Critical Discourse Analysis of Inaugural Speeches by Trump and Biden Based on the Systemic Functional Grammar

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Abstract
Joseph Biden’s inaugural address in 2021 has caught the eyes of people all over the world. As is known, the inaugural speech is an indispensable means of delivering ideologies and attitudes of the successive administration. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the author analyzes inaugural speeches delivered by the 45th American president Donald Trump in 2017 and the 46th president Joseph Biden in 2021, in an attempt to illustrate how they use language to influence the audience in order to achieve their political aims. The analysis employs Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar as the theoretical frameworks. From the analysis, the author finds that the language a politician uses in his speech is closely connected with his ideology and political intentions. What’s more, there is another interesting discovery: contrary to the widely-held negative impression for Trump, he is more proficient in making use of language in the speech.

Keywords: Biden; Trump; Three-Dimensional Framework; Systemic Functional Grammar

National TOEFL iBT Performance Analysis: Linguistic, Educational and Economic Factors

1. Introduction
   As the official statements from the government of the United States, the inaugural speeches made by new presidents always have a priority in the eyes of researchers. As inaugural speeches are delivered not only to American people, but to the whole world, presidents usually implicitly introduce their diplomatic policies in their inaugural speeches. This also explains the international enthusiasm on the American presidents’ inaugural speeches. Due to religious affiliation and personal preferences, presidents would make different policies towards their international partners, which definitely will influence the fates of related countries. One of the prime examples is the Trump’s “America first” concept in his speech, indirectly leading to trade conflict between United States and China in the Trumpian administration. If a country can smell the political purpose behind the president’s inaugural speech at an early time, they can take measures accordingly to avoid unnecessary loss in the future development.

   Political speech is considered as an important component of public discourse and plays a crucial role in political stage to realize the politicians’ purposes. In political speeches, politicians would try their best to manage individuals’ opinions and ideologies to gain support from the audience. At this point, Critical Discourse Analysis is considered as an approach to reveal the hidden discursive factors in terms of power, ascendancy, inequality and bias. It explores how these factors are sustained and rebuilt among the relevant social, political and historical contexts (Van Dijk 1980), and it has been considered as an effective tool to investigate the relationship among language, power and ideology of political speeches. Thus, it is worthy studying the inaugural addresses of American presidents from the perspective of CDA.

   This research mainly presents three significances. Firstly, the inaugural speech serves as an official statement to all American people and the whole world. With the help of CDA, the clever and deft use of strategies bound up with the presidents’ political intentions are unveiled, which offers an opportunity for the American people to examine the reliability of the promises from presidents of America, and for other countries to predict the problems that might
occur and make plans in advance. Secondly, using newly emerged data to conduct a CDA analysis can further test the applicability of CDA in political speeches. Thirdly, since Biden Administration begins its term very recently, researches using inaugural speeches of the two presidents as corpus are relatively rare. In this way, the current work might offer some hints for future researchers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework of CDA

In the book, Language and Power, Fairclough puts forward the idea that text, discourse practice and social practice form the three-dimensional conception of discourse. Based on it, he adopts a three-dimensional method of discourse analysis, which is a model of description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 1992).

2.1.1 Description

To be specific, “description” means to describe linguistic features, precisely, the “formal properties” of the language text. (Fairclough 1989). This is the first step to go into critical discourse analysis. As language usage is a social practice driven by ideology, a range of linguistic features, including vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, textual structure, the directness or indirectness expression, and other language features related to interactions, are essential to the understanding of power relations and ideological processes in discourse. (Song Huifang, 2018). The analysis of these linguistic features is based on Halliday’s three meta-functions since it focuses not only on the internal environment of the text but also takes notice of the external environment of cognition and social culture. In this stage, modality system will be discussed.

