

Persuasive Rhetoric in Barack Obama's Immigration Speech: Pre- and Post-Electoral Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The emerging power of the Latino community has become a recurring reflection for most analyses of the United States of America over the last two decades. However, their presence on the media usually focuses on two factors: the increasing immigration of undocumented workers, mostly from Mexico, and their decisive condition as voters due to their presence in the so-called “swing” States, which provides specific power to the Hispanic population to choose the President, especially when they are as disputed as the 2012 general elections.

Barack Obama, whose presidential rhetoric has been extensively studied, decided to change his immigration policies during his campaign and to adapt his speech accordingly. It is our aim to study his rhetoric and figurative language as a means of electoral persuasion by analyzing two of his most representative speeches specifically addressed to a Latino audience: “Remarks by the President at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Annual Conference” (2012) and “Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform” (2013) under those theoretical approaches of the *Political Discourse Analysis*, the *Critical Discourse Analysis* and the

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Corpus Approach to Critical Metaphor Analysis, at the same time based on the *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, so as to perceive how the presidential speech deals with the Hispanic community.

The findings analyze the frequent appeals to movement, justice and personal and local references in the form of acknowledgement together with a predominant use of conceptual metaphors on the American dream. His metaphors prove this concept is conceived by him as a path forward to citizenship, and his use of them, so common in Obama's discourse, makes him devote once again his addresses to Latinos to the uniqueness of the United States, provided by the mosaic of cultural juxtaposition.

Keywords: Latino power, Barack Obama, immigration policies, persuasive language, presidential rhetoric, discourse analysis, Hispanic role in politics, conceptual metaphors, figurative language, 2012 United States presidential election, 2013 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act.

RESUMEN

El poder emergente de la comunidad latina en Estados Unidos se ha convertido en referencia casi obligada en los análisis de la situación de este país en las dos últimas décadas. Sin embargo, la presencia de este sector en los medios normalmente se centra en dos únicos aspectos: la creciente inmigración que ha creado una bolsa de trabajadores indocumentados, en su mayoría provenientes de México, y el papel decisivo de los hispanoamericanos en los Estados "morados" o indecisos, que de alguna manera les otorga poder específico para elegir al presidente, especialmente en un marco tan complejo como las elecciones generales de 2012.

Barack Obama, cuya retórica presidencial ha sido profusamente estudiada, cambió tanto su política inmigratoria como el discurso relativo a esta en la campaña electoral. Nuestro propósito es analizar su retórica y uso del lenguaje figurado a través de dos de sus discursos más representativos dirigidos a un público específicamente latino: "Mensaje del presidente en el Congreso Anual de la Asociación Nacional de Representantes Políticos Latinos" (2012) y "Mensaje del presidente sobre la Reforma Integral de la Inmigración" (2013) bajo las corrientes teóricas del *Análisis del Discurso Político*, del *Análisis Crítico del Discurso* y del *Análisis Crítico de la Metáfora*, a su vez basado en la *Teoría de la Metáfora Conceptual*, con el fin de aproximarnos al enfoque del presidente en su discurso para la comunidad hispana.

Los resultados analizan las numerosas apelaciones al movimiento y la justicia ,así como referencias personales y locales en forma de reconocimiento, además del uso de metáforas conceptuales sobre el sueño americano, eminentemente concebido como un camino hacia la ciudadanía, un recurso frecuente en el discurso de Obama que le lleva a dedicar nuevamente sus palabras al engrandecimiento del mosaico cultural que la yuxtaposición de nacionalidades ha aportado a Estados Unidos.

Palabras clave: Poder latino, Barack Obama, políticas de inmigración, lenguaje persuasivo, retórica presidencial, análisis del discurso, papel político de los hispanos, metáforas conceptuales, lenguaje figurado, elecciones presidenciales norteamericanas de 2012, Ley de la reforma integral de la inmigración de 2013.

