

## Personal Pronouns in American Presidential Political Discourse

**M. Masqotul Imam Romadlani**

*Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia*

e-mail: imam.romadlani@gmail.com

### **Abstract:**

*This research examines first-person personal pronouns which arise in political speeches given by Obama in his victory as American President in 2008 and 2012. Employing qualitative and quantitative methods, this research explores the occurrences of first personal pronouns to reveal the forms and its discourse function through political speeches. Abstracting from 458 personal pronouns found in Obama's speeches, 272 pronouns are identified as first personal pronouns. The findings of the first personal pronouns employed in Obama speeches illustrated that Obama produced pronoun we and its variants, 183 times, and pronoun I and its variants, 89 times. Obama exploited singular personal pronoun to convey personally his deep appreciation and gratefulness, personal experiences, personal professional experiences, his personal argumentative opinions, hopes, and his commitment as well. The use of inclusive we and its variants indicate Obama's desire to shares responsibility and construct nationalistic spirit, togetherness, equality, publicly assertion about the political situation, and any challenges they probably face in the future. Additionally, by employing exclusive we, Obama asserts his political plans, commitment, political experiences during the election, and serious concern of reconciliation.*

**Keywords:** *personal pronouns, political discourse, speech*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Political speech, a speech conveyed by politicians or political institutions, seems to be common entities in democratic daily life. Through the speeches, politicians are in an attempt to share their viewpoint, position, power, and social status to the hearers.

Giving speeches are a crucial part of the politician's purpose in persuading other people. Besides achieving a persuasive purpose, according to Beard (2000), it is important to be an expert in serving political speeches because the word 'politician' carries such negative connotations. It leads them to apply strategies required to achieve and sustain universal popularity. In other words, the process of transforming ideas, positions, or attitudes, politicians have to fight to mitigate the connotative meaning through a great political discourse production. Politicians should be aware of the innate ability to exploit language, especially for political purposes.

To elaborate the employment of personal pronouns, this research deals with exploring the occurrences of first singular, *I*, dan plural personal pronouns, *we*, with their variants in political speeches given by Obama in his presidential election victory. Elected as the first African-American President in the United States of America, it is strikingly to pay attention to his stands throughout his pronominal choice. The occurrences of personal pronouns in a specific event also imply an explicit meaning beyond the speeches. In a broader sense, this research is also in an attempt to reveal the function of the pronominal choice employed by Obama after the presidential election race against John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012. A first speech after winning a presidential election must be crucial in reconsolidating a massive political polarity that occurred during the presidential campaign and election. That is one of the reasons why the pronoun *I* and *we* seem to be a powerful tool in political discourse, particularly after the national election race.

Current works related to personal pronoun in discourse analysis were conducted by Håkansson (2012), Bramley (2001), Alinezhad & Nemati (2019), Ho (2013), Hasan (2013), Proctor & Su (2011), Ranjha & Islam (2018), Alavidze (2017), and Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018). They highlighted that pronoun *we* is used to affecting togetherness, closeness, collectivity, and solidarity between the speakers and hearers. Proctor & Su (2011), in additional findings, proposed that pronoun *we* could be used to align the speaker with another person as one-group mate in a political contest to avoid individual pointer. Ranjha & Islam (2018) identified pronoun *we* into inclusive and exclusive pronouns by which inclusive *we* indicate to create unity, harmony, sharing responsibility, and invoke the sense of responsibility among their colleagues. On the other hand, exclusive *we* indicates to highlight the positive aspect of the speakers, showing loyalty, and asserting their efforts and sacrifices for the democracy.

By identifying the concept of *self* and *other* in politics, Håkansson (2012) examined the use of personal pronouns specifically in a comparative study of pronominal choices of two American President. Bramley (2001) also examined the use of personal pronouns in politics by investigating the construction of *self* and *other* in political interviews. Besides pointing *self* of the speaker, a singular first personal pronoun *I* and its variant are directly exploited in Bramley's work to illustrate the speaker's authority, indicating the speech to be more subjective, and could be

considered as a way to express sympathy to the audience. Hasan (2013) and Alavidze (2017) also found that pronoun *I* is used to adding personal touch to the speech, to show a speaker's authority, to convey commitment of the speaker's belief and the actions as well. One particular case in Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018), Hillary Clinton dominantly opted to use pronoun *I* to persuasively confirm her quality, confidence and commitment to achieve the vision she asserted.

