Cynthia L. Hallen

Rhetoric for English Language Learners : Language Features of Five Latter-day Saint Devotional Talks

Res Rhetorica nr 2, 45-60

2017

Res Rhetorica, ISSN 2392-3113, 2/2017, p. 45

CYNTHIA L. HALLEN
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
cynthia_hallen@byu.edu

Rhetoric for English Language Learners: Language Features of Five Latter-day Saint Devotional Talks

1. Introduction

Robert Kaplan (1966) suggests that a contrastive analysis of rhetoric, from language to language, may be a solution to the problem of what to do with the advanced ESL student (Kaplan 1980, 410). Every year several leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) speak to large college audiences for regular Tuesday and Sunday devotional meetings at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Prior to online internet access, these Latter-day Saint discourses were recorded and made available on cassette tapes and were also transcribed, edited, and published in annual volumes for further study. This purpose of this study is to investigate the possibility that a rhetorical analysis of public speeches such as devotional talks could be an effective way to observe typical language features in English that would be especially helpful for advanced English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students in improving their comprehension and expression skills. The study presumes that the more language details and patterns ESL students can recognize, the more they will be able to understand and use English persuasively.

Four categories illustrate English rhetorical alternatives in the LDS devotional speeches: lexical figures, syntactic figures, schematic figures, and tonal figures. These categories are based on Arthur H. King's (1986) work in teaching Shakespeare's language as a second language, in which he promotes sensitive reading, rather than surface reading of Shakespeare, including skills that can be applied to other literary and language areas (King 1986, 159-205).[1] This paper exemplifies cogent results of a detailed rhetorical analysis rather than foregrounding current theory. It will not cover more general areas defined by classical and modern rhetoric such as argument, arrangement, audience, coherence, or invention,

1. Dr. King served as a controller for the British Council of Education over English language teaching from 1959-1969 (see http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/elt_archive/research_projects/britishcouncil/).

but will focus on the TESL implications of style and delivery in language usage within a religious context.

The analysis focuses on five talks given at BYU in 1976 by five different LDS religious leaders as transcribed in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (1977). Audio cassette tapes of the selected speeches were compared with printed transcripts published annually by Brigham Young University, facilitating the identification, categorization, and analysis of significant rhetorical features. A discussion of the results begins with basic biographical contexts for the speakers, followed by discourse length constraints, and then moves on to specific aspects of rhetoric, such as vocabulary level, use of special terms, metaphorical language, antithesis, quotations, syntax, grammar, and semantics.

Table 1 provides speech titles, pages numbers, and the full names of the devotional speakers:

Devotional Speech Title:	**Devotional Speaker:**
"Marriage and Divorce" (pp. 141-156)	Spencer W. Kimball
"The Prophets and the Scriptures" (pp. 71-82)	LeGrand Richards
"Insights from My Life" (pp. 187-202)	Neal A. Maxwell
"Put on Your Spiritual Clothes" (pp. 233-245)	Paul H. Dunn
"Jesus Christ and Him Crucified" (pp. 391-406)	Bruce R. McConkie

Each of the speeches was rich, complex, and distinct in diction, structure, and style. The speakers may be characterized as educated, mature men delivering a message to young adult coed audiences with similar ideals, religious beliefs, and moral standards.

A few biographical details may help inform the rhetorical context in terms of speaker ethos. Kimball, age 84 in 1976, was serving as the Prophet and the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Richards, age 93, was serving as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Maxwell, age 53, was serving as the President of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Dunn, age 55, was serving as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. McConkie, age 64, was serving as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Before serving as full-time leaders of the LDS Church, the speakers had worked in various career fields that influenced their language choices, such as banking, business, education, insurance, law, marketing, real estate, sales, sports, and so forth.

BYU devotional meetings generally last an hour, and 30-45 minutes of that time is designated for the speaker. Table 2 gives the time spans and page lengths for the five talks:

Quantities	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
Time in minutes	43	34	32	34	44
Pages	14	12	14	12	14

Notice that Maxwell and McConkie both transcribed to fourteen pages, but Maxwell's talk is twelve minutes shorter, indicating that he spoke at a faster rate. That factor could make a great difference in an ESL student's comprehension.