1. INTRODUCTION

Barack Obama's speeches have been a fruitful source for academic studies in terms of linguistics, persuasive language and discourse analysis. Even when he was still an Illinois State Senator, Obama's speeches were said to have marked important moments in rhetoric, for example, in the African American one (Frank & McPhail), since, as a mixed race African American himself, born in Hawaii with Kenyan roots, he embodies a worldwide symbol of hope for his peers and of the anticipated changes in the U.S. politics before his first presidential term and so he represents his own policies. However, it has been logically as the President of the United States that his words have been most studied to assist in the understanding of the persuasive strategies (Horváth), of transitivity and modality (Wang) in his political speeches under the *Critical Discourse Analysis* approach and *Systematic Functional Linguistics* or of the persuasive power of metaphors, be them applied to the myth of the American dream (Charteris-Black 280-310), to the specific case of the movement metaphors (Cox) or to other topics such as terrorism and conflicts (Lesz). His speeches have also been analyzed to explore the phenomenon of power in his interviews on the base of *Hallidayian Systemic Functional Grammar* from the critical perspective of Fairclough (2003) such as in Shayegh & Nabifar (2012).¹ His posters have likewise been the focus of multimodal studies on pragmatic variations of his electoral discourse (Balsera Fernández). Other papers, although from a non-linguistic perspective, have studied how the Latino community has proven to be decisive in the 2012 presidential election and, therefore, understanding their needs and thoughts could be crucial for the final results (Lavariega Monforti & McGlynn).²

In this vein, the purpose of this paper is to explore through discourse analysis and the persuasive use of language how the official presidential speech deals with Latinos in the United States, right into a controversial election process in which this community has proven to be decisive for the key poll results, especially in *purple* or *swing* states such as Colorado or Florida, which were considered as the main battlegrounds of the campaign. Therefore, two speeches will be analyzed, one from the 2012 reelection campaign, “Remarks by the President at the NALEO Annual Conference”, and the 2013 “Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform”, the most remarkable postelectoral dissertation on the matter. By comparing these two statements, we will excerpt which were Barack Obama’s strategies not only to appeal the Hispanic community voters for his most recent election campaign but also to fulfill his promises to them during his last presidential term.

The theoretical framework on which this paper is based consists of Wilson’s approach to *Political Discourse Analysis* (2001), the *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) approach (Fairclough 1995, 2005; van Dijk 2003, Wodak & Chilton 2005) and Charteris-Black’s (2004) *Corpus Approach to Critical Metaphor Analysis*, at the same time based on Lakoff’s (1993) and Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*. First of all, *Political Discourse Analysis* studies public political manifestations and interventions as interesting phenomena and the strategic use of linguistic devices to influence the receiver in different ways, that is, persuasion through language.³ The CDA approach, as Scollon (65) argues, is a program of social analysis to study language in use as a means to tackle the problems of social change. Thus, this approach examines how social power and structures of social domination and submission reflect through the verbal elements of the lexical, syntactical and grammatical levels within their context. Van Dijk (2009: 123) considers that specific structures of discourse like figurative language can explain the processes which affect cognition, social problems and the manipulation of the mental models. Eventually, Charteris-Black’s approach to metaphor (2004) describes this device as a way of creating, organizing and understanding reality beyond establishing a comparison between two realities, thus, humans employ metaphorical associations derived from personal experience to conceptualize their thought. In this regard, Kövecses (206) adds that the selection of the metaphors somebody uses may depend on who they are, better said, what their personal history is or what their long-lasting concerns or interests are. Franke (151) clarifies that metaphors serve the vital function of creating meaning for concepts where no other avenues of reference are available and even constitute a tool to name the unnamable. The *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* endeavors to reveal the intentions and their meaning and ideologies underlying

language use by analyzing metaphors in three stages: first, metaphors are identified; second, they are interpreted; and finally, they are explained (Charteris-Black 26, 47). Thence their important role within political discourse, as Thompson himself states: “Fish need water to be fish; humans need metaphors to do and think about politics” (185).

2. BARACK OBAMA, IMMIGRATION AND NALEO

NALEO is the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, created in 1976 with the aim to work as a forum for Latino issues and promote new generations of leaders. Due to the growing power of this community, over 13% of the electorship in the 2012 elections, the 29th NALEO Annual Conference, celebrated in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, from June 20 to 23, 2013, became a major event into the Democratic and Republican campaigns, and addresses from both presidential candidates were included into its program.