2.1.2 Interpretation

Interpretation is the stage which discusses the relationship between text and interaction. In this stage, the text is regarded as the product of a process of production and as a resource of the process of interpretation. After being dealt with the process of discursive production, text works as the resource in interpretation. Interpretation cares about how a text is produced, distributed and consumed (Song Fanghui, 2018). For interpreting, Fairclough (1995) lists six domains of interpretation, of which situational context and intertextual context are central to the interpretation of the context. Following figure shows the relationship between situational context and discourse type. This work will focus on the interaction between the speaker and the audience, in order to find out whether the use of the linguistic features has any effect on the audience. The author tries to answer four questions about the situation: What is going on? Who is involved? In what relations and what is the role of language?

2.1.3 Explanation

Explanation deals with the relationship between social interaction and context. It develops the analysis into a wider scope with historical and social factors involved. According to Butt et al. (1995), the social context is the sum of all the meanings it is possible to mean in that particular culture. That means the discourse analysis can not be conducted without
considering the social context. (Xin Bin 2005). At this stage, the fact that the social context determines the discourse production can be shown clearly.

In summary, the Three-Dimensional Framework by Fairclough is of great value in the area of CDA. It offers an overall and thorough analysis on the discourse and thus makes speaker’s and writer’s implicit and explicit meanings obvious to catch. Although each stage serves for a particular purpose, the three dimensions are closely interrelated with each other. They are combined to disclose how the discourse producers achieve their underlying intensions through the production of discourses.

2.2 Halliday’s Three Meta-Functions in Systemic Functional Grammar

Andrea Mayr (2008) says: “The most influential theory of language in CDA that is socially oriented and informed is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It is because SFL provides insights into the ways in which language is socially constructed and embedded in culture that it becomes useful for its application in CDA”. According to Halliday (2000), the basic meta-functions of language are the ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. The interpersonal function is the function that language is used to establish and maintain social relations, which is the focus of this paper.

2.2.1 Interpersonal Function

“The interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations” (Hu Zhuanglin 1988). They intend to influence others or explain their own attitude or behavior, or to provide information to make others to provide them with information. The personal function of language is normally realized by the Mood and Modality system. Mood emphasizes on the role the speaker plays, and it usually consists of two elements: Subject and Finite. (Thompson 2010).

Modality, the focus of this thesis, indicates the speakers’ attitudes towards what they are saying. It relates to how valid the information is being presented in terms of probability or usuality or to how confident the speaker can appear to be in the eventual success of the exchange (Thompson 2010). Modality is represented by modal verbs and personal pronouns. Modal verbs are often used to convey the probability, obligation or inclination, for example, will, would, may, and must. Different modal verbs have different values. Generally, they fall into three types: low, median and high value. (Halliday 2008). Personal pronouns are employed by the speaker or the writer to include or exclude the hearer or the reader in the discourse, for example, our, we, you.

3. Research Methodology
3.1 Research Subjects

In order to find out how politicians achieve their political aims through manipulation of language, and unveil the hidden relations between language, power and ideology, the author chooses the inaugural speech by president Trump on January 20, 2017 and Biden on January 20, 2021 as research materials for this paper. Both transcripts are collected from the official website of American White House https://www.whitehouse.gov/. There are 1433 words which are divided into 87 sentences in Donald Trump’s inaugural speech on January 21, 2017, the
duration is around 16 minutes, while Joseph Biden’s 22-minute inaugural speech incorporates 2371 words and 215 sentences in total.

3.2 Research Questions

Three research questions are outlined in this paper:
1. Description stage: What are the linguistic features of each inaugural address?
2. Interpretation stage: How Trump and Biden achieve their political purposes by means of language?
3. Explanation stage: What are the social determinants of linguistic features of two presidents?

