




Public discourse: Systemic functional analysis of Trump's and Biden's inaugural speeches

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Abstract

This study critically analyzes the inaugural speeches of President Trump and President Biden using Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics. The study focuses on transitivity, modality, and texture to identify the political purposes of the two speeches and how language serves ideology and power. Concerning transitivity, the analysis of the ideational function reveals Trump's usage of 'material process' to portray himself as the 'actor' and the 'doer' with clear 'goals' (a strong leader) and Biden's usage of 'relational process', 'material process' and 'mental process' to communicate vision, simplify abstract concepts and gain trust. Concerning modality, the investigation of the interpersonal function exposes that as Trump communicated his goals, vision, and manifesto directly through medium certainty and the future indicator 'will', Biden used high, medium, and low certainty modals to reflect on his vision, entrust the public and generate hope. Even though the structural perspective of low modality in Biden's speech may suggest weak leadership and lack of confidence, the functional analysis reveals Biden's fatherly-like approach to uplift morale and generate trust. The investigation of the thematic development and lexical cohesion in both speeches reveals Trump's focus on concrete concepts (i.e., jobs, wealth, borders) and Biden's focus on abstract concepts and American values (i.e., unity, democracy, racial justice). The textual analysis also demonstrates how ideologies are communicated through the usage of multiple synonymous references, excessive repetitions, and the conceptual use of 'we' and 'others'.

Keywords: Public discourse; Ideational metafunction; Interpersonal metafunction; Textual metafunction; systemic functional linguistics; Inaugural speeches

1. Introduction

Inaugural speeches in the US are delivered by presidents after taking the presidential oath of office. Presidents take this opportunity to address the nation and introduce their vision and goals. These speeches, in times, also serve the purpose of uniting the USA especially after troubled periods or conflicts in times. Inaugural speeches are usually watched by millions of people in the US as they are also watched by millions of people abroad to get a glimpse of the new president's vision to the world. This was the case with the overwhelming majority of previously delivered inaugural speeches as was

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the case with the inaugural speeches of the 45th and the 46th presidents. However, the last two presidents had major personal and political issues with their predecessors and their visions of the country and this was reflected in their inaugural speeches.

Neither President Trump nor President Biden has good terms with their predecessors in the White House. For Trump, Obama was an immigrant who took years to provide a birth certificate (later on he admitted that President Obama is born in the US). He is, according to Trump, the most ignorant American president in history. Trump also claimed that Obama is a disaster and that he is the founder of ISIS. For Biden, Trump was not fit to be the president of the United States. Trump, according to Biden, will go down to history as one of the most irresponsible Presidents as he has been an embarrassment to the country (the US). They (Trump and Biden) were not in good terms up to a stage that Trump decided to skip the inauguration of Biden and Biden describes Trump's decision to skip the inauguration as 'a good thing'. Having the above in mind, this paper critically analyses the inaugural speeches of Trump and Biden using Systematic Functional Linguistics with a focus on modality and transitivity to learn the political purposes of the two speeches and how language serves ideology and power.

Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is the backbone of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Van Dijk (1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2001) viewed CDA as a field that studies and analyses written and spoken texts in social, cultural, historical, or political contexts to highlight discursive features such as dominance, ideology, power, bias, and inequality. CDA is not a simple discipline or narrowly defined theory; it is not a homogeneous method, nor school or a paradigm, but at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic, or discourse analysis. It shares the methods of linguistics and discourse analysis, but it differs from them in being critical. It implied different methods and approaches to study text and talk, and one of these is critical linguistics. In critically analyzing a communicative event, Fairclough (1998, 1992, 1995) drew attention to three analytical hubs that are the text, the discourse practice, and intertextuality. To carry the textual analysis, Fairclough (1993, 1995, 2003, 2005) made use of Halliday's (1985) SFL. For Halliday (1985), SFL is based on functional grammar as it opposes "formal grammar". It is functional as it intends to interpret the texts, the system, and the linguistic structures. It is systemic as the structures that people tend to use in certain recurrent situations are systematic. This study makes use of SFL to critically and functionally examine the structures used by both presidents in their inaugural speeches to find out more about the political purposes of their speeches and how language is used to communicate ideology and power.

