

CONTEXT MATTERS: PRAGMATICS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES OF MICHELLE BACHELET,
BARACK OBAMA AND JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATERO

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ABSTRACT

PATRICIA LEE FURNISH. Context matters: Pragmatics and political discourse analysis of the presidential speeches of Michelle Bachelet, Barack Obama and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. (Under the direction of DR. CONCEPCIÓN GODEV)

This is a comparative study of political discourse, specifically the State of the Union addresses, of three democratically-elected political leaders—Michelle Bachelet, Barack Obama and José Luis Zapatero. It addresses a need for combining the idea of “context” to include the historical, cognitive and social spheres. The analytical framework of this analysis of political discourse in the form of State of the Union addresses employs Critical Discourse Analysis and Relevance Theory to explore political language as both a mental and a social phenomenon. This work explores the meanings of the settings for the speeches, the histories associated with each country and government, and the psychological and cognitive processes defined above as “context.”

With regard to the analysis of the political speeches before their respective legislative bodies, Bachelet, Obama and Zapatero shared similar contexts in one important way: the historical moments in which they were elected as the leaders of their countries. This analysis suggests that effective political discourse, which is optimally relevant, is key to successful political leadership.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Language as a social phenomenon occurs within a context. The nature and extent of this context, indeed even defining “context,” means entering contentious terrain. Add to this exploration of defining context the issue of politics, and we encounter even more debate rather than accord. Chilton observes, “However politics is defined, there is a linguistic, discursive and communicative dimension” that practitioners and theorists only partially acknowledge (4). Word use and speechwriting are intentional acts; they involve conscious effort and editing for the communication of ideas. This work may remain invisible to the listener or observer, and this investigation will not explore this element of the craft of presidential speeches. The craft of speechwriting, however, is essential to the exercise of political power. Chilton says, “Political parties and government agencies employ publicists of various kinds, whose role is not merely to control the flow of, and access to information, but also to design and monitor wordings and phrasings, and in this way to respond to challenges or potential challenges” (8). In other words, Chilton posits that discourse management is integral to the effective use of political power.

This comparative study of the political discourse, specifically the State of the Union addresses, of three democratically-elected political leaders—Michelle Bachelet, Barack Obama, and José Luis Zapatero—depends upon the notion of context as understood by Gutt, who defines context very broadly as a “notion that can include virtually any phenomenon entertainable by the human mind” (42). Sperber and Wilson’s

perspective on context is also illustrative of the expansiveness of the term ‘context’ in pragmatics. According to Sperber and Wilson, a context is “a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation.” (15-16).

This study analyzes the texts of the political speeches of three elected heads of state, which were delivered as “State of the Union” addresses before their respective legislative bodies and public audiences. The research traces its origins to a graduate course on translation, pragmatics and Relevance Theory in the fall of 2013. I came to realize that my training as a historian had prepared me for understanding one particular kind of context, the historical. However, as my classmates and I learned to examine texts, and in many cases they were political speeches, I observed a need for combining the idea of “context” to include the historical, cognitive and social spheres. Such an interdisciplinary approach, now central to linguistic studies and discourse analysis, opened up a new avenue of comparative research in the study of political discourse beginning in the 1980s. Along the lines of this interdisciplinary approach to textual analysis, I set out to compare the speeches of the first female president of Chile, the first African American president in the United States and the “dark horse” candidate and surprise winner of the Spanish prime ministership subsequent to an al-Qaeda-connected attack in Madrid.

These three heads of state represent bellwethers of more inclusive change in representative liberal democracies. However, their political discourse contains elements

that indicate time-honored traditions of political communication from political elites. Bachelet, Obama, and Zapatero served as leaders of nation-states at a time in which the perception of threat at a global and national level was identified as “terrorism.” This anxiety is one of the unifying threads among them in terms of domestic and foreign policy. Another is economic crisis, while the final is equality within democratic institutions.

1.1 Objectives of Analysis

The analytical framework of this analysis of political discourse in the form of State of the Union addresses employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Relevance Theory to explore political language as both a mental and a social phenomenon. This work answers the call of Paul Chilton to participate in an effort to foster a theory of language and politics, one that would “move the debate towards a linguistic and rather more broadly cognitive theory of language and politics” (xi). The linguistic comparison of political speeches of presidential leaders from Chile, United States and Spain provides an opportunity to investigate and analyze political speeches of the three presidents and the historical contexts of each using the construct of pragmatics.

A combination of CDA and a pragmatic approach toward analyzing communication in this research allows for the exploration of the importance of context. Wodak has taken this approach in her analysis of three utterances of an Austrian politician’s election speech with an eye toward uncovering anti-Semitic references. An interdisciplinary theory and methodology approach are necessary, she argues, because of the specific nature of the rhetoric under investigation. Its qualities of “indirectness and context-dependency” required her to reach across disciplines for answers (204). Such is

the case for this investigation, which will explore the meanings of the settings for the speeches, the histories associated with each country and government, and the psychological and cognitive processes defined above as “context.” One could not fully engage the concept of political discourse analysis without an inclusive, interdisciplinary understanding of “context.”

1.2 Methodology of Analysis

This work will combine two approaches to the analysis of political discourse. The first is the mental phenomenon of language as Sperber and Wilson discuss it in their Relevance Theory. The second is the social phenomenon of language as viewed through the lens of CDA, which sees language as a social practice (Wodak 2009). At its core, this investigation takes a comparative look at political speeches and the use of language in the political domain. The themes of historical change and continuity are important in the analysis of the speeches of the leaders. Using Relevance Theory, these speeches will be analyzed as texts with subtexts. That is, this research will examine what is not encoded in the discourses and will offer explanations of selected utterances, with “utterances” broadly defined as ranging from a word to a speech, both written and oral.

The analysis of political discourse seeks to reveal the speaker's intention and the speaker's goal of facilitating the understanding of the message. Sperber and Wilson proposed Relevance Theory, based on cognitive psychology, as an approach to explain human communication (Relevance vii). The Principle of Relevance, or more specifically the Communicative Principle of Relevance, states, “every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance, in which relevance consists of (positive) cognitive effects and processing effort” (Relevance 260).

Ostensive communication is defined, according to Blakemore, as “an act of deliberate, overt communication in which the speaker not only intends to convey a particular message but is also actively helping the hearer recognize this” (105).

There are four concepts that are part of the role of cognitive processes in Relevance Theory: placement, mindsets, emotional system, and individual variation. Placement, often labeled as "collocation" in translation studies and other language-oriented fields, consists of certain words that appear frequently in proximity within the speech, but need not appear next to each other. The mindsets are clusters of information automatically evoked when we use specific words or expressions, such as a political speech, within a specific context. When you find the words, there is much more content than is encoded with the words alone or in isolation from the context. The emotional system is a mechanism that generates feelings of empathy, rejection, sadness and joy, to name a few. According to Leventhal, "Emotion itself is a form of cognition, especially if we assume that cognition is meaning" (122). The comprehension of a message depends upon the subtle perceptions within the cognitive-affective system of the recipient. Comprehension of a natural language is an inferential process that consists of constructing meaning around a coded message whose linguistic pieces are far fewer than the inferable meaning units (Relevance 32-33). Godev refers to the said coded message with the metaphor "skeleton of meaning."

As Sperber and Wilson say in their interpretation of Grice, “Pragmatic studies of verbal communication start from the assumption that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions” (“Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-reading” 3). Pragmatic interpretation, the

authors posit, requires an exploration of the intention of the speech act that the speaker intended to perform. In other words, the intended communication remains as significant as what a listener understands the intended communication to be. In one of their most recent assessments from 2012 in *Meaning and Relevance*, Wilson and Sperber explain that a presumption of relevance means that an utterance is presumed most relevant when it is compatible with a speaker's abilities and preferences and is worthy of the hearer's attention (276).

