

CROSS-TEXTUAL RECONCEPTUALISATION OF THE DEICTIC SPACE OF “VICTORY” IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: DONALD TRUMP VERSUS JOSEPH BIDEN

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Abstract

The present study propounds the notion-complex of cross-textual reconceptualisation as a cognitive-linguistic output of applying Paul Chilton’s (2013, 2014, 2017) model of Deictic Space Theory (DST) to textual practices drawn from the broad domain of political discourse. The DST model has operated methodologically towards conducting a cognitively oriented political discourse analysis of the two victory speeches produced by Donald Trump and Joseph Biden during the 2020 election for US presidency. As a geometric model, DST has been applied to the two speeches in a way that demonstrated the deictic spatial construction of victory in relation to Trump and Biden as the *now-here-real* speakers on the three axes of discourse referents, time, and epistemic modality. The data analysis has revealed four significant instantiations of cross-textual reconceptualisation made by Biden of Trump’s deictic space of victory as a contested concept: (i) a “clear” and “convincing” victory, (ii) a peripersonal real victory, (iii) Trump and his voters, and (iv) a now shift from a past Democrat to a future President. All four instantiations have proved the hypothesis that the DST model, while revealing the deictic-spatial conceptualisations of “victory” constituted by each speaker in his speech, may further be extended to disentangle the interesting aspect of how one and the same concept could be reconceptualised across two textual practices produced by speakers with ideologically opposed perspectives.

Keywords

cognitive linguistics, cross-textual reconceptualisation, Deictic Space Theory (DST), Donald Trump, Joseph Biden, political discourse analysis, victory

1 Introduction

Probing the interface between language and politics, Chilton and Schäffner (2002: 25) make it clear that the analysis of political text and talk can start from a premise about the “political”: “something becomes political when a particular representation of social organization becomes integrated with some validity claim or some value claim which is in conflict with some other such existing representation”. Perhaps, recently, no other political talks have been more “political” in this sense than Donald Trump’s and Joseph Biden’s speeches claiming victory in the major event of the 2020 elections for US presidency,

before the official declaration of the winner. On the one hand, Trump's speech was delivered with a claim to victory in the presidential elections at the White House in the early hours of Wednesday morning on 4 November 2020, while several key swing states were still in the throes of counting thousands of ballots. On the other hand, following Trump's speech, Biden's speech was delivered on Saturday 7 November 2020, immediately after days of vote counting and uncertainty. Biden was speaking, then, for the first time from Delaware as the potential US president-elect, whose core message consisted in renewing his commitment to unify America and to become a president for all Americans, both those who voted for him and those who voted for his Democratic Party opponent Donald Trump.

Indeed, strikingly, the "political", in the sense of Chilton and Schäffner (2002), has emerged precisely at this point where Biden has rhetorically struggled to conceal this sense of the "political" in his speech; that is, concealing the conflict appearing in a polarised time when Trump, alongside his then-revolting supporters, firmly denied electoral defeat. Thus, it can be said that the same moment of victory has become a temporal frame within which Biden's validity claim to winning the election for US presidency has been vehemently countered by Trump's election-fraud claims and rejection of Biden's victory.

Continuing with Chilton and Schäffner's (2002) argument, it can be assumed that political actors, like Trump and Biden, interact through "mental representations of themselves, the groups they belong to, and forms of action"; and this aspect can readily be revealed should discourse analysts and political-communication researchers consider the communicative strategies whereby language in action (discourse) "can be viewed first in the cognitive perspective and second in the interactive perspective" (ibid.: 25). Thus, a cognitive-linguistic approach may be redeemed doubly productive at the methodological level of conducting political discourse analysis in terms of synergising both (i) the conceptual toolkit (e.g. spatial metaphors, metonymies, and frames) whereby the mental representations of political speakers can be explained and (ii) the linguistic features giving expression of such representations (e.g. deixis, tense, aspect, and modality).

Further, cognitive linguistics is considered most fitting as an analytic framework for revealing the abstract political cognitions of politicians, for the field is primarily concerned with the situatedness or embodiment of linguistic meaning (notably, Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 1980, Croft & Cruse 2004). According to Chilton (2014: 10-11), "situatedness", in the parlance of cognitive linguists, means that human language always presumes and/or refers to "the time and place of speaking", with a "perspective" on the physical-environment surroundings

taken by the human language user; and such an element of situatedness is inherent in the “design” of language basically through deixis. Perhaps, this is the reason why, in preference to the rather conventional label “Discourse Space Theory” (DST), Chilton (2013, 2014, 2017) dubs his cognitive-linguistics model “Deictic Space Theory” (DST) (see below).

Perhaps, in the thicket of cognitive linguistics theories and models, Chilton’s (2013, 2014, 2017) Deictic Space Theory (DST), as evolving from his earlier Discourse Space Theory (Chilton 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010), is particularly helpful in the arena of political discourse analysis mainly because it nicely dovetails both the conceptual and the interactive linguistic-pragmatic dimensions of analysis. This is especially so when it comes to revealing the conceptual nature of the political use of language; or, more obviously, political conceptualisation as determined by the deictic spaces constructed by speakers through their dominantly deictic use of language. At this point, it should be made clear that the term conceptualisation derives from Chilton’s (2014: 40) following premise: “Linguistic constructions give rise to conceptual representations, the fundamental structure of which is the deictic space”. Chilton’s premise renders linguistic form the originator of conceptualisations bound by the deictic space hinging on the speaking self *S* (the “*I*”) that perspectivises a whole “discourse world” (“immediate situation”) (Werth 1999) along the three axes of referents, time, and epistemic modality. Crucially, the same *S* is argued here to be not only able to conceptualise discourse worlds of some sort (say, political), but also to reconceptualise such worlds along the same three axes.

Interestingly, let us assume here that Chilton’s above premise may take a most concrete form should one of the deictic spaces of one concept – in our case, “victory” – be investigated from the perspective of the deictic centres of Trump and Biden in their respective textual practices on the issue of their political victory in the 2020 presidential elections. Again, these deictic spaces are examined along the three axes indicated above (discourse referents, time, and epistemic modality). As will be demonstrated in the analysis section, the DST approach is likely to be revealing and telling of each deictic centre’s/speaker’s conceptualisation of political victory in the elections. Yet, the same approach may well prove to have greater potential with the DST model utilised in a way that examines the same conceptualisation of victory as being contested between the two deictic centres, i.e. demonstrating how one deictic centre/speaker contests the other cross-textually; or, in a more technical sense, how there might emerge a politically contested conceptualisation of the same concept (“victory”) tackled in the two speeches in hand.

Here, then, the current study hypothesises that the DST model, while revealing the deictic-spatial conceptualisations of “victory” constituted by each speaker in his speech, may further be extended to disentangle the interesting aspect of how one and the same concept could be reconceptualised across two textual practices produced by speakers with ideologically opposed perspectives. Here, I argue, the two speeches delivered by Trump and Biden are a typical case in point, where the concept of “victory” is tackled in these two speeches in the political event of the 2020 elections for US presidency, yet from ideologically opposed (even contesting) perspectives, Republican Party versus Democratic Party. Thus, the current study has been directed towards addressing one main question: How has the meaning of “victory” in the 2020 elections for US presidency been politically reconceptualised across the two victory speeches of Donald Trump and Joseph Biden?

Besides the introduction section, Section 2 reviews the literature relevant to the DST-bound investigations of political speeches in particular. Section 3 outlines the theoretical framework adopted for analysing the current research data. Section 4 presents the data analysis of Trump’s and Biden’s victory speeches. Section 5 touts a DST analysis of the research data. Section 6 culminates the current study with offering an overall summary of the main research point and charting the main research findings and implications.

2 DST applications in the arena of political discourse analysis

Generally, since the mid-1970s, there has been an upsurge in the research undertaken on the interrelation between linguistic and discursive structures on the one hand and mental representations on the other (e.g. Minsky 1975, Schank & Abelson 1977, Fillmore 1985, Johnson 1987, Langacker 1992, Fauconnier 1994, Lakoff 1996). But, since the focus of current research is Deictic/Discourse Space Theory (DST) and its cognitive-linguistic workings in the arena of political discourse, the present review is confined to the literature directly related to this area of research.