Obama remained conscious of the narrow margin of advantage his party had in the polls and therefore the strategy followed in the campaign seemed to lie on a simple and rather obvious point: the differences between the Republican and Democratic policies on those points regarded as crucial by the Hispanic community, such as education, health issues, reduced taxes for middle-class families, job creation and, especially, an immigration comprehensive reform. Apart from Medicare extension, it was one of the President’s concerns to offer higher education scholarships as well as to cut Latino-owned businesses’ taxes –as they did 18 times– so that they could grow and hire employees. Other resources are personal acknowledgement of his best-known supporters, be them officials, like Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, or show-business celebrities, like Eva Longoria, and the reinforcement of a positive image fighting negative stereotypes by praising their work and commitment to values.

On the other hand, Republicans were repeatedly censured for their anti-immigration policies through local laws in Arizona or Alabama and the intention to repeal the Dream Act, which provides permanent residency to those immigrant college students who came to the United States as minors. This time, Obama, who in 2010 (Southall) had already encouraged Latinos to “punish our enemies” –and by these words portraying himself as someone sharing their interests or even belonging to their community– added that he might win the elections due to Republican alienation of Latinos (Foley & Stein). Eventually, even when he was said to have lost his influence over Hispanic supporters, who had massively voted for him in 2008 (67% over 31%), the 2012 general elections would eventually improve those results (71% to 27%) and even their views on his policies have enhanced ever since (Lopez, Lopez & Taylor).

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

3.1. Rhetorical strategies

Before the detailed analysis, Figure 1 provides a summary of the results obtained regarding the rhetorical devices/strategies of the President's speeches for both years:

Figure 1. Rhetorical strategies in Barack Obama's speeches.

Purpose (appeal to)	22/06/2012	29/01/2013
	No of examples	No of examples
Action	2	5
Common sense		2
Emotions	2	3
Justice	8	8
Movement	18	5
Obama's policies for Latinos	2	
Patriotism/unity of America	6	4
Personal evidence	2	1
Personal/local reference or acknowledgements	5	16
The audience	3	
Uniqueness of Latinos	3	

Source: Prepared by the authors

Our whole analysis will follow the order of the tables, even when it responds to alphabetical and not hierarchical criteria. However, the progression or position in the table does not correspond to their importance within Obama's speeches; that will be stated in the course of the analysis. We start with the appeal to action, somehow related to movement; nevertheless, it is considered apart since the main objective of these expressions, which do not constitute a metaphor whatsoever, is to make the recipient perform a concrete activity and not simply move. These appeals to action can be classified into two categories: the first one is formed by those phrases urging the audience to "feel free to take a seat", which is a rhetorical device for persuading the receivers by engaging emotionally with them through empathy and so creating the right emotional climate for persuasion to occur (Charteris Black 2011: 15). Moreover, there is the implication

of the expression “feel free” which, despite being an idiom, appeals to the freedom of the audience to act voluntarily –which hides the persuasive intention of the President– as well as underlies the power of the speaker to provide that freedom. The second category is composed of those expressions which plead the audience for action, that is, to change their situation by passing the abovementioned Immigration Reform Act. Apart from a direct exhortation to motion, this also implies indirect persuasion because it evokes that immigrants’ destiny in America depends on themselves, especially if they support –or vote for– the Democratic Party. In this vein, Obama appeals to common sense, that is, to decide what is better for his audience, which results in that reform. This last case is a clear example of the use of classical rhetoric, more specifically of one of the five stages of the *taxis* or structure of an argument, which includes techniques orientated towards the audience like flattery or an appeal to their goodwill –or, in this case, common sense– (Charteris-Black 2011: 4).

As López Eire & de Santiago Guervós (12) conclude, persuading a concrete society can only be done within the framework of their own cultural values and cognition, that is, their sociocultural context. The same authors (71) add that, within persuasion, both the character or *ethos* of the speaker and the feelings or *pathos* of the receiver are essential. Bearing that in mind, Obama employs emotional appeals when he refers to different places by thanking how warmly they welcomed him such in Orlando or this Latino Association NALEO. Through his words, he also shows concern for the immigrants’ problems –emotional engage by means of empathy– when he says “they’re contributing members of the community[,] looking out for their families [and] neighbors. They’re woven into the fabric of our lives”. This is double persuasion: on the one hand, Obama tries to convince Latinos that he cares about them because they are like him or any other American; on the other hand, the President tries to persuade the rest of *true* Americans that the immigrants are like themselves and not like the pejorative stereotypes about them –“the overwhelming majority of these individuals aren’t looking for any trouble”– and they share the same values –which Obama identifies to commitment to family, nation or well-done work– and so deserve equal rights. This idea is even more boosted when Obama mentions that both Republicans and Democrats seem ready to solve the problem together and to work on a solution in Parliament. In fact, he remarks that the Dream Act was written by both parties but blocked in Congress by the Republicans.