This is a complex undertaking because utterances convey implicit meaning, that is, meaning that is not spelled out by the natural language code. The resolution of a speaker's utterances must be resolved based on contextual information. The authors conclude that "the hearer's task is to find the meaning the speaker intended to convey, and the goal of pragmatic theory is to explain how this is done" ("Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-reading" 4). Wilson and Sperber identify the hearer as central to their understanding of the speaker's communicative intention. The hearer must exert effort to comprehend the communication, and to do so, must "decode" the speaker's utterances. They describe this process in the following way: "An utterance is, of course, a linguistically-coded piece of evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of decoding." However, more than decoding is required for comprehension (*Meaning and Relevance* 2). They elaborate further by stating that "[w]ithin the specifically communicative domain, it is indeed rational for hearers to follow a path of least effort in constructing a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning" and that this interpretive process is "genuinely inferential" ("Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-reading" 7).

Relevance Theory usually defines context as a cognitive “space.” The context according to Sperber and Wilson, in terms defined within the scope of Relevance Theory, suggests that context encompasses ideas, beliefs, assumptions and a range of environments that extend beyond the utterance. Context, they argue, is “psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world” (Relevance 15-16). According to Chilton, critical discourse analysis allows for a broader understanding of context, one that includes social phenomena (x). The research for this comparative analysis of Bachelet, Obama, and Zapatero’s political discourse employs both the mental and the social definitions of context.

In an overview of the main tenets of critical discourse analysis, Blommaert and Bulcaen posit three dimensions of critical discourse analysis based on the influence of Norman Fairclough’s 1992 work *Discourse and Social Change* (448-449).¹ The first dimension is “discourse-as-text,” which analyzes linguistic features such as metaphor, grammar, cohesion and text structure. The second dimension is “discourse-as-discursive-practice.” This refers to the production, circulation, distribution and consumption of discourse in a society. The vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure are important, but in a different way. The third dimension of critical discourse analysis is “discourse-as-social practice,” which examines ideological effects and hegemonic processes. Blommaert and Bulcaen suggest that discourse reveals structures of power and control, as described by Althusser and Gramsci’s work (449). Wodak also emphasizes that language “gains its power by the use powerful people make of it” (209). This choice of State of the Union addresses as a subject of study indicates I agree with this assertion.

¹ Blommaert and Balcaen credit Norman Fairclough’s 1992 work *Discourse and Social Change* for constructing the blueprint and theory for critical discourse analysis (448).

The power of an elected leader in a representative democracy to explain the state of the nation-state is the ability to ideologically frame all subsequent political discussions. The president or the prime minister receives the first opportunity to tell the audience what is real and true about the government, the country and its place in the world.

For this research, the dictatorships of Francisco Franco and Augusto Pinochet of Chile and Spain, respectively, provide a historical foundation that informs the speeches. The historical position of Barack Obama, president of the United States, was different in the sense that democratic institutions existed for over a hundred years without a military dictatorship.

Van Dijk provides a simple definition of political discourse analysis: the study of the “texts and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, including the president, members of government, politicians at local, national or international level” (“What is Political Discourse?” 12). Context is important because interdependence exists between the environment in which communication takes place and the structure of discourse as it shapes the environment (“Discourse, Text and Cognition” 161). This is not to say that Van Dijk posits that a context produces the same results for all participants. He strongly cautions against “naïve contextualism.” Instead, he argues that socio-political contexts are subjective and best analyzed at the participant’s mental or cognitive level, which compliments Relevance Theory (“What is Political Discourse?” 162-63). The analysis of political discourse will uncover the speaker's intention and the goal of facilitating the understanding of the message by tapping into the listener’s mental schemata in order to manipulate message interpretation. It will also avoid being overly deterministic and will allow speakers in similar contexts to display individual variation.

1.3 Selected Corpus of Analysis

This thesis will analyze each of the presidents' official political speeches before their respective legislative bodies and the public². This genre of political discourse is highly institutionalized and constrained in terms of "content, moves and rhetorical strategies," according to Blitvich (62). The selections include four of Bachelet's speeches, four of Zapatero's speeches, and three of Obama's. Michelle Bachelet spoke to the National Congress each year from 2006 to 2009. She ran a successful re-election campaign in 2013, and took office again in March 2014. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero spoke before the Congress of the Deputies each year of his term, from 2004 to 2011. Barack Obama has also given a State of the Union Address to the joint legislative body in Congress each year of his presidency, from 2008 to the present. This analysis will include the speeches for each leader during each of these years. There are aspects of shared characteristics among the three leaders' addresses. For example, their speeches before their legislatures about domestic social changes such as same-sex marriage, women's reproductive rights and pay equity, and health care. The struggle to pursue courses of action without alienating political allies is most evident in their use of rhetorical metaphors that emphasize unity, national identity, a shared national history and political consensus.

For this research, the dictatorships of Francisco Franco and Augusto Pinochet of Chile and Spain, respectively, provide the historical background, which suggests that the presidents struggled with building more inclusive democratic institutions. For example, in

² Since these political addresses to the nation are televised nationally and recorded, it is possible to view the speeches online and analyze them as addresses to two different audiences: the legislative branch of the federal government and the viewing public. Although it can be argued there are more, such as political parties, lobbyists, corporate interests and online audiences, for example.

Spain during Zapatero's administration, he supported less persecution of gays and expanded legal rights for same-sex marriage and for gender identity. In Chile, Bachelet endorsed civil unions for same-sex couples during her re-election campaign, a pledge she has stated she wants to fulfill after her successful election to a second term as president. The historical position of President of the United States is comparatively different in the sense that many elements of democratic institutions existed for over a hundred years. The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001, the unilateral war in Iraq, and the electoral victory of the first African-American president are elements of the historical background that provide a frame for his speeches. Historical elements are usually meaningful in political speeches as they are part of the speech context.

The political importance of these speeches is manifest in the strict attention to rhetoric in the speeches themselves. The content of the speeches, the political and historical contexts in which the speeches are given offer a rich body of material for the study of pragmatics in relation to political speeches. Relevance Theory provides the parameters for an analysis of political speeches with an eye on text and subtext, that is, explicitly and implicitly conveyed meaning. There is much more to verbal communication than the utterances. The utterances are embedded in an intricate web or system of cognitive processes and assumptions. Communication, according to Sperber and Wilson, occurs in context, that is, within the psychological construct that constitutes part of a hearer's assumptions about the world (Relevance 15). Relevance Theory suggests that researchers consider the implicit meaning of communication strategies, rather than merely the explicit. Implicit meaning is constructed out of the structured relationship of elements that intervene in communication mediated by natural language.

These elements are the recipient of the communication, the communicator and her intention, and the context of the communication.

CHAPTER 2: BACHELET

Bachelet's Historical and Political Contexts

Michelle Bachelet took office as the first Chilean woman to become President of the Republic during a historic period of transition in Chile. She also stands out as the first woman in a South American country popularly elected president and whose political career emerged independent of a husband, such as Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina. She identifies herself as an atheist, a single mother, and a survivor.

A member of the Socialist Party, Bachelet's presidency represents a systemic change initiated in 1989 with the “no” vote in the plebiscite on the continuance of the Pinochet military dictatorship. In 1990 the country began to recover from dictatorship, a period known as “the transition,” and whose political parties overtly committed to democratic governance. Bachelet's predecessor Ricardo Lagos, the one who appointed her to strategically prominent positions within his administration, such as Minister of Health and later Minister of National Defense, once reflected upon the idea of a woman as president of Chile. According to a scholar of Chilean politics, Susan Franceschet, Lagos thought that a woman candidate would be a symbol of renovation after three consecutive governments led by the center-left Concertación. He remarked that the greatest indication of change would be to have the first female president in the country (1-2). Bachelet served from March 2006 to March 2010 and was reelected in 2013. Conservative and influential institutions in Chile, the Catholic Church and the military

represented prominent contrasts with the rise of moderate and left-of-center political parties, among which was the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party is currently one of four parties that make up the coalition of the Concertación.

