

Creating and Maintaining Identities in Political Discourse: A Corpus Driven Analysis

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This study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis of campaign speeches, UN Addresses and State of the Union Addresses given by Barack Obama. Using the Brown and LOB as reference corpora, the top 50 keywords in each sub-corpus and their collocation and colligation patterns were identified and used as points of entry for further qualitative analysis. The semantic implications of the lexical items in the key-word list suggested that prevalent themes throughout all of the speeches were conflict and the economy. A collocation and concordance analysis of the salient grammatical patterns determined through the key word lists yielded results which exposed a prevalent pattern of the key lexical items being ideologically manipulated to enhance Obama's political identity and to create and maintain a relationship with his audience. This was primarily achieved through the rhetorical strategies of predication and parallelism. Through qualitative analysis, the key linguistic and rhetorical patterns were cross-referenced with the topic(s) under discussion to reveal that they were primarily being utilised to discuss the salient discourse themes and predominant social issues of the economy and conflict.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on political speeches given by Barack Obama and includes campaign speeches, State of the Union addresses and annual UN addresses. Each speech is delivered to a different primary audience. Wardhaugh (2010: 113) argues that speakers will adjust their language to accommodate the needs and expectations of their audience. This theory is also adopted by Van Dijk (2006: 128-129), who states that within a political speech, 'practically each word is chosen as a function of its ideological and communicative presuppositions and implications'. The audience of a presidential speech is large and wide ranging, including those that are present at the speech, those watching it on television, those streaming it on the internet and those reading about it and watching it in the media. In addition, once these speeches have been delivered and recorded, the content is accessible to anybody and can be recontextualised and appropriated into different socio-cultural contexts years after they were originally delivered. Bell (1984) argues that an audience has an influential role in the decisions a speaker makes in terms of the dynamic and style of an interaction. He shapes an audience design framework which consists of a number of audience types that have varying levels of influence in terms of the linguistic and stylistic choices made by speakers. He argues

that the two audience types which have the greatest level of influence on language choices are 'addressees': audience members who are known to be present, ratified and addressed, and 'auditors': auditors are not present during the delivery of the discourse, but hold such salience to the speaker that they heavily influence language choices (Bell 1984: 159-86). It will be argued and demonstrated in this paper that, despite their absence at the original delivery, American citizens are considered influential audience members and auditors of Obama's State of the Union addresses and UN addresses. Within a political speech, linguistic measures are taken to ensure that a positive and powerful political identity is shaped for the politician and their political ideologies. This is achieved through a politicians' use of rhetoric, which is the art of speaking effectively and persuasively (Aristotle cited in Ross 1952: 69). Persuasive language in political discourse manifests itself in complex and often subtle linguistic indicators and patterns referred to as rhetorical devices. This paper demonstrates the results of a corpus driven analysis of the rhetorical devices employed by Barack Obama to create and enrich his and America's political identity in his campaign and subsequent presidential discourse.

By analysing a corpus of campaign speeches, State of Union addresses and UN addresses, this study aims to identify which grammatical and rhetorical patterns Obama utilised to create his political identity. The analysis will also establish whether Obama created a consistent political identity or whether the characteristics of his political identity were interchangeable depending on the type of political speech he was giving.

2. Creating Identities in Political Speeches

The intentions behind the linguistic choices in political discourse are to present and express social and political ideologies in addition to generating support and popularity for the politician delivering the speech. This is achieved through persuasion, not only by argument, but also through emotions, sense of history and appealing to the pragmatic motivations of the audience (Eco 1976: 277). Previous research into the linguistic patterns of political discourse has argued that the use of lexical items that carry positive or negative semantic implications can effectively enforce desired ideologies whilst generating emotional responses from an audience (Salama 2011). In addition, research into the grammatical features of political discourse, such as pronouns and verbs, has demonstrated how politicians can create ideologies and attach identities to them (Fetzer 2008; 2011). Fetzer (2008; 2011), uses the examples of cognitive verbs and contends that they can express psychological commitment and are represented through lexical items such as, *think*, *believe*, *assume*, *suppose* and *guess* (Fetzer 2011: 260). Pragmatically, the cognitive verbs *think* and *believe* indicate a greater quantity of psychological

commitment, and the results of her research revealed that politicians used self-referencing pronouns such as *I* and *we* in conjunction with these cognitive verbs (Fetzer 2008; 2011). When a cognitive verb is pre-modified by the first person singular pronoun *I*, the speaker expresses their epistemic modality towards the topic of discussion, which, according to Fetzer, intensifies the pragmatic force of a proposition by inviting the hearer to adopt the ideology which is attached to parentheticals such as *I think* and *I believe* (Fetzer 2008: 388; 2011: 261). Fetzer demonstrated how pronouns can be used to complement cognitive verbs and the ideologies which the cognitive verbs represent. However, pronouns can be manipulated in a variety of ways in order to represent identities and relay ideologies onto audiences. For example, pronouns are commonly used to execute an ideological rhetorical strategy of positive self-representation and negative other representation (Van Dijk 2005). This is often carried out in conjunction with a strategy referred to as 'predication', often employed by politicians as it refers to the act of labelling specific social actors in particular ways in an effort to create a conceptualisation of said social actors (Wodak 2009: 302). Evidence of predication was found in Bartolucci's (2012) investigation into a corpus of George W. Bush's speeches made during his presidency regarding terrorism. Her results showed that over the course of his presidency, Bush framed a negative conceptualisation of terrorists by repetitively utilising inclusive pronouns such as *we* and *us* to represent *the good guys* and exclusive pronouns such as *they* and *them* to represent terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda (Bartolucci 2012: 563). An example of this was Bush's consistent use of emotive verbs such as the transitive verb *hate* in conjunction with the pronouns *they* and *them*. For example, 'why do they hate us' and 'they hate our freedom' (Bartolucci 2012: 563). By consistently repeating that terrorists 'hate' anything we 'love', Bush linguistically contrasts *them* and *us* in a definitive and effective way by evoking an emotional audience response whilst endorsing the polarisation of *us* and *them* (Bartolucci 2012: 569). These linguistic patterns are effective in isolation and they are more effective when they are repeatedly utilised. The way in which they are repeated can additionally influence the interpretation of them and enhance the effects of them. For example, there has been some research conducted into a rhetorical strategy referred to as *parallelism*, which refers to the use of similar syntactic structures in two or more clauses (Charteris-Black 2014: 39-42; Flowerdew 2002: 151). For example:

They said this day would never come. (Cheers)

They said our sites were set too high. (Cheers)

They said this country was too divided, too disillusioned to ever come together.

(Charteris-Black 2014: 43)

It is argued that the repetition of phrases in this manner creates a rhythmic and climactic effect and generates an emotional audience response, which consequently makes an utterance

more persuasive (Flowerdew 2002: 161). This theory is substantiated by arguments that audience response in the form of cheering and applause provides proof of an emotional response (Flowerdew 2002: 161; Charteris-Black 2014: 43). Applause and cheers demonstrate a positive emotional response to the rhetorical strategy, but it cannot provide conclusive evidence that this response led to a change the audience's beliefs towards the politician or the issue under discussion. However, the linguistic evidence collected thus far has demonstrated that this is a favoured persuasive strategy employed by politicians. A shared contention amongst the existing literature is that politicians utilise rhetorical strategies such as predication and parallelism in abundance throughout their speeches to create a powerful political identity for themselves and to persuade audience members of their ideologies. This investigation expands on these arguments and specifically examines how Barack Obama enforces these rhetorical strategies and quantifies his use of them within his political speeches.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed in this analysis is a combination of Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which utilises quantitative and qualitative methods. The corpus for this research comprises campaign speeches, UN addresses and State of the Union addresses made by Barack Obama. There is a total of 19 speeches. These speeches were sourced from the White House website and were readily available transcripts. The corpus was divided into three sub-corpora and analysed based on speech type. In total, the corpus consisted of 97,354 words. Exact word counts of these sub-corpora are displayed in Table 1.

Corpus Design and Word Counts	
Campaign Speeches	26,930 words
UN Addresses	28,140 words
State of the Union Addresses	42,284 words
Total	97,354 words

Table 1: Corpus design and word counts

3.1 Corpus Linguistics

The computer technology used to conduct the quantitative element of this investigation was a freeware called AntConc (Anthony 2014). AntConc offers a variety of functions such as displaying word frequencies, extracting keywords and generating collocations and concordance patterns (Baker, Hardie and McEnery 2006: 13), all of which were utilised in this

analysis. In order to determine which words appear with an uncharacteristically high or low frequency in the corpus under examination, the word frequency list can be compared to a separate reference corpus. This is referred to as a keyword analysis (Baker, Hardie and McEnery 2006: 42-43). McEnery, McGlashan and Love (2015: 5) argue that keywords provide an insight into which topics and themes are salient within a corpus. The reference corpora utilised in this study were the Brown and Lancaster Oslo Bergen (LOB) Corpus and totalled two million words. These two corpora were selected because they are comprised of texts from a wide variety of different genres. Once the two reference corpora were imported into AntConc, a keyword analysis was run, and a keyword list was produced. The lexical items on this list are a consecutive list ordered by statistical significance or 'keyness' (Adolphs 2006: 36). The top 50 keywords from each sub-corpus were established and manually divided into semantic and grammatical categories in order to identify the predominant themes and grammatical patterns throughout the corpus. Each keyword then underwent a collocational and colligational analysis, which is an examination of the linguistic and grammatical patterns that occur next to or 'in the neighbourhood' of a key lexical item (Baker, Hardie and McEnery 2006: 37). Collocates and colligates of a lexical item contribute to its meaning and their analysis can uncover implicit messages (Sinclair 1991). In order to sufficiently explain the semantic implications of the keywords and their collocates and colligates, a concordance analysis was then carried out. This was achieved by the software presenting the collocational pairings within the context in which they occurred. When analysing the meaning of words and phrases, incorporating a contextual analysis is key. Meaning is predicated on context. The same string of words can have a completely different meaning in two different contexts. Therefore, in addition to analysing the key linguistic patterns in their immediate context, wider discursive and contextual factors were incorporated into the investigation.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

It is a shared contention among many discourse analysts that language choices heavily correlate with social structures and so the two should be analysed in conjunction with one another (Halliday 1978, Fairclough 1985, Fairclough 1992, Wodak 2011, Van-Dijk 1993). CL can be used to identify predominant linguistic patterns within text, but the methods are insufficient in aiding the process of interpreting what these patterns suggest. Baker (2010: 138-41) claims that the methodological procedures of CL can be used to 'downsize' corpora by eliciting key word lists, collocations and concordance lines, directing researchers towards words and concepts which are salient within their corpus. He suggests using CL alongside a multidimensional analytical framework which examines wider discursive and contextual aspects of the corpus. This proposed methodology is effective because making valid statements about patterns of lexical and grammatical phenomena at a discourse level requires

a broader contextual examination (Adolphs 2006: 91). An analytical framework which caters to the discursive requirements this analysis possesses is Critical Discourse Analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary framework which aims to elucidate power relationships in language that appear ideologically neutral by examining the relationship between language and social elements such as, power, social relationships, gender, culture and beliefs (Fairclough 2010: 231). Fairclough (1992) proposes a three-dimensional approach in which to analyse this. The three dimensions are 'text', 'discursive practice' and 'social practice' (Fairclough 1992: 72). The textual dimension requires an analysis of the linguistic features of the text. This could be as simple as one individual word, and as complex as large scale structural properties of discourse such as analysing the dialectal relationship between multiple sentences and clauses (Fairclough 1992: 75). Examining the discursive practices of discourse involves analysing elements such as the production and consumption of the textual dimension of the discourse, in conjunction with the context of the discourse (Fairclough 1992: 71). Fairclough emphasises that the production and consumption elements of discourse are social, they involve formulating arguments and a hypothesis as to why certain linguistic variables and patterns are present and how these variables and patterns could be received. Therefore, the context in which the discourse was generated needs to be referenced and implemented into the analysis (Fairclough 1992: 71). The final dimension to this approach is social practice. This involves using the evidence produced under the first two dimensions to trace a relationship between language and social societal structures. In addition to analysing the immediate context of the text which comes under the second dimension of Fairclough's approach, broader historical contextual factors which may have influenced and shaped the language within the discourse were also consulted. By incorporating a historical element into the methodology, the discourse in its entirety can be better understood.

3.3 CL and CDA Synergy

Synergising CL and CDA is a contemporary method of analysis which many discourse analysts have applied it to their research (Partington 2003, Baker and McEnery 2005, Baker et al. 2008, Baker 2012, Prentice 2010, Savoy 2010, Salama 2011, Bartolucci 2012, Charteris-Black 2014, Kyung Hye 2014). There are different approaches which can be taken when combining CL and CDA. The approach employed in this study was proposed by Baker (2010) and suggests using CL techniques as a point of entry for a further qualitative analysis. This means identifying keywords which are then qualitatively analysed within their collocational and colligational patterns within the discourse under examination. My approach mirrored this methodology initially but was advanced by establishing and then qualitatively analysing key grammatical patterns at a systemic functional level in addition to key lexical patterns which

were statistically significant. This in addition to a thorough qualitative analysis of these patterns allowed me to accurately determine and quantify how often Obama utilised these patterns as a rhetorical strategy to create and maintain identities within his discourse.

The qualitative aspect of this analysis also included an innovative approach which involved cross referencing the salient grammatical elements which made up the rhetorical strategies with the topic under discussion to provide more evidence and further facilitate the interpretation of the patterns. This was carried out in conjunction with the secondary stage of analysis which involved explaining the relevance of the prevalent discourse patterns using CDA. Taking this approach meant that the arguments made concerning language, society and ideology were formulated and supported with large amounts of quantified linguistic evidence.

4. Analysis

4.1 Keywords and their Semantic and Grammatical Categories

The first part of the analysis involved generating a keyword list. Concordance lines of the top 50 keywords were analysed, and the lexical items were categorised into semantic categories. The categorisation process also involved taking into consideration the context in which the lexical items were used. For example, the word *crisis*, which does not carry any literal meanings that equate to *economy*, was semantically categorised as an *economy* word because it was utilised in reference to the economic issues in Obama's speeches. The results displayed in Table 2 show that the predominant themes across the corpus of Obama's political speeches are *economy* and *conflict*.

A secondary grammatical categorisation of the top 50 keywords in each sub-corpus revealed that the salient parts of speech utilised by Obama are proper nouns, common nouns, lexical verbs and function words (Table 3).

Semantic Category	Campaign Speech	UN Address	State of the Union Address
Economy	<i>Afford, Business, Companies, Crisis, Economy, Families, Financial, Invest, Jobs, Plan, Tax, Taxes, Washington</i>		<i>Afford, Businesses, Change, Companies, Crisis, Deficit, Economy, Financial, Innovation, Invest, Jobs, Plan, Reform, Tax, Taxes, Washington, Workforce</i>
Conflict	<i>Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, Iraq</i>	<i>Al Qaeda, Arab, Conflict, Challenges, Democracy, Global, Freedom, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Israelis, Muslim, Nuclear, Palestinian, Palestinians, Peace, Rights, Security, Syria, Syrian, Violence, War, Weapons, World,</i>	<i>Al Qaeda, Afghanistan, Iran, Protect, Security</i>

Table 2: The top 50 keywords organised by speech type and semantic category

4.1.1 Economy and Conflict

It is clear from the results in Table 2 that contextual aspects such as the audience of a speech and issues which were prevalent at the time a speech was being made, had a significant influence on the language choices. This is because each speech type has a difference in primary audience members and Tables 2 and 3 reveal that language choices differ across each speech type. In addition to this, Table 2 demonstrates that the salient topics discussed by Obama are the economy and issues of conflict, both of which are global issues. The economy is a dominant issue for any president to consider. However, at the end of George W. Bush's presidency and during Obama's campaign and presidency, America was facing the most serious economic crisis since the great depression in 1929 (Clinton 2014: 12-15).

Grammatical Category	Campaign Speech	UN Address	State of the Union Address
Proper Nouns	<i>Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, America, Colorado, McCain, President, Senator, Washington</i>	<i>Al Qaeda, America, Arab, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria</i>	<i>Al Qaeda, Afghanistan, America, Congress, Democrats, Republicans, Washington</i>
Common Nouns	<i>Business, Companies, Country, Crisis, Economy, Education, Families, Folks, Freedom, Funding, Insurance, Jobs, Kids, Security, Tax, Taxes, Teachers</i>	<i>Conflict, Challenges, Democracy, Freedom, Future, Path, People, Region, World</i>	<i>Businesses, Cheers, Companies, Congress, Country, Crisis, Deficit, Economy, Energy, Families, Innovation, Kids, Jobs, Plan, People, Security, Tax, Taxes, Workforce, Year</i>
Lexical Verbs	<i>Afford, Invest, Make, Plan, Promise, Want</i>	<i>Believe, Fight</i>	<i>Afford, Change, Create, Invest, Laughter, Let, Make, Promise, Protect, Reform</i>
Function Words	<i>Because, Cannot, Got, I, Need, Our, That, We, Will, You, Your</i>	<i>And, Must, Our, That, Those, Us, We, Will</i>	<i>Every, Need, Our, That, Us, We, Will</i>

Table 3: The top 50 keywords organised by speech type and grammatical category

Therefore, for Obama, his success as a presidential candidate and then as a president was contingent on providing a solution to the financial crisis the country was in. In addition to this, America's position as the most financially powerful country in the world was jeopardised, so effective political discourse in terms of this issue was a high priority. It can be deduced from the results in Table 2 that the language Obama uses reflects this as across the three keyword lists elicited from the sub-corpora, there are 30 lexical items which fall into the semantic category of *economy*, making 20% of Obama's overall top 50 keywords economy related. There are no lexical items on the top 50 keyword lists of Obama's UN addresses which fall within the semantic field of *economy*. This is because Obama has altered his language accordingly to accommodate the needs of his primary addressees. The UN Addresses

analysed are the annual September address to the UN General Assembly. The function of the General Assembly is to keep peace between nations (www.un.org). While there are some economic aspects to this such as carrying out financial assessments of nations, their roles are primarily social and humanitarian (www.un.org). Therefore, the issues discussed throughout the addresses to this body are principally humanitarian and social in nature, which is why there are an abundance of keywords within the UN sub-corpora which are semantically associated to the concept of *conflict*. The results displayed in Table 2 reveal that Obama employs language relating to issues of conflict in all of his speeches. The subject of conflict was of great concern to him. On September 11th 2001, close to a year into President Bush's presidency, America was the victim of a devastating terrorist attack. As a direct result of this, Bush waged a war against the terrorist organisation responsible for the attack (Clinton 2014: 21). In addition to this, under the Bush administration, the main focus of America's foreign policy was restructured to focus on the biggest threats to the nation (Clinton 2014: 21). Obama inherited this war and the results displayed in Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that conflict was a prevalent theme within his political discourse. A total of 37, which equates to 25% of the lexical items which appear on the top 50 keyword lists for Obama's speeches are in the semantic category of *conflict*. By establishing the top 50 keywords, it is clear that Obama employs lexical items which best represent the predominant social issues at the time of his speeches.

The lexical items on the keyword lists which semantically represent the issues of conflict and the economy are made up of common nouns, proper nouns and lexical verbs. A collocational analysis with a span of five words to the left and right of every keyword within the semantic fields of economy and conflict revealed a prominent pattern of collocations between these keywords and pronouns and modal verbs, specifically the first-person pronouns *we* and *I* and the modal verbs *will*, *must* and *can*. These linguistic features are grammatically categorised as function words and also appear on the keyword lists (see Table 3). Therefore, this adds an additional level of salience to the pronouns and modal verbs within Obama's speeches. This is because they are frequently employed (see Table 3) and they additionally collocate with the other salient lexical items within his speeches. Table 4 displays how often the keywords within each semantic category and speech type collocate with these specific pronouns and modal verbs in Obama's speeches. For example, within Obama's campaign sub-corpus, 12, equating 86% of the keywords which are semantically related to the economy collocate with the pronoun *we*.

Economy					Conflict					
Campaign		State of the Union			Campaign		UN		State of the Union	
Raw Freq. of keywords which collocate with pronouns/ modal verbs	Percentage	Raw Freq. of keywords which collocate with pronouns/ modal verbs	Percentage		Raw Freq. of keywords which collocate with pronouns/ modal verbs	Percentage	Raw Freq. of keywords which collocate with pronouns/ modal verbs	Percentage	Raw Freq. of keywords which collocate with pronouns/ modal verbs	Percentage
We	12	86%	17	100%	5	100%	21	84%	8	88%
I	12	86%	2	12%	3	60%	7	28%	3	33%
Will	14	100%	10	59%	3	60%	16	64%	9	100%
Must	6	43%	11	65%	3	60%	12	48%	8	88%
Can	7	50%	11	65%	2	40%	11	44%	6	66%

Table 4: Obama economy and conflict related key lexical items collocations and frequencies

Table 4 reveals that the most frequent collocates are the pronoun *we* and the modal verbs *will* and *must*. The results yielded at this point have begun to display a distinct pattern. An initial collocation and concordance analysis of the data reveals that the language choices of Obama appear to be contingent on contextual aspects such as his audience and predominant social issues at the time of his speeches. These issues are being represented through their use of common nouns, proper nouns and lexical verbs. These linguistic features collocate with linguistic features such as pronouns and modal verbs which are also salient throughout the speeches and appear on each keyword list elicited for each of the sub-corpora within the corpus. Therefore, the prevalent lexical items are collocating with each other and are being utilised to discuss predominant global social issues. A further in depth qualitative analysis of these patterns displayed that the collocational clusters are then repeatedly utilised to enforce the rhetorical strategies of parallelism and predication. Specific examples and further in-depth explanations of these patterns indicated by the keyword lists are discussed in the following sections.

The fact that pronouns and modal verbs are the predominant linguistic features that Obama has chosen to represent the global issues of the economy and conflict is significant. Pronouns can be used to serve multiple linguistic functions: they can appear as a subject, object or complement of a clause and are primarily used to supersede nouns and noun phrases in sentences (Crystal 2004: 154). Linguistically diverse, they also maintain a multiplicity of social and ideological roles within political discourse and can be manipulated in a variety of ways in order to represent identities, exert ideologies onto audiences and attach identities to these ideologies (see section 2 for detailed discussion). In Obama's political discourse, his pronouns, specifically the pronoun *we*, are frequently followed by modal verbs (see Table 5 below for exact figures). Modal verbs express varying levels of modality which include possibility, probability, obligation and certainty (Halliday 2013: 30). These four, particularly obligation and certainty, connote power and leadership. By utilising these modal verbs with a self-referencing pronoun such as *we*, Obama is enforcing predication by creating an association of power and leadership towards global issues with himself and those included in the *we* reference (discussed further below).

4.2 Predication

4.2.1 *We/Modal Verb Colligation (WMC)*

Predication is a rhetorical strategy which refers to the labelling of social actors positively or negatively through a variety of linguistic indicators such as pronouns, adjectives and verbs (Wodak 2009: 302). Through predication, Obama shapes a powerful political identity for himself and America by utilising linguistic features which carry positive semantic implications.

For example, Obama frequently self-references utilising the first person plural pronoun *we*. *We* is salient in each speech analysed, it appears on every sub-corpora keyword list and collocates with 87% of the other keywords. An investigation into the collocations of *we* revealed that there is a distinct pattern of *we+modal verb* colligation appearing throughout the entirety of the corpus. See Table 5 for the exact frequencies and percentages of the *we+modal verb colligation* patterns in each sub-corpus with *n* being the frequency of *we* in each individual sub-corpus.

	Campaign n = 586	UN n = 573	State of the Union n = 944
will	28 (4.7%)	88 (15.3%)	54 (6%)
must	31 (5.3%)	54 (9.4%)	15 (1.6%)
can	45 (7.7%)	33 (5.8%)	68 (7.2%)
should		10 (1.7%)	
need to	30 (5.1%)		31 (3.3%)
have to			17 (1.8%)
Total	104 (22.8%)	185 (32.2%)	185 (19.9%)

Table 5: *We/Modal Verb Colligation in Each Sub-corpus*

Table 5 reveals that in each sub-corpus, a substantial percentage of the occurrences of *we* colligate with a modal verb. The most frequently utilised modal verbs in Obama's speeches are *can*, *must* and *will*. Charteris-Black (2014: 122) describes these as 'high level modal verbs' which can have a profound effect on a politician's political identity as they express high levels of commitment and can be used to influence perceptions of power. Therefore, due to the fact that the *we+modal verb* cluster (henceforth referred to as *WMC*) is repeatedly enforced and *we*, *must* and *will* frequently appear on the keyword lists for each sub-corpus, this grammatical pattern is predominant across the whole of the corpus. This evidence suggests Obama is attempting to exert his power through his use of high level modal verbs and by utilising them in conjunction with the pronoun *we*, he is also exerting his power whilst engaging his audience and implying shared political ideologies. This argument is reinforced through the fact that in each of the sub-corpora, Obama frequently uses the *WMC* to categorise himself with his primary audience members (see Table 6). In addition to this, Figures 1-3 display the exact percentages and proportions of additional *WMC* auditors within Obama's speeches.

Speech	We/Modal Verb Cluster Frequency	Frequency utilised to represent the politician and primary addressees	Percentage
Obama Campaign	134	106	79%
Obama UN	185	123	66%
Obama State of the Union	185	181	98%

Table 6: Frequencies of We/Modal Verb Clusters representing the Obama and his Primary Addressees

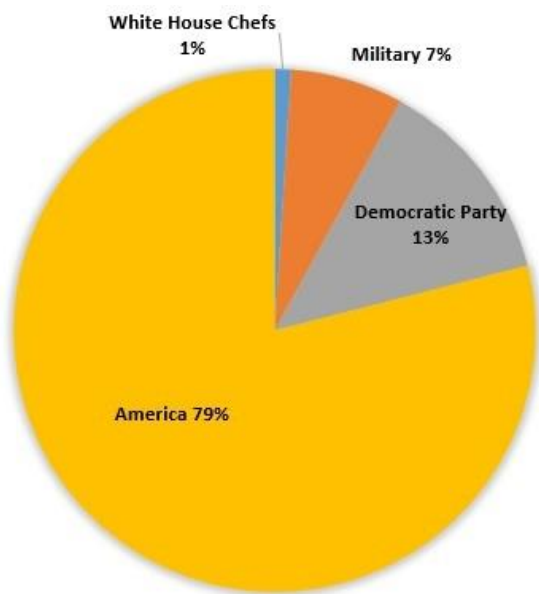


Figure 1: Obama Campaign WMC auditors

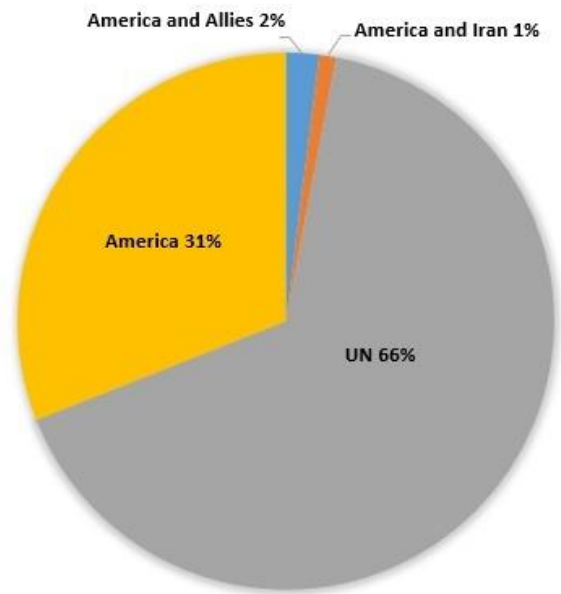


Figure 2: Obama Campaign UN auditors

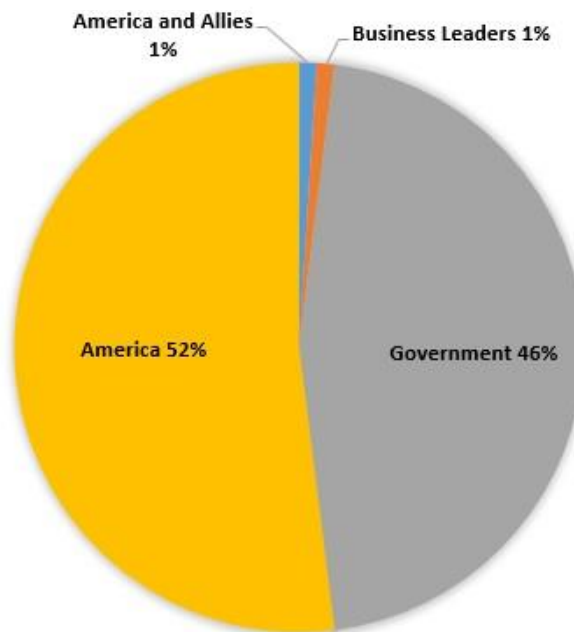


Figure 3: Obama State of the Union WMC auditors

A notable result which is made clear in Figures 1-3 is that Obama self-references with Americans a large percentage of the time, despite the fact that general American citizens are only present at campaign speeches. Barack Obama campaigned on the premise and promise of change, not just in terms of critical social issues such as economy and conflict but in terms of the alienation between the public and politicians which he argued was caused by the Bush administration (Jenkins and Cos 2010: 184-189). The ideology of change is a salient theme throughout Obama's campaign speeches, the lexical items *promise* and *change* both appear on the top 50 keyword list for the Obama campaign sub-corpus. It is clear from Figures 1-3 that this ideology is not just evident in his campaign speeches and that Obama's language choices are contingent on more than just his primary addressees. In UN addresses, general American citizens are not primary addressees. However, Obama makes a conscious effort to include them within his discourse (see Figure 2). Therefore, under Bell's audience design framework, they would be classed as *auditors*; auditors are not present during the delivery of the discourse, but hold such salience to the speaker that they heavily influence language choices (Bell 1984: 159-86). This pattern is also evident in Obama's State of the Union addresses (see Figure 3). Although in a State of the Union address, general American citizens are addressed (see Extract 1), and would be described as primary addressees under Bell's audience design framework, they are not present during the speech. In terms of the State of the Union addresses, Obama is inclusive and self-identifies with general American citizens more frequently than he does with his government; the primary addressees that are present during the speech (see Figure 3).

Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address Washington DC
U.S. Capitol 2010
THE PRESIDENT: Madam Speaker, Vice President Biden, members of
Congress, distinguished guests, and [fellow Americans](#):

Extract 1.

Therefore, utilising the *WMC* to enforce his political ideology of change to generate a positive political identity and a positive relationship with Americans is a prevalent rhetorical strategy used by Obama. This pattern is predominant in all of the speech types analysed and is therefore a salient discourse theme throughout all of the speeches within the corpus.

All of the evidence discussed so far adheres to an argument presented by Sclafani (2015: 370) which states that politicians shape and maintain the characteristics of their political identities across all genres of their political speeches. The evidence also suggests that the idea of change in terms of less alienation and a more inclusive government is a significant political ideology for Obama and he repeatedly enforces this through the predominant

discourse pattern of the *WMC* by self-identifying with general American citizens. It can also be argued that Obama does not just enforce the *WMC* to reach out to general American citizens. Due to the economic issue of the recession and the various issues of conflict that America was involved with at the time that Obama made these speeches, America's powerful and united political identity was tarnished. It is my contention that an additional motive behind frequently self-identifying with Americans was to project and reinforce a powerful and united identity to the world. A united nation implies a powerful nation, therefore Obama repeatedly enforces this through predominant linguistic patterns in an effort to repair and enhance America's political identity.

In each different speech type, Obama is primarily addressing different social groups. Through utilising the pronoun *we* to group himself with his primary audience members, Obama appears more relatable, he begins to shape a relationship between himself and his audience and also projects the ideology of America being a united nation. By colligating *we* with high level modal verbs, it can be argued that he is also creating an identity which represents power, commitment and leadership through these colligational clusters. It is clear from the evidence that Obama draws on the emotional effects of the *WMC* and utilises it repeatedly across his campaign and presidential discourse in an effort to generate popularity with American citizens and enhance and maintain America's and his own political identity.

4.2.2 *We/Modal Verb/Lexical Verb Colligation (WMLC)*

Leech and Svartvik (1994: 144) state that when a speaker aligns the first person plural pronoun *we* with a modal verb, they are also attempting to align their audience with the message which proceeds it. A qualitative analysis of every *WMC* in the corpus revealed that the lexical verbs following the clusters contribute to Obama's leadership identity as 91% of them carry leadership connotations such as *build, pursue, succeed an achieve* (see Tables 7-9). Therefore, Obama is enforcing the *we/modal verb/lexical verb colligation cluster (WMLC)* to further enhance the positive and powerful political identity he was generating for himself though the effects of the *WMC* discussed in the previous section. In addition to this, a qualitative analysis of each *WMC* revealed that 82% of the time Obama enforces this rhetorical strategy, he is discussing issues related to the economy and conflict, issues which were proven to be prevalent at the time of his speeches and salient discourse topics by the results yielded from the top 50 keywords for each sub-corpus. Therefore, predominant global issues are reflected throughout his discourse as regular topics of discussion. It will be argued in this section that Obama is enforcing predication through salient grammatical patterns in relation to these prevalent issues as a method creating a political identity which denotes power, strength,

	We Can	We Must	We Need to	We Will
Conflict	<i>choose,</i>	<i>act, call, exert,</i>	<i>come, ensure,</i>	<i>engage, finish,</i>
	<i>make, meet,</i>	<i>increase,</i>	<i>expand, finish,</i>	<i>help, launch,</i>
	<i>put, remove,</i>	<i>integrate, invest,</i>	<i>improve, send,</i>	<i>make, start,</i>
	<i>shape, start</i>	<i>speak,</i>	<i>start,</i>	<i>serve</i>
		<i>strengthen, strive,</i>	<i>strengthen,</i>	
		<i>upgrade, work</i>	<i>support</i>	
Economy	<i>achieve,</i>	<i>address, build,</i>	<i>build, fix, keep,</i>	<i>change, finish,</i>
	<i>begin, build,</i>	<i>crack, develop,</i>	<i>open,</i>	<i>keep,</i>
	<i>create, end,</i>	<i>do, ensure,</i>	<i>recapture,</i>	<i>transform</i>
	<i>go, grow,</i>	<i>establish,</i>	<i>regulate,</i>	
	<i>reform,</i>	<i>investigate,</i>	<i>replace,</i>	
	<i>secure,</i>	<i>pursue, reform,</i>	<i>streamline</i>	
	<i>steer</i>	<i>restore,</i>		
	<i>strengthen, take</i>			

Table: 7 Obama Campaign Pronoun, Modal Verb and Lexical Verb Colligation

unity and leadership for himself and America. Tables 7-9 display all of the results for each sub-corpus of this rhetorical strategy being enforced through *WMLC*.

The results displayed in Tables 7-9 demonstrate how Obama creates and reinforces an identity of leadership throughout all of his speeches through the *WMLC* by using lexical verbs such as *build, revive, win* and *lead*. These verbs have positive connotations and have semantic implications of strength and leadership. The combined semantic implications of the inclusive pronouns, high level modal verbs and lexical verbs result in Obama successfully projecting a powerful yet inclusive political identity whilst simultaneously expressing commitment in terms of the critical social and global issues of the economy and conflict.

A final component which contributes to the strong identities of power and leadership Obama is shaping is the fact that the participant role of actor is always allocated to Obama and those who are categorised with him through the pronoun *we*. This linguistic phenomenon is referred to as transitivity and is concerned with the roles of participants involved in a process and their relationship with the event which is being discussed (Bartlett 2014: 45-46). In terms of transitivity, in these examples, Obama and his *we* referents' role in the clusters is semantically powerful as they are the active participants of the clause and the agents carrying out the

	We Will	We Must	We Can	We Should
	<i>bring, build, call,</i>	<i>acknowledge, act,</i>	<i>accept,</i>	<i>draw, say,</i>
	<i>complete, confront,</i>	<i>address, agree,</i>	<i>achieve, build,</i>	<i>support,</i>
	<i>counter, demonstrate,</i>	<i>allow, broaden,</i>	<i>choose,</i>	<i>reach</i>
	<i>develop, dismantle,</i>	<i>build, come,</i>	<i>control, do,</i>	
	<i>engage, expand, focus,</i>	<i>confront,</i>	<i>embrace,</i>	
	<i>forget, help, impose,</i>	<i>continue, declare,</i>	<i>encourage,</i>	
	<i>increase, insist,</i>	<i>get, forget,</i>	<i>empower,</i>	
	<i>integrate, invite, lead,</i>	<i>harness, insist,</i>	<i>imagine,</i>	
	<i>lift, meet, move, permit,</i>	<i>meet, offer,</i>	<i>make, reach,</i>	
Conflict	<i>peruse, promote,</i>	<i>promote, reaffirm,</i>	<i>read, say,</i>	
	<i>provide, reinforce,</i>	<i>recognise,</i>	<i>succeed,</i>	
	<i>reject, seize, serve, set,</i>	<i>remain,</i>	<i>reaffirm,</i>	
	<i>shy, solve, spare,</i>	<i>remember,</i>	<i>recognise,</i>	
	<i>stand, strengthen,</i>	<i>remind, return,</i>	<i>remedy,</i>	
	<i>succeed, support, take,</i>	<i>seize, speak,</i>	<i>renew,</i>	
	<i>think, tolerate, train,</i>	<i>stand, stop,</i>	<i>resolve, save,</i>	
	<i>use, work</i>	<i>strengthen,</i>	<i>shape, table,</i>	
		<i>summon, take,</i>	<i>waste</i>	
		<i>unleash, work</i>		
Non-Conflict	<i>come, continue, do,</i>	<i>champion, do,</i>	<i>allow, choose,</i>	<i>announce,</i>
	<i>ensure, focus, press</i>	<i>embrace, put</i>	<i>protect, reach</i>	<i>bring</i>

Table: 8 Obama UN Pronoun, Modal Verb and Lexical Verb Colligation

lexical verbs which carry leadership connotations. In addition to this, Obama's *WMLCs* are all material processes. Material processes represent actions the participants take in the material world (Bartlett 2014: 489). Therefore, in addition to expressing leadership through the semantic implications of his lexical verbs, he is also portraying himself as a doer. Due to the fact that Obama is not the only the participant within these processes, it can also be argued that he is endorsing an ideology of unity and nationalism in relation to the actions these material processes represent.

	We Can	We Will	We Have to	We Need to	We Must
Conflict	<i>achieve, argue,</i>	<i>advocate, begin,</i>	<i>keep,</i>	<i>uphold</i>	<i>defeat,</i>
	<i>insist, say, see,</i>	<i>bring, build,</i>	<i>remain</i>		<i>enlist,</i>
	<i>share</i>	<i>complete,</i>			<i>fight,</i>
		<i>continue, defeat,</i>			<i>forget,</i>
		<i>deny, do, forget,</i>			<i>give,</i>
		<i>maintain, relent,</i>			<i>protect,</i>
		<i>reward,</i>			<i>serve,</i>
		<i>safeguard, stand,</i>			<i>remember</i>
		<i>support, waver</i>			
	Economy	<i>achieve, afford,</i>	<i>argue, continue,</i>	<i>confront,</i>	<i>build,</i>
<i>build, change,</i>		<i>demand, double,</i>	<i>do, reclaim,</i>	<i>change, do,</i>	<i>do, keep,</i>
<i>continue, deliver,</i>		<i>ensure, fix,</i>	<i>recognise,</i>	<i>encourage,</i>	<i>renew</i>
<i>fix, get, help,</i>		<i>launch, lose,</i>	<i>seek, seize,</i>	<i>export,</i>	
<i>invest, keep,</i>		<i>move, push, raise,</i>	<i>stop, take</i>	<i>finish, fix,</i>	
<i>make, pursue, put,</i>		<i>reach, reward,</i>		<i>make, set,</i>	
<i>restore, start,</i>		<i>step, stop,</i>		<i>stabilise,</i>	
<i>secure, settle,</i>		<i>strengthen,</i>		<i>take, teach,</i>	
<i>take, use, work</i>		<i>succeed, work</i>		<i>think, up,</i>	
				<i>win, work</i>	

Table: 9 Obama State of the Union Pronoun, Modal Verb and Lexical Verb Colligation

The evidence has displayed how each separate linguistic component of the *WMLCs* enhances the political identities of power, leadership, unity and strength that Obama is trying to create. Due to the fact that the *WMLCs* are prevalent throughout the corpus, Obama is repeatedly projecting and as a result of the repetition, naturalising an identity of power, unity, strength and leadership across his political speeches. The effects of the *WMLCs* are further enhanced by the fact that 82% of the time Obama utilises this rhetorical strategy, he is discussing the vital global issues of the economy and conflict. Therefore, by repeating the *WMLC* pattern regularly throughout his speeches, he is consistently expressing power, leadership and commitment towards his audience and in terms of these social issues. Enforcing a consistent political identity which is not interchangeable across different political discourse genres increases the level of trust an audience will have for a politician and the country they represent (Sclafani 2015: 370). As a result of this, Obama also generates a consistently positive political identity for himself and for America.

4.3 Parallelism

It was discussed how pronouns and verbs can be utilised to enforce the rhetorical strategies of predication in the previous section. However, the effects of this rhetorical strategy are enhanced by an additional rhetorical strategy that Obama employs called parallelism. Parallelism is repetitive in nature and refers to the use of similar syntactic structures in two or more clauses (Charteris-Black 2014: 39-42). Previous research into the effects of parallelism in political speeches has argued that the rhythmic and climatic effect of this rhetorical strategy can be utilised to emphasise and increase the intensity of an ideology within political discourse (Charteris-Black 2014; Hashemi and Kazemian 2014; Flowerdew 2002). As a result, it is argued that politicians employ parallelism regularly in an effort to formulate an emotional connection between the audience, themselves and the ideology which is being emphasised (Charteris-Black 2014; Flowerdew 2002; Hashemi and Kazemian 2014). The results from previous research into parallelism in political discourse were not realised through corpus methods, but through a qualitative analysis. Therefore, the use of this rhetorical strategy in political discourse had not been quantified. The argument that parallelism is present in political discourse has been made, but the argument that it is prevalent had not been proven. This analysis provides quantified linguistic proof that in terms of Barack Obama's political discourse, parallelism is present within salient grammatical patterns, predominant across different speech types and is used to further enhance his and America's political identity.

In the analysis and discussion above it was discussed how there is a predominant discourse pattern of Obama enforcing predication when self-referencing through the pronoun *we*. This is achieved through a colligational cluster of the pronoun *we*, modal verbs and lexical verbs to project a consistent political identity of power, unity and leadership. Obama displays a distinct pattern throughout his political discourse of reinforcing these identities through parallelism. The pronoun and modal verb elements of the *WMLC* employed by Obama (referred to as *WMC*, see section 4.2.1) are regularly utilised for the rhetorical strategy of parallelism. Exact frequencies and percentages of the *WMCs* which are also used to enforce parallelism are displayed in Figure 4.

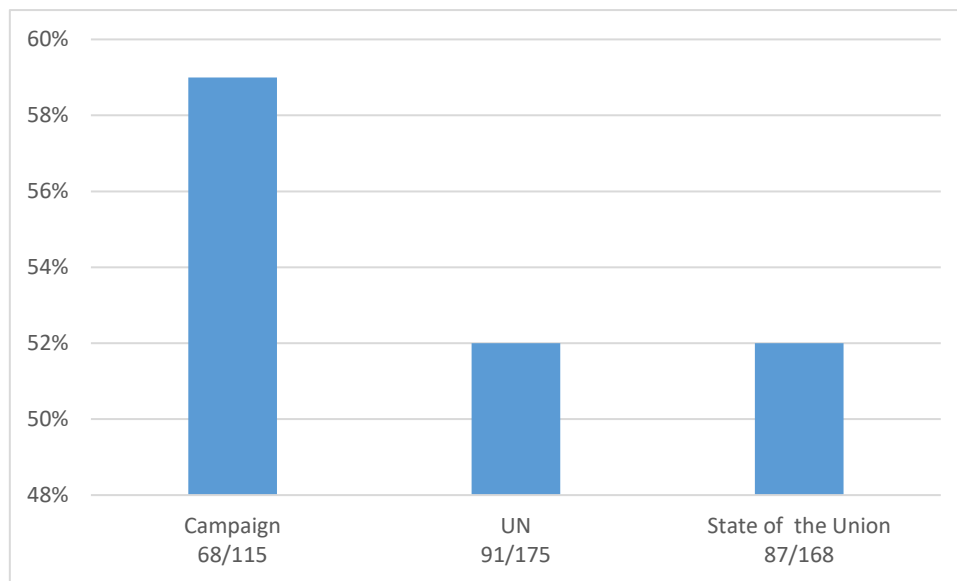


Figure 4: WMC parallelism frequencies and percentages

Figure 4. shows that over half of Obama's *WMCs* are enforced as a method of parallelism in addition to predication across all of the speech types in the corpus (see extracts 2-4 for examples of Obama's use of *WMC* parallelism).

Obama Campaign

I promise you **we will** win Colorado. **We will** win this election. **We will** finish what we started. And **we will** remind the world why the United States is the greatest nation on Earth.

To get out of this crisis - and to ensure that we are not doomed to repeat a cycle of bubble and bust again and again - **we must** take immediate measures to create jobs and continue to address the housing crisis; **we must** build a 21st century regulatory framework, and **we must** pursue a bold opportunity agenda that creates new jobs and grows the American

Extract 2.

Obama UN

We can read familiar lists of grievances. **We can** table the same resolutions. **We can** further empower the forces of rejectionism and hate. And **we can** waste more time by carrying forward an argument that will not help a single Israeli or Palestinian child achieve a better life. **We can** do that. Or, **we can** say that this time will be different.

We will neither tolerate terrorist safe havens, nor act as an occupying power. **We will** take action against threats to our security and our allies,

while building an architecture of counterterrorism cooperation. *We will* increase efforts to lift up those who counter extremist ideologies and who seek to resolve sectarian conflict. And *we will* expand our programs to support entrepreneurship and civil society, education and youth.

Extract 3.

Obama State of the Union

What comes of this moment will be determined not by whether *we can* sit together tonight, but whether *we can* work together tomorrow. I believe *we can*.

As a candidate, I promised that I would end this war, and that is what I am doing as President. *We will* have all of our combat troops out of Iraq by the end of this August. *We will* support the Iraqi government -- *we will* support the Iraqi government as they hold elections, and *we will* continue to partner with the Iraqi people to promote regional peace and prosperity.

Extract 4

Frequently utilising the *WMCs* within parallelism further emphasises and enhances the political identities he is generating in each speech for himself across his political discourse. This is because the modal verbs *can*, *must* and *will* express high levels of commitment and obligation (Charteris-Black 2014: 122). Referring to extracts 2-4, the modal verbs *can*, *must* and *will* are the modal verbs Obama most frequently enforces in terms of his *WMCs*. By attaching these modal verbs to a self-referencing pronoun such as *we*, the high levels of commitment and obligation are also attached to Obama's political identity. The repetitive nature of parallelism further emphasises Obama's high level of commitment and obligation. In addition to this, 91% of his *WMCs* are followed by lexical verbs which connote power and leadership (see section 4.4.2). Therefore, he is utilising the rhetorical strategy of parallelism to repeatedly emphasise his identity of a strong, powerful and committed presidential candidate and president.

The semantic implications of the lexical items on the keyword lists elicited for each sub-corpus reveal that the economy and conflict are salient discourse topics. *WMC* parallelism further emphasises the political ideologies that Obama is enforcing and extracts 2-4 provide evidence that he regularly enforces parallelism in terms of his *WMCs* when discussing these prevalent social issues in addition to other critical global issues such as the environment and health.

Figures 5-7 display the proportions and percentages of the topics in which Obama enforces this rhetorical strategy.

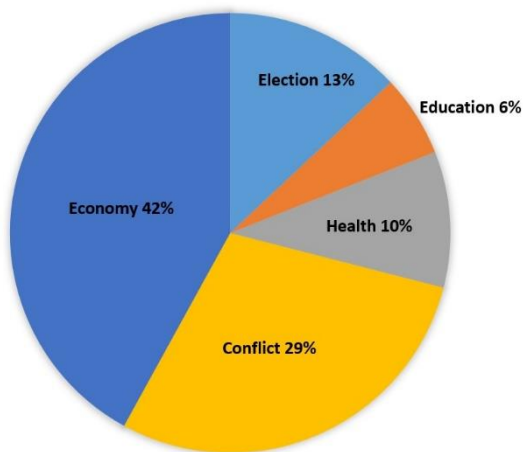


Figure 5: Obama campaign sub-corpus

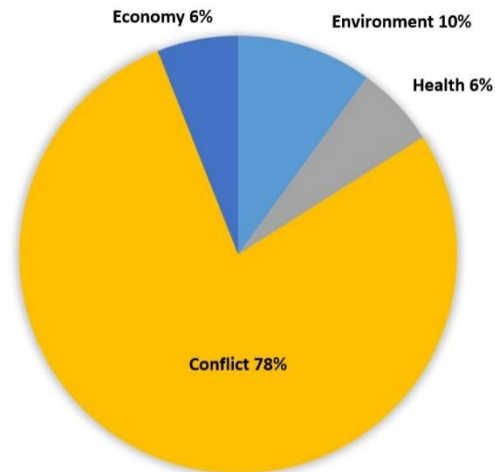


Figure 6: Obama UN sub-corpus

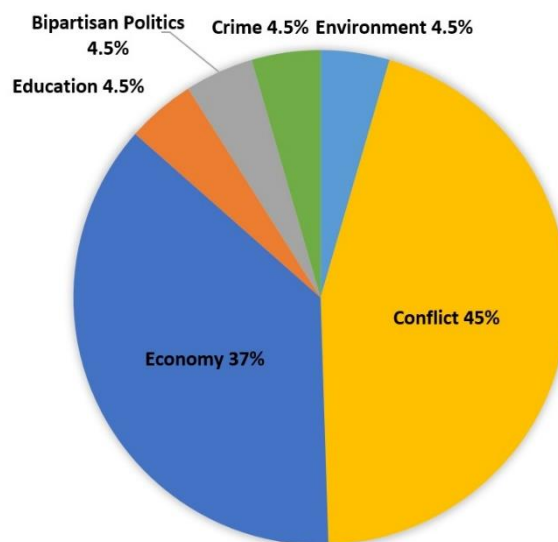


Figure 7: Obama State of the Union sub-corpus

The semantic implications of the lexical items on the keyword lists revealed that economy in addition to conflict are prevalent discourse themes in each sub-corpus. This is reflected in Obama's use of *WMC* parallelism as the economy and conflict are the most frequent topics in which he uses this rhetorical strategy. Therefore, it can be argued that Obama is simultaneously attempting to engage his audience and discuss prevalent social issues as a method of enhancing his political identities of power, unity and commitment. Reinforcing this message through parallelism further engages his audience and emphasises these identities.

5. Conclusion

This research has demonstrated how the language in Barack Obama's speeches has been manipulated to create, maintain and enforce powerful political identities and ideologies. This was achieved through the repeated use of the second person plural pronoun *we*, high level modal verbs such as *will* and *must* and lexical verbs which carry connotations of power and leadership such as *build*, *defeat* and *succeed*. These pronouns and verbs were used in conjunction with one another as components of the rhetorical strategies of predication and parallelism. Based on the evidence, it was argued that the identity Obama enforces is one of a powerful, strong, but also an accessible leader. Enforcing an inclusive, accessible identity further highlighted Obama's assurance of change regarding the alienation between politicians and citizens. In addition, these linguistic patterns were predominantly used in reference to critical social issues such as the economy and conflict. Therefore, projecting an identity of power and leadership towards these issues enforced the ideology that Obama was a capable and competent presidential candidate and president. The methodology employed was a synergy of CL and CDA, meaning that a large amount of data could be analysed and explained. These explanations were further enhanced as a result of the innovative approach to both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the analysis. By utilising the keyword lists to identify key grammatical patterns and then qualitatively cross referencing the results with the topic under discussion, further evidence was produced for the arguments made concerning language, society and ideology. The grammatical patterns discussed in the analysis are all prevalent and frequent across and within Obama's speeches. In addition to this, they were primarily utilised in reference to issues relating to the economy and conflict. These are critical issues which are of great concern to his audience. The top 50 keyword lists revealed that the predominant grammatical patterns correspond across each sub-corpus. In section 4.2.1 it was revealed that Obama's political discourse displays a prevalent discourse pattern of *WMCs*. It was argued that this grammatical pattern was utilised to engage his audience through the use of the pronoun *we* and express commitment and obligation through his use of high level modal verbs such as *must* and *will*. Section 4.2.2 examined the *WMC* patterns further and it was demonstrated that the lexical verbs which followed the *WMC*'s carried semantic connotations of power and leadership. Finally, in section 4.3 it was demonstrated that Obama reinforced and emphasised these identities through the rhetorical strategy of parallelism. Therefore, the deduction was made that Obama projected consistent political identities of power, unity, commitment and leadership across his political discourse.

This study was innovative in that it quantified rhetorical strategies in political discourse and provided evidence that these strategies are consistent and prevalent across different speech types. However, it did have limitations. Firstly, the data utilised to draw these conclusions were

transcripts of political speeches that had previously taken place. Therefore, they were de-contextualised and aspects of the speeches such as tone of voice and the exact socio-political contexts in which the speeches took place were unavailable and were therefore not included in the analysis. In addition, without audience response data, the effect of the discourse and the rhetorical strategies can only be hypothesised. Future investigations in this area could utilise a triangulated methodology that includes a corpus approach with audience response analysis through ethnographic research methods.

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