Connected with the previous ideas and to support his own immigration policies, Obama resorts to justice, of course, oriented towards immigration or the immigrants’ concerns. One of the concepts linked to these expressions is what van Dijk (1999: 95) calls “positive self-representation”, arising from the polarization of –or mental representations

about– ingroups and outgroups generally defined by the opposition between “us” and “them”. This means that groups constitute an ideological image of themselves and others in a way where “us” are represented positively (positive self-representation) while “them” are negatively (negative other-representation). From this standpoint, what “we” –the Democrats, or Obama and his electorship– do is right, contrary to what “they” –the Republican Party– do, which is wrong. By way of illustration, take the following examples which show both the former kind of representation: “[the health care reform] was the right thing to do” and “immigrants for getting on the right side of the law” thanks to the right policy; and the latter: “it was wrong to let insurance companies just jack up premiums for no reason, and to have millions of working Americans uninsured” –implying other policies are arbitrary and unfair–, “and I think [the Republicans who run Congress are] wrong”. However, this last idea is somehow hedged –again to the purposes of positive self-representation since Obama does not usually base his speech on discrediting his political opponents– when he says America needs a long-term immigration solution and not arguing who did something the wrong way or for the wrong reasons. In light of this evidence, Obama appeals to change reality since the “current immigration system doesn’t reflect those values”, “makes no sense” and is “not good for America”. The concept of polarization applied to immigration does not only concern politicians but also American citizens, such as when he alludes that businesses “are trying to do the right thing” by “hiring people legally, paying a decent wage, following the rules” and that is why they deserve the immigration reform neither to suffer nor compete against companies that break the rules; because, even though it will require time, “it will be a fair process”.

As Cox (2) remarks, Obama relies “heavily on figurative language, particularly ‘movement’ [and journey] metaphors”, especially when dealing with the economic crisis. These metaphors, which Lakoff and Johnson (15) call “orientational”, organize “a whole system of concepts with respect to one another”. For the election campaign, the idea of the President as the leader of America is retaken in a literal sense, that of someone in charge directing his people in an exodus from “the worst economic [crisis] of our lifetimes”, which he conveniently reports as started before his first term, when he felt his call “and run for this office”, to the promised land of the American dream. Therefore, the new President would have to go in the right direction and both candidates will surely follow opposite paths as they are moved by different visions of America.

Meanwhile, the Americans will keep walking with determination, as “what binds us together has always proven stronger than what drives us apart”. This way is considered to be upwards, implying sacrifice in order to get improvement: “to raise their

standards for teaching and learning”. The situation is even worsened by existing dynamic forces that separate people from their dreams and rights, apart from many obstacles in this progress, which are compared to a chess game (“what’s holding us back is a stalemate”). These paralyzing forces are mostly identified with the Republican Party or the Republican sector of the Congress “who want[s] to pay for it by raising middle-class taxes and gutting middle-class priorities like education and training and health care and medical research”. Their privileged position is implied by the idea that “they”—Republican leaders—are “up” and make plans for those below them: “we don’t need more top-down economics”, “in this country, prosperity has never come from the top down”. Some examples of these wrong policies are the Republican local laws regulating immigration: “it has given rise to a patchwork of state laws that cause more problems than they solve and are often doing more harm than good”, by this referring to the controversial immigration laws in Arizona, Alabama and many other states. This criticism is not about all of them, but just “a small fraction of their own party” that is pushing the rest. With these words, Obama seems conscious that an important percentage of his own electors are indecisive or swing voters.

On the contrary, prosperity “comes from a strong and growing middle class [and small businesses that over time grow into medium-size and then large businesses], and creating ladders of opportunity for all those who are striving to get into the middle class”. This concept of the “ladders of opportunity” to both strengthen the middle class and to clear the way for those who work hard to accede to is repeated in his post-electoral speech as a system that needs fixing and which is conceived in a bidirectional way: people must be lifted from the shadow of deportation, “go to college” or “pursue education” and then they “give back to the country they love”. The whole process for those who want to migrate is equally referred to into another conceptual metaphor implying movement and called a “path to citizenship” that needs to be built: “a path [...] that includes passing a background check, paying taxes, paying a penalty, learning English, and then going to the back of the line, behind all the folks who are trying to come here legally”.