3.3 Research Procedures

The research procedure could be divided into two steps including data processing and data analyzing. On the data processing stage, the frequency of the linguistic items is counted and the results are presented in tables respectively. On the data analyzing stage, the thesis takes advantage of both Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework, with its corresponding three dimensions in analyzing, offers a systematic and scientific procedure for researchers. Strictly following the three steps of CDA, which are description, interpretation, and explanation, the author describes the linguistic features of the inaugural speeches of two presidents. Then the author tries to interpret the relations between the text and interaction, aiming to reveal how Trump and Biden achieve their political purposes by means of language. Finally, an explanation on the social determinants of these linguistic features is made in order to discover the hidden relations between language and its determinants outside the discourse, namely, social contexts. Quantitative method is applied in the description step, while qualitative analysis is active in the interpretation and explanation steps.

Besides, at the first stage of CDA analysis, the description stage, Halliday’s three meta-functions of Functional Grammar is adopted. Specifically, the author tries to analyze the linguistic features from two aspects: 1) modal verbs and 2) person pronouns, both belong to the interpersonal function.

4. Results and Discussions

As mentioned above, in order to uncover the secrets among language, power and ideology, the author makes an analysis from the perspective of CDA, with three meta-functions in Halliday’s Functional Grammar and Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework as guiding principles. In this part, a comprehensive analysis on the Trump and Biden’s inaugural speeches will be presented on the basis of the two theories.

4.1 Description of Linguistic Features

4.1.1 Person Pronouns: interpersonal meta-function

Vocatives are usually the terms used to address others. Person pronouns applied in the discourse can tell us how the orators view the characters involved in the discourse, thus contributing a lot to establishing a specific relationship between the orator and the audience. In
many spoken and written contexts, the speaker uses them to mark the interpersonal relationship, and sometimes claim superior status or power (Halliday 2008). In texts, using vocative address properly imposes positive influence on the establishment and maintaining of the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the listener Li Zhanzi (2002). In English language, personal pronouns are divided into three types: first person, second person and third person, and each personal pronoun has singular and plural forms. People always refer to the speaker in communications as the first person, the listener as second person and others not present as the third person. As an important part of interpersonal meaning, person pronouns usually serve as an important pragmatic strategy, especially for political figures, to construct power.

In general, first person and second person in speeches are employed more frequently due to their function of the construction of interpersonal meaning in texts. Compared to third person which gives people the feeling of distance, the abundant use of first person and second person in texts has the advantage of shortening the distance between the speaker and the listener. Then it can help succeed in delivering the audience feelings of harmony and kindness and pushing communicators to interact more closely so as to reach the goal of communication. Since the meanings of personal pronouns are complex and dynamic, all pronouns need to be analyzed case by case. The following chart and table exhibit a detailed distribution of person pronouns in the inaugural speeches by Biden and Trump.

According to the statistics (see Table 2), Biden use more person pronouns than Trump, however, considering the length of his speech, here we counted the percentage rate of distribution of each type of person pronoun. Both of them employ a large number of personal pronouns in their own inaugural speeches. The frequency of use of first person, second person and third person in Trump’s inaugural speech are respectively 102, 23, 20, accounting for 72.73%, 16.08%, 11.19%; those in Biden’s inaugural speech are respectively 225, 18, 23, accounting for 84.59%, 6.77%, 8.65%. It can be seen that two presidents are inclined to use first person plural form in their texts to develop an intimate relationship between the speaker and the audience. Besides, several points need to be pointed out: 1) In terms of first person, although the percentages of the plural form in two speeches are nearly the same, Biden and Trump share a big difference in employing the singular form. We can clearly see that Trump tries to avoid the use of singular form, which occupies only 2.8% in his total use of person pronouns, while Biden’s use of singular form reaches up to 24.06%; 2) Concerning second person pronoun, Trump adopts more second person pronouns (16.08%) in his speech than Biden (6.77%); 3) There is no significant difference in the distribution of third person pronouns, which are mainly used when mentioning the predecessors of the country; 4) The overall number of first person pronoun and second person pronoun in Trump’s speech (88.81%) is in accordance with Biden’s (91.36%), which means that both of them try to strike a balance in the overall distribution of three types of person pronouns despite some minor differences in preference for certain forms. Several examples will be given to make these points clearer in the following:

Trump:

Example 1: I will fight for you with every breath in my body, and I will never, ever let you down.
In the inaugural speeches, the speaker has two roles to play, one is the president of United States, and the other one is an American citizen like his audience. Different focuses can lead to radically different results. When the speaker puts emphasis on the role as the president, his role as a citizen is weakened naturally, which absolutely creates a sense of distance in the audience’s mind. Vice versa, the speaker can successfully shorten the distance between himself and the audience by laying more emphasis on his identity as an American people. In so doing, it is much easier for them to change and manipulate the hearer’s ideology. For instance, in Trump’s speech, the first-person singular form “I/my/me” appears only four times, while the plural form “we/our/us” appears 100 times. As in example 1, he uses “I/my” merely want to express the strong determination of his new administration to fight for his people, which properly shows his assertiveness and strong will. But in most cases, Trump tends to apply the plural form to establish his social identity as an American citizen, arouse the hearer’s pride of being an American and make them feel included.

Biden:

Example 2: I thank my predecessors of both parties for their presence here.

Now let’s take a look at Biden’s speech, he uses singular form of first-person pronoun more frequently than Trump, which is not so helpful in manipulating the ideology of his people. Except expressing his gratitude to his predecessors like what is said in example 2, there are many traces of singular form. His stresses the importance of unity throughout the speech, but his vocative choices highlight his role as the president of United States, a supreme individual.

To make a summary, contrary to our originally negative impression on Trump, he is more specialized in using person pronouns to manipulate people’s ideology so as to achieve his political purposes. People might think that Biden is a good orator and he is clever in uniting people by his speech, but actually it is not the case, at least on the use of person pronouns.

4.1.2 Modal Verbs: Interpersonal Function

As another important means to realize interpersonal functions, modal verb expresses lines between “YES” and “NO”, namely “positive” and “negative”, thus has scales. Halliday (2008) established three basic values to formalize the modal judgment “high, median and low”. Modal verbs are often used to convey the probability, obligation or inclination, for example, will, would, may, and must. Hence close attention is often paid to the degree of confidence, namely, whether speaker meets the ultimate success of the exchange from the point of view of obligation and willingness. The distributions of modal verbs in two inaugural speeches are shown in Table 3:

According to Table 3, it is not difficult to find that in the use of modal operators, the proportion of the median-value modal operators “will” is the highest in the two inaugural speeches. However, there is a prominent difference in the general choice of three levels of modality. In Biden’s inaugural speech, the high-value modal operator “must/can’t...” and low-value modal operators “can...” were used 15 and 27 times respectively, each taking up only 18.75% and 33.75% of overall use of modal operators. While in Trump’s address, he uses only 4 high-value modal verb, which accounts for 8.89%, and no low-value modal verbs appear in his speech. To a certain extent, Biden is more balanced in the use of the three levels of modal words, but the median-value modal verbs enjoy a priority in Trump’s inaugural address.
In terms of median modal verbs, “will” is a moderate modal operator widespread in the inaugural speeches. The modal verb “will” either indicates that the speaker will take action to do something in the near future or represents certain aspirations and willingness. In Trump’s speech, “will” is used 40 times, reaching up to a percentage of 91.11%, while in Biden’s speech, “will” appears 38 times, taking up 47.5%. Specifically speaking, in example 1), which is extracted from Trump’s speech, “will” was mainly used to elucidate the fact that the country is still faced with many challenges like illegal immigration, and the new government will take measures to revitalize the domestic economy to further improve people’s quality of life. He uses “will” to show his strong determination to fight for middle-class workers, which enhances the audience’s sense of economic safety, and at the same time establishes his assertiveness as a president.

Example 3: Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on we affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.

Example 4: We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders.

In example 3, through the median modal operator “will”, Biden first elaborates, in the context of the severe pandemic, the new government would take measures to help people recover from the trauma caused by Covid-19. In addition, he also emphasizes the strategic layout of the new government. The application of median modal operator “will” not only shows that Biden government is able to overcome the hardship but emphasizes the assertiveness and strong determination of the government, which makes the speech more powerful and convincing.

