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Universidad de Alicante

DISCOURSE AND
IDENTITY IN BARACK
OBAMA'S FIRST
INAUGURAL SPEECH

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Student: Daniel Hernández Vila

Supervisor: Pamela Stoll Dougall

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1. Introduction

For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

(Obama)

In a politically convulsed historical period as the one in which we live, it is worth noting that many different events have occurred and, as a result, our society may undergo a significant transformation. If any positive conclusion can be reached from the Western financial crisis and its succeeding realisation of political corruption, it is in fact the collective awakening of social consciousness. Nowadays, people actually care more about the sort of information that the media conveys and, to some extent, most part of the population is at the moment much more aware of many facts which they did not know of before.

In this context, some may think that the study of language is useless as regards the issues affecting on societies. Nevertheless, many interesting assumptions can be made through the analysis of discourse. In looking into the aspects involved in the production and creation of, for instance, speeches, significant inferences can be drawn from a sociolinguistic approach, such as determining someone's actual ideology and, consequently, her[his] political intentions.

The importance of rhetoric dates back to the pillars of our civilization, that is to say, the Ancient Greece. The transcendence of words has always been a subject of close study, especially through literature. Let us think, for example, of Medieval times, the Renaissance period, the Age of Enlightenment, the Romanticism movement, the Modernism movement, or even of the Postmodernism era which we are now supposed to be experiencing. All of these periods have characterised and shaped different ways of thinking, namely discourses. Today, nonetheless, it is likewise important to highlight the role of political discourse. It is certainly the new fashion to influence on people. Political discourse is indeed the most powerful device that politicians have to transmit their ideals and persuade people to vote for them.

In this paper, Obama's inaugural speech in 2009, when he was firstly elected president of the United States of America, is analysed. The reason of my choice is probably motivated by the assumption that, even if I do not personally agree with all the ideals the American leader embodies, I do recognise his figure as one of the most influential in the beginning of the 21st century. Although he did not work actively on his political agenda once won the presidency, as it would have been expected after his epic campaign, his achievement in becoming the first African American president of the U.S. was somewhat epic. For better or worse, Obama has surely inspired new generations. Comparing to a Spanish paradigm, for instance, we do not know to what extent the motto «Yes we can» could have been influenced, six years later, on naming the new and revolutionary political party *Podemos*. Of course, this comparison is made with all due caution, as Obama's policies and *Podemos'* ones have nothing to do with one another.

In another regard, a vast amount of research has already been done on political discourse, especially on Obama's case. That is the reason why in this paper diverse approaches have been used so as to produce an analysis that results slightly different from the majority. Nonetheless, it must be clarified that this paper is based on Boyd's analysis 'De-constructing Race and Identity in US Presidential Discourse: Barack Obama's Speech on Race', which has been taken as its starting point. Furthermore, other features studied in the field of Discourse Analysis have been considered for the succeeding analysis. In doing so, this analysis has been structured into four major sections. Firstly, a literature review in which the different theories that have been used throughout the paper are explained. Secondly, an analysis of the aforementioned Obama's speech is carried out in terms of a quantitative study of pronominal use, intertextuality and interdiscursivity, and the study of selected conceptual metaphors. Thirdly, three specific issues related to ideology and identity in Obama's speech are discussed from a Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) perspective. Lastly, the conclusions reached are presented.

2. Bibliographic review

To begin with, it must be elucidated that this dissertation on Obama's discourse and identity has been written on the basis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with a specific focus on political discourse. Yet, before defining what CDA is, two fundamental terms for the succeeding analysis, which are *text* and *discourse*, must be defined. Firstly, Widdowson describes a text «as an actual use of language, as distinct from a sentence which is an abstract unit of linguistic analysis» (4). However, discourse is considered a broader concept that comprises the use of texts, and it involves other aspects such as the communicative purposes of the text production and the contextualisation in which this is produced (6). In short, discourse is a term used to denote «what a text producer meant by a text and what a text means to the receiver» (7).

Having briefly introduced these two key terms, a definition of CDA can therefore be provided. CDA is, from a sociolinguistic¹ approach, a tool concerned not only about the sociocultural, historical and linguistic aspects of a text, but also about the meanings and implications ensued from it in the process of its creation, its presentation and its likely connections to other texts (Boyd 79). Nevertheless, Van Dijk prefers to use the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) instead of CDA to refer to this field of study. The academic ascertains that CDS implies a broader terminology that «involves not only critical *analysis*, but also critical *theory*, as well as critical *applications*» («Critical Discourse Studies», 62). In this light, the term CDS will consequently be used from this point onwards.