As getting over the economic crisis and unemployment is portrayed as a path, road building works as a paradigmatic image for this recovery, which enables Americans to get “back to work rebuilding our roads and our highways and our runways”. Also, “making progress” means avoiding paralyzation, as challenges don’t require “to settle every detail”, but implies a quiet time “to find a common ground and move forward in common purpose”. Obama insists on the idea that this full citizenship he visualizes as a path depends on another bidirectional process: the Dream Act has to be “sent” to him so

that it can be “passed” and, “if Congress is unable to move forward in a timely fashion, I will send up a bill based on my proposal and insist that they vote on it right away” so that America can “finally put this issue behind”.

As mentioned before, flattery, appealing to the audience’s goodwill or the sharing of interests between the speaker and the receivers are effective persuasive techniques from classical rhetoric (Charteris-Black 2011: 4). Thus, patriotism and the unity of America fit those purposes. Many statements of his pre-electoral speech are devoted to praise its uniqueness, which is due to its historic condition of all-race melting pot, “and whether our ancestors arrived on the Mayflower or were brought here on slave ships, whether they signed in at Ellis Island or they crossed the Rio Grande”. In the speech about the immigration reform, he insists on this epic idea of many nationalities gathering in just one land in most heroic terms, “the Irish who left behind a land of famine. The Germans who fled persecution. The Scandinavians who arrived eager to pioneer out west [...] The huddled masses who came through Ellis Island on one coast and Angel Island on the other. All those folks, before they were ‘us’, they were ‘them’”. Obama repeatedly claims this has been America’s true nature (“that’s what makes us who we are”), for many generations (“this started before Washington”) and he uses hyperbole to describe positive traits (“we are a nation of strivers and climbers and entrepreneurs –‘the hardest-working people on Earth’”) while negative features are avoided. His thought goes over the idea of America being unique due to its ability to mix so many cultures under just one identity, which is not based on a common background but on the idea of America itself.

His second speech retakes the idea of immigration as the basis for the country when he claims “we define ourselves as a nation of immigrants. That’s who we are –in our bones. The promise we see in those who come here from every corner of the globe, that’s always been one of our greatest strengths”. Although, once the electoral process was over, and he has “had the honor of being sworn in for a second term as President of the United States”, Republicans are more firmly included into his concept of unity: “leaders from both parties are coming together”. Then, he remarkably adds that many hopeful immigrants still see America as the land of opportunity, which is an explicit recognition of national decay.

One of the most effective ways to empathize with the audience and appeal to their *pathos* is through personal evidence –cameos of personal experience evoke feelings (Charteris-Black 2011: 12)–, including references to the speaker’s own family especially when they are publicly known. One example that illustrates the last case is excerpted

from the election campaign speech in Orlando, held in Disney World Resort, where Obama mentions his daughters to say he had been there twice without them, so they would not be happy with him. Apart from approaching his audience by having the same “problems” than normal people, this depicts him not only as a committed leader, but also as a caring father. These references do not only involve his relatives, but also local people. Thus, Obama refers to the local communities to acknowledge their efforts, hopes and dreams in America despite the current frustrations and hardships. In fact, this previous idea is remarked in his speech when he mentions particular cases –Charteris-Black (2011: 8) states recounting anecdotes is a way of arousing the interest of the audience and retaining the attention of the hearer– such as that concerning Alan Aleman, a Mexican student at the College of Southern Nevada who is among the audience. Obama pinpoints his dreams consisting in becoming a doctor and joining the Air Force. He is proposed as an example because, even though he felt fear in the beginning, he continued “working hard every single day to build a better life for himself and his family [and] to build a better America” so that he could feel fully accepted in the end.

