

The Theme of Unity in Political Discourse: The Case of President Joe Biden's Inauguration Speech on the 20th of January 2021

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Abstract

This study explored the theme of unity in President Joe Biden's Inauguration Speech on the 20th of January from a linguistic perspective. The main research question was: How was the theme of unity conveyed in this particular speech through linguistic choices? The significance of this work lies in the fact that this specific speech has not been subjected to academic linguistic investigation to date. In addition, this speech is unique as it came to mark the beginning of the new presidency with a direct focus on unity as a recurring theme. The methodology adopted a qualitative analytical analysis of the concept of unity as referred to in this speech. The study followed a thematic analysis in approaching the speech text. The researchers scrutinized every utterance for clues on the possible linguistic features that portrayed the theme of unity conveyed by the speaker. They also examined the lexical items concerning the concept of unity in the speech. The results showed that the speaker used appropriate language in addressing the theme of unity. The speaker used religion and history as a source of rhetorical persuasive devices. The overall tone of the speech was confident, reconciliatory, and hopeful. The study concluded with some implications for pedagogy and academic research.

Keywords: Biden, inaugural speech, political discourse, USA, unity

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Introduction

Politics is definitely about the constant struggle for power among interested individuals or parties. It deals with means of collaboration among various social institutions with the aim of resolving disputes peacefully (Chilton, 2004). Therefore, persuasive techniques are vital for politicians interested in manipulating others or getting people to accept or reject specific ideas or plans of action. Persuasion involves discourse and rhetoric to influence the receivers to adopt an attitude towards a particular issue (Van Dijk, 1998). Therefore, language is a crucial factor in the art and craft of persuasion as politicians appeal to language to manipulate others and probably control or dominate the behaviors of intended audiences. To achieve their purposes, politicians tend to employ public speaking to persuade target audiences and move them to embrace particular ideologies.

Political speeches belong to the genre of political discourse. According to Swales (1990), the term 'genre' refers to any kind of text that belongs to a distinct category. Moreover, Swales describes the concept of genre as an instance of communication identifiable through specific purposes and characteristics shared or assumed by the members of that discourse community. In other words, political speeches can be considered a genre within a political discourse where language, written or spoken, is deployed by a politician with the purpose of steering beliefs and emotions of particular audiences to produce a specific outcome. A political speech is necessarily functional and directive in nature. Thus, it manifests rhetorical features such as figurative devices like metaphors or idioms (Chilton & Schaffner, 1999). Political speech is also a form of a monologue where language expresses a particular ideology.

The language of politics has received a lot of attention in the literature of political discourse. Previous research has addressed linguistic features of political genres from several approaches such as pragmatics, stylistics, syntax, and discourse strategies. Among the types of political discourse that received attention are inaugural speeches. Newly elected political leaders usually present the inaugural address to influence people's hearts as well as minds concerning some issues. They address audiences who supported them and also adversaries who opted not to do so. The speakers, in this case, try to promote their new leadership package of ideas and plans. Therefore, the inaugural speech is quite diplomatic at its core. The inauguration is a chance for the leader to assert their leadership style; in this sense, the inaugural address is naturally rich in rhetoric which calls for various types of analysis. The linguistic choices made by the speaker are thus an abundant source of data for linguists and politicians alike. The linguistic choices made by the speaker cannot be arbitrary because of ideologies that determine the form and content of the speech.

Research Problem and Significance

With this in mind, it is essential to note here that the rhetoric of the American presidency is of particular importance because it represents one of the most influential political figures in the world. The presidential inaugural speech is a unique event through which the new leader takes the oath and delivers hints on plans about the pressing issues. In this context, President Joe Biden's Inauguration Speech, on the 20th of January 2021, is exceptional. It is so because of the political events and scenarios that surrounded it. The significance of studying such a piece of discourse lies in the messages that the new president seeks to deliver to the American nation and the world at large. In this kind of discourse, the political leader conveys the meaning that lies in

the socio-cultural and the political context of the USA and the whole world. The traditional inauguration ceremony happens at the start of every new presidency in the USA. It is a landmark in American history where the newly elected president takes the oath and gives a speech. It is an occasion marking a new chapter in the history of American political life. The inauguration comes as a turning point to signify the traditional 'peaceful' transition of power. On this particular occasion, the former president chose not to be present.

This ceremony comes after the nation has experienced traumatic incidents. On the 6th of January 2021, an angry mob stormed the USA Capitol and attempted to cause a lot of damage that resulted in the death of at least five people. At the time of the ceremony, the nation was still suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic, which killed many thousands of Americans. The inauguration came after the night of honoring the Americans who lost their lives for COVID-19. Mr. Biden and his wife, Jill Biden, attended that ceremony together with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and her husband, Douglas Emhoff. Also, the economy was hit badly by the pandemic, and many people lost their jobs. A sad mood characterized the occasion. It seems that people looked for change and a glimpse of hope.

A new president came to deliver his message to the nation. An old president comes to take office in this challenging time in the history of America. He sounded sympathetic and wise; this becomes clear as we know from his biography that he had suffered from personal and family losses. This may have added to his wisdom and understanding of fate and mortality. Biden suffered the loss of his wife and daughter in a car accident that left his son seriously injured. Biden was further hit by the loss of his eldest son, Beau Biden, who died of a brain cancer in 2015. This is surely an experience for self-reflection and self-enrichment. The sense of bereavement must have caused greater maturity and realization of the limits of humanity. Individuals and societies can go in hardships from time to time. It can be argued here that age and personal grief added to Biden's vision in addition to many years in public service mainly as a congressman and vice president. The oldest man ever elected to the office, Joe Biden comes with a grandfatherly compassionate message.

Therefore, it is natural we expect to see the effects of this contextual background on the inauguration speech that is the substance of this study here. The research problem here is the linguistic nature of the speech at hand. The goal is to explore the links between the conceptual content about unity and the linguistic means adopted to portray it in that communicative event. The topic of unity in the textual data is the focus of this paper. In particular, this research deals with the following questions:

1. How is the theme of unity articulated in the given speech?
2. What are the linguistic devices used in portraying the theme of unity in the speech?

Related Literature

Studies on American presidential inaugural go as far back as the mid-1960s of the previous century. Hutton (1967) wrote on the rhetoric of John F. Kennedy's 'Inaugural Address' of 29th of January 1961. The author found that the speech reflected major issues such as 'betterment of some of the problems of mankind'. The study sought to test the hypothesis that John Kennedy probably presented a highly effective inaugural address. The conclusion was that this indeed proved to be accurate based on the evidence from the data analyzed. On the other hand, Savoy

(2010) analyzed the content of US political speeches and described a US political corpus comprising (245) speeches given by senators John McCain and Barack Obama during the years 2007–2008. The author characterized the common English words most frequently used by these political leaders in comparison with ordinary usage. The results revealed the overused and underused terminology in the speeches of both candidates.

On another front, Waheed, Schuck, de Vreese, and Neijens (2011) compared values of political speeches between developed and developing countries. They employed a content analysis approach on (48) political speeches of six leaders. The results showed that 'benevolence,' 'universalism,' 'stimulation,' 'self-direction,' and 'achievement' were most present in all speeches. Also, the study found that 'universalism' and 'benevolence' were most present in the rhetoric of politicians from developed countries while 'stimulation' and 'self-direction' were in speeches from developing countries. The tones of speeches were also different, as shown in words expressing the values.

In the African context, Abuya (2012) examined the pragmatic and stylistic features in the Inaugural Speech of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in Nigeria. The author analyzed the first (20) sentences in the text and identified (40) speech acts were identified. The findings showed the following speech acts: 'assertive – 55%, directive – 10%, verdictive – 15%, commissive – 75% and declarative – 45%.' The results also revealed that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan used heavy sentences that performed commissive acts. The study concluded that politicians seem to be more likely to show appreciation to people after victory in elections.

