

The Language of Diplomacy in Inaugural Speeches: Roberta Metsola's Speech as the New President of the EU Parliament

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Abstract

The study of inaugural speeches is fairly consolidated, especially if we refer to the analysis of the speeches of American presidents. Much less is available on the subject when we delve into lesser-known presidential figures, such as the presidents of European institutions. The analysis of the speeches of American presidents through the methodology of discourse analysis has helped to reveal their political intentions, their way of persuading listeners, building trust and empathy with the public, but also reaffirming their policies and measures relating to the economy, foreign affairs and social issues.

In this paper I will focus on the new President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, elected on January 18, 2022. We are therefore in a completely different context, since the two forms of presidency are different in terms of roles, tasks and powers granted. Metsola's inaugural speech will be analysed from a Discourse Analysis perspective, with a focus on lexical choice, personal pronouns and rhetorical figures to show how she plans to construct the image of the new presidency of the EU parliament and her intended objectives. The paper analyses how those who work in institutions such as the EU try to convey political messages, maintain or change the point of view of their public on certain issues, and understand whether they tend to conform to the consolidated structural and linguistic protocols that characterize their role or whether they (may) lapse into discursive practices that sometimes seem trite and worn-out.

Keywords: inaugural speeches, diplomacy, discourse analysis, European parliament, president

1. Introduction

In order to carry out a linguistic analysis of Roberta Metsola's inaugural speech at the European Parliament it is necessary to provide some preliminary information regarding the context in which the speech takes place. All this also for the purpose of clarifying the role played by the president of the European Parliament with respect to that—for instance—of an American president, whose inaugural speeches have always been the locus for scholars due to the political relevance of the latter, who hold power and are elected to govern a country. In the case of the president of the European Union Parliament, the powers are decidedly weaker, and for this very reason, I think it is useful to recall the functioning of the European parliamentary body.

1.1 *The European Parliament*

The European Parliament is one of the institutions that represents the peoples of the European Union, and it is the only European institution to be directly elected by the citizens of the EU. It exerts the legislative function of the Union together with the Council of the EU and, in some cases established by the Treaties, has the power of legislative initiative, which generally belongs to the European Commission. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament had been made up of 750 deputies plus the president until Brexit, when the United Kingdom left the EU on 31 January 2020, and the number of seats was reduced to 705 including the president.

It is the first institution of the EU, and among its tasks, shares the legislative function with the Council, participates in the procedure for approving the EU budget and elects the President of the Commission. It has its headquarters in Strasbourg. The Plenary sessions take place there, while committee meetings are held in Brussels. Luxembourg is the seat of the General Secretariat of the European Parliament. The current President of the European Parliament is Roberta Metsola, elected on 18 January 2022, who succeeded David Sassoli, after his premature death due to illness.

1.2 David Maria Sassoli (Note 1)

Sassoli was a journalist and then a centre-left Italian politician whose entry into politics coincided with the European Parliament elections on 6 and 7 June 2009. Thanks to his brilliant result at the elections, he became group leader of the Democratic Party in the European Parliament. In 2014 he ran again in the European elections, where he won a seat, and on 1 July 2014 he was elected Vice-President of the European Parliament, a position that he held on to also in January 2017 when he was reappointed.

When he ran in the European elections in 2019 he was finally elected President of the European Parliament, and during his inauguration speech, he underlined the importance of recovering and relaunching the constituent spirit of the Union. He referred to the “European project as one of peace and democracy. He said Europe and citizens showed that they still believed in the project and talked about being proud of European diversity” (Note 2).

On the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe, he declared that he hoped for a Community budget that would invest in scientific research, avoiding “cuts on the lives of Europeans”. He was in favour of the creation of a purchasing centre managed at European level, to which Member States could join on a voluntary basis to negotiate improved conditions for the shared procurement of capital goods and medical consumables. At the same time, he reiterated that the issue of health, although not one of the competences entrusted to the Union by the founders, could become of greater relevance if Member States expressed a favourable political position on it.

1.3 Roberta Metsola (Note 3)

Sassoli’s successor is a Maltese politician. From 18 January 2022 she has become the new President of the European Parliament. Her background was as a lawyer specializing in European law and politics. She worked as Malta’s legal and judicial cooperation officer within the Malta Permanent Representation at the European Union.

She had been active in politics from an early age as a member of the youth group of the Nationalist Party, and of the European Democrat Students, a youth movement of the European People’s Party, of which she was also general secretary.

