

Barack Obama's Inaugural Address: Metaphor and Values as Captivating Strategies to Celebrate a Presidency

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BARACK OBAMA'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS: METAPHOR AND VALUES AS CAPTIVATING STRATEGIES TO CELEBRATE A PRESIDENCY

ABSTRACT: Barack Obama's rhetorical style is broadly acknowledged to be one of the most outstanding examples of communication strategy in recent political oratory. His political success reinforces the thesis that language is a powerful tool to influence citizens. The relationship between power, discourse and cognition provides the theoretical framework for the present analysis of Obama's Inaugural Address; a speech which relies on literal meanings, and above all on figurative ones. Using this speech I will demonstrate how metaphor is a powerful strategy since first, it facilitates the understanding of abstract concepts in a short time span; second, it conveys positive images that benefit the orator; and, finally, because the message conveyed is doubly powerful as it works through both auditory and visual channels.

KEY WORDS: political oratory; power; strategy; metaphor; cognition.

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction 2. Our approach 3. Embodied function of metaphor in Obama's "Inaugural Address" 4. War, construction, and journey metaphors in Obama's Inaugural Address 4.1. The war metaphor 4.2. The construction metaphor 4.3. The journey metaphor 5. The rhetoric of the American values 6. Conclusion

EL DISCURSO DE INVESTIDURA DE BARACK OBAMA: METÁFORA Y VALORES COMO ESTRATEGIAS PERSUASIVAS PARA CELEBRAR UNA PRESIDENCIA

RESUMEN: La estrategia retórica de Barack Obama es una de las más sorprendentes en la oratoria política más reciente. Una victoria política que refuerza la tesis del lenguaje como arma poderosa para influir en los ciudadanos. Las relaciones entre poder, discurso y cognición constituyen el marco teórico del presente análisis en torno al Discurso de Investidura pronunciado por Obama en su toma de posesión como presidente; un discurso basado en significados literales y, sobre todo, metafóricos. Tal recurrencia mostrará el poder de la estrategia metafórica: Primero, porque la metáfora facilita el comprensión de conceptos abstractos en un breve espacio de tiempo; segundo, porque transmite imágenes positivas que benefician al orador; por último, porque el mensaje metafórico es doblemente efectivo puesto que funciona a través de un canal auditivo y otro visual.

PALABRAS CLAVES: oratoria política; poder; estrategia; metáfora; cognición.

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LE DISCOURS D'INVESTITURE DE BARACK OBAMA: MÉTAPHORE ET VALEURS COMME STRATEGIES PERSUASIVES POUR CELEBRER UNE PRESIDENCE

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 autour 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. Cette récurrence montrera le pouvoir de la stratégie métaphorique: en premier lieu, parce que la métaphore facilite la compréhension de concepts abstraits dans un bref espace de temps; deuxièmement, parce qu'elle transmet des images positives qui profitent à l'orateur; enfin, parce que le message métaphorique est doublement effectif étant donné qu'il fonctionne par l'intermédiaire d'un canal auditif et d'un canal visuel.

MOTS CLÉS: art oratoire politique; pouvoir; stratégie; métaphore; cognition.

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"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".
(Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, 1-20-2009)

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the only tangible vehicle to access knowledge as well as a powerful tool that influences perceptions, and behaviors (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). 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 careful choice of language and contextual adjustment. Thus, political discourse seems to be a clear piece of evidence where rhetorical language is seen in action.

This article attempts to analyse Obama's Inaugural Address as a means of transmitting the American Dream to argue that metaphorical representation is essential to the relationships between word and action. This work will demonstrate that one reason for Obama's success is that his linguistic choices are conveyed in captivating metaphors which often emerge from the American values.

Relationships between metaphor, rhetoric and politics along with methodology used in study will be discussed in the first section. Evidence of metaphorical instances in Obama's Inaugural Address is shown through the whole article as devices which help connect him psychologically with his audience. The second section explores the connections between Obama's metaphors and notions related to the human body and its surrounding experience. Section three demonstrates how some metaphors work as cognitive patterns which provide whole semantic fields (Lakoff, 1980: 36; Cuenca & Hilferty, 1999: 72): Political activity will be conceptualized as a battle, a construction, and a journey. The last section analyses some of the American values underlying Obama's Inaugural Address, and how, through an extremely empathic speech, the messages conveyed help connect Obama with his audience.