At a next level, personal and local references are used to focus on Latino personalities for a specific reason or to thank them, by even using the Spanish word *gracias*, which again is employed to appeal to the audience’s *pathos* or feelings towards their land. He acknowledges Secretary Solis’s introduction and hard work and to be thinking about the electorship “each and every day”. The choice of these literal expressions is not casual at all. On the one hand, “each” engages every person in the audience; on the other hand, “every day” insists on the efforts not only of the President but all his extended team to maintain Latinos’ welfare. As above mentioned, jokes also contribute to arouse the interest of the audience and retain their attention; this happens when thanking Arturo for his leadership, Obama says that even this contributor’s birthday was approaching, he would not sing, a remark implying close friendship. Again, he resorts to the immense value of the Latino community for the country by recounting their own stories as anecdotes. This is the case of Ambassador Mari Carmen Aponte, who originally refused to be a senator and was sent to El Salvador, but who had been finally and officially confirmed. In Las Vegas, the President starts by acknowledging the audience’s presence. And, again, he prepares the ground for a persuasive speech by empathizing with them through local references and by mentioning that he is “among so many good friends” both in English and Spanish. In this case, he thanks Latino educational institutions, like Del Sol High School –to whom he tries to appeal by resorting to their motto to cheer

up the football team, “Go Dragons!”— as well as its principal, Lisa Primas, students, and “notable guests”, who are acknowledged by their names and positions in different states.

3.2. *Conceptual Metaphors*

Before moving on to the analysis of conceptual metaphors and its results, it must be explained what we understand by this device. A conceptual metaphor consists of a set of correspondences –also known as mappings– between a “source domain” or its linguistic content and a “target domain” or what they describe which convey meaning. Another inevitable component in the use of metaphors is pragmatic aspects because, when a metaphor is employed, it must be coherent with the local context so as to understand its use in natural discourse (Kövecses 2006). Metaphors are important for persuasion to the extent that they help draw on the unconscious emotional associations of words, whose values are rooted in cultural knowledge. Thus, they activate both conscious and unconscious resources to influence –that is, to persuade– humans’ intellectual and emotional response (Charteris-Black 2011: 30). Moreover, this device becomes more persuasive when it is used in combination with other strategies, which will be analyzed in forthcoming section 3.3.

To investigate Obama’s use of metaphors, we have also employed Ivie’s (1987) method of metaphoric mapping, which propounds that the use of recurrent metaphors by politicians reveals the speaker’s motivations or the makeup of their –in Burke’s terms (1968: 49-50)– “terministic screens”, and which consists in locating the recurring metaphor (generating term) within a particular actor’s discourse.

Figure 2. Conceptual metaphors in Barack Obama’s speeches.

Conceptual metaphor		2012	2013
Source domain	Target domain	No of examples	No of examples
America	Building	2	3
American dream	Challenge	3	
	Fight	2	1
	Risk	3	
	Vision	6	
Disadvantage	Light	2	5
Politics	Map/moves	4	1

Source: Prepared by the authors

In the President's speech, there are many conceptual metaphors concerning America. The first one, *AMERICA IS A BUILDING*, is composed of several expressions which allude to the necessity of rebuilding the infrastructure of a country which was built "hand by hand, brick by brick" so as to recover from the economic crisis. In fact, he considers the immigrants to have built "the greatest economic engine ever in the world" by working or acts like founding companies such as Google and Yahoo as well as one out of four high-tech startups or small businesses. Related to this, the expression "my door has been open for three and a half years" represents Obama's availability to solve the citizens' problems by listening to them during his first presidential term.

As Charteris-Black (2011: 281) states, the political myth of the American dream drives Obama's rhetoric because it is the most "American" of all myths; that is, it links individual purpose with the origins of a group identity by appealing to generations of immigrants escaping intolerance, religious, political and economic persecution.⁴ Moreover, Obama's rhetoric is persuasive because of the potential of the American dream, which merges personal narratives with a social story. By way of illustration, take the following quote by the President "our heritage [is] a nation of laws and [...] of immigrants, and continues the American story of renewal and energy and dynamism that's made us who we are". And so, the *AMERICAN DREAM IS A CHALLENGE* –understood as a belief based on the fact that life can be better than before or even now and that any motivated individual can reach any social position regardless of their background, even literally described as so by Obama: "anyone from anywhere can write the next great chapter of our story"– is rooted in the President's duty to fight for progress and not to be satisfied with only what has been done and in the audience's duty to act to change and find solutions to their problems. From this previous idea, another conceptual metaphor is derived: the *AMERICAN DREAM IS A FIGHT*. That is, if they want to obtain the desired results, they will have to struggle. In fact, the President remarks that he "will not give up the fight to change it". And even though some debates are contentious and the American dream is sometimes "at great risk", those differences have started to dwindle. Furthermore, the *AMERICAN DREAM IS A VISION*, which contributes to sacralize the idea of America, mostly conceived as a religion, as it is seen as something absolute or perfect. The President is concerned with preserving the spirit of the American dream, even by means of simple political measures such as the health reform.

Another common type of conceptual metaphors in Obama's speeches is *light* metaphors, such as *DEPORTATION IS A SHADOW* which could fall over young immigrants who were brought to America when they were children. The traditional bond of negative aspects to dark colors in all its names (Gibbs 542) is also applied to other metaphors

like LIVING IN THE SHADOWS IS POVERTY or BEING IN THE SHADOWS IS BEING AN UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT/WORKER and that is why shadow economy has to be brought into the light.

As Cox (6) argues, President Obama's 2010 State of the Union address was rich with figurative language, especially metaphors, which repeats in the corpus of our analysis. Moreover, there is a particular type of metaphor which is more frequent than the rest, that is, movement or orientational metaphors, partly commented in the previous section. However, we have separated those directly concerning politics due to their importance. Then, ECONOMY MOVES shows its cyclical condition while emphasizing the idea that, with time, the financial situation can change. POLITICS MOVES too, and progress and success have a direction, concretely moving forward as shown in "Washington has a long way to go to catch up with the rest of the country".

3.3. Other persuasive resources

As stated in the previous section, persuasive rhetoric is more effective when it combines more than one strategy or device, such as those shown in the following table:

Figure 3. Other figurative devices and resources in Barack Obama's speeches.

Device	Reference	2012	2013
		No of examples	No of examples
Personification	America/American institutions	2	
Repetition	Politics	2	1
Statistics and figures		1	4
Synesthesia	American dream	6	5
	Obama's policies	4	3
Use of Spanish words		3	

Source: Prepared by the authors

The first one is personification, which alludes to "something that is inanimate using a word or phrase that in other contexts refers to something that is animate" (Charteris-Black 2004: 21). The persuasive force of this device relies on its power to evoke humans' attitudes, feelings and beliefs to be applied to abstract political entities

and so to heighten the emotional appeal, normally with the aim of arousing empathy for or opposition towards a social group, ideology or belief (Charteris-Black 2011: 61-62). And thus, with the former goal –appealing to the unity of America, also composed of immigrants–, Obama remarks one of the “greatest strengths” of the country is to “attract talented, hardworking people who believe in this country”. On the other hand, this personification is also used with the latter aim, that is, to arouse opposition towards the Republicans, when the President refers to the other “face of a Congress that refuses to do anything on immigration”.

Another persuasive device is repetition, because when using the same sentences, phrases and, in short, ideas, these finally penetrate into the audience’s minds. There are four frequently repeated sentences: “the bill hadn’t changed”, to refer to the importance of passing the Dream Act;⁵ “the need hadn’t changed”, which at the same time is a parallelism of the previous one, to focus on the immigrants’ necessities in America; “that was the right thing to do”, to emphasize the positive results caused by the Dream Act, especially concerning the deportation of young people who came to America as minors; and finally, “the time is now” and “now is the time”, to allude to the comprehensive immigrant reform. So, as can be seen, this device concentrates on the important role of the immigrants in America and the necessity of a country and a politician who cares for them.

As declared by van Dijk (2009: 341), the “number game” is a famous argumentation strategy, particularly concerning immigration. It consists of using statistics and figures with the aim of conveying the idea of objectivity and precision and, consequently, of credibility. Obama uses figures to attack Republican congress people’s policies, such as wanting “to spend \$5 trillion on new tax cuts, including a 25-percent tax cut for every millionaire in the country”. The President also employs figures to make Americans aware of immigration and the problems associated to it, since there are approximately 11 million undocumented workers in America and there are still illegal crossings, which “are down nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000”. But there are others, whose families have been living in America for around 400 years, and who still are considered immigrants by man and even by the law despite not having immigrated anywhere. This is explicit criticism of those ignoring Latino complex reality and subsequent (Republican) legislation.