She was a candidate in the 2004 and 2009 European elections, but in both cases, she was not elected. In 2013, however, she took over from Simon Busuttil, who resigned after being elected to the Maltese Parliament. In the European elections of 2014 and 2019 she was re-elected, in both cases being the most voted candidate in her party. In November 2020 she was first elected Deputy Vice-President of the European Parliament, and on 11 January 2022 she took over from David Sassoli as *interim* President of the European Parliament after Sassoli’s death. A week later, on January 18, she was elected President of the European Parliament with 458 votes, making her the youngest leader of the European Parliament ever. Her inaugural speech is the theme of analysis of this paper, which aims to show how she intends to construct the image of the new presidency of the EU parliament and how she can convey the message. The analysis will focus on some linguistic aspects such as lexical choice, personal pronouns and rhetorical figures.

2. Methods

2.1 Inaugural Speeches as a Part of Diplomatic Discourse

Roberta Metsola’s speech to the European Parliament is structured as an inaugural speech in which the new President introduces herself to parliament, the media and citizens, briefly illustrating the points on which she intends to focus in the course of her office. This type of speech represents a genre—that of inaugural speeches—which belongs to the broader spheres of political and, in particular, diplomatic discourse, and shares with it several characteristics. As Trosborg (2000, p. 137) affirms, in an inaugural speech of a president, the speaker “is not the individual, not the situation, but the institution”. However, she also maintains that “although inaugural addresses share common features characteristic of the symbolic act of inauguration, specific features contributed by the particular president [...] may be found as well (ibid.). Though she refers to the American context, we may extend the idea to any new president taking office. The president of the European Parliament is a political figure, strongly based on diplomatic skills, since s/he represents the institution both within the EU and internationally. Moreover, Pramadya claims that “inaugural addresses are one of the most powerful tools for influencing public opinion. Thus, by influencing (or strengthening) public opinion, one can influence (or strengthen) the current power structure” (2021, p. 1).

As an essentially political activity, diplomacy fulfils its primary role in the management of international relations through negotiation—a complex, delicate and refined practice—through which relations between countries are played out. Among the main tools used by diplomats, the most relevant one is language, or rather communication, used in a way to modify the interests and even the identity of the actors involved in the process (Pigman, 2011, p. 3). It is in fact not only a means of communicating ideas, but “the very essence of the diplomatic vocation” (Nick,

2000, p. 39).

A considerable part of the functions performed by diplomats consist in strictly adhering to formal and linguistic protocols, so much so that Nicolson defined diplomatic discourse as “paper currency of conventionalized phrases in place of the hard coins of ordinary human converse” (Nicolson, pp. 122, 3). Indeed, its salient features are a mitigated tone leaning towards understatement in which the weight of the words pronounced is so significant that they cannot compare to the same words used in daily conversation.

Besides having stringent lexical features, diplomatic discourse has fixed textual principles it must comply with, divided into rather rigid formulas of greetings, thanks and respect. Two other particularly relevant aspects are the use of rhetorical figures and ambiguity. If in the first case the strong presence of tropes such as the metaphor, oxymoron and metonym may not be surprising, more intriguing is the use of ambiguity, meant as language which is far from semantic precision in order “to allay anxieties on either sides or to secure a margin for subsequent interpretation” (Scott, 2001, p. 153). The need for ambiguity serves the purpose of avoiding a confrontation conflict, integrating possible divergences in viewpoints in order for each party to hear what they need, but also “mediating the estrangement between interlocutors, modulating dissonance, and facilitating to reach a basic consensus” (Cornago, 2013, p. 88). Let’s bear in mind that the speech is delivered in English, which is a lingua franca in the context of the EU Parliament therefore as Pigman observes, “language by its nature contains ambiguity, even when all the speakers are using the same tongue” (op. cit., p. 119), and we may infer that it is more so when communication takes place among non-native speakers.

2.2 Methodology of Research

In this article I will refer to Discourse Analysis (DA) as a methodological research tool. DA allows us to explore language on the basis of the context in which the communication act takes place and in particular it considers the use of language in real life contexts. The founder of DA was Michel Foucault (1969), who regarded the world we live in as organised by knowledge and was convinced that some people and groups produce ideas about the world that become accepted truths, axioms that end up seeming normal. So, an established starting point is that the speaker or writer refers to a set of notions that is normally accepted within a society, while affecting in turn the society by shaping or reinforcing those notions. Since what society believes to be true changes over time as its members exchange ideas and opinions, it becomes important to understand the mechanisms by which certain people or groups of people manage to shape knowledge. In the development of DA through time, a number of scholars have focused on the fact that some people or groups are in a position of power as opposed to other people or groups who may be excluded from it.

