

The Polyphonic Nature of Grace Poe's Declaration of Presidential Candidacy

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Introduction

Various kinds of appeal characterize political advertisements in the Philippines. The partisan appeal, the candidate's personal characteristics, the candidate's sympathy and concern for specific demographic groups, and the candidate's position and plan of action on a national problem (Alvarez-Encabo, 2010) could be noted of television advertisements. When a candidate identifies with a political party and states names of its members, he or she uses the partisan appeal which assumes that voters base their voting decisions on loyalty. Through another type of appeal, a candidate informs voters of the personal characteristics that make him or her worthy of his or her desired political position. Another appeal is the expression of information, sympathy, and concern for regional, professional, religious, and other demographic groups. Furthermore, a candidate states opinions and proposes a program that could solve a national problem.

Past local and national elections support the strength of the partisan appeal in Filipino culture. A spouse successfully succeeds a mayor who ends his or her term. This spouse is alternated by a son or daughter so that the whole family gets to hold government office, giving rise to the issue of political dynasty. The Aquinos' case is different but it, as well, supports the force of loyalty among the Filipino electorate. And politicians who capitalize on the partisan appeal have wooed political figures like Leonor Robredo and Grace Poe for electoral bids. The latter echoes a name whose death in 2004 proved him beloved by the nation.

Grace Poe, Fernando Poe Jr.'s adopted daughter, declared her presidential bid at the University of the Philippines Bahay ng Alumni on September 16, 2015. Right at the beginning of her speech, she states her desire to continue the undertaking that her father began through his presidential candidacy in May

2004. She proceeds to present her 20-point plan of action. One of these plans is to continue President Aquino's anti-corruption platform known as "daang matuwid." Before she presents her plans, however, she mentions ordinary Filipinos in their daily struggle, like the commuters who shove for space in the MRT or run for a jeep or bus ride, overseas Filipino workers who endure loneliness for the sake of their families, laborers who work non-stop, and several other members of the society, saying they are her source of inspiration and strength to serve as president. She further mentions her mother, Susan Roces' advice for her to keep steadfast amid varying political tactics. Fernando Poe's principle for running as president, President Aquino's platform, and Susan Roces' advice represent their voices echoed by Grace Poe. By citing the strife of groups of ordinary Filipinos, she makes these Filipinos' voices audible. She merges utterances she has heard from others into her speech. When a speaker like Grace Poe uses others' utterances, these utterances echo the expressions or the voices of the previous speakers.

The Utterance as a "Link in the Chain of Speech Communion"

Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, p. 67) views an utterance as a "unit of speech communication." Any word or sentence is not considered an utterance unless we use it. The circumstances of a particular situation imbue it with meaning or with a "full sense", as stated by Bakhtin (p. 83). In a particular context, we address an utterance to a hearer or hearers to achieve our specific purpose. Nobody owns either a sentence or a word. When we utter it, it expresses our thought that it acquires a relation with us and with others engaged in communication with us. Thus, an utterance is a "real link in the chain of speech communion in a particular sphere of human activity or everyday life." (p. 83) It is an expression of an individual point of view in "one referentially semantic sphere" or meaningful context of communication which determines a speaker's choice of lexical and syntactic structures. Bakhtin refers to the "referentially semantic content" (p. 84) as an aspect of an utterance. In other words, an utterance carries a context-specific meaning. Also an aspect of an utterance is the speaker's attitude toward the meaning of his utterance, which is referred to

as the “expressive aspect” (p. 84). Based on our attitude toward the subject of our utterance, we choose and combine words and utter this word or these words with intonation. Words like joy or sadness include emotional tone but are not inherently expressive. We choose words based on their meanings and we combine these words to utter our expressive intent. When we create an utterance, the words we use are from other utterances in certain speech communication situations wherein words relate to concrete realities. Words used in communication always relate to particular speakers and contexts. These words have three aspects. These are (1) its neutrality as part of a language, (2) its being part of another speaker’s speech and containing this speaker’s intentions, (3) and its being part of “my” speech in a particular context filled with expression.

