

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 11 : 10 October 2011

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. &
Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)

=====

Abstract

Twenty-first century is an epoch of democracy and democratic states. Language seems to be the most resourceful power tool in this period of sophisticated governing. Manipulation of language is very much noticeable in the domain of political speeches. Political speech plays a key role in the promotion of desired philosophies. Speech-making is an imperative part of the politician's job in publicizing and legitimizing political policies to accomplish triumph in the power-hunting game of politics. Orators make use of various means of persuasion to achieve their targets. Renowned modus operandi to carry out this includes 'rhetoric' and 'linguistic spin'.

This paper examines the use of rhetorical devices and the transitivity choices made by US President Barack Obama in his world famous speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)

An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

National Convention'. Olive (2008) declares that Barack Obama was recognized for the first time as a famous national figure after this 2004 address at the National Democratic Convention. In this speech, Obama endorsed John Kerry's selection as the Democratic presidential nominee. The analysis shows that Obama uses the elements of Ethos and Pathos in his speech quite frequently and employs *material processes of action* and *event* as well as *mental process of affection* to physically gather the people around him. He seems much interested in using circumstance of location, both *spatial* and *temporal*, and circumstance of reason to make his account more objective and reliable.

Key Words: Barack Obama, political language, speeches, rhetoric, ethos, pathos, logos, linguistic spin, transitivity

Methodology

As it is an overall rhetorical and linguistic analysis of a selected speech of Obama, different analytical procedures and devices of language have been adopted from a number of theoretical/descriptive frameworks to form an eclectic model of analysis.

Conceptual frameworks underlying this paper are Aristotle's three stage model of rhetoric and Halliday's transitivity systems. Aristotle's three-stage model (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) has been taken from on-line Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>). Certain rhetorical figures have been taken from Higgins' article 'The New Cicero' (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>). The idea of the use of personal pronouns and their effect in political speeches has been taken from Beard's 'The Language of Politics' (2000). Halliday's model of transitivity has been adopted from 'Working With Functional Grammar' (1997) by Martin, Matthiessen & Painter; and Halliday & Matthiessen's 'An Introduction to Functional Grammar' (2004).

Since our interpretation of Obama's speech deals with the art of rhetoric and linguistic spin as a political tool to achieve social effects, this paper is based on the ideational function of language.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

The text of the speech has been provided in the Appendix. The paragraphs have been numbered for the convenience of the readers.

Previous Study

Fairclough (2000) explores Blair's rhetoric to uncover the real meaning underlying his political addresses. He examines his political language in '*New Labour, New Language?*', and provides an analysis in the light of three guiding principles, as he writes:

We can identify three different aspects of political language ... the communicative style of political leaders, the political discourse associated with a particular party or group ... and the way language is used in the process of governing (or governance) (Fairclough, 2000).

In "*A Rhetorical Analysis of George W. Bush Inaugural Address*," Berryhill (2002) rigorously critiques Bush's inaugural address from a rhetorical point of view. He points out his flaws in logic, methods and attempts at persuasion. He argues:

Bush uses his rhetorical sleight of hand techniques as he deliberately commits several logical fallacies for emotional effect and as a method for avoiding making direct political argumentation that can be questioned. Specifically, Bush's speech consistently uses the sound byte method (<http://www.essortment.com>).

Higgins (2008), Atkinson (2008), Clark (2008), Ross (2009), Tofel (2009) have analyzed the rhetoric of President Obama. This paper applies the transitivity model as well as the rhetorical model for the analysis of President Obama's one of the most important speeches of the political career.

Analysis of "Keynote Address At The 2004 Democratic National Convention"

July 24, 2004

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

Boston, MA

Ethos Applied

Story Telling

Second half of the first paragraph and the whole of second paragraph (My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack ... After the war, they studied on the GI Bill, bought a house through FHA, and moved west in search of opportunity) have been devoted in narrating the life history of the speaker's father, his paternal and maternal grandfathers and grandmothers. Obama narrates all this as he is fully aware of the magical and seemingly unlikely success of his political career. He tells the listeners that he has very humble origin. He tells about the professions and life-long struggles of his predecessors for the betterment of their lineage. He tells the listeners that through honest hard work his parents and grandparents dreamed of a successful future of their children. The mention of his father as a poor herdsman, his grandfather as a cook, his maternal grandfather's joining of Patton's army for the sake of America, and buying of a small house through the aid of Federal Housing Authority is suggestive of a very long, fair and honest struggle of his family for the betterment of their future. The mention of his parents' belief that giving an African name (Barack) to Obama is not a hurdle "in a tolerant America" for his success, evokes the positive feelings of the listeners in favour of Obama. All this narrating activity of the history of his family unconsciously develops the feeling in the listeners that the speaker is the offspring of a family whose honesty of purpose, hard work, and loyalty to the state is time-tested. He is the representative of those who are the protector of the social and moral values. Hence this feeling of the audience increases the credibility of Obama's character.