To them discourse theory has to do with issues of power, and it often has to do with issues of institutional hierarchies. This view is particularly relevant in what came to be known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) thanks to their main representatives (van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2004). Here DA will be used for a qualitative analysis based on the text since I believe that it represents a useful connection between communication, politics and the world around us. I start from the fact that language is a powerful means of communication to persuade interlocutors and ensure their cooperation. It tends to modify people’s opinions and ideas as well as behaviours since it stimulates people to adopt new attitudes and lead them to action.

Presidential inaugural speeches, even in the case of the one taken into consideration, are important political speeches. Besides being of great significance for the new president, they are a special moment because the speaker is in front of an entire nation/union (in this case the EU and the citizens of 27 European member states) to express the fundamental policies and principles for the development of the country/union during the period of presidency. Although we are not dealing with an American president—who is the head of state and head of the government—the president of the EU parliament is an important representative at a European level.

Presidents try to convince citizens to increase their trust in the institution, and try to seek the greatest possible support from them. In order to achieve this task, they carefully weigh words in their speeches, and refine them by resorting to precise linguistic strategies. Here I will focus on three elements that seemed to me more relevant to the understanding of Metsola’s inaugural speech:

- 1) lexis: with a reference to the use of some verbs
- 2) rhetorical figures: with a focus on metaphor as a way to conceptualise a particular idea in terms of another and allowing the recipient to understand abstract concepts more easily.
- 3) clusivity, with the analysis of *we* in particular, as a plural first person pronoun through which discourses of inclusivity and exclusivity are constructed.

To do that I did not use any software program, and I simply analysed the speech manually, looking for words and

expressions that might be relevant to the linguistic aspects that suited my purpose. This choice was due to the fact that the analysis was limited to a single speech, rather short and I deemed not necessary to use those tools that are essential when the corpora examined are wider. These elements will allow the reader to understand how Ms Metsola linguistically conveys her themes to the public and whether she adheres to the typical features of diplomatic discourse, often based on rigid conventions and norms.

2.3 Structure of the Speech

Roberta Metsola opens the inaugural address in Maltese. Just a few words to thank the Members of Parliament for having placed their trust in her by choosing her for this role, of which she feels humbly honoured. She also thanks the European citizens and she immediately honours David Maria Sassoli in Italian. She supersedes him and through a tricolon gives impact to her words, defining him as a fighter for Europe, for us and for that Parliament. From here on, the new president's speech will be in English, interspersed with two short contributions in French. The first will be a reference to President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (Note 4) in which in his opening speech at the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002 he argued that anyone who could hear the strong voice of Europe would feel better on the planet. Later, Metsola will briefly return to French, recalling that this year marks the seventieth anniversary of the presence of the parliament in Strasbourg (Note 5). The rest of the speech, therefore almost all of it, is in English.

Metsola begins by paying a tribute to her predecessor David Sassoli saying that she will honour him by supporting Europe through the values that unite them, and listing seven words/expressions of positive connotation with a high rhetorical value: *democracy, dignity, justice, solidarity, equality, rule of law and fundamental rights*. Despite wanting to honour her former colleague, her subsequent statement seems to undervalue his contribution, as the sentence *I want people to recapture a sense of belief and enthusiasm for our [European] project* may suggest that Sassoli was not able to do so, even though he did not represent the only European institution, but one of the three main ones.

The second paragraph already includes a promise to all Europeans, and through the use of *will* she implies a certainty, which in this case will see Europeans looking to the institution for leadership and direction, while aware that there will be no shortage of detractors who will continue to see the limits of European values and principles. The anti-European narrative must be strongly rejected in Metsola's words though it seems that what is stated here is in clear dissonance with the opening sentence in which she promised the recovery of the sense of belief and enthusiasm.

The new President maintains that the causes of this problem must be sought in the disinformation and wrong information that have grown during the pandemic, giving rise to a whole series of -isms with strong negative connotations such as *cynicism [...], nationalism, authoritarianism, protectionism, isolationism*. While not specifying those responsible for wrong information (the press, politics, social networks, others) and not offering any solutions, Metsola seems to find refuge in ambiguous language, or rather clichés and trite expressions as full of rhetoric as empty of true meaning:

[Europe] is about all of us standing up for one another, bringing our people closer together. It is about all of us defending those principles of our founding mothers and fathers that led us from the ashes of war and holocaust to peace, to hope, to prosperity.

