

Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Speeches: A Case Study of Obama's and Rouhani's Speeches at UN

Massoud Sharififar

Kerman Institute of Higher Education, kerman, Iran

Elahe Rahimi

Kerman Institute of Higher Education, kerman, Iran

Abstract—The aim of this paper is to survey the art of linguistic spin in Obama's and Rouhani's political speeches at UN in September 2013 based on Halliday's systematic functional linguistics. The analysis is mainly performed through the transitivity system and modality to represent how two presidents' language can incorporate both ideology and power in their political speeches. In other words, they can manifest their power, capabilities, and policies through language; furthermore, the political implications of these speeches can be perceived better by common people.

Index Terms—critical discourse analysis, Halliday's systematic functional linguistics, transitivity, modality, political speeches

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a broad field which is related to use of language in context. According to Tistcher (2000, p. 42), "discourse is a broad term with different definitions, which 'integrate a whole palette of meanings". Discourse analysis takes into account different theoretical and methodological approaches such as linguistic, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and sociology. The nature of language is closely related to the demands that we make on it and the functions it has to serve. In the most concrete terms, these functions are specific to a culture. "The particular form has taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal need that language is required to serve" (Halliday, 1978, p. 142).

One of the important features of DA is to study authentic text and conversations in the social context. The early DA has concerned with the internal structure of texts. Halliday's systematic functional linguistics is a new evolution against internal structure of texts. According to Halliday (1978), texts should encode both personal and social processes. In other words, texts should be generated, comprehended and put into a social context. Discourse analysis is based on micro and macro levels. Therefore, both linguistic and social analyses are important. Discourses are interpreted as communicative events because discourses between people convey messages beyond that of what is said at directly. What is important in such discourse is the social information which is transferred allusively.

B. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

At the end the 1970s, CDA has established as one of the domain of research in discourse studies. It is known as an approach that is based on the union of language studies and social theory (Fairclough, 1992). CDA investigates how social power is misused and how text and talk represent, procreate, and resist dominance and inequality in the social and political context. The most notable figure in this domain is Norman Fairclough, who has developed a three dimensional framework for studying discourse. The aim of this framework is to integrate three dimensions into another analysis of language text. In other words, it refers to analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discourse events.

The main focus of CDA is public speech, such as political speeches, advertisement, newspaper, official documents and so on. CDA' aim is to examine the relationship between the language, ideology, and power; Furthermore, its aims is to find out the assessment and exploitation of language dominance through text.

One of the most important linguistic theories correlated with a critical discourse approach is that of Halliday's systematic functional grammar. It is supported by some linguists such as (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Fairclough, 1992, 1995 a and b, Kress, 1985) who used it for analyzing the text because systematic functional grammar has a significant role in critical interpretation of linguistic expression in various discourses. As a matter of fact, systematic functional linguistic (SFG) model has been applied as a tool for analyzing the texts.

II. THEORETICAL BASES

Systematic functional grammar (SFG) is developed by M.A.K. Halliday and it is based on grammatical description. It says that language is considered as interlocking options or network of systems for creating meaning. Functional linguistic foregrounds linguistic choice and functional linguistic that deals with structures which derives from the options created by encoding rules. Functional language is a tool for interaction based on this idea that language forms are inevitably specified by the functions or uses that they provide (Huzhunglin, 1988, p. 307).

According to Halliday and Hassan (1989, p. 10), a text, in the general term, is "language that is functional"; meaning written and verbal language which conveys social meaning in a specific and real situation. Indeed, for Halliday the texts serve as the study of meaning and use of phrases and words rather than just the union of words and sentences. It takes into account two perspectives concurrently such as text as product and text as process. A text is considered as a product when it studies the linguistic structures. Simultaneously it is a process in terms of semantic component or encoding the meaning. These grammatical systems provide a basis for explaining the meanings of different kinds.

Halliday's basic idea is that language is established metafunctionally. Therefore, Halliday's functions of language are called metafunctions and they have three kinds of semantic units: ideational functions, the interpersonal function, and the textual function.

A. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational function refers to those functions that provide a basis for understanding human experience as a kind of resource for realizing the "reality" (Halliday, 1994). In other words, this function conveys both new information and elements are unfamiliar to the listener. The events and experience are represented by this function in both the real and intuitive world. Based on Halliday, this function is separated into logical and experiential metafunctions. Logical refers to the combination of two or more grammatical units into a more complex one. The experiential function refers to grammatical options that allow individuals to create meanings about the world around them and language evolved through this process. The analysis of the text based on this ideational function consists of 'transitivity' and "voice". Huzhunglin (1988, p. 312) states that "these functions determines the accessible options in meaning as well as specify the nature of their structural awareness".

