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## Driving Home Persuasive Messages in Barack Obama's Closing Argument "One Week"

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### ABSTRACT

As Obama's speech entitled "One Week" signified the closing argument for all his presidential campaign speeches in the U.S. Presidential Election in 2008, Obama attempted to do his best to persuade the American voters to bring the important issues of his political agenda to the highest level of their consciousness. In that way the American voters were reminded of the important point of voting for him. For that purpose, to drive home his persuasive messages of unity and change, Obama delivered the speech making good use of some rhetorical devices. This paper is an attempt to explore and elucidate his outstanding use of those rhetorical devices such as sound bites for highlighting the messages, sound devices for appealing to his audience's ears about the messages being delivered, and the various means of message amplifications for magnifying powerfully the messages being delivered in his closing argument speech.

Keywords: Obama's closing argument, rhetorical devices, underscoring persuasion

### INTRODUCTION

With eight days approaching the decisive election, Obama delivered his closing argument known as "One Week" on Monday, October 27, 2008, in Canton, Ohio. Very much like the opening argument in his Announcement Speech, the closing argument repeated his overarching twin themes of unity and change to be imbued with the spirit of hope.

"We are one week away from changing America," Obama proclaimed, reminding his audience of the presidential election that drew nearer as the long trails of the campaigns came to an end in his closing argument for the presidency at the Canton Civic Center in Ohio. To his country that was in the grips of the economic crises, Obama promised to restore the nation's economic prosperity and sense of higher purpose (Feller, 2008a). As Americans had eight more days to go, Obama was anxious to bring to his audience's highest level of consciousness of his main political platforms such as bringing in a change to the Republican-dominated government, putting an end to the unauthorized War in Iraq, providing affordable universal healthcare coverage, improving education and cutting taxes for those who earned below \$ 250,000 (Obama, 2008; cf. Feller, 2008b; Baker, 2008). He was to underscore the persuasive messages of his political agenda that differentiated him from John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate.

If most of the polls were right, Obama was about to win the election to be the first African-American President. In view of this, his "closing argument" was seen both as providing a more solid ground for the vote and a more resolute standpoint as he would have to tackle the mismanaged country with his new direction (Baker, 2008). Both issues were very clearly and powerfully expressed in Obama's first high structures starting with the phrase "In one week" in the early part of the speech and the second high structures starting with the same phrase "In one week" in the later part of the speech (Baker, 2008; Obama, 2008).

Obama foregrounded his platform, especially regarding the enormity of the economic crises that he was to tackle. Following Abraham Lincoln (cf. Paulson, n.d.), Obama argued that "Government should do what we can't do for ourselves", underscoring the role of the government to facilitate the nation's growing prosperity and aiming his deadly argument at John McCain, saying: "John McCain calls it socialism, I call it opportunity". Toward the end of the speech, Obama reminded his supporters of the decisive moments that would determine the future of the nation in the D-day of the presidential election, saying: "In one week, we can come together as a nation and as a people and choose our better history" (Obama, 2008).



Obama's text of his presidential campaign speech in focus fell under the broad category of persuasive discourse (cf. Kinneavy, 1980, p. 61). As an instance of persuasive discourse, the text displays its characteristics of being persuasive in that it aims to influence, create, reinforce, and change his audience's beliefs, values, attitudes, and/or behaviors (cf. Charteris-Black, 2006, pp. 8-9; cf. also Lucas, 2007, p. 400, and Beebe & Beebe, 2005, pp. 398-399; 2009, p. 106).

The success of Obama's "One Week" as a political speech that aims at persuasion depends on how well Obama as a text maker tailors his messages to meet the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the audience (cf. Lucas, 2007, p. 403). Toward the goal of getting across his political lines of thought and platform, Obama therefore evidently employed some means of rhetorical devices to drive home some important points of his persuasive messages.

Obama's "One Week" contains carefully engineered short, repeatable and memorable excerpts (cf. Beard, 2000, pp. 37-43) to highlight his persuasive messages. Some well-known sound bites can be exemplified by three-part list and two-part list. The three-part list is exemplified by Abraham Lincoln's three part list as found in his famous Gettysburg Address of 1863 (Lincoln, 1863) in the forms of the repetition of the word "the people" preceded by different prepositions:

Government of the people,  
by the people,  
for the people.

