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Abstract

This article intends to build bridges between two recent trends within Critical Discourse Studies as exemplified by cognitive linguistics and multimodality. Thus, the postulates of spatial cognition will be followed to do an analysis of the musical re-contextualization (Wodak&Fairclough 2010) of Barack Obama's New Hampshire 2008 speech (cf. Will.i.am 2008). In Will.i.am's music video "Yes, we can", uploaded on YouTube under the username WeCan08, we can listen to a song whose lyrics are made of different extracts from Obama's speech. This type of communicative strategy results in a multiple re-contextualization of the political speech. The effectiveness of the musical video can be explained by identifying it as a blended mental space (Fauconnier& Turner 2002) incorporating elements of the text-world, the music-world and visual-world.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, multimodality, mental space, spatial cognition, text-world theory

1. Introduction

Songs are usually considered to be socio-cultural ludic discourses. However, it could be argued that they also perform a communicative ideological function, which stems not only from its textual component –through which the singer/performer establishes an interpersonal relationship with an audience while portraying a given view of reality (Halliday 2004; Van Leeuwen 2012:322) –, but also from its multimodal –musical and video – counterparts. With this in mind, this article intends to build bridges between two recent trends within CDS: cognitive linguistics and multimodality. Thus, the postulates of spatial cognition will be followed to do an analysis of the musical re-contextualization (Wodak&Fairclough 2010) of Barack Obama's New Hampshire 2008 speech (cf. Will.i.am 2008). I hypothesize that the emotional impact –or cognitive effect (Steen &Gavins 2003:6)– of this artistic re-contextualization of a socio-political event is partly caused by the mental representation built within the lyrics/speech, and partly by the relationship established between such mental representation and the audience's experience of the world. Through the use of images of different famous, non-political figures in the music video that accompanies the song, different contexts – and thus, different views about the world – are evoked. All of these worldviews coalesce in trying to achieve a single political response: a vote for Obama.

The emotional and socio-political impact of the "Yes, we can" video may be explained by relying on the relationship between language choices and cognitive effects. How can we explain the (higher) political impact of what is apparently a song? Which worldview representation is evoked in this song? How is this construed? To answer these questions,

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Will.i.am's version of Obama's New Hampshire speech will be analysed according to the postulates of Text-World Theory (TWT) (Werth 1999, Gavins 2007) with the aim of understanding how the uncovered mental representations (or "text-worlds") can be interpreted by the many audiences of this music video.

Given the importance of music and image, the textual findings will be backed by a preliminary attempt to apply spatial cognition to the analysis of multimodal components. In the latter case, the emphasis will be placed on those aspects that contribute to the creation of a blended mental space (Facuconnier & Turner 2002) which, as we will see, results in a re-contextualized political discourse world. This explains the effectiveness of the "Yes, we can" video, which does not only stem from the mental representation of a particular text-world, but also from the combination of given textual choices with music and video.

2. Yes, we can

The analysed music video is based on what is usually known as Obama's "Yes, we can" speech, and it is considered to be a significant part of Obama's 2008 election campaign (Castells 2009:364-411; Harfoush 2009:xii). After having announced his candidacy as president of the United States, Senator Barack Obama began his campaign to win the primaries of the Democratic Party, competing mainly against Hillary Clinton. On January 08, 2008, on the night of the primary, Obama gave a speech in Nashua, New Hampshire.² This has become known as the "Yes, we can" speech. In this name, we can already see one of the most important strategies that characterized (both directly and indirectly) Obama's rhetoric: the creation of a shared space between utterer and audience.³

The emotional link with the audience is even more significant in the "Yes, we can" music video created by Will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas. As Harfoush notes, the high number of reactions to this video on the social media can be easily explained if we look at it in detail:

Shot in black and white, the video featured musical artist Will.i.am from the Black Eyed Peas accompanied by a slew of celebrities singing along to one of Senator Barack Obama's speeches. It wasn't the faces of the rich and famous that had me sitting up. It was the message of hope and change coming from a man that until that moment I had only studied from a distance. [...] I remember feeling a shiver as I watched that video. It moved me [...] That video was a wake-up call, the catalyst that would lead me to join one of the world's most historic political campaigns. (2009:xii-xiii)

This worked as a viral online phenomenon. Will.i.am composed and produced the video, while Jesse Dylan directed it. It was released on YouTube by a user called WeCan08 on February 2, 2008, and by March 28, the video had already been watched more than 17 million times (Castells 2009).

The video was not originally devised as part of Obama's official campaign, although it can be argued that the song had a role in politics. In the music video accompanying this song,⁴ we

²The speech can be watched at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe751kMBwms>. This video has been uploaded by a user called "BarackObamadotcom". This user name is another proof of the importance that social media had in Obama's campaign (cf. Harfoush 2009).

³ The transcript can be found on http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/us/politics/08text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

⁴Available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcx-mYY>.

get the image of important people in North-American life singing a song whose words correspond to the ones of the speech uttered by Obama in New Hampshire.⁵ In the video, which is filmed in black and white, the images of the cultural representatives blend with those of Obama and the original audience of the speech. Besides, some keywords –such as “change” or “hope”– written in capital letters appear throughout the song. This, together with the final use of the word “vote”, prove the double use of this song, which is not only meant to be entertaining, but also aims at a political goal: making people vote for Obama in the 2008 presidential election.

3. Method of analysis

If we consider that with songs we can talk about society, CDS-based studies are not only justified but also necessary, as proved in most of the articles included in a special issue of *Critical Discourse Studies* devoted to the study of music (see for example Van Leeuwen 2012, or McKerrell 2012). This article follows the same trend while at the same time advocating in favour of an approach to CDS based on social cognition.

