Pronouns and Metaphors in Obama's and Trump's Inaugural Speeches: A Comparative Analysis through Critical Discourse Analysis

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http://dx.doi./org/10.4314/ujah.v21i2.7

Abstract

A political speech is usually characterized by the use of different linguistic techniques and strategies that allow politicians to convey their political messages and persuade people of their ideologies and thoughts. The American presidential inaugural address is therefore a form of political discourse that imbues the characteristics of both written and oral discourse. This study consequently looked at how Presidents Barrack Obama and Donald Trump of America have used Linguistic resources (Pronouns and metaphors) to construct individual and collective ideologies and persuade America to accept their political ideologies. This exploration was carried out within the frameworks of Lakoff and Johnson Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Charter is – Black's Critical Metaphor Theory and the content method of data analysis. The corpus was drawn from the respective official websites of Barrack Obama and Donald Trump. It was discovered that their speeches were characterized by skilful choice of rhetorical strategies to make their speeches effective in order to convince the electorates. President Obama used more of inclusive pronouns and metaphors to support and advocate for multilateralism and internationalism while Donald Trump used pronouns and metaphors that distanced him from the corrupt government that led to unemployment in America while supporting and advocating a strong American interest.

Keywords: Political discourse, pronouns, metaphors, comparative analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Introduction

Political discourse is often the subject of debates amongst linguists and political scientists. This is hardly surprising considering the fact that the term political discourse is reflexive and thus open to potentially ambiguous interpretations. Therefore, from the outset of any analysis of discourse within the purview of politics, it is pertinent to delineate the object of study. According to Lang, Raedy and Wilson (2008) the term political discourse is suggestive of at least two possibilities. First, a discourse which is itself political, and second, an analysis of political discourse as simply an example of discourse type, without explicit reference to political content or context. The study is on the former which the emphasis is on all forms of communication, written or spoken, that they thematically political, in that they emanate from a distinct domain of human experience.

Inaugural speeches which are the centre of the study are inclusive in the genres of political discourse. So, the study is on pronouns and metaphors in Obama's and Trump's inaugural speeches: A comparative analysis through critical discourse analysis. Igiri, Ogayi and Ajemba (2018) assert that our speeches and writings are not always neutral. They are products of our social identities, relationships and ideological leanings. Language is not an abstract entity. It is related to the world in which it is produced in the sense that meaning is derived from the historical, social and political context in which a text is produced. So, with the above explanations, one can see that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) draws attention to power, imbalance, social inequities and the manipulative tendency people have in discourse practices.

In this paper, two inaugural speeches by presidents Barrack Obama and Donald Trump were selected and studied and a comparative analysis through critical discourse analysis were used in order to identify some of the strategies used by them in an attempt to communicate effectively to their citizens and build national consciousness in them.

The two speakers in the study, Obama and Trump used pronouns to create representation. Obama used more of inclusive pronouns and metaphors while Trump used pronouns and metaphors that distance him from the corrupt government that created unemployment in America and America foreigners and other nations.

Conceptual Framework
Political Discourse/Inaugural Speeches
Apter (2001) in International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural sciences, political discourse refers to frames of meaning and their ordering and disordering propensities. It attributes special importance to symbolic capital as a form of meaning in contrast to economic capital. The two constitute quite different forms of powers. Symbolic capital is a result of events individually narrated, compiled, interpreted, and made into collective master narratives by agents, who by a process of retrievals and projections, orally and writing narratives and texts, are able to read events as social texts. This, the narrative construction of reality relies heavily on events as signifiers, particularly as metaphors and metonymies. The main emphasis is on the power of interpretation using myths about the past as evidence. Experience becomes an imaginary real which is taken as a higher and convincing form of truth. Events, considered in terms of difficulties, predicaments, and circumstances, define millennial and transcending goals, resolving such difficulties and predicaments by means of a logic of overcoming. If political discourse takes the form of a mytho-logic, when formed into discourse communities, constitutes a form of

collective power of its own, it distinguishes boundaries and affiliations at the level of the state or some lesser jurisdictions. So, political discourse is based on how events are interpreted. It contrasts with other forms of analysis in terms of its rationality. Conceptually, it owes much to semiotics, linguistics, and philosophical concepts as well as literary, sociological, and political science analysis. Some uses and applications of political discourse theory are indicated in terms of relevant events and circumstances as well as suggested trends and tendencies for the future.

Inaugural speeches are speeches given by a political leader or any person appointed and sworn into office. Inaugural speech is an example of political discourse. In a democratic government, the leader is expected to express his/her thanks to the citizens, for being elected into power. The purpose of this speech is not only to thank the citizens. It gives the citizens opportunity to know the vision of the speaker for them. Most of the newly elected or appointed persons make their speech audience-centred.

The speakers are made to use strategies and formulae designed to boost the spirit of unity, affinity, joy of participation and inclusion rather than exclusion. All these strategies listed, and also use of pronouns and metaphors are rhetorically used by the two American presidents, Obama and Trump to achieve their objectives on the American citizens.