Speakers prefer to convey their firm attitude and determination through the use of high-value modal verbs, of which “must” is applied in inaugural speeches frequently. High-value modal verbs often indicate the subjective command and obligation. On one hand, they function well in establishing and asserting one’s authority. On the other hand, the overuse of them may distance the relationship between the speaker and the hearer and lead to the adverse effects. It’s no wonder that Trump tries to reduce high modal verbs in his speech. In example 4, he uses “must” to declare that it is the responsibility and obligation for every citizen to protect national territory, products and so on. But this is rarely found in Trump’s speech. We can say he is aware of his usual arrogant impression in people’s ideology to some extent, meanwhile, he also realizes the fact that he needs people’s dedication more than ever. Under these considerations, he decides to reduce the rate of high-value modal verbs in the speech in order to weaken his arbitrary image existed in audience’s mind.

In summary, in terms of modal verbs, cunning Trump prefers to hide and weaken his negative images by reducing the using of high-value modal verbs. Besides, compared with low-value modal verbs, he wisely chooses median-value verbs to avoid any uncertainty. However, honest Biden makes a relatively even distribution of modal verbs, hoping to touch and arouse the consensus of his people.

4.2 Interpretation of Discursive Practice

During the research process, Fairclough raises four questions concerning the situation: what is going on, who is involved, in what relations, and what is language in what is going on. Corresponding to the four questions, four discourse types are also determined, namely, contents,
subject, relations and connections. The following will be conducted to answer the four questions.

4.2.1 Content

The contents of a discourse include the topic, activity and purpose of the discourse. Generally speaking, two speeches analyzed in this thesis are inaugural speeches delivered when new presidents officially taking the government office. One is made by 45th president of United States Donald Trump, the other is by 46th president Joseph Biden.

At the beginning, Trump owes the present prosperity of the nation to the Americans, then expresses his gratitude to the audience, vice-president, his families and campaign team. He lists some problems that are still scarring American society today, for which he calls for Americans’ participation as well as dedication. Finally, he tries to enhance people’s confidence and pride as an American. “American first” is the guiding principle of his speech, so does the idea of “buy American and hire American”.

Biden also begins his speech by expressing his sincere thanks. However, Biden takes his office in a more challenging period: virus silently stalks the country, unemployment rate soars, political extremism rises, and social injustice…. As a result, he spent more than 20 minutes to deliver his first speech as a new president to remind American people of the dangers ahead, and aims to appeal them to join this course together. In his speech, the idea of “Democracy” and “unity” is highlighted.

Generally, the aims of two presidents are similar—to give the Americans confidence and convince them to believe that he is the person who can lead America toward a better country. To achieve this purpose, they resort to different language skills in their speeches.

4.2.2 Subject and Relations

As participants and their relations are closely connected, here they will be discussed together. When it comes to the participants, both speeches involve the speaker and audience. In the two inaugural speeches, there are several participants: Trump and Biden as the speaker, and the audience as the hearer. Generally, a public speech serves for two purposes: giving information to the hearer and demanding services from the hearer. In terms of giving information, the relation between the participants is the information giver and the information receiver. In terms of demanding services, the relation between the participants is the service demander and service giver.

Let’s take a look at Trump’s speech first. Trump applies more passive sentences, avoids the use of first-person pronoun singular form and high and low-value modal verbs, highlights the first person pronouns and the use of median modal operators in his speech. He successfully forges a image of “good president” and hiding his real purpose by the means of language. Likewise, Biden also resorts to certain linguistic devices in his inaugural speech. His relatively balanced distribution of various linguistic devices and long duration of the speech also helps him a lot in winning public support. Trump’s indirect deceiving strategy differs greatly from Biden’s direct appealing method, but they do share a mutual goal—to maximize both the value of their information and the amount of service they demand. Through various linguistic devices, they both spread the idea that every citizen is expected to join in this new course ahead.
4.2.3 Connections

“What is language in what is going on” will be explored in this section. Suppose that we are standing on one side of the bank, while something we need is on the other side. In order to take it back with least effort, we need to choose the most convenient transportation means. Likewise, language functions as a mediate between what politicians can offer and what they demand from the other side. Wise choice of language skills can shorten the distance between, which makes it easier for politicians to get what they need. To put it concisely, in the process of achieving their political purposes, language plays a major role by shortening the distance between the speaker and the hearer. In turn, when constructing the discourse, the speaker takes his political purposes into consideration and always tries to shorten the distance through language choice.

