Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Halliday developed an internationally influential grammar model—the Systemic Functional Grammar. It is the main foundation of CDA as well as other theories in pragmatics. The aim of this study is to explore the relationships among ideology, language and power and to find out how to use the power of speeches to persuade the audience to accept and support his policies. The researcher selected the full transcript from former president Barack Obama’s acceptance speech on Wednesday morning, Nov. 7, 2012. Then the researcher applied Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar, in terms of one of the meta-functions: interpersonal function, to find out the formal features of Obama’s speeches. According to the Halliday’s theory, the researcher summarizes the features of Obama’s speeches as follow. First, through the analysis of modality, Obama made his audience more easily to understand and accept his political speeches by means of modal verbs, structure and word choice. Next, he used more simple words and short sentences instead of difficult ones. Thus, it shortened the distance between him and the audience easily. Also, by using first person pronouns, especially ‘we’, he successfully shortened the distance between him and the public. So it can help him persuade the audience to accept and support his policies. CDA explores the relationships among ideology, language and power. The results of this study provide a new idea and method to analyze public addresses. Also we looked at different strategies used by speakers on the panel to persuade the listeners about their opinions and judgments. So it is worth for English learners to pay more attention.

[Keywords] Critical Discourse Analysis, Halliday, Systemic Functional Grammar, Public Speech, Interpersonal Function

I. Introduction

In the past twenty years, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed quickly in overseas. A large number of researchers have made contribution in the fields of critical analysis of political discourse. At the end the 1970s, CDA has established as one of the research domain in discourse studies. It is known as an approach that is based on the union of social theory and language studies[1]. However, in the 21st century, the development of CDA has come to a new stage. We can see more articles about CDA appeared in academic journals.

CDA is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the
social and political context[2].” With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social equality[3].

Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (often M.A.K. Halliday), an Australian linguist, developed an internationally influential grammar model—the Systemic Functional Grammar[2]. It is the main foundation of CDA as well as other theories in pragmatics. The object of CDA can be a newspaper, an advertisement, a political speech, regulations and laws and so on. Its aim is to explore the relationships among ideology, language and power.

Among them, public speech is a one-way communication which does not need any response from the audience. However, in some occasions the speaker encourages the audience to respond some straight questions. According to ‘The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,’ public speaking is “the act, art, or process of making effective speeches before an audience”[4]. As it is generally understood, public speeches are delivered orally, commonly well-prepared and presented in formal situations. Based on the contents and functions, political speech is a kind of public speech given by authorities who have political purposes with aims to influence a certain group of people[4]. Thus, ideas, thoughts, programs, visions and missions can be effectively transferred to the audience by constructing beautiful speech.

Also, the arrangement of words enables the addressee to precisely realize the message he or she intends to convey[5]. In creating an effective speech, the speaker needs to pay attention to context of situation in which he or she will deliver the speech. Accordingly, the study of presidential addresses has not only attained the attention of linguists, but also attracted the interests of historians and political scientists.

In this study, the researcher chooses to analyze one of the President Obama’s speeches based on three reasons. First, public speech is form of spoken linguistic product which contains meaning that becomes the main purpose of delivering it. Second, as an EFL learner, the researcher is curious on how the interpersonal meaning in this particular speech is realized through the construction of the words. How Obama arranges words into phrase, phrase into sentence, sentence into paragraph so that his interpersonal meaning is well-conveyed through his speech. Finally, there is no doubt that his speech have some valuable information which we can adapt and later on we can apply it to the pedagogical fields.

2. Theoretical Background

Halliday’s systemic functional grammar is usually considered the main foundation of CDA as well as other theories in pragmatics. Halliday thought that the procedure of stylistic analysis can be divided into three logically ordered phrases: analysis, interpretation and evaluation. The limitless practical functions can be generalized into a set of highly coded and abstract functions—metafunctions, which are inherent in every language[6]. His idea of metafunction includes the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function.

In this paper, the researcher focuses on the interpersonal function. In this function, language serves as interpersonal function. As Halliday observed, “the speaker is using language as the means of his own intrusion into the speech event: the expression of his comments, attitudes and evaluations, and also of the relationship that he sets up between himself and the listener—in particular, the communication role that he adopts of informing, questioning, greeting, persuading, and the like”[7].

Based on Hu Zhuanglin, “the interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations. This includes the various ways the speaker enters a speech situation and performs a speech act”[8]. According to O’ Halloran, "The interpersonal metafunction relates to a text’s aspects of tenor or interactivity". "Like field, tenor comprises
three component areas: the speaker/writer persona, social distance, and relative social status”. “Social distance and relative social statues are applicable only to spoken texts, although a case has been made that these two factors can also apply to written text”[9].