"We" Pronoun

Counting words has turned out to be a much loved method to track a trend and to expose a veiled meaning. Pronoun analysis helps in locating the responsibility factor. Beard (2000) opines that the analysis of the first person singular pronoun "I" and first person plural pronoun Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

“we” is interesting, as it gives us an insight in the matter that how the speaker wants to be viewed by the addressees. The use of first person singular pronoun “I” not only demonstrates the personal contribution of the speaker in a matter under discussion but also his narcissism. It shows speaker as a pompous egomaniac. The speaker uses this pronoun whenever good news is delivered to take the whole credit. The advantage of using the plural pronoun “we” is that it spreads responsibility during more uncertain or bad state of affairs. Nevertheless, the distance between the speaker and the audience gets minimized by using the plural pronoun “we”. Hence it helps building rapport. Moreover, this pronoun gives the sense of inclusiveness: the feeling that the speaker and audience are not poles apart, rather are the same being. This feeling gives a sense of unconscious pride to the listeners, they begin to admire and take side of the speaker. Consequently, this strengthens ethos.

The result of the pronoun analysis of this speech has been shown in the following table:

Table: Pronoun usages (approximate percentage numbers)

	Pronoun	Counted Occurrence	% of Counted Pronouns (121)
1st Person Singular	I (I’m, I’ll)	29	23.96
	Me	10	08.26
	My	18	14.87
2nd Person	You	03	02.47
1st Person Plural	We	36	29.75
	Us	12	09.9
	Our	13	10.7
Total		121	100 (Approximately)

The percentage clearly shows that the focus is on the use of first person plural pronoun “we” (29.75 %). This might convey an interesting conclusion that the speaker of these pronouns wants to emphasize the “we-ness” during the political speech. Halmari opines that a pronoun that can be interpreted as inclusive is the key persuasive feature (Halmari, 2004). Following are the examples of Obama’s inclusive first person pronouns in nominative, accusative and possessive case (see appendix):

1. Tonight, **we** gather to affirm the greatness of **our** nation, not because of the height of **our** skyscrapers, or the power of **our** military, or the size of **our** economy. **Our** pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, “**We** hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”. [Paragraph 4]
2. That **we** can tuck in **our** children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That **we** can say what **we** think, write what **we** think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That **we** can have an idea and start **our** own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody’s son. That **we** can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that **our** votes will be counted — at least, most of the time. [Paragraph 5]
3. This year, in this election, **we** are called to reaffirm **our** values and **our** commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how **we** are measuring up, to the legacy of **our** forebears, and the promise of future generations. [Paragraph 6]
4. John Kerry believes in energy independence, so **we** aren't held hostage to the profits of oil companies or the sabotage of foreign oil fields. [Paragraph 9]
5. **We** have real enemies in the world. [Paragraph 11]
6. A belief that **we're** all connected as one people. [Paragraph 12]
7. Do **we** participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? John Kerry calls on **us** to hope. John Edwards calls on **us** to hope. [Paragraph 14]
8. I believe **we** can give **our** middle class relief and provide working families with a road to opportunity. I believe **we** can provide jobs to the jobless, homes to the homeless, and reclaim young people in cities across America from violence and despair. I believe that as

we stand on the crossroads of history, **we** can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face **us**. [Paragraph 15]

All the illustrations above are the examples of the inclusive first person plural pronoun. Obama uses the nominative plural pronoun “we”, accusative plural pronoun “us” and the possessive plural pronoun “our” too many times throughout the speech. This gives the effect of oneness, inclusiveness and unity with the listeners.