¹ It must be clarified that Sociolinguistics is conceived in this dissertation in relation to Matthews' definition in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* as «any study of language in relation to society» which «involves the study of correlations between linguistic variables (e.g. the precise phonetic quality of a vowel, or the presence or absence of a certain element in a construction) and non-linguistic variables such as the social class of speakers, their age, sex, etc.» Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis are included in this field of study and help to identify «language distinctions reflecting ideologies or relations of power among those speaking it, linguistic aspects of social psychology, etc.»

Furthermore, several authors have ventured to designate what the main goals of CDS are; in doing so, an agreement has been reached on several facts. Firstly, it is generally observed that CDS primarily aims to discern ideological aspects embedded in texts. Secondly, it is commonly thought that CDA should always entail socio-political commitment on the scholars' part to a vision of social equality and effective justice as primary needs for society. This perspective constantly confronts the imposed thinking that the current political systems are the fairest ones, and that they are the only ones that can sustain socioeconomic stability. Therefore, it can be stated that, in short, CDA attempts to disassemble political propaganda by questioning the conventional elite discourse (Widdowson 71; Van Dijk, «Critical Discourse Studies», 62-63; Boyd 79).

In much the same way, Neagu precisely notes major functions to CDS, which are to seek, highlight and discuss social issues through linguistic research (20). Moreover, she lists a series of distinguishing characteristics that are commonly attributed to CDS. The most important assumptions that can generally be drawn from the scholar's listing are probably that: i) all discourses are to some extent historical and can thus be explained in relation to its cultural, social and ideological context; ii) that it is fundamental to study the relationships between texts for a better understanding, that is to say, «intertextuality and interdiscursivity»; and iii) that, by means of linguistic analysis on different levels (lexical, semantic, syntactic, temporal), CDS aims to expose intrinsic traits of discourse that are veiled in texts, such as ideology and identity (20-21).

By contrast, it is important to remark that political discourse analysis, CDS perspective aside, also lies in terms of the media and communication. How political speeches are understood and interpreted by their audiences relies on the common knowledge that speakers and their interlocutors share; that is to say, their *culture*. To provide the latter term with a definition is not an easy task, since it is a concept that takes part in many diverse disciplines, which have characterised it differently.

Nonetheless, as detailed by Lauerbach and Fetzer, culture can be described as follows:

[...] the world view reflected in the classification systems of languages, as systems of beliefs, values and attitudes shared by the members of a community, as shared ways of doing things or as the sum of the artefacts produced by the members of a culture over time [...] Most traditional views conceive of culture as an autonomous, homogeneous, territorially confined unity that is “contained” within the boundaries of a nation state and that contains, in turn, all the properties that define it and make it different from other cultures.

(7-8)

In line with this, there exists an area of study known as Cross-cultural Discourse Analysis (XCDA) which must be taken into consideration for the subsequent analysis. XCDA is concerned about the shared knowledge between different peoples, which is basically analysed in two dimensions: the verbal and the interactional (Lauerbach and Fetzer 9). On the one hand, in the language scope all linguistic levels, ranging from prosodic to text organisational aspects, are examined. On the other hand, in the interactional scope «the social and discursive practices», as well as the conceptualisations of speech performance and its perception are studied. The role of the media as the main way of disseminating information fits in this latter dimension. Even so, for the sake of convenience and brevity, only the written features – multimodality apart – are to be referred to further on.

Additionally, Van Dijk and Kinstch define what they call *cultural strategies* in discourse, which are «those strategies that pertain to the effective selection of cultural information that is relevant to the comprehension of the discourse» (80). These tactics are in a very varied range that encompasses «different knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values» (81). The understanding of the discourse on the hearers' part does not thus only rely on what they know

about the communicative features of the speaker, but on the communicative situation in which the discourse is produced as well. Therefore, for an audience to really understand the discourse, «both textually and contextually», cultural strategies are necessary to be taken into account. Their purposes can vary from amusement to reproach, advising, reassertion of basic norms, or simply historical referencing (81). These are, precisely, some of the strategies used in Obama's speeches, as it will be observed further on in this analysis.

