

Obama victory speech 2008

Literature



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In Obama's speech, he uses many inclusive pronouns such as ' we' and ' our'. This shows that they are all the same; by doing this it creates a sense of unity among the audience. This is effective because it gets the audience on his side; if he used exclusive pronouns such as ' you', it would make the audience feel less united. He also says ' America can change', by doing this he personifies and metonymies ' America'. This is effective as it makes the people think about what he means by ' America' in that context, he could have easily said the ' people of America' but that would be very dull.

We also see here again that he uses ' America' in a united sense. This all links in with the semantic field of the speech, of ' theAmerican Dream', which is all based on peace and unity among the people of America. Another technique Obama uses are exophoric references and anecdotes, such as " She's a lot like the millions of others who stood in line to make their voices heard in this election except for one thing – Ann Nixon cooper is 106 years old. " This is effective in the speech as help explain the point Obama makes to the audience. It is also something the audience can relate to .

He also waits until right at the end to say " Ann Nixon cooper is 106 years old," this turns a sentence about someone ordinary into someone extraordinary. Apart from the general references he makes, there are also very famous ones, such as ' A man touched down on the moon' and ' a preacher told a people ' We shall overcome. '" He uses these exophoric references effectively, to remind the audience about the situations they have overcome, which inspires them. Also, when he makes these references, he doesn't clearly state the event but vaguely describes it.

He does this to make the audience think about what he is saying, but at the same time not to undermine them by being too clear. In the reference ‘ A man touched down on the moon’, he uses the word ‘ man’ which is much more inclusive than a person’s name, and it makes the audience feel united in that event and as if they were a part of it. Furthermore, when he gives the quotation of ‘ we shall overcome’, everyone immediately recognises that famous quote, and relates to MLK. Obama also picks this quote out in particular, as it is about overcoming which is the main topic of his speech and in the way it is said, it sounds like a statement.

This is effective as it reinforces and adds credibility to what he says, which means the audience are more likely to accept it. During the speech, Obama’s tone and body language varies. For example, when he is giving an anecdote, he talks in a calm manner with long sentences, few pauses and no hand gestures, ‘ At a time when women’s voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up... ’ Then when he starts to make a point his tempo rises and he uses sentences with many pauses with also strong hand gestures, ‘ That while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt... This is effective as it shows emphasis on the points that are very important and makes them easier to remember; also it shows a contrast between the main points of the speech and the anecdotes. In the Obama’s speech he uses few religious references, such as ‘ Thank you, God bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America. ’ He says this because he himself is religious, but also America is a strongly Christian country and he targets those in audience who are religious. This

effective as it gives impression that God is on their side and motivates people.

Also the way Obama says that at the end of the speech is similar to how a priest would end his speech in a Church, which again gives it a very holy and religious feeling. During the speech Obama shows advances in many things, such as technology. He shows this by saying “no cars on the road or planes in the sky” and “she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote,” by saying this he contrasts the past with the present, and it makes the audience think how far they have come, in terms of technology in a short space of time.

Another advance he shows us is inequality, by saying “when someone like her couldn’t vote for two reasons – because she was a woman and because of the colour of her skin,” he reminds the audience of the time when it used to happen. This is effective because it shows change, by contrasting the past with present, and he shows this change to show the American people that if they did it then why can’t they do it again, which motivates them. Also when he says “couldn’t vote for two reasons - ... there is a slight pause, he does this as the audience know what’s coming next which makes them think. Throughout the speech, Obama’s main buzz phrase has been “Yes We can.” This phrase is good as it is only three words long and is repeated throughout the speech several times, making it easy to remember. He uses these when making a point, such as “America can change. Yes we can” and “nation conquers fear itself with a New deal, new jobs and a new sense of common purpose. Yes we can,” this motivates the people and gets them on his side.

Also Obama uses this phrases right at the end of point or paragraph, so the audience know its coming and after it's said they can repeated the phrase, this is why he leaves a short pause after each point for the audience to react . This is effective as it makes the audience think and concentrate on the speech. The word “ yes” in the phrase as adverb shows the agreement between him and the people. The word “ we” as a first person plural pronoun denotes as collective force or unity and the word “ can” as a modal auxiliary verb suggests the ability or possibility of someone doing something.