Appeal to Authority

Ethos makes the speaker credible. So the credibility of the speaker helps the audience to take the propositions of the speaker as acceptable and true. Obama gives the proof of his practical intelligence and a virtuous character by referring to the authority, or old wisdom, i.e. state of Illinois and Abraham Lincoln. In very first sentence of the speech he expresses his desire to convey his deep gratitude to the audience, all on the behalf of “great state of Illinois” and “land of Lincoln”. Appeal to authority is mostly done in order to justify a point of view or an action or simply to back up one’s ideas (Halmari, 2004). The speech opens with the adjunct / *circumstance of cause* (behalf), “on behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln”. The thematic position has purposely been given to the adjunct that expresses the referring words of appeal to authority explicitly. In the whole paragraph Obama makes an idea home to the audience that a person who was of so humble origin (his father grew up herding goats in a small village of Kenya, and his grandfather was a domestic cook) is now on such a supreme place that he is expressing his deep gratitude on behalf of great state of Illinois and on behalf of Lincoln. Consequently, the audiences are pursued in taking the speaker as credible person. They accept him the delegate of the state of Illinois as well as of the greatest president of America, Abraham Lincoln. This astute use of Obama’s appeal to authority of the state of Illinois and of Abraham Lincoln increases his trustworthiness, integrity and reliability.

Pathos Applied

Emotion Stirring Narratives

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

Paragraph five exhibits a very unique way of arousing the emotional force of the audience in favour of the speaker. Here, the positive emotions are enthused not by recounting or narrating a story, rather by employing a careful collection of some episodes of mental pictures or images in very brief clauses.

It is human nature that he craves to protect the next coming generation. It is the dream of every human that s/he wants to see her/his off springs happy, flourishing, sheltered and prosperous. Obama creates the imagery of contented, properly fed, and safe children. He introduces the imagery of Utopia where there is a liberty of expression both in saying and writing, where there is no external social hindrance to what we think and desire to do, where there is no fear of bribe and retribution in political process.

Obama keeps on introducing the mental imagery episodes in paragraph six. He mentions the plight, wishes and hopes of the workers of Galesburg, Illinois. The mention of loss of their jobs creates the imagery of an old man competing for seven bucks an hour with his own children. This mental picture reflects the physical as well as the mental pain of the old workers. The mention of a jobless man who has to pay \$4500 a month for the drugs his son needs, and the mention of a woman in East St-Louis who has a good academic record and has desire to study more but no money to pay the fees, evoke audiences' emotions and they feel to stand by the side of the speaker.

Paragraph ten mentions the story of a real young man Obama met at VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars. One of the world's largest organizations for military personnel founded in 1899) in East Moline, Illinois. Obama even mentions the name of the man he met. This enhances the reliability of his account. As he narrates about the pure and honest devotion of the young man to his country and his firm belief in its leaders, Obama himself puts a rhetorical question addressing to the audience:

“Are we serving Shamus [the name of that man] as well as he was serving us? ”

Obama further mentions more than 900 military servicemen and servicewomen, sons, daughters, husbands, wives, friends who served America on the cost of their lives. All these accounts appeal the audience's need of their kindred. These accounts make them recall that war is snatching their relations forever. This emotional arousal of the audience strengthens Obama's antiwar agenda.

Paragraph twelve displays Obama's special use of some parallel structures:

“If there is ... that matters to me, even if it's not my child”

“If there is ... that makes my life poorer, even if its not my grandmother”

“If there is ... that threatens my civil liberties”

Quite like paragraph ten, this paragraph produces some mental pictures in the audience's mind. The imagery of the child on the South side of Chicago who cannot read, the thought of the senior citizen who cannot pay for her prescriptions, and the image of an Arab-American family who is being punished by the executives of the state without due legal process, are the language devices which produce the emotional feelings of positive attachment with the speaker. The concern of the speaker for every citizen of America makes the American audience emotionally charged in favour of the speaker. This paragraph also explicitly gives the audience the element of hope. Gallo opines that Obama speaks in the uplifting rhetoric of hope (Gallo, 2008). The hope Obama gives to the audience is the hope in the idea of America and the American people as a unit, in the idea of America as the land of free people, brave people, just people, in the idea of Americans who are the custodians of other individuals' dreams. This rhetoric of hope from Obama wins audience's favour for him.

Logos Applied

Logical Selection of Lexical Expressions

Logical arguments are a strong means to convince somebody satisfactorily. Speaking reasonably pursues the people the way the speaker wants them to be pursued. Obama uses reasonably Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

logical and convincing lexemes / expressions in his speeches. He employs all the means of persuasion, i.e. Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Although this speech apparently seems an address on the topic of national unity, the real objective of Obama was to convince the listeners in the favour of John Kerry, a candidate for American Presidency in the year 2004. The logical undercurrent / objective of the present speech is the election campaign. So, in paragraph eight Obama introduced John Kerry for the first time in this speech. Since the real motive of the present speech was election campaign, the logical analysis of the present speech focuses on the lexemes / expressions which convince logically the listeners of the suitability of John Kerry as the President of America. The following table shows all the connotative expressions which support the logic of electing Kerry as American President.

Table:

Logical items / expressions supporting Kerry, J.	Paragraph No.	Frequency
That choice	08	1
Our party	08	1
A man / that man	08	2
John Kerry / Lieutenant Kerry / President Kerry	08,09,11,14,16	2+ 5+ 4+1+1
Ideas of community, faith, sacrifice	08	1
His / he / himself / him	08	5 + 1 + 1 + 1
John Kerry believes in ... hard work	09	1
John Kerry believes in ... some health coverage	09	1
John Kerry believes in energy independence	09	1
John Kerry believes in constitutional freedom	09	1
John Kerry believes in war ... an option	09	1

We have real enemies in world	11	1
These enemies must be found	11	1
They must be pursued and they must be defeated	11	1
Lieutenant Kerry did not hesitate ... in Vietnam	11	1
President Kerry will not hesitate ... to use our military might	11	1
John Kerry believes in America	11	1
There is no liberal America and conservative America	13	1
There is the United States of America	13	2
Not a black America and white America	13	1
[Not a] Latin America and Asian America	13	1
There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it	13	1
Politics of hope	14	1
... to hope	14	2
Hope of slaves	14	1
Hope of immigrants	14	1
Hope of a young navel lieutenant	14	1
Hope of a mill worker's son	14	1

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
 An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

Hope of a skinny kid	14	1
The audacity of hope	14	1
Belief in things not seen	15	1
Belief that ... better days ahead	15	1
I believe	15	3
Energy	16	1
Urgency	16	1
Hopefulness	16	1

The table shows that the proper noun, John Kerry / Lieutenant Kerry / President Kerry has been mentioned thirteen times in this speech. The repetition of the name of a person who is the candidate for the American presidency convinces the audience logically of the suitability of his candidature, as repetition hammers home the content unconsciously. All other expressions mentioned in the table convey the connotative meanings and convince logically the listeners in favour of John Kerry. The end of the speech is full of lexemes like “hope” and “believe”. This positive side of the picture drawn by Obama through this rhetoric of hope increases the frequency of element of logos.

Transitivity: Analysis and Interpretation

Paragraph 1:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

The thematic force in the first sentence has been given to the *circumstance of cause (behalf)* as Obama speaks on behalf of great state of Illinois. In this verbal clause, *verbal process* “express” has been used after permission seeking imperative “let” consciously:

“On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln, let me express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention” (see appendix).

The noun phrases “crossroads of a nation” and “land of Lincoln” are appositives to the noun phrase “state of Illinois”, hence the part of the *circumstance of cause (behalf)*. The noun phrase “my deep gratitude” is the *verbiage* of this *verbal clause*, as “the content of saying may also be construed as a participant ----- the *verbiage* of a verbal clause” (Martin et al. 1997). Last part of the clause “for the privilege of addressing this convention” is again a *circumstance of cause (purpose)*. Obama is adding much to his credibility and acceptability of self by talking about the great state of Illinois as his pedestal. The appositives add force to his words as he lets the addressees recall the greatest hero of the nation, Lincoln. He consciously uses the emotional force and the attachment of the audience in his favour, since the thematic force has been given to the *circumstance of cause* and both appositions are the part of the thematic adjunct. Instead of using “I express my deep gratitude”, Obama prefers “let me express ...”. The use of accusative case of first person pronoun and permission seeking imperative “let”, instead of nominative case of first person pronoun, gives the audience a place of authority and the speaker successfully develops rapport with the listeners. This unique *verbal clause* starts and ends at adjuncts. The adjunct / *circumstance of cause (purpose)* “for the privilege of addressing this convention” explains the reason of Obama’s *verbal clause verbiage* “my deep gratitude”. He explains through this *verbiage* the reason why he is overwhelmed by the gratitude for the listeners.

The sentence:

“My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya”

bears three verbal groups / clauses: one *relational process* “was” and two *material (event processes)* “born” and “raised”. *Relational process* is of identifying type: “my father”
Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

functioning as *token* and “a foreign student” as *value*. The two *material processes* reflect the two independent phenomena; “born” and “raised”. Both are *material event processes*. The thematic position has been given to the *token* “my father”. All the processes have been introduced before the circumstance of location (*spatial*), i.e. “in a small village in Kenya”. This transitivity analysis proves that Obama is not willing to hesitate to introduce and proclaim his humble origin. The thematic place is given to the *relational (identifying) process* which speaks of his father and his foundation: Obama is not ashamed at revealing his identity. Obama’s unwillingness to be hesitant in revealing his humble source at such big occasion shows his strength of character and enhances his credibility and integrity.

The next sentence:

“He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack”

bears three distinct and independent verbal groups. The finite verbal group “grew up” represents the *material process of event* since “growing up” is a happening. The non-finite “herding”, represents *material process of action* since “herding” is doing something. The absence of a coordinator “and” before “went” gives more force to expression as content word “went” has been introduced without using the relational word “and”. The non-finite clause, in combination with content word / *material process* “went” gives force and economy of expression. These three processes produce the imagery of such a person, who is poor but is full of positive ambition, is a hard worker and a true seeker of knowledge.

The next sentence:

“His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant”

shows the use of two appositions in a *relational (identifying)* clause. “His father” is *token* and “cook” is *value*. This second *relational clause of identifying* attaches a value of cook to his grandfather. These bold *relational (identifying) clauses* at the close of the first paragraph give strength and weightage to the speaker’s self respect and his character.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

Paragraph 4

The first sentence has four processes, having two ellipted clauses (in second and third clauses, subjects are ellipted): “I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents’ dreams live on in my precious daughters”. The sentence is introduced with the *material process (action)*, “stand”, then comes the *mental process (affection)*, “grateful” with ellipted subject. The phrase “for the diversity of my heritage” represents *circumstance of cause (purpose)*, as Obama expresses his gratitude to the phenomenon of his diverse heritage. “Aware” is the *mental process (cognition)* with ellipted first person singular pronoun subject. The last process “live on” is *material process (event)*. Obama consciously avoided using nominative case of first person singular pronoun with the second and third processes (grateful and aware) of the sentence as this could have given the audience a sense of alienation from the speaker. Moreover, these ellipted subjects minimize the possibility of creating an egoistic image of Obama in the audience’s minds. So, within just two-line sentence Obama proudly speaks of his successes as the representative of the great state of Illinois, his feeling of being proud over his parentage, and his own ambitions for his daughters. He conveys all that by the economy of the expression created by the ellipted subjects; the *circumstance of location (spatial)*, “here”; the *circumstance of location (temporal)*, “today”; and the combination of subject-less *mental (cognitive) process*, “aware” with the dependent that-clause.

The next sentence once again has the same start showing a partial parallelism:

“I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible” (see appendix).

The non-finite clause “I stand here knowing” further introduces three dependent that-clauses narrating in a very economic way that he is the part of big story of America; his gratitude, respect and responsibility to his predecessors in politics; and his acknowledgment that such a story like that of him is possible only in his country, America. First that-clause just after the non-

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

finite clause is a *relational clause (identifying)*: “my story” is *token* and “part of the larger American story” is *value*. Through his brief *relational clause of identification*, Obama declares the strength of his relation with America and makes the audience to identify his unique place among them. Second that-clause is a *mental (perception)* clause as *senser* “I” has to pay [owe] the *phenomenon* “a debt”. This sense of obligation makes the process “owe” a *mental clause of perception*. So Obama’s perception of obligation to the forerunners of politics is conveyed through a precise mental clause. Third that-clause is a matchless example of *existential process* as *circumstance of location (Spatial)* has been given the thematic place and is further projected by using two commas around it. The *existent* “my story” could have been impossible in any other country of the world. The thematic place of the *circumstance of location (spatial)* is suggestive of Obama’s belief in the strong and justice based socio-political structure of America, found nowhere in the whole world. These strong proclamations of the speaker expressed in three successive that-clauses give the feeling of pride to the listeners, who are Americans, and the source of this feeling of pride is Obama’s precise and wise selection of words.

Next sentence does not let the momentum of Obama’s discourse go down, rather it redoubles the amount of feeling of pride in the addressees when he uses a long one clause (non-finite / to-infinitive) sentence starting with the *circumstance of location (temporal)*, and ending at the *circumstance of cause (reason)*, although the phrase, “because of” is ellipted:

“Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation, not because of the height of our sky-scrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy” (see appendix).

The sentence has one *behavioral (social) process*, “gather”. Nominative first person plural pronoun “we” is the *beholder* of the process. The thematic place has been given to the *circumstance of location (temporal)*, “tonight”. According to functional linguistics a transitive analysis based on the to-infinitive clause [here “to affirm”] is preferred (Martin et al. 1997). Hence the process “to-affirm” is more important to analyze. This to-infinitive seems a *verbal process* which amounts to the verbal behavior of “declaring”. “We” is the *sayer* of the process. “The greatness of our nation” is the *verbiage*, and the rest of the sentence bears three

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

circumstances of cause (reason): first with the words “not because” and the rest of the two with the ellipted lexemes “not because”. Hence this non-finite one clause sentence successfully keeps up the momentum of an important political speech of Obama.