Like words, sentences do not have an expressive aspect unless uttered in actual reality. A sentence may have a finalizing, explaining, or enumerating intonation but it only gains an expressive intonation when we use it as an utterance. Our view of and attitude toward reality combined with the language that has generic meanings determine the way an utterance is structured.

As mentioned earlier, we create an utterance using words from others’ utterances. By using words from another speaker’s utterance or stating another’s utterance, we react to it. We deny or support the utterance, argue against it, add our own ideas to it, or use it to clarify our point aware that others have heard it. We apply to it our own views and expression so that it expresses not only our evaluation of the meaning of the utterance but also our attitude toward others’ utterances. Utterances reflect the thoughts of different speakers.

When a statement of another is mentioned as part of a speaker’s utterance or speech, the expression of the current speaker’s speech adds to the expression of the previous speaker, making the utterance a sphere where world views meet. This is true of every utterance. And in producing an utterance, one does not only respond to another’s speech but also directs his utterance to others, taking into consideration their possible responses. For this anticipation of responses, Bakhtin applies the term “addressivity.” Intended addressees of an utterance could be an interlocutor in a conversation, one’s colleagues, an opposing group, the public

in general, and so forth, or even an unspecified hearer. The addressees influence how a speaker constructs his utterance. The speaker thinks of all possible reactions. In advance, he considers defense against objection and conditions to gain support from the addressees. He considers how they would perceive his speech based his knowledge about their experiences, beliefs, and biases. (Bakhtin, 1986)

The Dialogic View of the Utterance

The addressivity of every utterance makes it dialogic. Speakers and listeners of utterances engage in a dialogue. Bakhtin (in Morson & Emerson, 1990) explains that when we respond to an utterance such as a proverb, even if we do not know its author, we imagine an author. Thus, we give the utterance a voice to which we respond. This idea of voice is suggestive of the concept of tone. As explained earlier, a speaker's attitude toward the content of an utterance determines its intonation which is a form of tone. A speaker always adds something new to another's utterance and this always includes his or her evaluative position of the utterance expressed through tone.

Our speech is always a response to a previously spoken utterance and our response considers other earlier utterances about the topic of our speech. The words that comprise an utterance are filled with the value judgments and the layers of meanings attached to these by different speakers. That words are cited from other contexts makes these dialogic. Bakhtin distinguishes this meaning of dialogism to what he refers to as dialogue in the second sense. In the former which is the first sense, the speaker intends hearers to focus on what he or she says without making them conscious of the source of the utterance. In the second sense, the speaker makes the source of the utterance known. The speaker quotes the utterance from a source known to both the speaker and a listener to contrast their evaluative stance on a topic to that of the source of the utterance. Whether a speaker quotes or not, utterances are always dialogic in the first sense.

The Concept of Polyphony

An often misunderstood concept of Bakhtin, according to Morson and Emerson (1990), is polyphony. They say that this is because Bakhtin discusses the polyphonic feature of Dostoevsky's writings without explicitly defining the concept. The meaning of polyphony is often confused with that of heteroglossia because both relate to the dialogic nature of an utterance. To clarify the difference, it should be understood that heteroglossia refers to the varied speech styles in a language. As a feature of a novel, it is described as follows.

Another's speech in another's language serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double voiced discourse.

It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse, there are two voices, two meanings, and two expressions. And all the while, these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they -as it were- know about each other just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structures in this mutual knowledge of each other; it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324 in Kim, 2011, p. 60)