(Beard, 2000, p. 39)

The three-part list may also consist of different words of almost similar meaning as exemplified in Nelson Mandela's speech on his release from prison as delivered in Cape Town in 1990:

**Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans.**  
I greet you all in the name of **peace, democracy**  
and **freedom for all**.

(Beard, 2000, p. 39)

Atkinson (as cited in Beard, 2000, p. 39) mentioned another common feature of sound bite in political speeches called contrastive pairs, or commonly called as antithesis. Basically a contrastive pair consists of two parts of construction that are in some ways in opposition. As a case of point, this can be exemplified by Neil Armstrong's well-known words as he became the first man to land on the moon in 1969:

One small step for man: one giant leap for mankind.

(Beard, 2000, p. 40)

Good speeches as delivered by an excellent orator like Obama were also prepared to employ sound devices

such as assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and consonance, in order to create appeals to their audience's ears so as to draw their greater attention to the related utterances containing the messages. Assonance is defined as the repetition of the identical vowel sounds, that may occur both initially – as in "all the awful auguries" – or internally – as found in a line of Edmund Spenser's poem: "Her goodly eyes like sapphires shining bright" (Kennedy, 1978, p. 124; cf. also Perrine, 1988, p. 663). Alliteration is defined as the repetition of the identical consonant sounds at the beginning of successive words – "round and round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran". Rhyme is defined as the repetition of the identical vowels followed by the identical consonants at the end of words at close interval – as in "breeze" and "trees". Consonance is defined as a kind of slant rhyme as the rhymed words or phrases have the identical consonant sounds but a different vowel – as in "chitter" and "chatter" (Kennedy, 1978, pp. 123-129; cf. also Perrine, 1988, pp. 663-664; p. 1406).

When referring to Barack Obama, Leanne (2010, pp. 105, 127) identified his excellent communicative technique that enabled him to drive home his points so effectively. She described, for instance, when giving a remark, a highly effective communicator like Obama will prioritize and focus well, setting aside lower priority issues and throwing more light on ideas of greatest importance. Such a communicator will draw on a wide range of useful rhetorical devices to promote assertively the most significant ideas and themes. For the practical guide of message amplification, this research partly refers to Leanne (2010) and the concept of the means of message amplification in political speeches to Gunawan (2012).

## METHOD

The data for this paper were the linguistic units in the forms of words, phrases, and clauses or sentences that were used to drive home some important parts of Obama's messages. The source of the data was Barack Obama's prepared text of his closing argument: "One Week" (Obama, 2008). The approach used in this paper was qualitative method of inquiry (Creswell, 2003, pp. 208-213; Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 163-164, 268) as this paper focused on the non-numerical data of the rhetorical means that were qualitatively interpreted (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 271).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Obama employed the rhetorical devices in the forms of sound bites and means of message amplification for driving home and amplifying some significant points of his persuasive messages. He also employed



the rhetorical devices in the forms of sound devices to make his utterances more ear-catching, thus enabling him to draw his audience's greater attention to the messages being conveyed. All of those rhetorical devices in Obama's "One Week" may be summed up as follows (in the order of frequency of occurrences):

**Table 1.** The use of rhetorical devices in Obama's "One Week"

| Sound Bites (10)                           |    |
|--|----|
| 1 Antithesis                               | 3  |
| 2 Three-part list                          | 2  |
| 3 Juxtaposed three sets of three-part list | 2  |
| 4 Four-part list                           | 2  |
| 5 Juxtaposed three sets of two-part list   | 1  |
| Sound Devices (65)                         |    |
| 1 Assonance                                | 30 |
| 2 Consonance                               | 24 |
| 3 Alliteration                             | 11 |
| Means of Message Amplification (55)        |    |
| 1 Repetition                               | 31 |
| 2 High structures                          | 8  |
| 3 Repetition and reassertion               | 5  |
| 4 Polysyndetic coordination                | 4  |
| 5 Reaffirmation of the people's belief     | 3  |
| 6 Rhetorical question                      | 2  |
| 7 Triple reassertion                       | 1  |
| 8 Reassertion                              | 1  |

The above rhetorical devices – the sound bites, the sound devices, and the means of message amplification – will be discussed as the following.