2. OUR APPROACH

Persuasive strategies in political rhetoric are found in literal meanings, and also often in figurative. 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 (M. Osborn, 2009:81). However, metaphors often need to be adapted to the culture in which they are uttered in order to be persuasively effective (J. 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 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.

A qualitative approach is central to this work. Therefore, it takes into account Praguejazz and E. Semino's *Metaphor Identification Procedure* (2007) to determine the metaphoricity which takes place in Obama's victory speech. MIP is based on a comparison between contextual and basic meanings. If the meaning of a lexical unit can be understood by comparing it to its basic one, the unit can be termed as metaphorical. This method focuses on the distinction between words conveying metaphorical meaning and those which do not according to context as a wide range of words can be considered metaphorical depending on different contexts. For instance, the term *crusade* is metaphorically intended in Bush's rhetoric, it is interpreted as literal by many Muslims (Charteris-Black, 2004).

3. EMBODIED FUNCTION OF METAPHOR IN OBAMA'S “INAUGURAL ADDRESS”

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,

“...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 metonym 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 metonym 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.

4. WAR, CONSTRUCTION, AND JOURNEY METAPHORS IN OBAMA'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Certain metaphors are known as *structural metaphors* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They are named *structural* because they generate new metaphors out of a single semantic field in order to form a whole group of metaphors around the same topic. Some of the major semantic fields as speeches by European and American political leaders have proved are war, construction and journey. For instance, conflict metaphors are associated to M. Thatcher, journey metaphors, to M. Luther King and, construction ones to B. Clinton (Charteris-Black, 2005). This section will outline how this type of representation is used in Obama's Inaugural Address to create captivating effects.

4.1. THE WAR METAPHOR

In general terms, POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS A WAR is a frequently used metaphor during election time (M. P. Guitart, 2005): Elections usually become *battlefields*; words turn to *weapons*; and opponents are *enemies*. Even when it is an inaugural speech, war lexicon is still evidenced like in the case of Obama's, "...each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet." In a subtle manner, Obama criticizes the lack of measures taken in the US to save energy. He references the negative consequences of such waste for the country and for their neighboring democracies while he condemns the profit made by other countries. Additionally, messages sometimes switch from a metaphorical meaning to a literal one, as seen in the previous and also in the following excerpt,

"We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

Through this fragment, listeners evoke "real" battles in their minds. They join Obama's courageous leadership in defense of justice, and against those who attempt to frighten them by references to *terror* and *slaughter*. The next metaphor "...the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington

whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty..." evokes the respect that should be devoted to every soldier killed in Vietnam and buried in the Arlington National Cemetery as they still safeguard the freedom of the North American people.

The next rhetorical choice, "On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord..." conveys a much gentler tone than other politicians' rhetoric. Obama's style offers more positive meanings compared to fellow politicians and to the traditional linguistic confrontation practice in Europe and in the United States (Charteris-Black, 2005; Mussolf, 2008). For example, as far as Obama's predecessor's administration is concerned, Professor W. Fields (2008), expert on presidential rhetoric, posits "One of the contrasts between the two administrations is the care with which Obama uses language". Indeed, Obama has sought to avoid the controversial phrase "war on terror", mainly because of its negative anti-Islamic and anti-Arab associations (Cordesman, 2008: 36). As opposed to the frequent use of "metaphors of separation", Obama's "metaphor of hope" has been present in his speeches since his Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention because "hope is the chance for a better world that can be produced in a society that values both strong personal and communitarian values." (Rowland & Jones, 2007: 442).

4.2. THE CONSTRUCTION METAPHOR

On the opposite extreme of bellicose analogies, the structural metaphor POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS A CONSTRUCTION is also present in Obama's Inaugural Address. The construction analogy refers to the positive connotations of creation and building. Its contrast to the conflict metaphor is easily acknowledged in the following excerpt, "...to those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West - know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy." These words are a compelling example of how Obama pursues a more subtle way of communication. He addresses his opponents emphasizing the idea of building as positive and destroying as negative.