While heteroglossia describes the variety of styles of different voices in an utterance, polyphony concerns an author's position in communicating the dialogic aspect of truth. The dialogic aspect of truth acknowledges the interaction of many voices or consciousnesses. An author of such a work acts as an interlocutor in the dialogue. This can better be understood by taking into account Bakhtin's use of the idea of a surplus of vision exemplified by one's vision of the back of another's head. In a monologic novel, an author has much surplus of vision with respect to the characters in his novel while the latter do not have any surplus at all with respect to the author. In a polyphonic work, the author interacts with his characters at the same level. The author only creates a place and time wherein a dialogic encounter can take place. Both author and characters should have an amount of surplus vision that would enable them to engage in a dialogue. An author should

not completely merge with a character as this would not make the dialogue possible. This dialogism is possible through the process of creating a polyphonic work. The process does not account for how poetry is written wherein the author begins writing after the inspiration he or she has felt begins to wane. Dostoevsky's openness to new insights causing him to rewrite his dialogues can help clarify the method of creating polyphonic work. He does not follow a plan of structure but begins with the ideas of important voices who are sometimes real individuals. His minimum surplus vision is the situation wherein the characters encounter each other. As author, when Dostoevsky engages in a dialogue with his characters, he can guess but not foretell their answers before he speaks with them. This makes the dialogue unfinalizable. (Morson & Emerson, 1990) Other responses to utterances are expected as the expression of meanings never stops. Some meanings expressed in past contexts are renewed or changed in a new context. The unending dialogue that takes place in a polyphonic work is expressed in the following statement.

Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Dialogism characterizes our world. When a society goes through a transition period like an election of leaders, the dialogism elevates. The pre-election and election period is an open, free, and inconclusive setting wherein people argue not only with each other but also within themselves about the credibility of aspiring government officials. The speeches of aspiring leaders focus on the presumed responses of its addressees, the members of the society. Candidates communicate their messages through speeches and taglines that connect to past and recent events experienced by the nation as a whole and by its constituent groups. Aspiring leaders' persuasive intentions underlie their every utterance.

Using philosopher, Searle Austin's terms, illocutions underlie every locution. Producing an utterance involves a locution referring to a speaker's words; an illocution, the speaker's intention in uttering the words; and a perlocution, the effect of the illocution on an addressee. Language users constantly and even readily interpret the illocutionary force behind a speaker's

utterance based on physical, social, and linguistic contexts.

During the pre-election period of a society, every aspiring leader directs his or her messages to voters who respond through attitude, speech, and action. Anticipating hearers' responses gets complicated by the heterogeneous nature of the audiences in terms of socio-political connections, socio-economic statuses, beliefs, concerns, and prejudices. To gain favor from different societal sub-groups, politicians employ a number of strategies predominantly through the use of language.

The Use of Language

Language shows how humans think. American linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) explain that both language and human thought are metaphorical. We use language, specifically words or phrases that mean one thing to denote another. This explains why people readily understand the slogan "Tuwid na Daan" used by President Aquino as a metaphor for the honest governance practiced by his administration. The metaphorical nature and concise structure of a slogan explain why it captures attention and remains in the mind of hearers.

The succinct structure of and choice of words in a slogan calls and holds attention to its message. This capturing of attention and remembering is better exemplified by the slogan, "Erap para sa Mahirap". This effect of slogans should explain its use during elections when politicians compete for people's attention. Slogans display what Russian-American linguist, Roman Jakobson (1996) calls the poetic function of language which is to focus attention on the message. The use of rhyme in "Erap para sa mahirap" focuses attention on the message that strengthens a bond between the poor masses and Joseph Estrada. In addition to the poetic function, other functions of language namely the emotive referring to the expression of attitude toward a topic, the conative which is the stating of an imperative or vocative, the phatic which is used in maintaining communication, the metalingual which functions when speakers clarify their use of language, and the referential function which is the expression of ideas all work as part of persuasive tactics in electoral campaigns. The poetic, referential, and emotive functions are intended to fulfil a conative function.

Although slogans perform the poetic function of language, these are oriented toward influencing hearers' perspectives and voting decisions. When a candidate openly states others' utterances to express his or her position or attitude on these, he or she seeks support. Language fulfils not only its referential function when the public is informed of one's plans and proposed programs but also, its conative function through the intended persuasive effect of the information. Language fulfils different functions in varying degrees which gains significance in the verbal messages of electoral candidates for government office.