#### Sound bites

To highlight the important points of his persuasion in the speech, Obama employed antithesis, three-part list, juxtaposed three sets of three-part list, four-part list, and juxtaposed three sets of two-part list as follows:

##### 1) Antithesis

The two-part lists were aptly called antitheses in that they expressed two parts of ideas in opposition.

- You make a big election about small things
- When those who oppose you have you down, reach deep and fight back harder.
- We don't need bigger government or smaller government. We need a better government...

The antithesis a) highlighted Obama's critical comment on the attitudes of his opponents in the electoral processes for being concerned too much with trivial things that did not really affect the lives of most people in general. This was to drive home,

among other things, Obama's political platform to change the fallen economy of the Republican-run government (Feller, 2008b). The antithesis b) was used to highlight the considerable amount of difficulty that Obama and his followers were facing in fighting against the Republican-dominated national politics (Levy, 2008) and was intended to encourage his supporters to proceed further and fight back even harder when they were downgraded (Baker, 2008). The antithesis c) was used to highlight the importance of having a better government than the existing one. This was therefore to drive home Obama's persuasion to change the Republican-dominated government (Feller, 2008b).

##### 2) Three-part list

These three-part lists contain three successive ideas. The three-part list a) was used to highlight the importance of the spirit of optimism among his supporters and would-be voters to face whatever challenges ahead of them (cf. Levy, 2008).

- // It may look dark tonight, // but if I hold on to hope, // tomorrow will be brighter. //

With the three-part list a), Obama meant to drive home his persuasive message of the importance of the winning spirit by holding to hope that would lead to their success despite the difficulty they were facing. The three-part list b) was used to highlight the right of the people to change their government if the latter did not satisfy them.

- // Some of you may be cynical and fed up with politics. // A lot of you may be disappointed and even angry with your leaders. // You have every right to be. //

With this three-part list, Obama meant to drive home his persuasive message of the importance of the political participation of every American voter to determine the future of their nation.

##### 3) Juxtaposed three sets of three-part lists

This type consists of three sets of three-part list that are juxtaposed to each other. The juxtaposed three-sets of three-part list a) was used to highlight the unified spirit for a common cause.

- // The men and women who serve in our battlefields may be Democrats and Republicans and Independents, // but they have fought together and bled together and some died together under the same proud flag. // They have not served a Red America or a Blue America – they have served the United States of America. //



With the juxtaposition of the three sets of three-part lists as found in a) above, Obama meant to underscore the important points of his persuasive message to advance his political stand to unify Americans of the most diverse backgrounds.

The following juxtaposed three sets of three-part lists were used to highlight the importance of the spirit of optimism.

- b) (Ohio, that's what hope is) // **that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better is waiting around the bend;** // **that insists there are better days ahead. If we're willing to work for it. If we're willing to shed our fears and our doubts.** // **If we're willing to reach deep down inside ourselves when we're tired and come back fighting harder.** //

With the juxtaposition of the three sets of three-part lists above, Obama meant to underscore the important point of his persuasive message for his supporters to hold tightly his political vision of forward-looking. As a politician who was not satisfied with the existing national politics, he urged his supporters to bring in change and fight harder and harder to overcome whatever obstacles in their way. The spirit of fighting for a better future as delivered in Obama's 2004 keynote address had catapulted him to the national political forum (cf. Obama, 2004).

#### 4) Four-part list

This type of sound bite consists of four successive sentences including its variation in the forms of dependent clauses or phrases or words. The four-part list in a) highlighted the phenomena of the fallen economy.

- a) // **760,000 workers have lost their jobs this year.** // **Businesses and families can't get credit.** // **Home values are falling.** // **Pensions are disappearing.** //

By means of the four-part list a) above, Obama drove home the important point of his persuasive message to bring change to the fallen economy of the nation. In addition, the four-part list in b) highlighted the kind of economy that rewards its citizens.

- b) // **You invest in America.** // **America will invest in you.** // **and together, we will move this country forward.** //

By means of the four-part list b) above, Obama drove home the important point of his persuasive message, i.e. encouraging people's political participation and

support to address the fallen economy that had affected them for the last eight years of the Bush Administration.