The notion of construction is often used metaphorically for its anthropological features. In other words, metaphors very often refer to peoples' everyday customs like getting up, working or cleaning. This is also true in the next passage, "...starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America." This phrase draws our attention for the several reasons: First, the idea conveyed in the metaphor "...starting today, we must [...] dust ourselves off..." implies the abandonment of certain past habits to adopt new ones, and emerges from the literal meaning of removing dust from furniture. Second, it relates to the reconstruction of America as a consequence of Obama's victory, "...begin [...] the work remaking America..." In fact, Obama goes further with both metaphors as he applies the positive associations of building to a new era, the new America which has just begun with his election, and with the new policies which, in his own words, "...begin and start today..."

The last metaphor concerning the idea of construction and its positive associations is "the *levee* metaphor" found in the next excerpt: "it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break..." In this passage, Obama references to the levees which were destroyed during Hurricane *Katrina* in New Orleans, 2005, and the solidarity showed by many Americans.

Through this metaphor; Obama attempts to convey two fundamental ideas: first, the importance of citizens to their country; second, the solidarity which the American people show towards others when a setback, problem or disaster arises.

4.3. THE JOURNEY METAPHOR

POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY is another productive metaphor in political speech (M. P. Guitart, 2005). The main idea conveyed in this metaphor is that political activity is conceived as a journey. Accordingly, Obama's Address regards life in politics as a journey full of ways, routes, and paths, "...it is the surest route to our common good." He also refers to "...the road that unfolds before us..." as an equivalent of "a double opportunity." On other occasions, he depicts life as a progression, "...this is the journey we continue today." Likewise, his references apply to the long distances walked together after having overcome difficulties, "...how far we have traveled." An evident persuasive effect lies behind the unity that Obama creates with his audience. This captivating strategy of closeness is also evidenced in the next metaphor,

"Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted [...] Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom."

It is the metaphor of a journey where *long, rugged paths* are taken and shared, above all, by every hard-working American whereas *short-cuts* and *easy paths* belong to others. This metaphor is an obvious praise towards the people whose subsequent positive emotional reaction is predictable (Santiago, 2010).

On the long journey of life itself and life in politics, a forward movement is most likely perceived as positive as in the previous phrase "...path towards prosperity and freedom...", as well as in the following two, "...we intend to move forward...", and "... we seek a new way forward,..." On the contrary, a backward movement is considered as something negative as shown in the following passage, "Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon..." Positive and negative associations emerge from cultural meaning. Similarly, Obama employs the positive associations of the word *future* reinforced by the ideas conveyed in the combination of the terms *peace* and *dignity*. At the same time, he mentions "the weakest", women and children, in a way that everyone feels included and important, "...every man, woman and child who seek a future of peace and dignity..." As opposed to the notion of light, the idea of darkness is a negatively associated determinant as in the phrase "...our darkest hours..." to convey people's suffering metaphorically.

J. Darsey (2009) states that the potency of Obama's rhetoric lies in the concurrence of two metaphorical journeys, his personal journey and America's journey, especially concerning the issue of race. In this manner, the Inaugural Address represents a personal victory and communal victory, where both journeys coincide and conclude with the first Afro-American elected president of the United States of America.

5. THE RHETORIC OF THE AMERICAN VALUES

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 as shown in the next excerpt,

"Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake."

This powerful image relates to dangerous work (*charter* full of *perils*) carried out by the Founding Fathers, and supported by the suffering and death (*blood*) of many courageous people. Consequently, such ideals are encouraging (*light*) and unforgettable.

Another value referenced is a renewed notion of the American democracy, related to individual and, above all, social responsibility. A type of democracy which takes care of others as a way of "...acting to make oneself, the country, and the world better..." because everybody deserves "...protection and equal empowerment..." from a moral government. Referring to the concept of framing, Obama has certainly given a renewed meaning to this word (D. Olive, 2008: 305). As expressed by Obama on CNN (2008), it implies "caring for the other" versus "extreme individualism". Although emphasis is placed on societal responsibility, personal responsibility is also necessary. In this way, Obama disarms the conservative criticism on liberals placing responsibility on the government and none on the individual (C. Rowland & J. M. Jones, 2007: 441).