Matić (2012) investigated discourse structures in the speeches of two American candidates in the 2008 presidential election. The results showed that both speakers any positive information about their opponent. Furthermore, the study highlighted some similarities in the speeches and illustrated the linguistic devices which conveyed their ideological beliefs. The study reported that the speakers used lexical items to express objection and criticism directly and indirectly and to empathize with the audience. Similarly, Munir (2014) studied the style of Barack Obama's second inaugural address. The technique of data collection in this research was note-taking and textual analysis. The findings revealed that Obama used several figurative devices such as metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, personification, metonymy, paradox, and simile. Also, the results showed that figurative language took the form of words, phrases, and clauses.

In a similar vein, Zheng (2014) conducted a stylistic analysis of the speech 'I Have a Dream' made by Martin Luther King with to provide pedagogical implications for English writing and making speeches. The results showed that King used words skillfully, which add much interest and beauty to his style. The study concluded that King artfully employment stylistic means to persuade the audience about equal rights for the blacks. Other studies focused on linguistic aspects, such as Enyi and Chitulu (2015), who studied cohesive devices in President Goodluck Jonathan's Inaugural Address-May, 2011. The results showed that the speaker utilized many features like 'lexical repetitions, synonyms and near- synonyms, superordinates/hyponyms and the various shades of oppositeness in language use' (Enyi & Chitulu, 2015, p.77). Moreover, Olajoke (2015) discussed the functions of linguistic devices in the Inaugural speech of the Speaker of the State House of Assembly in Nigeria. The results showed that legislators employed cohesive lexical devices such as repetition, synonymy,

antonym, collocation, super-ordination to achieve specific purposes such as interconnectivity, directness, emphasis, appreciation, and appeal in negotiating meaning in their use of language.

From a discourse perspective, Al-Majali (2015) explored speeches of the ousted Arab presidents during the Arab Spring using Halliday and Hasan's cohesion framework. The author used a sample of seven speeches representing the period from December 2010 to December 2012. The study found that these speeches manifested distinctive features different from the usual speeches of these presidents during the customary circumstances. The study concluded that these presidents utilized various techniques, e.g., repetition, synonymy, and hyponymy to achieve their political ideologies, such threatening the civilian protesters.

Furthermore, Altikriti (2016) reported on persuasive speech acts in Barack Obama's inaugural speeches (2009, 2013) and the last state of the union address based on the adopted model of Bach and Harnish Taxonomy (1979). The study found that President Obama used more sentences that performed constative speech acts than other speech acts. Obama used assertive illocutionary acts as an influential factor. On the other hand, a comparative approach was used by Sameer (2017) in his analysis of two Egyptian inaugural speeches from El-Sadat and El-Sisi, belonging to different periods. The purpose was to find out whether there were differences within this genre in the same culture or not. The results indicated a minimal difference between these two speeches according to Searle's theory of speech acts. Moreover, the study showed that El Sadat's used commissive acts, whereas El-Sisi's utilized assertive ones. occupied the first place. The study concluded that the circumstances of the elections caused these differences.

From a stylistic dimension, Okafor and Issefe (2017) investigated President Buhari's inaugural speech. The study used Halliday's systemic functional linguistics because of its emphasis on form-function correlation in language use. The results showed that statements and modal auxiliaries expressing intention and obligation were most prominent in the speech. The study concluded that the choice of these linguistic forms was functionally significant because they showed the informative nature of the inaugural and the president's commitment to fulfilling his promises. Recently, Dickerson (2019) wrote on the rhetoric inaugural address of President Trump 2017 by social media, specifically Twitter, and looked at the context surrounding the inaugural. The results showed that Trump drifted from the typical framework of the inaugural address where he used his own modernized style. In another study, Ojukwu and Osuchukwu (2019) explored the political speeches of Nelson Mandela. The research employed Austin's Speech Act Theory with particular reference to Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. The researcher used a qualitative analysis and purposeful sampling for data collection. The results of the study showed that Nelson Mandela's speeches satisfied Austin's felicity conditions. The study concluded that Mandela's language contributed significantly to South African's freedom from the apartheid.