One of the early attempts at applying the DST model to political discourse is Chilton’s (2003) analysis of a long and complex address delivered by Bill Clinton, the US ex-president, on 24 March 1999. In this study, Chilton (2003: 95) investigated the process of conceptualising geopolitical space, with a view to unveiling the president’s intention of justifying America’s involvement in “a military action in a far-away place, among a far-away people, of whom the American electorate knew little”. Chilton significantly demonstrated how the deictic centre was constructed as a relation between speaker and hearer inside a political entity; he further identified “locations” with respect to the three

dimensions of space, time, and modality in a way that was largely determined by knowledge and cognitive frames. By way of illustration, in the speaker’s assumed frame, “[the discourse referent] *my fellow Americans* is closest to S, *NATO allies* are closer than *Kosovo*, and *Kosovo* is closer than *Serbian armed forces*” (Chilton 2003: 114).

Also, interestingly, Chilton (2004: 157-172) utilised the DST model in examining post-9/11 discourse, with special reference to the speeches delivered by George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden. The DST analysis concluded that each speaker (as a deictic centre) has constructed enemies that are geographically and ideologically distant at the conceptual level of discourse processing: (i) Bush conceptualising al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan and the Middle East; (ii) Bin Laden the infidels in the West, specifically, those in America and Israel.

Additionally, Hart (2007: 119-121) adopted the DST approach towards analysing the British National Party (BNP) manifesto. Focusing on “the UK” as the deictic space along the spatial axis, Hart observed that in one stretch of the text the temporal axis was not particularly significant; rather, it was the modal axis that appeared significant, especially the deontic aspect, with the conclusion that in the manifesto what is legal has been equated with what is moral (ibid.: 119-120). Considering another stretch of the text, Hart demonstrated that the modal axis has been significant in terms of its epistemic, rather than deontic, modality: the speaker conceptualised with certainty that “the native British people” would become “an ethnic minority” in Britain within sixty years. Moreover, with further investigation of the discourse referents of “we”, “our”, “the native British people”, and “Britain”, Hart showed how such referents have been located with the speaker at the deictic centre of the discourse space, whereas the referent “immigrants” has been positioned at the remote end of the spatial axis.

More recently, drawing on the DST model, Chilton (2017) has analysed a significant speech delivered by Donald Trump, the US ex-president, at Gettysburg on 22 October 2016. The analysis revealed how Trump, as the deictic centre in the speech, conceptualised two embedded sets of axes containing two past narratives: one narrative wherein the speaker (S) reported a conversation with the Mexican president; the other narrating a past event that made an ascription to an unnamed individual “he”. The latter narrative was demonstrated to be inferentially located prior to the Mexican president meeting on *t*-axis (conceived time). Equally interesting, in the same speech, the DST analysis has revealed how the repeated cases of “they” established a conceptual dichotomy between the collective “we” and a distal “their party” on *d*-axis (discourse referents). Perhaps, most interesting results of all is the fact that the Trump text would have no *m*-axis

(epistemic modality), marking the conclusion that the speaker “typically does not hedge, speculate, hypothesize or use conditionals” (Chilton 2017: 246).

Thus, as readily observed from the foregoing literature, the DST applications to political discourse, and more specifically political speeches, is a scarcity indeed; further, a modicum of the DST-based research reviewed above leaves uninvestigated the potentially interesting issue of contested conceptualisation across textual practices with politically opposed ideologies – hence the contribution claimed in the present context of research regarding DST-aided cross-textual reconceptualisation.

3 Deictic Space Theory (DST) and the potential for reconceptualisation

Deictic Space Theory (DST) came to be used under the moniker of Discourse Space Theory (DST) with the appearance of several seminal publications by Chilton (2004, 2005, 2007, 2010); thereafter, for the cognitive significance of deictic space as the most fundamental part of human language ability, Chilton has had a predilection for using the label Deictic Space Theory (DST), instead, in later publications (Chilton 2013, 2014, 2017). The DST model is argued to draw on Bühler’s (1934/1990) psychologically oriented theories of language, especially his idea that the relationship of deixis with self, space, and time “leads naturally to geometric modelling” (Chilton 2014: 8). Indeed, in proposing the latter DST, Chilton has explained the significance of coordinate geometry to his approach:

The crucial point is that a rather simple geometrical formalism is an economical way, and indeed a natural way, of describing fundamental spatial meanings. On a more abstract level, what coordinate geometry enables us to do is to analyse “point of view” or “perspective”, both in a physical-spatial and in various abstract sense. (Chilton 2014: 10)

Practically, then, coordinate geometry enables DST to conceive of the speaker’s self as being cognisant of what is *here* (“the graspable in primary peripersonal space defined physically”), what is *now* (“what is temporally within reach, that is, peripersonal space projected onto time”), and what is *real* (“what can be ‘grasped’ cognitively and in some possibly non-linear fashion correlating with spatial and temporal distance”) (Chilton 2013: 241).

Thus, as Chilton (2017) points out, DST takes as its starting point the self “in experienced space-time”, where a deictic space (conceptual, not physical) is utilised by language system to “represent many kinds of conceptualisations by way of words, parts of words and grammatical constructions” (Chilton

2017: 238). As exhibited in Figure 1, Chilton (2013: 239) offers an abstract diagram that schematically represents three spatial axes/dimensions (composing conceptual space): (1) discourse referents (*d*-axis), (2) conceived time (*t*-axis), and (3) epistemic modality (*m*-axis). In a later development, Chilton (2014: 40) crucially draws attention to three main points: first, all three axes are hinged on and start from the origin or zero point as “the conscious now-here-self, designated S (self, subject, speaker)”; second, all points on the three axes are “relative distances” from the origin/subject S; third, the intersection of the three axes – the origin 0 – defines the viewpoint of the subject S.

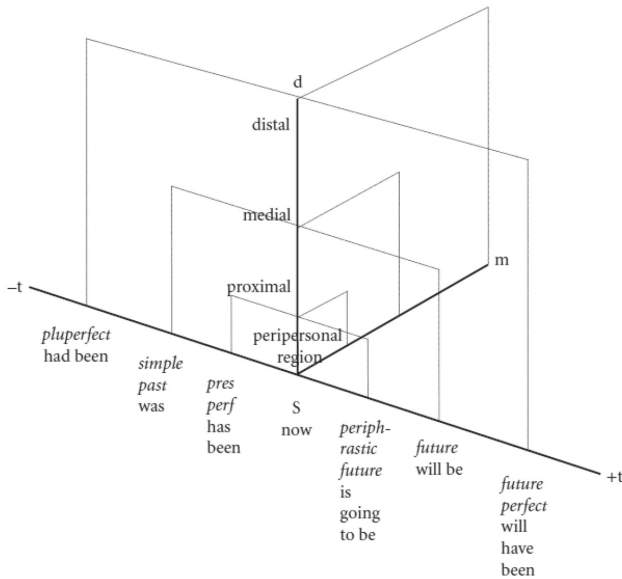


Figure 1: The fundamental deictic space (Chilton 2013: 239)

Obviously, then, from Figure 1 it can be gathered that Chilton pays close attention to what he describes as the “conceptual distance” prototypically communicated through the linguistic structure of demonstrative expressions, which denote the three relative positions of proximal, medial, and distal – with only proximal and distal being the case in English. This can be demonstrated on *d*-axis where a conceptual distance arises between the S (subject/speaker) and discourse referents. Indeed, as Chilton insists, such a conceptual distance can be projected on the two other axes of time and epistemic modality (*t*-axis and

m-axis): (i) “the peripersonal space is transposed onto the time axis”, allowing for the “peripersonal time” of the past recent to the deictic centre and the immediate future nearer to it; (ii) analogously, a “peripersonal region” may be transposed onto the epistemic modal axis, with “a proximal epistemic region of the real extending to high certainty” (Chilton 2014: 41-42). Now, let us take each of the three axes aside for further elaboration.

