

## THE LANGUAGE OF PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC: A STUDY OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN BARACK OBAMA'S FIRST INAUGURAL SPEECH

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### Abstract

*Barack Obama's first inaugural address stands out for its powerful use of language to inspire hope, unity, and progress during a time of national challenge. This paper examines the rhetorical devices employed in President Obama's speech by applying Jones and Peccei's (2004) Rhetorical Model. The study uses a qualitative design and purposive sampling to analyze how Obama skillfully weaves together devices such as metaphor, euphemism, parallelism, the rule of three, and inclusive pronouns to connect with his audience on both intellectual and emotional levels in his inaugural speech. The findings reveal that Obama's use of metaphors paint a picture of a changing America ready to move beyond old divisions, while his use of euphemism invites peace and reconciliation without alienating others. Parallel structures and the rule of three lend his words a memorable rhythm, reinforcing his call for both immediate action and lasting change, particularly in rebuilding the economy and promoting sustainable growth. Furthermore, his frequent use of pronouns like "we" and "our" fosters a sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility. This analysis demonstrates that Obama's rhetorical choices not only clarify complex issues but also unite his audience, making his vision for a resilient and forward-looking America both accessible and compelling. The findings imply that effective rhetorical strategies in political speeches can foster unity and motivate collective action during national challenges. It is therefore recommended that political leaders receive training in rhetorical techniques to enhance clarity and inclusivity in their communication.*

**Keywords:** Rhetorical Analysis, Rhetorical Devices, Inaugural Speeches, Obama

### Introduction

Communication plays a central role in human life, enabling individuals to transfer thoughts, share feelings, and provide clarifications (Kurniawati, 2019). It becomes most effective when collaborative interaction occurs between interlocutors through oral or written discourse. Oral communication, particularly in political contexts, often requires speakers to employ deliberate strategies to ensure clarity, impact, and persuasiveness. One of the most powerful strategies is rhetoric the art of persuasion through language which facilitates the comprehension of implicit meanings and enhances the effectiveness of political discourse (King, 2010).

In the political sphere, persuasion is fundamental, as politics revolves around determining differences through dialogue and negotiation (Chilton, 2004). Historically, political language has been closely knotted with persuasion (Wróbel, 2015; Almahasees, 2022), and politicians frequently rely on rhetorical strategies to legitimize authority and gain public trust. Campaigns, speeches, and media appearances are all driven by language, underscoring the central role of discourse in political communication (Fetzer & Bull, 2012). Therefore, analyzing how rhetorical devices are employed in political speeches provides valuable insights into political behavior and influence.

Although Barack Obama's first inaugural address is often praised for its powerful and inspiring language, there has been little in-depth analysis using established frameworks like Jones and Peccei's (2004) model to understand exactly how his rhetorical choices helped him connect

with and move his audience. This study aims to fill that gap by taking a closer look at the specific strategies Obama used to persuade, inspire, and engage listeners during this historic moment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The analysis of Barack Obama's inaugural speech (2009) within the framework of Jones and Peccei's model (2004) highlights key concerns in political communication. First, it examines the rhetorical devices Obama employed and how they reveal the skillfulness of persuasion in political discourse. Second, it uncovers the subtle linguistic strategies he used to convince and encourage his audience, thereby addressing the effectiveness of these devices in achieving his purpose. Third, this research paper responds to a gap in linguistic studies by exploring how rhetorical choices intersect with political influence, framing discourse as purposeful action aimed at shaping public perception (Golubovskaya, 2022; Kurmanova, 2021; Labastía, 2023). Finally, the study emphasizes the relevance of Jones and Peccei's model in contemporary political analysis, enriching both linguistics and political studies through a deeper understanding of how language constructs political narratives.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the prevalent rhetorical devices employed in Barack Obama's inaugural Speech: on 20 January 2009?
- How far he was successful in achieving his purpose using these rhetorical devices?

