

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Barack Obama's Speeches

Junling Wang

School of Foreign Languages, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, China

Email: wangjl36@163.com

Abstract—The Critical Discourse Analysis is often applied to analyze political discourse including the public speech, in which the speaker wins favorite response from the audience. This paper, based on Critical Discourse Analysis theory and Systematic Functional Linguistics, analyzes Barack Obama's presidential speeches mainly from the point of transitivity and modality, in which we can learn the language how to serve the ideology and power. Moreover, we can have a better understanding of the political purpose of these speeches.

Index Terms— Critical Discourse Analysis, transitivity, modality

I. INTRODUCTION

Critical linguistic is also called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It first originated in Britain in 1980s when the work *Language and Control* was published.

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. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social equality (Van Dijk, 1985).

Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (often M.A.K. Halliday), an Australian linguist, developed an internationally influential grammar model—the Systemic Functional Grammar (also called Systemic Functional Linguistics). It is the main foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis as well as other theories in pragmatics.

The object of CDA is public speech, such as advertisement, newspaper, political propagandas, official documents, laws and regulations and so on. Its aim is to explore the relationships among language, ideology and power.

In the past twenty years, Critical Discourse Analysis developed quickly in aboard and had achieved great achievements. A large number of scholars have made contribution in the fields of critical analysis of political discourse. However, Critical Discourse Analysis is, comparatively speaking, a kind of new study in China. Only a few researchers work in this field. Since 90s of the last century, some articles about the basic theories and principles of Critical Discourse Analysis have just appeared in linguistic journals. Chen Zhongzhu, a professor in Beijing University, was the first person who introduced Critical Discourse Analysis to China. He made a review of critical linguistics and introduced its philosophical and theoretical foundations to Chinese linguists. Xin Bin is another prominent and productive scholar of Critical Discourse Analysis in China. From 1996 to 2002, he published many articles to further the study of Critical Discourse Analysis, in which he discussed the birth, development and methods of critical linguistics (Xu Xiaoxia, 2008). Since more and more Chinese-foreign academic exchanges in the 21st century, the development of Critical Discourse Analysis has come to a new stage. We can see more and more articles about Critical Discourse Analysis appeared in academic journals.

We know that every four years, hundreds of thousands of Americans will welcome the glory moment of electing a new president. They will canvass for their favorite candidates willingly. And every candidate will apply his or her rich language expressions, impassioned speeches and wholehearted attitudes to try to win more votes. The study of presidential addresses has not only attracted the interests of political scientists and historians, but also attained the attention of linguists. This year, Barack Obama, the first African-American president in American history, captured the world's attention.

In this thesis, the author will apply Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, in terms of the three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function, to find out the formal features of Barack Obama's speeches. Its aim is to explore the relationships among language, ideology and power and to find out how to use the power of speeches to persuade the public to accept and support his policies.

II. THEORETICAL BASES

M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar is usually considered the main foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis as well as other theories in pragmatics.

Systemic Functional Grammar has two components: SYSTEMIC GRAMMAR and FUNCTIONAL GTAMMAR.

They are two inseparable parts for an integral framework of linguistic theory. “Systemic grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system network, or meaning potential. And this network consists of subsystems from which language users make choices. Functional grammar aims to reveal that language is a means of social interaction, based on the position that language system and the forms that make it up are inescapably determined by the uses or functions which they serve” (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988: 307).

Halliday thinks 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—meta-functions, which are inherent in every language. His idea of meta-function includes the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function.

A. Ideational Function

The first function Halliday points out is the ideational function. What is ideational function?

It is through this function that the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding (Halliday, 1971: 332)

In other words, this function is to convey new information, to communicate a content that is unknown to the hearer. It reflects the events and experience in both objective and subjective worlds.

The ideational function mainly consists of “transitivity” and “voice”. Hu Zhuanglin, a Chinese linguist, point out: “This function not only specifies the available options in meaning but also determines the nature of their structural realizations” (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988: 312). For Example, *Kitty flies a kite* can be analyzed as: the Actor is *Kitty*, the process is Material and the Goal is *a kite*. The Actor, Process, Goal, and their subcategories reflect our understanding of phenomena that come within our experience.

