

Thematic Analysis of the Speeches by Emma Watson at the United Nations and Adlai Stevenson's Presidential Campaign Speech

Yuanyuan Zhang

University of Hong Kong, Hongkong, 999077, China

ABSTRACT

Public speech has always been the focus of scholars' research. This essay based on Emma Watson's speech at the United Nations and Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign speech, takes Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics as the theoretical framework, and makes a comparative study of the language characteristics of the two speeches. By analyzing the discourse functions of the two speeches, the theme structure, the patterns of theme progression, and cohesion and coherence are used to explore and analyze the differences of linguistic features of the two speeches, help the audience understand the speaker's intention, and explore the reasons why the speech is moving.

KEYWORDS

Speech; Discourse analysis; Thematic analysis; Thematic progression patterns

1 Introduction

1.1 The introduction of Halliday's three metafunctions theory

Halliday is the founder of systemic functional linguistics. Halliday (1985) points out that the three metafunctions of language are conceptual metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction ^[1]. Conceptual function consists of two parts: experiential function and logical function. Experiential function refers to the expression of language to people's various experiences in the real world, including the inner world. Logical function refers to the expression of logical relationship between two or more meaning units by language. The interpersonal function of language means that the speaker can participate in a certain situation through language, express his attitude and views, and influence others through language, so as to achieve the purpose of interpersonal communication. According to Halliday, textual function refers to the function of organizing linguistic elements into texts. Thematic structure is the main way to reflect the textual function.

1.2 The backgrounds of Emma Watson and Adlai Stevenson

Emma Watson is a famous British actress. Emma Watson in the movie Harry Potter as Hermione Granger in Porter, has become a famous Hollywood actor and has a wide influence among teenagers ^[2]. In September 2014, Emma Watson delivered a speech as "goodwill ambassador of UN women's agency" in the United Nations sponsored activity "he for she" aimed at achieving gender equality. Adlai Stevenson is a famous American politician and an outstanding diplomat. In his career, he has injected vitality, passion, wisdom and insight into American politics and diplomacy. Many people call him as the greatest political orator after British Prime Minister Churchill at that time. His speech received worldwide attention and was well received for his idealistic style.

1.3 The aim and significance of the thesis.

The general situation of speech discourse analysis can be summarized as the following characteristics. First, the discourse analysis of speeches in China needs to be supplemented. Second, at present, most of the discourse studies of speeches by systemic functional scholars are political speeches, especially those focusing on key politicians, such as Obama and trump. Due to the lack of discourse analysis on nonpoliticians, Emma Watson is chosen as an ambassador of the United Nations and an influential young film actress Lectures at the United Nations could fill such gaps. In addition, it can help readers better understand the discourse of women's speech. Fourth, a comparative study of Emma Watson (nonpoliticians) and Adlai Stevenson (politicians) can enrich the linguistic features of the speech and the intention of the speaker.

2 Literature review

Halliday believes that human experience can be divided into six different processes through transitivity system: material process, psychological process, relationship process, behavior process, speech process and existence process personal pronouns and modal verbs are the main forms of interpersonal function ^[3]. In public speaking, the frequency of personal pronouns and modal verbs plays an important role in the relationship between the speaker and the audience. In general, the use of first person pronouns and second person pronouns helps to promote mutual understanding between

the speaker and the audience. Therefore, the analysis of personal pronouns is conducive to the study of the speaker's speech style and understanding of the audience's feelings about the speech.

3 Theme

3.1 The concepts of theme structure

Mathesuis, the founder of Prague School, put forward the concepts of theme and rheme. He believed that in a sentence, the element at the beginning of the sentence has a special role in the process of interpersonal communication, and this role is to raise topics^[4]. He called this part of the topic theme, and the other part. At the same time, he said the theme is usually known information, while the rheme is new information. In Halliday's view, the concept of theme contains not only topics, but also other elements that do not represent topics but at the beginning of sentences. According to this point of view, Halliday (1985) put forward the concept of single theme and multiple theme^[5]. In a book, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, he pointed out that the fundamental difference between the two lies in that the single theme only contains topic theme and has no structure, so further analysis is not allowed. It can be further divided into discourse theme, interpersonal theme and topic theme.

3.2 The concepts of thematic progression and patterns of thematic progression

In general, the theme plays a cohesive role in the text, which is often acted by the conjunctions. Interpersonal theme reflects the attitude of the author and the reader, usually including address, modality, limitation, modal marker and so on. Topic theme is experiential theme, which refers to the experiential component of theme and is related to the information conveyed in the text. In theory, Halliday's concept of multiple themes enriches the theory of theme rheme Structure. In other words, the systemic functional linguistics school not only accepts the terms of Prague School, but also develops on its basis. Each sentence has a theme structure. When the sentence exists alone, its theme and rheme are determined and will not change. Since there is no context, its theme and rheme are isolated and undeveloped. When we touch the discourse, we will find that most of the discourse is composed of two or more sentences. At this point, we will find that there are some relations and changes between theme and theme, between rheme and rheme, and between theme and rheme. This connection and change is called progression. The whole text is developed gradually with the theme of each sentence moving forward. It can be seen that this kind of promotion can promote the whole text to form a whole which can express a complete meaning. Although the form of thematic structure is complex and diverse, it still has its internal development law^[6]. Thematic rheme progression patterns can be used to express the semantic connection of a paragraph or a text. It can help the speaker to generate idioms effectively, and it can also help the receiver to understand the text accurately. It is helpful for us to understand the semantic intention of the speaker and the means of organizing the sentence, so as to better explore the relationship between sentence combination and sentence content, grasp the Theme-Rheme Structure Arrangement of the text and grasp the author's purpose and ideas, with the help of theme-rheme progression patterns, quickly and accurately understand the information structure of the text, and interpret it in the way closest to the author's thinking and development. A large number of corpus materials prove that there are very few progression patterns in a discourse according to a single one, and most of them are complex, often a combination of several progression patterns. We call a structure with two or more progression patterns as composite patterns.

4 Corpus research

4.1 The source of corpus and research methods about the two addresses

The two texts selected in this paper are all from public speaking. The first one is the speech of Emma Watson in the United Nations (hereinafter referred to as address 1) and the second one is the speech of Adlai Stevenson for president (hereinafter referred to as address 2). This paper focuses on the analysis of the thematic structure and thematic progression patterns of these two texts. By using the statistical analysis method, this paper makes a percentage statistics of the thematic use and distribution of the two corpora, and makes a comparative analysis of the language characteristics of English speech with the data^[7].

4.2 The corpus statistics and analysis for two corpora

4.2.1 The statistics and analysis of thematic selection data of two corpora

In these two speeches, the theme structure is I and we. The frequent occurrence of the first mock exam I reflects the speaker's main body feelings as a speaker, and the theme we is the idiom used by speakers to explain topics of common

Table 1 High theme frequency from address1 and address2

Address1	Word	Frequency	%	Address2	Word	Frequency	%
	I	46	71		I	8	32
	We	19	29		We	17	68

concern. Its other function is to narrow the distance between speakers and listeners, which makes people more intimate and more acceptable to their listeners. In these two speeches, the first person is the most used to indicate the personal purpose of the speech. But in the first person, Emma Watson used I the most, accounting for 71%; Adlai Stevenson used we the most, accounting for 68%. The speaker frequently took I as the starting point of the organizational thought, elaborated his feelings for the speech, and the content he would like to elaborate in the speech, so as to make the whole speech clear and natural. It's also the first person^[8]. Using I is more about emphasizing one's own point of view and experience. Adlai Stevenson describes his wish as everyone's wish, so as to get a greater resonance and make the purpose clearer. He portrayed a bright future for the American people, which made the American people more confident and emotional. This is a way for him to win votes. At the same time, we can see that the difference is that Emma Watson and Adlai Stevenson have different backgrounds and different purposes of their speeches. Emma Watson is a young British film actress, and Adlai Stevenson is an American presidential candidate^[9]. The purpose of her speech is to call for equality between men and women. As a feminist, she tells many examples of women's inequality as a female representative. Adlai Stevenson tries to win the presidential election by speaking for herself. Therefore, we should stand on the same emotional starting point as the American people.

By analyzing the data of theme selection of the two speeches, we can see that they have a common linguistic feature^[10]. Both of them are good at using parallelism. Parallelism increases the rendering power of the addresses, which can arouse the resonance of the audience and empathize with the audience. Although most of their addresses are short sentences, very few long sentences, short sentences plus the cadence of the speaker's tone during the speech, plus the structure of parallelism, make the address more touching. In political speech and nonpolitical speech, the rendering power of the address is particularly important the expression of the intention of the speaker. The logic and philosophy of the two addresses are not apparent, but the language and emotion conveyed are very intensive, reaching the intention of the speaker.

4.2.2 The statistics and analysis of thematic progression patterns of the two corpora

Table 2 High frequency of theme progression patterns from address1 and address2

Pattern	Address1	Address2
Constant theme pattern	11	4
Constant rheme pattern	2	1
Linear theme pattern	2	1
Cross theme pattern	2	0
Derived theme/ rheme pattern	3	3
Total number	20	9

From the two addresses, it can be seen that there are many patterns in the two addresses and the main progression is the constant theme progression, which shows that the reasoning of the two addresses is very thorough and the speakers focus on one theme. In these two addresses, constant theme progression accounts for about 50%. In terms of paragraph level (one paragraph explains a specific problem, but all paragraphs revolve around the theme of the text), the two addresses are closely around their respective themes. The theme of Emma Watson's address is Feminism. Adlai Stevenson's speech is about running for president. On the basis of understanding the themes of the two addresses, combined with table 2, it can be concluded that in table 2, Emma Watson used a lot of space to describe her life experience, and a lot of I as the theme closely related to it. There are many short sentences in Adlai Stevenson's speech, which uses the history of the United States to inspire people to vote for himself. Although the usage of the theme of Address 2 is much less than that of Address 1, compared with other modes in Address 2, constant theme progression still accounts for nearly 50%. It can be concluded that constant theme progression plays a great role in the elaboration of the theme and the cohesion of the theme between sentences^[11-12].

The second is the derived theme/rheme progression. It can be seen that the author focuses on a topic most of the time when writing this address. In the rest of the time, he basically selects a component from the new content contained in the digit part of the previous sentence, which becomes the starting point of the next sentence^[13-15]. It can be seen that this kind of discourse structure can develop in a continuous way, form a continuous development situation, make the discourse more expressive, make the discourse more coherent in semantics, so that it can be more accepted by the audience, and more easily attract the attention of the audience. First of all, the choice of thematic progression patterns must consider the necessary knowledge of readers. There must be some common knowledge between the author and the reader, which is very meaningful from the perspective of thematic structure, because the amount of common knowledge determines the angle from which the information should be conveyed. The author does not always use the easy linear theme pattern to lead out new information from the former narrator; He can choose the starting point of information from the common knowledge background between him and readers. As mentioned before, themes usually convey known or shared information. However, if the amount of knowledge shared by the reader group and the author of a text is limited, that is, the knowledge of the reader is insufficient to understand the text, or certain information is more

complex for the corresponding reader group, so the author should try his best to express the information clearly. When constructing a text, it is better to choose the linear development pattern, take the information expressed by the former rheme as the known information of the next rheme, and bring the old information into the new information, so as to gradually increase and accumulate the common knowledge between the author and the reader, so as to make the text clear to understand ^[13].

4.2.3 The analysis of cohesion and coherence

Although thematic progression is not the only way to achieve coherence, the above analysis shows that thematic progression is an important means to form discourse coherence. The study of thematic progression in discourse analysis is helpful to reveal the essence of discourse coherence. Of course, the use of thematic progression must pay attention to the relevance and unity of the text. A discourse with good surface cohesion and thematic progression may be a coherent discourse, or it may be just a disordered, seemingly coherent word combination without any semantic relevance ^[14].

Cohesion is one of the linguistic features of text and it, together with coherence in discourse, is regarded as the core of the study of text linguistics or discourse analysis. When it comes to the relationship between thematic progression and discourse analysis, Qi Yucu (1993) once pointed out that thematic progression helps to study the semantic relationship between sentences and the expansion of themes in paragraphs. In fact, the main means of cohesion to achieve speech discourse coherence is connection. The speaker uses a variety of conjunctions, adverbs or other linking means to skillfully connect the ideas he wants to express, thus presenting a variety of language structure, which also makes the speech fluent and clear ^[15].

5 Conclusion

The above part introduces the existing research on theme theory and thematic progression patterns, and analyzes them with specific texts, but the research results still have some limitations. The number of samples in this paper is insufficient, and the length of the two selected speeches is relatively short. Therefore, there are some limitations in the analysis of theme selection and theme progression patterns.

Using Halliday's systemic functional grammar as the theoretical framework, this paper analyzes Emma Watson's speeches at the United Nations and Adlai Stevenson's speeches from the perspective of theme and thematic progression patterns of discourse analysis, and explores the similarities and differences between the two speeches. Emma and Watson use a lot of subjects—I. Adlai Stevenson uses a lot of subject—we, which shows that they have different cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the choice of theme is related to the speaker's intention. Second, although they have different cultural background and themes, they both use a lot of theme—we at the end of the speech. This kind of theme change makes the speaker express his own views and easy to accept by the audience, mainly to attract the audience's resonance. Third, most of the speeches are from the same type to the continuity type, which is suitable for the transmission of new information and the transition from old information to new information.

About the Author

Yuanyuan Zhang, female, Han Nationality, born in Bazhong, Master, Sichuan province, August 10, 1998. Research direction: Applied Linguistics.

References

- [1] Brown G., & Yule G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Danes F. (1970). On linguistics analysis of text structure. *Folia Linguistics*, pp. 72-78.
- [3] Danes F. (1974). *Papers in Functional Sentence Perspective*. Prague: Academia.
- [4] Dijk T. A. (1977). *Text and Context*. London: Longman.
- [5] Ehrlich, S. 1988, 7 2. Cohesive devices and discourse competence. *World Englishes*, pp. 111-118.
- [6] Firbas, J. (1964, 1). On defining the theme in functional sentence analysis. *Travaux Linguistiques de Prague*.
- [7] Goffman E. (1975). *Frame Analysis: an Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- [8] Halliday M., & Hasan R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- [9] Halliday M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- [10] Hatim B. (1990). *Discourses and the Translator*. Longman.
- [11] Hoey M. (1991). *Patterns of Lexis in Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] Hu Z. (1980). Department of Linguistics. Sydney: The University of Sydney.
- [13] Mater J., & D., R. (2007). *Working with Discourse*. London: Continuum.
- [14] Newmark P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall.
- [15] Quirk R. (1986). *Words at Work: Lectures on Textual Structure*. London: Longman.