### **Research Objectives**

- To investigate the prevalent rhetorical devices employed in Barack Obama's inaugural Speech: on 20 January 2009.
- To find out far he was successful in achieving his purpose using these rhetorical devices.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of political discourse has a rich and evolving history, grounded in the understanding that language is a powerful instrument for shaping social realities, constructing identities, and exercising power. Foundational work by Halliday and Hasan (1976) established the importance of cohesion and coherence in language, highlighting how these features contribute to meaning-making in both every day and institutional contexts. Building on these early insights, the field has expanded to incorporate critical approaches, with scholars such as Fairclough and van Dijk foregrounding the ideological and socio-political dimensions of discourse. These critical frameworks have enabled researchers to uncover the ways in which language legitimizes authority, propagates ideologies, and reinforces or challenges social hierarchies. Political speeches, as a form of verbal communication, are strategically crafted and delivered to achieve specific political objectives. Rhetoric, defined as the art of persuasion, has long been recognized as a means to influence individuals and groups. In ancient Greece, the rise of democracy underscored the importance of public communication in addressing societal issues. Hansen (1996) describes rhetoric as the strategic use of language to shape attitudes, inspire action, and foster cooperation, functioning as both a communicative and symbolic practice that constructs and transforms social structures.

In recent decades, scholarly attention to political discourse has intensified, particularly in the context of American presidential rhetoric. Researchers have increasingly employed corpus-based and critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods to examine how political leaders use language to construct narratives, mobilize support, and delineate in-group and out-group boundaries. For instance, Gill et al. (2025) and Raza et al. (2024) conducted comparative analyses of the inaugural speeches of Donald Trump and Joe Biden, revealing distinct rhetorical strategies: Trump's discourse is characterized by assertive information delivery and direct audience invocation, whereas Biden's rhetoric emphasizes empathy, unity, and

democratic values. Despite these differences, both leaders utilize rhetorical devices such as lexicalization, victimization, populism, metaphor, and modality to shape their public personas and policy agendas.

Further empirical studies have explored the nuances of self-presentation and opposition in political speech. Raza et al. (2024b) and Imran et al. (2024) highlight Trump's use of divisive rhetoric, nationalism, and authoritative claims, in contrast to Biden's focus on resilience and constructive leadership. Additionally, Raza et al. (2025c) analyzed the use of hedges and boosters, demonstrating that Trump's tone is more confident and urgent, while Biden adopts a more inclusive and cautious approach.

Several studies have focused on the strategic use of rhetorical devices in political speeches. For example, Ullah et al. (2024) investigated Barack Obama's first and second inaugural addresses using Jones and Peccei's (2004) Rhetorical Model. Their qualitative analysis revealed that Obama's first inaugural address employed a greater variety of rhetorical devices, enabling him to convey complex ideas and emotions more vividly and establish a stronger connection with his audience. In contrast, the second inaugural address featured fewer rhetorical devices, suggesting a lower degree of persuasive effectiveness.

Other research has examined the rhetorical strategies of President Joe Biden. Amaireh and Rababah (2022) analyzed Biden's speech on Afghanistan using Aristotelian rhetorical appeals and van Dijk's "Ideological Square." Their findings indicate that Biden portrayed the U.S. and his administration positively while depicting the Afghan government and people negatively. His speech relied on ethical, emotional, and logical appeals, with a particular emphasis on parallelism and the frequent use of "we" to align himself with American values and achievements. Rhetorical questions were also used to provoke emotional responses and justify the U.S. withdrawal by framing Afghan resistance as lacking.

The emotional impact of political rhetoric has also been explored. Bakker et al. (2021) introduced the circumplex model to understand unconscious emotional responses, finding that individuals with extreme or incongruent political attitudes exhibited heightened emotional reactions to rhetoric. These affective responses influenced opinion change independently of conscious emotional awareness, highlighting the need for further research into the interplay between affective and cognitive dimensions of emotion in political persuasion.

Critical discourse and rhetorical analysis frameworks have been widely applied to political rhetoric. Hanim and Dewi (2018) examined Glenn Beck's speech through interactional sociolinguistics, identifying metaphors, euphemisms, and pronoun usage as tools for shaping public perception. Swari (2018) compared Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's rhetoric during a presidential debate, demonstrating how both candidates strategically used pronouns and other rhetorical devices to assert group affiliations and power relations, in line with van Dijk's framework.

Additional studies have analyzed the persuasive power of rhetorical devices in presidential speeches. Fengjie et al. (2016) and Akinrinlola (2016) examined Obama's and Buhari's inaugural addresses, respectively, focusing on the use of parallelism, metaphor, antithesis, and historical and lexical choices to emphasize ideological positioning. Other contributions, such as those by Antari (2016), Permadi (2014), Hatagaol (2006), and Rohmah, further demonstrate the broad application of rhetorical analysis across political, musical, and promotional contexts, underscoring the significance of rhetorical strategies in shaping meaning and influencing audiences in diverse communicative domains.