By departing from the notions underlying Fairclough’s (1989) three-stage model, it is argued here that textual choice may result not only in producing given representations of reality (worldviews), but also on these having a significant effect on the socio-political reality in which they are embedded. As we will see below, worldviews are the outcome of given text and discourse worlds. TWT has already proved to be a useful tool for clarifying which entities can be included in an ideologically-motivated instance on discourse (Filardo-Llamas 2013), as its main objective is to identify mental representations of the world – or “text-worlds” (Gavins 2007:10) – which are discursively spread. Two main elements determine the existence of these worlds: world-building elements (including participants, locations, and times), and function-advancing propositions (or the actions done by participants).

Text-worlds acquire (further) meaning when they become discourse worlds, i.e. when they are contextually interpreted at the moment of discourse production and discourse reception (Gavins 2007:9, 18-31). It is at this stage that textual choices are related to spreading ideological beliefs. In order to explain this process, Chilton’s (2004, 2005) Discourse Space Theory (DST) becomes a useful incorporation to TWT, as it helps to understand how a given instance of discourse can acquire ideological meaning by placing entities in a proximal-distal relationship to the deictic centre. Through this we may establish a link between language and discourse production and reception (cf. Fairclough 1989). By relying on DST, we can recast mental representations and place them “across spaces as coordinate correspondences on three fundamental dimensions” (Chilton 2005:81): Space, Time and Axiology (Cap 2010).

If, following Chilton (2005:86), we consider meaning – and discourse worlds – a “conceptualization of Euclidean space”, we may explain “viewpoint” as the position which the speaker adopts in terms of space, time, and axiological space. Discourse meaning thus becomes the conceptualization of “the integrated representation of the speaker’s consciousness of his/her own position in space” (ibid). Cap’s (2010, this volume) notion of

⁵A list of the thirty-four celebrities featured can be found in the Wikipedia entry for this song ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yes_We_Can_\(will.i.am_song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yes_We_Can_(will.i.am_song))).

proximization may help in explaining how emotions may arise out of the relationship that is established between the (ideally ego-centric) deictic centre and the other entities present in the discourse world: the closer entities are located in terms of space, time and axiology to the speaker – and those who share knowledge and beliefs with him/her –, the more effective discourse is in creating a shared identity.

As theories of discourse, both DST and TWT stress the importance of uncovering linguistic features, which are considered cues to (multiple) contextual interpretation(s). The meaning of an instance of discourse can be described by relying on the notion of a “mental space”, i.e. “a construct distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions” (Fauconnier 1994:16). It can be argued that both text and discourse worlds are contextually-determined mental spaces. Thus, all the linguistic elements to be analysed share an indexicality trait, i.e. they can be explained by relying on a proximal-distal relationship established within a particular space (regardless of whether this points at space, time or axiology).

A few linguistic aspects have been considered. The first one is deictics (pronouns, verb tenses, temporal adverbs, and modality and negation (Levinson 1983; Hidalgo Downing 2000; Stockwell 2002; Chilton 2004)), which can be considered a key element in building mental spaces (Fauconnier 1994:16-17; 35-36). In order to specify the world-building elements indexed by deictics, referential expressions, and particularly noun phrases, have also been acknowledged. These expressions do not only reflect our conceptual structure, but they can also profile certain features of the indexed entity (Saeed 1997; Langacker 2008). Halliday's (2004:44, 302) transitivity system has been studied to understand how the narrative advances (Gavins 2007:56). As proximal-distal relationships in the text are not only established in relation to time and space, conceptual metaphors, modality and negation have been analysed to understand how entities are located in the axiological scale (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1989; Hidalgo Downing 2000; Kövecses 2002; Stockwell 2002; Chilton 2004; Gavins & Stockwell 2012).

As noted by Sweetser (2012:3), viewpoint is built as a consequence of linguistic and multimodal stimuli, and the Mental Spaces framework proves to be a useful tool to represent such points of view. Following this, I argue that TWT and DST can be equally useful to explain the conceptual structure of the “Yes, we can” music video. If we consider that a discourse world is accessed not only by relying on linguistic cues, but also on any other element which can be sensorially perceived, the analysis of multimodal features becomes significant in this study. Since the main objective of this paper is not to present a detailed musical analysis of the song, but to consider the way in which text, music and images interact, Van Leeuwen's (2012) proposal has been followed for the study of musical categories. These include the type of melodies, the type of intervals between notes, whether there is monophony or polyphony in the song, the type of voices, and how time is deployed.

No specific methodological proposal has been followed for the analysis of images, and only those features which characterise the video have been considered. Particularly, I have focused on the use of colour, the position which images occupy on the screen (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996:61), and the identification of the source from which images have been taken.

4. Analysis

Three main text-worlds characterize Will.i.am's version of Obama's speech: one set on the present, one on the past, and one determined by modality shifts. The three of them share the same space – "this nation", the USA – and participants – a highly inclusive "we". Most of the shifts in text-worlds are just determined by time and modality deictics. Since textual organization in the song is different from the one in the speech, text-worlds will be explained following the order in which they appear, as this has a significant role in increasing the song's persuasiveness.

Construals in this song are highly determined by the first word that appears in it: the pronoun "it". This pronoun works as a cataphoric mechanism of textual cohesion – notably because it occupies the thematic position (Halliday 2004) in most of the paragraphs of the first section of the song - and it points to the phrase which eventually became Obama's slogan (Mieder 2009:104): "Yes, we can". This phrase is partly de-contextualized, mainly at the beginning of the song, as we neither know who the referent of "we" is nor which is the action that can be done.