Transitivity system represents ideational function in grammar. Transitivity system comprises six processes as follow:

- 1) Material processes: Physical action in the real world.
- 2) Relational processes: Expressing possession, equivalence, attributes...
- 3) Mental processes: Processes of cognition, affection and perception.
- 4) Verbal processes: Processes of communication.
- 5) Behavioral processes: Hybrid processes== a material + mental process.
- 6) Existential: Processes of existing by an empty there in subject position.

B. Interpersonal Function

Based on Huzhuanglin (1988, p. 313), "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'. According to O' Halloran (2006, p. 15), "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 statuses are applicable only to spoken texts, although a case has been made that these two factors can also apply to written text".

The speaker/writer persona is related to attitude, personalization and place of the speaker/writer. This concerns the neutral attitudes of speaker and writer by using of positive and negative language. Relative social statuses investigate if speakers are equal or not. Coffin (2006, p. 22-23) argues that,

Social distance means how close the speakers are, e.g. how the use of nicknames shows the degree to which they are intimate. Relative social statuses ask whether they are equal in terms of power and knowledge on a subject, for example, the relationship between a mother and child would be considered unequal. Focuses here are on speech acts (e.g. whether one person tends to ask questions and the other speaker tends to answer), who chooses the topic, turn management, and how capable both speakers are of evaluating the subject.

Speaker uses language to provide a relationship between himself and hearer. He uses language for informing, questioning, greeting, persuading and the like.

Two terms that are used to express the interpersonal functions are modality and mood. Modality extends between extensive positive and extensive negative in social communication. Mood concerns the role that is selected by the speaker in a speech situation and the role that is allocated the addressee. (Huzhunglin, 1988)

C. Textual Metafunction

"The textual metafunction relates to mode; the internal organization and communicative nature of a text" (O'Halloran, 2006, p. 36). "This comprises textual interactivity, spontaneity and communicative distance" (Coffin, 2006, p. 245). The factors such as lexical density, grammatical complexity, coordination and the use of nominal groups can determine the spontaneity. The communicative distance aims to investigate the text's cohesion regarding how it combines together and how it uses the abstract language.

Coffin (2006) pointed out that the context related to lexical, grammatical and intonational aspects can analyze cohesion according to lexical chains, speech register, tonality, tonicity and tone. The lexical factor puts emphasis on lexical reiteration and sense relationship. Grammatical aspects consider the role of joining adverbials and the meaning repetition that is reflected through elements such as ellipsis, substitution and reference.

III. DISCUSSION

Detail study on sample speeches

From table 1, Obama's speech includes 5465 words that constitute 581 sentences and 57 paragraphs. Rouhani's speech includes 2650 words with 221 sentences and 29 paragraphs. As it is realized from two speeches, Obama has used most simple words than Rouhani's. Obama has used colloquial language in order to shorten the distance between him and the audience. As well as he refers to different subjects and different characters to extend his speech. As shown, Rouhani has used fewer yet more difficult words and his language is formal and it can be related to his first days of presidency.

TABLE 1
STATISTIC OF SAMPLE SPEECH

Statistical terms	Statistic	
	Obama's speech	Rouhani's speech
Words	5465	2650
Sentences	581	221
Paragraphs	57	29

A. Transitivity Analysis

Transitivity is a system for explaining the whole clause instead of describing the verb and its object (Thompson, 1996, p. 78). According to Halliday a clause consists of three components: process, participant and circumstances. Halliday divides these processes into 6 types: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process.

TABLE 2.
TRANSITIVITY IN THE SAMPLE SPEECHES

Process types		Obama's speeches		Rouhani's speeches	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Material	228	46	54	38
2	Relational	97	29	50	35
3	Mental	62	18	13	9
4	Behavioral	1	0	2	1
5	Verbal	15	4	15	10
6	Existential	4	1	5	3

From table 2, it can be concluded that material process has the first rank with 47% and 38% frequency among other processes. Second is relational process with 29% and 35% frequency, followed by mental process 18% and 9%. The lowest numbers of processes are behavioral process with 0 and 1%, then existential with 1% and 3% and finally verbal process with 4% and 10%.

1. Material Process

Material process includes the activities and events that occur in the human's external world (Saragih, 2010, p. 7). Material process is process of "doing" or "happening". There are two participants in this process:

Actor: The one who does the action.

Goal: The one who is affected by the action.

This process applies action words either abstract or concrete.

