

The use of metaphors and biblical references in obama`s speech

[Literature](#)



The use of metaphors, repetition of words and biblical references in Obama's speech of inauguration based on "Analyzing Political Discourses" Theory and Practice by Paul Chilton

Introduction: Political discourses are made to impress, persuade and to underline ideas to change a country. Politicians use specialized writers to write for them their discourses or use a lot of time to write one, as political discourses are important for the future outcome. For example: To be voted by the people or explain bad situation on an adequate way so that the people don't offended.

To achieve this goal, several methods are used. But in this essay I will focus on metaphors, the repetition of specified words and the use of Biblical references, using methods given by Paul Chilton in his book "Analyzing Political Discourse, Theory and Practice". As experimental territory I used the inaugural speech of Barack Obama, which he used for his first candidature to become the president of the United States of America. The Speech by Barack Obama can be found in the Appendix. My goal is not only to see what and how he used the methods but also what goal he tried to achieve.

It is important to have some background information and what the people thought of him. As for America and other parts in the world, Obama stands for a new ideology, he promises America better healthcare, the end of the War and solutions to many problems, always emphasizing that this goal can only achieved as a team/nation but does he succeed to give us this image? What tricks did he use? What is a metaphor? Metaphors are used in political

discourses to replace words that the audience doesn't want to hear or could react badly. But what is a metaphor?

In literary use, a metaphor (from the Greek: *metapherein* rhetorical trope)[1] is defined as an indirect comparison between two or more subjects that are typically linked by a "is a" to join the two subjects. As an example we can take following sentence: "This Man is a beast". This is an elliptical form to emphasize the sentence that the Man is like a beast. Paul Chilton is the opinion that, Metaphors, qua models of political realities, as he calls them, are part of political discourses of today and used as vehicles to bring an opinion to a target. [2] We realize now that all of us speak in metaphors whether we realize it or not.

For example Mark Johnson, a philosopher, suggests that metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but that they actually structure and individualize our perceptions and understanding such that each person has a different understanding and thoughts about a common subject. [3] Metaphor is for many people a device of poetic and rhetorical imagination and development rather than the ordinary language, which is wrong as proven above. Metaphor analysis in Barrack Obama's Speech: In the following points I will reveal several metaphors Obama used and will try to reveal why he used them.

But also the Biblical references used as a metaphor, or as a bridge to transfer his Ideas. 1. CHANGE IS A MOVEMENT Citation out of the Speech: 1) "Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. " 2) "The question we ask today is not whether our government is <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

too big or too small, but whether it works – whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. ”

In the first citation “ rising tides” and “ still waters” are used as source domains, whereas the target domain is the word “ prosperity” and “ peace”. As it can be seen in the phrases: “ rising tides of prosperity” and “ the still waters of peace” here, the movement is a change of location (rising) or a stationary moment (still). If it involves a movement as change of location, it can be associated with the words: forward, backward, upward, downward, etc... so different directions and movements. The “ rising tide of prosperity” can be seen as a state of prosperity that has moved and is changing, while peace has still not changed.

This movement of which Obama is talking about can also be seen as a: flow of natural force (“ the rising tides”) and substance (“ still waters”). In the metaphorical expression in citation 2) the part which acts as source is the phrase “ We intend to move forward” and “ programs will end” where Obama is talking about the ideas of the US-government to provide jobs and a better social warranty. [4] In both metaphorical expressions, I think Obama wants to tell us that all presidents of America had taken the presidential oath to develop America.

All of their effort had the aim of raising economic development and prosperity and that all of these can only be achieved as a nation with a strong political support from the people. So, the “ WE” as a nation, which he uses a lot in his speeches. 2. POLITICAL IS A JOURNEY 1) This is the journey we <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth.

2) Our journey has never been one of short cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted – for those who prefer leisure to work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame.

Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, which have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom. In the metaphorical expression of the first citation the part which acts as a source domain is the phrase: “ This is the journey we continue today” whereas the focus of the citation is the American Political life. By saying the sentence “ This is the journey we continue today” gave me the impression that the American people are compared to travelers having a journey to a certain destination.

Even though we know that politics is no journey as such but can be seen as such in a metaphorical way. In the metaphorical expression of the second citation the part that interacts as source is the phrase “ Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted” whereas the target is also the American political life, like in the first citation with another connotation but keeping the idea of a journey in mind. We can see that in both citations have the same idea of a journey which is given to the audience.