Not only is the phrase de-contextualized because of the apparent lack of referents, which as we will see below has a significant impact in the persuasiveness of the song, but also because of the many previous uses of this phrase. As noted by Mieder (2009:104) and Berry & Gottheimer (2010:146), this triad has been previously used in other contexts, including Obama's run for the Senate in 2004; cofounders of the United Farm Workers', Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huertas, use of the Spanish equivalent of the phrase in a twenty-four-day fast in 1972;⁶ or in a 1973 song by the Pointer Sisters. By relying on a phrase which had previously appeared on different contexts, both Obama and Will.i.am are re-contextualizing it (Van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999; Wodak & Fairclough 2010; Wodak 2011), hence endowing it with further meanings.⁷

Besides acquiring meaning in a new context, the different entities pointed by the deictics in "Yes, we can" are also identified co-textually. To understand how this works, it is necessary to mention that two halves can be identified in the textual structure of the song. In the first part of the song we find the phrase "Yes, we can" used as a chorus, i.e. it is repeated after each sentence. The end of this part is marked by this same phrase in Spanish ("Sí, se puede"). "Yes, we can" does not appear again until the end of the song, where they are the final words. In the second part of the song, the chorus is "we want change", and it follows much longer stanzas. Verb tenses are also different, with the past tense prevailing in the first part and the present and future dominating the second.

⁶This Spanish equivalent – "Sí, se puede" - also appears in the music video. Even if it could be argued that this is a re-contextualization, I believe that this is not the only reason why this language appears in the video. By using Spanish, Will.i.am (and eventually Obama's ideas) are also trying to get the votes from the increasingly bigger Hispanic community in the United States.

⁷ This is an even-more-complex process, and there is at least a double – if not triple- re-contextualization. In a first stage, Obama takes a phrase which had previously appeared in texts produced at other times. In a second stage, Will.i.am uses the same phrase in a new text, which results in a new layer of meaning being added to these three words. Finally, these words are uttered by different people in the video – and they even appear printed on the screen -, thus acquiring further nuances of meaning.

The co-textual relationship that is established between “it” and “yes, we can” (example 1) is of key importance in order to explain how deictics function in the three-word phrase. In all the cases, we have an impersonal pronoun followed by a verb indicating a verbal process.

- 1) It was a creed written into the founding documents [...] Yes, we can.
- It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists [...]. Yes, we can.
- It was sung by immigrants [...]. Yes, we can. (Will.i.am 2008)

2) ... we will remember that there is something happening in America; that we are not as divided as our politics suggests; that we are one people; we are one nation; and together, we will begin the **next great chapter** in the America story with three words that will ring from coast to coast; from sea to shining sea –

Yes. We. Can. (Will.i.am 2008; [author’s emphasis])

As we can see in Figure 1, “Yes, we can” is not only one of the phrases which is part of Obama’s speech – something which is more prominent at the end of the song (example 2) – but it also functions as the locution of the verbal process (Halliday 2004) that accompanies the “it” pronoun. Thus, “Yes, we can” plays a double role. It is not only a re-contextualized phrase that is part of the communicative situation – the American Elections – in which it is uttered, but it is also part of a sub-world that is prompted by a combination of both the past temporal text-world shift (Gavins 2007:48; Werth 1999:216) and the use of the verb of saying. These two times are textually connected through the use of the phrase “the next great chapter” which semantically connects the past historical events referred to at the beginning of the song with what they hope will be a new historical event: Barack Obama becoming president of the USA. Because of this, “Yes, we can” undergoes a double process of re-contextualization: It is associated to a present situation, and it is presented as a constituent part of the discourses of several significant events in North-American history.

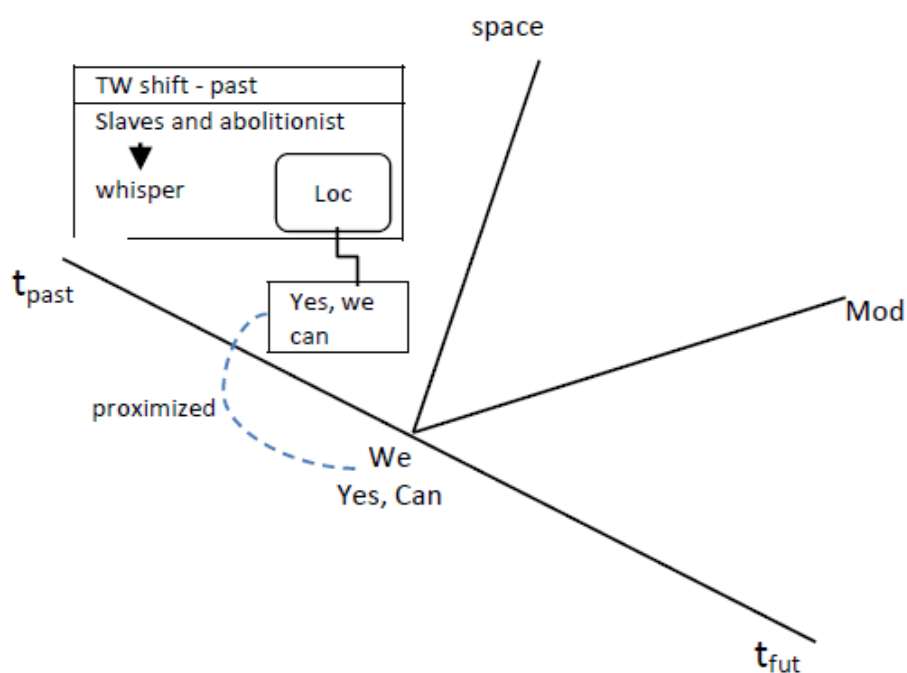


Figure 1. "Yes, we can" in the past and in the present.

