An investigation of American opposing political cultures in the speeches of Barack Obama and John McCain

This paper investigates American political discourse in line with Lakoff’s (1996) interpretation of American political reality. According to Lakoff, Republican and Democratic political thought is guided by two opposing value systems. Against this background, the current study examines elements of McCain’s and Obama’s speeches during their presidential election campaign in 2008. The analysis explores how highly frequent lexical items characterizing the rhetoric of the Republican and the Democratic candidates can be indicative of distinctive ideologies that affirm the existence of two contending political cultures. As such, the paper proposes an investigation of political discourse across two different political cultures in the context of the US.