Synesthesia –an ancient Greek word combining the prefix “together” (syn) with the root “sensation” (aisthēsis)– is a neurological condition which can be applied to language both under this term or that of “cross-sensory metaphors”. However, it must be noted that the former is involuntary contrary to the latter. Thus, this figure of speech

voluntarily mixes sensory or cognitive pathways, especially those concerning colors and flavors. In the case of Obama's speeches, every example of synesthesia is bound to the sense of touch, since the American dream, American problems and Democratic policies are tangible. So regarding the first one, as Charteris-Black states (2011: 282), Obama usually "defines his identity as someone who is living the dream of his parents and who is transmitting this dream to his own children". This is evidenced by quotes like "let their kids dream even bigger", or "it's about passing on even greater opportunity to our children". With respect to the second, American problems are tangible to the extent that the economy, illegal immigration and the immigration system can be fixed; and even visible, as long as the stalemate on immigration reform is seen "on a whole range of other economic issues". Yet the Democrats' policies are tangible since some of them "will be harder to lift than others" and can be "laid out on the table", and postsecondary educational Federal grants, such as Pell Grants can be—and, in fact, have been—extended. The President and his party are also taking "steps to patch up some of the worst cracks in the system".

4. CONCLUSIONS

With the above considerations we have attempted to study Obama's electoral persuasion addressed to Latinos, who were decisive in the last presidential election, in order to gain a deeper insight into his motives as a speaker and his political ideology. Our findings lead us to claim that the President's persuasive rhetoric about immigration is based on frequent appeals to movement, justice, patriotism, acknowledgement and personal or local references as well as a predominant use of conceptual metaphors, combined with other devices like personification, repetition and synesthesia. The most frequent source domain is the myth of the American dream, symbolized as a path forward to citizenship—then orientated to collective goals—, and emphasis on the uniqueness of the mosaic of so many cultures under a single identity.

However, he also resorts to classical rhetoric when appealing to common sense or goodwill and flattery to emotionally engage with the audience by means of empathy. This last effect is also achieved when using Spanish words like *gracias*—especially in the pre-electoral speeches to indirectly ask for their vote— or jokes, which arouse the interest of the audience and retain their attention.

Finally, he employs other argumentative strategies such as van Dijk's polarization (1999: 95), which helps him give a positive image of the immigrants by fighting negative stereotypes and praising their work and commitment to values, and a negative image of Republicans for supporting the wrong policies and laws regulating immigration.

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NOTES

¹ *Systemic Functional Linguistics* is an approach to linguistics, developed by Halliday in the 1960s and based on Firth's work (Palmer), which considers language as a social semiotic system. The central theoretical principle is that any act of communication involves choices. Then, language is a system and the choices available in any language are mapped using the representation tool of the 'system network'; language is considered to have evolved to cover the particular *functions* this system has to serve. Thus, these functions have an influence on the structure and organization of language at all levels (metafunctions). *Systemic Functional Grammar* is part of the previous social semiotic approach to language, and affirms that grammar is constructed of a language conceived as a system for making meaning.

² The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used in this paper according to the second and fourth definitions respectively provided by Merriam Webster dictionary, being the former applied to people "of Latin American descent living in the United States; especially: one of Cuban, Mexican or Puerto Rican origin" and the latter to "peoples or countries using Romance languages; specifically: relating to the peoples or countries of Latin America".

³ Schmidt & Kess (2) define "persuasion" as the process by which a voluntary change of behavior, attitude or beliefs is introduced through the transmission of a message. This is closely linked to rhetoric, which is the use of words to shape public opinion and to move minds and hearts, in essence, to persuade others (cf. Crespo Fernández). Therefore, rhetoric and persuasion are inseparable due to the fact that any definition of the first includes the concept of the second. In fact, according to van Dijk (1999: 263), rhetoric is oriented towards the persuasive communication of social events and, thus, analyzes how the recipients will understand and value those events; hence the relevance of rhetoric structures within ideological manipulation.

⁴ A political myth is a story where meaning is embodied in recurrent symbols and events as well as an idea which people subscribe (Charteris-Black 2011: 25) and so constitutes a predisposition to act (Jowett & O'Donnell 215).

⁵ For further information about the word "dream" in Obama's speeches, consult Charteris-Black (2011: 282).