Most devotional speeches are structured with an introduction, body, and conclusion which may also vary length, timing, and rate from speaker to speaker. The rate of Kimball's speech increased as his talk progressed from introduction to conclusion, so that he was speaking 102 words more per minute at the end of the discourse, almost twice as fast. The introduction was slow, with moderate sentence lengths; the body, faster with the longest sentences. Any comprehension problems for the ESL student might therefore occur in the body where both length and speech were increased.

Richards also spoke faster as he went along, but the increase was less dramatic: 68.5 words more per minute in the conclusion. Although beginning a little faster than Kimball, his introduction was relatively slow with the shortest sentence lengths of the talk. The body was faster with a slight increase in sentence length; the conclusion increased again in speed and sentence length and would be the place to look for ESL difficulties.

Speaking at his fastest in the introduction and faster than any of the other speakers, Maxwell dropped from 45.6 words per minute in the body to his slowest, and then picked up speed again for the conclusion. His introduction sentences were moderate length, shorter in the body, and were longest in the conclusion. Because of the decreased speed and sentence length, the body might be more accessible to the ESL student's understanding.

Dunn set a good pace for his introduction, increased it in the body, and then slowed down somewhat for the conclusion. His sentences decreased in length through the course of his speech, so that his conclusion might cause the least ESL comprehension difficulties, having the slowest speed and the shortest sentences.

Although at his fastest rate in the speech, McConkie began his talk more slowly than any other speaker. The body was even more deliberate, but he then picked up

speed for the conclusion. His sentences were very long in the introduction, much shorter in the body, and longer again in the conclusion. In regard to these factors, his introduction might be the most likely source of these ESL problems.

Beyond this practical framework of time and length, the lexical aspects of rhetoric, such as vocabulary level, use of special terms, metaphorical language, antithesis, and quotations are very important in effective ESL comprehension and expression. In this article, "lexical" refers to areas most closely related to the aspect of meaning—semantic features rather than structures or patterns; however, some of these lexical areas are involve syntactical or grammatical features.

A list of the 10,000 most common words, *The Teacher's Word Book* by Edward L. Thorndike (1921), was a useful basic tool for evaluating the vocabulary level of the speakers. Table 3 shows that each speaker used less-common words that were not included in the most-common 10,000:

Vocabulary	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
# of words not listed	10	1	17	4	10

Kimball's less-common vocabulary choices included items such as: *machinations, petulant, taut, subjugating, pharisaic, emaciated, camouflauged, seared, domicile, unpretentious*. Richards' less-common vocabulary choices included the word *transpire*. Maxwell's less-common vocabulary choices included: *correlation, harass, recycling, curriculum, peripheral, symbiotic, ecology, pendulum, sharpshooters, counterattacks, jowl, astral, cosmic, naïve, naivete, flaccid, accelerate*. Dunn's less-common vocabulary choices included: *emanate, infantrymen, vernacular, caterer*. McConkie's less-common vocabulary choices included: *papyrus, sacrament, controverted (twice), sidereal, efficacy (2), prototype, curtailed, vicissitudes*. This basic lexical analysis suggests that Maxwell's vocabulary would pose the most challenges for ESL students.

Another comprehension challenge for ESL learners can be the use of special terms, often not translatable, such as clichés, colloquialisms, jargon, neologisms, set phrases, or slang. The five speakers analyzed here used very little slang and very few set phrases, but when they did use them it was often for ironical purposes:

Kimball: (2 phrases) to keep up with the Joneses; soul mates.
Richards: (1) if one of my children had-a-been.
Maxwell: (1) "drop the hanky" reporters.
Dunn: (6) kinda; hard-crusted old infantrymen; Saturday grubs; ya know; for heaven's sake, a crack outfit.
McConkie: (0)

All LDS devotional speakers do use a great deal of fixed religious terminology, not particularly difficult on the surface, but often carrying distinct LDS connotations and magnifications. Although not a part of this study, further research has been done on this aspect of "Mormon" discourse rhetoric (Blair 1992, 1537-1538).

ESL students also need to be aware of the use of figurative language. Table 4 shows the total numbers of metaphorical tropes that each of the five BYU devotional speakers:

Metaphors	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
# of tropes	30	4	44	16	29

Each speaker used a variety of tropes to illustrate their remarks, some standard, some original:

Kimball: *the ugly dragon of divorce; Love is like a flower; Economy is reluctant to replace lavish living.*
Richards: *go astray.*
Maxwell: *wheat and chaff in everyday life; we should be like lonely sharpshooters; the sound of pain trying to erase itself.*
Dunn: *becoming better dressed in the spirit; in combat, just like in football.*
McConkie: *once we are in tune; as the waters cover the sea.*

In addition to non-religious metaphors, the talks were also enriched by figurative language from the scriptural passages that the speakers quoted. Both standard tropes and scriptural metaphors are likely to pose comprehension challenges for some ESL learners.