A historical ghost that haunts Chile is the lingering effect of years of violent repression of Pinochet's military dictatorship. The trauma of the collapse of Chilean democracy in 1973 has framed all political discourse to this day. Whenever Bachelet appears in public, her presence serves as a powerful reminder of the parallels between her personal history as a radical protestor, victim of torture and an exile within the larger history of her country. The systemic effect of the above mentioned trauma is that Chilean citizens struggle with national pain and sorrow for the disappeared and tortured. The roots of the emphasis on consensus have their origins in the violent 1973 coup that overthrew the first democratically elected Marxist president, Salvador Allende (Borzutzky and Weeks 1).

Emphasis on consensus-driven optimism remains the central tenet of the post-1989 political trajectory of Chile. One of the persistent political legacies of the dictatorship is a deep-seated fear of conflict, one that Franceschet describes as "the country's political culture [that is] plagued by a pathological search for consensus" (30-31). According to Borzutzky and Weeks, the Chilean political dichotomy of consensus instead of polarization has failed to eliminate unrest among the electorate. The ascension to power of the Concertación required the preservation of neoliberal economic policies of the Pinochet regime that conservatives and Pinochet loyalists supported. This "Faustian deal" shaped the identity of the left-of-center struggle to maintain credibility on social and economic justice issues like persistent poverty (Alexander 9-10). Bachelet embodies

the triumphalism the political elites deem necessary to shape Chileans' self-image as an economically vibrant and politically stable national leader in the Western Hemisphere.

Her public presence as leader of Chile reminds the people of the dictatorship and the disastrous consequences for the country in terms of the underdevelopment and fragility of democratic structures. Bachelet was a visible member of the feminist movement in Chile during the military regime. According to Linda S. Stevenson:

Michelle Bachelet's presidency was unique in that not only was she literally representing women, fulfilling the descriptive ideal of feminine identity politics of a woman's being more sensitive to women's needs [and] demands, but also she had the potential to fulfill the ideal of gender-equity (feminist) identity politics substantively as she joined in battles for women's rights and gender equity in connection with her combined political identities (131).

Given this observation, my analysis of Bachelet's political discourse gives primacy to the centrality of the evolving traditions of political language and the roles of women within patriarchal government and political culture of Chile.

The context for her political speeches emerges from the physical and historical environment on the one hand, and the psychological and cognitive environment, on the other hand. The analysis that will be performed on Bachelet's speeches depends upon generalizations regarding an audience of hundreds of members of the Congreso Nacional before whom she spoke, and also will not incorporate an assessment of the very important consideration of her television and radio audiences. Finally, this analysis of Bachelet's political discourse gives primacy to the centrality of the evolving traditions of political language and the roles of women within patriarchal government and political culture of Chile.

Analysis of Bachelet's Speeches

In her Presidential Address in 2006, she said, "Who would have thought! Today a woman president speaks to this Congress."¹ Bachelet's political speeches before the Congreso Nacional, which functions as State of the Union addresses in the USA, are shaped by historical context. Her speeches focus on the recurring themes of social justice, equality, and economic inclusion. Bachelet functions as an incarnation of the symbol of a new model of the woman, activist and feminist who survived torture at the hands of the dictatorship. She is a renunciation of the brutality of the regime, but not of all the dictatorship's governing policies and assumptions.

All the president's yearly speeches to the Congreso Nacional contain specific references to women and civic responsibility of the nation to remedy the injustices of the past and present against them. In 2006, Bachelet said:

We're able to have a glimpse at a time of women and men, as never before in our country. Today we reap a long planting. In addition to so many remarkable men, we have with us today the vision of an Elena Caffarena or an Amanda Labarca, the iconic personality of an Inés Enríquez, the dignity of a Tencha Allende, and the courage of a Sola Sierra. But above all, we have the tenacity and sacrifice of thousands and thousands of women throughout the country who strive to get their families ahead, they strive to work and to study.²

These are the specific references to female activists in the history of Chile that have served as models for Bachelet and indicate her decision as the first woman president of the country to publicly honor them and their political, intellectual and cultural achievements. In the same speech, she acknowledged the historical invisibility of women.

¹ ¡Quién lo hubiera pensado! Hoy le habla a este Congreso Pleno una mujer Presidenta.

² Se asoma también un tiempo de mujeres y hombres, como nunca antes en nuestro país. Cosechamos hoy una larga siembra. Además de tantos hombres notables, está hoy con nosotros la visión de una Elena Caffarena o una Amanda Labarca. El símbolo de una Inés Enríquez. La dignidad de una Tencha Allende. El coraje de una Sola Sierra. Pero sobre todo, el tesón y el sacrificio de miles y miles de mujeres en todo el país que se esfuerzan por sacar a sus familias adelante, por trabajar, por estudiar.

That is to say, the master narrative of Chilean history required, in her view, a revision to include the centrality of women in the country's past. Her policy decisions on the content of her speeches elevate women to become prominent figures in the narrative of the history of the nation. It is a stark contrast to the image of the Virgin Mary of the Catholic Church that shapes the perception and the reality of Chile.

Her statements about Chilean women indicate that the power to review the historical narrative of Chile lies in the ability to control the government's official message. She said, "I'm here as a woman, representing the defeat of exclusion that went on so long" (2006).³ This is an example of the directness of Bachelet's style of political discourse in her first year of office. Sperber and Wilson offer an explanatory theory of style in relation to pragmatics:

It is sometimes said that style is the man. We would rather say that style is the relationship. From the style of a communication it is possible to infer such things as what the speaker takes to be the hearer's cognitive capacities and level of attention, how much help or guidance she is prepared to give him in processing her utterance, the degree of complicity between them, their emotional closeness or distance. In other words, a speaker not only aims to enlarge the mutual cognitive environment she shares with the hearer; she also assumes a certain degree of mutuality, which is indicated, and sometimes communicated, by her style.

Bachelet's style in her first speech before the Congreso Nacional is direct and intimate. The context, in terms of beliefs and values, of her audience is intimate in the sense that the members know her story and her political trajectory. Her very presence and ability to wield executive power in Chile's high political office is a commentary on her radical protestor past and her transcendence of patriarchal strictures on women as leaders.

³ Estoy aquí como mujer, representando la derrota a la exclusión de que fuimos objeto tanto tiempo.

Another example of her purposeful use of language in her 2006 “Mensaje Presidencial” (Presidential Message) is her decision to use the feminine and masculine forms of nouns such as “diputadas y diputados,” (representatives) “los ciudadanos y ciudadanas,” (citizens) and “chilenas y chilenos” (Chileans). According to Relevance Theory, communication depends on two assumptions: “(1) human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance, and (2) every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance” (1995, 260). The standard practice in addressing an audience of both women and men as a group in Spanish is to use the masculine plural. However, in this first political speech before the Congreso Nacional, Bachelet asks the addressees to exert more effort to process her message. She has chosen to exercise her abilities and preferences as a communicator to achieve a specific goal: to highlight her feminist beliefs and to acknowledge those who share them in the audience. She makes similar linguistic choices in the remainder of her political speeches each year.