Another concept which is to be considered in relation to what has previously been said about cultural strategies and intertextuality is *recontextualisation*. The term has generally been described as «the appropriation of elements in one social practice within another» (Fairclough 32); recontextualisation, in other words, occurs when «an argument is taken from one context and restated in a new one», thus recontextualising the object in a different perspective (Boyd 80). Likewise, it has been suggested that there are two diverse dimensions for recontextualisation analysis that must be borne in mind separately: text-externally and text-internally (81). In doing so, on the external approach «one discourse, text or genre» is embedded from one prevailing text into another one «for some strategic purpose»; whereas on the internal approach lexical, syntactic, rhetorical and semantic aspects are taken into consideration (81). Regarding the latter, it is significant to remark that recontextualisation frequently takes places in pronominal use, which at the same time helps to identify elements such as «identity and ideology». Therefore, pronouns can either point to «collectivity or individuality», such as, for instance, inclusive versus exclusive pronominal components; e.g. *I* contrasted with *we* (Boyd 81-82).

Last but not least, it is important to allude to the inclusion of metaphors in political discourse, which will also be discussed in the ensuing analysis. Guitart-Escudero asserts that metaphors denote «motives that can even appeal to international audiences»; nonetheless, metaphors sometimes require alteration to fit in the culture in which they are used, so as to result «persuasively effective» (46).

Furthermore, Cox notes that metaphors have an essential purpose which is to provide «a sense of meaning for concepts for which no other avenues of reference are available», that is to say, «to name the unnameable» in order to «create a frame through which such foundational concepts are viewed» (3). Regarding this, some functions can be attributed to metaphors, such as legitimising or delegitimising, seeking for similes between situations and events, or even transmitting a parable. In a nutshell, metaphors use, regarded as a strategy in political discourse, enables an audience to remember what a speaker has said (Boyd 76-77).

3. First Inaugural Address on 20th January 2009 discourse analysis

3.1. Brief contextualisation

Barack Hussein Obama won the U.S. elections held in November 2008, thus becoming the 44th president of the country and, most importantly, the first African American who accomplished the presidency. His achievement was widely celebrated not only in the country but in the rest of the world. Besides, because of his magnetism with people and his commitment to the U.S. socioeconomic recovery, he was compared to distinguished historical personalities such as the President John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln.

Obama, initially criticised as taking advantage of his ethnicity for his campaign, overcame his party fellow Hillary Clinton in a very narrow vote. It was probably, according to many, his speech 'A More Perfect Union' which enabled him to win the primary elections. In his speech, he did not only confronted those who had harshly disapproved his candidacy, like the also Democrat and Clinton's supporter Geraldine Ferraro, but also his family's pastor Jeremiah Wright, who had been trying to defend Obama through «fiery sermons laced with black nationalism» and «aggressive press statements» ("The U.S. Election of 2008: Year In Review 2008"). It

was then that he delivered a speech which called to unity and more peaceful times, thus distancing himself from hatred and segregation discourses.

The motto of his campaign «Yes we can» crossed borders and became internationally famous, thus going down in history as one of the most emblematic aphorism. However, electoral polls did not favour Obama’s candidacy until the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, which would initiate the most serious global economic crash –and consequent crisis– since 1929. His opponent McCain, who was a strong advocate of the financial U.S., was at first reluctant to recognise the system collapse, and therefore his attitude was regarded as a great political failure. Obama seized the opportunity and knew how to inspire hope for a change in people, who eventually would make him president.

3.2. Pronominal use: quantitative approach and critical interpretation

To analyse the use of first person pronouns and its derivatives, and to help determine whether they are inclusive or, on the contrary, exclusive or limited to certain social groups, the following table has been drawn:

Term	Incidence	%
<i>I</i>	3	0.12
<i>my/me/myself</i>	2/-/-	0.08
Total first person singular	5	0.20
<i>we</i>	59	2.45
<i>our/us/ourselves</i>	68/30/3	4.20
Total first person plural	160	6.65

Table 1 - Concurrence of 1st Person Forms

In this chart, it is certainly observed that Obama’s pronominal use of the 1st plural forms was predominant, whereas the 1st singular ones were scarcely used in four occasions at the beginning of his speech:

- a. *My* fellow citizens: *I* stand here today humble by the task before us grateful for the trust [...]
- b. *I* thank President Bush [...]
- c. Today *I* say to you that the challenges we face are real.
- d. [...] from the grandest capitals to the small village where *my* father was born [...]