As how most previous researches constructed, this research aims to answer the fundamental question of what form of first-person personal pronouns and what the discourse function of those first-person personal pronouns found in Obama's first speech after winning the presidential election race in 2008 and 2012. Besides investigating the form of the first-person personal pronoun, this research also examines the most dominant first personal pronoun found in Obama's speeches. To make it more specific, this research deliberately analyzes the first-person personal pronoun only to portray Obama's stand and action beyond the pronominal choice as what Hasan (2013), Alinezhad & Nematı (2019), and Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018) conducted. Related to the previous researches, similarly, this research studies the pronominal choice specifically in political discourse. Different forms of personal pronouns employed in political discourse indicate the different purpose and discourse function on how to perceive the speaker's intention. What makes this research different from some previous researches is that the types of personal pronouns which is considered as the object of research and Obama's speeches as research sources. Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018) particularly just examined the first-person personal pronoun *we* and so did Proctor & Su (2011). Their study seemed to focus on explaining speaker's representation. Other researchers, in a broader sense, such Bramley (2001), Håkansson (2012), and Alavidze (2017), focus on investigating the first and second personal pronoun in political discourse. However, to achieve the related findings, this research examines first-person pronominal choice from two speeches served by the same person in a similar political context, the presidential election.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Wilson (2015), political discourse refers to the study of political language where the focus is on aspects of language structure as it constitutes and displays specific political functions. One of the language features employed in political discourse is that the use of personal pronouns. Traditionally, personal pronouns are used to address references for thing(s) or person(s) dealing with singularity-plurality and male-female referent. Different from the traditional function of personal pronouns use, discourse context carries wider meaning and function involving situation, social, and cultural context. Personal pronouns in such context portray how the speaker or the writer transfers his or her perception to other parties in the discourse.

Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan (1999) made a clear distinction about personal pronouns. They divided personal pronouns into first personal pronouns, second personal pronouns, and third personal pronouns (cf. Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002 and Huddleston & Pullum, 2005). Personal pronouns are function words that possibly refer succinctly to the speaker or writer, the addressee, and the identifiable things or person(s) other than the speaker or the writer and the addressee (Biber *et al.*, 1999). In a wider context and function, personal pronouns usage, especially in political discourse, indicates that there are some political purposes that will be achieved by the speaker. As mentioned in a pioneered work of personal pronoun in discourse analysis, Brown & Gilman (1960) reveal power and solidarity expressed through pronominal choice.

Brown & Gilman (1960) investigate power and solidarity through the use of personal pronouns. Addressing others by using personal pronouns choice indirectly implicate equality or solidarity in social relationships. Politicians should be aware of the innate ability to exploit language, especially for political purposes. Besides showing equality or solidarity, the use of personal pronouns also indicates an authority, social identity, and responsibility exchange. Different use of personal pronouns affects a different impact as well. This research examines the use of first personal pronouns, *I* and *we*, with their variants, possessive determiners, possessive adjective, and their objective forms, in Obama's presidential victory speeches at the first and second period.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Examining the use of first personal pronouns as object material, this research employs explorative investigation in identifying the occurrence of first singular personal pronouns *I* with its variant and pronoun *we* with its variants, possessive and objective forms as well. Obama's first speeches as elected President, both at the first and the second-period transcripts become data sources. There are two speeches illustrated to gain the data. Both data sources were accessed in July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and downloaded from a complete website <https://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2008/barackobamavictoryspeech.htm> and <https://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamasecondpresidentialvictoryspeech.htm>. The first speech was served on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in Illinois, and the second speech was served on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Illinois as well.