The semantic emptiness of the pronouns, used as deictics, allows for the past to be located closer to the present deictic centre, as these only acquire meaning contextually (Levinson 1983:62). All of the historical events that are referred to in the song evoke positive feelings, and they are constitutive part of the fight against social discrimination in North America.⁸ In a further development of the proximization concept (Cap 2010) – usually understood as a negative concept accounting for the study of threat in political discourse – it can be argued that the past is positively proximized to the present, thus acquiring a legitimating role in justifying present (and future) actions. The past and the present are blended (Fauconnier & Turner 2002), and certain features of those who were involved in the past situations are necessarily associated to the person who is to do similar actions in the present: Barack Obama.

Multimodal devices also help in making the first part of the song – and its “yes-we-can” “chorus” – persuasive. This part of the song is visually constructed by images of famous people who utter, at the same time as Obama, certain parts of the New Hampshire speech. Two different communicative situations are blended: Obama’s speech and it becoming a song. All the images included are shot in black and white, endowing the video with a credibility trait that stems from the low modality associated to these two colours (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996:165). The layout of the screen is also important. We always find images combined vertically (see figure 2) either in groups of two or three, or in a combination between text and image. At the beginning of the video the amount of the screen occupied by artists is bigger than the one occupied by Obama, although the two are quickly balanced. Besides, the location of the politician in the screen varies from right to left to a middle position.

From this we can infer that Obama and the different artists taking part in the video are presented as being equally important. This strengthens the blend between the two communicative contexts mentioned above: Obama’s speech and its musical re-interpretation. Two worlds are likewise blended: the political one represented by Obama and a broader socio-cultural and ideological one represented by all the other persons depicted in the video. This makes it easy for the audience to identify with them, as they all share a similar space: “this nation”. Images thus contribute to widening the referent of the pronoun “we” (cf. Wilson 1990:49; Wodak et al. 1999:46) which moves from a slightly exclusive one referring only to those delegates who were to vote in the Primaries to a highly inclusive one with which all North-American citizens can feel identified.

⁸ These past events include the foundation of the United States, the fight against slavery, the determination of immigrants and pioneers, the feminist fight for the right to vote, Kennedy’s decision to go to the moon in 1961, and Martin Luther King’s speech “I’ve been to the Mountaintop” uttered the day before he was murdered.

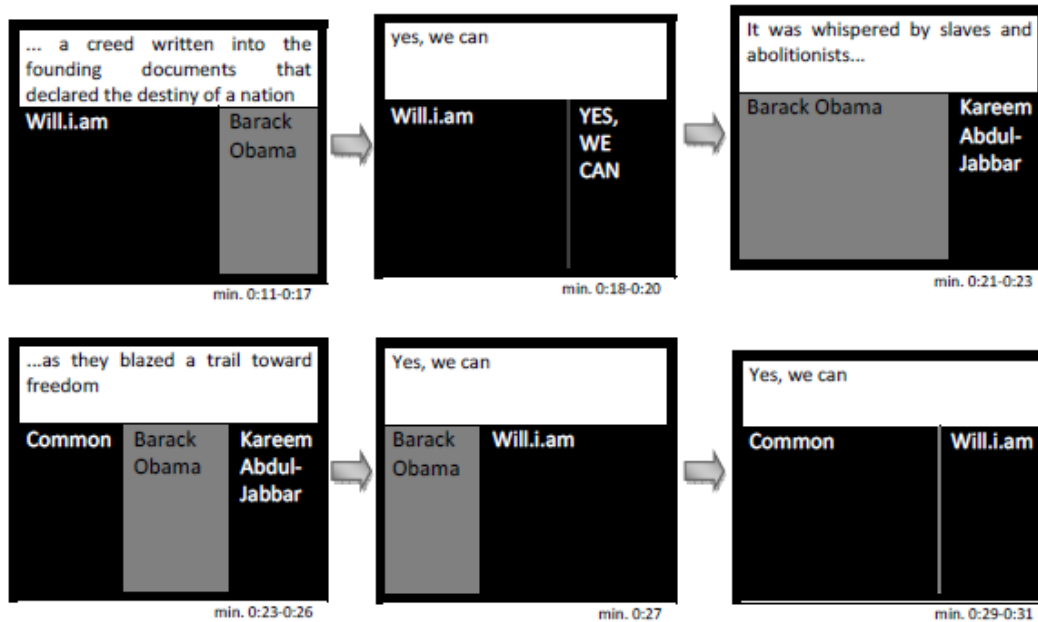


Figure 2. Sequence of shots in the "Yes, we can" music video

Music plays an equally significant role in creating text-worlds. Two aspects shall be highlighted when looking at how “Yes, we can” is sung in the first part of the song. The first trait is its polyphonic nature. More than one person sings what later became Obama’s slogan (“yes, we can”), whose musical counterpart is at times paired with the spoken one being uttered by Obama.⁹ Polyphony and monophony are of key importance here, and they strengthen the idea of social unison (Van Leeuwen 2012:322-323) that is both textually and visually transmitted. As explained by Van Leeuwen (ibid), “in ‘polyphony’, different melodies are simultaneously played or sung by different instruments or singers”, each standing on its own but fitting harmoniously. With this type of interaction, “parties are ‘equal but different’.” This is what happens in most of the extract, which is characterized by the unison rhythm that is established between Obama’s uttering of the speech and the speech-based lyrics sung by the public figures. However, polyphony does not work on its own, and it is often combined with monophony – i.e. different people singing the same notes. This happens mainly in the minute-long repetition of “yes, we can” which we find in minutes 1.00 to 1.57, and it stresses the solidarity trait that can be established between those singing the same notes (ibid). This subtle combination of polyphony and monophony results in a maintenance of the individual traits of public people – be them political or cultural – and the merging of their ideological beliefs, which are summarised in a three-word phrase: “yes, we can”.