The *d*-axis affords “mental ‘locations’” for the discourse entities referred to (as referents) by the speaker (S); such entities amount to conceptual objects that are typically arguments of predicates at the semantic level, but these objects should be understood as being objects of focus or referential attention at the cognitive level. On the *d*-axis there lies a conceptual (not exclusively physical) distance from S as the deictic centre. As Chilton argues, space-bound expressions such as the demonstratives *this* and *that* are closely related to the *d*-axis, simply as they typically enable the conceptualisation of discourse referents as being proximal or distal: “a proximal demonstrative for referring to an entity close to the deictic centre, and a distal demonstrative for referring to entities located at some indeterminate distance from S, in the extrapersonal space” (Chilton 2014: 32). However, as Chilton contends, there are other grammatical resources for the conceptualisation of distance in relation to S on the *d*-axis; for instance, the peripersonal space can be said to be conceptualised by means of “the spatial component of transitive verbs in English such as *touch*, *hit*, *grasp*, *hold*, *knock*, *kick*, *break*” (Chilton 2014: 31). Indeed, Chilton (2013: 238) crucially describes the *d*-axis in the cognitive terms of “attentional focus”, where the *d* is equated with “attentional distance of discourse referents from S (foregrounding, middle ground, background)”.

The *t*-axis, according to Chilton (2014), geometrically specifies the relative distance from the deictic centre (S) as conceptualised into two directions, “past (*-t*) and future (*+t*), both on scales of “distance” relative to time of utterance”; further, the *t*-axis is directed according to S’s point of view: “events can be relatively “close” or relatively “distant” in the past, and similarly for the future” (ibid.: 33). As exhibited in Figure 2, Chilton (2014) has visually represented the relative degrees of pastness and futurity as conceptualised by S via the linguistic formula “*look back to the past vs. look forward to the future*”.

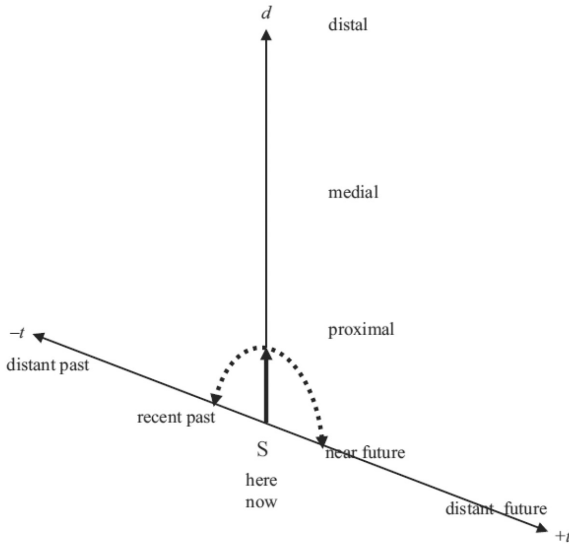


Figure 2: The relatively temporal distance of the past and the future from S (Chilton 2014: 34)

Of course, as is typical of DST, time here is conceptual, and it can readily be projected on the *d*-axis – as manifested in Figure 2 – as reflected in Chilton’s following remark:

The DST framework also suggests that proximal temporal space corresponds in some way to spatial peripersonal space. Like other “locations” in the deictic space, events can be viewed egocentrically or allocentrically, that is, taking 0 as reference point or some other time relatively distal to 0 as reference point. (Chilton 2014: 34)

This may well explain the visual presentation of how the attentional distance, associated with the *d*-axis, is projected onto the temporal distance formally marked by tense on the *t*-axis.

The *m*-axis, in the latest version of DST, refers strictly to epistemic modality, where the deictic space allows S to detach or distance the propositional contents of the utterance from absolutely true assertions. Along the *m*-axis, then, the two polar concepts of what is “certainly true” and what is not are relative to the S’s state of knowledge. This coheres well with what Chilton describes as conceptualised “epistemic distance”. In this respect, Chilton reports Langacker’s description of

modality in spatial terms: “the modals can be described as contrasting with one another because they situate the process at varying *distances* from the speaker’s *position* at immediate known reality” (Langacker 1991: 246, as cited in Chilton 2014: 37; emphasis added by Chilton). Further, in order to clarify the conceptual epistemic distance of the *m*-axis, Chilton (2014: 37) has insightfully visualised Werth’s (1999: 314-315) scale of modality whereby English modal adverbs, adjectives and auxiliaries are intuitively graded, as shown in Figure 3.

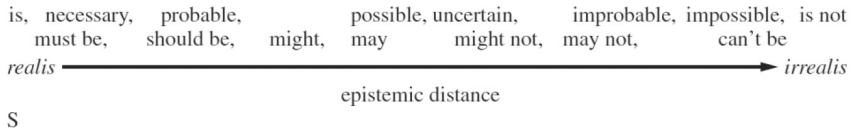


Figure 3: A scale-based modal axis of epistemic distance (Chilton 2014: 37)

Crucially, Chilton points out that in the figure above the two terms *realis* and *irrealis* denote strictly “cognitive states”, and not grammatical ones: the *realis* represents a cognitive state wherein S takes “some cognised entity”, say happening, to be “real” or “there” in the world or to be *experientially true* (in terms of S’s encyclopaedic knowledge); the *irrealis*, on the other hand, represents a cognitive state wherein “S has a mental representation that S understands as being removed from *realis* cognition to some degree” (Chilton 2014: 38).

Indeed, in his DST¹, Chilton (2004, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2017) has recurrently emphasised the role of “conceptualisation” as the core notion constituting the conceptual space used by language systems in the representation of the perspective of the “experiential self” (formally, the geometric origin S), or the “*P*”, in a given discourse world – including political discourse worlds – in terms of the three conceptual axes outlined above. But, as the literature reviewed above suggests, in applying the DST model there seems to have been no heed paid to the potential notion of reconceptualisation; the notion, as it stands here, is closely intertwined with conceptualisation itself, although with certain considerations taken into account. First, reconceptualisation is sensitive to the type of data analysed via the DST model; the data needs to be conceptually related in two ways: (i) more than one text should be topically bound as a result of having one core concept that constitutes the enunciative event in text; (ii) the producers of such texts should ideally be ideologically opposed in some way. Second, reconceptualisation is equally sensitive to what Gallie (1956: 171-172) dubs “essentially contested concepts”. This point merits further elaboration.

Gallie’s classic notion-complex of “essentially contested concepts” can be argued to be theoretically most serviceable in the context of applying DST towards revealing political reconceptualisation. Gallie insists that some concepts be essentially contested such that certain existential disputes are centred on them; that is, “concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie 1956: 169). As such, building on Gallie’s argument, users of essentially contested concepts may conceivably become contestants, who would in turn add their conceptual input to those *essentially contested concepts* across the different texts produced by the contestants themselves. At this point, one seeks to use the term contested conceptualisation as a descriptor of this process.

Having covered the theoretical framework adopted in the present study, it is time we moved to the methodological aspects of research data and procedure.

4 Methodology

This section is an outline of the methodology adopted in the present context of research in terms of the data sets proposed for analysis and the overall procedure adopted towards undertaking the data analysis.

4.1 Data

The data sets used for the current application of DST towards revealing cross-textual contested conceptualisation are two textual practices produced by the Republican Party Donald Trump, the then-standing US President, and Joseph Biden, the Democratic Party candidate, competing with the former (Trump) in the 2020 election for US presidency. Both textual practices are known as “victory” speeches since the two have the enunciative event of announcing their political victory in the election; but, significantly, prior to the official declaration of the election results. In what follows, let us take each victory speech aside.

Trump’s speech² was launched during the election night of Wednesday 4 November 2020 in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. Given its time and place, the speech might be viewed as a pre-emptive allegation to presidential victory in the elections. Perhaps, this sounds plausible should one consider the public backlash on the part of both conservative commentators and the Biden campaign, describing the speech as being not only “outrageous”, but more importantly, “unprecedented” in the entire history of America and its well-established democratic ethos. More than anything, such a backlash may well adduce particular significance to the Trump speech as a data set for analysis. This may further be corroborated when one considers the second set of data, the

Biden victory speech, probably coming as a retort to Trump's current premature victory speech.

Biden's speech³, delivered just three days after the Trump's victory speech, was launched from Wilmington, Del., in Delaware, on 7 November 2020. The speech timing is quite significant for Biden as the likely president-elect of America, following the Pennsylvania win that put him over the 270 electoral-vote threshold required for the day. But, to the significance of the speech, one more circumstantial aspect may be added; that is, the speech was delivered at a politically tense time when it was no secret that Trump (as the then-president) has never conceded, and publicly challenged, the legitimacy of the election; and as a corollary of it, neither Trump nor many top Republican leaders have offered the customary congratulations. Again, these circumstances may render Biden's speech politically contesting with Trump's prior victory speech, both sharing the same enunciative event of celebrating presidential victory at a critical timing of uncertainty about the winner. Crucially, considering Gallie's argument above, the current element of political contestation over electoral victory across the two speeches may conduce to the potential for reconceptualisation of the meanings of "victory" itself.

4.2 Procedure

The methodological procedure followed in the present study proceeded towards fulfilling an integrated form of analysis, with the two victory speeches examined alternately. Yet, the analytic point of departure has been decided to be Trump's speech, for it chronologically precedes Biden's. This has already been determined in view of the current research hypothesis, wherein the DST model is presumed to be potentially extendable to analyse the cross-textual reconceptualisation of "victory" as the concept being politically "contested" across the two texts; that is, in his speech, Biden is presumed to construct a deictic space of "victory" that reconceptualises Trump's along the three axes of discourse referents, time, and epistemic modality. Of course, considering the DST model, there has been a focus on the *now*, *here*, and *real* of each speaker, being the deictic centre wherefrom the whole textual event emanates.

The DST is a geometric model in the first place; and here geometry has been intended as the ideal medium for modeling spatial meanings across the two speeches. Being so abstract and spatially complex, the linguistic meaning of "victory", as conceptualised by one speaker and reconceptualised by the other in their respective speeches, needs this geometric modelling as the *terra firma* whereupon the two speakers are presented as deictic centres whose deictic space of victory can be visually represented along the three axes of discourse referents,

time, and epistemic modality. Obviously, as a geometric model, the DST has been applied to the two speeches in a way that demonstrated, along the three axes, the deictic spatial construction of victory in relation to Trump and Biden as the *now-here-real* speakers.

Indeed, there have been two procedurally guiding principles that governed the course of data analysis. The first guiding principle is the enunciative event that is common between the two speeches, that is, political victory. This principle has essentially governed the process of selecting the data parts relevant to such an enunciative event. Of course, this entails other conceptually relevant linguistic expressions; more specifically, these lexical items denoting voting, voters, winning, results, disenfranchising, etc. The second principle is cross-textual contested reconceptualisation as the core notion-complex proposed in the present context of research. Again, it should be made clear that this notion-complex is theoretically grounded in Gallie’s (1956) definition of “essentially contested concepts” (see above).

Crucially, the principle of cross-textual contested conceptualisation has always been brought in play throughout the analysis, particularly insofar as the systematic shifts of analysing one deictic centre in relation to the other was concerned. Understandably, according to this principle, the analysis direction has dominantly shifted from Trump to Biden in a way that revealed the latter’s reconceptualising deictic spaces of the former’s regarding the meaning of victory as cognised by each speaker along the three axes – referents, time, and epistemic modality. Perhaps, the same principle of cross-textual contested reconceptualisation has informed the interpretive process of *selecting* one “statement”⁴ uttered by one speaker in his speech. That is, only those statements with potentially contesting conceptualisations have been taken as units of analysis. Of course, procedurally, this entails another interpretive process of *de-selecting* potentially interesting – albeit irrelevant to the present context and scope of analysis – statements across the two speeches. By way of illustration, as shown in the coming analysis section, the two opening (and not closing) statements made by Trump and Biden in their speeches have been selected, for both constitute a typical case of cross-textual contested conceptualisation: Whereas Trump’s opening statement conceptualises a deictic space of the election process in terms of voting, Biden’s (statement) reconceptualises a deictic space of a “clear” and “convincing” victory. At this point, Biden’s opening statement appears to pose a conceptual contrast to that of Trump’s. Thus, after all, the present methodological procedure has been directed towards investigating instantiations of the deictic space of contested conceptualisation of “victory” as a referential-temporal-modal structuring across the two speeches under analysis.

Now, let us then put the above two procedurally guiding principles in action in the coming section of data analysis. This section unfolds through two stages: first, exploring the positions of Trump and Biden as the deictic centres in their victory speeches; second, investigating the deictic spaces of reconceptualising contested “victory” across the two speeches.

5 Analysis

In the following subsections, there is an initial brief contextual examination of Trump and Biden as the deictic centres in their victory speeches, with a focus on the three deictic-centre dimensions of *now*, *here*, and *real*; thereafter, a detailed investigation of the reconceptualised deictic spaces of “victory” follows, with a focus on both speeches as ideologically opposed textual practices along the three spatial axes of discourse referents, time, and epistemic modality.

5.1 Trump and Biden as speech deictic centres: Now, here, and real

Let us begin by presenting Trump and Biden as deictic centres with three dimensions of *now*, *here*, and *real* in their speeches. First, the *now* of both speakers is temporally consecutive in the same month and year (November 2020), but different days, since they (both) are bound by the same enunciative event of political victory in the presidential elections; there is, however, one interesting temporal difference: Whilst Biden addressed his speech to the American people as “president-elect” following the Pennsylvania win (which placed him over the 270 electoral-vote threshold required), Trump’s speech was addressed prior to Biden’s at an uncertain time during the election night when several key swing states were still in the process of tallying thousands of ballots.

Second, the *here* of both speakers is spatially distinct. Trump’s speech was delivered in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC; this is understandable from the fact that Trump was still acting as the US President. Biden’s speech, on the other hand, was delivered in Delaware; crucially, it is a city reported to have voted Democratic in the last seventeen elections, with Hillary Clinton beating Trump himself by 11.5 points in 2016.

Third, regarding the *real*, at the time of uttering his speech, Trump had a political reality of becoming the US president-elect for a second term; Biden, on the other side, while uttering his speech, he – for the first time in an entire political career of 48 years since he was first elected to the Senate – had a political reality that the transition was at hand and that he was almost there as the US President-elect.

5.2 Reconceptualising the deictic space of “victory”: Trump versus Biden

Speaking of the election process, Trump has opened his speech with a two-clause statement: “Millions and millions of people voted for us tonight, and a very sad group of people is trying to disenfranchise that group of people [...]”. As shown in Figure 4, the statement constructs a deictic space of the election process in terms of voting; the deictic space features on both the *d*-axis and the *t*-axis, yet the *m*-axis manifests no modalisation ($m = 0$); or, in Recanati’s (2007) terms, being “modally innocent”. The three discourse entities of “Millions and millions of people”, “us”, and “a very sad group of people” can spatially be located along the *d*-axis; on the *t*-axis, the temporal points of simple past and present progressive are marked in a way that reflects the sequence of the two processes of voting and disenfranchising.

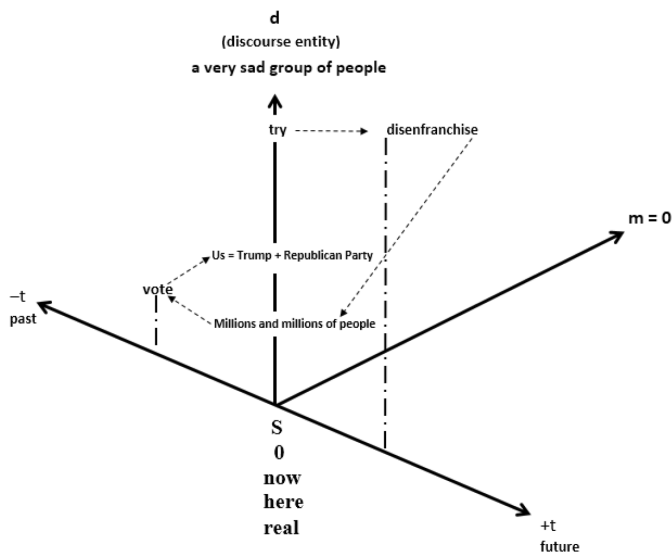


Figure 4: The deictic space of voting and disenfranchising in Trump’s speech

As Figure 4 exhibits, on *d*-axis, within the peripersonal space of Trump lies the proximal referent “Millions and millions of people” which is conceptualised as doing the past act of voting along the *t*-axis; such an act has been directed to the collective referent “us” denoting Trump and his Republican Party. Contrary to this conceptualisation is the distal referent “a very sad group of people” placed

at the extreme end of Trump's extrapersonal space on *d*-axis. This should create a foregrounding-backgrounding effect, where the former referent ("Millions and millions of people") comes into Trump's attentional focus. The rather backgrounded latter referent ("a very sad group of people") can be observed in the deictic space (Figure 4) to be committed to the progressive "trying" – synchronising with S's *now* – which is temporally extended to the near-future point of disenfranchising the millions and millions of people on *t*-axis. Indeed, here, the progressive "trying" gives rise to the cognitive effect of "windowing" (Chilton 2017: 245) as excluding the beginning and end of the process of *trying* from the perspective of the speaker (Trump).