Based on the purpose of this investigation, from two data sources obtained before, comprehensive reading and annotating the parts in which personal pronouns exist are needed to provide data analysis. The total number of personal pronouns found are 458 at data sources which 274 first personal pronouns are identified to be proceeded to the result and discussion of this research. Regarding to those numbers of first personal used, Obama tended to use first personal pronoun frequently, more than second and third personal pronouns. To keep narrower and deeper

investigation, this research examined those 274 first personal pronouns with their variants lied down within sentences in two Obama’s American presidential victory speeches. Those personal pronouns were identified based on classification proposed by Biber *et al* (1999) by dividing into first singular personal pronoun and first plural personal pronouns. Every sentence containing, especially, first personal pronoun was coded based on their occurrence in Obama’s speeches (APVS1 for the First American Presidential Victory Speech) and (APVS2 for the Second American Presidential Victory Speech).

The involvement of quantification for the number of data is important to portray the spread of first personal pronouns occurrence in those speeches. After having the quantification of the data, identifying the most dominant first personal pronouns is needed to draw a tendentious vision conveyed by Obama through the use of first personal pronouns. Related to the second goal of this research, the following step is interpreting the reasonable explanation of the personal pronouns use with contextual meaning during the speeches served. It also includes the argumentative interpretation in constructing the finding which first personal pronouns are dominantly used. Furthermore, exploring inclusive and exclusive *we* are necessary to consider whom party addressed by Obama in his victory speeches. Different personal pronouns selected by the speaker construct a different purpose and function of the social relation between the speaker and hearer.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Focusing on examining first personal pronouns, Obama mostly used first personal pronouns *we* with its variants through his speeches after his both first and second victory as American President. Quantitatively, the frequency below reinforces general previous researchers’ findings that first-person personal pronouns *we* and its variant are dominantly found in political speeches even though Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018), Bello (2013), and Saj (2012) interestingly underlined that, however, there is a politician that prefers to use pronoun *I* and its variant to pronoun *we* and its variant to achieve particular purposes. The findings of Obama’s pronominal choices in this research can be clearly seen in this following table:

Table 1. The occurrences of first personal pronouns

| First Personal Pronouns |      | First Speech | Second Speech | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------|--------------|---------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Singular</b>         | I    | 31           | 36            | 67     | 24.6 %     |
|                         | My   | 12           | 2             | 14     | 5.1 %      |
|                         | Me   | 4            | 4             | 8      | 2.9 %      |
| <b>Plural</b>           | We   | 47           | 51            | 98     | 36.1 %     |
|                         | Our  | 26           | 32            | 58     | 21.3 %     |
|                         | Us   | 13           | 13            | 26     | 9.6 %      |
|                         | Ours | -            | 1             | 1      | 0.4 %      |
| <b>Total number</b>     |      | 133          | 139           | 272    | 100 %      |

Based on the table above, it can be seen that Obama frequently produced first plural personal pronouns rather than the singular personal pronoun in his victory speeches in 2008 and 2012. Obama produced 183 first plural personal pronouns with its variants. Pronoun *we* is found 98 times or about 36.1% of all first personal pronouns, *our* 58 times or about 21.3%, *us* 26 times or about 9.6%, and *ours* only once or about 0.4%. Besides first plural personal pronouns, Obama also used first singular personal pronouns in expressing his position and relationship to the audience. The occurrence of pronoun *I* is found 67 times or about 24.5%. Other variants of singular personal pronouns are also found in those two speeches, such *my* about 14 times or 5.1% and pronoun *me* 8 times or about 2.9%.

#### 4.1 The Use of Pronoun *I* and its Variants

Alike two sides of a coin, based on the pronominal choice of *I*, the speaker is in between a positive and negative exchange beyond the subjectivity of *I*. Bramley (2001) presents that pronoun *I* appears as a good and responsible image to emphasize one's personal positive and quality such as principles, moral, power, and authority (cf. Håkansson, 2012; Saj, 2012; Bello, 2013; Alavidze, 2017; and Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee, 2018). Additionally, pronoun *I* is also employed to share speaker's both personal and professional experiences. Lenard (2016) argues that the reason why a politician shares her or his personal experience is to serve the purpose of introducing a new bill. Besides, possessiveness, gratitude, and great appreciation are publicly asserted by Obama through his pronominal choice by using pronoun *I* illustrated in the following examples.