Language Use during Electoral Campaigns in the Philippines

Verbal messages meant to gain Filipino voters' support reflect Filipino life and ways of thinking. Aspiring leaders make use of existing and widespread conditions in order to appeal to larger numbers of voters. The "Tuwid na Daan" slogan, which reminds of politicians' corrupt practices responds to the Filipino population's desire for change. "Erap para sa Mahirap" which seeks to gain support from the masses is suggestive of two things. One is that poverty is widespread, hence recognition of the poor would encourage support from a large percentage of the electorate. Another is the appeal of the actor, Joseph Estrada, who in his films has played the roles of "...jeepney driver, laborer, and a Communist guerrilla." (bio, par.5) In addition to popularity, the image that identifies with the poor which Joseph Estrada has created won him the sympathy of the Filipino masses. Fernando Poe Jr., also a popular Filipino actor who, in his campaigns, expressed concern for the poor was a supposed winner during the 2004 Philippine presidential elections. The effects of linguistic choices on the minds of Filipino audiences determine the victory or defeat of political candidates. Thus it is essential for aspiring leaders to fashion their language to Filipino voters' views in life.

Describing Grace Poe's Speech

The description of presidential candidate, Grace Poe's speech focuses on the use of different voices to gain the support of Filipinos in the upcoming presidential elections. The framework

used is the concept of polyphony and the speech act theory. In describing the speech, each of the voices is identified and the intention behind its utterance is discussed based on the role of the speaker and the situation when it was uttered. The intentions behind using the past utterances as part of Grace Poe's speech are an important part of the discussion. The discussion reveals past utterances included in Grace Poe's speech; intentions suggested by the contextual conditions of the past utterances; how the past utterances fulfil present intentions; and the role of utterances representing non-specific voices in Grace Poe's candidacy.

In identifying the voices in the speech, I followed a sequence that combines degree of dominance and the order of ideas in the speech. Thus, I first discuss the most dominant voice of Fernando Poe. I then talk about Grace Poe's mention of groups of ordinary Filipinos in their life struggles which actually precedes President Aquino's utterance which is cited only as part of Grace Poe's plans. I then discuss how Grace Poe intones her plans. The discussion is limited to Grace Poe's declaration of candidacy, posted at *Inquirer.com* in its Tagalog and English versions. The speech was actually delivered in Tagalog so this version must have more expressively carried the speaker's intent. So even if I read both copies I noted the closeness of the English translation to the copy in Tagalog. The analysis considers past conditions in relation to specific past utterances in the speech. Details about these past situations were taken from news websites although the description is limited to how pieces of information result to imagined responses on the part of the Filipinos.

Most dominant in Grace Poe's speech is the voice of her adoptive father, Fernando Poe Jr. At the beginning of the speech, she mentions how "he wanted to help the poor, fight oppression, and forge a prosperous and just society." These aims should be the most appealing to the poor Filipino masses who hear about cases of corruption investigated through senate hearings shown on television. Grace Poe continues her speech with what her father told her. She says, "Gracia, poverty is not a destiny because each one's fate is in his / her hands. But to get out of poverty, one's own hard work is not enough. Everyone needs a helping hand. Shouldn't this be the measure of a responsive government and society – how it uplifts everyone and leaves no one behind?"

When Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) run for presidency in May, 2004, he was the strongest contender of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. His edge in terms of the people's attention was attributable to his popularity as actor which made it easy for him to appeal to the oppressed Filipino masses. It added to his appeal that he was a friend of Joseph Estrada, who gained the highest number of votes in the history of Philippine elections, also for his popularity as actor and "Erap para sa Mahirap" campaign slogan. Grace Poe's utterance of FPJ's stated concern for the poor reverberates not only FPJ's voice. It also reminds of Joseph Estrada who was once loved by the poor. By stating the desire to continue her father's plan, Grace Poe reminds Filipino masses of her relationship with a political figure who cared for their welfare and whom they loved. This boosts her appeal to the Filipino masses. Her utterance of her father's intentions expresses her recognition of the plight of the poor and gives them a sense of hope. She may be as well aware of the favor she gains from the previous supporters of Joseph Estrada.