The ideational function is mainly represented by the transitivity system in grammar. In this system, the meaningful grammatical unit is clause, which expresses what’s happening, what’s being done, what’s felt and what the state is and so on (Cheng Yumin, 2007). The transitivity system includes six processes: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process and existential process.

Material processes are those in which something is done. These processes are expressed by an action verb (e.g. eat, go, give), an Actor (logical subject) and the Goal of the action (logical direct object, usually a noun or a pronoun). (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988) e.g. *Marry is eating a banana.*

Mental processes express such mental phenomena as “perception” (see, look), “reaction” (like, please) and “cognition” (know, believe, convince). A mental process involves two participants, Sayer and Phenomenon. (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988) e.g. *Tom likes chocolate.*

Relational processes can be classified into two types: Attributive and Identifying. The former expresses what attributes a certain object has, or what type it belongs to, for example, *The temperature is high.* The latter expresses the identical properties of two entities. For example, *Lily is a girl; The girl is Lily.* (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988)

Verbal processes are those of exchanging information. Commonly used verbs are *say, tell, talk, praise, boast, describe*, etc. In these processes the main participants are Sayer, Receiver and Verbiage.

Behavioral processes refer to physiological and psychological behavior such as breathing, coughing, smiling, laughing, crying, staring, and dreaming, etc. Generally there is only one participant—Behaver, which is often a human. This kind of processes is much like the mental process. Behavioral process may sometimes be hardly distinguished from a material process that has only one participant. This depends on whether the activity concerned is physiological or psychological. When Behavioral process has two participants, we may take it as material process, for example, *His father beat the disobedient boy.* (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988)

Existential processes represent that something exists or happens. In every existential process, there is an Existent. For Example,

There is a girl in the garden.

Does ghost exist on earth?

Here comes a bus.

B. Interpersonal Function

In the second place, 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. (Halliday, 1971:333)

Hu Zhuanglin (1988:313) points out: “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.”

Modality and Mood are often used to express the interpersonal function. Mood shows what role the speaker selects in the speech situation and what role he assigns to the addressee. If the speaker selects the imperative mood, he 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. (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988)

Modality refers to the intermediate ranges between the extreme positive and the extreme negative. It is one of the most important systems in social communication. On the one hand, it can objectively express the speaker's judgment toward the topic. On the other hand, it can show the social role relationship, scale of formality and power relationship. In English, except modal verbs, modal adverbs, adjectives, there are also personal pronouns, notional verbs, tense, direct and indirect speeches to express the modalization.

C. Textual Function

The third role of language is called textual function. Halliday described, "Language makes links between itself and the situation; and discourse becomes possible because the speaker or writer can produce a text and the listener or reader can recognize one" (Halliday, 1971:334). According to Hu Zhanglin,

The textual function refers to the fact that language has mechanisms to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random list of sentences. Although two sentences may have exactly the same ideational and interpersonal functions, they may be different in terms of textual coherence. (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988: 315)

The textual function fulfils the requirement that language should be operationally relevant, having texture in a real context of situation that distinguishes a living passage from a mere entry in a grammar book or a dictionary. It provides the remaining strands of meaning potential to be woven into the fabric of linguistic structure. Information can be clearly expressed in a discourse. It can also be implicated between the lines. Therefore, all discourses are unities of explicit and implicit message. (Halliday, 1971)

Because language serves as a generalized ideational function, we are able to use it for all the specific purposes and types of context which involve the communication of experience. Because it serves a generalized interpersonal function, we are able to use it for the specific forms of personal expression and social interaction. And a prerequisite to its effective operation under both these headings what we have referred to as the textual function, whereby language becomes text, is related to itself and to its contexts of use. Without the textual component of meaning, we should be unable to make any use of language at all (Hu Zhuanglin, 1988).

III. INTRODUCTION OF SAMPLE SPEECHES

A. The Introduction of Barack Obama

Barack Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, becomes the first African-American president of the United States. He was born on August 4, 1961, in Hawaii and has lived in many places, including Indonesia. His mother was from Kansas and his father from Kenya.

Obama attended Columbia University in New York and earned a law degree at Harvard University in Massachusetts. He and his wife, Michelle Obama, who also worked as a lawyer and later for the University of Chicago, have two young daughters, Sasha and Malia.