- (1) *To my sister Maya, my sister Alma, all my other brothers and sisters thank you so much for the support that you've given me.* (APVS1)
- (2) *And I wouldn't be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago.* (APVS2)
- (3) *And I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last 16 years, the rock of our family, the love of my life, the nation's next First Lady: Michelle Obama.* (APVS1)

One of three important issues, according to Bello (2013), in producing pronoun *I* is to provide the speaker's humble autobiography. Pronoun *I* and its variants, *my* and *me*, in example (1), (2), and (3) illustrate a personal gratitude from Obama to his family during in his political journey, especially in giving supports to be an American President. Both the first and second presidential speeches victory, Obama constantly involved family addresses to his audiences or hearers. Particularly, the use of subjective pronoun *I* and objective pronoun *me* refers to Obama as a speaker, and pronoun *my* indicates possessiveness. In accordance with Håkansson's findings of speaker's personal life throughout pronoun *I*, Obama specifically expresses his deep praise to Michelle Obama, his wife. Obama kept appreciating and thanking to his family in his political speeches after he won the American presidential election. It could be seen that Obama completely realized how crucial the role of his family

during his career in politics. If previous examples show a personal experience, another usage of pronoun *I* and its variants below demonstrate a personal professional statement related to Obama's political experiences. It still deals with how Obama shows his humbleness even to his competitor in the presidential election.

- (4) *I congratulate him; I congratulate Governor Palin for all that they've achieved, and I look forward to working with them to renew this nation's promise in the months ahead.* (APVS1)
- (5) *I want to thank my friend and partner of the last four years, America's happy warrior -- the best Vice President anybody could ever hope for -- Joe Biden.* (APVS2)
- (6) *And to my campaign manager, David Plouffe the unsung hero of this campaign, who built the best political campaign, I think, in the history of the United States of America.* (APVS1)
- (7) *To my chief strategist David Axelrod who's been a partner with me every step of the way.* (APVS1)
- (8) *I just spoke with Governor Romney, and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign.* (APVS 2)

Obama used subjective pronoun *I* to construct personal positive appreciation to his competitor or out-group in the presidential election both in example (4) and (8). Personal praise to competitor is obviously necessary to mitigate any kinds of potential conflict after the presidential election. As a leader, Obama, of course, desires to keep the unity of American and it should be the first political concern after the national election race. Even though Obama shows the poles between him and his rival by employing pronoun *I* in his speeches, he smartly exploits that strategy to show how he maintains a remarkable relationship with his competitor. Different from previous examples, in example (5), (6), and (7) Obama expressed his gratitude to his partner, Joe Biden, and his mentor, David Plouffe as Obama's campaign manager and David Axelrod as Obama's chief political strategist, to appreciate how their every single struggle to boost Obama to be an American president.

By producing singular personal pronoun, Obama tends to build his positive self-image by showing his respect publicly to others, especially to his competitor and to even citizens who do not vote for him in American presidential election. Furthermore, those three examples are in line with Håkansson's (2012) discussion about *I* that could be exploited to take credit for the others' work. Bello (2013) also cites that the usage of *I* in the speech is clearly to underscore three important issues: speaker's achievements, humble autobiography, and speaker's pledges.

A personal viewpoint demonstrated by speaker as highlighted by Alavidze (2017) and good personality by Bramley (2001) and Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018) is also identified in Obama's pronominal choice. A good personal quality and responsibility constructed by Obama can be seen in example (9) and (10). Obama

showed his modesty to everyone, even those who did not vote for him, as stated below.

