



THE RHETORICAL QUESTIONS AS STYLISTIC DEVICE

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Abstract: *Rhetorical questions hold a significant place in stylistics due to their ability to enhance communication by emphasizing ideas, provoking thought, and eliciting emotions. This thesis examines the definition, functions, and applications of rhetorical questions, focusing on their role in various texts, including literary works and speeches. The study integrates insights from Uzbek scholars and international theorists, presenting rhetorical questions as a stylistic bridge between speaker and audience. It emphasizes their capacity to engage listeners and readers, challenge norms, and influence perception.*

Keywords: *rhetorical question, stylistics, language, persuasion, literature, Uzbek linguistics, irony, emotional appeal*

In linguistic and stylistic studies, rhetorical questions are often regarded as powerful communicative devices. They transcend the literal function of questioning to serve as a means of persuasion, engagement, and emotional evocation. The Uzbek scholar Qudrat Musayev (2003) highlights rhetorical questions as a unique tool to “stimulate intellectual involvement without direct confrontation.” I.R. Galperin (1981) notes their potential to influence the audience subtly yet effectively.¹ This paper examines the stylistic role of rhetorical questions in English and Uzbek literature, identifying their semantic nuances, cultural specificities, and stylistic versatility [1].

Rhetorical questions are statements disguised as questions, meant to affirm or deny indirectly. Unlike standard inquiries, rhetorical questions do not seek answers; instead, they imply conclusions already understood by the audience. For example:

- “Who doesn’t wish for happiness?”

In Uzbek linguistics, rhetorical questions are termed *ritorik savollar* and serve a similar function. Uzbek linguist Sh. Rahmatullayev (1998) explains their role in poetic and everyday discourse, noting their capacity to emphasize moral and ethical considerations.

Galperin (1981) categorizes rhetorical questions into the following types:

1. Affirmative Assertion: Questions that confirm a positive sentiment.

- Example: “Isn’t life beautiful?” (*Hayot chiroyli emasmi?*)

2. Negative Assertion: Questions that emphasize denial or disapproval.

- Example: “Who would tolerate such injustice?” (*Bunday adolatsizlikka kim chidaydi?*)



3. Irony: Questions used to mock or criticize subtly.

- Example: "Was this the best you could do?"

These categories illustrate the diverse applications of rhetorical questions across languages and cultures.

Rhetorical questions draw attention to critical ideas and involve the audience. As Musayev (2003) notes, their use in political speeches and persuasive writing helps amplify the speaker's message. For example, in Uzbek poetry, rhetorical questions often highlight social or philosophical issues [2].

According to Kennedy rhetoric is the ability to use language effectively. It is the art of persuasion. For centuries rhetorical study was considered as a clincher of a gentleman's education. Every individual, who wanted this communication to have impact, had to study rhetoric. Rhetoric was considered as the cornerstone of communication. Rhetoric could be used to make ideas clear and concise and to make issues essential or important for people. Rhetoric concerns itself with language and how people use it. The good rhetorician had to be proficient to control arguments according to the rules of art of persuading. Kennedy states that the English word "rhetoric", and its various forms in European languages, is derived from the Greek word rhetor, a speaker in a public meeting or court of law, sometimes equivalent to us might call a "politician". Before and after "rhetoric" came into use there were other terms current. One was peitho, which means "persuasion"; more common was use of the word logos, meaning word or speech, in combination with other words: a demiourgos logon was a "worker of words", and thus an orator;" tekhnē logon art of words" was used to describe the technique or art of speech and became the common title for a handbook of public speaking [3].

Connolly defines political rhetoric as a device of government in the political system of any society. Rhetoric contains the variety of cultural and linguistic expressions as a part of the process of social communication. A good orator knows that words are a powerful tool. The appropriate choice of words is similarly important as the distribution of the purpose in the speech. In order to convince the people, politicians try to select clear, accurate, descriptive and short words that best convey ideas, as well as the words are arranged efficiently, coherent and correctly. Yoos shows that rhetorical strategies are the ways that writers and speakers use words and language in order to persuade the audience. In other words, rhetorical strategies help to find all methods that allow us to convey the most convincingly our point on a given topic. These strategies help effectively, efficiently and coherently present our material on a chosen subject also, to connect facts into a sequence, provide clusters of information necessary for conveying a purpose or an argument [4].

Rhetoricians use sounds, objects and behaviors especially gestures as well as words, to say what they would like to say. "Rhetoric is a much more comprehensive art

especially as one finds it going on in the art of negotiation in politics that aims to bond and interact with others in shaping a community". According to Harris rhetorical devices can be distinguished into three categories: first, involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus (antithesis, asyndeton, simile, etc.). Second involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement. Third, involving decoration and variety (metaphor, personification, etc.). He claims that "sometimes a given device or trope fall mainly into a Single category, but more often the effects of a particular device are multiple, and a single one may operate in all three categories e.g. parallelism, helps to order, clarify, emphasize and beautify a thought". However, despite the body language, an argumentation speech is a form of persuasive public speaking. Argumentation can play an important role in presenting ideas and influencing others [5].

In conclusion, rhetorical questions serve as a powerful stylistic device in both written and spoken language, enhancing the effectiveness of communication by engaging the audience and provoking thought. By inviting listeners or readers to contemplate the implications of a question without expecting a direct answer, rhetorical questions can emphasize key points, evoke emotions, and create a sense of intimacy between the speaker and the audience. Their strategic use can effectively reinforce arguments, highlight contradictions, or illustrate complex ideas in a more accessible manner. Moreover, the versatility of rhetorical questions allows them to be employed across various genres and contexts, from persuasive speeches and literary works to everyday conversations. As a result, they play a crucial role in shaping discourse and influencing perception. Understanding the function and impact of rhetorical questions enriches our appreciation of language as a dynamic tool for communication, encouraging further exploration into their application and evolution within different stylistic frameworks.

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