The idea behind is that the audiences who are involved in political life are like travelers on a journey, with their common need in life seen as the goal of this journey. The political activities and relation is their vehicle used to reach the goal of common interest. [5] 3. BIBLICAL REFERANCES AS A LIFESTYLE <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

The citations I used here are taken again in a separate chapter using the theoretical rapprochement given by Paul Chilton in part III chapter 10. 1)“ We remain a young nation, but, in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. ” 2) “ Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails. ” In the 1st citation the source domain given is the phrase “ time has come to set aside childish things” where he targets the lifestyle of the Americans. It gives the impression that the fights they had about political problems are childish and that they should focus to strive a common goal.

In the second citation he uses the same idea, again using a citation out of a religious text using as source domain “ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking” like before the target is the lifestyle of the Americans which Obama criticizes. It is clear that through these citations Obama tries to reason the population quoting biblical references. Comparing America with childhood and telling them that through love only, again the idea of working together, all goals can be achieved.

I won't go deeper into this comparison as I will come back to it later on in the text. Frequency of words: To see what words Obama used in his speech frequently and how many times we had to know how many words are in his whole speech, which lies around 2403 words. As such I was able to give the percentage of the most used words. The word Obama laid the most <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

emphasizes is “ WE” which he used 62 times, which can be understood as his speech is about working together as a nation and is also a word used in his slogan: “ Yes WE can”. Other words he used frequently are:[6]

Keyword	Repeats	Density
Nation	12	0, 50
New	11	0, 46

America 9 0, 37 Today 7 0, 29 People 7 0, 29 The repetition of these words sticks with the listeners as such the listener will always remember this words and will combine them with the discourse of Obama. As for mind manipulation it is the repetition that stays in our mind. [7]When we are learning or looking at advertisements or when we are learning a song, we always repeat them until we know them by heart. In the case of marketing the advertisements are kept easy and shown more than one so that they stick in our minds and when we have to choose between two product we will chose the one we “ know” or that we can remember of.

The same is in political discourses. The more often it is repeated the more we will remember them and believe them. In Obama’s case using the words Nation, New etc... he tries to underline the idea of freshness in the United States and that it can only work as a NATION. As all presidents the repetition of AMERICA, motivates the American listeners and they feel directly talked to, strengthening also the bond between the people and the nation. Paul Chilton underlines in his book that discourses often use a container concept, which is created by the words used.

This container ideology is divided in three structures: in interior and a exterior which are defined by a boundary which are formed in political discourses to a container- nation with political borders given by the speech.

As such it is able for politicians to give the fault to others, outside of the <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

container while securing the interior of the container. Analysis of Biblical references Apparently it is customary in American political discourse to employ biblical language[8], which is an inherent part of the old American public way of speaking.

However, given that Obama is a non-traditional and liberal candidate for president,[9] it is even more interesting to analyze the biblical references he used and give possible explanations why used following citations for his speech. “ We remain a young nation, but, in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. ” Obama quoted here, the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 13: 11, dealing with St. Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth.

The goal he tried to achieve of this particular example is to also aims at the Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and non-believing Americans, to include them too into the speech, for it is a text that is usually read at wedding ceremonies and is not specified to one religion specifically, as it speaks about true love in the following manner: “ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres.

Love never fails. ” (1 Corinthians, 13: 4) “ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-metaphors-and-biblical-references-in-obamas-speech/>

But the greatest of these is love. ” (1 Corinthians, 13: 11) These Letters were written by St. Paul to the church in Corinth in the times of internal struggles and divisions in the church, and when the church was hreatened by immoral influences surrounding the community. St. Paul’s letter was a letter of criticism and imploement to the Corinthians to stop the arguing and fighting around different problems and embrace, what he called, the most important virtue: love. [10] The choice of this particular biblical reference could be perceived as Obama’s attempt to spread the ideology of love “ loving thy neighbor” so that the American people can embrace a notion of racial inclusiveness and ideological diversity, necessary in the time of economic and international crises.

Again we can find the idea of a “ WE”. Conclusion: It is now obvious that Paul Chilton theory can be applied. We can see that it is the play together of the different methods and many more make a discourse unique and manipulative. But it is important to know in which context the discourse has been written as the context can change the words, emotions and message in a political discourse. In Obama’s speech we can find the concept of pragmatism, liberalism, inclusiveness, acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity and unity. As such the result of keywords of his run for presidency.

This is shown by the prominent words employed by Obama: nation, new and America, and a overall dominance of the personal pronoun We understood as necessary in the time of national peril... The results of the biblical references, which Paul Chilton explains as “ only” way to motivate and capture America’s population, have shown that Obama’s choice of citations (quoting the Corinthians) was to strengthen the notion of unity and brotherly love

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among the various members of the American diverse society. As such we can see that his methods were well used and can be found by the methods of Paul Chilton.

Obama stands for his candidature through his speech and ideology, world wide as a new wind for America that will rebuild and strengthen the country.

And we have to remember that Obama is the first president that has been accepted as young and black person as president. Sources Primary source:

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