The literature demonstrates that political discourse is a dynamic field, with rhetorical and critical discourse analysis providing valuable insights into how language is strategically employed to persuade, construct identities, and influence public opinion. The ongoing

evolution of analytical frameworks continues to deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between language, ideology, and power in political communication.

### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the use of rhetorical devices in Barack Obama's inaugural speech. Utilizing purposive sampling, Obama's January 20, 2009, inaugural address was selected for its political significance and rhetorical richness. The analysis is guided by Jones and Peccei's (2004) model, focusing on identifying and interpreting rhetorical devices such as metaphor, euphemism, the rule of three, parallelism, and pronoun usage. The study systematically categorizes and examines these devices to understand their functional role in shaping persuasive political narratives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### METAPHOR

Thomas and Wareing (2005) describe a metaphor as a statement that raises questions about its literal truth. Metaphors serve as linguistic devices within rhetoric, drawing parallels between distinct concepts by likening their characteristics, shapes, positions, or attributes.

Extract 1: "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America."

Extract 2: "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories."

Extract 3: "The ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply."

Extract 4: "We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan."

Extract 5: "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."

Extract 6: "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."

Extract 7: "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."

Extract 8: "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."

Extract 9: "This is the price and the promise of citizenship."

In his first inaugural speech, Barack Obama masterfully employs metaphor as a rhetorical device to enhance the persuasiveness of his message. Each metaphor serves to vividly convey complex ideas and emotions, connecting deeply with his audience. In Extract 1 uses a vivid metaphor, "pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again," which resonates with themes of resilience and renewal, particularly relevant in the context of economic recovery. In Extract 2 employs the metaphor of harnessing natural elements "sun, winds, and soil" to represent innovative and sustainable approaches to energy that promise a self-reliant and environmentally conscious future. In Extract 3 describes a shifting political landscape with "The ground has shifted beneath them," emphasizing that traditional political arguments have become obsolete, urging a new approach to governance. In Extract 4 features the metaphor "forge a hard-earned peace," likening peace-building efforts to metal forging, indicating laborious, deliberate work required to achieve durable peace. In Extract fifth addresses terrorism with a metaphor of indomitable spirit, declaring the nation's moral and psychological

fortitude against such threats. In Extract sixth describes America as being "shaped by every language and culture," employing a crafting metaphor that highlights the diversity and unity of the national identity. In Extract seventh and Extract eighth use military and communal service metaphors, respectively, to honor sacrifices and emphasize solidarity during crises, reinforcing the themes of service and community. Finally, in Extract ninth, "the price and the promise of citizenship," metaphorically encapsulates the dual aspects of civic responsibility and benefits, framing citizenship as a mutual exchange of duties and rights. These metaphors, spread throughout Obama's speech, not only enhance the clarity and emotional depth of his message but also help to weave a consistent narrative thread that portrays America as a resilient, diverse, and progressive society. Through these vivid images, Obama effectively communicates his vision of a united and forward-looking nation.

### EUPHEMISM

Euphemism is word or phrase used to avoid the unpleasant or offensive word (Hanim, & Dewi, 2018). In Obama's inaugural speeches, he uses various rhetorical devices, but specific instances of euphemism are subtle

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Extract 1: "...putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed."                                          |
| Extract 2: "For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of our economy calls for action, bold and swift." |
| Extract 3: "...we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."                                           |
| Extract 4: "We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan."          |

In his first inaugural speech, President Barack Obama adeptly employs euphemisms as a rhetorical device to convey complex and sensitive issues diplomatically and persuasively. This approach not only softens the presentation of dire situations but also fosters inclusivity and unity, encourages positive action, and maintains a forward-looking tone. For instance, Obama discusses procrastination in governance with the euphemism "putting off unpleasant decisions," which suggests a milder form of neglect and urges action without casting harsh blame on previous administrations or leaders. Economic challenges are framed as "work to be done," focusing on action and improvement and presenting these challenges as opportunities for progress rather than insurmountable issues. The invitation for peace is metaphorically suggested through "unclench your fist," which invites reconciliation and peace without labeling nations directly as enemies. This euphemism implies a readiness to engage positively, focusing on the possibility of reconciliation. Lastly, the military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan are described as "begin to responsibly leave Iraq" and "forge a hard-earned peace," emphasizing careful, thoughtful action and the achievements of peace rather than using terms that might imply defeat or abandonment. Through these euphemisms, Obama not only softens the blow of harsh realities but also constructs a narrative that is inclusive and optimistic, encouraging collective action and responsibility across various domains of American and international life. This strategic use of language plays a crucial role in his persuasive appeal, aligning with broader rhetorical goals of unity, action, and positivity.

