance with the three-pattern rule strengthens the memorability and emotional impact of the message.

Connective and transitive patterns add a dimension of meaning that connects moral values with concrete actions. Therefore, through a combination of syntactic and persuasion theories, it can be understood that the syntactic structure in Michelle Obama's speeches functions as a persuasive device that unites the emotional and rational aspects of the audience. The success of Michelle Obama's rhetoric lies in her ability to combine simple sentences with the power of Aristotelian classical rhetoric through the Rule of Three and measured repetition, creating a straightforward yet evocative style of language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research analyzes the use of sentence types and patterns in Michelle Obama's speech at the 2024 Democratic National Convention, as well as how the syntactic structures used play an important role in strengthening persuasive and emotional messages. The findings show that Michelle Obama strategically chose various sentence patterns, such as Linking Verb Pattern and Monotransitive Verb Pattern, to build emotional connections with the audience and reinforce the speech's themes of hope, unity, and call to action. The predominant use of Simple Sentences makes the message clearer and easier to understand, while Complex and Compound-Complex sentences add depth and connect more complex ideas in the speech narrative. This research makes an important contribution to understanding how linguistic strategies, particularly syntactic choices, are used to shape effective political speeches. The findings also confirm the important role of sentence structure in creating a deeper connection between the speaker and the audience, as well as showing how syntax can serve as a tool to achieve persuasive communication goals. For the potential future research, further analysis of the use of sentence structure in political speeches of other figures, both in different cultural contexts, may provide greater insight into both universal and culture-specific elements in political rhetoric. In addition, comparative research on sentence patterns in speeches from different ideologies or political parties can deepen the understanding of the relationship between syntax and political persuasion. Thus, this research is expected to expand the scope of political linguistics studies and contribute more deeply to the role of language in shaping political messages globally.

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