

## **A RHETORICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VICTORY SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA AND MIRCEA GEOANĂ**

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### **Abstract**

The present study sets out to examine the political discourses of two presidential candidates, Barack Obama and Mircea Geoană (the Romanian Social Democrat party leader), in a comparative study which also seeks to remind the reader of the overwhelming and manipulative influence of both PR and media on society.

As an interdisciplinary insight, the present analytical study was built on linguistic concepts like: *genre*, *(political) discourse*, *politics* and *democratic overtones*, and *psychological contributions* to civil political speech. The scholars and researchers whose remarkable works informed the present inquiry are: Bhatia (1993); Swales (1981, 1985, 1990); Bakhtin (1981, 1986); Bitzer (1968); Devitt (2004); Fairclough (2003); Jamieson (1975), Miller (1984); Charaudeau & Maingueneau (2002); Johnson, David & Johnson, Roger (2000). The primary sources used for the analysis of speeches were: Carr (2010), The Pew Research Centre's data and online newspaper articles.

The two discourses looked at in the study are: Obama's *Victory speech* presented in Chicago on 5th November 2008 and the Romanian presidential candidate's (Mircea Geoană's) eight-minute speech of his delusive glory delivered on the night of the elections, when he falsely declared himself the elect president. Whereas Obama's speech turned out to be a model speech, which will continue to instigate to further rhetorical inquiries in the decades to come, Geoană's speech, which looked pathetically thin and followed Obama's speech very closely in several respects, soon fell into oblivion.

After a brief discussion of political discourse in general, the study focuses on the rhetorical convergence of issues in other American presidential election speeches, illustrated by the 2000 presidential elections which opposed G.W. Bush to Al Gore, each allegedly standing for the same cause but representing different positions and strategies. The study then pursues an analysis of the two discourses or genre texts (Obama's and Geoană's) along Halliday's concepts of *field*, *mode* and *tenor*. It equally undertakes to highlight the similarities of the two speeches and to interpret the collected data. Next, the study moves on to an in-depth examination of what makes the two speeches resemble each other so much, starting with the delivery moment and ending up with the promises of the new administration and the final wish, whereby every quotation of the rhetorical 'import' phenomenon is commented on.

The findings reveal that Obama's speech exerted a great influence on Geoană's oratorical performance. However, the study does not attempt to cast any doubts on Geoană's rhetorical skills, nor to praise the uniqueness of his speech. Finally, it does not come as a surprise that the Romanians who were unaware of the monumental American

original held their candidate in high esteem and praised him as a caring, new president who distinguished himself as a master of oratory.

**Key words:** Political discourse; Discourse analysis; Rhetorics; Rhetorical convergence; Oratorical performance.

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