- (9) *And to those Americans who whose support I have yet to earn, I may not have won your vote tonight, but I hear your voices.* (APVS1)
- (10) *I need your help. And I will be your President, too.* (APVS1)

In examples (9) and (10), it can be seen how Obama humbly talks to the citizen who did not vote for him that he would accommodate their voices or ideas, even from a different standpoint. Obama also clearly stated that he still needed their participants during his leadership, and by using pronouns *I*, Obama personally showed his commitment as American President. Obama, again, shows the concept of *in-group* and *out-group* as Hasan (2013) or the concept of *self* and *other* as Bramley (2001) and Håkansson (2012) highlighted to build a relationship and unity between him and his opponent. Obama separated himself with McCain and his supporters to enunciate cooperativeness and togetherness for Obama's leadership as elected President. Some other examples below also illustrate the use of pronoun *I* with different purposes. In line with Karapetjana (2011), who argued that most politicians who have been familiar with the communication strategies and communication techniques tend to adopt personal pronouns *I* and *my* for statements regarding loyalty, integrity, commitment, views, and their personal perceptions.

- (11) *I know that political campaigns can sometimes seem small, even silly.* (APVS2)
- (12) *I am hopeful tonight because I have seen this spirit at work in America. And I ask you to sustain that hope.* (APVS2)
- (13) *I believe we can build on the progress we've made, and continue to fight for new jobs, and new opportunity, and new security for the middle class.* (APVS2)

A personal judgment also deals with the use of singular pronoun in example (11) and (13). Obama preferred to use singular pronouns to assert his argumentative opinion relating to political campaigns. That attitude is necessary to strengthen his public image about his personal ability in reading and addressing current political situation. A leader needs to show his or her capacity and capability to increase citizens' confidence. In example (13), besides asserting his personal argumentation, Obama would like to share his belief that he is able to achieve his visions, especially for new jobs, new opportunities, and new security for the middle class. Dealing with futurity, Obama clearly conveyed his hope personally to the audiences to carry out the same spirit and same commitment by using pronoun *I*. Besides describing speaker's beliefs and comments on a personal level as shown in Saj (2012), the most motivating reasons for a politician to use the pronoun *I* in the speech is to be seen as good and responsible, to describe himself or herself in a positive way and highlight personal qualities (Alavidze, 2017).

#### **4.2 The Use of Pronoun *we* and its Variants**

Pronoun *I* commonly stands in unambiguously rather than pronoun *we* as Biber *et al* (1999) differ that plural personal pronoun into inclusive which usually refers to the speaker or writer and addressee and exclusive *we*, to the speaker or writer and some people or people associated with him or her. The existence of first plural personal pronouns is identified more than first singular personal pronouns. Different from singular personal pronouns, this first plural personal pronouns impact the different social relationships between the speaker and the hearers. *We* can be manipulated for political effect and is used to establish a sense of group unity (Alavidze, 2017). That personal pronoun also indicates other concepts in political speech such as togetherness, solidarity, oneness, sharing responsibilities, commitments, and as highlighted by Proctor & Su (2011), Hasan (2013), Ali, Christopher, & Nordin (2017), and Dou (2019). In another context, Biber *et al* (1999) underlined that by choosing the plural pronoun *we* rather than *I*, a single author in writing context avoids drawing attention to himself or herself, and the writing becomes more impersonal. The involvement of other people making a speech more impersonal can be seen through the first plural personal pronoun choice associated with the speaker in the following discussion.

#### **4.3 Inclusive *we***

The use of inclusive *we* is recognized as the most dominant plural personal pronouns in two speeches given by Obama in 2008 and 2012. There are 162 first plural personal pronouns classified as inclusive personal pronouns, which means that Obama involves the audiences in his speeches through the use of the inclusive personal pronoun. The occurrence of the inclusive plural personal pronoun is clearly drawn in the following examples.

- (14) *If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of **our** founders is alive in **our** time; who still questions the power of **our** democracy, tonight is your answer.* (APVS1)
- (15) *It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled Americans who sent a message to the world that **we** have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of Red States and Blue States: **we** are, and always will be, the United States of America!* (APVS1)
- (16) *But despite all **our** differences, most of **us** share certain hopes for America's future. **We** want **our** kids to grow up in a country where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers -- a country that lives up to its legacy as the global leader in technology and discovery and innovation, with all the good jobs and new businesses that follow.* (APVS2)

Illustrating inclusive *we*, the use of plural pronouns above refers to speaker and the hearers created by involving *I* and *you*. The use of pronoun *we* and its variants in

example (14) to (16) produced by Obama to refer to all American citizen. Obama addressed directly the audiences by using subjective, possessive, and objective forms of pronoun *we* to show the involvement of American people. In example (14) and (15), by expressing plural possessive pronoun, Obama recalled their similar historical experiences and addressed their diversity to share a similar nationalistic emotion as Kaewrungruang & Yaoharee (2018) highlighted on the usage of pronoun *we*. Moreover, the emergence of that personal pronoun also portrayed a unity construction beyond speaker's identification with the audiences. The closer speaker's positioning to the audiences, the more solidity, and solidarity the speaker hold.

