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Linguistic analysis of social relation in a political and religious discourse

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Abstract: In this paper, Critical Discourse Analysis is applied to analyse the political and religious discourse through the Systemic Functional Grammar, specifically the interpersonal function of the language. The study reveals that there exist a close social relationship between the speaker, Benigno S. Aquino III and the major addressee-the Pope, with a high degree of respect from the speaker to the addressee as revealed in the use of personal pronouns. Personal pronouns further reveal the control of the speaker when he desires to be close to or distant from the addressee. The modal verbs reveal the politeness of the speaker, validated by the predominance of the declarative mood of the sentences.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis; Systemic Functional Grammar; personal pronouns; modal verbs; mood; interpersonal relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

'Life is in many ways a series of conversations', and that 'talking is something we tend to take for granted'. When linguists and other social scientists analyse spoken discourse, their aim is to show what talking accomplishes in people's lives and in society at large. It is an interdisciplinary enterprise (Cameron, 2001) of which students of education belong. Discourse can be used for assertion of power and knowledge, and they can be used for purposes of resistance and critique. (Wodak, 2007)

Discourse Analysis is not exclusively concerned with spoken discourse: in principle it can deal with socially-situated language-use in any channel or medium. Discourse analysts may work well with written data....(Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, cited in Cameron, 2001)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, (Van Dijk, 1985) a contemporary approach to the study of language and discourses in social institutions. Drawing on poststructuralist discourse theory and critical linguistics, it focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through the written and spoken texts in communities, schools and classrooms and employs interdisciplinary techniques of text analysis to look at how texts construct representations of the world, social identities, and social relationships. (Luke, 1995)

The principal unit of analysis for critical discourse analysis is the text. Texts are taken to be social actions, meaningful and coherent instances of spoken and written

language use, yet their shape and form is not random or arbitrary. Critical discourse analysis focuses on sentence and word-level analysis, drawing analytic methods from systemic functional linguistics. Halliday (1985) argues that lexical and grammatical features of texts have identifiable functions: (a) they represent and portray the social and natural world ("field"); (b) they construct and effect social relations ("tenor"); and, (c) they develop conventions as coherent, identifiable texts in particular media ("mode"). (Luke, 1995)

It is a natural phenomenon and a normal activity for a president to deliver a message on all important occasions and historical events in a nation. More often, occasions and turn of events are avenues for political discourses. It is but on rare occasions that a president delivers a message different from everyday contexts.

In 45 years, there were only three Papal visits to the Philippines. The first was in 1970, second was in 1995, and the most recent was on January 15-19, 2015. With the theme "Mercy and Compassion", his Holiness Pope Francis made this visit to the nation. It is on this occasion when on January 16, President Benigno S. Aquino III delivered a message before His Holiness together with the general audience in Malacanang Palace.

It was with firm belief that the said message was worthy of an analysis since it was not only a special political message but also a religious piece delivered before the Vatican's Head of State and at the same time the highest leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

In an attempt to a Critical Discourse Analysis, this paper applies Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. There are three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. However, this paper focuses the area on interpersonal function to find out the



formal features of Benigno S. Aquino's speech. Its aim is to explore the relationship among language, specifically the interpersonal function to be able to describe the relations between President Benigno S. Aquino and Pope Francis.

1.1. Research questions

Specifically, the study aims to find answers to the following:

1. What personal pronouns, modals, and mood are exhibited in the speech?
2. How do these personal pronouns, modals verbs, and mood or interpersonal function of language aid in the expression of social and personal relations between the speaker and the addressee?

1.2 Objectives

1. Identify the personal pronouns, modals, and mood of the sentences in the speech;
2. Show the interpersonal function of the language in terms of personal pronouns, modal verbs, and mood in the expression of social and personal relations between the speaker and the addressee.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study has as its theoretical framework, the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) or Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by M.A.K. Halliday in 1961. The Systemic Functional Grammar approach in linguistics considers grammar in terms of usage and the creation of meaning. It takes the resource perspective rather than the rule perspective; and it is designed to display the overall system of grammar rather than only fragment. (Halliday & Mathiesan 2004).

M. A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar focusing on Interpersonal Function frames the analysis of this paper. Systemic Functional Grammar is considered as the main foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is often applied to analyse political discourse including the public speech (Wang, 2010).

In the Systemic Functional Grammar, the term systemic refers to the view that language is "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning" (Halliday, 1994.p.15), and the term functional refers to the idea that language is "a social activity taking place in a situational context and fulfilling a number of functions" (Morley, 1985, p.4). There are three functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual.(Halliday, 1970). The ideational function is concerned with cognitive meaning, the interpersonal function sets up and maintains social relations between persons, and the textual function enables the speaker or writer to organise the article as a logical sequence of units (Kennedy, 1982).

In line with the interest of this paper which is to unveil the social and personal relationship between Benigno S. Aquino and Pope Francis behind the text of a language, the

interpersonal function of the Systemic Functional Grammar is specifically employed, since 'language serves as interpersonal function. (Halliday, cited in Wang, 2010). Hu (1988:313) points out that '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'.

Since the analysis of this paper focuses on the interpersonal function of the language used by Aquino in his speech, the analysis of the discourse includes the areas of personal pronouns, modality, and mood. (Halliday, 1978). Language is used in Christian religion to perform different functions; to persuade, convince, control behaviour, pacify and win over new converts, and in this paper, to affirm, through the systems of personal pronouns, mood and modality.

How do these areas of language aid in the establishment of the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the addressee? What are their function to deliver such role?

Personal pronouns are pronouns representing the first, second, and third person in the traditional grammar, including the subjective pronouns (i.e. I, we), objective pronouns (e.g. me, us), possessive pronouns (e.g. my, our), reflexive pronouns (myself, ourselves), relative pronouns (e.g. which, who), indefinite pronouns (e.g. anyone, someone) and other forms. Personal pronouns exert the interpersonal function in discourse, for they can establish a certain relationship between the addresser and the addressee in a speech. (Li, 2002, cited in Wang, 2010). Through the use of personal pronouns, the speaker establishes a certain degree of distance, whether close or far, with the addressee.

Modality and Mood often serve as channel in the expression of interpersonal function.

Modality refers to the degree of certainty and truth of statements about the world. Modality consists of modulation which is realized by modal verb operators such as may, will, and must; and modulation realized by mood adjuncts. It is the general term for all signs of speakers' opinion and attitude (Butt, et al 1995). It is the area of meaning that lies between yes and no (Halliday, 1994), demonstrates the speaker's assessment of probability (e.g. may, probably), usuality, obligation (e.g. should, must) and inclination (e.g. will) (Halliday, 1994). There are a number of means of modality, such as modal auxiliaries (e.g. can, may, will), modal adverbs (e.g. possibly, always) adjectives (e.g. possible, probable) and tense (e.g. present tense, past perfect) (Wang, 2010 p. 256.)

Mood shows what role the speaker selects in the speech situation and what role the speaker 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. (Hu, 1988) The power and the authority that the speaker possesses are emphasized. While the declarative or indicative mood states



facts of history, or simply gives information or a general truth. The mood structure indicates how clause is structured to realize the speech functions of offer, command, statement and question in interaction. From the Lexico-grammatical structure of a clause, a statement is realized by declarative mood, question is realized by interrogative mood and command is realized by imperative mood. Mood realizes interpersonal metafunction.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Content and or documentation analysis is employed in the discourse analysis of the “Message of President Aquino during the general audience with Pope Francis in Malacanang Palace” delivered before the presence of Pope Francis during his visit to the Philippines on January 16, 2015. In particular, personal pronouns, modals, and mood are investigated and analysed in the establishment of the speaker’s attitudes towards the addressee, and religious beliefs towards a proposition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table below shows the frequency of personal pronouns used by Aquino in his speech.

It is interesting to note the predominance of first person singular pronoun ‘I’ with frequency of 19 or 55.88% and the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ at 70.37%. The personal pronouns are both in the subject form.

This data suggests that in the use of ‘we’ pronoun at 70.37%, the speaker establishes a close relationship with the audience (Liu, 2008), in this case, the Filipino people, regardless of their differences in age, social status, professions, and local cultures. Paradoxically, the subject personal pronoun ‘I’ at 55.88% is also predominantly employed to mean that the speaker, while establishing closeness in certain events, also distances himself and identifies himself of negative experiences distinct from the audience. The use of the personal pronoun in possessive form, singular, ‘Your’ is used 16 times or 64% including the reference to the Pope, ‘Your Holiness’. This suggests that while the speaker gives reverence to the Pope, he prides himself with being close to the Pope by using the possessive pronoun ‘Your’ and ‘you’ which are in the second person, closer to the speaker than that in the third person. Although low in frequency, this is validated by the use of ‘me’ ‘you’ and ‘our’ in the object form. This clearly suggests the closeness in the relationship between the speaker and the Pope, in the viewpoint of the speaker. Moreover, the speaker reveals his belief in the opposition-the Roman Catholic, through his employment of personal pronouns in relation to the religious belief.

A. Personal Pronouns

A personal pronoun is a pronoun that is associated with a particular person, object, or animal. It can be in the subject form (I, You, He, She, It, We, You, They); object form (me, you, him, her, it, us, you, the), possessive form (mine, my, your/s, his, her/s, its), demonstrative form (this, these, that, those), reflexive form (myself, yourself, themselves, ourselves), and indefinite form (many, few, one, each, etc).

Table 1. Frequency of Personal Pronouns

	Singular	F	%	Plural	F	%
As subject pronoun						
	I	19	55.88	We	19	70.37
	You	4	11.76	You	3	11.11
	He	2	5.88	They	5	18.52
	It	9	26.47			
Total		34	100		27	100
As Object pronoun						
	me	7	46.66	us	6	100
	You	7	46.66	you		
	him	1	6.66	them		
Total		15	100		6	100
Possessive Pronoun						
	My	6	24.00	Our	7	70.00
	Your	16	64.00			
	His	2	8.00	Their	3	30.00
	its	1	4.00			
Total		25	100		10	100
Reflexive						
	myself	1	50.00			
	yours elf	1	50.00			
Total		2	100			



The use of personal pronouns 'I' and 'We' clearly suggest that the speaker sees himself as authority in the sense that he makes his choice and uses his choice of pronouns in cases where he wishes to be close or distant from the addressees. The speaker imposes himself and controls the situation when to get close and when not to by using 'we' when he wants to get close and uses 'I' to emphasise distance.

Although not expressed in the personal pronoun, the speaker used the subject- nouns 'the dictator/ship' two times, 'Mr. Marcos' two times', and the 'the previous administration's', it is obvious that the speaker creates a certain degree of distance from these subject-nouns, and rejection of being identified with them. The speaker regarded the subjects in names so distant from him.

The table further shows the predominance of the personal pronouns 'I' as singular subject (19 or 55.58%) and 'we' (19 or 70.37 %) as plural subject, and the predominance of the possessive pronoun 'your'. This draws the relationship of the subjects closer, while the nouns used as subjects pulls the relationship distantly away from the speaker and the subject of the noun.

The fact that the speaker sees himself as equal and close because of the employment of 'you' with the Pope is acceptable in the viewpoint that the Pope is the Head of State, like the speaker who also occupies the highest seat in the Republic. But in the ground that the Pope is the Head of the Catholic Church, which the speaker obviously does not occupy, is being authoritarian, since in this case, they are not equal. But the recognition is notable because every time the speaker addresses the Pope, the word 'Your Holiness' is used, with a capital 'Y' in the pronoun *Your*, and the word *Holiness*. Therefore, the establishment of closeness of relationship because of the use of the pronoun 'your' is catalysed since it is used in the highest respect -the capital letters. In this sense, the speaker does not see himself as equal with the Pope, but somebody with a lower identity.

B. Modal Verbs

The function of modal verbs is to allow the speaker or writer to express their opinion of, or their attitude, to a proposition. These attitudes can cover a wide range of possibilities including obligations, asking for and giving permissions, disapproval, advising, logical deduction, ability, possibility, necessity or absence of necessity.(tesol-direct.com) They often occupy the first position in verb phrase, coming before any other auxiliary verb and the main lexical verb

Table 2. Modals of Auxiliary Verbs

Modal	F	%
can	1	10.00
cannot	1	10.00
shall	3	30.00
should	1	10.00
will	2	20.00
would	1	10.00
might	1	10.00
Total	10	100

Table 2 presents the auxiliary verbs. Since there is a limited frequency of ten in the use of auxiliary verbs it is important to discuss these auxiliary verbs as they unveil the attitude of the speaker which provides a ground for the establishment of the relationship between the addressees. The auxiliary verb '*shall*' used three times or 30% is already the most used. The auxiliary verb '*shall*' is suggestive and polite as opposite to the auxiliary verb '*should*' at 10% which is more opinionated and more tentative. This describes the speaker as more polite and suggestive, not demanding or ensuing a command for a proposition.

C. Mood

Mood conveys the speaker's attitude about the state of being of what the sentence describes. Mood is only one of the many verb properties, others being tense, aspect, and voice. It is expressed through the sentence's verbs and grammatical structure. Mood can be a) Indicative or Declarative, used to make factual statements, indicates a fact or denies it, states and expresses opinions as if they were facts; b) Imperative, expressing commands or requests, indicating the speaker's desire for the action expressed in the sentence to take place; (grammatist.com.) or c) Subjunctive, that which shows something hypothetical or contrary to fact. It might be a wish, a desire, a doubt, or an imaginary situation, dead, or recommend. (englishgrammar101.com)



Table 3. Frequency of Mood

Mood	F	%
Declarative	51	89.47
Subjunctive	6	10.53
Imperative	0	0.00
Total	57	100

Table 3 shows the frequency of mood of the sentences based on the verbs used. The dominance of sentences in the declarative mood, 51 or 89.47% in the analysis indicates that the speaker's chief concern is to offer the addressee/s some information or facts of history. Since the speaker weaved his speech principally to the Pope as the main audience, two passages are lifted from the scriptures of the Holy Bible, originally in the imperative mood, but since the speaker's role is just to share the message by quoting the passages, the sentences are in the declarative mood. The wishes and desires of the speaker are executed in six instances or 10.53% when he made use of subjunctive sentences. The absence in the use of imperative sentences denote that the speaker is not an authoritarian person. This validates the use of personal pronoun 'we', which reveals the belongingness of the speaker with his addressees. Although this suggests that the speaker is trying to be equal, he definitely is not, because he weaves his sentences according to his personal choice, and shifts from 'we' to 'I' or vice versa in situations he decides so.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The language of the speaker is a reflection of his personality and the relationship he wishes to establish with the audience. He has the total control of the words he wishes to employ. As Thompson points out that language is a system of choices, each choice contributes to the meaning and by looking at the choices we can explore how the resources of the language have been used to construct meaning (2004: 35). The meaning of the language builds the social relationship between speaker and audience and unfolds the personal attribute of the speaker as well.

This study reveals that the language used to fulfil the interpersonal function of the Systemic Functional Grammar created a distinct characteristic of the social relationship and the personal attributes of the speaker. The use of equal frequency of personal pronouns reflects the character of the speaker as a person who sees himself not totally different person from the audience but somebody who 'belongs' to them, sharing their ideals, visions, hopes and dreams, *we* at 70.37%. At the same time, the speaker sees himself as somebody who has a distinct character because of negative experiences that only he has hurdled and survived, and the discom-

fort that only 'he' as President can attest, at the same time distancing himself (I, 55.88%) as the sole authority being the leader of the nation. Hence, the use of both 'I' and 'we' establish a close relationship between the speaker and the addressee/s. On the other hand, the limited use of auxiliary verbs still unveil the attitude of the speaker which provides a ground for the establishment of the relationship between the addressees. The auxiliary verb 'shall' used three times or 30.00% is already the most used, and is suggestive of the attribute of the speaker as being polite, and further validated with the use of the sentences in the declarative mood and subjunctive mood, but never in the imperative mood. Declarative sentences (89.47%) laid facts of history on the viewpoint of the speaker, and the wishes and desires in the subjunctive mood reveals the speaker's commitment of fulfilling the wants and desires of the addressees, (the Pope and the general audience) but never giving orders and commands because of the absence of imperative sentences. This is a phenomena of social relationship observed in the Philippine culture of politics and religion.

Finally, the speaker views himself as a person with lower rank with the Pope, humbly asking for blessing, on behalf of the Filipino people.

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