And it is at this point that the first of several issues quickly discussed in the inaugural speech is addressed: human rights. Metsola mentions the categories—rather broad and vague—of people who are suffering the most and for whom the Parliament matters: judges, health workers, women, the vulnerable, the oppressed and the offended. Those fleeing natural disasters or those who have suffered grief in terrorist attacks, those seeking protection, farmers, NGOs and entrepreneurs. But also LGBT communities, those who are discriminated against due to religion, skin, and gender. Metsola is convinced that the *House matters* because when people *look to us to defend our values they will find an ally*.

The second part addresses differences in Europe. She says she stands between the first generation to benefit from the Erasmus programme, and the last generation who saw Walesa (Note 6) and Havel (Note 7) as symbols of the fall of communism in Europe. These are intertextual elements that enable her to avoid the word 'communism' and to focus on the equality of opportunity, which is different from making each one equal to the other. Differences are what makes Europe strong and unique, though she is aware that much must be done to bring Europe to the cities and villages of the continent (where perhaps a sense of the union is less felt). She then involves the youth in the decision-making process who, through the Conference on the Future of Europe, will be able to express their ideas on the subject.

The next theme is that of climate change. Metsola alludes to trust in science, and maintains that if there is faith in science, as the European Parliament has, the question is no longer if climate change will happen, but when it will happen, thus emphasising the urgency of countermeasures and arguing that Europe has the right answer in the EGD (Note 8) and holds the promise to be the first decarbonised continent. Metsola tries to pose the climate issue as an opportunity and not as a problem, while listing rather vague advantages, such as *to take the lead, to re-invent itself, to ensure growth, sustainability and prosperity, while reducing emissions*. The sense of urgency is conveyed through the expression *tomorrow is too late*.

The shift from the environment to the economy is quick. European companies—Metsola argues—need legal certainty, easy access to finance and a new spirit and context in Europe. Less bureaucracy and more opportunities for businesses to regain a competitive advantage. Speaking of PNRR (Note 9) as an investment to overcome the pandemic, she thinks that the green transition and digital transformation will create opportunities and Europe will lead on this front. We have reasons to be proud of the open economies of which Europe is a model, which is also at risk of a creeping, more backward view, the raising of barriers and new borders, the abandonment of the Schengen area.

The second to last point addressed by the new president is that of foreign policy and dictatorship. She is convinced that the world has fallen behind the previous generation in terms of relationships. She regards the attacks on Ukraine as unacceptable and the situation in Belarus as dangerous and she believes that collective security is a joint challenge. The credibility of Europe and its global influence is based on unquestionable principles, which autocrats and despots see as a threat. The quote from political scientist Tarek Osman very positively reinforces the European way of life as the best ever known to mankind. In the antithesis Europe has a legacy of war, but also of healing Metsola believes that this experience can be useful for the resolution of conflicts, between everyone who knows the island of Cyprus, the last part of Europe still divided, and the Balkan area. Westerners.

3. Analysis of the Speech

The text is very short, about 1,350 words (English part only) for an overall duration of 15 minutes. The President uses 4 languages, starting in Maltese, switching to Italian, and using some French, though the speech is essentially all in English. Yet the use of these languages has primarily a symbolic meaning because she is from Malta, she succeeds an Italian president, the EU Parliament is in France and English is one of the working languages of the EU parliament.

The first linguistic element I would like to analyse is vocabulary. In particular, starting from lexical occurrences, it is evident that the word *Europe* is the most frequent if we count lexical words only. It occurs 23 times and this is quite normal, given the role and context in which it is spoken. *European* also occurs 9 times, either as an adjective or a noun. As an adjective it precedes words such as *parliament, union, institution, commission*.

Another feature which I would like to outline is the high presence of ‘hooray words’, that is the positive socially connoted words that will easily find the approval of the public. They refer to “ideals that everyone embraces, whatever they believe these ideals consist in” (White, 2003, p. 61) and the speech is scattered with *rights* (6 occurrences), *values* (4), *equality* (4), *democracy* (3), *law* (3), *hope* (3), *principles* (3) and *prosperity* (3). As Partington maintains (2018, p. 29) “they have little core meaning when subjected to close scrutiny”.

Another lexical element which seems worth-describing are verbs, to which the paragraph below is devoted.

3.1 Verbs

From the point of view of verbs, attention falls on the modal *must*, which is repeated 12 times in the course of the text, on *know* (7 occurrences) and also on the auxiliary *will* (8 occurrences).