The concept of togetherness and equality is also signaled by Obama through his pronominal choice of singular plural personal pronoun. Obama insisted on togetherness by addressing the same American founders' dream, which still alive in his and American people time and the power of their democracy. Obama seems to construct a public assertion, opinion, and commitment to the future through his personal judgment by using plural pronouns. Identical spirits are literally regarded by Obama in example (16) by employing pronoun *we* and its variants. From that example, it can be seen that Obama also expressed his belief beyond the diversity to refer to the commitment for hopes and future dreams, particularly for their best regeneration of America.

- (17) *This is **our** chance to answer that call. This is **our** moment. This is **our** time, to put **our** people back to work and open doors of opportunity for **our** kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth, that, out of many, **we** are one; that while **we** breathe, **we** hope. (APVS1)*
- (18) *The belief that while each of **us** will pursue **our** own individual dreams, **we** are an American family, and **we** rise or fall together, as one nation, and as one people. (APVS2)*

Dahnilyah (2017) underlined that pronoun *we* could be utilized to indicate togetherness construction to avoid personal accountability. Constructing sentences by involving a possessive form of first plural personal pronoun seems to be a powerful strategy to share responsibility, as found in example (17) above. To assert the same possessiveness of the future, Obama addressed American citizens inside of his stand by using pronoun *our* to capture oneness. It was clearly drawn that Obama employed the use of a possessive form of *we* to share common sense concepts by uttering *our* chance, *our* moment, *our* people, and *our* kids. Obama asked all American people to contribute to positive acts such as restoring prosperity, promoting the cause of peace, reclaiming the American dream, and reaffirming fundamental truth as they expected.

In some occasions, Obama is in an attempt to construct togetherness in his first speech after the announcement of the presidential election outcome. It indicated that

Obama seriously realized any unexpected conflicts potentially happened after the national election fight. This is related to Fina's (1995) and Bramley's (2001) hypothesis that personal pronouns *we* and *our* is thought of as a lethal weapon for politicians in responding and anticipating both effects and consequences. Example (17) strengthens a proposition of Obama's evaluation so that he exploited pronoun *us*, *our*, and *we* to state a togetherness, or what Hasan (2013) called oneness, no matter to whom American people had voted. Moreover, Obama also raised the same commitment to pursue his and the American dream together even though they had to fall as a nation and one people as well.

#### **4.4 Exclusive *we***

Besides analyzing inclusive *we*, some examples of exclusive *we* are also provided in this personal pronoun investigation even though they are found fewer than inclusive personal pronouns. There are 21 times occurrences of *we* categorized as exclusive *we* and some examples can be seen in the following illustration.

- (19) *We didn't start with much money or many endorsements.* (APVS1)
- (20) *Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington.* (APVS1)
- (21) *And I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last 16 years, the rock of our family, the love of my life, the nation's next First Lady: Michelle Obama.* (APVS1)

The existence of exclusive *we* in the three examples above were clearly identified because Obama involved the first-person plural personal pronouns in referring to him and another person associated with him. Obama did not refer to the audience in his speeches even though he expressed it by using pronoun *we*. The use of the personal pronoun *our* was a communication strategy to build a sense of belonging, pride, and appreciation to his partners. In examples (19) and (20), the use of pronoun *we* and *our* specifically refers to his presidential candidate partner, Joe Biden. By producing exclusive *we*, Obama is in an attempt to share his and Biden's experiences towards the presidential election. On the other hand, by producing possessive plural pronoun in example (21) refers to his wife, Michelle Obama. He conveyed his personal experiential life as a family. All of the referents given by Obama in example (19) to (21) did not refer to the involvement of the audiences, but it came from another person outside associated with him. Exclusive *we* used by politicians in an official position generally refers to parliamentary membership or a party (Ranjha & Islam, 2018). Based on the finding in example (21), it is quite uncommon in a political address, exclusive *we* is employed to refer to speaker's family. It shows that a referential pronominal choice could be appointed depending on the contextual practice of the use of that personal pronoun.