The second noticeable feature is the use of ascending melodies in most of the first part of the song, particularly when they sing “yes, we can”, or in the reference to Martin Luther King’s speech (see minute 0:52-1:00). As noted by Cooke (1959, quoted in Van Leeuwen 2012:321), these types of melodies are “active and dynamic”, and whenever they are used the songs “seek to energize people, to rally people behind a cause”. As we will see below, this fits with the final aim of the song: make people vote for Obama.

⁹When this happens, we can also hear a background of people clapping and chanting the phrase (from minute 1:00 to 1:58).

In these three words we can also see another recurrent textual feature: the constant construal of sub-worlds (Werth 1999). A difference can be established between the deitic and modal conceptual spaces triggered by the song (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999:226). The two parts in the song are determined by the temporal shift in the construction of text-worlds which share a similar space – “this nation” – and similar discourse participants – “we”, American citizens. Whereas the first part of the song mainly focuses on the past, the second part stresses the importance of the present and the future.

It is in the second part that we find another type of world-shift: the modal one (Gavins 2007). Combining Gavins’ (2007) and Werth’s(1999) explanation of world switches, we can identify three different types of sub-worlds: epistemic, deontic and bulomaic/desire. In “yes, we can”, we can already identify two linguistic cues which help in creating an epistemic world: “yes” and “can”. The use of the adverb “yes” stresses the positiveness and it is used to counteract the re-channelling process that is triggered by negation (Hidalgo Downing 2000:149)in some of the extracts of the song:

3) Yes we can.

We know the battle ahead will be long, but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way, **nothing** can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change.

We can change.

We want change.

We have been told we **cannot** do this by a chorus of cynics.... (Will.i.am 2008; [author’s emphasis])

That emphatic role of the form “yes” combined with the inclusive pronoun “we” contributes to profiling the certainty which the speaker has about the possible existence of a different world, as opposed to the beliefs and sayings of others. Besides, the combination of negation with the pronoun they – “the cynics” – and that of certainty with the pronoun “we” indexes a maximally-distant position of the others in relation to the speaker – and the deictic centre – within the modality axis (Chilton 2005:90). A clear opposition in the construction of textual – and discursive – spaces is evoked by the song, as we can see in Figure 3.

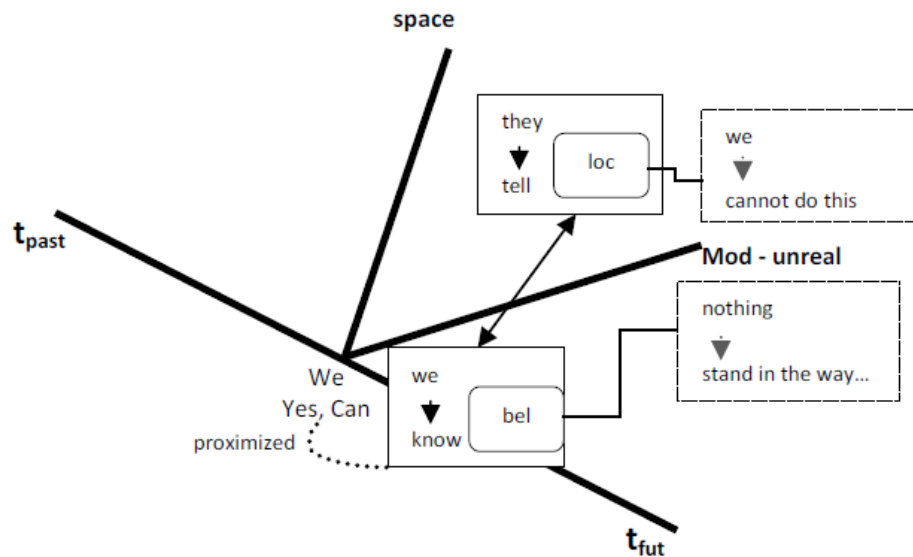


Figure 3. Group and real vs. unreal opposition

The combination of the pronoun “we” – whose discursive importance is emphasized by its occupying the thematic position in most of the paragraphs of the second part of the song, (Halliday 2004) – with verbs indicating mental processes – “know” and “want” (example 5) – is also significant in understanding how epistemicity and deonticity are construed in this text. These two verbs are found in the present simple tense, which stresses the proximal relationship with the deictic centre. Both of them trigger a sub-world where discourse participants are located. In both cases, this sub-world undergoes another temporal shift (Gavins 2007) and it is placed in the future.

A careful analysis shows how the form “we know” is endowed with a certainty trait, thus becoming a textual cue for epistemic modality (Gavins 2007:110). This phrase marks the beginning of the second part of the song, and it also helps in indicating that its object – i.e. what is known – is considered to be true. Significantly, the referent of the person who believes – the pronoun “we” – is once again ambiguous, as it could index only Obama, Obama and public figures, or all of them together with the audience.

Multimodal features help in identifying who is to be considered the choice of authority (example 3). In Figure 4 we have the sequence of shots which we find in the video, and we can see how the referent of the pronoun “we” can be identified as a highly inclusive one. Likewise, the use of polyrhythm in this extract – and from here on until the end of the song – helps in developing a multicultural identity for the referent of this pronoun, hence widening its referential scope.