The choice of passive voice in the next sentence is a wise decision:

Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (see appendix).

Instead of using, “We base our pride on ...”, he uses “our pride is based on ...”. By using it he achieves following effects:

1. Economy of expression as he has not to use nominative case of first person plural pronoun “we”.
2. Thematic force is given to the feeling of “pride”, a “collective American pride”. This gives much sense of superiority and positive vibes to the listeners.
3. The passive voice of the verb (is based) does not refer to any *participant* / agent responsible for providing that pride. Since no agent is nominated explicitly, the reference of agent automatically goes to three-sentence statement enclosed in the inverted commas (“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”). This is a cleverly wise use of passive structure as it increases the semantic force of the last three sentences he quotes in the inverted commas. In the absence of an explicit agent responsible for providing the feeling of pride, the truth that all men are created equal and that the humans have been given certain inalienable rights by the Creator serve as the agent of the process.

Paragraph 11

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

Permission-seeking sentences seem Obama's preferred style in a political address:

"Now let me be clear".

The transitivity choice of the permission seeking verb "let", instead of the phrase "I am clear" is used to give the audience an air of feeling privileged and imperative. This feeling makes Obama their favourite political personnel.

The next sentence, "We have real enemies in the world", has simple typical English syntax of SPCA. The relationship of the predicator (have) with both the subject (we) and the complement (real enemies) shows that the *material process of event* (have) has been used. The *material process* is used with the *circumstance of spatial location* (in the world). The use of *material process* here means that the speaker's fellow beings, who are all Americans indeed, have a real and very concrete and materialistic presence of enemies. And the *circumstance of spatial location* is referred to as the whole world. This transitivity choice of the speaker is very cognizant and mindful. He wants to communicate the audience that he is not unaware of the presence of enemies of America. He is not taking them flippantly, rather quite gravely.

Next three clauses are very strong statements of an obligation:

"These enemies must be found. They must be pursued and they must be defeated".

All clauses are in passive voice. *Mental processes of affection* (must be) ----- since it is an obligation so it seems a *mental process of affection* ----- are used in these clauses. Again, "find" is the *material process of action*, "pursue" and "defeat" are also the *material processes of action*. This transitivity analysis proves that Obama's mind is consistent in its thinking and expression: all the three clauses employ same category of *mental process*, i.e. *affection*; and all the three sentences employ same category of *material process*, i.e. *action*. His consistency of selecting the same categories of the *mental* and *material processes* convey that he is adamant in his belief that the enemies of America must be destroyed.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

Look at the next sentences:

John Kerry knows this. And just as Lieutenant Kerry did not hesitate to risk his life to protect the men who served with him in Vietnam, President Kerry will not hesitate one moment to use our military might to keep America safe and secure (see appendix).

In these clauses a proper name ----- the candidate for the American Presidency ----- has been introduced by using another consistent set of *processes*: “know” is the *mental process of cognition*. “Hesitate” is the *mental process of cognition*, and this mental process has been used with both the Lieutenant Kerry and President Kerry, who are one and the same person indeed. The choice of the same *mental processes* for a person’s past and the future produces the effect that the said person is reliable, as if his past deeds are praiseworthy and trustworthy, his future deeds would definitely be so. Non-finite to-infinitives (“to risk”, “to protect”, “to use” and “to keep”) are the *material processes of action*. Similarly, “served” is also a *material process of action*. The use of the five *material processes of action* once again strongly refers to John Kerry as a person of quick action and decisive nature. So Obama’s careful use of a consistent category of processes is suggestive of Kerry’s reliable character.

Paragraph 16

The last paragraph of the speech is interestingly important for the transitivity analysis as the whole paragraph consists of one sentence and too many clauses, only one more six-word sentence of blessings has been introduced at the very end:

Tonight, if you feel the same energy I do, the same urgency I do, the same passion I do, the same hopefulness that I do — if we do what we must do, then I have no doubts that all across the country ... the people will rise up in November ... and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness, a brighter day will come. Thank you and God bless you (see appendix).

The first clause comprises of *mental process of affection*, “feel”. Next three clauses are the examples of the ellipted *mental process of affection*: “feel” is ellipted but is taken for granted to be there. “I do” in all the first four clauses is used with an ellipted “as”, but it gives the meaning of “as I do”, so the verb “do” is used for the purpose of comparison between the speaker and the audience. Rest of the clauses use one or the other subcategory of the *material process* (with a few exception of *mental* and *verbal* clauses at the end of the speech): “have” is the *material process of event* in “then I have no doubt ... a brighter day will come”, “rise up” is the *material process of action*, “swear in” at both places is also *material process of action* (though it seems that they are the *verbal processes*) as “swear in” in this context is a speech act. “Come” is the *material process of event*. “Bless” is the *mental process of action*. “Reclaim” in this context is the *verbal process* since “this country” is the *sayer (Participant)* and “its promise” is the *content / verbiage (participant)* of the process. This transitivity analysis reveals that the last paragraph of the speech opens with and ends at the *mental clauses of affection*. This seems to be a conscious effort to move the emotions of the audience and to involve their sympathies positively in the favour of the speaker’s views.

Too many *material clauses* have also been used in this paragraph for the purpose of physically motivating the audience to vote for John Kerry. The speech act / *material process of action*, “swear in” develops the imagery of the office of the president of America, and also that of Kerry as President. This spinning use of language compels the audience to stand by Obama’s side in the fourth coming elections. Obama emerges as a spin master: all these mental, material and verbal clauses too vigorously ask the audience to vote for Kerry, although not a single word of “vote” has been used.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that Obama uses the elements of Ethos and Pathos in his speech quite frequently. This could be so as he was much interested in motivating and persuading the people’s emotional side, not the intellectual side, as it is easy to persuade people emotionally. Obama used *material process of action* more frequently than other process types. He used *mental*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama’s Speech ‘Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention’

process of affection and relational process as well. It is noticed that he used *circumstance of location (spatial)*, *circumstance of location (temporal)*, and *circumstance of cause, also*. His frequent use of *material processes* might be as he wanted to motivate the people physically to gather around him and affirm his ideas. Moreover, he used *mental processes of affection* to strike to the element of Pathos in the masses in the favour of his account.

=====

References

Beard, A. (2000). *The Language of Politics*. Florence, KY, USA: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2000) *New Labour, New Language?* London: Routledge

Halliday, M.A.K. & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Halmari, H. (2004). *Persuasion Across Genres. A linguistic approach* (Ed.). Philadelphia, PA, USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gallo, C. 3 April 2008. *How to Inspire People Like Obama Does*. Business Week Online. 18-19.

Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, M.I.M., & Painter, C. (1997). *Working With Functional Grammar*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Olive, D. (2008). *An American Story: The Speeches of Barack Obama*. Toronto: ECW Press

Atkinson M. *Rhetoric and Imagery in Obama's Victory Speech*

<<http://maxatkinson.blogspot.com/2008/11/rhetoric-imagery-in-obamas-victory.html>>

Berryhill A. *A Rhetorical Analysis of George W. Bush Inaugural Address*

<http://www.essortment.com/all/bushinaugurala_rnk.v.htm>

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

Clark R.P. *Why It Worked: A Rhetorical Analysis of Obama's Speech on Race*

<<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=78&aid=140711>>

Higgins.C. (2008, November 26) *The new Cicero*

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/26/barack-obama-usa1>>

Rapp, C.2 May 2002. *Aristotle's Rhetoric*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2002 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). 1 May 2008

<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2002/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/>>

Ross T. *Rhetorical Analysis of Barack Obama's Inaugural Address*

<<http://iambblackamerica.blogspot.com/2009/02/rhetoical-analysis-of-barack-obamas.html>>

Tofel R. *Obama Speech Analysis: The Oratory and the Promises*

<<http://www.propublica.org/article/obama-speech-analysis-the-oratory-and-the-promises-090120>>

=====

Appendix

“KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 2004 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION”

July 24, 2004

Boston, MA

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln, let me express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention. Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant. [1]

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place: America, which stood as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before. While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor he signed up for duty, joined Patton's army and marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised their baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the GI Bill, bought a house through FHA, and moved west in search of opportunity. [2]

And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter, a common dream, born of two continents. My parents shared not only an improbable love; they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed", believing that in a tolerant America, your name is no barrier to success. They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. They are both passed away now. Yet, I know that, on this night, they look down on me with pride. [3]

I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on Earth, is my story even possible. Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation, not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness." [4]

That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles. That we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son. That we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted — at least, most of the time. [5]

This year, in this election, we are called to reaffirm our values and our commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we are measuring up, to the legacy of our forebears, and the promise of future generations. And fellow Americans----- Democrats, Republicans, Independents----- I say to you tonight: We have more work to do. More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour. More to do for the father I met who was losing his job and choking back tears, wondering how he would pay \$4,500 a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits he

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

counted on. More to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college. [6]

Don't get me wrong. The people I meet in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks, they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead and they want to. Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don't want their tax money wasted by a welfare agency or the Pentagon. Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach kids to learn. They know that parents have to parent, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. No, people don't expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all. They know we can do better. And they want that choice. [7]

In this election, we offer that choice. Our party has chosen a man to lead us who embodies the best this country has to offer. That man is John Kerry. John Kerry understands the ideals of community, faith, and sacrifice, because they've defined his life. From his heroic service in Vietnam to his years as a prosecutor and lieutenant governor, through two decades in the United States Senate, he has devoted himself to this country. Again and again, we've seen him make tough choices when easier ones were available. His values and his record affirm what is best in us. [8]

John Kerry believes in an America where hard work is rewarded. So instead of offering tax breaks to companies shipping jobs overseas, he will offer them to companies creating jobs here at home. John Kerry believes in an America where all Americans can afford the same health coverage our politicians in Washington have for themselves. John Kerry believes in energy independence, so we aren't held hostage to the profits of oil companies or the sabotage of foreign oil fields. John Kerry believes in the Constitutional freedoms that have made our country the envy of the world, and he will never sacrifice our basic liberties nor use faith as a wedge to divide us. And John Kerry believes that in a dangerous world, war must be an option, but it should never be the first option. [9]

A while back, I met a young man named Shamus at the VFW Hall in East Moline, Illinois. He was a good-looking kid, six-two or six-three, clear-eyed, with an easy smile. He told me he'd joined the Marines and was heading to Iraq the following week. As I listened to him explain why he'd enlisted, his absolute faith in our country and its leaders, his devotion to duty and service, I thought this young man was all any of us might hope for in a child. But then I asked myself: are we serving Shamus as well as he was serving us? I thought of more than nine hundred service men and women, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors, who will not be returning to their hometowns. I thought of families I had met who were struggling to get by without a loved one's full income, or whose loved ones had returned with a limb missing or with nerves shattered, but who still lacked long-term health benefits

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'

because they were reservists. When we send our young men and women into harm's way, we have a solemn obligation not to fudge the numbers or shade the truth about why they're going, to care for their families while they're gone, to tend to the soldiers upon their return, and to never ever go to war without enough troops to win the war, secure the peace, and earn the respect of the world. [10]

Now, let me be clear. We have real enemies in the world. These enemies must be found. They must be pursued and they must be defeated. John Kerry knows this. And just as Lieutenant Kerry did not hesitate to risk his life to protect the men who served with him in Vietnam, President Kerry will not hesitate one moment to use our military might to keep America safe and secure. John Kerry believes in America. And he knows it's not enough for just some of us to prosper. For alongside our famous individualism, there's another ingredient in the American saga. [11]

A belief that we're all connected as one people. If there's a child on the south side of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child. If there's a senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for her prescription and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my grandmother. If there's an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties. It's that fundamental belief — I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper — that makes this country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family. E pluribus unum. Out of many, one. [12]

Yet even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers, who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America — there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice-and-dice our country into Red States and Blue States; Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the Blue States, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the Red States. We coach Little League in the Blue States and have gay friends in the Red States. There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America. [13]

In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? John Kerry calls on us to hope. John Edwards calls on us to hope. I'm not talking about blind optimism here — the almost willful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't think about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. No, I'm talking about something more substantial. It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs. The hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; the hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; the hope of a mill worker's son who

dares to defy the odds; the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. The audacity of hope! [14]

In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation; the belief that there are better days ahead. I believe we can give our middle class relief and provide working families with a road to opportunity. I believe we can provide jobs to the jobless, homes to the homeless, and reclaim young people in cities across America from violence and despair. I believe that as we stand on the crossroads of history, we can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face us. America! [15]

Tonight, if you feel the same energy I do, the same urgency I do, the same passion I do, the same hopefulness that I do — if we do what we must do, then I have no doubts that all across the country, from Florida to Oregon, from Washington to Maine, the people will rise up in November, and John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness, a brighter day will come. Thank you and God bless you. [16]

=====

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil.
Lecturer in English
Government College University
Faisalabad.
Pakistan
sofia.alvi@yahoo.com

Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (English) Candidate
International Islamic University
Islamabad
Pakistan

Lecturer in Linguistics
Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan
abdulbasseer@yahoo.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

11 : 10 October 2011

Sofia Dildar Alvi, M.A. (English), M.Phil. & Abdul Baseer, M.Phil. (English), Ph.D. (Candidate)
An Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech 'Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention'