

A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC AND RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL FESTIVE SPEECHES

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Abstract:

This paper analyses American presidential festive speeches delivered by Barack Obama and Donald Trump, treating them as instances of epideictic political discourse. Such speeches conventionally emphasise celebration, unity, and the affirmation of shared values, yet they are also produced in specific political and ideological contexts. This makes them a productive site for examining how national identity and political authority are discursively constructed within ceremonial constraints.

The analysis is conducted within a Critical Discourse Analysis framework and incorporates insights from conceptual metaphor theory. It examines recurring patterns of figurative language, forms of address, evaluative expression, and symbolic reference in a small corpus of presidential festive speeches delivered on occasions such as Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The focus is on how established differences in presidential rhetoric are realised within the conventions of a highly ritualised epideictic genre.

The findings show that, although both presidents operate within shared generic expectations, they configure rhetorical and metaphorical resources in systematically different ways. Obama's festive speeches more consistently frame national identity in civic and inclusion-oriented terms, supported by metaphors of journey, hope, and collective responsibility. Trump's speeches, by contrast, place greater emphasis on military commemoration, strength, and defence, drawing on martial imagery and narratives of protection. These differences emerge through distinct uses of the genre's established rhetorical repertoire rather than through departures from it.

Keywords: *Presidential festive discourse; Epideictic rhetoric; Critical Discourse Analysis; Conceptual metaphor; National identity.*