Serving in the Senate since 2004, Obama introduced bipartisan legislation which allows Americans to learn online how their tax dollars are spent. He also serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which helps oversee the care of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. So his approval rate on the internet is high. The most supporters of Obama are young people, African-American, poor citizens and the people who want to change. Facing with the economic crisis, two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama gave his campaign slogan "change has come" and hoped to rebuild the confidence and believe of Americans.

In last August, Barack Obama defeated Hillary Rodham Clinton, the former first lady, and became the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party. And during the following months in 2008, he defeated McCain, the Republican Party's presidential candidate, and won the all three television debates held in Oxford (Mississippi), Nashville (Tennessee) and Hempstead (New York). And finally he relying on 333 electoral votes won the final success and became the 44th American president and the first African-American president in American history.

Barack Obama has written two books: *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006) and *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995).

B. Speeches for Analysis

Sample Speech 1. Obama's Victory Speech

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama gave a victory speech in Grant Park of Chicago to appreciate his supporters and celebrated the success of elections. About 400,000 Americans got here and witnessed the happy moment.

Sample Speech 2. Obama's Inaugural Address

On January 20, 2009, the new American president Barack Obama gave his inaugural address before the Capital Rotunda in Washington. According to the official reports, population of the attendance reached about 2,000,000.

IV. DETAIL STUDY ON SAMPLE SPEECHES

From table 1, we can have a general view of the two speeches. We can see the total words of sample 1 are 2057,

including 110 sentences. The average length of words is 4.247 and sentence mean length is 18.7. Sample 2 is as the same, the total words are 2396, with an average length of 4.458. And the number of sentence is 112 with an average length of 21.39. So here, we can find that the two sample speeches mainly use simple words and short sentences. The language is easy and colloquial. The audience of the speeches is usually various, including the rich, the poor, the black, the white and so on. In order to shorten the distance between the president and the audience, we can find Obama used a lot of spoken English. Moreover, the subject of the two speeches is extensive, which isn't on account of one or two concrete issue. That is because the presidential speeches usually reflect the political platforms of the candidate, so the field is large, such as American history, present crisis, global issues and so on.

TABLE 1
STATISTIC OF SAMPLE SPEECHES

Statistical Item	Statistic	
	Sample 1	Sample 2
Words (Tokens)	2057	2396
Words (Types)	690	894
Tokens/Types	2.981	2.680
Word Classification	1687_114_...	1969_123_...
Sentences	110	112
Paragraphs	63	35
Characters	8736	10681
Sentence Mean Length	18.700	21.393
Word Mean Length	4.247	4.458

A. *Transitivity Analysis*

The ideational function is represented in text by transitivity. It is a basic semantic system, which construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. Halliday divides these processes into six types: material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process and existential process.

TABLE 2
OVERVIEW OF PROCESS TYPES (PENG PINGPING, 2007)

Process types	Core meaning	Participants
Material	'doing', 'happening'	Actor, Goal
Mental	'sensing'	Sensor, phenomenon
Relational	'being'	
Verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage
Behavioral	'behaving'	Behaver
Existential	'existing'	Existent

TABLE 3
TRANSITIVITY IN THE SAMPLE SPEECHES

Sample Speech	Total Number	Material Processes	Metal Processes	Relational Processes	Behavioral Processes	Verbal Processes	Existential processes	
1	NO.	212	123	18	48	8	12	3
	%		58	8	23	4	6	1
2	NO.	227	141	14	52	6	10	4
	%		62	6	23	2	4	2

From table 2 and 3, we can see that material processes are used most in the speeches with a percentage of 58% and 62%. Relational process ranks the second and then is followed by mental process. So here, the author will mainly analyze the first three ones.

1 Material process

Material process is a process of "doing". The process is usually indicated by a verb expressing an action, either concrete or abstract. There are usually two participants in the process: Actor and Goal. Actor is comparable to the Subject and Goal is comparable to the Object and both of them are usually realized by noun phrases. When the participants both exist, the clause can be either in active voice or in passive voice.

TABLE 4
TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE SPEECHES (MATERIAL PROCESS)

ACTOT	PROCESS	GOAL
I	receive, congratulate, make, need, thank	call, partner, voice, help
We/Americans/each of us/all /our	achieve, start, get, face, share, seek, refuse, choose, reject, carry, understand, use, build, meet, restore, transform, taste, consume, send, volunteer, support,	money, the challenges, values, change, choice, vital trust, hope, journey, gift, greatness, energy, roads and bridge, reality, science, schools and colleges, new threats, the bitter swirl, new way, world's resource , message.

From the above table (Table 4), we can see the Actors of the two sample speeches are I and we /Americans/each of us/all. Material process, as a process of doing, is a good choice in the address to demonstrate what the government has achieved, what they are doing and what they will do in different aspects of affairs, home or abroad. And it can also arouse the American people's confidence toward the president and his government and to get their support in policies or measures in the following four years. For example,

We (Actor) will begin to responsibly leave (Material Process) Iraq (Goal) to its people, and forge (Material Process) a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan (Goal). With old friends and former foes, we (Actor) will work tirelessly to lessen (Material Process) the nuclear threat (Goal), and roll back (Material Process) the specter of a warming planet (Goal). We (Actor) will not apologize (Material Process) for our way of life (Goal), nor will we (Actor) waver in its defense (Goal) , and for those who (Actor) seek to advance (Material Process) their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents (Goal), we (Actor) say (Material Process) to you (Goal) now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken (Material Process); you (Actor) cannot outlast (Material Process) us, and we (Actor) will defeat (Material Process) you (Goal).

2 Relational process

Relational process is a process of being. It can be divided into two modes: attributive relation and identifying relation. The first means what properties an object possesses or what category it can be put into. And the other means that an entity and another is uniform. It is used widely in describing people and objects. Look at the following table:

TABLE 5

Attributive	Identifying
The dream of our founders is alive.	America is a friend of each nation. A friend of each nation is America.
Our challenges may be new.	America is a place where all things are possible. A place where all things are possible is America.

Relational process, as a process of being, is appropriate to explain the complex relationships between some abstract items because it sounds definite. As a result, the process accounts for a large proportion in these addresses to elaborate the relationship between traditional ideals and their beliefs. Such an elaboration can reach the President's aim of making the reasoning naturally and unconsciously accepted and making the required sacrifice in the speech willingly taken by the audience. (Cheng Yumin, 2007)

3 Mental process

Mental process is a process of feeling, thinking and seeing. Actor is not the real subject of doing, but the feeling. It represents inner experience, such as "perception", "reaction" and "cognition". We call the two participants are Senser and phenomenon. For example,

(1) *In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we (Senser) understand (Mental Process) that greatness is never a given.*

(2) *As we (Senser) consider (Mental Process) the road that unfolds before us, we (Senser) remember (Mental Process) with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains.*

(3) *And we (Senser) know (Mental Process) the government can't solve every problem.*

From above examples, we can see that mental process, as a process of sensing, appeals to the audience's inner heart to connect the political beliefs, ambitions with their expectation, hope in a clear and emphasized way. In this way, the audience's emotion of promotion and willingness to devotion is aroused and strengthened.

Halliday declared that material, relational and mental processes are three primary ones in language use since the three add up to about 90%. As an inaugural address for a newly elected American President, it must fulfill the traditionally and ritually required functions: to state facts of the domestic or worldwide situations or problems objectively and the relevant policies forcefully, to conduct reasoning related to the relationship between traditional beliefs such as freedom, democracy, justice, equality, principles, union, happiness and American dreams and citizens' participation, responsibilities, sacrifice and the needed reforms in economy, Medicare, or other fields. (Cheng Yumin, 2007)

For example,

(1) *There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after the children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage or pay their doctors' bills or save enough for their child's college education.*

(2) *Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.*

The above two sentence are examples of showing the fact that the situation in American is not good. The economic

crisis led many people lost their jobs. It is hard for them to pay the housing fee, tuitions Medicare and other heavy pays.

(3) *There's new energy to harness, new jobs to be created, new schools to build, and threats to meet, alliances to repair.*

(4) *So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism, of responsibility, where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves but each other.*

These two examples reveal that the government hopes the Americans can join together and rebuild their confidence and believes to defeat all the bad things.

B. Modality Analysis

Modality refers to a speaker's attitudes towards or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. It also extends to their attitude towards the situation or event described by a sentence.

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 to, can't/couldn't, mayn't, mightn't, hasn't/hadn't to

TABLE 7
MODALITY ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE SPEECHES (MODAL VERBS)

Sample Speeches	Total Number	Low politeness		Median politeness		High politeness	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2057	23	1.12	23	1.12	3	0.15
2	2396	29	1.12	28	1.12	9	0.38

According to the statistics, it is obvious that modal verbs are used to convey the addresser's attitudes and judgment, with an average of 0.8% in the whole speeches. The high percentage of the use of modal verbs is appropriate to the speaking since the addresses are delivered in spoken form. Compared with other verbs, modal verbs are more easily identified and understood and then accepted because at the time of listening to the speeches, there is no time for the audience to reflect.

For Example,

(1) *...because they believed that this time **must** be different, that their voices **could** be that difference.*

(2) *The road ahead **will** be long. Our climb **will** be steep. We **may** not get there in one year or even in one term. But, America, I **have never been** more hopeful than I am tonight that we **will** get there.*

(3) *And to those Americans whose support I have yet to earn, I **may** not have won your vote tonight, but I hear your voices. I **need** your help. And I **will** be your president, too.*

(4) *We **will** build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We **will** restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We **will** harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we **will** transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we **can** do. All this we **will** do.*

2 Tense

Tense is the time of a clause. Halliday (1994) points out that primary tense means past, present or future at the moment of speaking; it is the time relative to "now".

TABLE 8
TENSE OF SENTENCES

Sample Speeches		Total Numbers	Present		Simple Past	Simple Future
			Simple	Perfect		
1	NO.	110	72	8	21	10
	%		65.5	7.2		
2	NO.	112	71	13	12	14
	%		63.4	11.6		

On the basis of the statistics of tenses, we can see that the tense of simple present is most frequently used in the speeches, the average percentage being 64.45%. Simple past ranks second with an average percentage of 14.9% and is followed by simple future with an average percentage of 10.8%. The use of present perfect is slightly less than simple future and ranks the fourth. It is natural that simple present tense ranks with top priority since the addresses are to present the domestic and world wide situations ranging from political, economic and cultural fields at present. The use

of the tense facilitates the creation of a close relationship between the president and his audience and the easy identification and acceptance of the validity of the assertions contained in the speaking.

Simple future tense is primarily used to show the planned or expected things in the future. The tense helps the president to lay out his or his government's following reforms or steps taken in his term to foster the buildup of the country and the corresponding change or results of these measures in the future. In this way, the government's objectives are shown and at the same time, the audience's confidence is built by the prospect of the beauty and prosperity of the future life. It will be a natural result that the American people will follow the government's direction and guidance in the next four years and thus the addresses' goal of seeking support is achieved. Simple past and present perfect tenses are used to refer to the actions or things in the past. Their function lies in that the newly elected presidents usually state the achievements in the founding of the country or in the last term or recall the positive or negative experiences in the past as basis or incentive of his following actions. By this means, his respect for the past is displayed and it can also make his plans reasoning and fully grounded. (Cheng Yumin, 2007)

3 Personal Pronouns

TABLE 9
PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal Pronoun		Sample Speeches	
		Obama's victory speech	Obama's Inaugural Address
First person	I (me)	35	3
	We (us)	60	85
Second person	You (you)	20	14
Third person	He (him)	4	1
	She (her)	8	0
	It (it)	14	0
	They (them)	8	4
Possesive pronoun		Obama's victory speech	Obama's Inaugural Address
	My (mine)	12	2
	Our(ours)	26	69
	Your(yours)	6	3
	His (his)	1	0
	Her(hers)	6	0
	Its (its)	0	0
	Their (theirs)	11	0

From table 9, we can find out that the first person is used most. For example, the use of the first person pronoun "we" is to shorten the distance between the speaker and the audience, regardless of their disparity in age, social status and professions etc. it may include both the speaker and the listener into the same arena, and thus make the audience feel close to the speaker and his points.

C. Textual Analysis

The textual function refers to the fact that language has mechanisms to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random list of sentences. Here, we take Sample 2 as an example.

Obama's inaugural address is the first time for him to give a formal speech as a president and also an optimal time to show himself a qualified president. As a result, to fulfill the aim of convincing the American people and the whole world that he and his team are capable of leadership, with vigor and with vision, he must illustrate the planned policies, both domestic and foreign, in a formal, convincing and forceful way. It often contains the following information: (Cheng Yumin, 2007)

- 1) Salutation
- 2) The expression of gratitude and honor
- 3) A review of the American history and achievement in the past
- 4) An analysis of the contemporary situation, at home and in the world
- 5) A displaying and explanation of domestic policies and/or foreign policies of the new government
- 6) Hopes for the beautiful and prosperous future of the country
- 7) Resort to God for help and blessing

The whole text is coherent, organized, accurate and logical. So it can help to persuade the public to accept and support his policies.

Meanwhile, we can find the strong religious content in his speech. Look at the following examples:

(1) ...the **God**-given promise that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

(2) This is the source of our confidence — the knowledge that **God** calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

(3) ...with eyes fixed on the horizon and **God's** grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

(4) Thank you. **God** bless you. And **God** bless the United States of America.

We know most Western people are godly Christian. These prayers, direct and indirect speeches from Bible and the Christian stories can all help the speaker to win the sympathy and supporting of audience. They make the speech full of charisma.

V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above discussion, we may come to the conclusion.

According to Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, we can summarize the features of Barack Obama's speeches as follow. First, 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. Second, from transitivity analysis, we can see material process, a process of doing, has been used most in his speeches. From this process, Obama showed us what the government has achieved, what they are doing and what they will do. And also we can see that with applying transitivity, his speeches are trying to arouse the American people's confidence toward the president and his government in the following four years. Third, modality refers to a speaker's attitudes towards or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence. Through the analysis of modality, we can find that Obama made his audience more easily to understand and accept his political speeches by means of modal verbs, tense and first person pronouns. He used simple present tense to present the domestic and world wide situations ranging from political, economic and cultural fields at present. And then depending on simple future tense, he laid out his following reforms and steps taken in his term. In this way, the government's objectives are shown and at the same time, the audience's confidence is built. Moreover, by using first person pronouns and religious belief, he successfully shortened the distance between him and the audience. So it can help him persuade the public to accept and support his policies.

Critical Discourse Analysis can explore the relationships among language, ideology and power. It provides a new idea and method to analyze public addresses. So it is worth for us to pay more attention.

REFERENCES

- [1] Halliday, M. A. K.(1979). Linguistic function and literary style: an inquiry into the language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*. In *Linguistic Studies of Text and Discourse*. ed. Jonathan J.Webster. 88-125. Peking: Peking University Press.
- [2] Van Dijk, (1985). *A Handbook of Discourse Analysis* London Academic Press Limited. Volumn 4.
- [3] Cheng Yumin.(2007).An Analysis of Style Features of Inaugural Speeches Given by American Presidents Based on the Functional Theory of Han Lide. From the thesis of a master. Tai Yuan science University.
- [4] Dai Weihua, Gao Jun.(2002). A Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory Comment and Examples Analysis. *Foreign Language Issue* 6.P 85-88.
- [5] Hu Zhuanglin.(1988). *A Course of Linguistics*. Peking: Peking University Press.
- [6] Lin Wei,Yang Yuchen.(2007). *English Discourse Analysis*. Shanghai: Fu Dan University Press.
- [7] Luo Li.(2007).A Critical Discourse Analysis of a Political Speech. *Science and Education Collection* P193-194.
- [8] Wei Fang.(2005).Language Feature Analysis and Translation Method of Political Speeches. *Journal of Peking Printing College* Volumn13, issue 4.P75-78.
- [9] Xiong Li.(2004).A Study of Kennedy's Writing Style from Words of His Inaugural Speech. *Journal of Southwest National University*, Issue 6. P 407-410.
- [10] Xu Xiaoxia.(2008).A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sino-American Political News Report. From the thesis of a master. Shan Dong Normal University.

Junling Wang was born in Lanzhou City, Gansu Province, China in 1963.She received her M.A degree in English language and literature from Foreign Languages Department of Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou, China in 1989.Now she is an associate professor in Northwest Normal University. Her research interests include English teaching and translation practice.