

## **Prabhakaran's National Heroes' Day Speech (1992) and Positive Identity Construction via Linguistic Choices**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the National Heroes' Day speech (1992) of Prabhakaran, the former leader of Liberation Tiger Tamil Eelam (henceforth LTTE), in relation to semantic macrostructure, lexical structures, and rhetorical structures. The main goal of this article is to address how effectively LTTE's former leader employed these devices to linguistically and ideologically persuade his followers. The article also aims at critically analysing the underlying ideologies in this speech at the first phase of war between the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhala government. In order to analyse Prabhakaran's speech critically and to evaluate his linguistic and ideological structures, van Dijk's (1980; 1998a) Semantic Macrostructures and Ideological Square theories have been adopted respectively. The findings reveal that positive lexicons in Prabhakaran's speech are utilised to indicate the good features of Tamil people as peace loving and heroes; whereas the negative lexicons are used to construct the bad image of the Sinhala government as a foe and an oppressor. In addition, the analysis of this speech reveals that Prabhakaran was a rhetorical militant leader who relied heavily on promoting the theme of inciting his followers to commit violent acts for the sake of Tamil Eelam sovereignty. This is done through the heavy use of the rhetorical devices of repetition and three-fact list to convince and influence his audience.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis; ideology; lexis; National Heroes' Day speech; Prabhakaran; rhetoric; semantic macrostructure.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is vital to the process of transforming a political will into a social action. Schäffner (1997) contended that "any political action is prepared, accompanied, controlled and influenced by language" (p.1). Fairclough went further to say that politics is not just conducted through language, but much of politics is language: "politics partly consists in the disputes which occur in language and over language" (1989, p.23). Politicians have employed lexical and rhetorical structures to great effect in their speeches. However, studies of wider adoption of rhetoric evolved from observations of how it was used in political assemblies to influence the views of individuals. In this respect, the art of rhetoric can be viewed as a discipline deals with all aspects of persuasive speaking or writing employed as tools of manipulation and control. Rhetorical devices, therefore, have been associated with politics and ideology, and their use has significance in the realms of political context and persuasion. Discursive information structures can be accorded greater or lesser emphasis by the employment of such tools (van Dijk, 1997). Therefore, lexical and rhetorical devices may be used to emphasise or de-emphasise knowledge structures in discourse (van Dijk, 2011). This study aims at analysing the semantic macrostructures and rhetorical structures of Prabhakaran's speech, and their role to persuade and influence the Tamil people to have their sovereignty. Thus, the researchers address three research questions: (a) What are the semantic macrostructures represented by themes/topics of this speech? (b) What are the local meanings represented by lexical and rhetorical structures? (c) How is ideology revealed in this speech?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Prabhakaran's speeches offered the public policy statements and reflected his group ideology. Few studies have focused on semiotic content analysis (Ubayasiri, 2006), symbolic analysis (Prentice and Boange, 2011) and ambivocal analysis (Schonthal, 2011) of Prabhakaran's speeches. Ubayasiri (2006) provided a semiotic content analysis to determine the main narratives outlined in Prabhakaran's national speeches addressing his nation from 1992 to 2006. He concluded that the key word *Tamil* containing in these speeches can refer to the positive associations with words indicate freedom, peace, right(s), dignity and emancipation. Alongside, Prabhakaran's speeches pointed to the Tamil people as *our people* denoting the position of LTTE as leader and representative and even protector of the Tamil's rights and their political and socio-cultural future.

Prentice and Boange (2011) employed symbolic convergence theory developed by Ernest Bormann in 1972 to identify the persuasive rhetoric that the LTTE movement used to garner support for its cause and to influence its followers. Through scrutinizing two texts, the Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976 and the National Heroes' Day speech given in 2008, by Velupillai Prabhakaran, Prentice and Boange (2011) identified three main fantasy themes. These themes were concerned with historical claims to the existence of the Tamil Eelam, the right of self-determination for the Tamil people, and discrimination of the Tamil people by Sinhala governments. They concluded that Prabhakaran's speech referred to the conflict between the state and the people as a war on 24 separate occasions; unlike the Vaddukoddai Resolution which uses the term *war* as a factual description of history instead of a description of the Sinhala and includes the term on only one occasion.

Schonthal (2011) undertook a thorough analysis of a section of LTTE Heroes' Day speech in 1997 and examined how the opposing connotative possibilities of ambivocal terms used in that speech create alternate narratives of commemoration which can be read as both religious and non-religious in tone. He concluded that the ambivocal language of National Heroes' Day speeches appeared to be one component of a deliberate discursive strategy employed to address separate in-group and out-group audiences and to mobilise religious concepts and imageries in a way that does not directly compromise its stated, official secular position. However, from another perspective, the religious/non-religious diglossia of LTTE National Heroes' Day speeches was understood, not as a linguistic strategy only, but also as a rhetorical style that is endemic to military commemorations.

None of these studies have highlighted Prabhakaran's discourse of terrorism that elaborates an ethnic struggle for the sake of independence which makes it possible to be analysed from a critical discourse perspective. Furthermore, the researchers have not found a study analysing micro and macro structures of the selected speech that incites and persuades recruiters for committing acts of violence delivered by Prabhakaran.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researchers have adopted van Dijk's (1980; 1998a) theories of Semantic Macrostructures and Ideological Square respectively. Van Dijk's (1980) theory of Semantic Macrostructure recognises political discourse as a socio-cultural, cognitive, and linguistic phenomenon. This theory is important because it can illuminate cognition involved in political discourse offering an examination of how it is understood and analysed at the structural and textual levels (van Dijk, 1988a). Van Dijk's analysis is of twofold: macro-and micro-level analyses. On the macro-level analysis, thematic structures are examined. The thematic analysis explains the most essential themes exist in a text and is defined by van Dijk (1988b, p.72) as the "hierarchical organisation of themes or topics of a text". The thematic structure refers to the overall organisation of global topics of a text or talk. On the micro-level analysis, rhetoric structures are examined and as part of the local meanings. The rhetorical structures are dealt with in this study because they are pertinent to the research topic. Additionally, van Dijk's (1998a) Ideological Square is significant in this study as it represents a dichotomy between the positive representation and the negative representation of the in-group and out-group members respectively.

The word Square refers to four dimensions that can elucidate and validate the existence of societal inequality and polarisation which includes:

1. Express/emphasize information that is positive about Us
2. Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them
3. Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them

4. Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about Us

The theory of van Dijk’s (1998a) Ideological Square is concerned with the ideological representations of the in-group and out-group that can be reflected in both micro and macro levels of analysis. Simultaneously, a text can be generated from the macro and micro structures through the application of a number of techniques within a single speech.

**METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

In constructing a sample set relevant to the research topic explored in this study, van Dijk (1997) contended that one needs to search for texts and talk on certain websites as dataset. The most relevant and readily accessible archive is that of the Internet which has acted as a key form of storage and collation of documents and data since 1990. Prabhakaran’s speech addressed the Tamil people, on what is called “National Heroes’ Day”, to venerate the past activities of Tamil legends. The researchers have collected this transcript of the National Heroes’ Day Speech (1992) as well as the English translation from the website, www.eelemview.com which provides an archive of Prabhakaran’s speeches in chronological order. This speech was selected because it represents the first phase of Eelam War II (1990-1994). In this section, Prabhakaran’s speech is analysed linguistically and ideologically as shown in the subsequent sections.

**Macro-level Analysis**

Conceptually, topics are the semantic macropropositions which summarise the text and provide the important information (van Dijk, 1991). These macropropositions are derived from sequences of propositions which can be reduced to more specific macropropositions by applying van Dijk’s (1980) macro-rules: reduction, generalisation and construction. Thus, a succession of topics or macropropositions can compose the thematic structure of a text. Prabhakaran’s speech is represented as a series of propositions which can be reduced to a shorter list of macropropositions or main topics. The main macropropositions are tabulated below.

Table 1: Macropropositions and Summary of the selected speech

Sentence no.	Macropropositions	Summary
1	M.1: Unification	Greeting
2	M.2: Remembrance of the heroes’ day	Remembering and celebrating
3	M.3: The concept of self-sacrifice within the LTTE has embraced a phase of expanding into a nation of patriotic heroism, in the name of Statehood of Tamil Eelam.	Praising those heroes and their violent acts
5,6&7	M.4: Heroes are idealists and their goal and death is only to liberate people.	Description of the heroes’ aim and the path of freedom they deport to liberate Tamils
8,9,10,11&12	M.5: Freedom is a palatial goal to the settlement of the heroic self-sacrifice was deemed possible without pursuing the path of freedom.	
13	M.6: Struggle and reference to history	Struggle for Freedom
14	M.7: struggle against oppression	
15	M.8: Struggle as a result of human desire for freedom	
16,17&18	M.9: Historically subjugation and destruction exploitation	
19&20	M.10: Humans are struggling and becoming enemies	
21&22	M.11: Liberation struggle as a reaction against Sinhala’s oppression and discrimination in terms of caste, class and race	
23,24&25	M.12: Engagement in freedom struggle and its credited in the international arena	Description of the relation between Sinhala’s oppression and LTTE’s liberation struggle
26&27	M.13: LTTE’s struggle is a distinct from other types of struggle	
28	M.14: Tamils’ sacrifices are worthy and unique.	Devotional and remarkable sacrifices for the cause of Eelam
29	M.15: Tamils’ determination creates a legend of heroism and martyrs’ death was portrayed to be valiant acts of honor.	
30	M.16: These sacrifices and struggle are driving force to all the oppressed people	

31&32	M.17: The fighters are courageous and this enriches the path of struggle.	Focusing on violence as a political strategy for self-determination and liberation from the Sinhala hegemony
33	M.18: The worldly support of enemy	
34, 35, 36 & 37	M.19: Self-determination and strength	
38	M.20: Tamils' struggle faced new crisis and challenges.	Showing Tamils' crisis
39&40	M.21: the enemy closed the doors of peace.	Closing doors of peace
41&42	M.22: the war has been escalated this year with new strategies developed by Tamils to foil the plans of the enemy.	Escalating the war
43&44	M.23: the enemy suffered heavy casualties.	Describing the enemy's path of war
45&46	M.24: Despite the setback that the enemy suffered, it did not give up the military solution.	
47& 48	M.25: There is no change in the policy of Sinhala government towards Tamil people.	Describing Sinhala regime's policy of violence against Tamils
49&50	M.26: Sinhala government adopted the racist politics.	
51,52,53& 54	M.27: Sinhala regime showed no mercy for the grievances of Tamils that they faced a long time ago.	
55,56&57	M.28: The enemy used violence and war against Tamils.	
58	M.29: Tamils have no alternative other than to struggle.	Depiction of violence by Tamils
59,60,61,62, 63,64& 65	M.30: Tamils opened the doors of peace because they are not warmongers.	Tamils are peace loving
66,67,68, 69&70	M.31: The enemy waged genocidal war to destroy Tamils.	Showing the brutality of the government
71,72,73, 74&75	M.32: Tamils' have a sacred right of struggle to protect their land.	Ongoing struggle
76,77&78	M.33: The call for the continuity of struggle	
79	M.34: Tamil people encounter many dangers and crises in their struggle.	Venerating martyrs
80,81,82& 83	M.35: Tamils have to continue fighting following the same path of martyrs and with determination.	
84	M.36: Tamil leader and Tamils salute the martyrs.	

Subsequently, through a recursive repetition of the process of macro rules, the topics covered in Prabhakaran's speech are reduced to six Higher Macropropositions (HM1-HM6) which help derive the overall semantic macrostructure and thus providing a summary of the entire speech as listed below.

- HM1: LTTE's martyrs are eulogised for their sacrifices for the sake of Eelam independence.
- HM2: Sri Lankan Tamils are oppressed by the Sinhala government.
- HM3: Sri Lankan government refused the peaceful solution to the Tamil national question of independence.
- HM4: Sinhala government escalated the military war.
- HM5: LTTE adopts violence because of the brutal tactics of the Sri Lankan government.
- HM6: The Sri Lankan Tamils' struggle will be continued with bloodshed to achieve freedom and independence.

In order to derive such topics or macropropositions, considerable knowledge about the conflict between Sinhala government and Tamil people is required. For example, the use of discrimination and subjugation by the Sinhala government against Tamils leads LTTE to react in a more violent and deadly way. Therefore, the focus on particular topics has ideological implications.

From the above six main macropropositions (HM1-HM6), the global theme of the speech which is termed as the Semantic Macrostructure (SM) is summarised as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Derivation of the Semantic Macrostructure

Macroproposition No.	Semantic Macrostructure (SM)	Macrorules Application
HM1-HM6	The Sri Lankan Tamils' continuity in the violent struggle against the Sinhala military aggression is an inevitable path to achieve Tamil Eelam independence at any cost.	formed from six main macropropositions

Thus, the semantic macrostructure *‘The Sri Lankan Tamils’ continuity in the violent struggle against the Sinhala military aggression is an inevitable path to achieve Tamil Eelam independence at any cost* is briefly structured from the main six macropropositions as shown in the table above. Moreover, this semantic macrostructure gives information that is not explicitly apparent in the title of the speech. This uncovers that the title *National Heroes’ Day* is a short noun phrase and is not as precise as the overall macroproposition (i.e. the SM); this is so as the SM is inferred from the topics of the whole speech. The semantic macrostructure of the speech provides the audience with clear signals that the Tamils’ sacrifices are an obvious indication of sincere allegiance to the cause. The freedom struggle provides a rationale for the actions of the Tamil people on the bloodshed and ongoing violence to have Eelam independence.

**Semantic Macrostructure and van Dijk’s (1998a) Ideological Square**

From the thematic analysis of the speech, it has been demonstrated that this speech does not only include explicit direction to the Tamil nation, but also it has an implied message directed to the Sinhala government and the international community about the Tamil rights. Therefore, the semantic macrostructure involves an ideological polarisation represented by US and THEM dichotomy. Tamil minority in Sri Lanka has suffered from the racist discrimination and aggression of the Sinhala regime which has been transformed into a war on the Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamil lands. Therefore, the semantic macrostructure *‘The Sri Lankan Tamils’ continuity in the violent struggle against Sinhala military aggression is an inevitable path to achieve Tamil Eelam independence at any cost* represents the in-group members (the Sri Lankan Tamil) positively and the out-group members (Sri Lankan government and its army) in a negative view. Thus, the semantic macrostructure can illustrate clear and implied concepts and enables different viewpoints of the out-group to be argued for and against. In this sense, the semantic macrostructure portrays the out-group as those who have persecuted the Tamils within Sri Lanka. As a result this has led to an aggressive response by the LTTE. In this case, the out-group is demonised and dehumanised and the in-groups’ action is legitimised. This is an attempt to discursively link the Sinhalese military operations and Sri Lankan Tamils’ sacrifices. The table below shows van Dijk’s (1998a) Ideological Square pertaining to the semantic macrostructure of Prabhakaran’s speech.

Table 3: Van Dijk’s (1998a) Ideological Square for the macrostructure of the selected speech

Semantic Macrostructure	Ideological representation
The Sri Lankan Tamils’ continuity in the violent struggle against Sinhala military aggression is an inevitable path to achieve Tamil Eelam independence at any cost	Positive in-group presentation (the Sri Lankan Tamils) vs. Negative other-presentation (the Sri Lankan government and its army)

**Micro-level Analysis**

**Lexical Structures**

A number of lexicons denoting war, peace, victimisation, heroism, violence and evilness are used in this speech to describe the in-group and out- group actions (see Table 4). Prabhakaran focused on the lexical choices that depict a legitimised *Us* and thus, conversely, lead to delegitimise the *Other* negatively.