#### 5) Juxtaposed three sets of two-part lists

This excerpt contains the three sets of two-part lists that were juxtaposed to each other to highlight the importance of having the spirit of optimism, a clear vision of a better day, and the right attitudes for a common goal.

(The American story has never been about things coming easy) - // **it's been about rising to the moment when the moment was hard.** // **It's about seeing the highest mountaintop from the deepest of valleys.** // **It's about rejecting fear and division for unity of purpose.** //

By using the three sets of two-part lists above, Obama underscored the important point of his persuasive messages for the people to cling to the passion that all Americans of the most diverse backgrounds had to be unified to fight for a common, high purpose for a better future.

#### Sound devices

The sound devices as shown in Table 1 were employed to make the important points of Obama's persuasive messages more ear-catching to his audience.

##### 1) Assonance

The repetition of the identical vowels /ai/, /i/, /e/ occurring internally and externally was employed to draw audience's greater attention to the persuasive message as expressed in the following excerpt:

Ohio, that's what hope is - that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better is waiting around the bend; that insists there are better days ahead. If we're willing to work for it. If we're willing to shed our fears and our doubts. If we're willing to reach deep down inside ourselves when we're tired and come back fighting harder.

The successive uses of the identical vowels /ai/ as found in "Ohio" and the following other words; /i/ as found "thing" and the following other words; /e/ as found in "better" and the following other words were employed to draw audience's greater attention, thus bringing to the highest level of the people's consciousness of the utterances containing the message requesting people's willingness to cling to Obama's



political manifesto of hope and forward-looking (cf. Obama, 2004; cf. also this excerpt being the juxtaposed three sets of three-part lists as analyzed earlier).

## 2) Alliteration

The initial consonant sounds /w/ were repeated at close intervals in order to make the important points of Obama's persuasion more ear-catching in this excerpt:

(The choice in this election isn't between tax cuts and no tax cuts.) It's about whether you believe we should only reward wealth, or whether we should also reward the work and workers who create it.

By using the alliteration /w/ as found in "whether" and the following other words above, Obama made the message of the excerpt more ear-catching so as to draw his audience's greater attention to the message. Obama wanted to get across the important message of the people's political participation to determine the future of their nation in the presidential election.

## 3) Consonance

The successive consonants at the end of words - like /s/ as found in "jobs" and the following other words, /ɪŋ/ as found in "crumbling" and the following other words, and /n/ as found in "men" and the following other words - were used to make the message of the excerpt more ear-catching so as to draw his audience's greater attention to the message.

- We'll create two million new jobs by rebuilding our crumbling roads, and bridges, and schools, and by laying broadband lines to reach every corner of the country.
- I've seen it in the faces of the men and women I've met at countless rallies and town halls across the country, men and women who speak of their struggles but also of their hopes and dreams.

By successively using the sound devices /s/, /ɪŋ/, and /n/ at the end of the words in the excerpts above, Obama wanted to draw his audience's greater attention to the important points in a) toward his political agenda to fix the fallen economy, and in b) toward the spirit of optimism deeply ingrained in the belief of the common people.

## 4) Alliteration and Consonance

Both alliteration and consonance were also used to make the important points of Obama's persuasion

more ear-catching in the speech. The use of alliteration, repetition /f/ at close intervals of the initial consonant sounds, as found in "finally finish the fight", and that of consonance, repetition at close intervals of the consonant /n/ at the end of the words, was found in "bin Laden . . . 9/11" (my note: to be rendered as 'nine eleven'). They were found in the following excerpt:

... and finally finish the fight against bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 ...

By using the alliteration /f/ and the consonance /n/ as exemplified above, Obama wanted to draw his audience's greater attention to the main points of the persuasive messages as expressed, i.e. his political stand to continue the fight against terrorism.

## Means of Message Amplification

To amplify the power of his persuasion, Obama employed various means of message amplification that were basically built on the basis of repetition and its variation. These rhetorical devices consisted of repetition, high structures, repetition and reassertion, polysyndentic coordination, reaffirmation of the people's belief, rhetorical question, triple reassertion, and reassertion. They were discussed as follows:

### Repetition

Repetition here is of the most common type of repetition, in which the repeated constructions were mostly at close intervals within the same paragraph.

- That's how** we've overcome war and depression. **That's how** we've won great struggles for civil rights and women's rights and worker's rights. And **that's how** we'll emerge from this crisis stronger and more prosperous than we were before - as one nation; as one people.