Moving to Biden's speech, the opening statement reads as such: "[...] the people of this nation have spoken. They have delivered us a clear victory. A convincing victory". Here, the statement seems to provide a deictic space of a "clear" and "convincing" victory, which appears to be a conceptual contrast to that of Trump's. Biden's attentional focus tends to be on the referent "the people of this nation," which is explicitly made proximal on *d*-axis via the demonstrative "this" preceding the collective referent of "nation"; thus, Biden's collective discourse entity of "the people of this nation" conceptually contrasts with Trump's referentially specific discourse entity of "Millions and millions of people". Obviously, then, as shown in Figure 5, within the peripersonal space of Biden lies a referent of all Americans on *d*-axis; and they are described metaphorically as speakers with the message presumed to be their voting. Along the *t*-axis, the verbal process of speaking is located as a recent event in the present perfect; that is, the act of voting is conceptualised as a past that is quite recent to the *now* of Biden's speech. Further, notably, Biden seems to be quite assertive in his conceptualisation, where the formula $m = 0$ is no different from that of Trump's above conceptualisation.

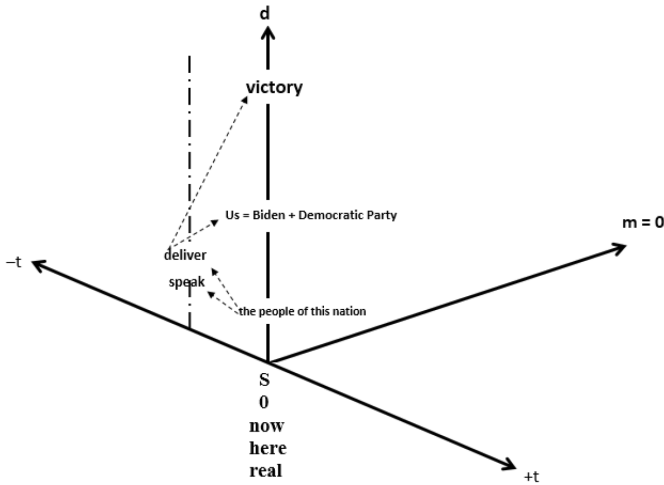


Figure 5: The deictic space of a “clear” and “convincing” victory in Biden’s speech

A quick glance at the deictic space represented in Figure 5, on *d*-axis, two other referential coordinates appear. One is “us”, composing Biden and the Democratic Party, and the other “victory”, which Biden describes as being “clear” and “convincing”. Indeed, the latter referent (“victory”) stands as the direct object of the process “deliver”; a process that temporally falls within the time region of present perfect on *t*-axis, and therefore synchronises with the preceding process of “speak” in relation to the *now* of Biden’s speech. The former referent (“us”) is the indirect object metaphorically receiving the direct object of “victory”. Perceptibly enough, in Figure 5, “us” is closer to the speaker (Biden) than “victory”; this is even syntactically reflected in the word order of the sentence structure where *victory* is sentence-final and *us* is sentence-medial; and of course, *the people of this nation* is the closest element to the speaker, and thereby coming into the attentional focus of Biden. This aspect of varying conceptual distancing from Biden merits further elaboration.

Whilst the discourse entity “the people of this nation” is the proximal referent on the *d*-axis of Biden’s deictic space of “victory”, the entity of “victory” is the distal one; it is cognitively the ultimate goal conceptualised by Biden as vying for winning the election and becoming the new US President. This may explain why this discourse entity conceptually lies within Biden’s extrapersonal space. Further, on a rather semantic level, considering the information structure of the whole utterance, the linguistic entity “victory” is presented as the end-focus of

Biden's message; or the New information to be disclosed to Biden's audience in terms of the *now*, *here*, and *reality* of his speech. Also, represented at the medial point of the *d*-axis, the discourse entity of "us" is conceptualised as a mediating link between the means and the end, i.e. between the people of this nation and the electoral victory.

At this point, in terms of each speech's opening statement, it can be said that Biden's deictic space reconceptualises Trump's earlier deictic space on a number of grounds. First, Biden's deictic space of a "clear" and "convincing" victory *contests* Trump's space of voting and disenfranchising, where Trump's *voters* and *disenfranchisers* have been conceptually transformed into Biden's *speakers* and *deliverers*. Second, on *t*-axis, Biden is temporally bound by the recency of the events associated with victory in a way that departs from the remoteness of the past voting and the *windowing* of the progressive act of conspiracy towards future disenfranchisement. Third, Biden's discourse entity of "us" reconceptualises Trump's "us" through the political opposition holing between the two candidates and their contesting political parties; but, more subtly, whereas Trump's "us" is conceptualised as being flanked by voters and disenfranchisers along the *d*-axis, Biden's "us" is conceptualised as being a link between supporters and victory.

Now, moving again to the Trump speech, there is a self-expression of appreciation for specific discourse entities, which is then immediately followed by a collective call for "a big celebration": "I want to thank the first lady, my entire family, and Vice President Pence, Mrs Pence for being with us all through this. And we were getting ready for a big celebration". At this point, Trump appears as though he is constructing a deictic space for conceptualising a moment of victorious celebration that is coming soon in the near future and that would be a gathering for his family members as well as for all members of Democratic Party and his supporters. This specific order of the preceding discourse entities is determined by the conceptual distancing from Trump himself as a speaker on *d*-axis as exhibited in Figure 6.

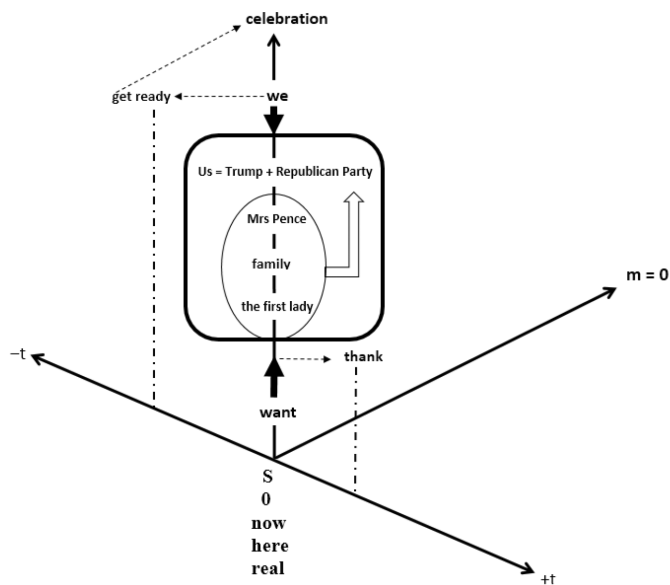


Figure 6: Trump’s deictic space of extrapersonal celebrated victory

From Figure 6, it is clear that the geometrical coordinates of “the first lady”, “family”, and “Mrs Pence”, Trump’s Vice-President, are all referred to in a specific frame of appreciatory discourse world; a discourse-world that is presented as an object of Trump’s verb of desire *want*, which is in synchrony with the *now* of the speech; but of course Trump’s actual speech act of thanking is a little extended further in the so near future linguistically marked by the *to*-infinitive form “to thank”. This futurative aspect renders Trump’s appreciatory discourse world semantically extensive, and thereby being cognitively more effective. Further, notably, all these discourse entities in their conceptual distancing from Trump are spatially related to another discourse entity along the *d*-axis, that is, “us” as conceptually equated with Trump and Republican-Party members. This has been visually featured in Figure 6 by means of the oval shape spatially demarcating all three entities and the vectorial arrow directed towards the referent “us” – the latter may be conceived of here as falling at the medial point of *d*-axis. Even more interestingly, on *d*-axis, the discourse entity “we” appears as a more inclusive referent, which seems to conceptually condense all other discourse entities appearing thus far, namely, “the first lady”, “family”, “Mrs Pence”, and “us”.

