Persuasive Techniques in Political Discourse. A Study on Joe Biden's Acceptance Speech as US President

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Abstract: *Aimed at analyzing several instances of persuasive techniques employed in political discourses, this paper is focused on CDA (critical discourse analysis) and also seeks to pinpoint certain interconnections between such discourses and their historical and social settings. Certain key concepts, i.e. discourse, context, critical discourse analysis and political discourse, represent the main focus of the first part of the paper, while its second part is dedicated to a case study, namely, the analysis of Joe Biden's acceptance speech as president-elect, in which he employs several persuasive techniques, such as parallelism, pairs of antonyms, colloquial language, inclusive language, clichés, hyperboles, similes, intertextuality, questions. In his speech, the new President highlights the convincing nature of his victory in the elections, outlines his pledges and main goals focused on unity, pinpoints the unique nature of his Vice-President, addresses the opposition, calls upon unity and cooperation, outlines his legitimacy and focuses on his promise to heal America. The persuasive techniques that he employs are aimed at acquiring the audience's sympathy and support, and at appealing to their different desires and emotions.*

Keywords: *discourse, context, critical discourse analysis, political discourse, persuasive techniques*

Theoretical framework

Discourse analysis tackles a vast array of notions, including text, intertextuality, context, discourse, argumentation, persuasion, rhetoric, oratory, implicature, coherence, ideologies, individualization, community, etc. According to Schiffrin and his colleagues (1-2), the ever-expanding arena of discourse analysis encompasses both interfingering and distinct disciplines, such as anthropology and linguistics – wherefrom discourse analysis methods emerge. In addition, the same scholars argue that it has also engulfed other disciplines e.g., communication, psychology, sociology, philosophy, psycholinguistics, literary criticism, and even artificial intelligence - seen as rich territories that provided countless opportunities for the expansion of discourse analysis.

The heterogeneous nature of this landscape has triggered a vast array of meanings assigned to the terms "speech", "discourse", "text", and "discourse analysis". For instance, Montesano Montessori and her colleagues

(12) state that a text is "any instance of semiotic practice (linguistic, visual, or aural), extracted from its context of production for the purposes of analysis". As regards intertextuality, this concept plays a key role in critical discourse analysis, as it deals with "the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text" (Fairclough 39), thus forming various connections between texts.

In his work, "Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach", Hymes (53-62) outlined three speech analysis levels, i.e. speech situation, speech event and speech acts. Scholars consider that the second level – represented by the speech event – is the most significant as it tackles several special occurrences of speech exchanging (see Richards & Schmidt, 2002). When examining speech events, Hymes (53-62) draws the attention to several factors which he abbreviates as "SPEAKING": S - situation (it refers to the setting of the speech event); P – participants (it involves the interaction between an addressor and an addressee); E – ends (it refers to the goals and outcomes of the speech event); A – act sequence (it denotes the contents and form taken by messages); K – key (it refers to the speech manner and tone; I – instrumentalities (it makes reference to speech forms and channel); N – norms (it implies that there are certain norms/ rules of interaction and interpretations that should be taken into account); G – genres (it refers to the text types).

It is also worth mentioning Tatiana Slama-Cazacu's (61-62) original theory of context. The great Romanian psycholinguist identifies various semantic levels, such as the social, situational and psychological context (i.e. *explicit*), the *implicit* context and the *total* or global context. From this scholar's perspective, the total context encompasses the implicit context, made of the physical situational environment (dealing with the coordinates of the partners involved in the speech act) and the so-called social environment. The explicit context – also encompassed by the total context and by the implicit context – includes the linguistic or the verbal context and the extralinguistic context (referring to nonverbal elements/ components of communication, such as gestures, mimics, etc.).
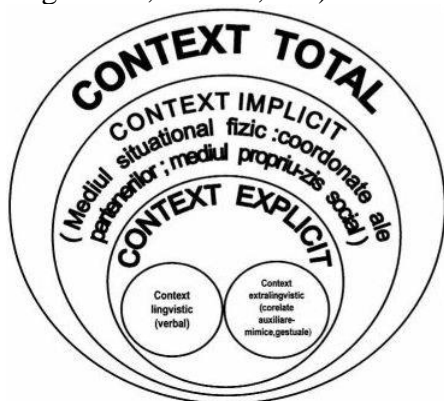

Figure 1 Source: Slama-Cazacu (61)

In their turn, linguists view discourse as "anything beyond the sentence", dealing with language use; their definitions are based on "a focus on specific instances or spates of language", while for critical theorists "the term 'discourses' not only becomes a count noun but further refers to a broad

conglomeration of linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions" (see Schiffrin et al. 1-2).

From Widdowson's perspective, "Discourses are kinds of genre, institutionalized modes of thinking and social practice, and those who compose texts are taken to be not so much individuals as socially constructed spokespersons or representatives of discourse communities" (70). Therefore, the above-mentioned scholar reaches the conclusion that

> critical discourse analysts enquire into the role played by schematic knowledge […], but the schemata they focus on have to do more with socio-political values and beliefs, not only with ideational but also ideological representations of reality, not only with cultural constructs of how the world is, but also with political constructs of how it should be. (Widdowson 70-71)

Widdowson (429) also approaches discourse analysis from a heterogeneous viewpoint:

> Discourse analysis seeks to describe and explain linguistic phenomena in terms of the affective, cognitive, situational, and cultural contexts of their use and to identify linguistic resources through which we (re)construct our life (our identity, role, activity, community, emotion, stance, knowledge, belief, ideology, and so forth).

Montesano Montessori and her colleagues (12) examine the term "discourse" in correlation with the notion of "critical discourse analysis". These scholars define it as "The process of social signification using a range of semiotic modes (language, image, sound) in a specific socio-cultural setting" and, against the background provided by critical discourse analysis, ontologically, the discourse becomes "one element of social life which is dialectically related to other non-discourse elements (like time, space, place, social power, and so forth)". Moreover, the same scholars also specify that "Operationalised in analysis, discourse is the patterned use of language which emerges from engagement in social practices. It thus reflects and helps to shape social practice". Nicolina Montesano Montessori and her colleagues (12) further speak of the "orders of discourse", which highlight "the socially constitutive and regulatory power of discourse" and refer to "the distinctive configuration of styles, discourses, and genres that are routinely drawn on as part of a social practice". It is commonly known among linguists that discourses shape the particular characteristics of social practices and create networks that can be approached in terms of interdiscursivity. Therefore, scholars agree that the interdiscursive connections between social practices are

vital characteristics of societies and represent the generator of social metamorphosis and a mechanism of power that can promote particular social practices and their main features at the expense of others.

As far as *critical discourse analysis* is concerned (first expanded by Norman Fairclough, in 1989), Baker and Ellece (26) define it as "An approach to the analysis of discourse which views language as a social practice and is interested in the ways that ideologies and power relations are expressed through language". The scholars that perform research in this field usually tackle issues of inequality and examine the social context in order to figure out the ways of, and the reasons for writing or uttering words and in order to find out whether there are other texts referenced by the respective words.

In 1989, Norman Fairclough expanded upon this approach based on the implementation of a three-dimensional framework. He stressed the idea that first, the description incorporates the correlation of text analysis with critical linguistics (which, in turn, sprang from Halliday's systemic functional grammar). Then, the scholar pinpointed the interpretation stage, targeted at outlining the interconnections between text and interaction, as texts are considered yields of the production process and sources in the interpretation process. Finally, the explanation deals with the analysis of the interconnections between interaction and social context, having in view the social consequences triggered by the production and interpretation processes (see Baker and Ellece 26).

Although there are scholars who have tackled critical discourse analysis from various other perspectives, almost all of them have the tendency to intermingle text analysis and the scrutiny of the broader social arena. Baker and Ellece (26) have identified such instances. For example, they argue that Reisigl and Wodak approached discourses from a historical perspective in 2001, also employing the argumentation theory; Jäger's perspective (published in 2001) is outlined by theoretical and methodological elements sprang out from Foucault's critical discourse analysis interweaved with dispositive analysis. In his turn, Van Dijk (210) deals with critical discourse analysis by employing social and cognitive lenses and a three-part memory pattern. O'Halloran's approach (from 2003) to critical discourse analysis is underlined by cognitive linguistics, connectionism, relevance theory and inferencing. Focusing on the identification and description of large-scale molds/ patterns by corpus linguistics methods, Partington (in 2004) and Baker (in 2006) were the promotors of corpus-assisted discourse studies, while in 2007 Hart and Luke were interested in the synergy spawned by critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics.

Criticism of critical discourse analysis highlights the lack of a stable approach to analysis and the fact that the analyst is granted extensive liberty in the selection of his/her research corpus of texts, and of merging various

analytical techniques, in a fluctuating order, which makes critical discourse analysis challenging and slippery. Furthermore, Baker and Ellece (27) consider that this extensive liberty interweaved with critical discourse analysis's main concern of outlining social issues, e.g. prejudice and exclusion can generate the researchers' bias, as they might focus on text samples that demonstrate their hypotheses or perspectives whereas overlooking those texts that disproof them or undermine their assumptions. Although critical discourse analysis has agreed upon the fallacy of the so-called unbiased analyst, it has also upheld the idea of reflexivity, i.e. analysts are able to reflect upon their stance and its evolution as the research unfolds. In addition, it has also called upon triangulation, which involved the interlace of "small-scale qualitative analysis with practices from corpus linguistics such as sampling and quantitative techniques", featuring broader tendencies (Baker and Ellece 27).

The political discourse
Wilson (775-794) explains that the term "political discourse" involves at least two meanings: it either makes reference to a discourse of political nature or it denotes the examination of a political discourse as merely an instance of discourse type, without any overt connections to its political content or context.

Van Dijk (20), in his paper entitled "Political discourse and ideology", conceives the political discourse as an "institutionally bound text and talk of politicians". From the scholar's perspective, the topic tackled by the discourse is not a defining element because politicians may virtually deal with almost any topic in society (usually related to events from the public arena) that they consider engaging, interesting or pertinent or that might need public decision-making processes, policies or regulation. As far as the discourse style, the overall form and the debate format are concerned, Van Dijk (21) explains that these do not represent defining features of political discourses either, although there are some terms and ritual formulas (such as those for addressing to or speaking about MPs) employed only by politicians. Nevertheless, the scholar identifies certain features typical of the political discourse, outlined by contextual categories:

(a) The global domain: politics
(b) The global act(s) being implemented: legislation, policy mailing, etc.
(c) The global setting (House of Parliament, session of parliament, etc.)
(d) The local political acts being accomplished: Tabling a motion, 'doing' opposition, etc.
(e) The political roles of the participants: MP, representative, party member, member of the opposition, etc.

(f) The political cognitions of the participants: Political beliefs and ideologies; aims and objectives, etc. (Van Dijk 21-22)

The above quote shows that the political nature of discourses is outlined by context features rather than by structural properties.

As far as policy discourse is concerned, Montesano Montessori and her peers (266-267) explain that it has a fourfold nature, i.e. it is relational, constitutive, context-specific and infused with issues of power. Its relational nature is pinpointed by the fact that critical policy discourse analysis tackles the interconnections between policy practices, as the meaning of their aspects springs from their relationships with other policy practice factors and from the existence or even absence of the interconnections with other political, social, and economic facets of the landscape enacting the respective policy. Since the central theoretical concept of critical discourse analysis is represented by the orders of discourse and the focus falls upon discourse inception in terms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, Montesano Montessori and her colleagues (267) think that the analysis should pinpoint the interconnections between events and practices, spawned through texts and discourses, revealing their socially structuring capacity.

In their turn, Wodak and Weiss (127-128) explain that discourses are interconnected (interdiscursivity) and that discursive dynamics is tightly connected to its settings. Moreover, the scholars also pinpoint the context-dependency nature of discourses, which played a significant part in their research findings and designed the heuristic model that enabled them to analyze "the mediation between "discourse" and "society" in EU-discourses".

The constitutive nature of critical policy discourse analysis contributes to the knowledge of policy and enriches critical social research, as it furnishes the tools for the examination of its specific mechanisms, by the consistent interconnections between the discourse's effects and actual texts. The above-mentioned scholars agree that the detailed examination of texts in critical discourse analysis pinpoints the practices and discourses whereby political and policy actors are conceived as social subjects that interpret objects of governance and modulate them, triggering real-life influences on the evolution and implementation of policy, and even showing the inconsistencies, conflicts, and vested concerns typical of the political arena, which unveil the flaws of the scenarios for hegemonic dominance (see Montesano Montessori et al. 267-268).

A relevant example in this regard could be represented by crisis situations. Fairclough and Fairclough (3) explain that crises compel people to design strategies or policies aimed at restoring balance, entailing a subjective aspect, since "practical argumentation feeds into people's decisions about how to act". According to these two scholars, this reveals the political nature of

strategies and of the choices and decisions made by agents which, in addition, are often challenged by other groups guided by different purposes and interests, who are striving for dominance on the political arena.

Having in view that the contexts heavily influence texts and discourses, it should be taken into consideration the fact that in critical policy discourse analysis, the discourse is envisaged in a reciprocally "constitutive relation with social practices" (Montesano Montessori et al. 268). Thus, the discourse can be critically located within its historical social landscape, highlighting the interconnections between the macro and micro levels of a social issue. As far as the pervasion with power issues is concerned, it should be taken into consideration that critical discourse analysis is mainly focused, among others, on social power and power interactions and relationships. Therefore, analysts usually tackle those discourses that have the potential to enhance the advantages of powerful groups at the expense of weaker ones.

Montesano Montessori and her colleagues (269-270) have reached the conclusion that critical policy discourse analysis, which is endowed with methodological variety, is a field based on a consistent set of research principles that promotes a critical realist perspective upon the social world, by analyzing the interconnections between the discourse moment and the broader social order.

Case Study: Joe Biden's (President-Elect) Acceptance Speech (2020)

This part of our study will tackle some persuasive techniques employed in Joe Biden's acceptance speech as US president-elect, which he delivered after a vote counting period haunted by segregation and uncertainty. Journalists noticed that by means of this speech, Biden renewed his pledge to serve as a president for all Americans and called upon cooperation, in order to put an end to polarization (Stevens).

Joseph Robinette Biden Jr., member of the Democratic Party, is nowadays the 46th US President. Besides being the oldest US president, he is also the first one who has a female Vice-President (also of Black and South-Asian descent). He played major parts on the American political scene across time. Among many others, he was the sixth-youngest senator in U.S. history (1972) and the fourth-most senior sitting senator (in 2008). He chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee (1987-1995), and, for 12 years, he was part of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Between 2009 and 2017, he was Vice-President under Barack Obama and he put his imprint on US foreign affairs. At the beginning of his Presidential mandate, Biden has focused on activities aimed at solving the issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and at counteracting the negative effects of, and fighting against the recession haunting the US. Moreover, his concerns have also been directed towards the

reversal of certain policies implemented by Donald Trump (former US President), such as rejoining the Paris Agreement on climate change.

From the very beginning, Biden was aware of the fact that he had become the president of a people severely segregated by partisan lines, and, thus, in his acceptance speech, he reiterated his will to unite and support all Americans. In his article, "Read Joe Biden's President-Elect Acceptance Speech: Full Transcript", published on 9th November 2020, in *New York Times*, Matt Stevens summarizes Biden's speech as follows:

> In a roughly 17-minute address, Mr. Biden, speaking for the first time as president-elect, promised to lead with compassion, decency and character and heal the nation's soul. As he has for months, Mr. Biden also promised to immediately address the coronavirus pandemic and work to stop its spread, an effort he said would be key to economic recovery.
> And to conclude, he returned to the idea that there is nothing Americans can't do if they work together. (Stevens n.p.)

The main ideas that Biden pinpointed in his speech are:
- highlighting the decisive and convincing nature of his victory in the elections, "with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of this nation — 74 million";
- outlining his pledges and main goals, focused on unity ("to restore the soul of America", "to rebuild the backbone of the nation - the middle class", "to make America respected around the world again and to unite us here at home");
- highlighting the support of his family and his wife's qualities and future role, as first lady;
- pinpointing the unique nature of his Vice-President ("the first woman, first Black woman, first woman of South Asian descent, and first daughter of immigrants ever elected to national office in this country");
- thanking the people who worked for the elections, his supporters and members of his campaign staff;
- addressing those who voted for Trump and calling upon unity and cooperation;
- outlining that his mandate, will be focused on healing America ("to control the virus", "to build prosperity", "to secure your family's health care", "to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country", "to save the climate", "to restore decency, defend democracy, and give everybody in this country a fair shot") and on the battle against the pandemic;
- calling upon the politicians' cooperation;
- presenting a brief history of America at crossroads;

- envisaging America's prospects focused upon the restauration of its soul and upon its possibilities ("an America that's freer and more just", "an America that creates jobs with dignity and respect", "an America that cures disease", "an America that never leaves anyone behind", "an America that never gives up, never gives in", "A nation united", "A nation strengthened", "A nation healed").

Biden employs several techniques (such as parallelism, pairs of antonyms, colloquial language, inclusive language, cliches, hyperboles, similes, repetitions, questions) (see Lamb, 2021) that boost the persuasive nature of his speech.

Biden's speech abounds in parallelism, a compositional technique with intensifying effects, which involves the repetition of several words in the same order or the symmetrical construction of two or more structures or the identity of the syntactic structure of two or more successive sentences, so that their similarity is perceptible (see Bidu-Vrănceanu). Therefore, repetitions have both a stylistic and a syntactic nature. Biden begins his promises by employing the parallelism of three definite relative clauses; in addition, the first two clauses contain the conjunction "but", which introduces an added statement, in opposition with what was mentioned before it:

> I pledge to be a president *who seeks not to divide,* **but** *to unify.*
> *Who doesn't see red and blue states,* **but** *a United States.*
> And *who will work with all my heart* to win the confidence of the whole people. (Biden)

His speech continues with two other parallelisms. The first one consists in the pronoun "that", the verb "to be" (Present Simple Tense, third person, singular), followed by a noun, the verb "to be" (Present Simple Tense, third person, singular/ Future Simple Tense) and the preposition "about": "For that is what America is about: the people. And that is what our administration will be about" (Biden).

The second parallelism is made of a "to" infinitive verb, followed by a noun phrase (direct object), the preposition "of" (marking possession) and noun phrase: "I sought this office *to restore the soul of America. To rebuild the backbone of the nation* – the middle class" (Biden).

A certain word (or group of words) is used two or more times in a row in order to express the duration of an action, the intensity of an action or a quality, as well as a series of circumstances, such as distribution, progression, succession, periodicity, etc. The artistic value of the repetition appears through the ability of speech to intensify the expression through the consecutive mentioning of the same words/ phrases and to boost their suggestive or evocative effects, by stressing them in various positions (see Bidu-Vrănceanu).

Thus, the repetitions identified in Biden's speech underscore or protrude certain ideas. For example, the repetition of the pronoun "each other" and of the adverb "again" in the following sentences pinpoint the idea of cooperation and reciprocity: "To see each other again. To listen to each other again". Another instance is represented by the repetition of the definite article "the", the noun "battle", followed by a "to" infinitive verb and a noun phrase. It is noteworthy that this paragraph outlines some of the main objectives of Biden's term:

> The battle to control the virus.
> The battle to build prosperity.
> The battle to secure your family's health care.
> The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country.
> The battle to save the climate.
> The battle to restore decency. (Biden)

The new President's call upon cooperation is reiterated in the following sentences, also by means of parallelism, marked by the repetition of the personal pronoun "we" (first person, plural form), the modal verb "can" and the infinitive form of the verb "to cooperate": "And if we can decide not to cooperate, then we can decide to cooperate". The stylistic effect is boosted by the adverb "not", which also marks the antonymy of the structure, suggesting the segregation of the country during the election period and marking the President's hint that he is ready to cooperate but that cooperation also depends on the will of both his partners and opponents.

Parallelism can also be noticed in the following lines (where the President sketches America's prospects), being outlined by the repetition of the adverb "ahead", the preposition "to", the indefinite article "an" and the noun "America", followed by a "that" clause:

> Ahead to an America that's freer and more just.
> Ahead to an America that creates jobs with dignity and respect.
> Ahead to an America that cures disease – like cancer and Alzheimers.
> Ahead to an America that never leaves anyone behind.
> Ahead to an America that never gives up, never gives in. (Biden)

In the last two lines, the adverb "never", which is repeated three times, and the juxtaposition of the phrasal verbs "give up" and "give in" highlight the President's faith in the determination and tenacity of the American people.

Finally, the parallelism marked by the repetition of the indefinite article "a" and of the noun "nation", followed by an adjective, emphasize the idea that

a united nation is stronger and able to heal: "A nation united. A nation strengthened. A nation healed" (Biden).

Interestingly, the initials of the first two adjectives, i.e. "united" and "strengthened", are also the initials of the country: U.S. Moreover, if we add the last adjective, the main idea of Biden's prospects is revealed, i.e. U.S. healed.

The President employs colloquial language in his speech in order to make himself understood by the entire people and to seem down-to-earth, especially when he addresses his opponents: "I've lost a couple of elections myself", "let's give each other a chance", "It's time to put away", "That's the choice I'll make" (Biden).

The questions (similar to the rhetorical ones) "what is the people's will? What is our mandate?" (Biden) lead the audience to the President's brief presentation of the objectives of his mandate.

In addition, Biden's speech is infused with inclusive language, marked by the use of the pronouns "we", "us", "our", in order to get the audience onside. He says that "The Bible tells us that to everything there is a season" and that "Americans have called on us"; he speaks of "our mandate", "our work", "our nation", "our better angels", "our darkest impulses", "our best America" and "our time". Furthermore, he asserts that "We cannot repair" "until we get this virus under control", and that "We can do it. I know we can", "We must restore the soul of America" (Biden), highlighting the common efforts that have to be made by all politicians in order to restore America. The idea of collaboration and unity reaches its climax in the following lines, infused with both inclusive and colloquial language: "And there has never been anything we haven't been able to do when we've done it together" (Biden).

Hyperboles – employed in order to underline the speaker's perspective and to pinpoint his or her ideas – can be noticed in the following structures: "tireless support" (emphasizing his wife's assistance); "this grim era of demonization in America" (hinting at the issues caused by the pandemic and by the polarization of the country during the elections); "America has bent the arc of the moral universe towards justice" (highlighting that finally, the discrimination of women, Black people and immigrants has come to an end, now that he has a Black South Asian woman as Vice-President). In addition, Biden says that his coalition is "the broadest and most diverse in history", which also hints at the idea of diversity and lack of discrimination (as opposed to Trump's segregation). Hyperboles are also present in the following lines, suggesting the hard times faced by the country and the huge efforts that have to be made in order to solve the issues affecting the American people: "Americans have called on us to marshal the forces of decency and the forces of fairness. To marshal the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of our time" (Biden).

Similes are employed in order to persuade of, and to strengthen the decisive nature of his victory ("We have won with *the most votes ever cast* for a presidential ticket in the history of this nation"), to emphasize the idea of America's power and importance at the global level ("our best *America is a beacon* for the globe") and the wide array of possibilities it grants to its people ("in America everyone should be given the opportunity *to go as far as their dreams and God-given ability will take them*"; "an America that's *freer and more just*") (Biden).

Having in view that pairs of antonyms are frequently employed in poetic works and folklore, the semantic juxtaposition of such words clearly and figuratively pinpoints the author's thinking or the essence of popular wisdom (see Bidu-Vrănceanu 164-167) (for instance, in his speech, Biden speaks of "the constant battle between better angels and our darkest impulses"). Furthermore, antonyms can also be used in order to clarify or emphasize the meaning of the main word (Biden pledges "to be a president who seeks *not to divide, but to unify*"). Moreover, in general, the use of a wide array of antonyms enlivens and enriches the discourse, it boosts its expressivity and pinpoints its main ideas. For example, when the President speaks of his pride of "the broadest and most diverse" coalition, he points out that it encompasses:

> Democrats, Republicans and Independents.
> Progressives, moderates and conservatives.
> Young and old.
> Urban, suburban and rural.
> Gay, straight, transgender.
> White. Latino. Asian. Native American. (Biden)

Clichés and catch phrases aim at expressing ideas that can be easily and quickly understood by the audience. For instance, Biden uses in his speech the cliché according to which America is seen as the country of all possibilities: "I've always believed we can define America in one word: possibilities". He also quotes Obama's catch-phrase (i.e., "Yes, we can."), and uses a similar one in his speech (i.e., "We can do it. I know we can."), when he calls upon cooperation and unity in order to take advantage of "the opportunity to defeat despair and to build a nation of prosperity and purpose". The new President ends his speech with another cliché, aimed at infusing a positive and hopeful tone related to America's future: "God bless you. And may God protect our troops" (Biden).