- (22) *We are better off for the service rendered by this brave and selfless leader.*  
(APVS1)

- (23) *In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward.* (APVS2)
- (24) *We may have battled fiercely, but it's only because we love this country deeply, and we care so strongly about its future.* (APVS2)

Exclusive *we* is used to serving a political purpose such as earning trust (Ali, Christopher, & Nordin, 2017). All examples above refer to a similar entity, Obama's opponents in the American presidential election with a different person. By choosing pronoun *we*, Obama bravely includes his rival in the presidential election to share personal judgment. In example (21), a speech served by Obama in his first presidential election victory, the use of first plural personal pronoun referred to John McCain, another American presidential candidate in 2008. Obama produced pronoun *we* to create publicly as similar as possible perception about a leader between Obama and McCain. A resemble referent is found in the example (22) and (23). Those examples provide the use of pronoun *we*, which refers to Governor Romney, an American presidential candidate from Republic in 2012. Obama associated himself with Romney in using pronoun *we* to share their plan and commitment to the United States of America's future. Furthermore, Obama also indicated to the audiences that he and Romney were going to work together in spite of in different ways. That statement is probably crucial to show their good relationship in front of all of their voters after battling for America's leader. Depending on the findings above, it can be noted that exclusive *we* is not always associated with speaker's in-group, but it can also associate with the speaker's out-group, which aims to maintain a solidity of the American citizen.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Contextualized pronominal choice in political discourse can be functioned as political devices to construct any social relation between speaker and hearers. Pronoun *I* and its variant do not only mark as subject, possessive adjective, or object in sentences but they are also exploited to express personal evaluation and speaker's viewpoint based on the context. Obama used first-person singular personal pronouns to personally convey his deep appreciation and gratefulness to his family, to share personal professional experiences, personal argumentative opinions, hopes, his commitment and to appreciate and gratitude towards another presidential candidate, John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012. Surprisingly, the concept of *self* and *others* in political discourse is clearly provided by Obama. He deliberately demonstrated the polarity concept in his political discourse to assert the power of togetherness concept through the differences. Positive self-images such as integrity, democratic, open-minded, and visionary entirely seem to be served by Obama through the use of *I* and its variants. However, the major personal pronouns used by Obama is the first plural personal pronouns. By producing *we* and its variants, Obama desired to have public involvement as a strategy to share responsibility and

to produce such nationalistic spirit, togetherness, equality, the public assertion about the political situation, and any challenges they probably face in the future. By employing exclusive *we*, Obama shared his political plans and commitment with his vice-president, Joe Biden. In some cases, Obama also associated himself with his rival, John McCain and Mitt Romney, to convey publicly what they have communicated after the United States Electoral College, which announced the result of the presidential election. It definitely aimed to calm down the political situation after the election and also confirmed Obama's serious concern about one important event after the general election called reconciliation.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Alavidze, M. (2017). The Use of Pronouns in Political Discourse. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 9(4), 349–356. Retrieved from <http://universitypublications.net/ijas/0904/html/R6ME325.xml>
- Ali, M. K., Christopher, A. A., & Nordin, M. Z. F. B. (2017). Pronouns and Ideology in Newspaper Discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 6(3), 168–179. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.6n.3p.168>
- Alinezhad, H., & Nemati, M. (2019). Divulging Power of Words - Personal Pronouns and Speech Acts. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 7(2), 211–224. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.22190/JTESAP1902211A>
- Beard, A. (2000). *The Language of Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Bello, U. (2013). “If I Could Make It, You Too Can Make It!” Personal Pronouns in Political Discourse: A CDA of President Jonathan’s Presidential Declaration Speech. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(6), 84–96. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v3n6p84>
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bramley, N. R. (2001). *Pronouns of Politics: The Use of Pronouns in the Construction of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Political Interviews* (Thesis: Australian National University). Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/46225/5/01front.pdf>
- Brown, R., & Gilman, A. (1960). The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in Language* (pp. 252–275). Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Dahnilyah, D. (2017). The Implied Power through the Use of Personal Pronouns in Obama’s Speeches: Critical Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, 1(2), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.31258/ijebp.v1n2.p59-71>
- Dou, X. (2019). Modal Operators and Personal Pronouns in Roosevelt’s Inaugural Addresses. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9(8), 984–989.