Table 4: Positive and negative lexicons of in-group and out-group

No.	Lexical Fields	Positive lexicons of in-group	No.	Lexical Fields	Negative lexicons of out-group
1.	Victimisation	the profound suffering of our people, the tragedies they faced in the form of death and destruction, the tears of blood they shed from their anguish	4.	Violence	Our enemy is heartless and committed to war and violence, He is prepared to shed any amount of blood in this genocidal war, our enemy is committed to violence

2.	Peace	we are keeping the doors of peace open, we are not warmongers who love violence, we want a permanent, stable and honourable peace, we have not closed down the path of peace, we will extend the hand of friendship	5.	War	closed down the doors of peace, has embarked on a course of escalating the war, the Sri Lanka regime has not given up militaristic approach, has imposed an unjust war on us, the enemy's armed forces have come to our doorstep and are beating war drums
3.	Heroism & Sacrifices	those exceptional beings who, by their sacrifice, have made our freedom struggle a heroic epic, Our heroes are supreme idealists, the sacrifices made by our martyrs and the blood spilled by our people will not be in vain, whose sacrifices shape the formation of our nation, whose blood enriches the history of our freedom struggle	6.	Evilness	His objective is to destroy our homeland

The choice of specific words can signal the relationship between the group-based i.e. in-group and out-group members and their ideologies. Prabhakaran's word choice for the victimisation of the Tamil people is elucidated with the constant reference to tragedy, grievance and the exceptional suffering of the Tamil people. The events are constructed and fixed as a national tragedy in the exaggerated forms of death, destruction and bloodshed. The ferocity of this reaction promoted a common feeling of protest which invoked a desire for rage, loathing and vengeance. As a consequence, these feelings have given rise to a sense of patronage towards the aggressive programme promoted by Prabhakaran. In addition, Prabhakaran deceptively accentuated that Tamils are peace lovers who are *keeping the doors of peace open* and that they are *not warmongers who love violence*. As such, he attempted to transfer the blame of violence on the Sri Lankan regime. Constructing the events in this way particularly in a such evocative setting arouses a powerful set of emotions among his audience. Thus, descriptions of the *Self* as suffering tragedies and grievances may more subtly convey negative opinions about the *Other* as a tyrannical government.

The characterisation of in-group as victims of oppression and peace lovers typically reverses the role for out-group members when Prabhakaran overtly described the Sinhala government negatively through the lexical items of war, aggression and evilness. The construction of war, however, imbued Tamil people or LTTE cadres with a certain sense of legitimacy; it turned them into warriors. Therefore, Prabhakaran evoked the sense of heroism and self-sacrifice among his warriors by making a significant reference to the LTTE martyrs. Whilst the allusion to martyrs can be depicted within the discourse given by Prabhakaran, it is evident that the notion of martyrdom and is consensual which indicates a fundamental need and camouflaged within his speech. In other words, the inherent notion of immunity by the LTTE appears evident. The Tigers are considered to be far more successful fighters in comparison to ordinary paid army men. This is because the Tamil Tigers are happy to be killed in the name of their cause. Indeed, both the Tamil citizens and LTTE fighters have accepted that they may die in their fight for independence.

**Rhetorical Structures**

In relation to Prabhakaran's rhetoric, three rhetorical devices, repetition, parallelism and hyperbole found out and analysed. Prabhakaran reiterated some phrases and clauses because he needed to ensure that his messages are understood by many people and more importantly to emphasise some ideas which are more important than others. When Prabhakaran states an idea as the enemy is an oppressor and commits brutal acts against Tamils, the emphasis is followed by repeating the same idea with the same words to arouse the audience's emotion. This helps the audience to focus on important parts of the speech. Thus, Prabhakaran's use of repetitive phrases *committed to war and violence* mostly indicates the negative actions of the out-group members. However, because the enemy is committed to war and violence, Prabhakaran repeated the idea of struggle and fight against this common enemy. The repetition of a series of phrases as in this sequence *to continue our struggle, to continue to intensify our struggle, Let us continue to struggle, Let us continue to struggle, Let us continue our journey towards freedom, Let us continue to struggle* and *Let us continue our struggle with determination* shows firm immutability and helps the audience to focus on the positive side of struggle which is liberation and then followed by denoting the good actions about the in-group members. Thus, by the use of repetition, Prabhakaran made his speech more resonant, and simultaneously the important message is

underlined. Within Prabhakaran's speech, the reference to *struggle* and *journey* metaphors serves to persuade and motivate the entire Sri Lankan Tamil population not to lose faith and to continue their struggle through perseverance. Thus, the repetition powerfully reinforces this struggle and this implies that the audience is privileged to be a part of something special.