Must is relevant because it reveals how modality may be conveyed in discourse. Partington (2018, p. 33) defines modality as grammatical systems that speakers use to show their degree of commitment to their belief that something happens or not, that someone does something or not. Since *must* indicates an obligation, it may give clues of the degree of necessity or moral responsibility felt by the speaker towards what s/he is expressing. *Must* occurs in the following contexts:

- We **must** fight back against the anti-EU narrative
- We **must** burst through the Strasbourg and Brussels bubble to bring Europe
- We **must** now ensure that the Conference on the Future of Europe has the support it needs [...] Especially, we **must** listen to our youth on this year dedicated to them.
- We **must** impress on the rest of the world that the fight against climate change is a common destiny.

- And we **must** continue to show that you cannot decouple the environment and the economy.
- [Our European way of open economies and open societies] is a model that **must** be given support to withstand the pressure it comes under.
- We **must** also reverse the lost momentum when it comes to our relationship with the Western Balkans.
- I say his struggle [Olivier Dubois] for freedom **must** become our struggle.
- Ours **must** be a Parliament that empowers.
- [I know that having the first female President of this House since 1999 matters inside and outside these rooms.] But it **must** go further.
- Our Institution's commitment to having more diversity, gender equality, guaranteeing women's rights - all our rights - **must** be reaffirmed.

As we said, modality expresses how the speaker sees and judges the world and *must* owns what is called deontic modality. Therefore, it is not only meant as necessary or possible according to rules or norms of morality, but also for what stems from practical reasoning (Charlow & Chrisman, 2016). In deontic modality there may be an attempt to alter or influence other people's behaviour or ideas and it is somehow linked to the illocutionary intent of commands and instructions.

In most of the examples aforementioned, necessity and obligation are a duty felt as such by the speaker so it is meant to express subjectivity. In the text *must* does not seem to accompany verbs which connote concrete and effective actions, rather it tends to be followed by more abstract circumstances, such as advice, recommendations or auspices like in *Ours must be a Parliament that empowers* or *We must impress on the rest of the world that the fight against climate change is a common destiny*.

In the above examples as in *we must fight back against the anti-EU narrative* the idea conveyed by the speaker is rather vague, void from a semantic point of view and seems not to have a specific meaning, but more truly a lack of concreteness which seems to exist in all the expressions using *must*, certainly linked to moral or ethical duties but far from expressing concrete measures.

Another interesting observation is given by *know*, a factive verb that "trigger[s] the presupposition that the events or states conveyed by their sentential complements are true" (Shetreet et al., 2019, p. 96).

- ... because we **know** that is what makes us stronger. What makes us unique. What makes us European.
- We **know** that if people are to look to Europe with confidence, we must burst through the Strasbourg and Brussels bubble.
- I **know** that having the first female President of this House since 1999 matters inside and outside these rooms.
- I **know** I stand on the shoulders of giants.

As a matter of fact in the above sentences every stance is taken for granted; it is assumed by the introduction of the *I/we know* structure. Though, the verb is sometimes used in the imperative mood and it acquires the idea of an order, a threat, or more likely a warning:

- **know** that this House stands against you.
- **know** that this House will never accept it.
- **know** that Dictators will never divide us.

It is also interesting to note the use of *will*, an auxiliary that in English serves to form the future tense. It may indicate futurity, but also volition and prediction, so it indicates the intentions of the speaker—and of the institution of reference—on what will be done on specific issues, such as measures and policies to be adopted towards something. It occurs 11 times and besides expressing futurity it may also convey modality, e.g., volition, prediction and obligation. In the example below it conveys both futurity and volition:

- I **will** honour David Sassoli

In the following statements *will* refers mainly to making predictions and drawing conclusions. Sometimes they are based on evidence, in other cases they are merely aleatory:

- people across Europe **will** look to our institution for leadership and direction
- while others **will** continue to test the limits of our democratic values

- This House matters—and when people look to us to defend our values they **will** find an ally
- They need less bureaucracy and more chances to take the risks that **will** see Europe regain its competitive edge.
- The Recovery and Resilience Fund **will** help our investment to relaunch after the pandemic.

In the following examples *will* is used as to express deontic modality, so a sense of necessity or obligation:

- We need to be in the forefront of these changes and steer it. And we **will**.
- know that this House **will** never accept it.
- this Parliament **will** not weaken solidarity among members –
- know that Dictators **will** never divide us.
- It **will** not be another two decades until the next woman is standing here.
- know that this House **will** never accept it.