Quotation themselves can be an ESL problem, whether they contain figurative language or not. Direct quotations usually introduce a shift from the speaker's style to that of the person referred to. Indirect quotations may be more smooth stylistically, but they can lead to confusion about who is saying what. Sometimes whole passages are directly quoted; sometimes scattered lines from a passage, one complete line, or part of a line. The same choices apply to the paraphrasing of indirectly quoted material.

Table 5 shows that all five speakers varied in types and sources for their quoted materials. Some of the sources would be more familiar to ESL students than others, depending on their religious, cultural, ethnic, academic, or language backgrounds.

Quotations	Kimball	Richards	Maxwell	Dunn	McConkie
Total	13	57	22	26	19
Direct	13	38	14	26	17
Indirect	0	19	8	0	2
Biblical	2	32	3	10	11
Other scriptures	8	7	3	0	4
Other LDS sources	0	11	4	0	4
Other non-LDS sources	3	7	12	16	0

Although Richards had fewer instances of less-common vocabulary items, his extensive use of quoted material, especially from biblical prophets such as Isaiah, would pose ESL listening comprehension challenges.

Antithesis, as a rhetorical figure based primarily on semantics, cannot be easily separated from its syntactic, and sometimes musical, functions. Therefore, ESL students and teachers could benefit from distinguishing three kinds of antithetical figures:

1) Strict antithesis: opposing or complimentary terms related by wet syntactic parallels. For example, Kimball says, *The entertainer gives to the people that which they desire: the true leader gives to the people that which they should.* The phrases *entertainer/true leader* and *desire/should* have are in strict antithesis.
2) Relaxed antithesis: opposing or complimentary terms related by rough syntactic parallels or other noticeable structures including antithetical pairs, i.e., *wickedness or happiness* (Maxwell). Here is an example from Kimball: *a union of minds as well as of hearts.*
3) Contrast: opposed or complementary terms not related by noticeable syntactic structures. Again, a Kimball example will demonstrate: *I will not give you any spectacular sermon, but I hope to call your attention to some of the things that disturb us.*

Table 6 shows that the five speakers used the three types of antithesis as follows:

Antithesis type	Kimball	Richards	Maxwell	Dunn	McConkie
strict	3	2	1	0	2
relaxed	9	1	10	1	1
contrast	19	5	12	9	7
total	31	8	23	10	10

One of McConkie's contrasts was a chiasmus,

If he had not created us, we would not be,
A B B A

that can also be seen as a relaxed antithesis:

If he had not created us, we would not be.
A B C D A B C D

Rhetorical features dealing mainly with sentence complexity, parallelism, parenthesis, and fragments, can be analyzed as syntactic features. Some examples are:

1) Simple. *"God our Heavenly Father ordained and established the plan of salvation."* (McConkie)
2) Compound. *"We set down with both of our daughters at the time of their marriage, and we talked about cost and image."* (Dunn)
3) Complex. *"In his talk he made this little statement which I want to present to you here today."* (Richards)
4) Compound-complex. *"Now, in thinking of what I might say about the scriptures, I thought of an experience that I had in Ogden a few years back when I attended a conference there and I had as my companion on of the counselors in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association of the Church."* (Richards)
5) Fragment. *"Sometimes men are goaded to the point where they erringly feel justified in doing . . ."* (Kimball)
6) Conjunction-joined but with separate sentences. *"He's saying to his multitude, 'Think of the greatest, most important event that can happen in your life.' And that's what it's going to be like to be with God in his dwelling place."* (Dunn)
7) Parallel sentences. *"We all heard the gospel preached. We knew its terms and conditions. We knew what would be involved in this mortal probation. We knew that it was necessary to come here and get a mortal body as a step toward gaining an immortal body, one of flesh and bones."* (Kimball)

8) Parallel clauses or phrases. *"Before marriage, each individual is quite free to go and come as he pleases, to organize and plan his life as it seems best, to make all decisions with self as the central point."* (Kimball)
9) Parenthesis. *"Several times in early manhood, friends (who probably did not know then that what they said had such an impact) gave me rather specific and encouraging words, prospective praise."* (Maxwell)

Table 7 shows sentence structures that I categorized for the first twenty sentences of a five-minute segment from the body of each talk:

Within 20 sentences	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
Simple	6	3	5	7	8
compound	0	0	1	4	2
complex	11	14	11	8	10
compound/complex	1	3	2	1	0
fragments	2	0	1	0	0

Perhaps it would be unreasonable to expect all ESL students to know and identify these sentence structures in a technical way; however, a rhetorical study of devotional speeches could help advanced students acquire a feel for the movement and possibilities of the English language within the bounds of its syntax.