In order to lend emphasis to a particular aspect of a speech, Prabhakaran often employed the concept of parallelism. He used parallelism to underscore his ideologies regarding Sri Lankan Tamils' grievances, sacrifices and struggle. Prabhakaran utilised a similar arrangement made of three successive phrases and clauses such as '*They loved their goal more than their lives. They embraced the liberation of their people as the highest goal in their life and they died for that ideal, The profound suffering of our people, the tragedies they faced in the form of death and destruction, the tears of blood they shed from their anguish, and We have already encountered so many challenges, so many dangers and so many crises in the course of our struggle*', to introduce ideas in a parallel structure. He is thereby able to draw the audience's attention not only by the introduction of new topics, but also by the rhetorical parallelism that he creates between the three different phrases. In such cases, the emphasised clauses are not necessarily held to the end of the sentence, but are instead introduced directly at the beginning of the phrase in order to emphasise the topic at hand/the current state of Prabhakaran's mind. Because the use of parallelism is to engender an emotional, intellectual or sensory response from the audience, the use of it with the conditional clause in *As long as there is oppression and injustice, as long as there are people deprived of freedom, there will be liberation struggles* appeals to audiences while also leaving a deep impression in the minds of the enemy. The paralleled structure with the repetitive form of *on our own* in the phrases *History will be our guide and truth shall be our witness*, Prabhakaran unified himself with his nation to indicate the strong determination and to give a sense of shared responsibility. Thus, parallelism is constructed using the modals *will* and *shall + be + complement*. This construction links concepts and applies emphasis by introducing future connections. Such a persuasive device aims to positively influence the audience's conception of context by taking advantage of particular constructions of speech (van Dijk, 2012).

Hyperbole is an important rhetorical means used by Prabhakaran when he was engaged in the exaggeration of the sacrifices made by Sri Lankan Tamil as in, "In our homeland, in the course of our struggle, *extra-ordinary sacrifices have been made which have not taken place anywhere, at any time in the history of the world*. I can proudly say that *none can equal our martyrs in their dedication, deep commitment to the goal and tremendous courage that transcends the fear of death*. Such magnificent qualities have enabled them to create an *unparalleled legend of heroism*". The use of hyperbole in the above text is only to achieve a special effect and to leave a strong impression on people as these expressions are made beyond natural bounds. To impress the audience and to boast with the success of the arms, Prabhakaran exaggerated Tamils' sacrifices, in the sense that they are actually impossible to be accounted as the other's sacrifices. Therefore, the use of hyperbole places an emphasis on the issue. The extract *extra-ordinary sacrifices have been made which have not taken place anywhere, at any time in the history of the world* is the particular combination of words and senses that produces the overall hyperbolic meaning. Consistently, he used *the world* as a scale to ensure the audience that the Tamils' sacrifices have been compared with that made in the history of the world. Therefore, hyperbole is used here to magnify an emotion. Thus, Prabhakaran was able to touch the emotions of the audience and made Tamils' martyrdom to sound impressive and in this sense he persuaded his followers to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Tamil Eelam.

## CONCLUSION

At the macro-analysis, the semantic macrostructure '*The Sri Lankan Tamils' continuity in the violent struggle against Sinhala military aggression is an inevitable path to achieve Tamil Eelam independence at any cost*' is constructed from the analysis of different topics in the text. Thus, it plays a significant role in concluding the main theme systematically and provides the synopsis of the speech that may be important to the audience that LTTE has no alternative to the use of violence to achieve its objectives. Ideologically, the semantic macrostructure implies ideological differences between the in-group and out-group due to the political conflict between the Tamil nation and the Sinhala nation. The main tactic of affirming one's own position favorably whilst portraying the opposition's position as unfavorably is very common as it does not only promote the orator's own perspective, but it also enables them to attribute any disadvantageous events on the opposition.