With the sentences being introduced by the repeated elements "That's how" in a), Obama wanted to drive home his persuasion as expressed by the remaining parts of the related sentences, i.e. his supporters had to be optimistic in their political struggles despite the difficulty they were facing. As evident in the success of all Americans in the American history, Obama was underscoring his forward-looking conviction that Americans as one people would be capable of overcoming their common crises.

- That's how** we create not just more millionaires, but more middle-class families.

**That's how** we make sure businesses have customers that can afford their products and services. **That's how** we've always grown



the American economy - from the bottom-up. John McCain calls this socialism. I call it opportunity, and there is nothing more American than that.

With the sentences being introduced by the repeated elements "That's how" in b), Obama wanted to underscore his persuasion as expressed by the remaining parts of the related sentences, i.e. the obligation of the government to protect the people from harm and provide them with decent lives. As the Republican-dominated government had failed to do so in the last eight years of the Bush Administration, Obama wanted to drive home the persuasive message for the people to bring in change to the national politics and leadership.

- c) I know this change is possible. Because I have seen it over the last twenty-one months. Because in this campaign, I have had the privilege to witness what is best in America.

I've seen it in lines of voters that stretched around schools and churches; in the young people who cast their ballot for the first time, and those not so young folks who got involved again after a very long time. I've seen it in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see their friends lose their jobs; in the neighbors who take a stranger in when the floodwaters rise; in the soldiers who re-enlist after losing a limb. I've seen it in the faces of the men and women I've met at countless rallies and town halls across the country, men and women who speak of their struggles but also of their hopes and dreams.

With the sentences being introduced by the repeated elements "I've seen it" in c), Obama wanted to drive home his persuasion as expressed by the remaining parts of the related sentences, i.e. convincing the people that the change they were to bring in was within their reach as evident in the spirit of the people throughout his campaign trails.

- d) (Ohio, that's what hope is - that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better is waiting around the bend; that insists there are better days ahead.) If we're willing to work for it. If we're willing to shed our fears and our doubts. If we're willing to reach deep down inside ourselves when we're tired and come back fighting harder.

With the sentences being introduced by the repeated elements "If we're willing" in d), Obama wanted to

drive home the important message of his persuasion as expressed by the remaining parts of the related sentences, i.e. the people had to possess the passion and the fighting spirit to overcome whatever obstacles in their way and bring in change for their better future.

- e) ... I will ensure that the financial rescue plan helps stop foreclosures and protects your money instead of enriching CEOs. And I will put in place the common-sense regulations I've been calling for throughout this campaign so that Wall Street can never cause a crisis like this again.

By using sentences being introduced by the repeated element "I will" (*my note: there were seventeen more such repeated elements behind this quoted excerpt*) in e), Obama wanted to magnify his persuasive message in the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. the strong determination behind every detail of his political platform that was far more superior than McCain's. Thus Obama drove home the persuasion for all Americans to vote for him.

### High structures for message amplification

In high structures, repetition was done across different paragraphs, thus building up consciousness on a high level of the constructions of the intended messages being underscored in the related paragraphs as found in these excerpts:

- a) In one week, you can turn the page on policies that have put the greed and irresponsibility of Wall Street before the hard work and sacrifice of folks on Main Street. In one week, you can choose policies that invest in our middle-class, create new jobs, and grow this economy from the bottom-up so that everyone has a chance to succeed; from the CEO to the secretary and the janitor, from the factory owner to the men and women who work on its floor. In one week, you can put an end to the politics that would divide a nation just to win an election; that tries to pit region against region, city against town, Republican against Democrat; that asks us to fear at a time when we need hope. In one week, at this defining moment in history, you can give this country the change we need.
- b) In one week, we can choose an economy that rewards work and creates new jobs and fuels prosperity from the bottom-up. In one week, we can choose to invest in health care for our families, and education for our kids, and renewable energy for our future.



In one week, we can choose hope over fear, unity over division, the promise of change over the power of the status quo.

In one week, we can come together as one nation, and one people, and once more choose our better history.

By repeating the phrase "In one week" to introduce each new paragraph in a) and in b), Obama wanted to magnify the power of his persuasive message as expressed by the remaining part of each paragraph, i.e. convincing the people to make the right choice on the D-day of the presidential election as it would determine the future of their nation.