Table 8 shows that parallelism contributed to order and elegance throughout all of the talks:

Sets of Parallel Structures	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
Phrases	12	2	4	5	40
Clauses	9	6	6	9	43
sentences	12	3	1	6	28
paragraphs	1	0	0	0	3
total sets	34	11	11	20	114
average parallel items per set	2,41	2,09	2,27	2,3	2,33
# of items in parallel relationships	82	23	25	46	266

Among his antithetical figures, McConkie had a set of alternating parallel paragraphs, and his symmetrical stylistic elegance may be attributed to his pre-apostolic training and profession as an attorney.

Table 9 shows that parenthetical structures gave focus and variety in the discourses. Some of the examples were whole statements marked by a subdued voice on the cassette tapes and by the appropriate dash — or parenthesis (…) punctuation on the transcriptions. Other were shorter phrases, within clauses or sentences, that modified or broke the flow of thought, sometimes acting as appositives.

Parentheses	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
Totals	3	10	39	22	12

The choice and variety of syntactic structures in a speech is important for the rhetorical effect and for the accessibility of the message being delivered.

One way of analyzing syntactic or grammatical complexity is to find the mean length in words of a speech's T-units rather than the mean length of its punctuated sentences. Kellogg W. Hunt (1970) defined a "T-unit" or "minimal terminable unit" as a main clause and all of its modifiers, including any embedded or attached clauses. He explains that "cutting a passage into T-units will be cutting it into the shortest units which it is grammatically allowable to punctuate as sentences" (Hunt 1970, 4). The longer the average T-Unit is in a discourse, the more syntactically difficult the language is likely to be.

Table 10 shows the average length of T-units in the five-minute sections from the body of the five speeches, as mentioned above:

T-units	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
# of T-Units	38	33	44	75	31
# of words	714	678	685	820	518
mean length of T-Units	18,78	20,54	15,5	10,9	16.70

Harold S. Madsen and J. Donald Bowen (1978) explain that "the mean length of T-units turns out to be the most reliable index of syntactic difficulty" (Madsen and Bowen 1978, 164.) Of the five speakers, Richards' language would pose the most syntactic challenges for the ESL students. This is interesting because he also had

the highest number (17 occurrences) of complex and compound-complex sentence structures in the five-minute section of his talk.

In the schematic figures, the patterns and musical aspects of language are foremost, often supporting or supported by meaning and structure. Many speakers use sound patterns to bind the words and ideas of their messages. Kimball highlighted his discourse with several repetitions and variations of sound:

maximum chance of marital happiness
mæ m m æns mæ n s
(alliteration, assonance)

giving, serving, sharing, sacrificing, and selflessness
viŋ s rviŋ riŋ s r siŋ s s s
(consonance, /i/ homeoteleuton, alliteration)

lavish living
l ɪ lɪ
(alliteration, assonance)

individual pride, increased independence, and then misunderstandings arise
individ prəid in r st ind p nd nts nd n ɪs nd rst nd rei
(consonance, alliteration, assonance, /ər/ sonance)

Richards also used phonetic repetitions to bind together key words and ideas in his speech. Note his use of /h/ alliteration; /h/ /d/ paromoeon: heard, had; /i/ assonance; /pr/ consonance, alliteration; /d/ consonance, homeoteleuton:

When he heard what they had to say about him and his ministry and his crucifixion, he realized
h h d h d hɪ hɪ ɪ ɪ hɪ k ɪ ɪk h

that they didn't comprehend what the prophets had said and predicted about him.
k pr h pr h d d d pr d k h

Maxwell was famous for his use of alliteration, but my analysis shows a rich combination and variety of sound repetition patterns throughout this passage:

As I pondered possible topics, some members of my family urged me to use some relevant
p*a* r p*a* b *a*p m m mb r m m r m m r

autobigraphical themes. They have had to endure my tale of trudging through snow to school
r m d d t t d t