The president used her speech to explain the specific problems that are part of Chilean daily life because of sexism and open tolerance of violence against women. She created the links between the institutional subjugation of women and Chile as a country. The subtext in her speech is that Bachelet was a victim of domestic violence in addition to being the target of violence as the result of the torture from the hands of the military dictatorship. The history of violence penetrated her private and political life. In 2007 during the Presidential Message, she said:

Every day more women aspire to the top. Daily it becomes more difficult to accept discrimination and prejudice about our capabilities. Each day also it's harder to hide physical and verbal violence against women. Both as President and as a Chilean

woman, I can not remain indifferent before this year's statistics of 19 women dead because of the violence from their partners. And this is a figure that we're all ashamed of but, fortunately, is no longer a figure hidden behind closed doors as it happened before.⁴

Recurrently her speeches contain a detailed and evocative description of the type of democracy that she envisions. A serious problem for Bachelet was that Chilean democracy was in its transition or was only recently completed, relatively speaking. A consistent theme in her speeches was references to the development of democratic governance and the struggle of many years to update the political structures based on democratic principles. In her policy speech in 2006, she said, "We have built a more open, diverse and tolerant society."⁵ Also, in 2007, she devoted ten pages to the presidential theme of "Citizenship and Democracy." Chile was a democracy still under construction in terms of experience with electoral representation, pluralism, tolerance, and civil engagement. As its democratically elected leader, Bachelet said her responsibilities as president were to highlight the democratic concepts to prepare and promote the people's expectations for informed citizen participation. She explained in her speech, "A better democracy presupposes the recognition of indigenous peoples. Chile is recognized today as a multicultural, diverse and heterogeneous society."⁶

To provide an illustrative comparison, two years later she explained the differences between the military dictatorship of Pinochet and the system of the moment:

"In a democracy all issues may be subjected to the responsible and free analysis of the

⁴ Cada día más mujeres aspiran a lo más alto. Cada día se hace más difícil aceptar la discriminación y los prejuicios sobre nuestras capacidades. Cada día también se hace más difícil esconder la violencia física y verbal contra las mujeres. Como Presidenta y como chilena no puedo permanecer indiferente cuando vemos que sólo en lo que va de este año han muerto 19 mujeres por causa de la violencia de sus parejas. Y esta es una cifra que a todos nos avergüenza pero, afortunadamente, es una cifra que ya no ocultamos detrás de la puerta de la casa como ocurría antes.

⁵ Hemos construido una sociedad más abierta, diversa y tolerante.

⁶ Una mejor democracia supone el reconocimiento de los pueblos indígenas. Chile se reconoce hoy como una sociedad diversa, heterogénea, multicultural.

citizenship. Dictatorships have tutors; a democracy has citizens. In a pluralistic society debate, not a gag, is used. And if the debate improves, so does democracy."⁷

In her view, the debate without violence was integral to a democracy in practice, not just in word. Sperber and Wilson explain the necessity of identifying the expectations of a speaker. They say, "The more precise the expectations, the more precisely the speaker's intentions can be pinned down. This situation is predicted by relevance theory in the usual way: an utterance, like any other ostensive stimulus, is a piece of evidence about the communicator's informative intention" (*Relevance* 189). For the audience in the Congreso Nacional, Bachelet's message of continuity, unity and consensus signifies a decisive break—a permanent rupture—with the past disasters associated with the dictatorship. Her intentionality in this passage is evident and unambiguous. As Sperber and Wilson observe, "Some implicatures are made so strongly manifest that the hearer can scarcely avoid recovering them" (*Relevance* 197).

The rhetorical connection between her ideas and words is in the placement of words to emphasize the unity of purpose and national identity of the people of Chile. For example, in her speeches before Congress for four consecutive years, multiple times she used the phrase "our history." She said, "Here is, as promised during the campaign, the first shared government in our history. A new era, the citizen's era begins to take shape.

⁷ En democracia no hay temas vedados al análisis responsable y libre de la ciudadanía. Las dictaduras tienen tutores; la democracia tiene ciudadanos. En una sociedad pluralista se usa el argumento, no la mordaza. Y si mejora el debate, mejora la democracia.

A Chile for all. A more inclusive and integrated Chile. A more inclusive society, which does not discriminate and does not forget those lagging behind" (2006).⁸

In her next speech in 2007, she used the word "our" forty-two times to reinforce her political concept of unity and democratic consensus. In 2008, the phrase "our history" was invoked seven times. Saliency of a message is enhanced when the message is reiterated. This enhancement has a key role in achieving the objective of the speaker, that is, leading the listeners towards focusing on working to attain a certain goal or on supporting the presidential agenda. In language processing, reiteration has a central goal (Ellis 178), as language serves its communicative purpose only when its users are exposed to its patterns long enough for the users to understand the code.

In her presidential message of 2008, Bachelet does not take a partisan approach to explaining setbacks during her administration. Her most common terms for problems is "challenges" (*desafíos*), which is a term that is relevant to the audience, but vague enough to offer room for different understandings. For example, Bachelet calls on members of government to work together to create innovative solutions to economic problems in Chile: "A first crucial way is to create public institutions that are able to face this challenge. Thus, today it is that I want to call upon the Congress so that we work together to pass this bill once and for all."⁹ A set of beliefs, or context, in the country's political discourse is the consensus-based political climate of Chile values, which downplays crises and conflict and offers room for improvement without the acknowledgement that the democracy may not function well in some ways. Therefore, the democratic process,

⁸ Aquí está, como lo prometí durante la campaña, el primer gobierno paritario de toda nuestra historia. Se asoma también el tiempo de los ciudadanos. Un Chile de todos. Un Chile más integrador y más integrado. Una sociedad más inclusiva, que no discrimina y que no olvida a quienes se quedan atrás.

⁹ "Y un primer paso crucial es crear una institucionalidad acorde con este desafío. Así es que quiero llamar hoy al Congreso para que trabajemos juntos para aprobar de una vez por todas este proyecto de ley."

according to Bachelet, is dynamic, but without fatal flaws. The use of the term “challenge” indicates something that must be worked on, a temporary obstacle that the Chilean government can overcome in the name of the people.

Her last “Mensaje Presidencial,” before she successfully ran again in 2013, was given in 2009. Just as she spoke in 2006, Bachelet refers to herself and her identity as a woman to highlight the singular historical import of her presidency. She says, “Here is a Chilean woman responding day after day to the mandate of her country! I say it as a woman of this land, like so many that each day, alone or accompanied, guide, sustain, and protect those they love.”¹⁰

As she concludes her speech, she returns to a central theme of her political discourse as president: the equal inclusion of women in the political process, which, at one time, seemed unimaginable. In the selected portion of her speech, she uses implicatures to allow the hearers to use the least amount of effort to process this defining feature of her presidency:

I can say the same in relation to female participation. I do not believe it would yet be possible in Chile to have a ministerial cabinet with two or three women! The cultural change in this sense is irreversible.

And let me tell you that women we know how to occupy spaces without excluding anyone. Chile is greater when women are also in leading roles. For all these reasons, I maintain that the government is more civic than yesterday. There are more voters, more transparency, more participation, more women.

It needs to be acknowledged, nevertheless, that this political will has not had a shared institutional equivalent.

¹⁰ “¡Aquí está una mujer chilena, respondiendo día a día al mandato de la patria! Y lo digo como mujer de esta tierra, como tantas que cada día, solas o acompañadas, guían, sostienen y protegen a quienes aman.”

We need to perfect our democratic institutional framework.¹¹

She has explained in this passage that the key to a perfect democracy is the equal representation of women and men in government and that her presidency began an irreversible trend toward that goal. Bachelet consistently ends her speeches with a tone of triumphalism and optimism that reflects the general political assumptions of Chile: consensus.

¹¹ “Lo mismo puedo decir en relación de la participación femenina. ¡No creo que sea posible ya en Chile tener un gabinete ministerial con dos o tres mujeres! El cambio cultural en este sentido es irreversible.