### Repetition and reassertion

By using the structural form of repetition and reassertion, the important points of the ideas having previously been stated were brought back and amplified. Thus, the importance of the previous ideas was more powerfully brought back to the attention of the audience.

a) ... the plain truth is that John McCain has stood with this President every step of the way. **Voting for** the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy that he once opposed. **Voting for** the Bush budgets that spent us into debt. **Calling for** less regulation twenty-one times just this year. **Those are the facts.**

b) (And now, after twenty-one months and three debates, Senator McCain still has not been able to tell the American people a single major thing he'd do differently from George Bush when it comes to the economy. Senator McCain says that we can't spend the next four years waiting for our luck to change, but you understand that the biggest gamble we can take is embracing the same old Bush-McCain policies that have failed us for the last eight years.)

It's **not change** when John McCain wants to give a \$700,000 tax cut to the average Fortune 500 CEO. It's **not change** when he wants to give \$200 billion to the biggest corporations or \$4 billion to the oil companies or \$300 billion to the same Wall Street banks that got us into this mess. It's **not change** when he comes up with a tax plan that doesn't give a penny of relief to more than 100 million middle-class Americans. **That's not change.**

By using the repetition "Voting for" (and finally its slight variation "Calling for") and the assertion "Those are the facts" in a) and the repetition "It's not

change" and the assertion "That's not change" in b), Obama wanted to amplify the important points of his persuasion as stated by the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. voting for his opponent – McCain – would only mean to continue the fallen economy and the broken politics of the Bush Administration.

By using the repetition "I will" and the assertion "That's the change we need" in c), Obama wanted to amplify the important point of his persuasion as expressed in the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. the need to have a strong national leadership for the common good of the people, and by using the repetition "jobs" and the assertion "That's how America can lead again" in d), Obama amplified the important point of his persuasive message as expressed by the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. the urgency for creating more job opportunities for the welfare of the people. By using the repetition "what we have lost" in its slight variation and the assertion "And that's what we need to restore right now" in e), Obama wanted to amplify the important point of his persuasion as expressed in the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. restoring what Americans had lost – the sense of common purpose; higher purpose.

c) We don't have to choose between allowing our financial system to collapse and spending billions of taxpayer dollars to bail out Wall Street banks. As President, **I will** ensure that the financial rescue plan helps stop foreclosures and protects your money instead of enriching CEOs. And **I will** put in place the common-sense regulations I've been calling for throughout this campaign so that Wall Street can never cause a crisis like this again.

### **That's the change we need.**

d) We'll create two million new jobs by rebuilding our crumbling roads, and bridges, and schools, and by laying broadband lines to reach every corner of the country. And I will invest \$15 billion a year in renewable sources of energy to create five million new energy **jobs** over the next decade - **jobs** that pay well and can't be outsourced; **jobs** building solar panels and wind turbines and a new electricity grid; **jobs** building the fuel-efficient cars of tomorrow, not in Japan or South Korea but here in the United States of America; **jobs** that will help us eliminate the oil we import from the Middle East in ten years and help save the planet in the bargain.

### **That's how America can lead again.**

e) That is why **what we have lost** in these last eight years cannot be measured by lost wages or bigger trade deficits alone. **What has also been lost** is the idea that in this



American story, each of us has a role to play. Each of us has a responsibility to work hard and look after ourselves and our families, and each of us has a responsibility to our fellow citizens. That's **what's been lost these last eight years** - our sense of common purpose; of higher purpose. **And that's what we need to restore right now**

So the use of the rhetorical device of repetition and assertion was to drive home some important points of Obama's political platform, thus urging would-be voters to vote for him, not for McCain, for the better future of their nation.