Since they express the properties of nouns, adjectives are one of the main means of artistic presentation of reality through words and, as such, they are usually employed in descriptions. Although the adjective is an expressive determinant of a noun, the artistic achievement (epithet) is not only due to the

adjective itself but results from its association with a certain noun, which, in reality, does not possess the feature expressed by that adjective. In his discourse, Biden uses adjectives in order to underline the unquestionable nature of his victory ("clear victory", "A convincing victory"), the exceptional qualities of his wife and of his Vice-President ("tireless support", "military mom", "a great first lady", "a fantastic vice president"), the challenges faced by America ("the harsh rhetoric", "the great battles", "grim era", "terrible virus"), the development of the country ("the slow, yet steady widening of opportunity") and the qualities and potential of the American people ("a great nation", "a good people"). The emphasis on his decisive, clear and convincing victory suggests the idea of social power and power interactions and relationships, Biden's speech being also aimed at enhancing the advantages of the group he represents.

He also uses intertextuality, as he prepares the survey of his objectives by mentioning a teaching from one of the humanity's most important books, i.e. The Bible: "The Bible tells us that to everything there is a season - a time to build, a time to reap, a time to sow. And a time to heal" (Biden). Then the President adds that "This is the time to heal in America". Interestingly, Biden uses the verb "to heal" against the background of an America haunted by the pandemics and its havoc, highlighting that it is time to take action.

In his speech, Biden also quotes Michael Joncas's hymn "On Eagle's Wings". The President confesses that it "means a lot to me and to my family, particularly my deceased son, Beau" and that "It captures the faith that sustains me and which I believe sustains America" (Biden). He also hopes "it can provide some comfort and solace to the more than 230,000 families who have lost a loved one to this terrible virus this year". In this case, intertextuality is employed in order to boost the audience's sympathy, by revealing himself as an empathic President, who has also gone through difficult times.

In his speech, in order to win the people's sympathy and support, Biden appeals to their different desires and emotions, such as patriotism ("My fellow Americans", "A victory for "We the People".", "For that is what America is about: the people.", "To make America respected around the world again", "I wanted a campaign that represented America"), fairness and justice ("America has bent the arc of the moral universe towards justice", "The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country", "The battle to restore decency, defend democracy, and give everybody in this country a fair shot", "no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity, or their disability"), family values ("I would not be here without the love and tireless support of Jill, Hunter, Ashley, all of our grandchildren and their spouses, and all our family. They are my heart."; "The battle to secure your family's health care", "hugging a grandchild, birthdays, weddings, graduations, all the moments that matter most to us").

Conclusion

In his acceptance speech as president-elect, Joe Biden uses several persuasive techniques (such as parallelism, pairs of antonyms, colloquial language, inclusive language, clichés, hyperboles, similes, intertextuality, questions) in order to highlight the convincing nature of his victory in the elections (which suggest the idea of social power and power interactions and relationships), to outline his pledges and main goals (focused on unity), to pinpoint the unique nature of his Vice-President. He also addresses his opponents and calls upon unity and cooperation and outlines his mandate, focused on healing America. The persuasive techniques employed in his speech are aimed at acquiring the audience's sympathy and support, and at appealing to their different desires and emotions.

It is made evident that the context heavily influences Biden's discourse, as it is deeply anchored within the historical and social landscape of the year 2020, in an America haunted by the Covid-19 pandemics and divided among partisan lines. Thus, in his speech, Biden calls upon unity and cooperation, in order to engage in great battles such as those against the virus, against racism and against the climate changes that negatively affect the planet, battles aimed at solving social and economic issues faced by the American nation and at building prosperity, securing family health care and restoring decency.

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