Y permítanme decirles que las mujeres sabemos ocupar espacios sin excluir a nadie. Chile es más grande cuando las mujeres también son protagonistas. Por todo ello, sostengo que el gobierno es más ciudadano que ayer. Hay más votantes, más transparencia, más participación, más mujeres.

Hay que admitir, sin embargo, que esta voluntad política no ha tenido correlato equivalente en lo institucional. Necesitamos perfeccionar nuestra institucionalidad democrática.”

CHAPTER 3: OBAMA

Obama's Historical and Political Context

The 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama is the culmination of a metamorphosis of what political power symbolizes in the United States. As Campbell and Jameson argue in their definitive study of U.S. presidential rhetoric and the shaping of the image of the presidency, speeches enable presidents to communicate both transition and stability and the execution of prescribed roles (341). The institutionally-defined discourse, delivered via her or his manner of speaking, makes the leader.

In the case of the Obama presidency, it has been marked with controversy in both the domestic and political realms. As a politician without extensive experience in the federal government, he lacked both a substantive voting record and policy initiatives attached to his name. As a result, Obama functioned almost like a blank screen upon which observers and partisans could project their views on his potential as a presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. Lacking tangibles, then, it was possible to misinterpret or distort his moderate liberal political views.

A limited record of legislative activity could not clearly help pin down his qualifications or reveal potential guideposts on how he would address delicate matters such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq if he were to be elected to the office of the

president.¹ Spectators both domestic and international watched as, after his election, a partisan rupture broadened between the two dominant political parties, and legislative paralysis in both houses of Congress emerged. To compound the difficulties the president-elect confronted a catastrophic economic crisis whose origins date back to the 1980s. This meant his platform of national vitality, world leadership and prosperity were stymied. Liberals, progressives, young people, and African Americans shared enthusiasm regarding his candidacy, yet found his first-term presidency beset with problems and with the realities of the limits of U.S. executive power. His second administration struggles with the legacy of these first-term crises and failures. His presidency has come under increasing scrutiny and attack during the economic crisis. Over time, his speeches reflect these tensions, which are evident in the political polarization of the country, disappointments from his constituents, and increasing questions about his conduct of the war in Afghanistan and drone attacks in Pakistan.

Obama's speeches reflect a careful attention to references regarding race. In large part, he does not mention them directly, and instead opts for more nuanced word choices and allusions. Historical issues of race and the legacy of the civil rights movement are notably one of the least overtly prominent references in his political speeches before Congress and the nation in the State of the Union addresses. Instead, he expresses those references very indirectly so as to allow for the most inferential options for listeners and broaden his bipartisan appeal. He sidesteps direct references to his self-identification as

¹The invasion of Afghanistan began in October 2001 when, under orders from president George W. Bush, members of the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Special Forces entered the country to kill Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. The invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 after a presidential address by George W. Bush the same month that stated the dictator Saddam Hussein, a former U.S. ally against Iran, supported Al Qaeda and retained "weapons of mass destruction" to use against the U.S. and its allies.

“black,” which functions to avoid marking him or qualifying his status as a “black” or “African American” president.² He is instead “the president.”

Analysis of Obama's Speeches

President Obama’s political discourse in the context of the State of the Union addresses is an opportunity to explore and analyze the relevance of an input for an individual or group present during the yearly event in Congress and the cognitive effort necessary for achieving comprehension. It also provides opportunities to analyze the historical, political and physical contexts of his discourse. For example, critical discourse analysis allows for an assessment of the symbolic importance of Obama, who identifies as a black man (even though he has a white mother and an African father), which is similar to that of Bachelet as a woman. However, unlike Bachelet, the president carefully avoided the specific references to his race and structures the content of his political speeches before Congress without the rhetorical use of overt racial references or the history of racial injustices.

In his political speeches to the nation, he used recurrent rhetorical terms to highlight this leadership strategy. A prominent example is the phrase "common sense." He used this phrase in his a speech before Congress regarding economic reform, which is outside the scope of this study, but highlights a pattern in his discourse. His speeches also emphasize the use of reason or deliberative thinking to solve political problems. For example, in his first State of the Union address in 2010, he said, "Let's invest in our people without leaving them a mountain of debt. Let's meet our responsibility to the citizens who sent us here. Let's try common sense. A novel concept."

² Obama indicated his sense of his own racial identity on the 2010 U.S. Census when he selected, among many options including the option to select more than one race, “black.”
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/03/us/politics/03census.html?_r=0

This utterance, "Let's try common sense," draw attention to a trend in Obama's political discourse to speak sarcastically. Possibly it is a telling moment about the temperament of the president and his tendency to be impatient with the tedium of the political process. Also, Obama had little political experience at the national level prior to his election. The extensive checks on power on the executive branch have stunted his political agendas. In 2011 and 2012, respectively, he used the phrase, "It makes no sense" to discuss domestic policies he wanted to reform. For example, in reference to denying the children of undocumented workers the opportunity to obtain an education in the United States. He said,

Today, there are hundreds of thousands of students excelling in our schools who are not American citizens. Some are the children of undocumented workers, who had nothing to do with the actions of their parents. They grew up as Americans and pledge allegiance to our flag, and yet they live every day with the threat of deportation. Others come here from abroad to study in our colleges and universities. But as soon as they obtain advanced degrees, we send them back home to compete against us. It makes no sense.

Later in the speech, the president refers to the federal tax structure and points to one of its inherent inequalities:

All these investments -- in innovation, education, and infrastructure -- will make America a better place to do business and create jobs. But to help our companies compete, we also have to knock down barriers that stand in the way of their success.

For example, over the years, a parade of lobbyists has rigged the tax code to benefit particular companies and industries. Those with accountants or lawyers to work the system can end up paying no taxes at all. But all the rest are hit with one of the highest corporate tax rates in the world. It makes no sense, and it has to change.

The following year, Obama discussed economic reform when he said:

So we have a huge opportunity, at this moment, to bring manufacturing back. But we have to seize it. Tonight, my message to business leaders is

simple: Ask yourselves what you can do to bring jobs back to your country, and your country will do everything we can to help you succeed.

We should start with our tax code. Right now, companies get tax breaks for moving jobs and profits overseas. Meanwhile, companies that choose to stay in America get hit with one of the highest tax rates in the world. It makes no sense, and everyone knows it. So let's change it.

This strategy allows for many interpretations of Obama's intention as a communicator. One interpretation is that Obama retained a deep sense that the state's problems could be solved with reason and without emotion. This reveals a political naïveté on the president's part. Another interpretation allows for a more subtle stance that is meant to convey a naïve, overly-simplistic understanding of policy making. His audience for the latter could not have been intended for the legislators seated before him who know better. Instead, the viewing and listening audiences, exclusive of the punditry and power elite, would be his intended audience. Finally, a pretense of naïveté could serve to present the president as a relatable optimist, that is, a politician lacking guile and cynicism about politics in Washington.

Diane Blakemore, in her discussion of discourse and relevance theory, suggests that an explicature is the intended explicit content of an utterance. This understanding is predicated on both recovering the explicatures and the contextual effects the hearer must derive from the explicatures (106). An example of importance to the African American community is the reference to "the dream." According to Relevance Theory as Wilson and Sperber discuss it in *Meaning and Relevance*, the hearer must take on a certain amount of responsibility for identifying the explicature. She must also have background knowledge (77). For many members of the community and liberal people, independent of race, the reference to the dream evokes images of the civil rights movement and the

memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. Obama embodies the precepts of the vision of equality and freedom of King and his famous speech, "I Have a Dream" of 1963.³

In addition, "the dream" reference alludes to the national mythology of the goal of "the American Dream," which means the values of individualism, hard work, initiative, and equal opportunities through personal merits. Depending on the mindset and affective system of audience members, the message has a subtle nuance. In his first inaugural address, Obama concludes with a triumphant invocation: "We have finished a difficult year. We have come through a difficult decade. But a new year has come. A new decade stretches before us. We don't quit. I don't quit. Let's seize this moment – to start anew, to carry the dream forward, and to strengthen our union once more."