Here there appears a complex discourse processing of an all too inclusive “we”, which is spatially visualised in Figure 6 via the bold framing including all such discourse entities. At this point, conceptual vectoring seems to be of overriding importance: the discourse referent “we” is shown to be directed at the speaker’s more conceptually proximised entities; and this may signify a particular conceptual link. Indeed, the link can be detected in the linguistic construction of the progressive-past construction *were getting ready*, which spatially shifts the whole discourse world from a present-future time zone to a past-progressive one along the *t*-axis. The cognitive effect of this temporal shift is past “windowing” (which is induced by the progressive aspect indicated in the past); that is, occluding any conceptualisation on Trump’s part for the beginning and end of the act of preparation for “a big celebration”. This cognitive effect of *windowing* gives rise to the hearer’s anticipation of unfulfilled celebration – big or otherwise. This may explain why in Figure 6 the discourse referent of “celebration” is presented as falling in the extrapersonal space of Trump’s conceptualisation to the furthest end of *d*-axis – hence the conceptual failure of celebrated victory.

All in all, then, in his appreciatory discourse world, Trump can be said to conceptualise a deictic space for an unfulfilled extrapersonal celebration; a conceptualisation that is likely to materialise should one consider a later statement uttered by Trump: “We were winning everything, and all of a sudden it was just called off”. Obviously, the statement begins with a progressive-past time reference, with the same *windowing effect* in play, then a cognitively interrupting past-time reference emerges in a way that ends the winning process; such a cognitive process of interruption has been linguistically explicitised through the adverbial construction *all of a sudden*.

A rather different conceptualisation of an appreciatory discourse world can be found in Biden’s speech with the following statement: “I would not be here without the love and tireless support of Jill, Hunter, Ashley, all of our grandchildren and their spouses, and all our family”. The statement is underlain by a counterfactual proposition that is based on the negated reality of Biden’s physical appearance in the speech’s location (Delaware) as *here*. Indeed, as can be observed in Figure 7, the spatial deictic *here* is visualised as a discourse entity on *d*-axis within a bold circle; the reason for this is attributed to the fact that Biden has explicitly used “here” as a space term for the place where he was delivering his victory speech. Thus, at this point, it can initially be said that Biden reconceptualises Trump’s foregoing deictic space of extrapersonal celebrated victory (Figure 6), mainly because Biden (as a speaker) has cognitively brought in attentional focus the *here* of his speech, i.e. by bringing this *here* within his

peripersonal region of conceptualisation. Yet, Biden’s reconceptualising aspect of celebrated victory is more complex in terms of the discourse processing of his preceding counterfactual statement, as it may be surmised from the complex deictic space exhibited in Figure 7.

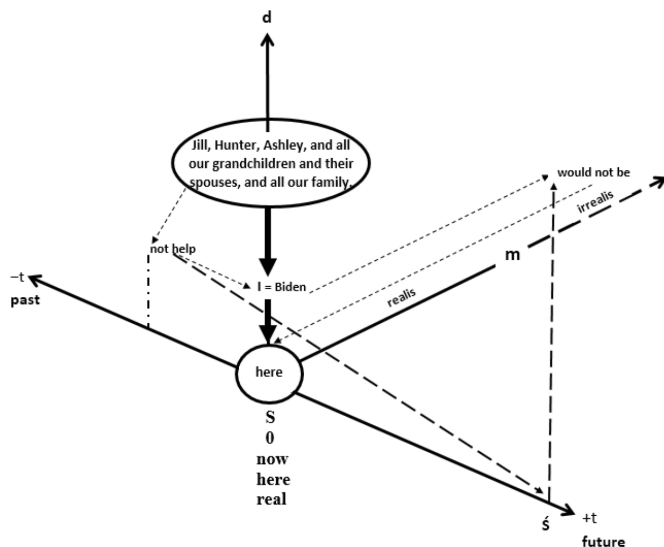


Figure 7: Biden’s deictic space of a peripersonal real victory

As Figure 7 demonstrates, the counterfactual proposition conceptualised by Biden is mentally represented by a number of closely related discourse entities, viz. “here”, “I”, and a group of supportive referents (“Jill, Hunter, Ashley, all of our grandchildren and their spouses, and all our family”). As stated earlier, *here* is Biden’s deictic focus that falls within his conceptualised peripersonal space as the setting of celebrating his presumed victory; further, Biden refers to himself as “I” (self-speaking), as spatially close to “here”: note the proximal conceptual distancing and the direction marked by the bold arrow points towards *here* in Figure 7. Also, the group of supportive referents are collectively related to Biden by means of their essentially semantic role of being the presupposed agent of Biden reaching *here* and delivering his victory speech. Again, this conceptual agency has been marked by both the bold arrows pointing to Biden on *d*-axis and the dotted arrows referring to the past event of helping Biden all through the process of preparing for such a moment of celebration.

Crucially, the whole counterfactual proposition, with all these discourse entities, affords Biden's mental representation of a furthest "possible world" (Stalnaker 1968) of an otherwise electoral defeat in default of the help of supportive referents. This element should highlight a conceptual split between two discourse worlds along the *m*-axis: *realis* vs. *irrealis*. As delineated in Figure 7, the latter discourse world of *irrealis* is located beyond that of *realis* as an embedded imagined space for Biden's conceptualised failure to deliver his victory speech from the *here* and *now* of the speech itself. On this *irrealis* plane lies the unreality encoded into the hypothetical negated modal verb *would not*, which conceptually triggers a deictic shift of the actual speaker Biden (S) to a virtual speaker Biden (Š): the latter speaker would not have appeared as a president-elect in the imagined scenario of S if (and only if) he had received no help from these supportive referents, who conceptually populate the *realis* discourse world. Thus, here, Biden (as S) negates the hypothetical reality of Š and is committed epistemically to the truth of the actual reality of S and the rest of its deictic space of a peripersonal real victory, *here* and *now*.

Obviously, then, let me reiterate, at this point of Biden's speech there seems to be a reconceptualisation of Trump's deictic space of the latter's extrapersonal celebrated victory; such reconceptualisation has emerged from Biden's conceptualisation of the *here* of his speech as a space for an all too proximal victory becoming a reality only with the agency of a group of supportive discourse referents who share the same conceptual space created by S.

However, Biden's reconceptualisation is continued in his speech further beyond his supportive referents; that is, it has included even those discourse referents who have not volitionally voted for Biden: "And to those who voted for President Trump, I understand your disappointment tonight". It is patently clear that Biden's statement about "those who voted for President Trump" is interesting should one consider the conscious foregrounding of those referents at the linguistic level, which is explicitly emphasised through the opening addressive marker *to*. Yet, at the cognitive level, as Figure 8 shows, the same referents are located at a distal level of conceptual distancing from Biden as a speaker on *d*-axis; this distal representation has been established via the demonstrative *those*. But more interesting still is the observation that Trump is mentioned – only one mention in the whole speech – and conceptually located even further away from Biden on *d*-axis, the remotest from Biden so to speak. Equally interesting is the observation that both Trump and those who *voted* for him are temporally located as remote in time; the simple past tense encoded in the process *voted* denotes such temporal remoteness as exhibited on *t*-axis in Figure 8.