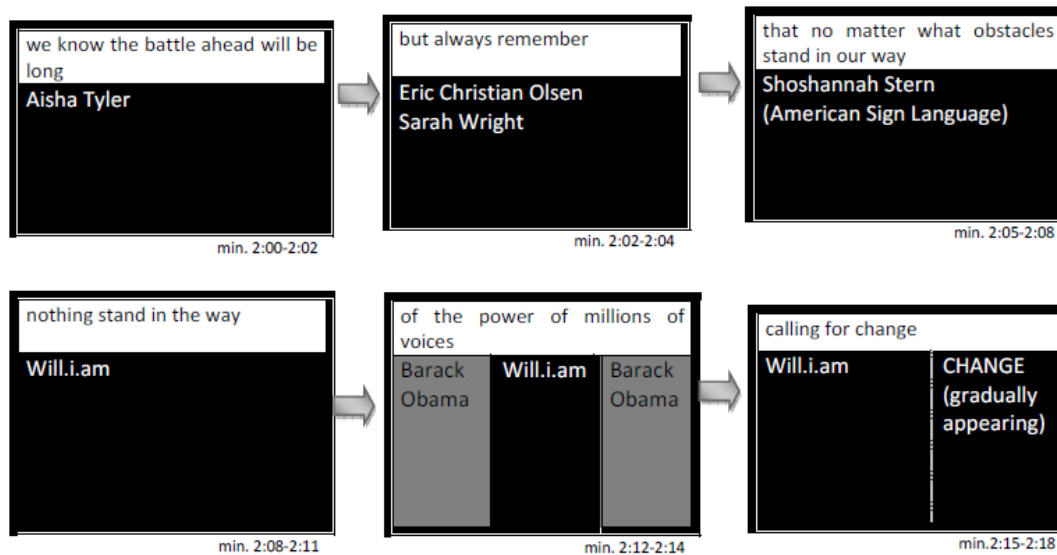


Figure 4. Sequence of shots at the beginning of the second part of the song

If we look at the succession of public figures uttering Obama’s speech (the speech is read aloud from minutes 2:00 to 2:08 and music does not begin again until minute 2:08 when Will.i.am reappears and sings the same words that Obama utters), we can see that there is a constant change of persons appearing in screen, hence making the referent of the pronoun a global one. Barack Obama does not appear until minute 2:12, and his image appears twice on the screen surrounding Will.i.am’s one. It can be argued that a conceptual blend (Fauconnier& Turner 2002) is produced here whereby Will.i.am and Obama are visually presented as one single person who is to be considered the source of authority. This blended figure acquires significant features from both persons, and as a consequence the truth associated to what the speaker believes is stressed. As we can see in Figure 5, we mentally obtain the representation of a new speaker which is not only a politician, but also a social and cultural representative. This results in a visual re-contextualization of politics in a new and more global communicative environment.¹⁰

¹⁰ This visual strategy (mixing shots of Obama with ones of Will.i.am, and alternating those with a constant succession of images from several public figures) is constantly repeated in this part of the song. Both Obama and Will.i.am tend to appear when actual extracts from the speech are uttered, while the public figures tend to do so when the chorus – “I want change”, “we want change” or “yes, we can” – is sung.

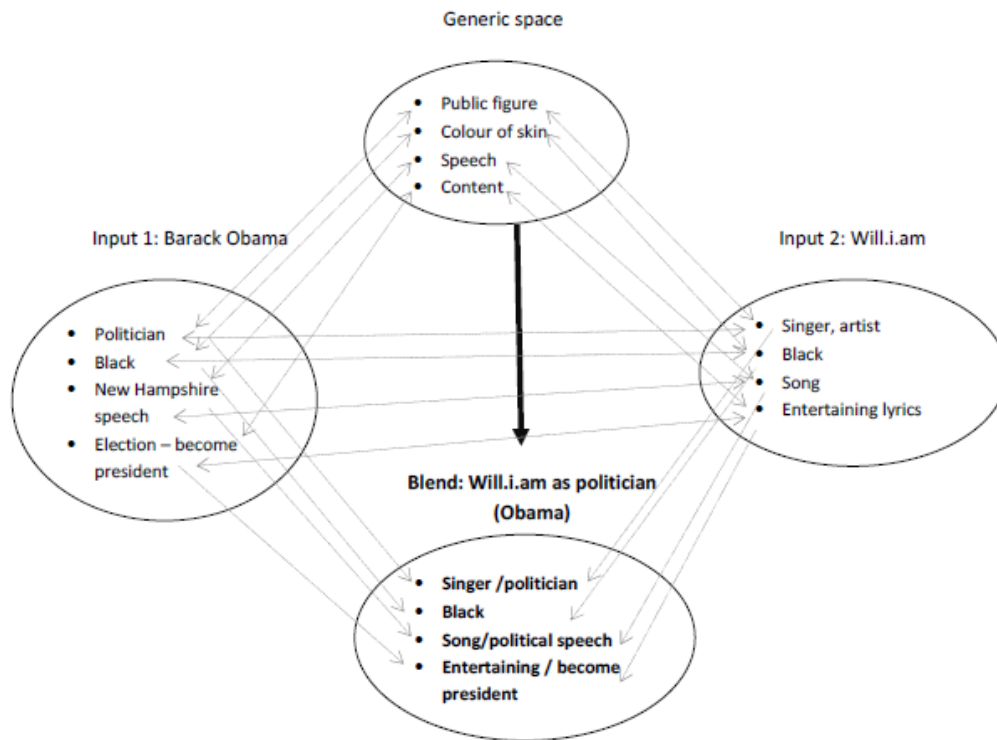


Figure 5. Visual blending between Obama and Will.i.am.