In 2011, for example, Obama makes several references to "the dream":

We may have differences in policy, but we all believe in the rights enshrined in our Constitution. We may have different opinions, but we believe in the same promise that says this is a place where you can make it if you try. We may have different backgrounds, but we believe in the same dream that says this is a country where anything is possible. No matter who you are. No matter where you come from.

That dream is why I can stand here before you tonight. That dream is why a working-class kid from Scranton can sit behind me. That dream is why someone who began by sweeping the floors of his father's Cincinnati bar can preside as Speaker of the House in the greatest nation on Earth.

That dream -- that American Dream -- is what drove the Allen Brothers to reinvent their roofing company for a new era. It's what drove those students at Forsyth Tech to learn a new skill and work towards the future. And that dream is the story of a small business owner named Brandon Fisher.

He concludes this section with a generalized reference: "From the earliest days of our founding, America has been the story of ordinary people who dare to dream."

³ Website: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

These statements coincide with their references to the supposedly unique history of the United States. Obama used the concept of American exceptionalism in his speeches to convey the idea that the nation has a unique global mission to serve as a model for the world. It is the destiny of the nation. Sheveleva says that [Obama] highlights the ability for people of the United States to learn lessons from the past to avoid errors in the future." He shows the solicitous attitude of Americans towards their history and their pride in it" (58). The president used hyperbole to explain the status of the nation in relation to other countries with references to the superior position of the U.S., which is an implicature.

Relevance Theory suggests that there is a assumption of relevance contained in every act of ostensive communication. According to the U.S. Constitution, State of the Union addresses before Congress are a responsibility of the president to deliver either in person or in writing. There is a constitutionally-defined assumption that the conditions of the country in economic, political, military and public health and safety terms, for example, are relevant to Congress, the party in power, the party out of power and the public who tunes in to watch the televised speech. The communication, according to Sperber and Wilson, contains its own optimal relevance, which means "every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (*Relevance* 260). Hearers of the State of the Union speeches assume the statements of the president in this historically-reified and legally-defined obligatory role of the president contains information relevant to their statuses as elected or appointed representatives, guests, and viewers. The maintenance of the informed citizenry and the balance of

powers as constructed in the Constitution create these roles of speaker and listener for the civic body to perform annually.

Obama has also emphasized the importance of the U.S. image of superiority in the historical moment when the nation was in decline in economic and imperial terms. The financial crisis that began in late 2007 and early 2008 deflated the high hopes of Obama's supporters and derailed many of the agenda items he outlined during his campaign. In terms of military power, the U.S. found itself mired in two expensive and grinding wars, both of which strained public support. Obama's discursive strategy reveals the deep sense of insecurity throughout the country and an unwillingness to recognize the affliction both in domestic and foreign policy. Most telling, in 2012, Obama said:

The renewal of American leadership can be felt across the globe. Our oldest alliances in Europe and Asia are stronger than ever. Our ties to the Americas are deeper. Our ironclad commitment -- and I mean ironclad -- to Israel's security has meant the closest military cooperation between our two countries in history.

We've made it clear that America is a Pacific power, and a new beginning in Burma has lit a new hope. From the coalitions we've built to secure nuclear materials, to the missions we've led against hunger and disease; from the blows we've dealt to our enemies, to the enduring power of our moral example, America is back.

Anyone who tells you otherwise, anyone who tells you that America is in decline or that our influence has waned, doesn't know what they're talking about.

The subtext of his speech reveals doubt about U.S. economic and military vitality and contradicts his explicit message of U.S. supremacy and stature.

Using Sperber and Wilson's definition of explicature as an explicit assumption communicated via an utterance, Obama's utterance contains an explicature to communicate an idea of U.S. global superiority. This is a rhetorical device and a

powerfully evocative strategy to reference a mental schema that emerged in U.S. presidential speeches dating back to President James Monroe's congressional statement in 1823, now called the "Monroe Doctrine."⁴ It outlined the extent of U.S. power, whose boundaries extended throughout the Western Hemisphere to create a "sphere of influence." One does not have to decide whether or not such an assumption or Obama's statements are true, according to Relevance Theory. Chilton, citing Sperber and Wilson's argument, which is contrary to Gricean assertions, stresses relevance, not truthfulness.⁵ In other words, "Humans do not, or do not have to process incoming messages as already true or real" (21). If listeners understand his statements as true, an aphorism may apply. To paraphrase, just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, truth is in the ear of the hearer.

⁴ Website: <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3604>

⁵ Paul Grice argues that a conversation should follow what he designates as a "cooperative principle." One of the maxims of this principle is, "Try to make your contribution one that is true" (46).

CHAPTER 4: ZAPATERO

Zapatero's Historical and Political Contexts

Sperber and Wilson focus on cognitive effort in the understanding of an utterance. A person's comprehension of an utterance begins with an expectation that the utterance is relevant, that is, worth the efficient expenditure of cognitive resources to process the meaning of an utterance (Hellin 26). The more effort required to process an utterance, the lower the relevance of the input to the listener ("Relevance Theory" 609). One of the most potent forms of utterances in political speeches is the use of metaphors. Relevance Theory approaches the issue of metaphor by stating "that metaphor does not require special interpretative abilities or procedures; it is a natural outcome of some very general abilities and procedures used in verbal communication" (*Relevance* 237). In their 2nd edition of *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, they elaborate upon the communicative riches of meaning that metaphors can achieve: "The surprise or beauty of a successful creative metaphor lies in this condensation, in the fact that a single expression which has itself been loosely used will determine a very wide range of acceptable weak implicatures" (*Relevance* 237). Context, according to Hellin, is essential to the interpretation of metaphorical expressions, but she does find a paucity of explanation from Sperber and Wilson on how cognitive mechanisms for understanding metaphors function (*Relevance* 237).

Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's leadership of Spain began with the controversial election in March of 2004, and he remained prime minister until December 2011. Perhaps the most prominent theme of his administration both in terms of domestic and foreign policies was the threat of terrorism. He and the country had grave concerns about the Madrid bombings in the days before the election. In his speeches, Zapatero consistently returns to the twin themes of security at home and multilateral leadership abroad. His rise to power reflects a profound change in the role of Spain on two fronts: a realignment in the nation-state's behavior as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and as a national participant (or not) in the "war on terror." The active participation of Zapatero in the United Nations and his very public support for the European Union and its initiatives underscore Zapatero's political ideology of engagement, pragmatism, and collective cooperation at home and abroad. The emphasis in his speeches is unity of purpose and resistance to the political fragmentation of the state.

On the other hand, Zapatero had to ensure a comprehensive peace with the militants in the Basque Country in Spain. The national government and military had been engaged in a protracted struggle against Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the armed separatist and nationalist movement since its founding in 1959. ETA, often referred to as a terrorist group, agreed to renounce armed struggle in the last year of Zapatero's administration.

Analysis of Zapatero's Speeches

In his inauguration speech in 2004 he began with a discussion of the Madrid bombings:

There is no reason in terrorism; no sense in terrorism; no political dialogue in terrorism. Only terror, death, blackmail. Only desire to submit, to subdue, to destroy the morale of the men, to eliminate their convictions.

Before the terror, Madrid has set an example of courage, solidarity and heroism. And as Madrid, all of Spain.