- <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0908.14>
- Fina, A. D. (1995). Pronominal Choice, Identity, and Solidarity in Political Discourse. *Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study Discourse*, 15(3), 379–410. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1995.15.3.379>
- Greenbaum, S., & Nelson, G. (2002). *An Introduction to English Grammar*. London: Pearson Education.
- Håkansson, J. (2012). *The Use of Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches: A Comparative Study of the Pronominal Choices of Two American Presidents (Lecture notes)*. Linnaeus University, School of Language and Literature, Småland, Sweden. Retrieved from <https://semanticscholar.org/paper/The-use-of-personal-pronouns-in-political-speeches-Håkansson/044a71156a339cdf818817e0b9634ebcf389077>
- Hasan, J. M. (2013). A Linguistic Analysis of in-group and out-group Pronouns in Hosni Mubarak's Speech. *Journal of Basrah Researches*, 38(2), 5–24. Retrieved from <https://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=90135>
- Ho, V. (2013). Strategic Use of Nouns and Pronouns in Public Discourse: The Case of the Fine-tuning of the Medium of Instruction Policy in Hong Kong. *Pragmatics*, 23(1), 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.23.1.03ho>
- Huddleston, R. P. G. (2005). *A Student's Introduction to English grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaewrungruang, K., & Yaoharee, O. (2018). The Use of Personal Pronoun in Political Discourse: A Case Study of the Final 2016 United States Presidential Election Debate. *Reflections*, 25(1), 85–96. Retrieved from <http://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/reflections/article/view/136268/101678>
- Karapetjana, I. (2011). Pronominal Choice in Political Interviews. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 1(1), 36–45. Retrieved from <https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/1157>
- Lenard, D. B. (2016). Gender Differences in the Personal Pronouns Usage on the Corpus of Congressional Speeches. *Journal of Research Design and Statistics in Linguistics and Communication Science*, 3(2), 161–188. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jrds.30111>
- Proctor, K., & Su, L. I. (2011). The 1st Person Plural in Political Discourse - American Politicians in Interviews and in a Debate. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(13), 3251–3266. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.06.010>
- Ranjha, M. I., & Islam, M. (2018). Association vs Disassociation: An Analysis of Inclusive and Exclusive Plural Personal Pronouns in the Pakistani Parliamentary Speeches. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 40(2), 195–205. Retrieved from [https://researchgate.net/publication/331589393\\_Association\\_vs\\_disassociation\\_an\\_analysis\\_of\\_inclusive\\_and\\_exclusive\\_plural\\_pp\\_in\\_the\\_PPS\\_196/link/5c822f06299bf1268d44c0c4](https://researchgate.net/publication/331589393_Association_vs_disassociation_an_analysis_of_inclusive_and_exclusive_plural_pp_in_the_PPS_196/link/5c822f06299bf1268d44c0c4)
- Saj, H. E. (2012). Discourse Analysis: Personal Pronouns in Oprah Winfrey Hosting

- Queen Rania of Jordan. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2(6), 529–532. <https://doi.org/10.7763/ijssh.2012.v2.163>
- Wilson, J. (2015). Political Discourse. In D. Tannen, D., Hamilton, H. E., & Schiffrin (Ed.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis Volume 1* (pp. 775–794). West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Sources:

<https://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2008/barackobamavictoryspeech.htm>

<https://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamasecondpresidentialvictoryspeech.htm>