

Valentina CIUMACENCO
Universitatea Liberă Internațională din Moldova, Chișinău,
Republica Moldova

THE ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S RHETORICAL STYLE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LINGUISTIC TECHNIQUES

Introduction

Language is the only tangible vehicle to access knowledge as well as a powerful tool that influences perceptions, and behaviors (Austin, 1962). Words that evoke emotion may have a strong psychological impact on the audience (Ullman, 1969). Additionally, discursive genres are embedded in the culture and society in which they are produced. Therefore, any speech with the purpose of persuasion requires the most thoughtful choice of language and contextual adjustment. Thus, political discourse seems to be a clear piece of evidence where rhetorical language is seen in action. The language used by politicians is carefully selected to persuade and impact upon audiences. Linda Thomas et al. write that

“Politicians throughout the ages have owed much of their success to their skilful use of rhetoric, whereby they attempt to persuade their audience of the validity of their views by their subtle use of elegant and persuasive language” (Thomas et al, 2004:39).

How and where linguistic features are used and how they are positioned alongside other linguistic features affect how people interpret the message.

This article attempts to analyse Obama's Inaugural Address as a means of transmitting the American Dream to argue that rhetorical strategies are essential to the relationships between word and action. Given the enormous domestic and global significance of the said speech in times of international economic turmoil it is crucial to decipher ideological traits typical for Barack Obama's enshrined in his inaugural address. Inaugural address predestines policies of the newly inaugurated president and its overall significance is enhanced in the case of Obama's policy of change. The aim of this essay is to identify, analyse and discuss some examples of rhetorical devices used in Obama's speech to show how their choice, structure and organisation can affect the arguments of persuasion in the

text. More specifically, I shall propose and focus on the idea that the composition of the speech has an aim to create a unity of the speaker and the audience in order to deliver the message. Moreover, the speaker maintains the atmosphere of unity throughout the speech, so that the speech produces an effect when the audience becomes a co-author of it. The purpose is to analyze how the use of a number of linguistic approaches creates a speech which senses an agreement and co-operation between the orator and the audience. I will try to unfold the sophisticated linguistic composition of various techniques lying in fields of semantics and rhetoric, employed by Obama and argue that the coherent use of them produces the desired effect in the delivery of the message.

A Presidential Inaugural Address is a ceremonial speech, made by a newly elected president of the USA, marking a new Presidential term. *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government* states that a speech “sets the tone for the administration” and that “presidents usually stress unity and bipartisanship after what is sometimes a divisive and bitter Presidential campaign” (“inauguration, Presidential”). There are no regulations concerning the length or issues of the speech, it is only language which is specified by the Constitution. The richness of the English language is employed to produce the first Presidential address to the nation and the world, the speech which is in focus of the world-wide mass media.

An inauguration ceremony takes place at the Capitol on January, 20 and is usually attended by a large crowd, to which the President speaks. Presidents usually have a prepared text of the speech. Obama seemed to have learned his by heart and often appealed to the audience in the form of live performance interrupted by applause, which is indicated in the transcript.

The term *performance*, introduced by Chomsky, will be used in this paper since it describes “the way the individual goes about using language” (Mey, 1993:5). The term reflects the issue that I will analyze, that is to say, not only the words used by the speaker as a lexical register, but also the context in which the speech is situated. Having been skillfully coordinated, they create the *performance* that aims at the delivery of the message. I will focus on the structural and functional properties of the language, the combination of which enables the speaker to achieve the goal of the performance.

Theoretical preliminaries

The study of rhetoric is very important in political speech making. Rhetoric teaches politicians how to speak well; it teaches politicians how to present ideas in vigorous and persuasive discourse, and to communicate their thoughts and impressions effectively.

According to Jones & Peccei (2004), "language can be used to influence people's political views by exploring in detail the ways in which politicians can use language to their own advantage". Moreover, "Aristotle's Rhetoric points out that we all employ rhetoric, the persuasive use of language, generally in trying to demonstrate the rightness of what we want the other person to accept" (Joseph, 2006:110).

The power of rhetoric is using persuasive discourse to convince an audience. Persuasion is considered as the ways of using language to exploit feelings, to foreground or to obscure responsibility and agency, to repeat equal ideas, or to draw attention to a particular part of the message, as shown in Jones & Peccei (2004:51-52) and Inogo-Mora (2004:47).

Relying on the use of rhetorical devices, politicians make the impact of their ideas on the addressee increase to their own advantage. One of the rhetorical devices that politicians usually apply in their speeches is the use of suitable personal pronouns. Cameron states that

"one is the frequent use of names, especially first names, and another use of pronouns *I* and *you*. There is a preference for informal styles and registers, which connote a higher degree of intimacy or solidarity than more formal ones" (2001:132).

Based on the Montgomery's public discourse analysis in his article (1999) about distinguishing Blair's attribute and the Queen's tribute to Princess Diana, Montgomery focused on rhetorical devices that are pronouns and parallelism. Both the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Queen use the parallelism device in their discourse in order to express the sincerity of a tribute to Princess Diana. From Montgomery's argument, Cameron concludes that

"The pronouns that predominate in the speech are first person plural ones, *we* and *our*. This tends to imply that the attitudes expressed by Blair are common to the nation as a whole" (2001:136).

Jones & Peccei state that parallelism is "a device which expresses several ideas in a series of similar structures. This can serve to emphasise

that the ideas are equal in importance and can add a sense of symmetry and rhythm, which make the speech more memorable" (2004:51). In one speech, politicians always want the audience to focus on key features - salient points. And the parallel patterns of discourse are seen as the best choice "to draw attention to a particular part of their message and make it stand out from the rest of the speech" (Jones & Peccei, 2004:51).

With a similar distinction, it could be argued that (1) using personal pronouns in a group of two '*I* and *you*' connotes a higher degree of intimacy and solidarity - it makes the gap between the speaker and the listener narrower, (2) the choice of '*we*' is considered as a 'bridge' connecting '*I*' and '*you*' - making a sensation that the speaker and the listeners are on the same side, and (3) using parallelism, politicians emphasise their key views, persuade the audience to sympathize with their views, and make their speech more memorable.

Persuasive strategies in political rhetoric are found in literal meanings, and also often in figurative ones. Scholars have agreed that metaphor is frequent and diverse (T. Carver, 2008; Honohan, 2008; Pikalo, 2008; Fridolfsson, 2008), ranging from election time to celebration speeches (Mieder, 2009; Vertessen & Landtsheer, 2008).

The reasons for such abundance of metaphors lie in the fact that they serve as both powerful learning tools and persuasive devices. A metaphor has learning power because it facilitates the understanding of messages by converting abstract notions into concrete ones (G. Lakoff, 1980; Cuenca & Hilferty, 1999). Its persuasive power lies in the subliminal meanings conveyed by unconscious associations of words. Therefore, metaphor is a major means of ideological transmission appealing "to our emotions (or *pathos*) through *unconsciously* formed set of beliefs, attitudes and values" (Charteris-Black, 2005: 175. While it projects positive images that benefit the orator, it also conveys negative ones for his adversary. Consequently, it has the power to act as an emotional stimulus whose response may significantly change listeners' attitudes and actions. Finally, the message conveyed by metaphor is doubly powerful as it works through both auditory and visual channels at the same time, a verbal message and a mental image.

Metaphors embody basic motives and can even appeal to international audiences (Osborn, 2009:81). However, metaphors often need to be adapted to the culture in which they are uttered in order to be

persuasively effective (Aitchison, 1997: 92). Hence, not only do metaphors have a cognitive nature, but they also need to be culturally grounded. For this reason, metaphors may vary under time and space constraints as shown by diverse oratory styles (Charteris-Black, 2005; Mussolf, 2004).

The theoretical framework presented in *Critical Metaphor Analysis* (Charteris-Black, 2004) provides an adequate approach to determine and analyze a specific set of metaphors found in Obama's Inaugural Address. The cognitive theory of conceptual metaphor mapping is closely related to patterns of source domains usually salient to the audience. This is the reason why political activity is often considered a journey, a war, and a construction. Moreover, understanding social, cultural and ideological values is central to an account for certain metaphorical choices. According to Charteris-Black (2004:12), metaphor is an effective persuasive tool because it "taps into an accepted communal system of values." Regarding previous works on metaphor, persuasion and ideology (Charteris-Black, 2004, Guitart, 2005; Lakoff, 2006; Mussolf, 2008), this article will demonstrate that Obama's choice of metaphors is conscious and often carried out under the influence of a set system of values.

Language and politics

Citizens of democratic countries have the option to go to the ballot boxes on election days and vote for one person or one party. Whether their decision goes along with a political conviction or not, it is most likely based on communication through language. Charteris-Black (2005) states that

"[w]ithin all types of political systems, from autocratic, through oligarchic to democratic; leaders have relied on the spoken word to convince others of the benefits that arise from their leadership" (Charteris-Black, 2005:1).