In a more recent study, Elsanhoury, Seddek, Sarwat, and Debian (2020) investigated the political election speeches of Donald Trump in 2016. They used a discourse analysis methodology to analyze the data. They also focused on the verbal and nonverbal linguistic features of these speeches. They also utilized a theme analysis method to isolate the recurring themes emphasized in Trump's speeches. The results showed that both the verbal and nonverbal

messages influenced the audience and showed leadership of the speaker. It is interesting to note that such a study is helpful in the way it utilized nonverbal features of the political speeches.

Most recently, Biden's speech received attention from Ahmad and Amir (2021), who analyzed the speech acts using quantitative and qualitative methodology. They employed The Speech Act framework suggested by Austin and Searle. The study showed that the speech used directive acts. The authors concluded that using Speech Act Theory was helpful in demonstrating the informative nature of Biden's speech.

Siregar (2021) discussed Joe Biden's elected president speech on the 8th of November 2020 to identify the discourse structure and the ideologies contained in Biden's speech. The methodology followed the six critical discourse analysis (CDA) steps; problem identification, literature specification, code analysis, content analysis and coding, reading and interpretation, and explaining findings. The study found that Biden used thematic macrostructure and semantic microstructure, such as background, detail, and presupposition. Biden also resorted to syntactic microstructure, such as personal pronouns. The superstructures of the speech were opening, content, and closing remark. The results also showed that Biden stressed his ideology regarding unity, equality, and freedom for the US citizens.

Abbas (2021) studied Joe Biden's election campaign speeches. The purpose was to show how Biden used the positive and the negative image of the USA in his election campaign speeches. The results indicated that Biden professionally utilized this discourse in almost all of his speeches. Moreover, Ricca and Johan (2021) studied deixis in Biden's inaugural speech. The authors adopted a qualitative method in which they analyzed the data using the theory of Miles and Huberman. The results indicated that person deixis was the most dominant in the speech, whereas the least dominant category was temporal deixis. Also, on political trend research, Xiaochen and Yang (2021) used big data technology to obtain word frequency statistics on the inaugural speech of President Joe Biden. The study made use of the social, interpersonal function theory in systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday. The study showed that metaphors helped in the attempts to understand the political direction of the USA. The study concluded that Biden used a lot of first-person and second-person pronouns to convey his promises to the nation.

Rahayu, Suastini, and Jayantini (2021) described the discourse in Biden's speech using data-driven from his acceptance speech at the 2020 Democratic National Convention. The results showed (8) topics in the speech: (1) Crises, (2) the country that everyone wishes to live, (3) missions of Joe Biden, (4) Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's life story and family, (5) the campaign and election's value, (6) Joe Biden's reason for running as president, (7) Joe Biden's opinion of his opponent, and (8) Joe Biden's perspective about America. The findings also showed that each topic contained political discourse structures such as local semantics, lexicon, syntax, rhetoric, expression structure, and speech act and interaction.

Having reported some relevant literature, it seems clear that there is nothing yet about the theme of unity in the political speeches of Biden as a president of the USA. Moreover, previous research avoided using thematic analysis regarding the theme of unity which is the subject of

this study. In brief, previous research seems to have restricted itself to the description of salient discourse features regardless of the thematic content in the speeches.

Method

This study adopted a thematic analysis based on contextual information available on the speech event. The study deployed all possible linguistic techniques to identify the clues that depicted the theme of unity in the speech. The researchers utilized theoretical constructs from discourse analysis and pragmatics in the study. The aim was to explore the role of language in portraying the idea of unity in the speech. The whole text of the speech was considered the source of data. The method involved scanning lexical items and syntactic clues for theme identification. The official biography of President Biden provided necessary and useful data for the analysis. In addition, it was necessary to skim through the comprehensive media coverage of the event for possible information and contextual clues that could highlight the event.