The blend between Obama and Will.i.am is possible because both discourse participants share the same geographical and discourse space – “this nation”, the USA – and the same present temporal space. This makes it possible for both of them as individuals, and to the resulting blend, to share the deictic centre position, hence establishing a proximal relationship with the audience, which also occupies that same space. Unison performances – with Obama uttering the speech while Will.i.am sings it (minute 2:08-2:18) – also help in activating the blend as each of the “singers” plays the song simultaneously, standing on its own as an individual but at the same time fitting harmoniously as a blend (Van Leeuwen 2012:322-323).

This blend is even more effective at the end of the music video, where we have an image of Will.i.am over a black background where the word “hope” is written in white. Gradually, this word becomes “vote”, first with the letters “v” and “t” being written in red, and eventually with the whole word acquiring the scarlet colour. Although only music accompanies this fragment of the video, the written text triggers a deontic modal sub-world through the use of the imperative (Gavins 2007:99-101). This word appearing next to Will.i.am reinforces the re-conceptualization of this public figure as a political one. The conceptual blend is even more persuasive as it is not a politician but a singer who is asking the audience to perform a political action. Throughout the video a proximal relationship has been established with the audience, included in the referent of the inclusive pronoun “we”, and since both the audience and the singer occupy the deictic centre, the action of voting for Will.i.am/Obama is not presented as a deontic obligation, but as an action which is desired. It is interesting to note how, according to Werth (1999:230), a desire sub-world is a remote conceptual space, which in this case is proximized (Cap 2010) through deictics indexing the deictic centre. The use of colour in this word also has a modalising effect as it appears over a black background, the

latter being one of the most naturalizing colours we can find (Kress& Van Leeuwen 1996:165). Red being used at the end of a 4-minute black-and-white video stresses the modality impact of the command to which it is associated. All of these strategies help in a re-contextualization process which may take place at an even broader level, with politics being embedded within a cultural artifact. This may also imply a change in the effect of the video, which can reach a wider audience: both those who attend political meetings and a broader spectrum of society are required to vote.

Other desire sub-worlds permeate the last part of the song where the chorus is “we want change”. As in the previous chorus, we have a three-word phrase with the pronoun “we”. In both choruses – “yes we can” and “we want change” – we can see a connection between the past referred to in the first part of the song and the present desire – and expected future outcome – which characterises the second part. Likewise, in both cases the same multimodal strategy is repeated: the different public figures successively repeat the triads as if they were a political slogan. Besides, in both cases we can note the use of an ascending melody which seeks to activate people.

The use of the lexical verb “want” triggers a world-shift which points to a new desired reality (Gavins 2007:94-96). The use of the nominal form “change” as the complement of that verb does not only foreground the end of the process – i.e. it focuses on the consequence – but it also stresses its atemporal nature, as it is no longer presented as a complex sequential process, but as a single sequential state (Langacker 2008:117-122). This has a double effect, as it does not only allow for the new desired world to be placed on a proximal relationship with the deictic centre – both axiologically and temporally – but it also allows this desire to acquire a global nuance.

The temporal dimension associated to change can be observed in the final stanza of the song, where we find other nominalized lexical verbs which trigger a desire sub-world (example 4). Besides, the referent of the person craving for change is personalized and exemplified, hence providing examples of different individuals who could be included in the referential scope of the pronoun “we”.

4) We want change.

Now the hopes of the little girl who goes to the crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of LA; **we** will remember that there is something happening in America, [...] that **we** are one people, **we** are one nation, and together, **we** will begin the next great chapter in the American story with three words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea.

Yes, we can. (Will.i.a.m 2008, [author’s emphasis])

If we look at the example above, we can see that some of the participants in the text-world are personalized by the use of definite phrases like “the little girl” in Dillon and “the boy in LA.” This results in an inclusion process which is consequence of the individualization of social actors (Van Leeuwen 1996, 2008:147). The same inclusion process can be observed if we look at the images that accompany the song, as people belonging to different races – particularly white and black – are shown. Likewise, not only English is used when saying “yes, we can”, but the Spanish equivalent of this phrase – “sí, se puede” – is also uttered by actor Adam

Rodríguez. In this way, by relying on the existence of several individuals, a community-related generalization process is observed, as the different individual examples point to the three main communities in the USA: white, Afro-American and Hispanic.

Inclusiveness is textually emphasised by relying on a relational process together with the pronoun “we”, which is described as “not divided”, “one people”, “one nation”, and “together”. Through the relational verb “to be” all these features are attributed to the referent of the pronoun (cf. Halliday 2004). It is interesting to note how all the features are semantically connected and serve to stress unity between all the discourse participants: Obama as the original utterer of the speech, the public figures who re-utter the message, and the audience. As a consequence, the scope of the deictic centre is widened, and a proximal relationship is established between it and the desired future sub-world. Besides, another link is established between the three temporal text-worlds identified in the song – past, present, and future – as they are all located in the same space: America.

It is in the final sentence of the song that the active role of the inclusive we can be observed: The verb “begin” does not only stress the material actions to be carried out both by Obama and all the citizens in the United States, but it also profiles the idea of sequential process (Langacker 2008:112) which is implicit in the time-based organization of the song. As we can see in example 5, this active role is also metaphorically associated to the “we” in the phrases which serve as transition between the first, past-related, part of the song and the second, present-and-future oriented, one.