In relation to the lexical analysis, Prabhakaran depicted lexicons showing the cruelty and brutality of the Sinhala state through the use of the words denoting violence, war and evilness. His language accentuated and

highlighted the negative representation of his enemy and described the Sinhala army's attacks as a primarily an act of mass murder. This is further elaborated through another association of peace loving with the description of Tamils, thus persuading the international community about the legitimacy of Tamils' freedom struggle. The negative lexicons in Prabhakaran's speech were used to construct the bad image of the Sinhala government as a foe and an oppressor. The actions of the enemy in Prabhakaran's speech were described through the use of verbal clauses and from which the negative image can be deduced. Then, the *Other* is overtly mentioned with negative connotation such as the destruction that the Sinhala government brought through the war and military assaults and thus infringing Tamils' peace and freedom.

Prabhakaran's most valued rhetorical device seems to be repetition which was present in this speech. This helps him to cement his beliefs and ideals, especially through the recurring use of the phrase *let us continue to struggle* which reiterates the idea of being victimised and placed under hardship which necessitates violent acts and struggle. This is confirmed by Lazarov and Zlateva (2014) that such a sort of repetition can socialise the idea, in that it helps the concept to become widespread and familiar within a community through cultivating it in the peoples' spirits and minds. In addition, Prabhakaran's use of parallelism with three-part structure emphasise to his key views persuading the audience to sympathise with his views and make his speech convincing. Then, hyperbole is used to exaggerate the supreme sacrifices of the Tamil people in their struggle to defend their homeland. This is a considerably effective tactic as it enables the Tamil population to aid and enhance the struggle for independence. This also suggests that the heroes' sacrifices are not in vain but purposeful in advance. Prabhakaran used such tools to exaggerate the victimisation and martyrdom of the Tamils, helping to create an image of distinction and honour on behalf of LTTE and also to warn their enemies of the futility of their persecution. Prabhakaran's vocabulary has been carefully selected to omit terms that could cause a negative portrayal of his followers to the world at large. This is also validated by van Dijk (1988a) that hyperbole is used when discussing the negative features of the *Other* or comparisons of similar types may be used.

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**APPENDIX: National Heroes' Day Speech on 27 November 1992 (source: [www.eelamview.com](http://www.eelamview.com))**

**My Beloved People of Tamil Eelam,**

Today is Heroes Day. It is the sacred day when we cherish in our memory those exceptional beings who, by their sacrifice, have made our freedom struggle a heroic epic in the annals of world history.

Our heroes are supreme idealists. They loved their goal more than their lives. They embraced the liberation of their people as the highest goal in their life and they died for that ideal. Freedom is a noble ideal. It is the highest virtue in human life. It is the basis for human progress and development. It is freedom which gives meaning and wholeness to life. The yearning for freedom arises as the deepest aspiration of the human spirit.



For thousands of years, since the birth of civilisation, human beings have been struggling for freedom. They were struggling to emancipate themselves from the structures of oppression. The innumerable struggles, revolutions and wars that erupted on the face of this planet for centuries are none other than the manifestations of the human passion for freedom. Human beings enslave human beings. They destroy each other. They exploit each other. Man has become the foremost enemy of man. Righteousness is undermined when one infringes on the human world.

As a consequence contradictions emerge in human relationships in the form of caste, class and race. As long as there is oppression and injustice, as long as there are people deprived of freedom, there will be liberation struggles. This is the law of history. The motor of history is propelled by the human will to freedom. As a section of people belonging to the oppressed masses of the world, we too are engaged in a struggle for liberation. Above all the national liberation struggles, our cry for freedom is heard louder in the world arena. Our liberation struggle is unique. It has its specific characteristics and is structurally different from other freedom struggles.