### PARALLELISM

Jones and Peccei (2004) referred to a device that conveys several ideas through a sequence of comparable structures. President Barack Obama's inaugural speech, demonstrating the use of parallelism, as a rhetorical device where components of a sentence are grammatically similar or identical in construction. This technique adds balance, rhythm, and emphasis to the speech:

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Extract 1: "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."

Extract 2: "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."

Extract 3: "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."

Extract 4: "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."

Extract 5: "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."

Extract 6: "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."

In his first inaugural speech, Barack Obama skillfully employs parallelism as a rhetorical device, enhancing the persuasiveness and resonance of his message. This technique, involving the use of similar grammatical structures to express related ideas, is evident across various segments of the speech, each contributing uniquely to the overarching themes of hope, responsibility, and change. The first extract juxtaposes two distinct pathways: the easy route of "short-cuts or settling for less" against the arduous yet rewarding path of "risk-takers, doers, makers of things." This parallel construction not only emphasizes the virtue of perseverance and hard work but also serves to inspire and motivate the audience by highlighting the contributions of often-uncelebrated individuals to national prosperity and freedom. In the second extract, Obama links the roles of guardians of liberty to their spirit of service, using parallelism to honor their sacrifice and to exemplify the admirable qualities of selflessness and dedication. This rhetorical choice reinforces the value of collective effort and service above self, setting a moral standard for the audience. The third extract employs parallelism to delineate a stark contrast between American resilience and the tactics of terrorists, through phrases like "will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense." This not only strengthens communal resolve but also effectively creates a clear 'us versus them' scenario, rallying nationalistic sentiments and support for defense measures. The fourth extract emphasizes a commitment to both immediate and long-term objectives through the parallel phrases "not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth." This dual focus not only advocates for immediate action but also for sustainable growth, enhancing the call for comprehensive economic reform. The fifth extract presents a series of initiatives in a rhythmic, parallel structure, such as building infrastructure and restoring science to its rightful place. This list not only underscores a broad and ambitious agenda but also imparts a sense of energetic determination and forward momentum. Finally, the sixth extract reinforces the message of steadfastness and collaborative effort in facing global challenges. By using parallelism to list the guiding principles and required tasks, Obama solidifies his vision of guided principles leading to the successful addressing of new threats. Through these examples, it's evident how Obama strategically uses parallelism to create memorable, motivational, and clear messages that align with his themes of hope, responsibility, and change. This not only makes his speech effective but also emotionally engaging and inspiring for the audience.

### THE RULE OF THREE

The rule of three enhances reasoning, persuades the audience, and facilitates message memorization. (Jones and peceei 2004). President Obama's inaugural speech use: "The Rule of Three":

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Extract 1: "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."                    |
| Extract 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 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." |
| Extract 3: "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."                                                                                                                                                      |
| Extract 4: "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."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Extract 5: "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."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

