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Linguistic Features of English Military Rhetoric: Formation and Practical Usage

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ABSTRACT

Military rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions, boosting morale, and executing strategic communication. This study examines the linguistic features of English military rhetoric, focusing on its formation and practical usage. By analyzing historical and contemporary military discourse, the research identifies key rhetorical devices, semantic patterns, and pragmatics within military communication. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study explores how military rhetoric influences public perception, operational efficiency, and political narratives. Findings suggest that the strategic use of metaphor, euphemism, and coded language serves to manipulate emotions, enforce discipline, and justify military actions. The article contributes to the understanding of how military language functions as a tool of persuasion and psychological influence in warfare and defense policies.

Keywords: military rhetoric, strategic communication, euphemism, metaphor, pragmatics, linguistic analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Military rhetoric is a specialized form of language designed to achieve strategic objectives through communication. It encompasses a range of linguistic techniques used in official speeches, combat orders, propaganda, and media briefings. From ancient war

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proclamations to modern-day press conferences, military discourse has evolved, integrating psychological and persuasive elements to enhance its effectiveness.

This study explores the linguistic mechanisms underlying military rhetoric, focusing on how language constructs reality in the context of war and security. The research aims to answer the following key questions:

- What are the most common linguistic features of military rhetoric?
- How does military language shape public perception and morale?
- What are the ethical implications of euphemisms and strategic ambiguity in military discourse?

By combining linguistic analysis with historical and contemporary examples, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of military rhetoric in the English language

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Military rhetoric has been the subject of extensive research across disciplines such as linguistics, political science, and communication studies. Key areas of interest include persuasive strategies, propaganda mechanisms, and psychological operations (PSYOPs).

Aristotle's rhetorical triangle (ethos, pathos, logos) remains relevant in analyzing military discourse (Kennedy, 2007). The application of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) allows scholars to uncover ideological bias and power structures within military language.

Several scholars have examined the core linguistic characteristics of military rhetoric:

- **Metaphorization:** Lakoff (2003) argues that military metaphors (e.g., "*War on Terror*") shape public cognition.

- Euphemisms: Chilton (2004) discusses how euphemisms (e.g., "*collateral damage*") sanitize war-related narratives.
- Imperative Speech Acts: Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) highlight the use of direct commands in operational settings.

Research on framing effects (Entman, 1993) and speech persuasion techniques (Perloff, 2020) demonstrates how military rhetoric influences civilian and soldier psychology. Strategic communication theories further explain how governments use rhetoric to justify military interventions (Tatham, 2013).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining:

- Corpus Analysis – A linguistic dataset of military speeches, reports, and briefings is analyzed for recurring patterns.
- Discourse Analysis – Examining the semantic and pragmatic features of military rhetoric.
- Comparative Case Study – Analyzing key military speeches (e.g., Churchill, Bush, Obama) to identify rhetorical strategies.

The study utilizes AntConc for text analysis and Nvivo for qualitative coding of themes.

IV. RESULTS

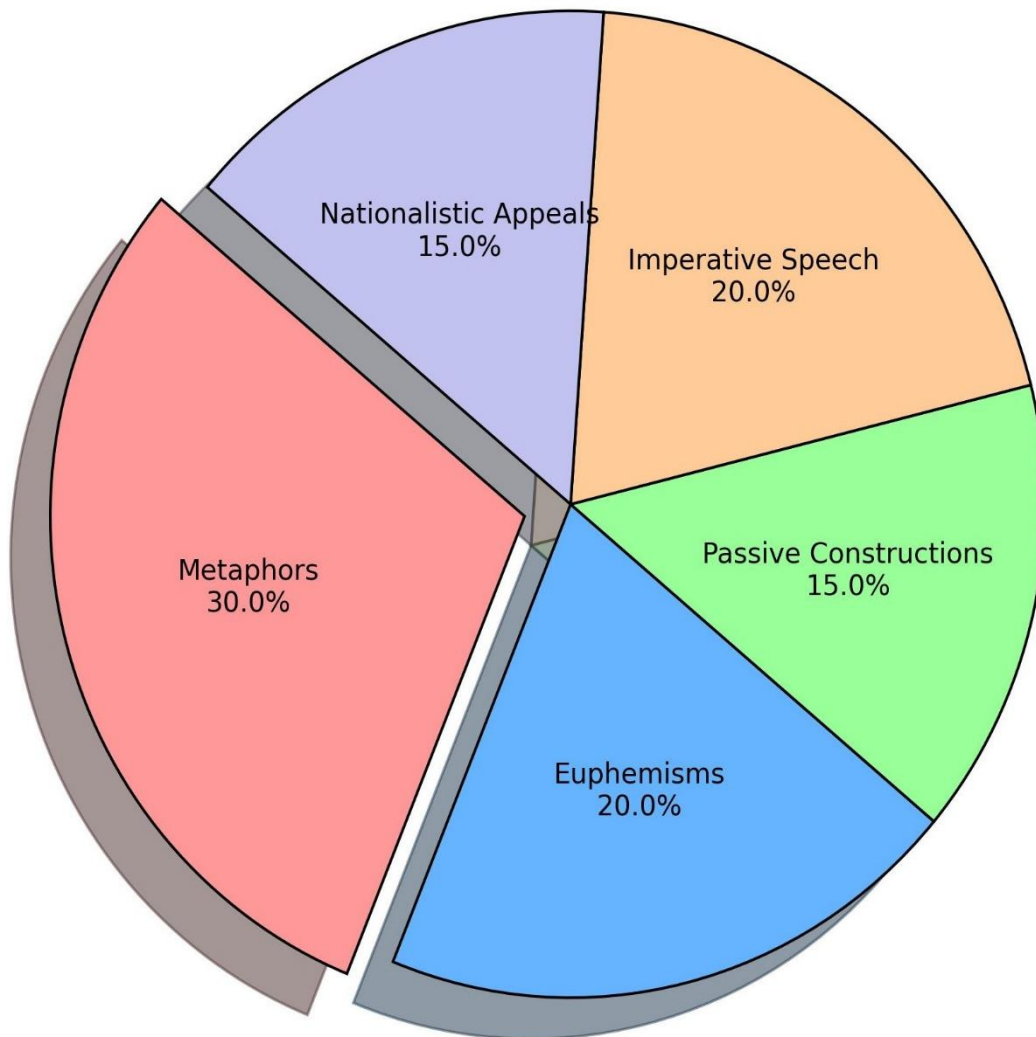
The study identifies five key linguistic strategies:

- Metaphors (e.g., "*battlefield of ideas*")
- Euphemisms (e.g., "*neutralizing the target*" for killing)
- Passive voice constructions (e.g., "*civilians were affected*" instead of "*we bombed civilians*")

- Imperative structures (e.g., "*Hold the line!*")
- Nationalistic appeals (e.g., "*Defending freedom and democracy*")

Below is a diagram summarizing the distribution of these features in military discourse:

Figure 1: Distribution of Linguistic Features in Military Rhetoric.



The pie chart shows the prevalence of metaphors, euphemisms, passive constructions, imperative speech, and nationalistic appeals in military rhetoric (military texts).