TABLE 3
TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF ROUHANI'S SPEECHES (MATERIAL PROCESS)

Actor	Process	Goal
I, we, Iran, those, Iranian people, Sadam Hossein.	Played, harpoon, help, vote, defend, seeks	With chemical weapons, situation. Syria's acceptance, discourse, the peace, problems

TABLE 4
TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S SPEECH (MATERIAL PROCESS)

Actor	Process	Goal
I, we, they, our, America, United states, those, UN, Syria	Use, give, persuade, return, continue, help, move, urge, provide, rebuild, walk, develop, reject, resolve, carry out, kill, deliver	Weapons, the Syrian people, settlements, prewar statues, moderate opposition, a peaceful resolution, Geneva process, all nations, nuclear weapons, nations, the issue, this attack, his people, beyond conflict. Peaceful.

Table 3&4 demonstrate that material process indicates government's activities. What presidents have done and will do for their people in future. According to table 3 most of the actors in Obama's speech are I, we, America, United States that enable us to realize that Obama and his government are action leaders who are against chemical weapons and want to do their best to provide a kind of peace among nations. But the number of this process in Rouhani's speech is much fewer and most of the actors are I, we, Iran but this does not mean that Rouhani is not an action leader since it was the first days of his presidency and also he refers to wise choice of Iranian speech.

Obama's speech:

We (Actor) will dismantle (Material process) terrorist networks (Goal) that threaten (material Process) our people (Goal). Whenever possible we (Actor) will build (Material Process) the capacity of our partner (Goal), respect (Material Process) the sovereignty of nations (Goal) and work (Material Process) to address the root cause of terror (Goal). But when it is necessary to defend (Material Process) the United States (Goal) against terrorist attacks, we (Actor) will take direct actions (Material Process) and finally we (Actor) will not tolerate (Material Process) the development (Goal) or use of weapons of mass destruction so we (Actor) reject (Material Process) the development of nuclear weapons (Goal).

Rouhani's speech:

The Iranian people, (Actor) in a judiciously sober choice in the recent election, voted (Material Process) for the discourse of hope, foresight and prudent moderation (Goal). In foreign policy, the combination of these elements means that the Islamic Republic of Iran, (Actor) will act responsibility (Material Process) with regard to regional and international security (Goal).

2. Relational process

"Relational process is a process of being that through identification, attribution, and possession shows the link among entities" (Saragih, 2010, p. 8). This process is identified by two modes: identifying relational process and attributive relational process. Identifying relational process means that one entity is being used to identify another. The verbs that are use in such process are (am, is, are, was, were...) become, etc.

Attributive process means that an entity has some characteristics that ascribed to it' (Halliday, 1994, p. 120). The verbs that are used in this process are (look, cost, play, sound, gets, seem...).

TABLE 5
TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S AND ROUHANI'S SPEECHES (RELATIONAL PROCRAEE)

Attributive relational process	Identifying relational process
The leaders who built united nations were not na ĩve.	War in Iraq was the dominant issue. The dominant issue in Iraq was war.
Intolerance is the predicament of our time	The Taliban and Al-Qaide are just two examples of such catastrophes. Two examples of such catastrophes are the Taliban and Al-Qaide.

The modes which are established in this process are attributive and identifying. If the process is attributive the participants are carrier and attribute and clauses with attributive processes are non-passivisable. According to table 5 "the leaders" is carrier and "na ĩve" is attribute. The carrier in this process is treated as real and obvious which is represented through was, were, am, and etc. but if the process is identifying the participants are token and value and clauses undergo passivisation. According to above table "war" is token and "the dominant issue" is value. Relational process is considered as a process of being which can explain about the relationship between traditional ideals and their beliefs that such explanations have a role in showing that president aim is to express his reasons in a natural way which is unconsciously accepted and the audience can take the required sacrifice in the speech (Cheng Yumin, 2007).

3. Mental Process

This process includes perception, cognition, affection and desire verbs such as know, think, feel, hear, see, like, hate, please, and etc.

Obama's and Rouhani's speech:

- 1) *I (Sensor) know (Mental Process) that some now criticize the action in Libya as an object lesson.*
- 2) *We (Sensor) have seen (Mental Process) terrorists target innocent civilians in a crowded shopping mall.*
- 3) *They (Sensor) feel (Mental Process) in having no firm place in the community of nations.*
- 4) *I (Sensor) listened (Mental Process) carefully to the statements.*

From above examples there is sensor that feels (emotionally), think and perceive and the phenomenon which is felt and thought about. The sense involves in this process expressed by human being or a conscious entity. Human can express their inner feeling to arouse the sense of others. For example presidents use the mental verbs such as think, know, feel.... to express their opinion, thought, and taste to connect their political beliefs with people expectations.