2. Literature Review

The SFL or the 'Sydney School' is based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG) approach. Halliday (1985) viewed grammar from a functional point of view. He also viewed the "components of meaning" as functional. He illustrated that languages are systematized around two types of meanings that are the "ideational", which represent experience (Martin and Rose, 2003) and the "interpersonal", which is the component to enact relationships (Martin and Rose, 2003). As such, the ideational component is concerned with our use of grammar and grammatical resources to interpret our experience of the world around us and inside us (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). The interpersonal component, however, is concerned with the relationship between the communicators. It is the "grammatical resources for enacting social roles" (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997, p. 12).

In addition to these two components, Halliday (1985) added another component that is the "textual", which "breathes relevance into the other two". The textual component, then, is concerned with the presentation of the other two components as a text (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997). Halliday

(1985) called these three components of meanings “metafunctions”. According to Marin and Rose (2003), these three functions or metafunctions of language are “interwoven with each other” (p. 6). Therefore, researchers may examine any discourse from any of these three components to identify the functions carried out by the different patterns of meaning (p.7).

According to Halliday (1985), the main intention of this approach is to examine the “meaning as a choice”. For him, the meanings that are carried out in any “semiotic system” can be interpreted as a “network of interlocking options”. He argued that language, as a socializing system, is used to achieve meaning in what he called the “context of situation”. The context of situation, according to Halliday, reoccurs as “situation types”. Therefore, the users of any semiotic system create typified options that they use when they face the same context of situation. As such, these typified options become conventional in any similar context of situation and create what Halliday called the “semantic configurations” or the register.

Halliday and Hasan (1989, p. 39) view register as a “configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, tenor, and mode”. In this sense, the field refers to the social action that is taking place between participants, the tenor refers to the participants who are taking part in the social action, their role and status and the mode refers to the function[s] of language in that given context (Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Taking workplace emails, for example, if an employee sent a goal-oriented email to a colleague, the field is the knowledge that the writer has about writing such an email in the workplace (AlAfnan, 2018, 2021a). The tenor is the status and role played by the sender and the recipient[s] in the institution. The mode, however, is how the participant used the channel of communication, which is a computer-mediated written channel in this context, to achieve his goals (AlAfnan, 2015, 2021b).

Initially, the focus of SFL was on identifying the register of correspondence to help students “learn to exercise the appropriate linguistic choices relevant to the needs, functions or meanings at any time” (Christie, 1987, p.24). This focus was extended to include written and oral workplace communication (AlAfnan, 2018), mass media communication (AlAfnan, 2019, 2020), and political discourse.

3. Methodology

This study critically analyzes and compares the Inaugural Speech of President Donald Trump², the 45th American President, and the Inaugural Speech of Josef Biden³, the 46th American President, to identify the political purposes of the two speeches and how language serves ideology and power.

To critically analyze the two speeches, Halliday’s (1985) SFL and SFG components of meaning or metafunctions (the Ideational Function, the Interpersonal Function, and the Textual Function) were examined. To examine and analyze the field or the ideational metafunction, the use of verbs is examined and analyzed. To examine and analyze the interpersonal metafunction or the tenor, the communicative role (i.e., informing, persuading, questioning, greeting) the speaker adapted through the use of modal verbs and their functions is examined and analyzed. To examine the textual metafunction and the mode, thematic development (cohesive devices) and lexical cohesion (synonyms and repetition) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) are examined and analyzed.

The examination of these linguistic resources includes the use and the meaning or the function of the use in the given context of situation. However, I start by providing some general insights into the two inaugural speeches.

² **Inaugural speech of President Trump:** <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/full-text-president-donald-trumps-inauguration-speech/story?id=44915821>

³ **Inaugural speech of President Biden:** <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr>

4. Insights into the Two Inaugural Speeches

President Donald Trump delivered his inaugural address as the 45th President of the United States on Friday, the 20th of January, 2017. It is estimated that 300.000 to 600.000 people attended the public ceremony (Bump, 2017). The total number of words of the speech is 1660 words. The speech was delivered in 16 minutes and 20 seconds. The speech had 98 sentences and the average number of words per sentence is 16.9 words. The most common noun that was repeated in the speech is ‘America’ (19 times (percentage 1.3058)). The most common action verb repeated in the speech is ‘make’ (5 times (percentage 0.3436)) and the most common modal verb repeated in the speech is ‘will’ (42 times (percentage 2.8866)). The lexical density of the speech is 37.1821. President Trump started the speech by thanking the Chief Justice Roberts, President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama, fellow Americans, and people of the world and concluded the speech thanking his audience.

President Josef Biden delivered his inaugural address as the 46th President of the United States on Wednesday, the 20th of January, 2021. Because of the current pandemic, the general audience was not allowed to attend the inauguration ceremony. Three previous presidents (Trump did not attend the inauguration as he decided to skip it) and several congressional leaders and senators also attended the ceremony. There was a security presence during the inauguration because of security fears that pro-Trump rioters would return to Washington on Inauguration Day. The speech was 2371 words long and it had 202 sentences. The average number of words per sentence is 11.7 words. The speech was delivered in 21 minutes and 10 seconds. The most common noun that was repeated in the speech is ‘America’ (20 times (percentage 0.8288)). The most common verb repeated in the speech is ‘know’ (5 times (percentage 0.3315)) and the most common modal verb repeated in the speech is ‘will’ (33 times (percentage 1.3676)). The lexical density of the speech is 30.2114. President Biden started the speech addressing Chief Justice Roberts, Vice President Harris, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence, distinguished guests, and my fellow Americans and concluded the speech thanking America.

Table 1. Overview of Trump’s and Biden’s inaugural speeches

Speech Component	President Trump’s Speech		President Biden’s Speech	
Duration	16 minutes 20 seconds		21 minutes and 10 seconds	
Number of words	1660		2371	
Number of sentences	98		202	
Average No. of words per sentence	16.9		11.7	
Most common noun	America	19 times (1.3058%)	America	20 times (0.3315%)
Most common verb	Make	5 times (0.3436%)	Know	8 times (0.8304%)
Most common auxiliary verb	Will	42 times (2.8866%)	Will	33 times (1.3676%)
Lexical density	37.1821		30.2114	

As the table above shows, even though Biden’s speech is longer in terms of duration, number of words, and number of sentences than Trump’s speech, Trump’s speech has a higher lexical density than Biden’s speech. The linguistic complexity in Trump’s speech can also be noticed through the average number of words per sentence. As shown above, in an average, Trump’s sentences are around 5 words longer than Biden’s sentences. As American inaugural speeches target the American public

and international audiences, it can be argued that Biden's relatively low lexical density is intended to allow the American public and international observers to have a fuller understanding of the speech.

The table above also shows that the target audience of both Presidents is America and Americans. America was the most common noun in both speeches, but even though Trump used the noun one time lesser than Biden, the percentage of using the name/noun (America) in Trump's speech is higher (3 times higher) than Biden's speech. This reflects Trump's intensive focus on internal (American) issues and communicating to the American public in his inaugural address.

The table above also shows that the most common verb used in Trump's speech is 'make' (5 times) and the most common verb used in Biden's speech is 'know' (8 times). The usage of 'make' reflects an action-based approach in communicating to 'American' and eventually an action-based approach governing the country. That is, President Trump introduced himself as being an action-oriented president. The usage of 'know', which is a mental-state verb, in Biden's speech, however, reflects understanding. 'Know' in Biden's speech is an assurance to the Americans that the President belongs to them, unlike Trump who eats KFC in his private jet using a fork and knife (On the 2nd of August, 2016, President Trump tweeted a picture of himself eating KFC fried Chicken with a knife and fork). Biden wanted to emphasize that he 'knows' as he was neither isolated from the Americans in his personal tower nor golf resorts. As such, Trump introduced himself as a strong leader who is action-oriented while Biden introduced himself as a person from the neighborhood who understands the needs of the people.

In terms of modal verbs, it is apparent that 'will' is the most common modal verb in both speeches as it was repeated 42 times by President Trump and 33 times by President Biden. The intensive usage of 'will' in inaugural speeches is expected as the new president formally introduces his goals, vision, and manifesto to the nation and the world. The 'will+action verb' in inaugural speeches are considered promises that people will look forward to achieve. As President Trump used the modal 'will' 42 times, which is equivalent to 2.8866% of the overall speech count (President Biden used 'will' 33 times which is equivalent to 1.3676% of his speech's word count), it is apparent that President Trump provided more promises to the nation and the world. The fulfillment of some of these promises is questionable, at least for President Biden. For example, President Trump promised in his inaugural speech that "we will reinforce old alliances and form new ones". Four years later, President Biden, in his inaugural speech, semi-directly announced that old alliances were wrecked and that we, President Biden and his administration, "will repair our [American] alliances and engage with the world once again". As we cannot verify the fulfillment of President Biden's promises at this stage, we will need to wait until the end of his term to analyze.

5. Ideational Metafunction-Transitivity Analysis

According to Halliday (1994), every single situation is made up of processes. These processes include the participants (the nominal groups involved in the process), the process itself (which is represented by a verb), and the circumstances that are associated with the process. We have, according to Halliday (1994), three major processes that mental, material, and relational processes and three minor processes that are behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. The focus of this study is on the three major processes. Material Process has an actor and a goal. The mental process is grouped into four subtypes that are perception, cognition, affection, and desire. Relational process is carried out inside and outside human beings and associated with the use of the verb to be and some other verbs like seem, appear and own.

Table 2. Transitivity in Trump’s and Biden’s inaugural speeches

Speech		Total number	Material processes	Mental process	Relational processes
Trump’s speech	No.	124	73	9	42
	%	100%	58.87%	7.25%	19.35%
Biden’s Speech	No.	148	51	30	67
	%	100%	34.45%	20.27%	45.27%

Examining President Trump's inaugural address reveals that Trump’s inaugural speech has included more material processes (58.87%) than mental (7.25%) and relational (19.35%) processes. On the other hand, Biden’s speech included more relational processes (45.27%) than material (34.45%) and mental (20.27%) processes.

5.1. Transitivity in Trump’s Speech

Material process is a good option to establish confidence in the new administration. It is a direct and straightforward method to communicate to the public who the actors will be, what are the intended processes and what are the intended goals. For the actor part, Trump used the first-person plural inclusive pronoun ‘we’ quite intensively to give the impression to the American people that they will be the actors who are setting in the driving seat to govern the country. He made this reference explicitly in the speech as he said “our government is controlled by the people”. The inclusiveness is also noticed in the repetitive usage of “our government”, “our country”, and “Americans” as the actors in the material processes. In terms of goals, Trump highlighted safeguarding the borders, increasing the wealth of the people, and creating/bring back jobs. The selection of these process is systematically carried out as they were foregrounded in most of his speeches during the campaign period. The goals were intended to be achieved through “making America great again”, “controlling the borders”, and “protecting the people”.

Table 3. Transitivity analysis of Trump’s inaugural speech (Material Process)

Actor	Process	Goal
I/we/you/ Americans/ our government/our country/ a new nation	Bring/Face/make/protect/control/reap/want/bring/ send/salute/seek/reinforce	Jobs/Politicians/the great men/ old alliances/friendship/ Borders/wealth/loyalty

In addition to material process, it is also noticed that President Trump also used relational process 42 instances, which communicates to 19.35%. The relational process is an effective method to communicate to the audience the beliefs of the speaker, in this context, the president. It is a method to establish a relationship between the status quo and the stand of the president. In his inaugural speech, President Trump used the relational process to emphasize unity as in “when America is united, America is totally unstoppable”. He also used the relational process to assure the audience that he is an

action-oriented person (i.e., empty talk is over) and to give a sense of pride to the American public (i.e., this moment is your moment).

The mental process was not very popular in Trump’s speech as it was merely used in 7.25%. In the 9 instances of the mental process, Trump tried to give people a sense of pride as in this day “will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again”. Trump also used the mental process to encourage people to work harder as in “In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving”.

5.2. Transitivity in Biden’s Speech

As shown in table 2 above, Biden used a mix of relational, material, and mental processes in his inaugural speech. The highest percentage is linked to the relational processes (45.27%). By focusing on the relational processes, Biden tried to establish a connection between himself and the American public. He also tried to communicate his beliefs and convince the audience with his stand to encourage the belief in him, believe in their ideologies and belief in their country (i.e., This is America’s day. This is democracy’s day). But he also used relational processes to directly and straightforwardly explain some abstract elements in simple and direct sentences (i.e., Democracy is fragile). As shown in table 1, the lexicon complexity of Biden’s speech is relatively low. His sentences are mainly simple and he did not use abstract/technical words. He wanted to talk to all Americans- the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, the native speakers and the immigrants. He wanted to simplify the abstract concepts and establish rapport with everyone and make every single American believe in the country and feel responsible as some irresponsible acts may lead to a lot of damage. The relational processes help in achieving this goal.

Table 4. Transitivity analysis of Biden’s inaugural speech (Material Process)

Actor	Process	Goal
We/I/ Americans/ citizen /leaders	Celebrate/thank/ask/put/teach/overcome/ deliver/make/know/understand/repair /honor/face/meet/defend	Triumph/predecessors/every American/people/children/deadly virus/social justice/America/forces/jobs/families Alliances/ mothers and fathers/husbands and wives/sons and daughters/friends/neighbors/co- workers.

The usage of the material process was also popular in Biden’s speech as it was used 51 times. Biden nominated several actors in his inaugural speech; however, it is noticed that the main reference was the first-person singular pronoun ‘I’ and the first person plural inclusive ‘we’. The usage of these personal pronouns as actors in this speech depended on the context of usage. Biden strived to introduce himself as a strong president who can act independently. He is not the shadow of Obama. He will be able to ‘defend’, ‘face’, ‘meet’, ‘repair’, ‘make’, ‘deliver’ and ‘overcome’ independently. He is also connected to the people and know and understand what they face. Biden strived to establish credibility as a strong leader. However, he also emphasized that he cannot be the only actor. He needs all Americans and citizens to stand by his side and put their belief in him if they want to achieve his and their goals to relating to their ‘children’, ‘families’, ‘mothers’, ‘wives’, ‘husbands’, ‘neighbors’, ‘fathers’, ‘friends’ and ‘alliances’. Material process in Biden’s speech intended to establish confidence in his leadership and gather support to his stand and policies in the years to come.

The usage of mental processes in Biden’s speech is less popular than the usage of the other two processes but more popular than its usage in Trump’s speech. The mental process in Biden’s speech intended to introduce himself as a person who is close to the public and ‘know’ their needs and wants. This is reflected in the repetitive usage of ‘know’ which is also the most popular verb used by Biden in the speech (i.e., I know speaking of unity, I know the forces, I also know they are not new). Biden wanted to give the impression that he on top of the job. Mental processes were also used by Biden to spread ‘hope’, ‘understanding’, and ‘believe’ in the country, its future, and its ability to overcome all obstacles.

6. Interpersonal Metafunction-Modality Analysis

The examination of the interpersonal metafunction is carried by analyzing the usage of modality in the two inaugural speeches. The usage of modal verbs can reflect low, medium, and high certainty/uncertainty. The degree of certainty can be presented in its positive or negative nature. For example, can, may, could, and might represent low certainty and high degree of uncertainty, which is not expected from a sitting president. The usage of will would, shall, and should represent medium politeness as the degree of certainty and uncertainty are relatively similar. The usage of must, have to, ought to represent high certainty as the degree of uncertainty is low, which is expected from a sitting president. Investigating the usage of modal verbs in the two inaugural speeches reveals that intensive usage of modal verbs in the two speeches.

Table 5. Modality analysis of Trump’s and Biden’s Inaugural speeches

Speeches	Total number	Low certainty (can, could, may, might)	Medium certainty (will, would, shall, should)	High certainty (must, ought to, have to, had to)
Trump’s speech	47	1	43	3
	3.51%	2.12%	91.48%	6.38%
Biden’s speech	68	20	37	11
	3.48%	29.41%	54.41%	16.17%

As shown in table 5, Trump used 47 modal verbs in his 1660 words inaugural speech, which is equivalent to 3.51% of the overall word count, while Biden used 68 modal verbs in his 2371 words inaugural speech, which is equivalent to 3.48% of the overall word count. The averages of using modal verbs in both speeches are almost identical. However, it is noticed that we have a huge difference in the types of modal verbs used in both speeches.

In Trump’s in quartation speech, the usage of the medium certainty modal verbs by far is the highest among all other modal types used. Among the medium type modal verbs, the modal verb ‘will’ is the most popular as it was used in 42 out of the 43 occurrences. That is, the average of using ‘will’ in Trump’s speech is 97.67% of the medium certainty modal verbs usage and 89/36% of the overall modal verbs usage. Even though the usage of ‘will’ reflects medium certainty, it does not necessarily mean that the levels of certainty and uncertainty are almost even. The usage of ‘will+infinitive’ indicates future tenses which is adequate in this context (inaugural speeches context). As the new president addresses the nation and the world, he would be outlining his goals, vision, and manifesto, and the most direct and straightforward method to do it is the usage of future forms. The usage of ‘will’ in this context reflects promises. As President Trump says ‘new vision will govern this land’, observers and listeners do not take this as a mere willingness to do it, but as a manifesto promise that it will happen in the future. In addition to ‘will’, President Trump used the high certainty modal verb

‘must’ in three occurrences concerning protecting the borders, speaking freely, and thinking big. Two out of the three occurrences relate to American values (freedom of speech and believing that America is the land of achieving dreams) and the third occurrence relates to a major hardcore manifesto promise in Trump’s election campaign relating to immigration. The usage of ‘must’ in ‘we must protect our borders’ is a reassurance to the voters who voted him to office that he is going to build the ‘huge wall’ between the US and Mexico and stop illegal immigration. The usage of low certainty modal verbs was apparent in one occurrence, but the linguistic usage was more of an assurance and lessening possibilities than introducing possibilities. The usage of ‘can’ in ‘no challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America’ belittles possibilities up to a stage of diminishing them. As such, the usage of modal verbs in Trump’s speech portrayed the president as a president with a clear vision and goal who strongly stands by the American values and his promises to the people.

In Biden’s inaugural speech, the usage of medium certainty is the highest in numbers and percentage, but the usage of low certainty and high certainty was noticeably present. The usage of medium certainty was mainly represented by the usage of ‘will’ (34 out of 35 medium certainty occurrences) to introduce future policies and present goals and vision. The conspicuous usage of low modality is signified by ‘can’ (16 occurrences), ‘could’ (1 occurrence), ‘may’ (2 occurrences), and ‘might’ (1 occurrence). In critical linguistics terms, the usage of low modality in a presidential address may reflect a lack of big confidence in the abilities or possibilities of achieving a goal or a vision. It may also reflect reducing the sealing of expectations from the addresser. That is, the usage of low modality gives more space to the ‘actor’ to achieve the ‘goal’. For example, the usage of ‘can’ in ‘we can overcome this deadly virus’ and ‘we can deliver social justice’ does not reflect strong belief, confidence, and assurance from the actor’s side (we-the president, his administration, and the American public) to achieve the goals (social justice, overcoming the deadly virus). Even though it might be argued that the challenges that are faced in relation to ‘social justice (i.e., Black Lives Matter) and facing COVID19’ (i.e., the US fatality rate because of COVID is the highest in the world) are huge, but it is expected from the president to provide assurances to increase the morale of the public in facing the challenges. The usage of ‘can’ in this context could have been replaced by ‘must’ or ‘have to’ to reflect a strong and stern stand on the two challenges. This could have been carried out as in ‘we must reject a culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured’, which reflects a strong stand and belief. The usage of modal verbs in Biden’s speech reflects a balanced and mixed personality. It portrays the president as a person of vision when he outlined his goals and concerned when giving guidance. However, the usage of low modality about some challenges did not provide enough evidence that he, as the actor, is confident and strong in achieving the goals.

7. Textual Metafunction-Texture

The textual metafunction denotes that language has devices that can make the text (written and spoken) a coherent and integrated structure. These devices or mechanisms include, but not limited to, referencing and repetitions, ellipsis, and substitution. In this study, we will focus on lexical cohesion concerning repetitions and synonyms and thematic development to the usage of cohesive devices.

Table 6. Cohesive devices and synonyms in Trump’s and Biden’s inaugural speeches

Speeches	Cohesive devices			Synonyms
Trump’s speech	And	84 times	83.1%	Americans-Citizens of America- the people- the citizens- the men and women of our country- a righteous public
	But	14 times	13.8%	
	Because	2 times	1.98%	
	However	1 time	0.99%	

				America-our country-your country- the United States of America-our wonderful nation The government-the establishment The world-other countries-other nations-foreign capitals-the nations of the world Our military-our great men and women-our soldiers
Biden’s speech	And	92 times	81.4%	Americans- the people- my friends-great people-our people- America- great nation-our nation- the country-the leading force-the United States of America- our Republic The virus-the deadly virus-the raging virus
	But	16 times	14.1%	
	Yet	3 times	2.65%	
	Also	1 time	0.88%	
	Because	1 time	0.88%	

Investigating the thematic development of both speeches reveals a similar approach in constructing the speeches. Both speakers made sure that they build up sentences in a straight forward manner where the usage of ‘and’ as a cohesive device is the most common. Given that the speeches are delivered to a wide range of viewers, the speakers decided to add information to the theme of the sentence without complicating the structure of sentences with functional connectors or cohesive devices. As speakers needed to provide contrasting opinions in times (14.79% for Trump (13.8% for ‘but’ and 0.99% for ‘however’) and 16/75% for Biden (14.1% for ‘but’ and 2.65% for ‘yet’)), they selected to use the commonly used and understood ‘but’. Even though Trump used ‘however’ in a single instance and Biden used ‘yet’ three times, this does not reflect the common practice of providing contrasting opinions using ‘but’. As mentioned above, both presidents opted for clarity and simplicity in building the relationship between the clauses and sentences to build the thematic development of their speeches.

Concerning lexical cohesion, as table 6 shows, both presidents used several synonyms to build cohesion in their speeches. President Trump referred to the Americans using six synonymous terms that are ‘Americans’, ‘the citizens of America’, ‘the people’, ‘the citizens’, ‘the men and women of our country’, and ‘a righteous public’. He also used 5 synonymous terms to refer to America that include ‘America’, ‘our country’, ‘your country’, ‘the United States of America’, and ‘our wonderful nation’. Trump also referred to the world using five terms that ‘the world’, ‘other countries’, ‘other nations’, ‘foreign capitals’, and ‘the nations of the world’. Examining the word choice in the three sets of synonyms above reveals how President Trump draws a line between America and the rest of the world. America and Americans are addressed passionately using the possessive pronoun ‘our’ which indicates the sense of belonging. The ‘rest of the world’ is viewed as the ‘other’ or the ‘foreign’, which indicates distancing. This explicates the ideology behind a number of Trump decisions that are unfavorably viewed by the rest of the world (i.e., withdrawing from Paris agreement).

Table 6 also shows that President Biden used several synonyms to refer to ‘America’, ‘American’, and ‘the virus’. America for president Biden is ‘great nation’, ‘our nation’, ‘the country’, ‘the leading force’, ‘the United States of America’, and ‘the republic’. The Americans are ‘the people’, ‘my friends’, ‘great people’ and ‘our people’. Biden used the same passionate and intimate method to refer

public. He wanted to be understood by all Americans and this was also reflected in the relatively low lexical density of his speech.

In reference to modality or the interpersonal metafunction, both presidents used low, medium, and high certainty modal verbs. However, it is noticed that Trump mainly used medium certainty modals, especially ‘will’ to communicate his political manifesto. The analysis revealed that the usage of ‘will’ in Trump’s speech does not reflect certainty/uncertainty as much as it communicates promises to the American public. This adds to the impression of being a ‘doer’ and an ‘actor’, which reflects strong and clear-lined leadership. The usage of modality in Biden’s speech, however, reveals a mixed-use of low, medium, and high modality. The usage of future form (medium certainty) is expected in inaugural speeches; however, the intensive usage of low modality is unexpected from a sitting president. This generates an impression of a weak leadership that lacks confidence in achieving goals and strives.

About texture or the textual metafunction, the textual analyses on lexical cohesion and thematic development revealed that both presidents delivered well-structured and cohesive speeches. The cohesive devices were mainly used to create a straight forward relationship between the clauses and the sentences. The two presidents did not want to complicate the linguistics structures to avoid confusion. The investigation on the lexical cohesion revealed the themes of the two speeches and the ideology of the two presidents. For Trump, the nature of repetitive words reveals that he mainly focused on concrete concepts (i.e., jobs, wealth, borders) concerning the Americans (i.e., the people, the nation). He viewed the rest of the world as ‘others’, which gives insights into the ideology behind leaving World Health Organization (WHO) and Paris Agreement. For Biden, the nature of the most commonly repeated words reveals that he mainly focused on abstract concepts and American values (i.e., unity, democracy) concerning the public (i.e., children, people, the nation). He viewed the world as ‘the world’ that America is an integral part of. This also gives us insights into the ideology behind a number of his decisions such as rejoining the WHO and Paris Agreement.

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