In our homeland, in the course of our struggle, extra-ordinary sacrifices have been made which have not taken place anywhere, at any time in the history of the world. I can proudly say that none can equal our martyrs in their dedication, deep commitment to the goal and tremendous courage that transcends the fear of death. Such magnificent qualities have enabled them to create an unparalleled legend of heroism. Our struggle evolved through these remarkable feats of self-sacrifice, has become a guide and a driving force to the oppressed people of the world.

The strength of our struggle arises from the fierce determination of our fighters. Their firm commitment and their courage to act without the fear of death are the force and resource of our struggle. The whole world is providing arms and funds to our enemy. We are not begging from the world. We do not depend on anybody. We stand firm on our own legs, on our own soil, relying on our own people and fight with our own hands. This is the specificity of our individuality. Since we are firmly rooted in our own strength we stand upright without bowing to the pressures of others.

Today, our liberation struggle is situated in a complex historical conjuncture faced with new challenges and new crises. Our enemy, having firmly closed down the doors of peace, has embarked on a course of escalating the war. The Government is not prepared to put forward any substantial proposals to resolve the Tamil national question.

This year the war has intensified on an unprecedented scale. We were able to work out new strategies and stepped up our military assaults to foil the offensive plans of the enemy. As a consequence, the enemy suffered heavy casualties more than ever before in the history of the war. We have impressed upon the enemy that this land of ours will not tolerate the incursions of an aggressor.

In spite of the fact that the enemy has suffered set-backs in the war front and faced serious economic crisis as a consequence of the war and in spite of the realisation that the LTTE cannot be defeated militarily, the Sri Lankan regime has not given up its militaristic approach. The Government is primarily concerned with modernising the armed forces, escalating the war of aggression and to seek a military solution.

From the strategy of the Government we must be quite clear about one thing. That is, there has been no change in the hegemonic attitude of the Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism to dominate and rule over the Tamil nation by armed might. As long as the Sinhala nation is buried in the mud of racist politics, we cannot expect a fair and reasonable solution from the Sinhalese ruling class. Our people should realise this bitter political reality.

Our freedom struggle continues for more than forty years amidst tensions, turmoils and crises. Our struggle has taken different forms at different times, from non-violent Gandhian agitations to armed resistance movement. Yet our cry for justice and fair play has not touched the conscience of the Sinhala nation.

The profound suffering of our people, the tragedies they faced in the form of death and destruction, the tears of blood they shed from their anguish, have not touched the compassion of the Buddhist nation.

Our enemy is heartless and committed to war and violence. His objective is to destroy our homeland. We cannot expect justice from the magnanimity of his heart. What can we do in these circumstances?

We have no alternative other than to continue our struggle, to continue to intensify our struggle.

We are not warmongers who love violence. In actual fact, spiritually, we love peace. We want a permanent, stable and honourable peace. It is because of this reason that in spite of this bloody war, we are keeping the doors of peace open.

We have not closed down the path of peace. We have no such intention. One day, when our enemy knocks at our doors of peace, we will extend the hand of friendship.

But our enemy is committed to violence. Therefore, he has imposed an unjust war on us. Today, the enemy's armed forces have come to our doorstep and are beating war drums. They are bent on devouring our land and to destroy us. He is prepared to shed any amount of blood in this genocidal war.

In this most difficult and critical situation what can we do? Have we got any alternative other than to fight to protect our land and our people? We have to struggle and win our freedom. Freedom is not a commercial commodity that can be bargained. It is a sacred right that can be won by shedding blood.

Let us continue to struggle. Let us continue our journey towards freedom in spite of the obstacles and sufferings we may encounter. Let us continue to struggle so that the sacrifices made by our martyrs and the blood spilled by our people will not be in vain. We have already encountered so many challenges, so many dangers and so many crises in the course of our struggle.

Nothing and nobody can deter us anymore. Let us continue our struggle with determination. History will be our guide and truth shall be our witness. Our martyrs are the pillars of our freedom movement, whose blood enriches the history of our freedom struggle, whose ideal makes our struggle supreme, whose sacrifices shape the formation of our nation, whose memories make our determination stronger. We salute our martyrs who are the architects of the freedom of our nation.

JIAATS