B. Modality Analysis

One of the important factors that have crucial role in carrying out the interpersonal metafunction is modality which represents to what extent the proposition is acceptable.

1. Modal verbs

TABLE 6
MODAL VERBS (ZHANG GUOLING, 2006)

	Low Politeness	Median Politeness	High Politeness
Positive	Can, may, could, might, dare	Will, would, should, shall	Must, ought to, need, has/had to
negative	Needn't, doesn't/didn't, need to, have to	Won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, isn't/wasn't to.	Mustn't, oughtn't, can't, couldn't, mayn't, mightn't hasn't/hadn't to

TABLE 7.
MODALITY ANALYSIS OF OBAMA'S AND ROUHANI'S SPEECH (MODAL VERBS)

Sample speech	Total number	Low politeness		Median politeness		High politeness	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Obama	5465	54	98%/0	69	1/26%	30	54%/0
Rouhani	2650	6	22%/0	28	1/05%	7	0/26%

- 1) *It must also be measured by our ability to resolve conflict.*
- 2) *United States will never compromise our commitment to Israel's security.*
- 3) *We can arrive at a framework to manage our differences.*

According to table 7, in both speeches the median politeness has the first rank with 1/26 percent. The most frequently adopted modal verb in both speeches is 'will'. The next is 'can' and then 'must'. These two presidents have used 'will' in their speeches more than other verbs to show what they will do in future. It demonstrates the president's capability in ruling his government with difficulties in future.

2. Tense

According to Halliday (1994), the term tense refers to past, present, or future at the moment of speaking.

TABLE 8
TENSE OF SENTENCES

Sample speeches		Total number	Present		Past		Future	
			Simple	Perfect	Simple	Perfect	Simple	Past
Obama	NO	339	154	47	95	3	34	6
	%		45/5	13/86	28/2	0/88	10/2	1/76
Rouhani	NO	94	44	18	16	1	14	1
	%		47	19/14	17/02	1/06	14/89	1/06

Based on table 8, we can see that simple present in both speeches occurs the most frequency; with an average percentage of 45/5 and 47%. Simple past has ranked in the second level with 28/2 and 17/02 percent. Finally future tense, with percentage of 10/2 and 14/89, ranks third. It is natural that simple present tense has the most frequency. The Presidents are talking in the present situation with the present audience. They are talking about issues that are based on facts. They try to focus the attention of people to the current events in their country. They use the simple past to refer to the past activities and what they have done in past. For example, in Obama's speeches the use of simple past or past perfect represents his activities. He refers to other leader's activities in the past and aware or recalls the people about the previous actions have done by president or other characters. Everyone's ambition is to know about future. Simple future is used with less frequency in both speeches since individuals cannot express their actions definitely in the future. So they cannot make promises about their actions in the future. One of the important features of this tense is that when it is uttered by presidents, respected characters, it can arouse people's motivation and hope in order to relate their beliefs to future's events.

3. Personal pronouns

Li (2002) states 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.

TABLE 9.
PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal pronoun		Sample speeches	
		Obama's speech	Rouhani's speech
First person	I (me)	40	12
	We (us)	93	16
Second person	You (you)	1	3
Third person	He (him)	2	0
	She (her)	0	0
	It (it)	26	7
	They (them)	23	5
Possessive pronoun		Obama's speech	Rouhani's speech
	My (mine)	5	4
	Our (ours)	44	9
	Your (yours)	0	0
	His (his)	6	0
	Her (hers)	0	0
	Its (its)	10	1
	Their (theirs)	7	0

The data at table 9 shows that, the first person pronouns (we and I) are used the most in both addressers' speech. In Obama's speech 'we' turns up 90 times and in Rouhani's speech it turns up about 16 times. The pronoun 'we' suggests two meanings. On one hand it suggests an idea of 'I and you' that shortens the distance between the president and the audience and creates a feeling of common purpose. On the other hand, it means '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.

C. Textual Analysis

This metafunction considers the internal organization of a text in order to create a message. The whole text should be coherent, organized, accurate and logical to persuade the audience (Wang, 2010).

Here we take Obama's speech as an example. Obama's inaugural speech includes following information:

- 1) Salutation
- 2) Introducing UN as an institute to resolve problems.
- 3) Explain about different attacks at different places
- 4) Refer to Assad regime that uses chemical weapons.
- 5) Explain about role of UN and international law in meeting cries for justice
- 6) Welcome the influence of all nations that can help bring about a peaceful resolution of Syria's civil war.
- 7) America policy toward Middle East and North Africa.
- 8) America's diplomatic efforts will focus on two particular issues: Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, and the Arab Israeli conflict.
- 9) America seeks peace and international community among nations.