Mood and modality are often used to express the interpersonal function. Mood shows what role the speaker selects in the speech situation and what role he/she assigns to the addressee. If the speaker selects the imperative mood, he/she assumes the role of one giving commands and puts the addressee in the role of one expected to obey orders. For example, Pass me the book[8].

Modality refers to the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity[10]. What this implies more specifically will depend on the underlying speech function of the clause. On the one hand, it can objectively express the speaker’s judgment toward the topic. On the other hand, it can show the scale of formality, social role relationship and power relationship[10]. In English, except adjectives, modal verbs and modal adverbs, there are also notional verbs, tense, personal pronouns, direct and indirect speeches to express the modalization.

As shown in <Figure 1>, according to Halliday’s functional grammar, modality types were distinguished by ‘modalization’ and ‘modulation’. “(1)If the clause is an ‘information’ clause(a proposition, congruently realized as indicative), this means either (i)’either yes or no’, i.e. ‘maybe’; or (ii)’both yes and no’, i.e. ‘sometimes’; in other words, some degree of probability or of usuality. (2)If the clause is a ‘goods-&-services’ clause(a proposal, which has no real congruent form in the grammar, but by default we can characterize it as imperative), it means either (i)’is wanted to’, related to a command, or (ii)’wants to’, related to an offer; in other words, some degree of obligation or of inclination. We refer to type (1)as modalization and to type (2)as modulation”[10].

Figure 1. Types of modality(Halliday, 2014).

![Figure 1](image)

Halliday further distinguished ‘orientation’, i.e. whether the speaker is explicitly involved in the activity(explicitness of speaker involvement) and "value/strength of modality". In the orientation, there is the distinction between subjective and objective modality, and between the explicit and implicit variants. The system can be seen in <Figure 2>.

Figure 2. System of types of orientations in modality (Halliday, 2014).
Value of modality refers to the strength or power. These values are summarized in Table 1. Halliday does not present it as a scale but as a system of possible choices available for the speaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probability</th>
<th>Usuality</th>
<th>Obligation</th>
<th>Inclination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Certain</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Probable</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Supposed</td>
<td>Keen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Allowed</td>
<td>Willing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Three ‘values’ of modality (Halliday, 2014).

Table 2 lists the Finite verbal operators, positive and negative. These operators obviously vary considerably in frequency. As modal operators, ‘shall’ and ‘shan’t’ are very rare, although in regulatory texts operating in ‘enabling’ contexts, ‘shall’ is common[10].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal operators:</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>can, may, could, might, (dare)</td>
<td>will, would, should, is/was to</td>
<td>must, ought to, need, has/had to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>needn’t, doesn’t/didn’t + need to, have to</td>
<td>won’t, wouldn’t, shouldn’t, (isn’t/wasn’t)to</td>
<td>mustn’t, oughtn’t to, can’t, couldn’t, (mayn’t, mightn’t, hasn’t/hadn’t to)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some of the negative forms, such as mayn’t, are rather infrequent; if they occur in a negative clause, the negative is usually separated (may not, used not to).

3. Method

In this study, the researcher selected the full transcript from former president Barack Obama’s acceptance speech on Wednesday morning, Nov. 7, 2012. Then the researcher applied Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, in terms of one of the meta-functions: interpersonal function, to find out the formal features of Obama’s speeches. Its aim is to find out how to use the power of the speech to persuade the public to accept and support his policies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Modal item

The researcher concerned the use of modalization and modulation means, in particular various degrees of probability and obligation. Regarding the choice of orientation, Obama used implicit subjective and objective modalization and modulation (‘probability’ and ‘obligation’ mainly). The most frequently used modal verb in the speech was ‘will’. The next was 'can'. Obama had used 'will' in the speech more than other verbs to show what we will do in future. It demonstrated the president’s capability in ruling his government with difficulties in future. The results are shown in the Table 3 below.
Table 3. The results of modal item analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Polarity</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Modal item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modalization: probability</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Must</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
<td>Will</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
<td>Won’t, wouldn’t</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modulation: obligation</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Must</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Need</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Can</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modulation: inclination</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Willing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher claimed that speakers have the choice of focus. Whereas modalization (epistemic modality) concerns mainly beliefs, knowledge and opinions more than facts and includes the speaker’s point of view towards the proposition, it is modulation (deontic modality) which concerns necessity or possibility of acts which are performed out by responsible actors [11] that is used in language primarily to influence other people’s behavior.