Let’s take two powerful linguistic devices to further illustrate this. In the description stage, the author analyzes the two inaugural addresses from the three-level values of modal operators. Among them, the use of the median-value modal operator “will” is the most common in the two inaugural speeches, mainly because it is helpful to facilitate the introduction of the topic and present the grandiose blueprint conceived by new government. More importantly, the median modalities are relatively approachable in attitude, and it is easy to shorten the relationship between the speaker and the audience, based on which they can easily build a consensus on ideology and urge the audience to unite and promote the development and prosperity of the country. Hence, always taking their purposes into consideration, two presidents make their distinctive language choices in the speech.

Personal pronouns are one of the most effective means to shorten the distance between the participants. Considering this purpose, in the inaugural speeches, both presidents are inclined to use the first-person plural form, to develop an intimate relationship between themselves and the audience, which can make the audience feel that they are standing on the same point with the American people. Then people will conceive the credible feelings to the new president, thus facilitating the formation of political identification.

So generally, we can see that language is an effective means to reflect and enhance ideology, and specific language choice is determined by the purpose of the speaker. All politicians are eager to put certain political, ideological and social ideas into practice. In the process of realizing this goal, language plays a fundamental role by shortening the distance between participants. Besides, the speaker takes his purposes into consideration when he organizes the discourse. According to their purposes, different language choices will be made.

4.3 Explanation of Social Practice

According to Fairclough’s three stages of CDA, explanation deals with the relationship between the text and the social context. As discourses are kind of social practices, every discourse is produced in a certain social context, which may influence the writer or speaker’s thoughts, value and even the construction of discourses. In other words, social context determines the production of discourses. Concerning different characteristics of two presidents, factors including merchant identity and social background will be analyzed accordingly.
4.3.1 Trump—Merchant identity

Speaking of Donald Trump, the first thing we might think of is his merchant identity. Previous business career exerts a great influence on Trump’s thoughts and ideology, which is also clearly reflected in his choice of language in the speech. As a shrewd businessman, President Trump has different cognition and thinking from traditional politicians. Simple and direct language style, bluntly critic manner, anti-traditional system restrictions action, strong executive capability, and the pursuit of “individualism” are all closely related to his social identity as a businessman.

As the president of the United States, the biggest business for him is to increase national welfare, so he puts forward the idea of “American first” in his inaugural speech. To maximize the interest of America, he tries to kick out every country and group who is sharing the resources that should have flowed into America and the American people. This typical merchant thought also sheds a light on his language choices. In the speech, he uses distinctive words and some other descriptions to separate American allies who agree with him from the people who are against his will. Besides, he excludes certain groups through the language. Besides, his business career makes him a good practitioner of economic principle, which is reflected in his deft manipulation of language skills to get twofold results with half the effort. Trump is well aware of his own bad image in people’s mind, but he knows how to apply proper linguistic devices in speech to conceal and weaken this image.

4.3.2 Biden—Social background

Language should be interpreted in context considering the context gives language certain social implications. Since social contexts are more complex in the time when Biden was elected as the president, it is necessary to go deep into the social context of this period.