- 5) Yes we can (to justice and equality)
- Yes, we can (to opportunity and prosperity)
- Yes we can **heal**this nation
- Yes we can **repair**this world
- Yes we can (Will.i.am 2008, [author’s emphasis]).

In this same example, we can observe the use of two metaphors: THE NATION IS A PERSON and THE WORLD IS A MACHINE (cf. Charteris-Black 2005). In both cases the metaphor is triggered by the verb, which indicates a material action that is to be performed by the “we” which encompasses utterer and audience. The personification that we can observe in the first metaphor results in the conceptualization of the American nation as a container within which both utterer and audience are included (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Hart 2008). Another proximizing strategy can be observed in the same extract in the use of the demonstrative “this”, which helps in establishing a proximal relationship between the conceptual space occupied by the actual discourse participants and the one occupied by the text-world participants. As a consequence, both audience and utterer acquire a double role: As discourse participants, they are construed as the social actors who are to perform a positive political action: healing the nation; as text-world participants, they are included within the nation-container. Given that the nation-container is embodied, they are also implicitly presented as members of the ill body who is to receive the healing power. Therefore, in the blended mental space (Langacker 2008:51) that is created through the NATION AS BODY metaphor, a link can be established between the two roles attributed to the referents of the pronoun “we”.

The same strategies mentioned above can be also seen in the WORLD AS MACHINE metaphor. Instead of healing the physical problems of the body, it is the complex system that makes a machine work that is to be repaired (Kövecses 2002:161-162). Both examples presuppose the existence of a broken system – be it a body or a machine. Consequently, the textually-constructed “we” occupies a faulty conceptual space. This problem – which could be solved by the discourse participant “we” – is construed as being proximal to the deictic centre, which serves to stress the importance of carrying out the material actions that could help in solving it. The geographical counterpart of the conceptual space occupied by the two metaphorical blended worlds is increasingly widened through references both to the United States – “this nation – and the world. This functions as a globalizing strategy, which could explain why the song appealed to people from all over the world and why it had such a strong persuasive power.

5. Conclusion

The analysis presented here shows the importance of taking into account multimodality in CDS. A combination of multimodal tools with a close linguistic analysis can not only shed light on how certain discourses construe ideologically-motivated representations of the world, but also on how these representations may help in changing socio-political practices. TWT and DST have been proved to be valid tools for CDS which can be applied to the study of different modes of discourse.

Using approaches based on social and spatial cognition is useful to explain the mediating role that language has in the relationship established between discourse and society. These approaches understand language (or music and images) as the mechanism allowing us to construe and decipher mental spaces which have a double mediating role: they are the path which can help humans reach an understanding of society and the mechanism through which some social actors may influence others.

Spatial cognition provides us with a set of tools that can help us explain how re-contextualization works in Will.i.am’s version of Obama’s speech. By relying on textual cues such as personal pronouns (we), and modal (can) or desire (want) verbs without an object, a text-world with unclear referents is indexed. This textual vagueness allows for different discursive construals which are determined by the different contexts in which the two leading phrases in the song – “yes, we can” and “we want change” – are uttered.

This vagueness allows for at least three different types of re-contextualization. First, we find examples of textual re-contextualization with the “yes, we can” phrase being associated to different times which go from past events in the history of the USA to the desired future. Second, we have examples of discursive re-contextualization; first with Obama taking a phrase that has been previously used in different social contexts, and second with the entertainment industry seizing a political speech and endowing it with further meaning. Finally, we have a re-contextualization of discourse consumption since a political speech – or at least parts of it – reaches an audience to which it had not been originally intended. It can be argued that this has eventually helped in increasing the number of votes for the Democrats in the 2008 election.

These multiple re-contextualizations, together with the indexical vagueness of the two phrases that function as a chorus in the song, are of key importance in explaining the effectiveness of Will.i.am's music video. When someone watches this video for the first time, we might do it hoping to see something which is entertaining. The musical and visual elements of the video originally perform this function. However, the "lyrics" of the song – and their original status as part of a political speech – together with some images of Obama help us identify its political nature, which becomes clearer in the deontic command that appears at the end of the video: vote. This functional re-contextualization is possible and effective because we can easily associate arts – music being one of them – to several functions which are not only ludic, but which may also be didactical (Eco 2007:325).

Textual and visual conceptual blends, and particularly the one resulting in a Will.i.am/Obama-characterised individual, make this video more persuasive, as it is an artist who is asking people to vote, thus removing any possible suspicion that a politician may induce. This results in the video – and its message – acquiring an epistemicity and objectivity feature which would not have been as easily associated to a political speech. Both the blend and the re-contextualization process are effective because a proximal relationship is established with the deictic centre. The vagueness of the personal pronouns and the use of de-contextualized modal indicators make it possible for them to index the deictic centre – which is occupied both by the (multiple) utterer(s) and the audience – and the axiological values they believe in. Besides, they all occupy an increasingly-widening space: this nation (the USA) and the world.

The fact that all the text-worlds identified in Will.i.am's "Yes, we can" are anchored to the same personal, temporal and axiological deictic points, with small temporal shifts, shows the importance of spatial cognition for explaining how mental spaces are construed. It also helps in overcoming what could be originally understood as social distance between discourse participants, particularly given that the three main communities represented in the video (White, Hispanic, and Black) do not *a priori* share any discourse feature. DST proves to be a useful tool for understanding how point of view is created not only linguistically but also through other discursive devices. The role that both music and images have in the analysed video, and their interaction with linguistic choices, shows the importance of acknowledging multimodality and spatial cognition in CDS, as it is through the combination of all of these discursive modes that the cohesive conceptual frame that underlies the mental spaces triggered by this song is constructed.

Analysed Data

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