By studying language in circumstances where all its functions and variations are taken into considerations, it is possible to learn more about how perceptions, convictions and identities are influenced by language. In political speeches during election campaigns, ideas and ideologies need to be conveyed through language so that they are agreed upon by the receivers as well as by others who may read or hear parts of the speech afterwards in the media. Words and expressions are used or omitted to affect the meaning in different ways. Moreover, political speeches are composed by a team of professional speech writers, who are educated in the use of persuasive language. Adding rhetorical devices to a pre-

composed speech may be of crucial significance to election results. A political speech is not necessarily a success because of correctness or truth, rather it may be a matter of presenting valid arguments (Beard, 2000: 18).

It is generally accepted that the strategy that one group of people takes to make the other group of people do what it intends to be done is known as a linguistic strategy. It involves manipulative application of the language. Therefore, '*linguistic manipulation* is the conscious use of language in a devious way to control the others' (Fairclough, 1989:6). Pragmatically speaking, linguistic manipulation is based on the use of indirect speech acts, which are focused on perlocutionary effects of what is said.

Linguistic manipulation can be considered also as an influential instrument of political rhetoric because political discourse is primarily focused on persuading people to take specified political actions or to make crucial political decisions. To convince the potential electorate in present time societies, politics basically dominates in the mass media, which leads to creating new forms of linguistic manipulation, e. g. modified forms of press conferences and press statements, updated texts in slogans, application of catch phrases, phrasal allusions, the connotative meanings of words, a combination of language and visual imagery. To put it differently, language plays a significant ideological role because it is an instrument by means of which the manipulative intents of politicians become apparent.

Language and power

One evident distinction of how language operates in social interaction is its *influential* and *instrumental* relationship with power.

It is generally accepted that *influential power* inclines people either to behave in certain ways or makes people adopt opinions/attitudes without exerting obvious force on them. It operates in such social spheres as advertising, culture, media and politics. In other words, if we resist the influential power, we are not usually the subjects to some penalty or trouble. We usually do not suffer any penalty for a kind of a "sales resistance" to buy high-end or top-end goods (e.g. the highest-priced model cars, furniture, etc), or for the resistance to be one political party loyal.

In contrast, *instrumental power* is explicit power, which is imposed by the state, by the laws and conventions of this state and by the institutions and organizations we work for. Instrumental power operates in such social

spheres as business, education, and in various types of management. Thus, it can be asserted that in many, but not in all cases, if we resist instrumental power, we might be subjects to some kind of penalty. However, it has to be admitted that in some spheres of social activity, such as politics or law, both kinds of power may be present at the same time. For example, we are subjects to current laws, which often enforce penalties for wrongdoing, but some legal processes, such as trial by jury, rely on the attempts to persuade those who are involved in them.

All in all, politicians impose laws, taxes and bureaucratic systems, i.e. they use instrumental power. However, they seek to influence us to endorse their policies, or they call for the eventual voters' political loyalty, thus imposing their influential power. They may wish to influence us to use our collective power to return them to governmental institutions, where they will use their executive power to direct or influence some important aspects of our lives. In other words, politicians aim at having the power to tell people what to do and how to live.

Seemingly, the features of political discourse vary, as do its purposes that may be:

- to persuade voters to be a party loyal and to turn up to vote,
- to move a floating voters' party loyalty,
- to make people adopt general political or social attitudes in order to attract support for a present policy.

Similarly, politicians may also use particular language forms when answering journalists' questions. There where politicians engage in language interactions with other politicians, their discourse differs to a great extent.

Thus, it is axiomatic that language plays an essential part in politics because its main function in different political situations is to enable politicians to form structurally stable social relationships.

As it has been stated above, an essential area of political discourse is linguistic manipulation. Therefore, discourse analysis, though primarily being a field of inquiry in linguistics, has become multidisciplinary in nature. As a result, one of the main focuses in language for politics is on the linguistic text with varying degrees of sociocultural context taken into consideration.

It is clear that discourse involves both text and context. When analyzing the political discourse, applied linguists are primarily interested

in the transactional or interactional nature of the discourse since one of the basic functions of language is to transmit information, be it factual or propositional. In this respect, the present paper sees the issue of linguistic manipulation as the source for this investigation.