Consequently, from modality metafunction, it can be understood that president’s use of modal verbs shows his firm plan to fulfill the tasks and make their language easy as much as possible. Then it shortens the distance between the president and the public. Another role of modal verbs, especially the frequent use of ‘will’ and ‘can’ in president’s speeches, persuades the audience to have faith in the government’s ability about the difficulties that their country may confront in the future.

4.2. Additional analysis (i.e. structure, word choice, etc.)

Obama started off by alluding to the independence gained by the former colonies, a step which included self-determination. He pointed out that the struggle for a perfect union was an ongoing process and emphasized the various contributions the listeners, whom he addressed directly, had made. He made use of anaphora when referring to the process, repeated “it moves forward”, which spread optimism using a parallel structure, and described the impact of “the spirit” and the values on the outcome of the elections.

He emphasized that, regardless of individual dreams, a sense of togetherness was important for success. He compared the nation and the American people to a family, thereby using the personal pronoun ‘we’ repeatedly. He again used the personal pronoun ‘we’ to stress the team spirit and all the effort taken together in order to enumerate the “hopes for America’s future” which most people shared, and he underlined the commonality by his continued usage of the pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our.’

Li stated that one of the roles of personal pronoun is that it has an interpersonal function in discourse and it makes a kind of link between the speaker and the listener in a speech [12]. The first person pronouns (‘we’ and ‘I’) were used the most in Obama’s speech. In his speech, ‘we’ turned up 62 times and ‘I’ turned up 37 times. The pronoun ‘we’ could imply two meanings. First, it could mean an idea of ‘I and you’ that shorten the distance between the president Obama and the public and created a feeling of common purpose. Second, it could mean ‘I and
others’, which refers to a sense of authority by the addresser and his team, who tries to establish the powerful government that the audience expects.

Secondly, he made use of enumeration in negative statements regarding debt, inequality and global warning. The word choices ‘burdened’, ‘weakened’ and ‘threatened’ stressed the negative impact they could have on the people. This way he made the audience pay attention to these unresolved problems.

Thirdly, he characterized America as a secure and globally respected country, using enumeration with positive adjectives. He contrasted the need for military strength with the prospect of peace and basic values for all.

Then, he had pointed out that they had to progress to make the union perfect, using parallel structures/anaphora to emphasize what he had said. He made his forth point characterizing America as ‘generous’, ‘compassionate’ and ‘tolerant’ enumerating positive adjectives(word choice), regarding patriotic second-generation immigrants.

All four points he made start with the same sentence structure, the same wording to help the audience remember the points and follow his line of argument more easily. He finished this part of his speech switching from “we … want/believe” to “I … believe we can”, to stress his leadership qualities. He repeated the need for jobs, opportunities and security for the middle class adding the word ‘new’ three times to emphasize the necessity of further advancement.

Finally, he alluded to the American Dream, focusing on the differences among Americans, using opposites to build contrasts to show how great the differences really are. He addressed the audience directly to get his message of hope across: that everybody can really make it in America “if they’re willing to try.”

5. Conclusion

Systemic functional linguistics describes language with a functional-semantic approach which explores both how people use language in different contexts, and how language is structured for use as a semiotic system[13]. It is a theory on language and at the same time a methodology to deploy language. Through the analysis of Obama’s speech with the systemic functional approach, the features of Obama’s speeches can be summarized as follow. First, modality refers to a addresser’s attitudes towards or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. Through the analysis of modality, Obama made the public more easily to understand and accept his political speeches by means of modal verbs, structure and word choice.

Next, he used more simple words and short sentences instead of difficult ones. His language is easy and colloquial. Thus, it can easily shorten the distance between him and the audience. By using first person pronouns, especially ‘we’, he successfully shortened the distance between him and the audience. So it can help him persuade the public to accept and support his policies.

CDA explores the relationships among ideology, language and power. The results of this study provide a new method and idea to analyze public addresses. Pedagogically, this study can make EFL learners understand the effectiveness of lexicogrammar analysis to enhance their critical thinking. Also, this study may be able to be a model for another researcher who interested in conducting such study. Therefore, it is worth for us to pay more attention.

6. References

6.1. Journal articles

6.2. Thesis degree


6.3. Books


6.3. Additional references


7. Contribution

7.1. Authors contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial name</th>
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<tr>
<td>HDE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting results ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make a significant contribution to collection ✔</td>
</tr>
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<td>Final approval of the paper ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corresponding ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play a decisive role in modification ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant contributions to concepts, designs, practices, analysis and interpretation of data ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants in Drafting and Revising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2. Authors profile

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**Research field**

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- Effects of AI Chatbot on Korean EFL Learners’ Speaking Ability and Affective Domain, Chonnam National University, Doctoral Thesis (2020).

**Major career**

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