Similarly to *must*, *will* is also used to express serious promises, though somewhat vague, and is almost in no way linked to concrete and measurable actions. This may be in line with a common political view that the European Parliament has no actual legislative powers, but only consultative ones (Note 10).

3.2 Rhetorical Figures

Even from a rhetorical and stylistic point of view, Metsola's speech is characterized by the typical aspects that one would expect to find in the genre of inaugural speeches, typically full of emphasis and grandiloquence, maybe the outcome of the enthusiasm the speaker has for the new responsibility. Metaphor is one of the most frequent tropes in diplomatic discourse, as it is in everyday life. Through images of great visual effect, the author makes some points of view unique and can also express his/her evaluation on what s/he is talking about. The first metaphor worth analysing relates to the Strasbourg and Brussels bubble that Metsola wants to burst through. European institutions are often seen as distant from the citizens and Eurocrats themselves consciously use this metaphor to indicate that institutions should be brought closer to the people. The expression finds its origin in the broader Eurobubble form. Bajuk Sencar maintains that,

The EU bubble can be understood as mapped onto part of Brussel's urban landscape. The majority of the EU institutions are situated in what is considered the EU quarter, where Eurocrats spend their long working days and a significant deal of their leisure time. In addition, the EU bubble can be understood as a physical manifestation of a social group whose profession operates as a social distinction. Eurocrats are recognized as a social group by the remaining residents of Brussels, a group of persons distinguished from other residents by, among other things, their high salary (Bajuk Sencar, 2018, p. 128).

Semantically, the word bubble may refer to "anything that seems to be solid but is not; a delusion or false hope" (Note 11) but also to "an inflated speculation, esp. if fraudulent" (Note 12). It also describes "an area that can be defended, protected, patrolled, etc." (Note 13). If these elements are put together, it is clear that in the collective imagination, the EU and its institutions have a negative connotation if we apply the aforementioned meanings of bubble. Of course, Metsola's aim is to put an end to this phenomenon and for this reason she uses the verb *burst through*.

Another metaphor widely used in the concluding part of the speech is *stand on the shoulders of giants*. The complete expression in English is *dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants* which means resorting to the use of the understanding gained by the greatest thinkers who preceded us to create intellectual progress. Doing so she can soften the juxtaposition of her achievement to the women who were presidents of the European parliament before her. Metsola refers to Simone Veil, detained in Auschwitz and first female president of the European Parliament and Nicole Fontaine, strenuous supporter of Europeanism, and second woman to be president of the parliament. Then, she extends her tribute to all the nameless women who have suffered, notably Ashleing Murphy and Paulina Dembska (alleged victims of femicide). She deliberately omits the surnames to give a sense of familiarity with the victims and to point out that they are part of the community in which we all live.

The concept of standing on the shoulders of giants is definitely frequent in the final 143 words of the speech, given that from the first occurrence of the word *shoulder* it is repeated another 5 times for a total amount of 4% of the final excerpt. This gives great importance to the figure of women in the Metsolian narrative, both in terms of rank for the roles they deserve to play in society and to raise awareness of the injustices and violence that women suffer and which are no longer tolerable.

3.3 Pronouns

The use of pronouns has a fundamental role in the choice the speaker makes with respect to the inclusion or exclusion of the recipient. Naturally, in an inaugural speech by the president of the European parliament to European colleagues and citizens, one could only expect to hear a wide use of inclusive pronouns, aimed at establishing empathy and solidarity with the public and feeling part of the reference community. Based on the research carried out by Molek-Kozakowska (2011) on territorialization in political discourse, pronouns are linguistic means that contribute to inclusion and exclusion. In fact, clusivity focuses on inclusive and exclusive *we*. The former embraces the recipient, so that *we* means ‘you and I and possibly others’, whereas the latter, exclusive *we* specifically ignores the recipient in which it means ‘he/she/they and I, but not you’. In the text there is a massive use of the first-person plural pronouns *we* and *us*, as well as the possessive adjective *our*. Metsola uses them respectively 23, 11 and 32 times. *We* is mainly used as a way to include all the actors involved, the members of the EU Parliament and the citizens, with a view to sharing both a sense of community as well as responsibility. As Pearce states “a text which incorporates inclusive *we* into its rhetorical strategy might be seeking to construct a set of shared interests and frames of reference” (2012, p. 87).