—snow which grew deeper with each parental retelling. They probably saw no reason why you
i:p r i: p rɛ t l r tɛl ɛ: pr

should escape the same punishment. Beware today, therefore, those vertical pronouns and the
š ɛ:p ɛ:m p šm ɛr ɛ: ɛr r v t k

selectivity of my memory. At other times I have spoken in praise of parents and prophets who
lɛkt v t m mɛm sp n n pr p r nts n pr ts

have helped me so much, as well as about my renewing and loving wife and family.
ɛlp m m ɛl m n w iŋ l iŋ w f f li

Note Maxwell's use of /p/ /t/ /m/ /pr/ alliteration, consonance; /ɛ/ /ɛ:/ assonance; /l/ consonance; /ɛl/ sonance; and parents, prophets /p/ /ts/ paramoeon. Other sonantial figures by Maxwell appear in these shorter lines and phrases:

walked wearily; inventorying our insights; resultant of related; chaff, life; shortness of stature,
w w ɪn nt r r ɪn t ri: lt ri:l t f f š rtn s st tš r

shyness, outdoor plumbing and a 4(four)-H(aitch) pig project; periodic pain; recycling regrets
š t o:r p o:r tš p pr t p p ri: l ri: t

didn't change reality; pawing through the past is not productive; Foxhole faith; specific and
t tš ri: l t p p t t p t f f sp s

special opportunities; do each day's duties; direction, motivation, illumination.
sp p du: d z du: z šən m ɛ: šən m nɛ:šən

Dunn has a simpler rhetorical style than the four other speakers; however, he also uses sound patterns strategically to make his points. Note Dunn's use of /n/ /p/ /l/ consonance; /l/ /n/ /pəl/ homoeoteleuton; and /k/ alliteration:

if a simple Christmas charol will do that between a Christian and a non-Christian nation what
pəl k k l l n k tšən n n n k tšən n šən w

will the gospel of Jesus Christ do for people everywhere.
w l pəl v k p pəl v w

McConkie likewise punctuates his prose with sound patterns. Note McConkie's use of /g/ /p/ /f/ /l/ consonance; /ai/ assonance; and *fed*, *bread*: internal rime:

We have assembled here tonight in the spirit of worship and gratitude and thanksgiving,
t p t r p g ŋk g

desiring, I think, to be fed the bread of life, to have the guidance and edifying, uplifting influence
ai ai ŋk fɛd ɛd aif aid d d faiiŋ plɪf iŋ ɪ fl
of the Holy Spirit.
l pɪ ɪ

Of the five speakers, Maxwell tended to be the most artistic in his use of marked sound patterns that bind discourse together phonetically and rhetorically.

As with sound patterns, the repetition and variation of words, phrases, and clauses can help to bind a devotional speech. Some word patterns are for music and

emphasis; others are used to help the speaker, listener, or reader keep the train of thought. Repetition of a word within a sentence can add emphasis to a point; repetition throughout a speech gives power and penetration to the basic principles being explained. Also, parallelism (see above) often depends on certain structural word-repetition patterns. Here are some examples of typical word-repetition patterns identified in traditional rhetorical terms found in the devotional talks; repeated forms appear in italics:

> Anaphora – repetition at the beginning of phrases, clauses, or sentences. "*We* went through the usual, normal experiences. *We* had the Fourth of July celebrations; we had contests, we had school activities, we had everything that is available to the city of that size." (Kimball)
>
> Epistrophe – repetition at the end of phrases, clauses, or sentences. "He became the advocate of *salvation*, the leader in the cause of *salvation*." (McConkie)
>
> Epanalepsis – irregular repetition of a word. "You young *people*, of all *people* in the world, know basically there are only two things you can *take* with you out of this world . . . I thought for a long time I'd *take* my ball glove . . ." (Dunn)
>
> Anadiplosis – repetition of the last word in one clause as the first word in the next. "Mention was made by President Oaks . . . of my duties in connection with priesthood *correlation*. *Correlation* is a concept I'm often asked to define." (Maxwell)
>
> Antimetabole – repetition of two or more words in inverted sequence.
> "Certainly the most careful *planning* and *thinking* and *praying* and *fasting* should be done . . . the heart and the mind, strengthened by *fasting* and *prayer* and *serious consideration*, will give one the maximum chance of marital happiness." (Kimball)
>
> Climax – parallel phrases or clauses linked by A-B-B-C-C-D-D-E- . . . word or idea repetitions. "We add to our faith[A] virtue[B], and to virtue[B] knowledge[C], and to knowledge[C] temperance and a patience and godliness." (McConkie from 2 Peter 1:5–7).