Pronouns and Metaphors in Political Discourse

Pronouns play a key role in the construction of "self" and "other". They are not merely a way of expressing person, number and gender as is suggested by traditional grammarians, nor do they only do referential and deictic work. They must rather be thought of in the context of interaction and in terms of the "identity work" that they accomplish. In this paper, it is argued that pronouns are used to

construct favourable images of citizens. The context of this study is the inaugural speeches of two American presidents, Obama and Trump; a comparative analysis through critical discourse analysis. In this study, the pronouns "I" "you" "we" and "they" are examined individually, then as they occur in sequence. This investigation reveals that pronouns are used to construct politicians' multiple "selves" and "others" and that as they occur in sequence, the changing "selves" of politicians and different "others" are created. The construction of these multiple "selves" and "others" is a version of reality that politicians construct discursively and is not an objective representation of facts. This analysis of pronouns in political interviews also reveals striking uses of pronouns, which can be used to show affiliation or create distance between people where it would not traditionally be expected. Politicians actively exploit the flexibility of pronominal reference to construct the different identities of "themselves" and "other" and use them to create different alignments to, and boundaries between their multiple "selves" and "others". Thus, pronouns are pivotal in the construction of reality – a reality that is created and understood in the discourse of the moment.

Metaphors: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) established through their cognitive Metaphor Theory, that metaphor is an integral aspect of the human conceptual system, and so is first, and more fundamentally a figure of thought than of speech. This cognitive perception of metaphor has engendered varying studies by scholars on the preponderance, native and usage of metaphors in various domains of human experience. The theory, in this connection, seeks to establish the link between the effectiveness of metaphor as a persuasive tool in discourse and the context of its use. Its relevance to the current study is in determining the contextual principles underlying the choice and use of metaphors by the two American presidents, Obama and Trump in their inaugural speeches.

The metaphoric expressions in the text of the study are classified into their conceptual domains using the cognitive aspect of Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Theory.

The critical component of the theory focused on the ideological connotation of linguistic metaphors and the conceptual metaphors underlying them. Overall therefore, the Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Theory provides a basis in the current study for the critical interpretation of conceptual metaphors as powerful tools of persuasion and ideology formulation in American political discourse.

Comparative Analysis/Critical Discourse Analysis
This study is focused on a comparative analysis through critical discourse analysis of the use of pronouns and metaphors in Obama's and Trump inaugural speeches. This paper being a compare-and-contrast paper, the writers took raw data, gathering the similarities and differences as observed in the inaugural speeches.

For any writer to effectively succeed in comparative analysis through critical discourse analysis, frame of reference should be a vital tool to be used. Frame of reference simply means a context within which one places the two things he/she plans to compare and contrast, it is the umbrella under which one has grouped them. The frame of reference may consist of an idea, theme, question, problem, or theory. It may be a group of similar things from which the writer extracts two for special attention.

Theoretical Framework
The principles of critical discourse analysis as a theoretical approach to discourse have been deployed and synthesized along with other language theories for the critical evaluation of text and talk. The results of one such synthesis is Charteris-Black's critical Metaphor Theory which is adopted in the current study for the analysis of text.

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The theory is a collapse of insights from pragmatics, cognitive metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis. The pragmatic dimension of the theory focuses on the role of context in the choice, use and interpretation of metaphors in discourse. The theory, in this connection, seeks to establish the link between the effectiveness of metaphor as a persuasive tool in discourse and the context of its use. Its relevance to the current research is in determining the contextual principles underlying the choice and use of metaphors by American politicians in their inaugural speeches. The cognitive aspect of the theory is drawn largely from Lakoff and Johnson Cognitive Metaphor Theory the central tenet of which is that the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured.

Linguistic metaphors are therefore possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system which is structured as source domain (the conceptual domain from which understanding is sought). The metaphoric expressions in the text of the study are classified into their conceptual domains using the cognitive aspect of Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Theory. The critical component of the theory focuses on the ideological connotation of linguistic metaphors and the conceptual metaphors underlying them. In summary, Charteris-Black's critical metaphor theory provides a basis in the current study for the critical interpretation of conceptual metaphors as powerful tools of persuasion and ideology formulation in American political discourse.

Barrack Obama's Speech
The speech to be studied is the first inaugural speech of Obama on the 20th January, 2009 in Washington DC. Barrack Obama inaugural speech is prominently dotted with pronouns "we" and "our". These are inclusive pronouns. This portrays the sense that all Americans are the addressees. The importance or value of the first person plural pronoun is to encourage group and togetherness of American people.

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(1) "We" are a nation of Christians and Muslim, Jews and Hindus and Nonbelievers.
(2) "We" are shaped by every language and culture drawn from every end of the earth.

Obama also used the third person plural "they" and "we"
(3) "They" pack their few worldly possession and travelled across oceans in search of a new life for us.
(4) "They" toiled in sweatshops and settled in the West, and
(5) "They" fought and died in places like concord and Getty's burgh, time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands.
(6) They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions.