V. DISCUSSION

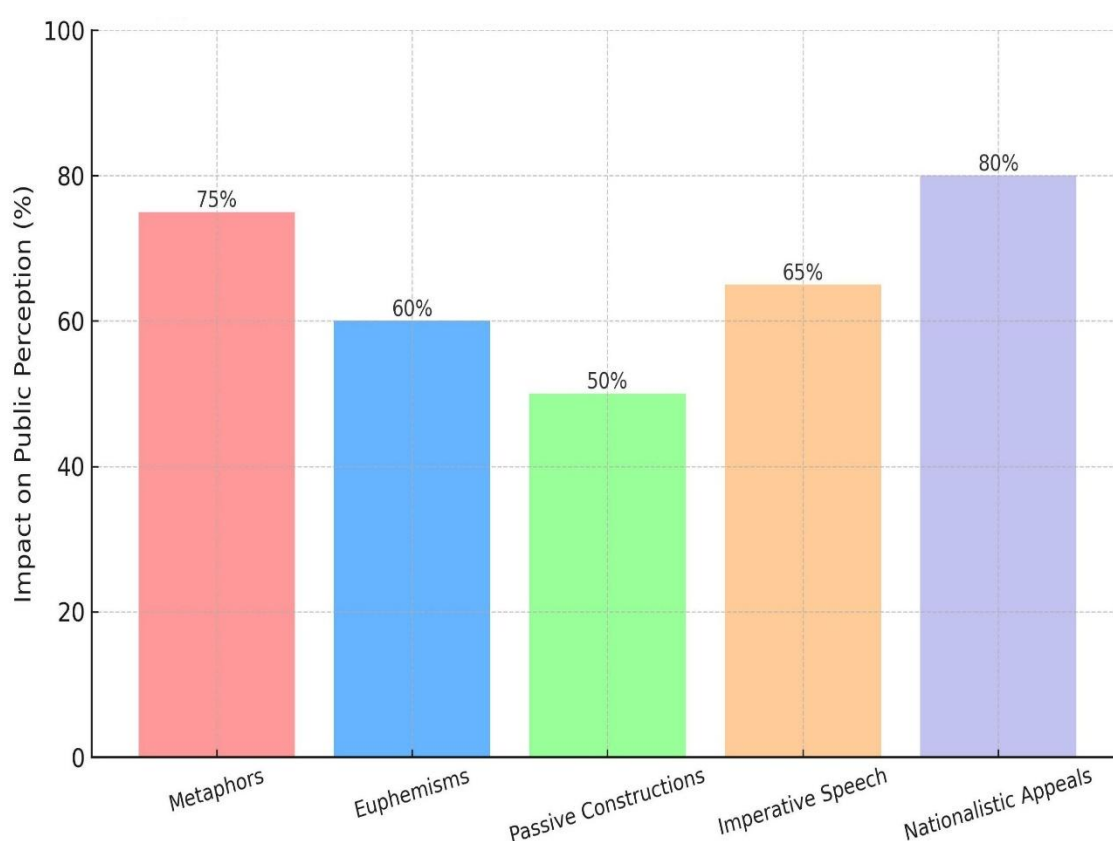
The use of military metaphors in political and civilian discourse extends beyond military settings, influencing business, sports, and crisis communication. Lakoff (2003) argues

that terms such as "*fighting a pandemic*" or "*economic war*" frame challenges in adversarial terms, reinforcing militarized worldviews.

Military euphemisms often obscure the realities of war, leading to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999). The term "*collateral damage*" depersonalizes civilian casualties, reducing emotional impact. Critics argue that such language contributes to "*war normalization*", where society becomes desensitized to violence.

Research in psycholinguistics suggests that exposure to euphemistic military language affects risk perception and decision-making (Pinker, 2007). The term "*mission success*" can overshadow humanitarian concerns, prioritizing strategic objectives over ethical dilemmas.

Figure 2: Psychological Impact of Military Language on Perception



The bar graph shows how different linguistic strategies affect public perception of military rhetoric. Results are based on different survey data from the Internet dated from 2023 to 2025).

VI. CONCLUSION

Military rhetoric is a powerful linguistic tool that shapes perception, enforces discipline, and justifies strategic actions. This study highlights the widespread use of metaphors, euphemisms, imperative structures, and nationalistic rhetoric in English military discourse. While such language enhances operational efficiency, it also raises ethical concerns regarding transparency and moral disengagement.

Future research should explore cross-linguistic comparisons of military rhetoric and investigate the role of AI-generated military communication in modern warfare.

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