#### Polysyndetic coordination

This rhetorical device was done by using coordinating conjunctions, mostly 'and', 'or', and sometimes 'but'. This enabled Obama to express successive important ideas more emphatically and forcefully in a more unified manner as follows:

- a) I believed that Democrats **and** Republicans **and** Americans of every political stripe were hungry for new ideas, new leadership, **and** a new kind of politics - one that favors common sense over ideology.
- b) It's getting harder and harder to make the mortgage, **or** fill up your gas tank, **or** even keep the electricity on at the end of the month.
- c) Senator McCain might be worried about losing an election, **but** I'm worried about Americans who are losing their homes, **and** their jobs, **and** their life savings.
- d) And if in this last week, you will knock on some doors for me, **and** make some calls for me, **and** talk to your neighbors, **and** convince your friends; if you will stand with me, **and** fight with me, **and** give me your vote, then I promise you this - we will not just win Ohio, we will not just win this election, **but** together, we will change this country **and** we will change the world.

The use of the polysyndetic coordination in a) was to amplify Obama's persuasion that change he was after was evidently the desire of Americans of many different backgrounds; in b) was to amplify the various economic problems that the people were suffering from; in c) was to magnify the message that Obama's rival - McCain - was much more concerned with winning the election, not sincere passion for the common good of the people; in d) was to amplify the message for the people to work together as one nation to bring in change for their better future.

#### Reaffirmation of the people's belief

This rhetorical device was used to present the ideas that had become the public knowledge, thus bringing them back to the audience's attention as a reminder of their importance. The ideas being amplified were introduced by the word "yes".

Yes, government must lead the way on energy independence, but each of us must do our part to make our homes and our businesses more efficient. Yes, we must provide more ladders to success for young men who fall into lives of crime and despair. But all of us must do our part as parents to turn off the television and read to our children and take responsibility for providing the love and guidance they need.

Yes, we can argue and debate our positions passionately, but at this defining moment, all of us must summon the strength and grace to bridge our differences and unite in common effort - black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, Democrat and Republican, young and old, rich and poor, gay and straight, disabled or not.

By using the reaffirmation "yes" to introduce the sentences, Obama wanted to drive home the important point of his persuasion as expressed by the remaining parts of the sentences, i.e. the urgent need to work together to create a more effective new government through their votes in the presidential election.

#### Rhetorical question

Obama employed two sets of rhetorical questions - questions that do not require direct answers - to focus on and amplify the messages toward the direction being questioned.

The question in this election is not "**Are you better off than you were four years ago?**" We know the answer to that. The real question is, "**Will this country be better off four years from now?**"

By the rhetorical questions as underlined above, both the direct and indirect audience were to assess their own consciousness for their respective answers; and for sure, they did already know through their own lives. However, the answer for the future was more important for the people and they knew it: America would not be better off under the leadership of McCain.

#### Triple reassertion

The triple reassertion took the structural forms of three successive short assertions or its variations



stating an important follow-up to the ideas stated beforehand. Thus, the persuasive message became three times stronger as found in the following excerpts.

Remember, we still have the most talented, most productive workers of any country on Earth. We're still home to innovation and technology, colleges and universities that are the envy of the world. Some of the biggest ideas in history have come from our small businesses and our research facilities. So there's no reason we can't make this century another American century. We just need a new direction. We need a new politics.

The three successive assertions as underlined above were used to amplify Obama's persuasive message as stated previously that America had both the resources and the opportunities to create a better future. So, the important follow-up was that voters had to be really determined to change their national politics and leadership.

### Reassertion

Reassertion was characterized as being a concluding decision for a real action given to the ideas or arguments having been stated right before. In other words, the importance of the previous ideas was emphatically brought back to the attention of the audience with a more determined course of action.

Ohio, we are here to say "Not this time. Not this year. Not when so much is at stake." Senator McCain might be worried about losing an election, but I'm worried about Americans who are losing their homes, and their jobs, and their life savings. I can take one more week of John McCain's attacks, but this country can't take four more years of the same old politics and the same failed policies. It's time for something new.

By using the reassertion "It's time for something new", Obama wanted to drive home the important point of a real course of action - voting for a new national leadership - in response to his previous arguments.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the depth of Obama's magnificent use of the three rhetorical devices - sound bites, sound devices, and means of message amplification - in his closing argument entitled "One Week". For an outstanding political orator like Obama, the political messages were not simply

delivered to his audience. They had to be packed neatly and skillfully using the linguistic forms as found in the use of the various types of those rhetorical devices. In that way, the power of persuasion in Obama's speech was made more intensified and palatable to the point that it could be capable of kindling the audience's consciousness, attention, and determination to finally make a difference by backing up his political stand and voting for him in the presidential election.

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