IV. CONCLUSION

Obama's and Rouhani's speeches are analyzed according to Halliday's systematic functional linguistic. Some features of two addressers are revealed as followed. First, Obama has applied a colloquial language, consisting of simple words and short sentences that are understandable to different people. But Rouhani has used more difficult words and his language is rather hard and formal. That is related to his first days of presidency. Second, regarding transitivity analysis, which is based on different processes, both addressers' speeches have included the material processes as a process of 'doing' and "happening" more than other processes. This is especially prevalent in Obama's inaugural speech. It can be realized that one of the notable functions of this process regards to president's activities and his government. Including what presidents have done and will do in future. Third, from modality metafunction, it can be understood that presidents' use of modal verbs shows their firm plan to fulfill the tasks and make their language easy as much as possible as well as shortening the distance between the president and the audience. Another role of modal verbs, especially the frequent use of 'will' and 'can' in presidents' inaugural speeches, can persuade the audience to have faith in the government's ability about the difficulties that their country may confront in the future.

One of the prominent factors that signalize an addresser's speech is the use of personal pronouns. Obama and Rouhani give significant role to personal pronouns such as 'we' to make sense of intimacy with the audience as well as follow a common objective. The tense can be another factor that signalizes presidents' political speech. Because it refers to present, past and future events as well as activities that demonstrate government's objectives and at the same time display the world wide situations that extend from political, cultural, and economical field at present.

REFERENCES

- [1] Coffin, C. (2006). English grammar in context. Book 3: Getting practical. En.wikipedia.org: The Open University, 11.
- [2] Coffin, C. (2006). English grammar in context. Book 3: Getting practical. En. Wikipedia.org: The Open University, 22-23
- [3] Coffin, C. (2006). English grammar in context. Book 3: Getting practical (2006). En.wikipedia. org: The Open University, 245.
- [4] Chouliaraki, L. & N, Fairclough (1999). Discourse in late modernity. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- [5] Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and social change. Cambridge, UK: Policy Press.
- [6] Fairclough, N. (1995a). Critical discourse analysis. London: Longman.
- [7] Fairclough, N. (1995B). Discourse across disciplines: discourse analyzing in researching social change. *AILA Review*, 12, 3-17.
- [8] Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). Language as a social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. London: Edward Arnold Press
- [9] Halliday, M.A.K & R. Hassan. (1989). Language, context and text: aspects in a social-semiotic perspective. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Links. Jstor.org/sici?sici=0039-8322(198706)21%3A2%3C353%3ALCATAO%.
- [10] Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). "Systematic Theory". In R.E. Asher (ed) *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, Vol 8. Pergamon Press. Reprinted in full in Halliday, M.A.K. 2003. *On language and linguistics: volume 3 in the collected works of M.A.K. Halliday*. London: Continuum, 436.
- [11] Hu Zhunglin.(1988). A course of linguistics. Peking: Peking University Press, 307,312-313.
- [12] Kress, G. (1989). Linguistic processes in sociocultural practices. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [13] O'Halloran, K.A. (ed.) (2006).. English grammar in context, Book 2: Getting inside English. En.wikipedia.org: The Open University, 15-22.

- [14] O' Halloran, K.A. (ed.) (2006). English context, book 2: Getting inside English grammar. En.Wikipedia.org: The Open University, 36.
- [15] Saragih, A. (2010). Introducing systemic functional grammar of English. Medan: FBS UNIMED (unpublished), 7-8.
- [16] Thompson, G. (1996). Introducing Functional Grammar. Being: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 78.
- [17] Titscher, S., M. Meyer, R. Wodak, & E. Vetter. (2000). Methods of text and discourse analysis. London: Sage.
- [18] Wang, J. (2010). A critical discourse analysis of Barack Obama's speeches. *Journal of language teaching and research*. Lanzhou: Northwest Normal University.
- [19] Yumin, Ch. (2007). An analysis of style features of inaugural speeches given by American presidents based on the fundamental theory of HanLide. From the thesis of a master Tai Yuan science University.

Massoud Shariffar earned his PhD in linguistics from the science university of Malaysia. She is a Professor in the Department of English language at the Bahonar University of Kerman, Iran, where he teaches English language courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. His research interests include linguistics, translation, and discourse. He has written some papers in these areas of study. He is one of the referees in Iranian Foreign Language Journal.

Elahe Rahimi is an MA student in English Language Teaching in the Department of English at the Kerman Institute of Higher Education. She is working on her MA thesis which will investigate the critical discourse analysis and its implication in English language teaching: a case study of political text. Her research interests include critical discourse analysis and teaching.