It is important to remember that two or more of these devices can occur together in one sentence, paragraph, or passage.

Table 11 shows other kinds of word repetition and variation used in the devotional speeches: pairs, triads, tetrads, and pentads. Some of these syntactic formulas employed polysyndeton (joined by multiple conjunctions: *troubles* and *turmoils* and *vicissitudes and anxieties*) and some asyndeton (distinguished by commas instead of conjunctions).

	Kimball	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
pairs	90	18	68	34	71
triads	25	4	6	2	34

tetrads	5	1	1	3	3
pentads	2	0	0	0	0
total	122	23	75	39	108

Many of the word groupings were pleonastic, different words for the same concept: *sins and vices; worship and gratitude and thanksgiving*. Other groupings were hendiadys—words that modify or complement each other: *moral and spiritual; economic and social and educational; plant, cultivate, and harvest*. Some groupings were antithetical: *the show horses and the work horses; lazy or industrious*. Maxwell, and others less frequently, sometimes used alliteration to reinforce the word groupings for more impact: *parents and prophets; resultant and related; timely and tender*.

The tonal analysis of the five devotional addresses includes choices made by the speakers in personal mannerisms such as humor and irony, pause/emphasis devices, pitch-contour, rhetorical questions and exclamations, and choices in the level of formality. These mannerisms are like fingerprints of a speaker's style and personality.

Even for advanced ESL students, humor can be difficult to master since it depends so much on native culture and tradition. But the use of humor in public address has valuable effects: 1) it can bring the speaker and audience closer together, even in a large arena; 2) the overt response of the audience to a humorous remark is a stimulus to the speaker; 3) humor also maintains interest and contributes to variety in the tone and stylistic level of the remarks; and 4) most importantly, because of humor, irony is possible; amusement and laughter may provide a contrast and a preparation for the delivery and reception for the more serious aspects of a talk.

Table 12 shows that Dunn's informal speech style incorporated the most humor:

Humor	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
Introduction	1	1	6	1	0
Body	0	1	2	18	0
Conclusion	0	3	0	5	0
Total	1	5	8	24	0

However, humor is not always necessary or even appropriate in a devotional speech. McConkie did not use any humor in his discourse, no doubt because of the sacred nature of his topic.

The study of transition devices, such as *uh*, *and*, *but*, *now*, *well*, and *you know* for pause or emphasis is very interesting. Table 13 gives a combined count of these devices from the introduction, the five-minute section of the body, and the conclusion of the five devotional speeches:

	Kimball	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
uh	0	7	0	6	0
and	8	23	4	23	14
but	4	3	2	1	1
now	1	6	0	5	5
well	0	0	0	3	2
you know	0	0	0	5	0
others	0	0	0	2	0
total	13	39	6	45	22

Not surprisingly, Dunn had the most phatic lexemes in his more casual speech style. ESL listeners may be distracted by such devices even if the speaker's informal language usage is more comprehensible than formal registers.

Four of the five speakers had some other idiosyncrasies worth mentioning for TESL consideration. Richards had unusual intonation patterns in much of his talk. He carried on a 2 3 2→ pitch-contour from sentence to sentence or clause to clause instead of using the normal 2 3 1↓ contour in which the voice drops at the terminal juncture of the sentence or clause. For example, he said, "President Wilford Woodruff told about [2] when he first met the Prophet [3] Joseph Smith [2. → 2] And I'd like to read you a prophecy . . ." This analysis of pitch is too complicated for more explanation here, but it does account for the enthusiastic almost breathless style of Richards. He also used the idiom "little" as a diminutive modifier.

Like Richards, McConkie used a 2 3 2→ pitch-contour at the end of many sentences and clauses until he reached a point that he really wanted to emphasize. Then he dropped down to the 2 3 1↓ pattern. He also used "Now" at the beginning of the consecutive paragraphs to outline and emphasize major points. Maxwell

used an “I, too . . .” pattern a few times, and Dunn used the “kind of” idiom several times. Kimball did not have any noticeable mannerisms.