Of course these few cases in which Obama used the first person singular were necessary so as to begin his address, as well as to express his personal gratitude to those who had voted for him (*a.*) and to the ex-president Bush for facilitating the transition (*b.*). Besides, the *I* operates in *c.* as a sign of authority to implicitly present himself as the new national leader who is expected to deliver a memorable and inspiring inaugural speech full of hope. Conversely, what is really noteworthy is to pay attention to the use of the first person singular possessive form in *d.*, which denotes part of Obama's identity when referring to his father's background, as it will be discussed in section 4.

Similar to the use he had previously made in the speech 'A More Perfect Union', in this speech the pronoun *we* was in turn inclusive and exclusive (Boyd 85-87). On the one hand, for instance, the recently elected president quoted the famous «*we, the people*» – which calls to mind the constitutional preamble ("The Constitution of the United States") – to refer to the citizenship as a whole; yet he had previously excluded the North American political class, not seemingly including himself in it though:

[...] America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of **those in high office**, but because *we, the people*, have remained faithful to the ideals [...]

Accordingly, it can be considered that this *we* is to some extent what is known as *partially addressee-inclusive* (Boyd 86). Obama as a result stood on people's side by regarding himself as an ordinary citizen who was by-then aloof from political

responsibility. It was indeed a good strategy to humble his by-this-time mythicized persona and present himself modestly. On the other hand, he continued his speech by alluding to the actual culprits of the financial crisis but also recognising the «collective failure» for not having handled the situation in time:

Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age.

Furthermore, Obama once again shifted the implication of the pronoun *we* to subliminally address their supporters:

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics.

By means of these words, in which there are evocative conceptual metaphors that will be commented further on in 3.4, the African American leader somewhat remarked that his voters had made the right choice. He probably addressed his words not only to those historically loyal Democrat voters, but also to those who had perhaps voted Republican before and had then changed their tendency. These are consequently once more examples of *partially addressee-inclusive* pronouns.

Likewise, it is important to clarify that the major pronominal use is *all-inclusive* (Boyd 87). It is not surprising that in his speech, in which he was being inaugurated president of the nation, Obama intended to deliver a speech which rose the voice of all American citizens. That is the reason why it can be stated that the first person plural forms that predominated in his discourse embraced all the U.S. population in a historical and general sense. An instance for this can be seen when he referred to the pillars of the nation by stating:

Our Founding Fathers [...] faced the perils that *we* scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man [...] Those ideals still light the world, and *we* will not give them up for expedience sake.

Recalling the fathers of the Constitution precisely provide these pronominal forms with that meaning of all-encompassing and far-reaching group of people which constitutes the North American society. What is more, Obama finished his speech by laying emphasis on the idea that this sense of collectiveness should be left as a legacy for upcoming generations:

Let it be said by our children's children that when *we* were tested *we* refused to let this journey end, that *we* did not turn back nor did *we* falter [...] *we* carried forth that great of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

In opposition, it is likewise interesting to look into the use of third person plural forms and observe what or who they referred to. In this regard, Table 2 has been drawn:

Term	Incidence	%
<i>they</i>	17	0.70
<i>their</i>	10	0.41
Total	27	1.31

Table 2 - Concurrence of 3rd Person Forms

The first time these forms appear in Obama's speech is when he refers to the problems the U.S. had to face:

[...] that the challenges we face are real. *They* are serious and *they* are many. *They* will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: *They* will be met.

By pointing to the issues the country should endure in such terms, some kind of personification of them was being made. He spoke of them as if they were enemies

of the nation that in one way or another had to be defeated. Secondly, another time when third person plural forms appear is when referring to the earliest North American people, that is to say, to colonial times, as well as those who died in slavery, and those fought in the Second World War and in Vietnam:

For us, *they* packed up their few worldly possessions and travelled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, *they* toiled in sweatshops, and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip, and ploughed the hard earth. For us, *they* fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn.

In bringing to mind the bravery and the endurance of the nation's ancestors with the third person plural, Obama divided North American History into different periods and, to some extent, diverse societies. Therefore, he remarked the strong transformations this people has undergone and how the country has evolved through the passage of time.

At last, it is also significant to highlight how the U.S. leader also directly addressed to those who had threatened peace in his country and terrorised its people, as well as to the leaders who have restrained their people's freedom. «To the Muslim world» he openly spoke, and then stated that «mutual interest and mutual respect» were to be sought in order to solve their differences. Nevertheless, he continued by directly addressing the oppressing leaders who suppressed their people, and stated that «*your* people will judge *you* on what *you* can build, not what *you* destroy» and proceeded with «know that *you* are on the wrong side of history». These words controversially confronted what he had promised about other conflicts in the Middle East in which the U.S. has been involved – Irak and Afghanistan – and implicitly implied that the country armed interventions abroad would not come to an end yet. Right after this, nonetheless, he offered to «extend a hand» if they were disposed to cooperate to bring peace («to unclench *your* fist»). This latter subject, on whether Obama has favoured military actions or not, is to be discussed in section 4.

3.3. Recontextualising the American Dream, the Bible and the Constitution: intertextuality and interdiscursivity

Premised on Fairclough's assumption that recontextualising occurs when «an argument is taken from one context and restated in a new one» (32), three different topics with which Obama dealt in his speech are to be discussed at this point. Firstly, references to the American Dream can be found throughout the speech. Although this is a broad concept that can be defined in diverse terms, for the sake of brevity the *Oxford English Dictionary* is to be taken into consideration:

American dream *n.* (also **American Dream**) (with the) the ideal that every citizen of the United States should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative.

(“American”)

Accordingly, a recontextualisation of the American Dream took place, for instance, when the North American president spoke about how «men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked» in the past so that all Americans today can «live a better life». Furthermore, he by some means evoked that idea of the American society as a *melting pot*, in which so many diverse cultures merged to constitute a pluralistic nation (“melting pot” 3b):

They saw America as **bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth and wealth of faction.**

In line with this, Obama expounded the conceptualisation of the American Dream at its finest when he remarked what the main purpose of the U.S. should be. Namely, the American government's principal task should be to restore the principles of this ethos and to help «families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified». In short, this meant to fulfil what the American Dream by enabling people to live a prosperous happy life.

Additionally, even if in the U.S. there exists freedom of religion, which was guaranteed by the First Amendment (“First Amendment”), the African American leader made allusion to the Bible by paraphrasing a passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The reference was indeed made in a metaphoric way, as right before he had to some extent personified the U.S. in uttering «we remain a young nation»; after that, he resumed by recontextualising the Christian book in these terms: «But in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things.» He then continued elaborating his idea to conclude that in God’s eyes «all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.» This Christian message is in fact really interesting topic to look into in terms of ideology and identity; therefore, it is to be explored in section 4.

Turning to another theme, it is important to note Obama’s suggestive references to the Constitution. He had certainly used the historic text before during his campaign speeches (Boyd 84-85). In observing the president’s former job as a constitutional law lecturer at the University of Chicago (“Barack Obama”), it is not then surprising to realise that he is indeed very fond of what the legally sacred text endows in terms of boosting word influence. That is probably why, as mentioned before, he decided to introduced into his speech the powerful phrase «we, the people», which most North American citizens certainly recognised. Furthermore, he continued as follows:

[...] we, the people, have remained **faithful to the ideals of ours forebears**
and **true to our founding documents**.

In recontextualising the Constitution this way, Obama asserted that the values gathered in the old manuscript were still as valid and significant as when they were drafted in 1787. Besides, he further on once again would underline the importance of these ideals when emphasising that they were written «to assure the rule of law and the rights of man – a charter expanded by the blood of generations» and, moreover, that they «still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience sake.»

Lastly, it would also be remarkable to broach the literal quotation Obama uttered by the end of his speech. The words in hand are from Thomas Paine's 'The American Crisis', which were supposed to have been read to the Continental Army at George Washington's behest ("Thomas Paine"):

Let it be told to the future world... that in the depth winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive... that the city and the country, alarmed at once common danger, came forth to meet [it].

These lines were introduced by «at the moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt», thus denoting the U.S. Independence War. Afterwards he referred to George Washington as «the father of our nation» and stated that he had demanded that these words were read «to the people». It can consequently be considered that the U.S. president recontextualised these words to remove all doubts about the country's capacity to overcome the socioeconomic crisis that it was enduring.

3.4. Brief exploration of three major conceptual metaphors

Provided a metaphor is «a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable» ("metaphor"), the question therefore arising is: What is a *conceptual metaphor*? As it may result somehow confusing and difficult to provide a definition, given the implication of the concept in diverse disciplines, a plain definition is to be taken into consideration. For that reason, conceptual metaphor is to be regarded here as «a way of conceptualising one, usually abstract, thing in terms of another, usually more concrete, one» (Koller and Semino ch. 2 12).

Throughout Obama's speech, much ornamented language, which would be interesting to comment in an aesthetic manner, took place; however, only three conceptual metaphors are to be underlined for the sake of simplicity. Firstly, the by-then inaugurated head of state used a noticeable conceptual metaphor to set the context in which he was to deliver his speech. Having mentioned that he was to

become the 44th president of the country, he compared the different historical periods to the weather variability in the following terms:

The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms.

Obama was certainly making it clear that he was aware of the difficult situation the U.S. was undergoing, and so in that context of *tempest*, meaning socioeconomic crisis, he situated his speech.

Secondly, when dealing with political corruption and the culprits of the financial crisis, the African American leader did not opt for referring to it in economic terms or pointing to specific cases. Instead he chose to simplify his explanation by using an understandable conceptual metaphor which was as follows:

And those of us who manage the public's dollar will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day.

He therefore preferred talking about doing «business in the light of day» rather than specifying laws of budgetary control or economic transparency that would need to be enacted.

To conclude, another conceptual metaphor that was perhaps introduced in order to call to generosity and determination can be presented. In this case, Obama decided to use a plain simile which everyone listening to him would understand:

It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child that finally decides our fate.

This way, the recently elected head of state invited all Americans to stay resilient and lavish before a situation that required much effort on population's part. He was probably trying to highlight that the country's recover was everyone's responsibility and not only his.

4. Ideology and identity: modelling liberalism, armed interventionism and race

As this is definitely not a dissertation regarding psychology nor sociology, the concepts of ideology and identity, commonly related to these fields of study, are not to be examined from such perspectives. All the same, from a CDS approach this can certainly also be done. For instance, in looking into the very language, the descriptions of thought, and «the social representations shared by members of a group», ideology can be described (Van Dijk, *Ideology* 8-9). Likewise, it can be considered that identity ensues from the collective criteria – i.e. beliefs – that define a social group's ideology (118-119).

With respect to ideology, two different observations can be made concerning Obama's inaugural speech. On the one hand, his liberalist inclination was implicit at some point of his speech when he uttered:

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions (a). They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use (b); our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint (c).

In (a), he to some extent asserted that both fascism and communism were detrimental political systems to the U.S., and reminded that they had had to confront them in the past. By placing both movements at the same level, he was making it clear that he did not share either political view. Furthermore, in (b) he emphasised the idea that state affairs must be delimited by prudence, thus somehow showing himself in favour of the liberalist principle of the individuals' self-reliance ("Liberalism"). Eventually, he once again would point to moderation and constraint, this way underlining that his policies would tend to this stance.

On the other hand, other traceable statements for ideology can be discussed. In this case, it can controversially be argued whether Barack Obama has actually been prone to seek peace and stability or, on the contrary, he has continued Republican legacy of armed interventions abroad. In his speech, he indeed seemed very fond of soldiers abroad – «the guardians of our liberty» – and matters regarding state defence. At some parts of his discourse, he even seemed to be menacing those who threatened the U.S. interests. Even if he explicitly said that American troops would «leave Irak to its people» and «forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan», he right after this statement resumed that «we will not apologise for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defence», thus to some extent justifying armed interventions abroad. What is more, he subsequently sent a message to those who «induce terror and slaughtered innocents»:

[...] our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken – you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

In saying this, it can then be assumed that he would continue allowing the U.S. military actions where they believed they should be brought. Despite initial promises during Obama's campaign, the fact is that under his administration the North American country has took decisive part in Lybia conflict in order to overthrow the divisive leader Gaddafi in 2011 ("Muammar al-Qaddafi"); moreover, American military actions started in Syria in September 2014 so as to fight the extremist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, better known as ISIL ("ISIL"). Therefore, it can be maintained that U.S. policy towards the Middle East issues has not significantly changed. In fact, it is consequently arguable, in the light of succeeding events, that Obama actually deserved the Nobel Peace Prize «for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.» ("Barack Obama"). For there are surely other ways of handling such conflicts and avoiding civilians' casualties – as it has been mostly the case –, it is

certainly difficult to find justifications beyond a Western perspective of «it's every man for himself.»

In another regard, some distinguishable aspects of Obama's identity can be found in his speech. As the first African American accomplishing the U.S. presidency, he was surely aware of the importance that his words would incite. That is perhaps the reason why he decided to emphasise several times the ideals of equality and freedom. In a country where the slavery issue had led to division and consequently Civil War 150 years ago, it was quite an achievement to inaugurate an African American as head of state. Obama stated that the U.S. was a nation «shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth» and called to mind «the bitter swill of civil war and segregation» as samples of events that should never be repeated. Furthermore, it is remarkable to observe how he referred to slaves as part of the ancestors of the country, thus resolving any conceivable doubt that their forced and cruel labour benefited the nation's prosperity:

For us, they [...] endured the lash of the whip, and ploughed the hard earth.

It was precisely his belonging to the black segment of the population which empowered his statements. These words, semantically pertaining to the slavery sphere, would not certainly be as effective and attention-grabbing as in a white spokesman's speech. In addition to this, he underlined part of his identity by broaching «to the small village where my father was born». His father was indeed born in a Kenyan hamlet when this country was still a British colony. In remarking so, he probably wanted to make it clear that he was proud of his African background.

As a final point for this section, it must be asserted that there are most certainly more indicators of Obama's ideology and identity in his speech. However, in order not to deviate from the premised discipline of study and extend unnecessarily this dissertation, only these few examples have been brought out.

5. Conclusions

Although this study on Obama's inaugural speech in 2009 has been conducted as closely to the text features as the nature of this paper has allowed, some interesting conclusions have possibly been reached. Firstly, by implementing a quantitative study of the diverse pronominal use and in attempting to provide the results with interpretations, it has been concluded that the U.S. president delivered a speech in which the predominant pronoun forms pointed to collectiveness. Yet, at some points, it also did it to exclusion. Secondly, little research for recontextualisation in some parts of Obama's speech by looking into references and quotation has been carried out. In doing so, some assumptions have been made on the major North American cultural themes which he broached so as to make the U.S. population recall some facts and reflect on them. Thirdly, some conceptual metaphors have been considered in order to underline the president's rhetoric strategies. As a result, it can be said that these did not surely aimed only at supplying his speech with appealing features, but also at facilitating people to remember more easily his words. Eventually, some noticeable Obama's traits of his ideology and identity have been discussed on the basis of CDS, that is to say, in terms of construing his language and thought representation.

Finally, it must be clarified that however equivocal the results obtained in this paper may seem, an attempt to explore and minimally contribute to the critical study of discourse has been made. CDS is still a new field of study within Sociolinguistics which needs to be further researched. It has in any case resulted thought-provoking to analyse political issues from a more linguistic dimension rather than the sociological or psychological society is used to. Apologies are nonetheless made in advance for possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of this paper.

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7. Appendix: Obama's Inaugural Speech in 2009

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you've bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation -- (applause) -- as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

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. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we, the people, have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears and true to our founding documents.

So it has been; so it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many -- and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far

too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation. But in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. 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 that prefer leisure over 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 -- who have carried us up the long rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops, and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip, and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week, or last month, or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of our economy calls for action, bold and swift. And we will act, not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We'll restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage. What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply.

The question we ask today is not whether our government is 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. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched. But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity, on the ability to extend opportunity to every

willing heart -- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers -- (applause) -- our Founding Fathers, faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man -- a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience sake.

And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet.

We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken -- you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.

To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages.

We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service -- a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

And yet at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all. For as much as government can do, and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends -- honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism -- these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is demanded, then, is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties that we do not grudgingly accept, but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence -- the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall; and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served in a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day with remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was

abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At the moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words to be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world...that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive... that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

America: In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.