Union is another value emphasized by Obama. M. S. Boyd (2009: 78) considers that "an all-encompassing message of unity [...] makes his rhetoric more persuasive." It is an idea of union as equivalent of inclusiveness, which applies to the issues of race and religion. Historically, race has been one of the hardest political issues to address in the United States. As

Sharpley-Whiting (2008: 132) suggests, Obama's speech on framing the race issue is a model which uses not only literal terms, but also metaphorical language. On the one hand, Obama deals with it as something that has already been overcome through his election as the following excerpt shows,

“This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed - why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.”

On the other hand, the next one indicates that he believes there is still more work to be done. This thought is conveyed by the tasting of “the bitter swill” which refers to racism as a “dark chapter” in history. Obama also refers to racism with another compelling image, “the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve”. This metaphor reminds American people that racism, which has created hate and divided people, will be soon eradicated,

“...and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve;”

As for religious values, Obama wants to make clear that every creed is welcomed in the US, “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;” In that way, a broad cultural scope of the audience could be emotionally touched in a positive manner. He praises the diverse religions, cultures, and languages in a more effective way through the metaphorical image of the “patchwork heritage”, “For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength not a weakness.”

Emphasis on particular religious references may not be politically successful depending on cultural context. In the case of the Inaugural Address, overt references to Obama's religious faith, such as “God's grace upon us” and “the knowledge that God calls” clearly plays to the political narrative of the US. The Christian religious background that has long influenced in the congregations of powerfully effective preachers becomes present in B. Obama's speeches (Higgings, 2009). Indeed, he has a particular rhetoric training based on the black American church, which captured the rhetorical tradition of educating people through sermons (Davidson, 2009). The following excerpt from the Inaugural Address reminds us of a religious sermon with explicit references to God and the Scriptures,

“...in the words of Scripture, [...] time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.”

Through several parallelisms such as “...to reaffirm our [...] to choose our...”, “...that precious gift, that noble idea...” and “...all are equal, all are free, and all deserve...” the audience is encouraged to continue believing in the pursuit of equality, freedom, and happiness. In sum,

the American people are encouraged to achieve the American Dream as it is a central socio-cultural value, and consequently, an essential part of American political speech along with those values of religion, patriotism, and unity.

6. CONCLUSION

The values and ideals of a nation flow through Obama's Inaugural Address, very often through captivating metaphors. As with any discursive genre, political rhetoric is embedded in the culture and society in which it is produced. Additionally, 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.

Several carefully made choices take place in Obama's speech. Captivating metaphors are found by converting abstract notions into concrete ones related to human body and natural phenomena (*hand, fist, winter, current, storm, tide*). Personifications are also captivating for the affectionate tone they convey ("...America is a friend and a young nation..."). Cultural meaning related to human experience is behind evaluative metaphors, either positively or negatively, ("...intend to move forward not turn back..."). Similarly, Obama's Inaugural Address evidences evaluative metaphors which conceptualize political life as a journey (*charter, path, short-cut*), a construction (*build, remake, levee*) and a conflict (*defeat, foe, slaughter*).

However, the war metaphor denotes a more novel way to construct political discourse when compared with the oratory of his predecessor, President Bush; particularly as it relates to the post 9/11 world. Positively associated metaphors seem to be much more beneficial in political speech than those conveying negative associations. Opposing the metaphors of "segregation and hate", Obama prefers the positive metaphor of "unity and hope".

The Inaugural Address calls out for values and ideals such as loyalty to America's Founding Fathers, "...faithful to the ideals of our forbearers..."; renewal of democracy, "...the work of remaking America..."; inclusiveness regarding race, "...every race and every faith can join in celebration..."; and praise to diversity, "...our patchwork heritage is a strength..." In the end, a good combination of touching values is what makes this Inaugural Address highly empathic.

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.

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