Thank you, on behalf of those of us who, in this House, represent all of the Spanish people; thanks to everyone who helped, all who everywhere have shown their support and solidarity.¹

In his first speech on the State of the Union in 2005, Zapatero returned to the issue of terrorism and expanded it to include a global community that was commiserate with his plans for cooperative and collective action for Spain:

I began my inaugural speech with a tribute to the victims of the attack we suffered fourteen months ago. I want to return to this same tribute today to give it to all victims of all terrorist acts. I do it now as a sign of our common will to face the pain and the terrorist brutality.²

In reference to specific plans of his administration to eradicate terrorism, he employs a metaphor of physical illness or a scourge or scar, which in Spanish is “lacra.” Zapatero states, “Our country wants to see terrorism eradicated. It is the only scourge that has lasted since the democratic transition.”³

Framing his administration’s efforts as legal and operating in the pursuit of peace, Zapatero references one of his hallmark achievements upon inauguration, which was the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq. They were however, redeployed to Afghanistan,

¹ No hay razón en el terrorismo; no hay sentido en el terrorismo; no hay política en el terrorismo. Sólo hay terror, muerte, chantaje. Sólo hay voluntad de someter, de sojuzgar, de destruir la moral de los hombres, de eliminar sus convicciones.

Ante el terror, Madrid ha dado ejemplo de coraje, de solidaridad, de heroísmo. Y con Madrid, toda España. Gracias, en nombre de quienes, en esta Cámara, representamos a todos los españoles; gracias a todos los que ayudaron, a todos los que en todas partes han mostrado su apoyo y solidaridad.

² Empecé mi discurso de investidura con un homenaje a las víctimas del atentado que sufrimos hace hoy catorce meses. Este mismo homenaje quiero volver a rendirlo hoy a todas las víctimas de todos los actos terroristas. Lo hago ahora como muestra de nuestra voluntad común frente al dolor y la barbarie terrorista.

³ Nuestro país quiere ver erradicado el terrorismo, la única lacra que perdura desde la transición democrática.

a subject he returns to later. He says, “Thus, I withdrew troops from Iraq, and now Spain is a strong supporter of the law and the peace.”⁴ The presence of Spanish troops in other parts of the world, Zapatero explains, complies with Spanish law, which is a key point for him, and the deployments were approved as the result of considerable parliamentary debate. He similarly explains the missions in Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Haiti; the Spanish military presence in these countries is in defense of Spanish interests. Spain’s foreign policy must be in defense of the nation, in his words, a cornerstone. Zapatero mixes his metaphors in his summation of the logic of this foreign policy of defense: “There will be no detours, nor more interventions behind the backs of the citizens.”⁵

In his political speeches, Zapatero used the rhetorical device of repetition. For example, he used "I have worked" six times to highlight his personal responsibility for specific goals:

I have worked and will work for a fully European Spain and committed to peace;
I have worked and will continue to do it so that our economy grow more and better, and create more and better jobs;
I have worked and will do it for a cohesive society, attentive to the needs of the weakest;
I have worked for a tolerant and cultured Spain;
I have worked for a secure Spain;
I have worked and will work for a plural and integrative Spain.”⁶

His use of both rhetorical repetition and placement techniques are prominent in a political speech in 2006 when he described his vision of Spain. In relation to Relevance

⁴ Por ello, retiré las tropas de Iraq y hoy España es firme defensora de la legalidad y de la paz.

⁵ No habrá más desvíos ni más intervenciones de espaldas a los ciudadanos.

⁶ He trabajado y trabajaré por una España plenamente europea y comprometida con la paz;
He trabajado y lo seguiré haciendo para que nuestra economía crezca más y mejor, y genere más y mejor empleo;
He trabajado y lo haré por una sociedad cohesionada, atenta a las necesidades de los más débiles;
He trabajado por una España tolerante y culta;
He trabajado por una España segura;
He trabajado y trabajaré, en fin, por una España plural e integradora.

Theory, repetition and strategic parallel placement of words require less processing effort and greater cognitive effect, hence relevance to the listener. The word "somos" begins the sentences nine times. For example, he states, "We are an increasingly open and pluralistic country. We are a country in which women move decisively. We are a country that lives longer every day."⁷ Also, he uses the word "plural" twice to describe the type of democracy that Spain represents in the previous examples and in another in which he describes the nation's way of life as "a safe and orderly coexistence of all citizens in a plural and united Spain."⁸ This is a recurrent characteristic of his speeches. The previous year, he called for Spain to be "plural and integrated," a description that followed a discussion of the status of immigrants in the country.

In a portion of his 2005 speech, Zapatero addresses the issue of the autonomous regions in Spain. He wants to balance both the unified nation-state image with the "profound diversity that characterizes" the country, but still founded on the "common motherland (la patria común)." In this portion of his speech, which is near the conclusion, Zapatero references "la Constitución" or "constitucional" as an adjective a total of twelve times to reinforce the importance he places on the rule of law. Self-government in autonomous regions must be understood to be possible only within the boundaries of the Spanish Constitution. In reference to a territorial model of self-government, he says, "I invite all political groups to develop and implement it with us."⁹

⁷ Somos un país cada vez más abierto y plural. Somos un país en el que las mujeres avanzan con decisión. Somos un país que vive cada día más.

⁸ Para ello el Gobierno tiene como metas, primero, más bienestar para todos los españoles y más oportunidades para los jóvenes; segundo, la extensión de los derechos civiles y sociales para los españoles y españolas comenzando por los más necesitados; tercero, una convivencia ordenada y segura de todos los ciudadanos en una España plural y unida, y, cuarto, la persecución de un orden internacional basado en la paz y la cooperación.

⁹ Éstas son las reformas del modelo territorial que el Gobierno defiende. Se acomodan, a nuestro juicio,

One of the hallmarks of the Zapatero prime ministership was his administration's support of gay marriage as a part of larger rights for Spanish citizens. He situated these changes in Spanish legal and social history as indicators of the power of the nation and government. In his 2006 speech, he establishes a tone to underscore the fortitude of the government and its ability to lead the country toward granting tangible rights to citizens. In a series of short, declarative statements, he lists eleven examples, four of which serve to highlight the structure and tone of this portion of his speech:

People of the same sex can marry and adopt.
Those wishing to divorce can do so quickly and free.
Women are more protected against gender violence, though
bloody murderers continue humiliating us with the horror
of their deaths.
Soon, every citizen can see their gender identity
respected.¹⁰

Zapatero won reelection in 2008, and the global financial crisis that destabilized the Spanish economy affected the content and tone of his State of the Union speech in 2009. He dedicated nearly three-fourths of his speech to the governmental approaches his administration would support to mitigate the high rate of unemployment, to fortify the collapsing housing construction industry and to support educational initiatives. Zapatero draws a parallel between Spain's domestic and foreign policies and connects them with the international community when he says:

con lo que España necesita, con lo que necesitan las Comunidades Autónomas en su vocación de construcción de más autogobierno y de mejor financiación, y con lo que la Constitución permite y prevé. Invito a todos los grupos políticos a que lo desarrollen y apliquen con nosotros.

¹⁰ Las personas del mismo sexo pueden contraer matrimonio y adoptar.

Quienes deseen divorciarse pueden hacerlo de forma rápida y libre.

Las mujeres están más protegidas ante la violencia de género, aunque los malditos asesinos sigan humillándonos con el horror de sus muertes.

Los padres que tengan un hijo con determinadas enfermedades genéticas pueden concebir un hijo sano que contribuya a salvar a su hermano.

Pronto, todo ciudadano podrá ver respetada su identidad de género.

The government of Spain is developing a very active foreign policy at a time that we consider crucial for the future of international relations.

The arrival of the Obama administration and the need, perceived by all, of responding to a global crisis, open the best possible scenario for multilateralism.

Spain has just been present in four key summits to redefine the new international world order: the G20 in London, NATO in Strasbourg and Kehl, the summit between the EU and U.S. in Prague, and the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul.¹¹

For Zapatero, a globally-engaged Spain, even at a time of severe economic crisis, is preferable to isolation, which is the subtext of this portion of his speech. A nation actively involved in cooperative, collective problem solving is more preferable than an isolated, insular country.