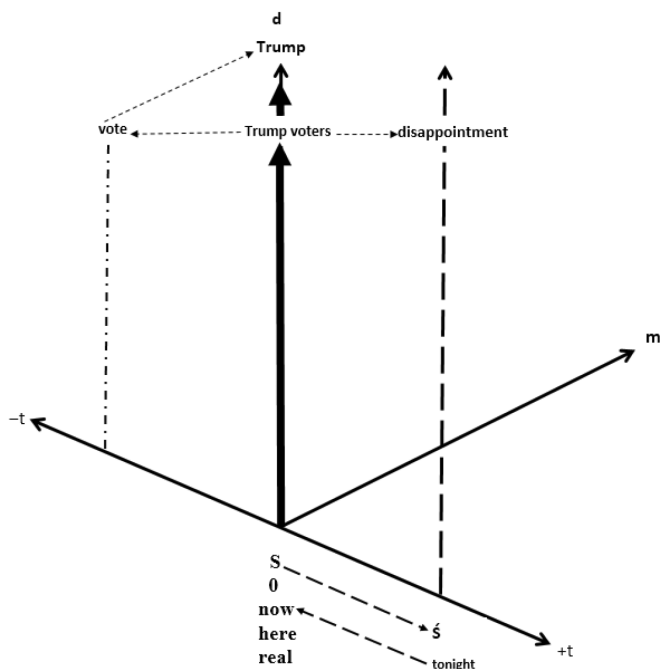


Figure 8: Biden’s deictic space of Trump and his voters

Indeed, as reflected in Figure 8, the discourse processing of the second half of Biden utterance (“I understand your disappointment tonight”) renders the whole conceptual picture more complex. At this point there emerges a conceptual deictic shift from the actual speaker Biden to an imaginary/virtual speaker Biden, who develops the mental representation of a sympathiser and who understands the disappointment of those who voted for Trump; and while the voting happened in the fairly remote past (at the time of voting), the disappointment transpires in synchrony with the same “night” Biden celebrates his victory with his supportive referents. Yet, as visually represented in Figure 8, the time reference of Biden’s understanding cognitively supersedes that (time reference) of “tonight”, since the latter temporal zone came into conceptual effect only by means of the former’s, with the reading: *I would imagine how disappointed you are!*

Following such a complex discourse processing of the conceptual network holding among the two Ss (actual and virtual) of Biden and the discourse referents voting for Trump is another no less complex conceptualisation that has

been triggered by the following statement: “I ran as a proud Democrat. I will now be an American president”. But this time, the conceptual complexity occurs on *t*-axis and *d*-axis as manifested in Figure 9. Strikingly enough, two sequential phases are conceptually marked as a temporal shift from the past Biden as “a proud Democrat”, before becoming a president-elect, and the future “American president” speaking *now*; one may call it a *now* shift, which is inherently the temporal core of Biden’s peripersonal space, as visualised in Figure 9. The now president is no longer a Democrat-Party member in the conceptual sense of the past; rather, he is a president for all Americans; a fact that has been textualised by Biden himself in his victory speech:

Democrats, Republicans and Independents. Progressives, moderates and conservatives. Young and old. Urban, suburban and rural. Gay, straight, transgender. White. Latino. Asian. Native American. [...] the African American community stood up again for me. They always have my back, and I’ll have yours. (Biden’s 2020 victory speech)

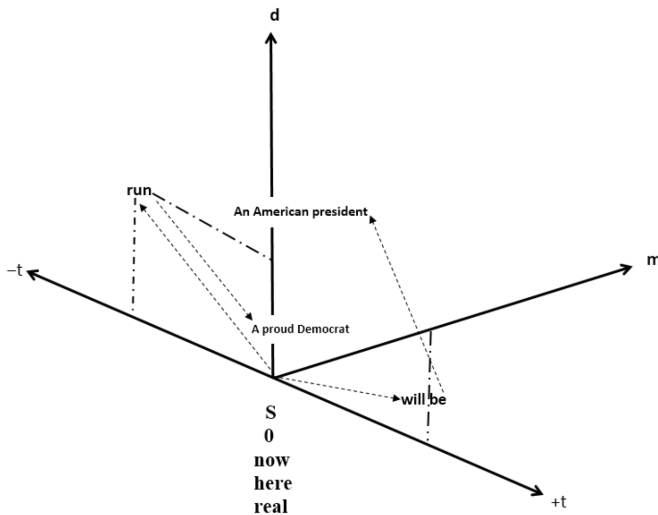


Figure 9: Biden’s deictic space of a now shift from a past Democrat to a future president

No doubt this *now* shift conceptualised by Biden may conceivably be viewed as a mental representation of his entire forty-eight-year political career since he was first elected to the Senate up till the *now* of his victory speech, celebrating the moment of becoming the US president-elect. Using the future-time reference

encoded in *will* conceptually represents Biden’s vision in terms of his perspective to his future political career; such a time reference projects on *m*-axis, where the epistemic necessity of Biden’s becoming a president is near-certainly close to the *now* of his speech, as demonstrated in the visual representation of *will be* on both axes of time and epistemic modality (Figure 9). Thus, the relative distance of futurity on *+t* corresponds to a degree of near certainty on *m*-axis.

In Trump’s victory speech, one can easily find a conceptualisation that Biden has already reconceptualised in the above analysis of the discourse referents of (i) Biden’s supportive referents (Figure 7), (ii) Trump’s voters and their disappointment (Figure 8), and (iii) Biden’s self-conceptualisation of his past and future (Figure 9). This can be realised in Trump’s declaration speech act: “so we will be going to the U.S. Supreme Court”. As Figure 10 exhibits, on *d*-axis, Trump’s peripersonal space allows only for “we” as a conceptual merger of Trump, his supporters, and fellow Republican-Party members. Of course, as shown above, Biden has already reconceptualised this deictic space by allowing for Trump himself and his voters to enter the former’s deictic space of his speech (Figure 8).

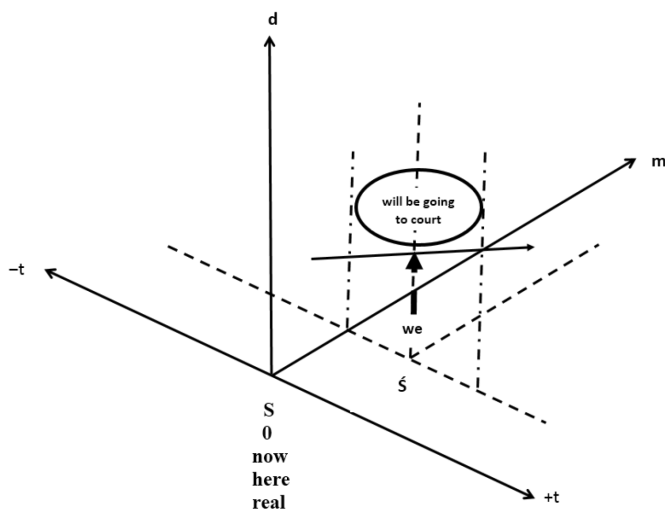


Figure 10: Trump’s deictic space of delegitimising voting

Most interesting about Trump’s deictic space of delegitimising voting (Figure 10) is the combination of the future time reference marker *will* and the

progressive aspectual operator attached to the main verb *go* in a way that yields the full verbal process *will be going*. With the future marker *will* the cognitive meanings of intending and planning can easily be realised; and using the progressive operator prompts a conceptualisation in which “spasmodic events succeed one another in a series” (Chilton 2014: 124). Thus, the process of “going to the US Supreme Court” is conceptualised here as a series of separate events that serve to arrest the process towards its completion, with a homogenisation cognitive effect (Langacker 1999).

This conceptually complex intersecting of the future and the progressive reveals the insertion of a new viewpoint in a new reality located at some time in the future relative to Trump (S); and this new viewpoint is conceptually based on a deictic shift from the present *now* of S to an imagined scenario by \acute{S} , who (alongside his fellow Republicans) intends or plans to go through a series of successive legal events. Indeed, in the statement immediately following his speech act of declaring the intended plan of going to the Supreme Court, Trump divulges the perlocutionary effect of his intended plan: “We want all voting to stop”. Obviously, using *wish* as an instance of *verba sentiendi*, Trump conceptualises such an effect of causing all voting to stop as emanating from the collective desire of his supportive Republicans, who are anchored as *we* into Trump’s peripersonal space as part of \acute{S} ’s inserted viewpoint in Figure 10. Thus, generally, Trump’s current deictic space conceptualises a plan for delegitimising all voting through the official agency of the US Supreme Court.

Indeed, recalling Biden’s foregoing conceptualisations of certain discourse referents (Figures 7, 8, 9), there emerges a threefold reconceptualisation of the above complex deictic space of delegitimising voting. First, Biden conceptualises his supportive discourse referents as the *raison d’etre* of the spatial surroundings (*here*) of his electoral victory (Figure 7). Second, Biden has allowed Trump and his voters to conceptually feature in one virtual space embedded in the deictic space of Trump and his voters (Figure 8). Third, Biden has implicitly conceptualised the voting as legitimate by conceptualising himself as the future US president-elect from the present *now* of his speech (Figure 9).

6 Conclusion

Now, it can be said that, in his 2020 victory speech on 7 November, Biden has textually created instances of conceptual deictic space of presidential victory that contested those of Trump in his victory speech, produced days earlier on 4 November. In the present study, this cognitive-linguistic output has been theoretically termed cross-textual reconceptualisation. Revealing this output entailed the methodological operationalisation of Deictic Space Theory (DST)

with its three conceptual dimensions or axes of discourse referents (*d*-axis), time (*t*-axis), and epistemic modality (*m*-axis) (Chilton 2013, 2014, 2015). All three axes have been combined at the experiencing self of each actual speaker (S) – or sometimes, virtual/imagined speaker (Ŝ) – in his speech in terms of his cognisance of what is *here* (denoting the peripersonal geopolitical space of the speech), what is *now* (indicating the political timing of the speech), and what is *real* (defining what can be cognitively grasped as a political reality in the speech).

The first macro-stage analysis above has been concerned with detailing all three aspects of cognisance (*now*, *here*, *real*) for each speaker in a way that uncovered the political contexts of the speeches under analysis. The second micro-stage analysis of the reconceptualised deictic-space instances of “victory” in the Trump speech has brought out different deictic spaces of the two speakers cross-textually (Trump vs. Biden), so that a whole picture of cross-textual reconceptualisation could be delineated through DST at the level of cognitively oriented political discourse analysis. Indeed, this picture of cross-textual reconceptualisation has materialised by means of coordinate geometry as a system for specifying the space-bound points of referents, times, and epistemic modals featuring along three axes (respectively, *d*-axis, *t*-axis, and *m*-axis). Therefore, the present study has utilised the DST as a modelling attempt that sought to grasp the multifaceted workings of Trump’s and Biden’s political communication seen as part of their political minds, respectively, Republican and Democratic. In other words, the micro analysis presented above has been a more or less cognitive-linguistic geometrical reading of the political cognitions⁵ of the two ideologically opposed speakers on the enunciative event of political victory in the 2020 elections for US presidency.

The main question of “how has the meaning of ‘victory’ in the 2020 elections for US presidency been politically reconceptualised across the two victory speeches of Donald Trump and Joseph Biden?” has been addressed with reference to the different instantiations of cross-textual reconceptualisation potentially holding between the two speeches under analysis. Four such instantiations have been recognised, and these can be said to have proven the current research hypothesis introduced in the introduction: the DST model, while revealing the deictic-spatial conceptualisations of “victory” constituted by each speaker in his speech, may further be extended to disentangle the interesting aspect of how one and the same concept could be reconceptualised across two textual practices produced by speakers with ideologically opposed perspectives. Further, these three aspects represent the main analytical findings coming out of the present study. Let us present each aside.

The first instantiation of cross-textual reconceptualisation holding between the two speeches consisted in Biden's deictic space of a "clear" and "convincing" victory as a political contestation of Trump's deictic space of voting and disenfranchisement (Figures 4 and 5). With the first instantiation on *d*-axis, Trump's political referents of voters and disenfranchisers have been reconceptualised as Biden's referents of speakers and deliverers of victory; and, further to this, the referent "us" has marked a reconceptualisation of Trump's static deictic space that accommodates only Trump and his Republican Political Party; Biden's deictic space has proved more dynamic in mentally representing "us" as a mediating link between the people of this nation and the electoral victory. Also, on *t*-axis, Trump's temporal representation of past voting and the *windowing* of the disenfranchising event has been reconceptualised in Biden's representation of the comparatively recent victory-bound events.

The second instantiation of reconceptualisation across the two speeches has been realised in Biden's deictic space of a peripersonal real victory (Figure 7) as contesting Trump's deictic space of extrapersonal celebrated victory (Figure 6). Through this deictic space Trump conceptualised an unfulfilled extrapersonal celebration due to a spatial shift of the whole discourse world of this celebration from a present-future time zone to a past-progressive one along the *t*-axis; the cognitive effect of such a temporal shift is past "windowing"; that is, occluding any conceptualisation on Trump's part for the beginning and end of the act of preparation for "a big celebration". On the other hand, Biden's conceptualisation of the *here* of his speech was seen as a space for a proximal victory that became a reality only through a group of supportive discourse referents who share the same conceptual space created by S, namely, "Jill, Hunter, Ashley, and all our grandchildren and their spouses, and all our family". This sort of mental representation has been made more cognitively effective through Biden creating two conceptual worlds of *realis* and *irrealis* along the *m*-axis, where Biden himself would not have appeared as a president-elect in the imagined scenario of S without the help received from these supportive referents, who conceptually populate his *realis* discourse world of victory.

The third instantiation of cross-textual reconceptualisation has conceptually materialised with Biden's deictic space of Trump and his voters (Figure 9) as politically contesting Trump's deictic space of delegitimising voting (Figure 10). Whereas Trump's deictic space has conceptually provided a peripersonal region on *d*-axis that allows only for "we" as a merger of Trump, his supporters, and fellow Republican-Party members; Biden's deictic space has conceptually developed an embedded space for Biden as a virtual speaker (\acute{S}) who would imagine the disappointment of those who voted for Trump; and here comes

Biden’s reconceptualisation of Trump’s deictic space, where the former has conceptualised himself as a virtual sympathiser to Trump’s voters.

The fourth, and last, instantiation of reconceptualisation has been recognised across the deictic spaces of Biden and Trump in Figures 9 and 10, respectively. Trump’s deictic space of delegitimising voting has reflected the mental representation of the process of “going to the US Supreme Court” as a series of separate events that serve to arrest the process towards its completion, with a homogenisation cognitive effect (Figure 10). On the other hand, Biden’s deictic space of a now shift from a past Democrat to a future president has implicitly conceptualised the voting as legitimate as a direct consequence of Biden picturing himself as the future US president-elect from the present *now* of his speech (Figure 9).

In fine, then, through the DST, Biden’s reconceptualisation of Trump’s deictic-space instantiations can be said to have been all both systematic and persistent across the two victory speeches. All four instantiations summarized above can prove such a hypothesis should one allow the overall perspective of each speaker to rest on the meeting point of the three axes of political referents, time, and epistemic modality; the two perspectives have not only reflected politically opposed speakers on the enunciative event of presidential victory in the 2020 election for US presidency, but they have also demonstrated a cross-textual reconceptualisation with tangible cognitive effects produced through their political communication.

Notes

- ¹ Here, it should be made clear that the abbreviation DST is being used (advisedly) ambiguously to denote the old and the new versions of Chilton’s Discourse Space Theory (2004, 2005) and Deictic Space Theory (2013, 2014, 2017), respectively, where “conceptualisation” has always remained the core notion constituting both versions.
- ² The script of Trump’s victory speech is available online: <https://www.newsweek.com/what-donald-trump-said-election-victory-speech-full-transcript-1544716> (accessed on 26 December 2020).
- ³ The script of Biden’s victory speech is available online: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/11/08/transcript-joe-bidens-victory-speech/> (accessed on 26 December 2020).
- ⁴ Here, I opt for the Foucauldian sense of the technical term “statement” as being abstracted from “the simple inscription of what is said” (Deleuze 1988: 15). Foucault (1972) privileges this term (“statement”) as “the elementary unit of discourse,” which represents “an ultimate, undecomposable [sic.] element that can be isolated and introduced into a set of relations with other similar elements” (p. 80). “Wherever there is a grammatically isolable sentence,” Foucault (p. 81) argues, “one can recognize the existence of an independent statement”; however, as he continues to argue, it would be “pointless to object that some statements may be composed [outside the canonical form of a sentence] of a simple nominal syntagm (“That man!”), or an adverb (“Absolutely”), or a personal pronoun (“You!”)” (Foucault 1972: 81).
- ⁵ Here, the term “political cognitions” is understood to be each speaker’s “mental representations about political situations, events, actors and groups” (van Dijk 2002: 206).

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