Table 14 shows the amount of exclamations and rhetorical questions used in the speeches. Such features can provide emphasis to a thought but can also give speeches a conversational tone:

Emphasis	**Kimball**	**Richards**	**Maxwell**	**Dunn**	**McConkie**
exclamations	2	1	1	1	1
rhetorical questions	1	5	3	16	0

Due to variations in the speakers’ voice habits, I had to rely on the punctuation of the transcript editors to determine what would count as an exclamation.

Finally, a knowledge of the rhetorical phenomena discussed above can enable ESL students to sense the level of formality of each talk. In terms of H. A. Gleason’s Five Levels of Formality (Madsen and Bowen 1978, 120). McConkie was by far the most formal speaker with the very careful and precise language of serious deliberative speech (level 4) and perhaps even the ornateness of oratorical speech (5). His talk may have been patterned on rules of classical discourse. Maxwell, the most poetic and fluent speaker, seemed to go back and forth between deliberate (4) and consultative (3) levels, with a few personal remarks on a casual level (2). Kimball, the most balanced speaker, was mostly consultative (3) and at times deliberative (4) and somewhat casual (2) in the introduction. Richards, the most complex and quick-paced speaker, was mostly consultative (3), but stepped to the casual level (2) throughout. He may have been on the intimate (1) when he made two references to his own death in a humorous tone. Dunn, the most enthusiastic and conversational speaker, chose the casual level (2) but was also consultative (3) as he explained gospel principles.

A rhetorical study of this kind can reveal the extent of the challenges that non-native English students face when hearing or reading the discourse of well-educated English speakers in a religious context. Such challenges are also encountered in other public lecture settings and texts. In considering timing, meaning, structure, musical patterns, and tone in language, there is so much that could cause either confusion or illumination for ESL students. Teachers of advanced ESL classes can help their students recognize the rhetorical features of English. Of course, many native speakers cannot even recognize or identify these language features, but they can usually at least feel their effects without special training because of life-long

exposure to the English language. Many ESL students may need special training because they do not have the advantage of that prolonged exposure.

ESL students do have the advantage of their own native language and its rhetorical features. Spanish, for instance, has some of the same rhetorical traditions that English does. In two different Spanish rhetoric texts, Jose Gomez (*Arte de Hablar* 1839) and Narciso Campillo y Corres (*Retorica y Poetica* 1969) recommend and describe several of the devises outlined in this paper. When ESL students discovered patterns similar to their native ones in the second language, they may begin to understand and use them without difficulty. Then they can distinguish and focus more confidently on English patterns that are not included in their native language.

The LDS devotional talks were convenient for this study because the transcripts and audio-tapes were easily accessible. The devotional messages were straightforward, interesting, uplifting, and rich in rhetorical figures. The speakers were varied and intelligent. The real value of this analysis for teaching English to speakers of other languages became apparent when I read that Angel Abrea, a Latter-day Saint church leader from Argentina, had studied President Spencer W. Kimball's sermons and talks when he was learning English (Abrea 1981, 96). Another LDS leader, Charles A. Didier, a native of Belgium, has said that "language is divine" (Didier 1979, 25). Knowledge of the rhetorical features of languages can provide that bond of divinity as ESL students learn to understand one another in English and in other languages.

References

1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Bicentennial Devotional and Fireside Addresses. 1977. Brigham Young University. Provo, Utah: Young House.

Abrea, Angel. 1981. "News of the Church." *ENSIGN* (Nov): 96.

Blair, Robert W. "Vocabulary, Latter-day Saint." 1992. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. New York: McMillan.

Campillo y Corres, Narciso. 1969. *Retorica y Poetica*. (Mexico City: Libreria y Ediciones Botas.

Didier, Charles. 1979. "Language: A Divine Way of Communicating." *ENSIGN* (Nov): 25.

Hunt, Kellogg W. 1970. "Syntactic Maturity in Schoolchildren and Adults." *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 35:1, 1-67.

Kaplan, R. B. 1980, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education." In *Readings on English as a Second Language*, ed. Kenneth Croft, pp. 399-418. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop Publishers.

King, Arthur H. 1986. *The Abundance of the Heart*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.

Madsen, Harold S. and **J. Donald Bowen**. 1978. *Adaptation in Language Teaching*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

Mamerto Gomez Hermosilla, José. 1839. *Arte de Hablar.* Caracas: Valentín Espinal.

Thorndike, Edward L. 1921. *The Teacher's Word Book*. New York: Columbia University.