He picks up this topic again the following year, and employs two metaphors, the first related to denial and rejection of reality:

We cannot close our eyes. We have to adapt our pension system to the profound demographic changes that we are experiencing and will continue to experience in the coming decades with more intensity.

It is a necessity that affects almost all countries of the European Union, as indicated by several studies and recommendations of international organizations, including the OECD, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission.¹²

¹¹ El Gobierno de España está desarrollando una política exterior muy activa en un momento que consideramos crucial para el futuro de las relaciones internacionales. La llegada de la administración Obama y la necesidad, percibida por todos, de responder globalmente a una crisis global, abren al multilateralismo el mejor escenario posible.

España acaba de estar presente en cuatro cumbres clave para redefinir el nuevo orden internacional: la del G20 en Londres, la de la OTAN en Estrasburgo y Kehl, la Cumbre entre la UE y EE.UU. de Praga y el Segundo Foro de la Alianza de Civilizaciones en Estambul.

¹² No podemos cerrar los ojos. Tenemos que adaptar nuestro sistema de pensiones a los profundos cambios demográficos que estamos ya experimentando y que experimentaremos en las próximas décadas con más intensidad. Es una necesidad que afecta a la práctica totalidad de países de la Unión Europea, como señalan diversos estudios y recomendaciones de organismos internacionales, incluyendo la OCDE, el Fondo Monetario Internacional y la Comisión Europea.

The second metaphor invokes the physical manifestation of protracted stress and worry: growing older at an accelerated rate. It also references the declining birthrate in Spain. He states, “All developed countries will suffer an unprecedented aging process.”¹³

Zapatero has matured as a more skillful communicator of his ideas by 2009. His effective use of metaphors and concrete data points offer more opportunities for relevance among listeners. Listeners can interpret his utterances in terms of what his administration has accomplished and measure that against the promises he made the year before. Also, with the use of metaphor, listeners can generate a set of weak implicatures. For example, listeners can interpret the metaphor of closed eyes as a call to be brave and confront the difficult reality of the dire economic situation in Spain. With the use of the pronoun “we,” Zapatero can also be understood to reference other politicians who may not agree with his party’s policies. “We” must act. We must accept this reality. The subtext of this statement is also that Prime Minister Zapatero has accepted this reality and is calling on other members of congress to accede to his point of view.

The second metaphor on the aging process offers listeners the opportunity to process the input as an almost universal experience: growing old, sometimes prematurely so, due to life difficulties. The outward manifestations of aging such as grey hair, deep wrinkles or stooped shoulders indicate that the Spanish population is undergoing something very difficult and stressful, but the experience is shared in common and is almost a natural, physical response. Another related collective experience that Spain shares with the rest of Western Europe is the declining birthrate. The population is aging, and the costs of healthcare for an aging population create fear and uncertainty about the

¹³ Todos los países desarrollados van a sufrir un proceso de envejecimiento sin precedentes.

future. Regardless of the dire warnings, he prefers to end all of his speeches with a note of confidence in the resilience of the Spanish people, which is a hallmark of all of his speeches.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

When considering context, I have adopted the broadest definition possible, following the lead of Sperber and Wilson and in answer to Chilton's call for more scholarly investigations of the links between language and politics. Chilton's work in political discourse analysis has led him to attempt to guide the debate toward a theory of language and politics grounded in areas of linguistics and cognition (xi). Relevance Theory offers a clear place to start. And while searching for relevance in communication is, for Sperber and Wilson, the ultimate goal of successful communication, this analysis argues that one must apply Relevance Theory and critical discourse analysis to arrive at fuller understanding of the myriad elements that constitute context. The analysis of the physical and mental space in which communication occurs, what I call "context," is a multidisciplinary activity. Van Dijk says the context in which politicians speak is vital to understanding the larger structures of political power and social justice. He states, "From our discourse analytical point of view, such a contextual definition at the same time suggests that the study of political discourse should not be limited to the structural properties of text or talk itself, but also include a systematic account of the context and its relations to discursive structures" (15). I chose three political leaders of representative democracies who have been successfully re-elected and whose times in leadership overlapped. Bachelet and Obama were "firsts" in their countries' histories, and their State

of the Union speeches drew heavily on a master narrative of broadening social justice and political power in Chile and the United States. How else could their elections be explained? I conclude that their success, and this is true for Zapatero too, hinges more on their ability to communicate effectively and to reassure audiences of stability than to present themselves as agents of change. Transition and upheaval, be it economic, political or military, could be elided with the deft use of State of the Union addresses to reassure, to project strength and to embody confidence.

With regard to the analysis of the political speeches before their respective legislative bodies, Bachelet, Obama and Zapatero shared similar contexts in one important way: the historical moments in which they were elected as the leaders of their countries. Each speech analyzed in this study considered the contextual space in which they spoke publicly as their countries' elected leaders to be one of the most important attributes of understanding their communication. Their utterances transcended the component parts: words, phrase and sentences. The context shaped their speeches and made the speeches intelligible on many levels. Whether the speeches, or even smaller portions of them, achieved relevance, depended in part on the listeners. And there were millions of listeners. However, the speeches were tailored to address particular historical and contemporary events, presidential dispositions, and leadership frustrations. This analysis suggests that effective political discourse, which is optimally relevant, is key to successful political leadership. Michelle Bachelet was reelected president in 2013, Obama in 2012 and Zapatero's party won again in 2008, which provided him a second term. These leaders are more than their speeches, of course. Yet their ability to

communicate effectively is a sign of their skillful use of discourse as an effective exercise of power in democracies.

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GLOSSARY

context – According to Roberts, “[A] context stores various kinds of information shared in discourse.” An utterance cannot be understood separate from its context (202). Sperber and Wilson define context as “a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances” (15-16).

critical discourse analysis – According to van Dijk, it is the study of the “texts and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, including the president, members of government, politicians at local, national or international level” (12).

discourse – written and spoken communication.

explicature – Wilson and Sperber state that an explicature is an utterance in which “the speaker’s meaning is quite explicit.” It is “common-sensically described as ‘what is said’ or ‘the literal meaning of the utterance.’” They can be stronger or weaker, thus requiring the hearer to take more responsibility for the interpretation she constructs (Meaning and Relevance 13).

implicature – According to Horn, an implicature is a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker’s utterance without being part of what is said (3).

metaphor – According to Ritchie’s study of metaphor, metaphor is “seeing, experiencing or talking about something in terms of something else” (210).

pragmatics – According to Horn, pragmatics is a field of linguistic inquiry that is the study of “context-dependent aspects of meaning” of human communication (xi). It is the study of communication beyond what is said explicitly. Pragmatics studies language use in context, as both are necessary components to arrive at a comprehension of communicated meaning beyond the dictionary-definition of the utterances themselves.

Relevance Theory – Wilson and Sperber define Relevance Theory as an inferential approach to pragmatics that is built upon Paul Grice’s assertion that most verbal and non-verbal human communication contains an essential feature: the expression and recognition of intentions. An utterance raises expectations of relevance because the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition. The expectations of relevance are “precise and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker’s meaning.” An input is relevant to an individual when “its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a positive cognitive effect” (“Relevance Theory” 607-609).

utterance – Wilson and Sperber define an utterance as “a linguistically coded piece of evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of decoding” (“Relevance Theory” 607). A further elaboration is provided by Mikhail Bakhtin’s discussion of what

constitutes speech. He offers the following analysis of speaking: “To learn to speak means to learn to construct utterances (because we speak in utterances and not in individual sentences, and, of course, not in individual words). Any utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication” (84).