Political Discourse Analysis of U.S. Inaugural Speeches: Barack Obama’s Second Speech as an Example

by

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Abstract


The present study investigates the linguistic strategies used in Obama’s second inaugural speech in light of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of personal pronouns especially the pronoun *we*. In addition, some other personal pronouns, namely, *you, they* and *I* are analyzed to show the political relationship that binds the president to his people and others. This is done in view of the sixth question in Fairclough’s Ten-question Model (2001). Some other American inaugural speeches are compared to Obama’s second speech to uncover the ideological linguistic system that Obama uses in revealing his political ideologies. The results of the analysis indicate that Obama shows solidarity with the people in his inaugural speeches as he uses his linguistic strategies purposefully in particular personal pronouns to convince his people that he is the most appropriate and closest politician to Americans to lead the U.S.A. in such a time.

**Keywords**: Political Discourse Analysis (PDA), inclusive *we*, exclusive *we*, specific *you*, animate *they*, American inaugural speech, President Barack Obama, polarity, solidarity, power.
Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Theoretical Background

Discourse Analysis is a term used to describe a field of research on the use of language; it could be defined as “the study of language viewed communicatively and linguistically” (Cameron, 2001: 11). Any more detailed use of such a definition typically involves reference to concepts of “language in use, language beyond the sentence, language as meaning in interaction and language in situational and cultural context,” to use Cameron’s (2001: 12) words. Moreover, Discourse Analysis analyzes a wide range of texts including “natural speech, professional documentation, political rhetoric, Internet communication, journals and broadcast media” (Schiffrin, 1994: 39). In addition, Discourse Analysis deals with “language form and language function” while analyzing spoken and written texts since it considers “the linguistic features characterizing different genres of social and cultural factors that help interpret different texts and types of talk” (Demo, 2001: 25).

One of the major interests of discourse analysts is differences between spoken and written discourse which are lexical density, syntactic structures and situational features. Some analysts claim that spoken