According to Atkinson, linguistic manipulation is a distinctive feature of political rhetoric, and it is based on the idea of persuading people, i.e. it persuades people to take political actions or persuades them to support a party or an individual (1984:18). In modern societies, politics is mostly conducted through the mass media; therefore, it leads to new forms of linguistic manipulation.

Thus, the language applied in political discourse uses a broad range of rhetorical devices at the phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic and textual levels. This is aimed at producing the type of the language that can be easily adopted by the mass media and memorized by the target audience.

Rhetorical and linguistic strategies

The Oxford English Dictionary defines rhetoric as

“The art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence”.

Furthermore, “In the Middle Ages rhetoric was reckoned one of the seven ‘liberal arts’ being comprised with grammar and logic in the ‘trivium’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007). A very important part of what politicians do involves convincing audiences of the accuracy of the arguments they present in addition to their own personal conviction and ability to act upon these arguments. Therefore the definition of rhetoric as “using language so as to persuade or influence others” is the most relevant description to be used in this study of rhetorical devices in a political speech.

Today, rhetoric use especially by politicians can be identified by “the identifiable habits of speech which govern the linguistic structures and devices which they use to increase the impact of their ideas” (Thomas et al, 2004: 45). A writer is able to use a range of rhetorical techniques incorporated into the language used to persuade the reader. How the writer chooses to define problems, support claims, validate premises and

state conclusions is crucial to whether an audience is likely to accept an argument. As Hyland points out,

"the logical connections used to elaborate an argument by adding, comparing, sequencing or explaining its elements are critical to a text's overall persuasive force" (2005:75).

Politics and persuasion have been closely related since ancient Greece, and the role of Aristotle's *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* still remains central to political discourse. Accordingly, Obama's rhetoric can be characterized as extremely *empathic*. In other words, he capitalizes on the appeal of *ethos* because he addresses his audience in a positive and courteous manner that the nation easily identifies with his views (Charteris-Black, 2005; Santiago, 2009; C. Steel, 2009). As far as Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech is concerned, G. Lakoff (2008) points out that it "works via the emotional structure built into the speech and into our national ideals.". His rhetorical success can be traced in a set of particular values which G. Lakoff (2009) called "The Obama Code". In this way, his Inaugural Address often references values conveyed in words such as *responsibility*, *unity*, *caring*, *hope* and *loyalty* among others. Additionally, the original values stated by the Framers of the American Constitution are the most important issue in the US political life according to G. Lakoff. Thus, from the very beginning of the Inaugural Address, Obama stresses his link to the Framers of the Constitution by saying, "I stand here today [...] mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors." Moreover, through the use of empathic forms of address such as "We the People..." Obama relates the importance of loyalty to both American national forbearers, and the founding documents of the US, "...because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents." Signatories of the Declaration of Independence and drafters of the US Constitution are present ideologically as a driving force for the country, and linguistically as a metaphorical construction.

In his performance, Obama employs a complex of rhetorical and linguistic strategies, which allow the speaker to introduce and deliver the message in favorable context. Analyzing rhetoric, Hart says that

"human history has been written by great persons authoring great orations for social betterment. Often, these great statements have seemed more poetic than pragmatic, as satisfying to the heart as to the head" (1997:4).

Rhetorical techniques are many and varied. In the next section, only some specific techniques used by Obama in his inaugural address will be looked at, including his uses of connections between sentences, as well as certain specific words which invite reader-writer interaction by playing on readers' assumed "comprehension capacities" "in addition to their understanding of related texts and need for interpretive guidance" (Hyland, 2005:50).

Personal deixis

Deictic expressions, known as *deixis*, can be interpreted only in the context in which they are used. The word *deictic* derives from the Greek language and is used for pointing to a subject. I will focus on the use of deixis employed in the speech which, I will argue, creates an effect of unity on one side and "outsiders" on the other.

In his analysis of Obama's electoral speech, Capone indicates that "a speaker is responsible for the positions or opinions advanced, but need not necessarily be the animator or even the author". He refers to Goffman for definitions of "a principal in the legalistic sense", which involves imposing "self-identification" as *we* not *I*. By doing so, the speaker "become[s] a representative of the people" (2010:2967).

This pattern of seemingly speaking on behalf of the audience is focused upon in the present section. The use of person deixis in the speech, in these circumstances, is worth investigating.

Unlike his previous public performances, where Obama aimed to convince the audience that he was the right candidate for the position of a congressman or, later, a president, here he is a victor and addressing his message from a position of Head of State. He, probably, does not need to put his personality in focus any longer, but rather needs the support for his future challenges. In this case the pronoun *I*, which was used generously in Obama's previous speeches, emerges only three times in his inaugural address in its beginning: "*I stand here today... I thank President Bush. Today I say to you...*". The first person pronoun "*I*" does not appear any more in the performance.

Obama favors the third person plural pronouns *we*, *us* and *our(s)* in the rest of the speech - the pronouns which play their significant role in creating a sense of unity of the speaker with the audience. *We*, *us* and *our(s)* are employed 61, 20 and 65 times respectively and are, probably, the most often used words of the speech. The speaker does not distance himself from

the American people; instead, everything the president proclaims further seems to be issued by *us* – the people of America.

According to Capone, “a political speech is in itself an interpretation of the audience’s feelings and needs” that allow “the audience to build its own intentionality” while a politician mirrors them (2010:2969). The above mentioned pronouncements are employed as the inclusive ones throughout the text. The speaker, in this case, is a member of the society to which he speaks. Whether he speaks of the previous achievements or the future plans, the orator claims them to be a commonality, which means that he shares responsibility for everything being said with the audience. As a result, the audience seems to become a co-author of the speech, providing that they approve of it, and they do so by frequent applause. Thus, the president speaks on behalf of the American people: “On this day *we* gather ... *we* come to proclaim...”.

The addresser has a message to his opponents, and the pronouns *they*, *their*, *those* and *some* are served as if to indicate a distance between the American people, on whose behalf Obama speaks and those “who question the scale of *our* [the Americans] ambitions”. The victory in the election, presumably, allows the new president to associate himself with the majority of the nation and to look down at “the cynics [who] fail to understand [is] that the ground has shifted beneath *them*”. By carefully chosen pronouns, the speaker foregrounds the Americans, whose ideas he articulates and backgrounds the rest, who “have forgotten what *this* country has already done”. Having repeated by then *we* and *our* dozens of times and created a panoramic picture of the nation’s achievements, the present state and the future challenges, Obama has little difficulty opposing and disparaging “*those* who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame”.

Parallelism and alliteration

The art of persuasion is further enhanced through the incorporation of specific linguistic devices. In Obama’s speeches, the stylistic device of parallelism combined with repetition became the carrier to emphasize main contents that Obama wanted the audience to notice.

“Parallelism is a device which expresses several ideas in a series of similar structures. This can serve to emphasise that the ideas are equal in importance and can add a sense of symmetry and rhythm, which make the speech more memorable” (Jones & Peccei, 2004:51).

One reason why politicians use parallel patterns of discourse in their speeches is “to draw attention to a particular part of their message and make it stand out from the rest of the speech” (Jones & Peccei, 2004:51). The following explanations will examine the occurrence of parallelism at the word, phrase, and clause level.

I would like to suggest that the following piece of speech consists of lexical parallels. To start with, the nouns ‘strength’ and ‘weakness’ are antonyms; by putting them in the same line the speaker creates the effect of parallelism based on contradiction. He continuously contrasts and contradicts the rights and wrongs in the text until ‘goodness’ eventually prevails over ‘evil’.

e.g. *For we know*

*that our patchwork heritage is strength, not a weakness.
We are a nation of Christians and Muslims,
Jews and Hindus - and non-believers.
We are shaped by every language and culture,
drawn from every end of this Earth;
and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation,
and emerged from the dark chapter stronger and united,
we cannot help but believe
that the old hatreds shall someday pass;
that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve;
that as the world grows smaller,
our common humanity shall reveal itself;
and that America must play its role
in ushering in a new era of peace.*

It is interesting that by contradicting and drawing parallels, the speaker achieves the effect of foregrounding [1]. Before pointing out the goal, the speaker explains the reason for it and, hence, prepares the ground for the challenge, which seems achievable afterwards. Lexical and syntactic repetitions strengthen both the background and foreground of the text.

Speaking about the diversity of the country, Obama uses the effect of *antithesis* making contrasts when mentioning the religious groups. The diversity of religions evolves from being simply contrastive, which might in other contexts be interpreted as divisive and, therefore, a problematic issue, to cohesion and solidarity of the purpose. Those elements, which rest on the side of ‘meanness’, fade away under the pressure of ‘goodness’. The

following compounds of phrases seem predictable then: "*hatreds – pass . . . tribe – dissolve . . . humanity – reveal*".

In addition to the parallelism, the repetition and the heading position of the phrase '*for us*' produces the effect of foregrounding. The repetition and relationship of the phrases "*they*" and "*for us*" make the message of the passage more coherent. *Everything "they" did, they did "for us"*. In this case, what "forebearers" did, is not signified merely as a list of jobs, but rather as the effort they made for "a future generation". The language devices serve as a promoter of the message here.

e.g. *For us,*

*they packed up
their few worldly possessions
and travelled across oceans
in search of a new life.*

For us,

*they toiled in sweatshops
and settled the West;
endured the lash of the whip
and plowed the hard earth.*

The following block contains both of the devices alliteration and parallelism. The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines the term *alliteration* as "the repetition of the same sounds – usually initial consonants of words or of stressed syllables – in any sequence of neighboring words", remarking that in some poetry "alliteration rather than rhythm is the chief principle of repetition" ("alliteration").

Based on the analysis of the given speech, the adjectives "*less*" and "*last*" are not only repeated in the same stanza, but they also start with the same consonant "l", consist of a single syllable and have similarity in the meaning [2]. They both related to the tendency to minimize something to an unimportant level.

Although the two first stanzas begin with the same pronoun "*our*", they differ in the choice of linguistic tools. The effect of parallelism of the following two stanzas rests upon contradiction.

Alliteration is more vaguely expressed in the words starting with consonant "p" such as "*pat*", "*protecting*", "*putting*" and "*passed*" in the second stanza, and is absent in the third one. These two stanzas contain

verbs and/or verb phrases having opposite meaning; they contradict each other and the parallelism is based on contradiction.

Every stanza consists of a single, complex sentence, where intensity is accumulating in the first two lines in stanza 1 and 2 (in the third stanza that is line 1), and accelerating to its climax in the following line 3 and 4 relatively. Calling for action, Obama stresses the last syllables in phrasal verbs - verbs of action *pick up* and *dust off*. The choice of these multi-word verbs obviously reflects the desire to emphasize the need for action: *up* and *off* associate with impulse and movement. The tension is growing from the first to the last verse with the conclusion coming as a final chord:

e.g. *Our minds are no less inventive,
our goods and services no less needed
than they were last week
or last month
or last year.
Our capacity remains undiminished.
But our time of standing pat,
of protecting narrow interests
and putting off unpleasant decisions
that time has surely passed.
Starting today,
we must pick ourselves up,
dust ourselves off,
and begin again
the work of remaking America.*

Metaphor

As G. Lakoff & M. Johnson (1980) stated, people categorize their surrounding reality by establishing boundaries according to their own experience. In metaphorical speech, abstract notions are usually organized in physical objects, spatial orientations, and fixed structures, relating to daily human experience. Therefore, the resulting notions become more familiar, easier to understand, and are processed much faster.

The human body is a productive lexical field for metaphorical creation in political discourse as Obama's Inaugural Address demonstrates. For example, in the following excerpt, "... these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw..." he uses an evaluative image related to the body term *hand* described as *raw*, and

surrounded by verbs such as *struggle*, *sacrifice*, and *work*. In the next example, he refers to a metaphorical phrase containing the words *hand* and *fist*, "To those who cling to power [...] we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." Likewise, another metaphor combining bodily needs and nature appears as a parallel reference to body and mind, "... make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds." Nature and natural phenomena terminology described in different ways, *icy currents*, *rising tides*, *gathering clouds*, *water of peace* and *raging storms*, lead us to associations with bad and good times,

e.g. "...in this winter of our hardship, [...], let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come." [...] The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms."

Many inanimate beings are conceptually, and linguistically, treated as humans. In other words, typically human features and actions are assigned to institutions, countries, and organizations. Relevant consequences arise from the analogy embodied in personifications. First, listeners feel a greater identification and a more positive attitude towards the object that has "become" human. Second, personification conveys more information than literal speech in a shorter utterance, which paradoxically is processed faster. In Obama's Inaugural speech, the word *America* undergoes a process of personification which results in a captivating metaphor because of its affectionate tone. For example, we read about "...America's birth...", in other words, an America *who* is born into a new age of Obama's victory; we also read about "...a young nation...", and finally we read that "...America is a friend..." In the sphere of international politics, Obama's Address depicts nations as humans, highlighting the need for good relationships in a globalized world: "...greater cooperation and understanding between nations..." where "...the world grows smaller..." Other abstract entities such as system, crisis, and economy undergo a similar process, "...our system cannot tolerate too many big plans...", "...this crisis has reminded us...", and "...the state of the economy calls for action..."

Finally, one last personification which draws our attention is "...worn out dogmas that [...] have strangled our politics." This represents another captivating metaphor because of the negative associations conveyed in the

graphic idea of strangulation. Obama relates prior attitudes of intolerance with the deterioration of the Republican's political activity.

In addition to metaphor, metonymy is another commonplace in political communication. The mental process involved in this strategy relates to the substitution of one entity for another without the use of an analogy. For instance, the name of a place is used instead of the activity which takes place there. In Obama's speech, as in many other political speeches, words that name capital cities such as *Washington* or *Madrid* most frequently replace the word *government*. In turn, *government* is used instead of an explicit reference to "the elected and non-elected officials". In both cases, this substitution takes place between a city and an institution, respectively, to refer to people and their activities.

Metaphor and metonymy often function together. For instance, the word *government* can be used for people, and at the same time to refer to human actions assigned to such institution, as stated in the following excerpt from the Inaugural speech, "The question [...] is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works - whether it helps families find jobs..." The same process applies to the term *country*, "...what this country has already done..." as well as institutions, "...our schools fail too many..." Likewise, America becomes the audience, "But know this, America..." A cause-effect metonymy is also used by Obama to designate energy resources instead of its effect, "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories." Another metonymic connection has been found to name containers in the place of their content, "...the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together" instead of referring to energy itself.

Synecdoche, a type of metonymy that names a part for the whole, or vice versa, can also be traced to one of Obama's statements where the term *heart* replaces *person*, "...our ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart..." Likewise, he mentions particular institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities instead of referring to a faulty education system, "...and we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age." In sum, the use of these devices could lead us to believe that the mental processes involved play an essential role as captivating strategies because of the psychological connections these devices build between orator and audience.

Conclusion

The research outcomes of the present inquiry show that the area of investigation is very broad: from the description of the linguistic approaches used for influencing an audience's thoughts and emotions to analysing the rhetorical devices applied to create a persuasive and manipulative political discourse.

On the basis of the above discussion, we may come to the following conclusions:

- The linguistic manipulation can be considered as an influential instrument of political rhetoric because political discourse is primarily focused on persuading people to take specified political actions.
- Language plays a significant ideological role because it is an instrument by means of which the manipulative intents of politicians become apparent.
- Language applied in political discourse uses a broad range of rhetorical devices at the phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic and textual levels.

Political rhetoric is embedded in the culture and society in which it is produced. It implies a set of techniques which involves manipulation of language for persuasive reasons. Consequently, political communication requires a profound contextual adjustment and a thoughtful choice of linguistic items to influence listeners' perceptions and their subsequent actions; President Obama demonstrates his understanding of these concepts in the speech analysed.

Obama's Inaugural Address is a good example of how persuasive political communication involves linguistic strategies mostly related to cultural beliefs. Obama is persuasive because of his highly captivating metaphors which directly engage the emotions of his audience. They are captivating for their cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic qualities. Most of them take into account the deepest social and ideological American values and depict positive associations. Overcoming past events, and embracing opportunities for reconstruction and hope embodied in a personal as well as a societal victory, they are metaphors which celebrate the election of the first Afro-American president of the United States.

Learning from Ancient Greeks, Obama uses didactic poetry: persuading, convincing and easy-to-be-remembered rhythmic style when addressing to a wide audience of the Americans. Didactic poetry rests upon

repetition and parallelism, which are the basic tools for creating an easily memorized message. Parallelism is, in turn, a part of a linguistic field of semantics.

Focusing on parallelism employed in the speech, this essay has suggested that personal pronouns play a significant role in creating a foregrounding effect, which is an aspect of pragmatics. All these devices positively correlate with a rhetorical style, which the orator chose for the speech.

NOTES:

- [1]. Foregrounding is based on “giving unusual prominence to one element or property of the text” (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “foregrounding”). The devices such as repetition and giving a favorable syntactic position are commonly employed for creating a foreground effect.
- [2]. Stanza is a product of correspondence of and “the length, metrical scheme and rhythmical pattern [of the verse lines] with those of at least one other such group of verse lines in a poem” (*The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*, “stanza”).

REFERENCES:

- Atkinson, Max. (1984). *Our Master's Voices. The Language and Body Language of Politics*. London: Methuen.
- Aitchinson, J. (1997). *The Language Web: The Power and Problem of Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barack, Obama. “Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address”.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/> (viewed July 10, 2012)
- Beard, A (2000). *The language of Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Cameron, Deborah (2001). *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: GBR: Sage Publication.
- Capone, Alessandro (2010). “Barack Obama’s South Carolina Speech” *Journal of Pragmatics*. 42: 2964-2977.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2005). *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. London: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Carver, T. & Pikalo, J. (2008). *Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and Changing the World*. London: Routledge.

- Cuenca, M. & Hilferty, J. (1999). *Introducción a la lingüística cognitiva*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Ínigo-Mora, Isabel (2004). *Journal of language and politic.* 3:1, 27-52. Universidad de Sevilla.
- Jones, Jason & Stilwell Peccei, Jean (2004). *What is language and what does it do?* Language and politics. Language society and power, p 1-15, 36-53.
- Joseph, John (2006). *Language and Politics*. Edinburgh, GBR: Edinburgh University Press.
- Guitart, M. (2005). *Discurso parlamentario y lenguaje políticamente correcto*, Madrid, Congreso de los Diputados.
- Hart, P. (1997). *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*. Upper Saddle River: Allyn&Bacon A Pearson Education Company,
- Hyland, Ken (2005). *Metadiscourse*, London: Continuum.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (2006). *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, New York: Farrar: Straus and Giroux.
- Lakoff, G. (2009). "The Obama Code", *The Huffington Post*, February 24, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/the-obama-code> (viewed June 16, 2012)
- Mey, Jacob (1993). *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.
- Mieder, W. (2009). "Yes We Can", *Barack Obama's Proverbial Rhetoric*, New York: Peter Lang.
- Mussolff, A. (2004). *Metaphor And Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mussolff, A. (2008). *What can Critical Metaphor Analysis Add to the Understanding of Racist Ideology? Recent Studies of Hitler's Anti-Semitic Metaphor, Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 2-2: 1-10, <http://cadaad.org/ejournal> (viewed May 17, 2012).
- Osborn, M. (2009). *The Trajectory Of My Work With Metaphor*. Sothern Communication Journal, 74-1, pp. 79-87.
- *** (2007). *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Ed. Angus Stevenson, Oxford University Press.
- Santiago Guervós, J. (2009). *Cortesía y descortesía: pragmática y discurso político*. La lingüística como reto epistemológico y como acción social. Madrid: Arco/Libros, p. 981-991.
- Thomas, L. & Shan Wareing, S. (2004). *Language, Society and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Ullmann, S. (1962). *An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Résumé: La stratégie rhétorique de Barack Obama est l'une des plus surprenantes de l'art oratoire politique le plus récent. Une victoire politique qui renforce la thèse du langage comme arme puissante pour avoir de l'influence sur les citoyens. Les relations entre pouvoir, discours et cognition constituent la délimitation théorique de cette analyse. L'auteur de l'étude ci-dessous se propose de définir le rapport entre la personnalité politique et la personnalité linguistique de l'acteur politique, d'identifier et d'apprécier l'opportunité de certaines techniques du discours politique, utilisées dans le but de la transformation de l'information politique dans un instrument de mobilisation et de persuasion. Le cas analysé est celui du Discours d'Investiture prononcé par Obama lors de sa prise de possession comme président; un discours basé sur des significations littérales et, surtout, métaphoriques. Ce discours, devenu un discours historique, qui marque une „nouvelle époque” pour le peuple américain, est envisagé sous l'aspect pragmatique.

Mots-clés: *communication politique, langage politique, discours politique, pouvoir, stratégie, cognition, discours d'inauguration, Obama.*

Abstract: Barack Obama's rhetorical strategy is one of the most surprising in recent political oratory. A political victory that reinforces the thesis that language is a powerful weapon for influencing citizens. The relationship between power, discourse and cognition forms the theoretical boundary of this analysis. The author of the study below sets out to define the relationship between the political personality and the linguistic personality of the political actor, to identify and appreciate the appropriateness of certain techniques of political discourse, used with the aim of transforming political information into an instrument of persuasion. The case analysed is that of the Inaugural Address delivered by Obama on his first speech as President of the USA, a speech based on literal and, above all, metaphorical meanings. This speech, which has become a historic one, marking a 'new era' for the American people, is going to be considered from a pragmatic point of view.

Keywords: *political communication, political language, political discourse, power, strategy, cognition, inauguration speech, Obama.*