The text was considered in terms of utterances rather than sentences because it was a spoken discourse. In the analysis of the speech, lexical items were considered most important. The speech provided abundant semantic content which reflected the power of language used by a key political figure. Moreover, the methodology used in this approach looked for the themes that may emerge from the data rather than imposing specific assumed themes by the researchers. In fact, in this study, data analysis goes hand in hand with data collection. Every piece of the data was seen as significant unless proven otherwise at a later stage. In this process, the researchers sought to highlight the prevailing themes in the speech which served as the corpus of the study. The source of the speech transcript came from the official White House website. The study corpus also included the audio-visual version of the speech which provided further useful clues. Both researchers listened to and read the address many times before embarking on the analysis. The researchers shared all gathered observations about the background of the speech event and made relevant remarks. The researchers lived the occasion with its details as a personal learning experience. Recognizing the themes is not a simple task due to the complexity of the content addressed in the speech with its complicated political connotations. The analysis considered every tiny detail to recognize a possible pattern in the text. The process was not linear in following the analysis. It was a recursive process where we went back and forth throughout the speech content.

The researchers also thought that they needed a coding framework to facilitate the analysis of the data. Therefore, they developed a system for decoding the data in our hands. They wanted to capture the clues that bring the insights to the surface. Coding is practically a process of labeling the qualitative data and organizing it to find specific themes in the text. The way these themes related to each other was also crucial in this process. The methodology also involved assigning labels, colors, or tags to each word or phrase signaling significant or recurring themes in the data. It was necessary to use color coding to achieve the coding operation which involved numbering of each utterance for ease of progression. The overall goal was to understand and interpret the speech to establish what ideology it stands for from the speaker's perspective in this case. Any information in the text, or indeed in the context, was potentially significant as a clue for theme hunting.

The coding and analysis of the data were all manual in this case which guarantees direct interaction with the text. The researchers looked up meanings of each significant lexical item from several dictionaries and thesauruses for further coverage. They also scrutinized sentence structures and verb behaviors. Every chunk or set was read and re-read by each researcher in isolation. In addition, every utterance in the speech received a specific code. Using this inductive method would yield a more authentic as well as a fair treatment of the themes. The lexical items in the body of the speech served as exemplars of the themes identified. Moreover, in analyzing the speech, the thematic content was viewed as an instance of language in both spoken and written forms where the content is possibly a form of dialogue or interaction. The thematic load of the speech represents the philosophy of the new administration in the White House.

For each notion or function, the lexical and syntactic realizations were listed as evidence from the speech content. Lexical items or syntactic forms are tools which convey communicative functions in speech event. Also, words and phrases serve as lexical sets regarding particular themes or intended meanings. Of course, words or grammatical forms cannot be significant in isolation. Instead, they become meaningful when seen in the context of the general situation. Therefore, we used a minimalist approach to consider what we thought would be the minimum indication of a particular theme as evidenced by linguistic tools. Of course, the researchers who came as outsiders to the text bore no biases and tried their best to exclude their political inclinations from the study. In a further measure for objectivity, a group of advanced students of linguistics shared observations on the speech and worked as a focus group to help in verifying the themes. Yet, the spoken speech was utilized through multiple listening and watching on YouTube for additional clues for theme analysis.

Analysis

Soon after he was sworn as the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden, has delivered his inauguration address built around the theme of unity. He spoke about the need to bring the country together during an unprecedented moment of crisis. Biden has reached out to the whole nation calling for unity. He spoke for around (22) minutes and most of what he said centered around united America. Interestingly, Biden began his presidency with a speech that focused heavily on the theme of unity. Unity is clearly the number one issue that characterized this address by the new President. It will be pretty interesting to see how other predecessors approached the idea of unity in their political agendas. However, this issue may attract authors in future papers on political discourse. In facing severe health and economic challenges, among others, it is natural that a call for unity becomes a top priority. Unity may be considered a valid goal by any political leader. It is of a great value. Whenever a nation faces a threat, local or foreign, the immediate answer is the appeal to national unity. Unity, of course, is elusive and cannot be easily realized; sometimes, it is no more than wishful thinking. It is not surprising that unity comes as a top priority for Biden in his maiden speech as president. Biden is aware that the call for unity at this time in history may sound unreasonable or unrealistic or even *'naïve'*, as he put it. But he took the trouble to make a case for unity clear and loud. *'The forces that divide us are real'*, he said. He refers here to history to show that this phenomenon is not new but has roots in past times.