Grace Poe's speech further mentions the different groups of ordinary Filipinos whose triumph over daily struggles amazes her. These struggles are known to the society because the great majority of Filipinos experience these everyday and view these on television news programs like TV Patrol in ABS-CBN and 24 Oras in GMA. She cites ordinary Filipinos who wake at dawn for school, for work on the farm, and to force one's way into the crowded MRT or run after a jeep or bus. She cites Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) agents working graveyard shifts, public transport drivers plying the city's roads, and fishermen out at sea. She speaks of Filipinos who work overseas for the sake of their children's future, workers whose hands get calloused and back gets hunched, teachers who reach out to students in distant areas, nurses who work till they are exhausted, and policemen and soldiers who risk their lives to ensure our safety and security. By mentioning these groups of ordinary Filipinos, Grace Poe begins a dialogic encounter with them. She imagines stirring the consciences of specific groups of Filipinos about her awareness of their socio-economic conditions. By doing so, she extends her appeal to the working classes.

Fernando Poe Jr.'s voice dominates when before Grace Poe

presents her 20-point plan, she says, “Naniniwala ako na sa pag-unlad o pagyaman, sabay-sabay dapat! At kung may uunahin man, dapat and mahihirap at mas nangangailangan. The double-voiced discourse expresses two intentions. The purpose of gaining support from the electorate is common to the two speakers. In addition to this and to Fernando Poe Jr.’s expressed desire to help the poor, Grace Poe affiliates her identity to her father. She intones his words with her support and presents this to a body for their evaluation. She hypothesizes favorable attitudes, speech, and action in response to her supportive reference to her father who has won their hearts.

Grace Poe further quotes an utterance from President Aquino, “Tuwid na Daan,” which refers to his administration’s anti-corruption policy. The utterance gets to serve two illocutionary forces. President Aquino’s use of the term is a denouncement of alleged corrupt acts of a number of government officials. It serves to reinforce his administration’s concept of reform toward trustworthiness in governance. In including this among her 20-point platform, Grace Poe expresses agreement to the campaign against corruption and strengthens this expression by stating her plan to pursue the passage of the Freedom of Information bill. In addition, her explicit support for “Tuwid na Daan” is an appeal to other sectors of the electorate, the pro-Aquino groups and those who favor good governance without actually supporting a particular political figure. By this appeal, Grace Poe reaches beyond the audiences exclusive to her father and his political affiliates. She engages diverse groups in a dialogic encounter.

It has been explained that our speech is always a response to others’ utterances so that the words in an utterance are filled with layers of meanings intended by different speakers. The words used in stating the concerns of Grace Poe’s plans have been heard many times on television and Filipinos’ daily conversation in a variety of specific contexts. Thus in presenting her plans, she serves several intentions.

Among the most sought after of the plans is the lowering of income taxes. As posted by GMA News Online on September 1, 2014, public demand for reduced tax rates has caused leaders of the House of Representatives and Senate to consider hastening discussions on a tax reform bill. On November 29, 2015, Bayan

Muna and Anak-Pawis party lists rallied for lower income taxes. By including this among her plans, Grace Poe adds to her points in gaining electoral support.

She adds a special voice in citing senior citizens among “vulnerable sectors,” saying her own mother gives importance to the care that older people should get from the government. In mentioning her adoptive mother, Susan Roces, she reminds people of her identity. She reaches deeper into their hearts through the motherly image of an actress known to all and close to the hearts of older generations.

Individuals who belong to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) sector have encountered issues like acceptance by the public in the case of a number of celebrities, and even by their families. Grace Poe’s recognition of their rights is her way of giving them importance and gaining their support.

She establishes a common identity with parents when she says that as a mother, she worries about the safety of her children amid the spread of crime and drugs. This statement seeks an affinity with parents, communicating the idea that she understands their concerns.

Furthermore, she addresses the Moros of Mindanao, saying their culture and heroism served as inspiration for FPJ’s films. She adds that they should gain equal opportunities, which is what they have clamored for. Through her expression of admiration for their culture and supportive position toward their aims, she attempts to gain a spot in their hearts.