In terms of the internal social situation, there are many existing problems exerted by the previous president Trump’s chaotic administration. When Covid-19 stalked the country, Trump administration was not even prepared to fight. The weakness of his administration in response to the coronavirus crisis causes the highest death toll in the world and is the sharpest economic contraction in American history. In addition to downplaying the virus domestically, Trump has done plenty to torpedo his own reputation abroad. It is under this backdrop that Biden takes his term of office, doubtlessly these social problems both at home and abroad have a huge impact on Biden’s ideology. To help people better get through this historic moment of crisis and challenge, Biden chooses to preach “unity and democracy” with long paragraphs lasted for nearly 22 minutes. In the speech, he repeatedly uses high modal verb “must” to remind the American people of the urgent situation they are facing now, and adopts “can” to enhance people’s confidence and urge them to take actions.

To sum up, Trump government made a lot of serious problems both at home and abroad, which has undermined America’s influence in the world as well as its own prosperity. This social background deeply influences Biden’s ideology. So in the first speech delivered to the American people, he tactically adopts some linguistic devices to rebuild the prosperity and the confidence of Americans.
5. Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

In this paper, the analysis of the collected materials is mainly based on Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework including description, interpretation and explanation. Conclusions will be drawn from these three stages.

In description step, through a series analysis on different choices of person pronouns and modal verbs, the author discovers that they are all powerful linguistic devices to help orators achieve certain political purposes. Furthermore, different politicians rely on different means to manipulate language, which can be clearly shown in their choice of modal verbs. What’s more, it seems that Trump is more proficient in building the image of “a good president” and disguising his real self through the deft manipulation of language.

In interpretation step, the author discusses the role of language in two inaugural speeches. Major finding is that language is an effective means to achieve the political purposes, like spreading the ideology and building the power relations. The specific language choice is determined by the purpose of the speaker. Main purpose of politicians is to put certain political, ideological and social ideas into practice. In the process of realizing this goal, language plays a fundamental role by shortening the distance between participants, and every political action is prepared, accompanied, affected and played by language.

In explanation step, the author takes a look at the relation between the text and social contexts. As discourses are kind of social practice, every discourse is produced in certain social context. For example, Trump’s “American first” idea in the inaugural speech is deeply influenced by his merchant identity. Biden’s language choice is mainly influenced by the current social background. Besides, the social contexts also exert great influence on the production of the discourse.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

During constructing this paper, author realizes at least two limitations that can be further improved in future studies. First and one of the most important, the author chooses several aspects in Halliday’s three meta-functions, namely, modality system, to conduct her CDA on the inaugural speeches of two presidents. While there is much room for deeper analysis on other aspects, such as transitivity in the ideational function and thematic structure in the textual function. Secondly, the above analysis is influenced by the author’s subjective attitude more or less. The critical discourse analysis of political speeches requires the sensitivity solid knowledge about social contexts, the limitation of personal experiences and knowledge background also adds up to the deficiency of the present study.

References


Figure 1: The Three-Dimensional Method of CDA (Fairclough, 1995)

Figure 2: Situational Context and Discourse Type (Fairclough, 1989)

Figure 3: Distribution of Person Pronouns

Figure 4: Distribution of Modal Verbs
Table 1

Values of Modal Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Can may could might dare</td>
<td>Needn’t doesn’t need to do/does have to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Will would should shall is/was to</td>
<td>Won’t wouldn’t shouldn’t isn’t/wasn’t to shall not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Must ought to need have/had to</td>
<td>Mustn’t oughta’t to, couldn’t mighta’t may not hasn’t/hadn’t to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Distribution of Person Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>First Person</th>
<th>Second Person</th>
<th>Third Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I/me</td>
<td>we/us</td>
<td>you/your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>143(100%)</td>
<td>100(69.93%)</td>
<td>23(16.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>102(72.73%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>127(88.81%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>266(100%)</td>
<td>161(60.53%)</td>
<td>18(6.77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>225(84.59%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>243(91.36%)</td>
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Table 3

Distribution of Modal Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can/may/could/might/needn’t</td>
<td>Will/would/should/shall</td>
<td>Must/have to/mustn’t/can’t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40/100%</td>
<td>3/0/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33/33%</td>
<td>9/2/33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>