Biden comes to the office just after (12) days of a severe attack on the very foundation of American democracy: the Capitol. Trump supporters stormed the Capitol as millions of

Americans were under the impact of false claims that elections were 'stolen.' In this sense, the very legitimacy of Biden's presidency has come under fire. A time of doubts and uncertainty filled the atmosphere.

The opening section of this speech addresses the audience who were present in the place for the occasion. The president directly greets this audience by name. These dignitaries included Justice Roberts, Vice President Harris, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence. Biden has also addressed other '*distinguished guests*' and '*fellow Americans*.' Representation from both leading parties is noticed and acknowledged as a sign of bipartisan unity and reconciliation. The exception is, of course, is the absence of the defeated former president Donald Trump who chose to fly to Florida a couple of hours before the ceremony leaving and evacuating the White House for the new leadership without ever accepting the results of the elections. The following excerpt in Biden's speech takes the idea of unity further:

"I thank my predecessors of both parties for their presence here. I thank them from the bottom of my heart."

In this speech act of thanking and showing gratitude to the former presidents, Biden asserts the idea of bipartisanship as a means to achieve unity in politics. Partnership rather than division are the sole means of attaining progress in the political arena. To thank those former presidents from both parties (democrats and republicans) who attended the ceremony is a sign of unity and sponsorship of democracy. The thanking from the depth of one's heart is an open call for Americans to stay united regardless of political ideology.

The first and probably the foremost significant theme that emerges in this speech is unity. In the first greeting and opening statement, we notice the lexical and syntactic realizations (*my*; *fellow*) which indicating solidarity and collegiality. Here, the President is expressing his personal identification with the American people. The attendance of leaders from the republican party: Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence, is also a sign of unity. The lexical item '*fellow*' suggests meanings such as sharing, partnership, equal standing as class or rank. The word '*fellow*' is also about being viewed as a peer, and that is an ample signification of sharing common characteristics in a group, that is, society. In addition, the word '*fellow*' conveys the meaning of citizenship, affiliation, and personal attachment to the American people as a nation. The term '*fellow*' further implies meanings of association and a sense of belonging. The theme of unity is strongly expressed here in this strong word indeed. The reader or listener, in this case, the ordinary American citizen, would feel this sense of harmony with the leadership. Also, the audience would share the feelings of nationalism in being united for a cause. The phrase '*my friends*' in this clause is yet another highlighter of the unity theme. Friendship resonates with the word '*fellow*' mentioned earlier in the speech. Fellowship emphasizes the emotional and social bond with fellow Americans. When the leader at the top addresses his people as friends, the call for unity is more likely to be much appreciated and believed. Of course, the personal pronoun '*my*' stresses solidarity with the audience here, indicating that unity is the issue to be shared among Americans.

In the same vein, Biden argues that unity is the answer to the nation's divide. The utterance: *'we come together as one nation'* carries the core element of harmony. The word *'indivisible'* is a strong exponent of unity in this context. We should remark here that the consistent use of the personal pronoun *'we'* suggests unity. Biden conveys the theme of unity through vocabulary like *'coming together'* and *'peaceful'* where democracy is practiced in its best forms and not through riots or violent mobs. Thus far, the speech is focusing on these two paired themes: unity and democracy. The phrase *'as one nation'* is a permanent reminder of unity and the need to reunite for the noble cause of solidifying democracy.