The pronouns "we" and "they" are not opposing groups of people in the example above but "they" are two groups working for the same goal and dream. "They" refers to all the previous generations of Americans all the way from European settlers to soldiers in the Second World War. "US" refers to current generation of Americans. These pronouns create the imagery that every generation has worked for the betterment and the greatness of the nation together.

Metaphors
Political speech might be one of the most problematic types of discourse, because it is usually characterized by the use of different techniques and strategies that allow politicians to convey their political messages and persuade people to their ideologies and thought. Obama's speech was indeed an example of one that has the features. He used emphatic ideological predicative and other metaphors in his political speech.

He began his speech by using metaphorical language to gain audience trust and attention.

(7) We remain a young nation, but in the words of the scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things...

(8) Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin the work of remarking American.

These two examples 7 and 8 were aimed at creating group mentality: All American must put in some effort to better the society. This group mentality is created through shared religious mission. This is the shared imagined physical fall that all Americans have endured and must now together recover from it.

Donald Trump's Speech
In his inaugural speech, he used inclusive and collective pronouns "we" and "our" often when he is referring to America and positive change he ensures will take place in the future.

(9)   We will bring back our jobs

(10)   We will bring back our border

(11)   We will bring back our wealth

(12)   And we will bring back our dreams

(13)   You all changes here and now, because this moment is your moment. It belongs to you, and this United States of America is your country.

(14)   … Americans want great school for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families and good jobs for themselves.

In example 13, Trump used pronoun "You" and in addition to himself in example 14, he used second person plural to refer to ALL Americans.

Example 15/16, Here Trump used a mixture of self-inclusive pronouns, self-exclusive, individual and collective pronouns to refer

to foreigners. The choice appears to be because of the context and the actions in each situation.

(15) We must protect our borders from ravages of other countries making our products ...and destroying our jobs.

(16) We will seek friendship and good will with the nations of the world but we will do so... we do not seek to impose.... We will shine for everyone to follow.

The two examples stated with the first person plurals "we" and "our", used in an inclusive sense by Trump to use language to separate Americans and other nations. Trump also used inclusive pronoun "we" to refer to only Americans and foreign nations. He also used third person plural "they". This separates United States and other nations apart.

Metaphors

In Trump's inaugural address, the number of different types of metaphors are much more than in Obama's speeches. Trump use metaphors of emphatic purpose almost solely in the negative context. Examples 17/18,

(17) ...But for too many of our citizens' different realities exist. Mothers and children trapped in poverty ...Our factories scattered like bomb stones...

(18) We've made other countries rich...Our country has dissipated over the horizon. One by one the factories shuttered and left our shores.

The negativity in these examples carries from the terminology that is used in the metaphors and the content they were used in. Trump in the examples 17/18 was addressing the poor state of America. He talks of poor economic state, lack of jobs. He maintains that the state was characterized with unemployment, weakness and lawlessness type of nation.

(19) For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government ..., Washington flourished, but the people prospered, the jobs left and the factories closed.

Trump made a clear social and economic differences between the politicians and the people he represents. The politicians with the seat of government in Washington flourishing while the people suffer poverty.

Comparative Analysis of the Two Speakers
The two speeches show that the amount of self-inclusive pronouns are particularly divergent. More so, the number of inclusive first person plural "we" varies significantly.

The speeches differ in length. Trump's speech was shorter than Obama's. Trumps can speak 15 words per sentence while Obama can speak averaged 19 words per sentence.

The two presidents used metaphors with very different connotations. The metaphors were mainly in regards to foreigners. Obama uses empathetic, ideological and predicative metaphors to create positive representations. Trump uses empathetic ideological and predicative metaphors negatively. Trump creates division between Americans, the wealthy and the poor as well as people and politicians. The difference in Obama and Trumps inaugural addresses maybe a reflection of their background.

The representations they create in their speeches portray this. The republicans advocate a strong national interest first, a national defense and aggressive pursuit of American interest above other nations. The democrats via Obama support and advocate for multilateralism and internationalism. In line with this ideology, Obama created almost positive representation about foreign nationalities.

Summary of Findings

The findings reveal differences in the two addresses. Obama used pronouns and metaphors to encourage group membership and positive connotation towards different socio economic group and foreign nationalities. However, in Trump's speech pronouns and metaphors were often used to enforce existing divisions between groups of people based on their status in society, nationality and also between himself and the people. This means that Obama is more at one with the people while Trump from his speech is more distant.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Obama and Trump spoke on Americans most pressing challenges, path and ways forward, concept of globalization, Islamic relationships, government of America, and finally on American values and dreams. So, their closing remarks clearly point out the differences. In Obama, "America in the face of common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember timeless words with hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy, current and endure what storms may come". In Trump "together, we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America safe again. And yes together we will make America great again. So, we saw encouragements in Obama's speech while Trump was promises with emphasis on his background.

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