In his first inaugural address, President Barack Obama adeptly utilized the "Rule of Three," a powerful rhetorical device that structures information in triads to enhance clarity, emphasis, and memorability. This technique is evident across various segments of his speech, each serving to underscore his vision and rally collective action. In the first extract, Obama contrasts the American journey with lesser paths, emphasizing the national character through a triad of virtues: "risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things." This not only celebrates hard work and innovation but also subtly elevates these qualities over "short-cuts" or superficial success. The rhetorical structuring here plays a crucial role in resonating with American ideals of perseverance and industriousness. The second extract uses a less explicit triadic structure but effectively conveys the virtues of American guardians of liberty. These guardians are honored for embodying "the spirit of service" and their willingness to "find meaning in something greater than themselves." This segment underscores the collective ethos of selflessness, which Obama positions as a cornerstone of national identity. In the third extract, in addressing economic challenges Obama outlines a clear action plan involving "creating new jobs, laying a new foundation for growth, and taking bold, swift action." This triad not only specifies his immediate priorities but also commits to an aggressive approach to economic recovery, aiming to instill confidence in his administration's resolve. The fourth extract discusses infrastructure and science, where Obama commits to "build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together." Alongside, he pledges to restore science and harness renewable energy, encapsulating his vision for a modern, interconnected, and sustainable America. Finally, the fifth extract serves as a reaffirmation of American resilience and unity, emphasizing "effort, cooperation, and understanding between nations." This triadic summary not only encapsulates his foreign policy approach but also serves as a rallying cry for greater international collaboration in the face of global challenges. Overall, Obama's use of the "Rule of Three" throughout his inaugural address not only enhances the

rhetorical impact of his speech but also aligns his messaging with both historical American values and his forward-looking agenda, effectively mobilizing public sentiment and support for his presidency.

### PRONOUN

Bramley (2001) argues that pronouns are not merely a way of expressing person, number and gender as is suggested by traditional grammarians nor do they only do deictic or referential work, they must be thought of in terms of the context of interaction and identity work that they accomplish. President Obama's inaugural speech where he used "we, the people" as a rhetorical device, emphasizing collective action and responsibility:

Extract 1: "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."

Extract 2: "So it has been; so it must be with this generation of Americans."

Extract 3: "And we will act, not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth."

Extract 4: "We'll restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost."

In his first inaugural address, Barack Obama adeptly utilized pronouns as a rhetorical tool to forge a sense of unity, shared responsibility, and collective endeavor among his audience. This strategic use of language serves to not only engage listeners but also to transform them into active participants in the narrative he crafts about America's future. In first Extract, Obama's use of "us" positions the audience as active participants in shaping the nation's uncertain future, invoking a moral duty tied to citizenship. Similarly, in second Extract, "this generation of Americans" highlights the immediate responsibility of the current populace, linking them to the broader historical narrative. In third Extract, the future-oriented "we will" emphasizes collective action, suggesting that national progress hinges on the efforts of all citizens. Finally, in fourth Extract, Obama's repeated use of "we'll" underscores a joint commitment to national goals, particularly in areas like science, technology, and healthcare, reinforcing the idea of shared action for national improvement. Through these pronouns, Obama not only includes his audience in the conversation but also motivates them to envision themselves as central actors in the nation's transformative journey, thereby enhancing the persuasive power of his speech. Obama in his first inaugural speech employs pronouns to enhance the persuasive power of his message. In the initial extract.

### Discussion

In analyzing President Barack Obama's first inaugural speech, it is evident that Obama skillfully employs a range of rhetorical devices to shape his message, much in line with findings from previous studies on political discourse. By examining Obama's use of linguistic strategies through the lens of the Jones and Peccei (2004) sociolinguistic model, we can draw parallels with established research on political rhetoric, particularly in how leaders use language to inspire, unite, and assert authority. Obama's extensive use of metaphors to create vivid imagery aligns with Lakoff (2014) conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that metaphors are central to how we understand and experience abstract concepts. Obama's use of metaphors like "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories" in his first inaugural speech is consistent with Lakoff's findings that metaphors can shape the audience's understanding of complex situations by linking them to more familiar, concrete experiences. Obama's use of euphemism to soften the impact of delicate subjects, such as the economic crisis and racial inequality, reflects what Allan and Burridge (2006) describe as a linguistic strategy to mitigate the harshness of reality. In his first inaugural address, like "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist" which invites reconciliation and peace without labeling nations directly as enemies. This euphemism implies a readiness to engage positively,

focusing on the possibility of reconciliation. This is comparable to the findings of van Dijk (1997), who argued that euphemisms in political discourse allow speakers to address sensitive issues without alienating their audience.

The frequent use of parallelism in Obama's speech, especially in contrasting values such as "hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord," mirrors Atkinson's (1984) study on the effectiveness of parallel structures in political speeches. Atkinson noted that parallelism creates a rhythm that not only enhances the clarity of the message but also makes it more memorable for the audience. Obama's repeated use of parallel constructions to emphasize unity and collective effort reinforces these themes, consistent with previous analyses of political speech that suggest parallelism enhances the emotional and cognitive engagement of the audience.