4. Results

The linguistic analysis of President Metsola’s inaugural speech cannot be considered exhaustive with regard to her communication modalities in a broad sense, but it does reveal some salient features in relation to two aspects, one more personal and the other more universal, that are:

- 1) the issues that are dear to Ms Metsola and how she conveys them linguistically to the public
- 2) the traits of diplomatic discourse—in particular the genre of inaugural speeches—that follows a rather rigid set of rules from which it is difficult to diverge.

With regard to the first point, it is natural that Europe should be at the centre of her speech given the role she is going to perform. Her words show that the EU still has difficulty in being perceived as close to the citizens but she worries about reassuring the audience that detractors and opponents to the European project will be rejected. Metsola focuses on giving a strongly inclusive message, in which she expresses Europe’s solidarity and closeness to all those who suffer and whose rights are not respected, including women, but also the LGBT community, immigrants, the oppressed, etc. The tone is firm and decisive but remains quite tied to the constraints of an inaugural (diplomatic) speech, where it is easier to give an overview of the *status quo* than to give citizens precise and credible solutions.

As regards the traits of diplomatic discourse, Metsola does not betray the typical stylistic features that belong to it and the genre which is represented here—the inaugural speech—so that it is permeated by a certain vagueness and by the use of words and expressions with a strong positive connotation that aim to hold the audience in enthrallment to some extent and are a part of the traditional rhetoric of the role held.

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Notes

Note 1. 9th parliamentary term | David Maria SASSOLI | MEPs | European Parliament (europa.eu)

Note 2. Retrieved from <https://www.euronews.com/2019/07/03/who-is-newly-elected-european-parliament-president-david-maria-sassoli>

Note 3. [Home](#) | [Roberta METSOLA](#) | [Deputati](#) | [Parlamento Europeo \(europa.eu\)](#)

Note 4. French president who was deeply involved in the process of European Integration, who presided over the Convention on the Future of Europe which took place in December 2001.

Note 5. It was first established in 1952 as Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community

Note 6. Lech Wałęsa, Polish president and earlier leader of the Solidarity movement who helped to end the communist rule in Poland.

Note 7. Vaclav Havel, the last president of Czechoslovakia and first president of the Czech Republic, intellectual and dissident who fought the communist regime in his country.

Note 8. The European Green Deal is a set of proposals through which the EU should decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030.

Note 9. The **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** (*Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza*) is part of the **Next Generation EU** (NGEU) investment programme, that the European Union negotiated in response to the pandemic crisis.

Note 10. [Legislative powers \(europa.eu\)](#)

Note 11. [bubble - WordReference.com Dictionary of English](#)

Note 12. Ibid.

Note 13. Ibid.

Appendix A

Roberta Metsola's first speech as EU President

(Maltese) *Membri tal-Parlament Ewropew, Kollegi, Ewropej, B'umilta' inhossni onorata bir-responsabbilta' li qed tafdawni biha. Inwieghed li se nahdem bl-energija kollha tiegħi f'isem dan il-Parlament u għall-gid taċ-ċittadini Ewropej.*

I will honour David Sassoli as President by always, standing up for Europe. For our common values of democracy, dignity, justice, solidarity, equality, rule of law and fundamental rights. For the politics of hope and the promise of the European Union. I want people to recapture a sense of belief and enthusiasm for our project. A belief to make our shared space safer, fairer, more just and more equal.

Dear Europeans, In the next years, people across Europe will look to our institution for leadership and direction, while others will continue to test the limits of our democratic values and European principles. We must fight back against the anti-EU narrative that takes hold so easily and so quickly.

Disinformation and misinformation, further amplified during the pandemic, fuels easy cynicism and cheap solutions of nationalism, authoritarianism, protectionism, isolationism. These are false illusions offering no solutions. Europe is about the opposite. It is about all of us standing up for one another, bringing our people closer together. It is about all of us defending those principles of our founding mothers and fathers that led us from the ashes of war and holocaust to peace, to hope, to prosperity.

Honourable Members, Our House matters. It matters to our judges under attack, to health care frontliners under pressure; to every woman in our Union still fighting for her rights; to the vulnerable; to the oppressed and the abused.

It matters to those forced to flee natural disasters; to the families of those killed in terror attacks; to our armed forces and law enforcement serving under difficult conditions; to those seeking protection; to our farmers, NGOs and entrepreneurs;

It matters; to our LGBTIQ communities; to those still discriminated against because of their religion, skin colour or gender identity; to all those who believe in the promise of Europe.

This House matters - and when people look to us to defend our values they will find an ally.

Dear Colleagues, My generation sees no old and no new Europe. We are the first of the Erasmus generation, the last of the Wałęsa, and Havel generation. We understand that equality of opportunity is different from making everyone the same.