Moving ahead in the text of the speech, we recognize that Biden expresses unity in other words. He repeats the pronoun *'we'* to emphasize the notion of unity. Also of interest is the mention of *'the nation'* and *'our uniquely American way.'* Unity is possible, and unity is a must. The following extract from the speech illustrates how Biden captures the idea of unity as a feasible goal :

“We look ahead in our uniquely American way – restless, bold, optimistic – and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be”

The phrase *'our nation'* signifies unity. Biden, in this speech, is never tired of shying away from stressing the need for unity. He elaborates on the same theme by suggesting that to achieve the most American noble goal, i.e., democracy, there is only one way, which is unity. The American story that denotes the past events and achievements overcoming hardships is conditioned here by unity. This supposition is evident in the phrase: *'all of us.'* The American story is the collective, collaborative attitude rather than divided practices that can save the nation. The nation can achieve unity through the embrace of the constitution in which the very first words were: *'We the People.'* The lexical items carried the theme of unity strongly. Words such as *'perfect union'* gave the theme of unity a measure of strength that is rare to find. The theme of unity goes on as we navigate through the speech text. We see expressions of unity manifested as *'we have come so far.'*

In response to the challenges, the President puts forward the solution. In this, he returns to the basic theme of the speech: Unity. Yet, he considers unity as the most elusive form of democracy. This idea is clearly stated in the following segment:

“To overcome these challenges – to restore the soul and to secure the future of America – requires more than words. It requires that most elusive of things in a democracy: Unity.”

Unity is elusive. Biden stresses this idea as more meaningful than a simple word. It is ideal and maybe a faraway dream. Unity is the remedy, but it is difficult to catch. The President presents the idea of unity along with the phrase: *'restore the soul.'* The rhetorical expression *'to restore the soul'* is a very effective means of capturing the picture of unity rebuilding in a dangerously divided nation. This expression is very intriguing indeed. Without the soul, the *'body'* is dead. The soul symbolizes life and dynamism in society. To say *'restore the soul'* means that the American culture has lost its very soul because of the practices of previous leaderships. The use of the word *'soul'* here is metaphoric, and it brings a sense of rituality to the situation. The soul is primarily viewed by many as immortal, while the body may decay. The soul of the American democracy needs rebuilding. It should be guarded, and nourished and this is what the new leader

will be doing. The soul embraces as the identity of any entity. It is the seat of imagination and affection. It gives direction to the one feeling lost. It is a religious metaphor, and the speech made excellent use of it.

The appeal to unity is reinforced again by using strong language in the form of a direct call to Americans to join forces for the good of America. Unity is the solution for social and economic-political illnesses. The following excerpt from the speech shows this strategy:

“Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation. I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face.”

Unity is the correct answer to face the challenges ahead. The President is realistic in confirming that he is aware of the size and scope of the challenges that make unity look like fantasy to some people. Biden expresses this idea finely as follows:

“I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy. I know the forces that divide us are deep, and they are real. But I also know they are not new.”

But he reassures the audience that these dividing ‘forces’ are not new. Biden has been in politics for the past (36) years, and he knows the limits and the possibilities. He knows that the divisions are rooted deeply in the fabrics of society. Yet, he is showing his readiness to face them. As expected, Biden delves into history for insight and evidence to substantiate his point about the supremacy of unity over division.

Biden makes mention of Saint Augustine in pursuance of the meaning of nationhood. He lists the ordinary objects of love that unite the people in a nation. These are: ‘*opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honor, and the truth.*’ These seven objects of love are ethical and moral values that bring a nation together. Biden refers to them as requirements for restoring the soul of America. Each term may take many pages of books and dictionaries to grasp the essence of the everyday objects of love. Biden brings them as a list in background to his concern over ethical politics. Truth and lies are a concern in light of the incidents that took place before the inauguration.

Unity is the answer to all of these malfunctions in society. In addition, unity is the key to future. Biden uses a list of ‘*we can*’ (repeated eight times) as possibilities that can happen in reality due to unity. For example,

“With unity, **we can** do great things. Important things... **We can** make America, once again, the leading force for good in the world.”