Obama's deployment of the Rule of Three, a widely recognized rhetorical device, supports the findings of previous studies on its persuasive power in political speeches. Phrases like "all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance" from his first inaugural speech align with Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, particularly the notion that grouping ideas into sets of three enhances their impact (Wisse, 2002). Obama's use of triadic structures in his inaugural speech is not only a device to create a cadence in his speech but also a method to reinforce key themes such as equality, opportunity, and resilience. This technique's effectiveness is supported by more recent studies Harris, (2023), which demonstrate how the Rule of Three can enhance the audience's perception of a leader's ideas as balanced and comprehensive.

The inclusive use of pronouns, particularly "we" and "our," plays a critical role in shaping Obama's discourse, as seen in previous studies on political speech. Bull and Fetzer (2006) argue that the strategic use of "we" in political speeches helps create a sense of solidarity and collective identity. In his inaugural speech, Obama's consistent use of "we" ties him closely to his audience, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This echoes Wilson's (1990) argument that pronouns are essential in constructing political identities and rallying support, positioning Obama as a leader who is not detached but rather part of the people's collective journey.

Obama's speech can be compared to earlier studies on political rhetoric, including those on President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, which similarly used metaphor, parallelism, and pronouns to convey a message of national unity and progress (Beard, 2000). Both leaders used rhetorical strategies to inspire hope and a sense of collective responsibility, though Obama's speech, especially in the context of the 21st century, show a more nuanced use of euphemism to navigate the complex political landscape.

Additionally, Obama's speeches reflect elements of what Bhatia (2006) identifies as "intertextuality," wherein political speeches draw from historical references and ideals to reinforce legitimacy. His references to the Declaration of Independence's trio of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" demonstrate how intertextual references can be combined with contemporary rhetoric to create a sense of continuity with foundational American values.

The analysis of Barack Obama's inaugural speech reveals that his rhetorical strategies are in line with findings from previous research on political discourse. His use of metaphor, euphemism, parallelism, the Rule of Three, and pronouns reflects established linguistic techniques that have proven effective in political communication. Obama's speech not only highlight his adept use of language to inspire and unite but also confirm that these rhetorical devices remain powerful tools in shaping political narratives. Through this sophisticated blend of rhetorical strategies, Obama effectively communicates his vision for America while positioning himself as a leader attuned to the values and aspirations of his audience.

### **Conclusion**

Barack Obama's inaugural speeches exemplify the effective use of rhetorical devices to convey a vision of resilience, unity, and progress. Throughout his first inaugural address, Obama

employs a range of rhetorical techniques metaphor, euphemism, parallelism, the rule of three, and pronouns to enhance the persuasiveness and emotional impact of his messages, making complex ideas more accessible and fostering a strong connection with his audience. In his first inaugural speech, Obama strategically uses metaphors to paint a picture of America as a resilient, diverse, and progressive society. He addresses critical topics such as resilience through adversity, economic recovery, innovative and sustainable energy, and the importance of mature governance. For example, his metaphor "The ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply" describes a shifting political landscape with "The ground has shifted beneath them," emphasizing that traditional political arguments have become obsolete, urging a new approach to governance. Euphemisms like "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist" "soften The invitation for peace is metaphorically suggested through "unclench your fist," which invites reconciliation and peace without labeling nations directly as enemies. This euphemism implies a readiness to engage positively, focusing on the possibility of reconciliation. Parallelism such as "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." emphasizes a commitment to both immediate and long-term objectives through the parallel phrases "not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth." This dual focus not only advocates for immediate action but also for sustainable growth, enhancing the call for comprehensive economic reform. The rule of three are also prominent in Obama's first inaugural speech, creating rhythm and emphasis that make his words more memorable and impactful. He uses the rule of three "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" discusses infrastructure and science, where Obama commits to "build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together." Alongside, he pledges to restore science and harness renewable energy, encapsulating his vision for a modern, interconnected, and sustainable America. This technique not only highlights the severity of the situation but also reinforces the need for collective action and perseverance. Pronouns like "we" and "our" are frequently used to forge a sense of unity and collective responsibility, as seen in lines such as "we will rebuild, we will recover, and we will emerge stronger." The aim of using these five rhetorical devices was to convince and influence the audience and he was successful in achieving it.

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