In citing the need to investigate if wages workers and government employees receive are fair, she makes their voices heard. She does the same to consumers complaining about high electricity costs, commuters who complain about the traffic, parents and their sons and daughters who find it a challenge to finish college, artists, writers, and athletes who need support, families who starve, and families of overseas Filipino workers who encounter problems in processing their papers and in working abroad. She expresses an awareness of current problems and plans to resolve these.

The speech does not miss the controversy over the West Philippine Sea. For this, Grace Poe expresses a steadfast tone. She says the sea belongs to us and will be protected by peaceful

means. Nevertheless, she aims at strengthening our Philippine Coast Guard and Armed Forces against any threat.

Stating the plan to ensure that the contractor who will be in charge of trains should have previously proven to effectively maintain train operation, she stirs train commuters' thoughts about the inconveniences caused by the malfunctioning of the Metro Rail Transit that runs along EDSA. She adds the expressive intent of fixing current problems.

When she states the need for an "Emergency Management Department" that will ensure preparedness against the threats of climate change, she must have had in mind past catastrophes that left the Filipinos helpless as when typhoon Yolanda victims devastated residents of Samar, Leyte, and other Visayan regions. This gives her an edge over candidates who failed to use their utmost opportunity to show concern for the typhoon victims.

Moreover, the plans directed toward development are the use of machinery for the agricultural sector to prosper, improving internet services, and attending to the tourism industry.

In presenting her plans, Grace Poe addresses sub-groups of Filipino society. Through this and her utterance of others' statements, she touches on the many consciousnesses that make up the society. She makes use of her surplus of vision in addressing her countrymen, which are the conditions that have challenged their lives. By presenting plans that they would find favorable, she anticipates but cannot predict favorable responses. The hearers of her speech have their own surplus of vision about Grace Poe herself and other candidates which enable dialogic encounters in response to her speech. As competing candidates engage in persuasive campaigns and voters decide on whom to elect, we can expect an unending expression of meanings.

Grace Poe ends her speech again with her father's voice. She spoke of how despite the ridicule, belittling, and doubt about her father's citizenship when he ran for presidency, his courage but enabled him to pursue his purpose of helping his fellow Filipinos. She takes the stance of a daughter who listens to and admires her father's courage and goodness. In doing so she also stirs the hearts of his supporters who would want to express their loyalty to him through her. To this she adds her mother, Susan Roces' voice advising her to remain steadfast in facing the challenges

of politics. These statements create an image of someone whose background we all know about. As she says, her “life is an open book.” And as someone we all know about, she offers her voice in all honesty and sincerity, a strategy against the disqualification schemes against her.

She further utters the question, “Who would have thought that a founding would ever become senator?” supplementing her humble honest image with that of a capable leader.

Conclusions

The analysis of the speech declaring Grace Poe’s presidential bid reveals the inclusion of many voices making it polyphonic. In openly stating her intention to continue her father’s advocacies, she presents her stance on these and anticipates audiences’ positive responses. Her acknowledgement of the voices of her father, the president, and ordinary Filipinos is viewed as a strategic appeal which encourages dialogic interactions. As Bakhtin explains, a dialogic interaction occurs when both an author of a novel, for instance, has a surplus of vision equal to his or her characters. Both author and character know a minimum amount of information about each other so that neither is in control of the other’s perspectives and voice. Grace Poe, like the author of a novel, possesses a limited amount of information about the decision making of Filipino groups of voters. She makes use of this in her attempt to call their attention. She does not only mention her father’s candidacy but also how he was belittled during his candidacy because he has sympathetic supporters. Aware that President Aquino himself has loyal supporters, she mentions his platform of government. In uttering the concerns and struggles in life of millions of Filipinos, she gives them a voice. The Filipino audiences, on the other hand, are aware of Grace Poe’s public figure and the persuasive intentions behind her utterances. As Grace Poe uses several voices in her declaration of candidacy, she lays her proposals open to hearers’ evaluative responses. She stirs dialogic encounters with various groups of the voting population.

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