We celebrate differences in Europe - because we know that is what makes us stronger. What makes us unique. What makes us European. We know that if people are to look to Europe with confidence, we must burst through the Strasbourg and Brussels bubble to bring Europe, its ideals and decisions, to people in different towns and villages across Europe.

Already then, the call for stronger Europe existed. We must now ensure that the Conference on the Future of Europe has the support it needs to ensure concrete outcomes. Especially, we must listen to our youth on this year dedicated to them.

Dear fellow Europeans, Climate change is ravaging our continent and our world - it is no longer a problem for another generation to deal with. If you believe science, and this House does, the question is no longer if, but when. The European Green Deal and the pledge to be the first carbon-free continent is the right answer.

This is not only a necessity and an urgency, it is also an opportunity for Europe to take the lead, to re-invent itself, to ensure growth, sustainability and prosperity, while reducing emissions. We must impress on the rest of the world that the fight against climate change is a common destiny.

Tomorrow is too late.

And we must continue to show that you cannot decouple the environment and the economy.

Businesses from start-ups and SMEs to larger corporations across our Union require legal certainty, easier access to funding, and an innovative spirit and environment in Europe. They need less bureaucracy and more chances to take the risks that will see Europe regain its competitive edge. The Recovery and Resilience Fund will help our investment to relaunch after the pandemic. Like the green transition, the digital transformation creates opportunities. We need to be in the forefront of these changes and steer it. And we will.

Our European way of open economies and open societies is a model I am proud of. It is a model that must be

given support to withstand the pressure it comes under. Pressure to look inwards, erect new barriers, put up old borders and abandon our shared Schengen space - a space we have a duty to complete - or any attempt to discredit our values and principles.

Konrad Adenauer said, "European unity was a dream of a few. It became a hope for the many. Today it is a necessity for all of us".

Dear Colleagues, The world around us is less friendly than it was a generation ago. The unacceptable attacks on Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the dangerous situation in Belarus are prime examples of this. Our collective security is a common challenge.

For the European Union to remain credible and exert its influence globally, we have to remain principled. This is our true strength. For autocrats and despots the EU is a threat, simply by existing. As Tarek Osman put it so eloquently: "Europe has after all curated the most beautiful, refined way of living humanity has ever known."

Europe has a legacy of war, but also of healing. We can put this experience to use in helping efforts to end the separation in the EU's last divided country -Cyprus - under the auspices of the UN plan. We can never be truly whole while Cyprus remains split. We must also reverse the lost momentum when it comes to our relationship with the Western Balkans.

Dear Members: Let me be clear: to those who seek to destroy Europe: know that this House stands against you.

To those who attempt to undermine democracy, the rule of law, free speech and fundamental rights, who see women as a target, and who deny the rights to our LGBTIQ citizens - know that this House will never accept it.

To those who try to blackmail Europe through hybrid attacks, this Parliament will not weaken solidarity among members - know that Dictators will never divide us.

And, let me say, to the families of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Jan Kuciak, journalists killed for doing their job: your fight for truth and justice is our fight. To the loved ones of Olivier Dubois, abducted for almost 300 days in Mali I say his struggle for freedom must become our struggle.

Friends, Europeans, the political model that we developed has led our continent to democracy, prosperity and equality. But, if we are to raise Europe to the levels promised to the next generation, we now need to forge something even stronger, something in tune with the times, that motivates a younger, more sceptical audience to believe in Europe.

Ours must be a Parliament that empowers. That is diverse. I know that having the first female President of this House since 1999 matters inside and outside these rooms. But it must go further. Our Institution's commitment to having more diversity, gender equality, guaranteeing women's rights - all our rights -must be reaffirmed.

Twenty-two years ago, Nicole Fontaine was elected 20 years after Simone Veil. It will not be another two decades until the next woman is standing here.

I know I stand on the shoulders of giants. The shoulders of Simone Veil -Auschwitz inmate 7-8-6-5-1 - who tore off the shackles of that painful part of our European history to blaze a path through ceilings as the first woman to be European Parliament President; the shoulders of the millions of nameless women who endured so much and who fought for us to have the opportunities they were never afforded.

The shoulders of Ashling, Paulina and all the other women whose lives have already been stolen this year. The shoulders of Europe's displaced and the disappeared; on all those who fought and suffered under totalitarianism and sacrificed everything for Europe.

On the shoulders of all those who believed and who believe still. We stand here thanks to them. We stand here for them.

Europe is back. Europe is the future. Vive L'Europe!

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