Biden uses solid diction to show the way by suggesting unity and tolerance. He simply warns against division and distrust and preaches for unity and collaboration. The answer is in the phrase: ‘*opening the souls.*’ It is a spiritual kind of remedy. Tolerance and humility are the essential components of unity. The spiritual recipe for bringing America together is readily available in more eloquent rhetoric. Consider, for example, the following expression showing unity in its best forms: ‘*My fellow Americans, in the work ahead of us, we will need each other.*’

Discussion

It is clear from the speech analysis that unity as a theme and a priority occupied almost every part of the speech. The apparent focus on the theme of unity comes as no surprise as we know the incidents that preceded the event of the address. Moreover, the content and language of the text revealed how linguistic choices served the purpose of the speech event very well. The employment of powerful phrases based on history and religion helped portray the indispensable value of coming together to face the challenges ahead. Both rhetorical functions and lexical realizations cleverly highlighted the seriousness of the situation and the need for unity as the only and best solution and a way forward.

The analysis also showed clear allusions to spirituality that reflected the ideological orientation of the new president. The lexical choices came in harmony with the function of stressing unity as a requirement for maintaining democracy. The overall tone of the speech sounded optimistic. The president was grateful and respectful in general. The tone appeared reconciliatory as well. Affiliating with the nation was also apparent in the speech. Words and phrases that showed solidarity with the audience served that function well. The allusion to the constitution and previous presidents or founders of the nation was also significantly predominant. Powerful language also showed resilience and determination to face the challenges ahead. The speech served the tone of confidence and reassuring. Reference to history and resorting to religion were used as rhetorical techniques to assert the need for unity.

In light of the previous related literature, it seems clear the content and language of this particular speech are both functional and directive, an idea suggested by (Chilton & Schaffner, 1999). The speaker is interested in influencing the audience's by resorting to a variety of persuasion devices that are mainly linguistic. Previous inauguration research showed that every new president has a particular plan to promote. For example, J.F. Kennedy focused on issues of the time, such as the welfare of humanity as a global concern, as reported by Hutton (1967). Similarly, social values such as benevolence, universalism, stimulation, self-direction, and achievement were the focus of (48) speeches of 6 leaders as reported by Waheed, Schuck, de Vreese, and Neijens (2011). Other studies seem to have focused on pure linguistic devices as exponents of functions and notions of communicative purposes.

The approach of this particular study was thematic, and it seems that little previous research handled the idea of unity as a unit of analysis in inaugural speeches. Therefore, compared with other studies, it seems clear that we need to maintain more balance between the analysis of linguistic devices and the analysis of themes addressed in the speeches selected. From previous research, it is clear that past trends focused on a purely linguistic exploration at the expense of notions and themes.

Conclusion and Implications

Having disclosed the theme of unity and how Biden's speech utilized linguistic means to portray its significance, it is now possible to conclude that this particular speech is of special importance. The analysis showed that the theme of unity occupied the bulk of the inauguration address. The circumstances that preceded and surrounded the occasion influenced the linguistic choices and the notions in the text. It was clear that throughout the text, Biden was preoccupied with the idea of uniting the divided nation. The content in the speech revealed expressions and

phrases that captured the essence of the message: Unity. It was also clear that the diction was quite suitable to the theme of unity.

The analysis also showed clear allusions to spirituality that reflected the ideological orientation of the new President. The lexical choices came in harmony with the function of stressing unity as a requirement for maintaining democracy. The overall tone of the speech sounded optimistic. The President was grateful and respectful in general. The tone appeared reconciliatory as well. Affiliating with the nation was also apparent in the speech. Words and phrases that showed solidarity with the audience served that function well. The allusion to the constitution and previous presidents or founders of the nation was also significantly predominant. Powerful language showed resilience and determination to face the challenges ahead. The speech served the tone of being confident and reassuring. Reference to history and resorting to religion were used as rhetorical techniques to assert the need for unity.

This research can serve several implications. These may be pedagogical and academic. At the pedagogical level, this speech and similar political inauguration speeches can act as vehicles for thematic discussions among language learners who can discuss unity as an essential element in a democratic society. The language features can also highlight devices for transferrable learning. In public speaking courses, this speech can serve as a perfect example of how to address unity in democracy. For academic research, this study could attract further studies on how other speeches handled the theme of unity as a political concern. Future research could utilize the thematic approach in analyzing other speeches. For thematic lexicography, researchers and lexicographers could investigate the notion of unity based on authentic data from this speech and other similar ones.

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