

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Inaugural Address of Emmanuel Macron

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Abstract—The French incumbent president Emmanuel Macron has won the election in 2017 and became the youngest one in French history. His inaugural address could be considered as a good text to do some researches. Critical discourse analysis is an objective method to analyze some texts, but it usually cannot be used alone. With the help of Halliday's systemic functional grammar, this paper aims to analyze French president Emmanuel Macron's inaugural address in 2017, mainly from three functions of discourse, in order to conclude language features of Macron's address and to better understand this kind of political passages.

Index Terms—Critical discourse analysis, inaugural address of Emmanuel macron, systemic functional grammar

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper tries to analyze Inaugural Address of Emmanuel Macron with the approach of critical discourse analysis, as well as systemic functional grammar. And it mainly divides into four chapters: the first one is the theoretical framework, which introduces the two main theories; the second chapter is literature review part; chapter three is the concrete corpus analysis from three functions of discourse; and chapter four is the conclusion part.

Emmanuel Macron is a special president among the French history or even on the world scale, whose election is just like a legend [1]. One year before he makes a figure, he was not anybody in French political field. He is neither a descendent of officials, nor is born in an extremely wealthy family. In addition, he does not own unrecognized social relationships. Such a new rising star won the election, with no strong political background, little political experience. Moreover, he has fallen love with his high school teacher and married her, who is 24 years older than him, which adds a lot of romantic factors. And when he took office, he was just 39 years old. All these aspects throw Macron into the public voice of people in France and then worldwide. Naturally his inaugural address took a relatively important role in his period.

Generally speaking, the future directions of a country could be heard in the inaugural address of president, include economic policy, political plan, diplomatic relations and so on, and it is also a method to know something about a country.

There are several reasons why I choose this topic. The first one is that not too many articles adopt critical discourse analysis to analyze inaugural address, especially that of Emmanuel Macron. According to CNKI, if we just take "address" and "Macron" as key words, there exists only no

more than fifteen paper; and then we change into "inaugural address", there are few proper papers. So, this topic has something new to explore. The second reason is more personal. As I major in foreign languages, and put more emphasis on French, I should pay attention to the information which are related with French language. By this way, not only can it broaden my minds, but also improve my language ability of understanding and explaining. As for the third reason, that is the paper is the first try for me to do a cross-language analysis, and I hope I could better understand the language usage differences and different logic modes of thinking.

And as for the significances, there are four points. First, it is more likely to have a better understanding of Macron's speech language style with his certain linguistic features by analyzing his inaugural address discourse. Second, this paper could make a contribution to understanding political discourse in France by analyzing the address from three aspects. Third, as critical discourse analysis is associated with ideology, it can be naturally used to analyze political discourse, "but doing such discourse analysis is highly subjective and even biased" [2]. This paper tries to apply a more objective way to do analysis. Four, as it is mentioned that there are not too many articles about this topic, so it is a relative new point of view to analyze discourse, which broadens the research ranges of critical discourse analysis.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It involves two important theories: one is critical discourse analysis and the other is systemic functional grammar. This chapter will explain them and some related concepts.

A. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis, an analyzing way to appreciate non-literary discourse on the basis of criticism, is also called critical linguistics or critical language study, which started from 1970s. In a general way, at the earliest in 1979, R. Fowler and Hodge *et al.* used "critical linguistics" and put forward this kind of discourse analysis approach in the book *Language and Control* [3]. Then in 1989, Fairclough put forward the concept of critical discourse analysis in the book *Language and power* [4]. According to him, critical discourse analysis aims to systematically study how to analyze the language usage in common cases and relation between texts and their extended social and cultural structures: for example, it explores the relation between texts and engendering thoughts, ideology, and cultural background; the relation between a discourse and the society. He also thinks that critical discourse analysis is a study of discourse, concerning with social and political background under the circumstance of unbalance and inequality of social powers. Its goal is to

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expose and fight against inequality. And Van Dijk defines critical discourse analysis as a research of discourse analysis which explores how discourse in social and political linguistic environment carries out, and pushes back against the abuse and inequality of social power. In addition, critical discourse analysis mixes together research achievement of linguistics, sociology, psychology, ethnology, mass media and so on. In critical discourse analysis, there are three vital concepts: discourse, ideology and power, which will be explained in the following content.

1) *Discourse*

In general, discourse means the social practice of discourse that has an influence on ideology and power relationship between people and the world in critical discourse analysis. However, discourse is not a single concept, which contains a huge range, for example, a book, an article, a paragraph, a sentence, sometimes even a word can be considered as a discourse. Accordingly, it has a wide variety of uses. Different researches in different fields could have various opinions on it. In sociology, the study of Foucault concentrates on rules in different areas of knowledge in the earlier stage while in later research, he shifts his concern to knowledge and power where he probes into the relations between rules of knowledge areas and the power relations in the process of knowledge construction. While in linguistics, Harris firstly applied the concept “discourse” in his thesis and he does not focus on the language structure at the sentence level, but is extended to text level [5].

2) *Ideology*

“Ideology” was a word translated from the new French word—*idéologie*, which was put forward by French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, into English in 1769. At the outset, the word “ideology” referred to the science of ideas, which was used to distinguish the difference compared to ancient metaphysics. Until the end of 19th century, this kind of meaning was not utilized any more. Then Napoleon Bonaparte believed that ideology was a knowledge of human heart and of the lessons of history, which was popularly accepted during his time.

And it is naturally that scholars of different fields have different interpretations of the term, which can be roughly classified into two kinds, one being critical and the other neutral, the former conveys a negative and pejorative sense, which contains that the phenomena characterized as ideology or ideological are misleading, illusionary, or one-sided; the very characterization of phenomena as ideology carries with it an implicit criticism or condemnation of them [6]. The critical concept of ideology usually if not always contains a political sense. Concerning the neutral interpretation, ideology is just seen as a descriptive term irrespective of whether it is oriented towards the preservation or transformation of the social order [6].

3) *Power*

The discourse of power is used when it comes to differentiating the levels of power due to cultural and social characteristics that come about through societal upbringing. The ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject. The idea of the discourse of power within media has a domino effect and it can play a huge role in determining the patterns of access to

the mass media: who has preferential access to journalists, who will be interviewed, who will be quoted and described in news reports, and whose opinions will influence the public? Through access to the mass media, dominant groups also may have access to and partial control over the public at large.

According to Fairclough [4], there are two kinds of relationships between discourse and power: power in discourse and power behind the discourse, in which power would be won, exercised, sustained and lost only in or through social struggle, implying that on one can hold the power finally. What's more, power is usually exercised intentionally and invisibly, especially in political language. Since political discourse producer and its audiences are separated in hierarchical of different layers of the society, generally speaking, a predominant position and dominated one power plays an important role in disciplinary and realization of political purpose [2].

B. *Systematic Functional Grammar*

Systemic functional grammar is put forward by English linguist Halliday. Before him, his teacher Firth has already had concepts for it, including four points. First, in addition to the internal context of language, language also has situational context, which refers to something that has actually happened at the time of speaking, that is, the context in which language occurs. In his opinion, language behavior includes the following three categories: 1) relevant characteristics of participants. Who are they? What kind of personality, what kind of relevant characteristics? 2) the effects of verbal behavior on transactions and nonverbal impersonality events. 3) the effects of linguistic behavior. Second, language has situational meaning and formal meaning. Saussure believed that linguistic signs had value. Inspired by this point of view, he proposed that language has formal meaning. According to him, formal meaning can be expressed at three levels: collocation level, grammar level and phonetic level. Third, language has both structural and systematic aspects. A structure is a combinatorial arrangement of linguistic elements, while a system is a set of rectangle-like units that can be interchangeable at a position within a structure. The structure is horizontal, the system is vertical. Four, the multi-system theory and the trans segmental theory of phoneme.

Halliday was student of Firth, so he inherited the London School of Linguistics, the idea of functional linguistics, and further put forward the systemic functional grammar. Halliday applied Firth's theory of context to the concrete structure of language. He believes that the language situation can be composed of three parts: the scene mode and the communicator. A scene is the overall event in which the discourse functions, as well as the purpose of the speaker or collaborator. So, it includes the subject of discourse. Mode is the function of the discourse in the event, so it includes the channel of language adoption, as well as the style or rhetorical means of language. And communicator refers to a set of permanent or temporary corresponding social relations between the role types in communication and the participants of discourse.

The semantics of language can be divided into conceptual function, interpersonal function and textual function. Conceptual function represents the content of speech, which

can be divided into experiential function and logical function. Experience and function are related to the content of speech. It is the online response of the speaker to the external environment. It is the empirical logic function of the speaker about the external world of various phenomena and the internal world of self-will. Interpersonal function is a role relationship, which involves both the role of the speaker in the context and the roles assigned by the speaker to other participants. Discourse function makes the words spoken by the speaker work in the linguistic environment, which reflects the need for coherence in the use of language.

Systemic functional grammar includes two parts: systematic grammar and functional grammar, but it is not a simple synthesis of the two kinds of grammar, but two inseparable aspects of a complete theoretical framework of language. In general, the core ideas of Halliday's systemic functional grammar mainly include the following six points: 1) the idea of meta-functions; 2) the idea of system; 3) levels of thought; 4) functions of thought; 5) contextual thinking; 6) approximate or probabilistic thinking.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will do a relative brief literature review on papers about two key words—Critical discourse analysis and systematic functional grammar.

Input “address” and “critical discourse analysis” in CNKI, there are about three hundred results, divided into two types: one is from diverse journals and the other is graduation thesis. Politicians usually deliver a speech in some important occasions; therefore, the addresses are various, among them papers about inaugural only take a small account.

Jian [7] did a research that attempts to make a critical analysis of Donald trump presidential inaccurate speech with respect to transitivity, modality, personal pronouns and transformation, so as to bring to light the speaker's political intention based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis, it is concluded that material, process, existential process, and the first person pronoun are rather frequent in the speech, which aims to build a good government image and winds as much as possible from the people. Her research mainly focuses on the ideational function and interpersonal function.

Li [8] used the theory of critical discourse analysis in her paper to interpret the inaugural speeches of American politicians from the aspects of transitive disposition and personal pronouns, aiming to make readers penetrate the surface of language skills more deeply, explore the social ideology behind it and improve the ability to read similar political speeches. This paper is not long and concrete enough, even does not mention the name of politicians or the published time of inaugural address, so we should read this article with a grain of salt.

Meng [9] analyzed the Foreign Minister's speech of Sausi Arabia at the opening ceremony of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly from three aspects: the choice of words, the use of modal words, and nominalization. Summarize the use of different discourse forms and source structures respectively, explore their different meanings and functions, and reveal the speaker's ideological tendency and speech intention. This paper seems to be a good example of application of critical discourse analysis, since its content is

concrete, informative and distinct, its language is fluent and its point of views are explicit.

According to Du Zenghui (2020), the New Year message is a kind of political discourse, which is a summary of the work of the head of state in the past year and conveys the country's domestic and foreign policies [10]. In New Year messages, leaders use various forms of interpersonal meaning realization to convey their message. Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, this paper makes a comparative study of the similarities and differences in the interpersonal function of Chinese and American New Year greetings in the past 20 years, reveals the similarities and differences in the thinking patterns and ideologies of the leaders of the two countries, so as to try to reduce misunderstandings in the communication between China and the United States and provide ideas for strengthening cooperation.

What is more, there are few papers about addresses of Emmanuel Macron, for example, the graduation thesis of Yin [11]. According to her, as a method of discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis aims to explore the interaction between discourse power and ideology. Political discourse usually contains a lot of implicit information, which reflects the influence of power and ideology. Therefore, her paper took the theory of systemic functional grammar of Halliday as the framework. Incorporating the path of discourse analysis. An analysis of the inaugural speeches of the new French president reveals how rights and ideologies control speech, with a view to deepening people's understanding of the relationship between language and society, reflect on the influence of language and develop critical thinking.

After looking through these papers, one point mention above is proved, that the critical discourse analysis could not be applied alone. All the writers combined systemic functional grammar or the theory of three-dimensional framework of Fairclough to the CDA to make their research more compact.

IV. CORPUS ANALYSIS OF INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF EMMANUEL MACRON

This paper will discuss the discourse from three aspects of meta-function of language: Ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function.

A. Ideational Function

The most significant feature of ideational function is transitivity, which divides the experience world into six processes: material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioral process and existential process.

1) Material process

Material process is usually showed by verbs in order to express that something has been finished. Normally nouns or pronouns serves as the agent and the object of the verb.

Example 1: Le monde a besoin de ce que les Françaises et les Français lui ont toujours enseigné : l'audace de la liberté, l'exigence de l'égalité, la volonté de la fraternité.

In this example, the agent is “le monde” which means “the world”; the object is a substantive clause “ce que les Françaises et les Français lui ont toujours enseigné (...)”

which means “what French people have taught the world”, and the actual content is the national motto of France—The freedom, the equality and the fraternity; and the verb is “avoir besoin de” which means “need”, and Macron used this verb to deliver a kind of positive attitude to French people, that could strengthen their confidence both in themselves and in their country. This sentence was placed at a relatively forward in the whole address, thus it plays an important role.

2) *Relational process*

Relational process is a process that reflects the relationship or the attributes of the entities.

Example 2: La responsabilité qu'ils m'ont confiée est un honneur, dont je mesure la gravité.

This example could be shortened into “La responsabilité est un honneur.” which means “The responsibility is an honor.” As the new president, Macron did not keep a higher position than other citizens, but he spoke with a very modest attitude: to take his power and responsibility that people endow him as an honor, which not only specifies his duty, but also narrows the psychological distance and emotional distance between French people and himself to a great extent. Macron uses this relational process to make his speech more passionate, as well as to provoke the audience to think and better integrate into the speech discourse.

3) *Mental process*

Mental process contains the mental activities, such as sensation, consciousness, perceive and so on.

Example 3: Je convaincrâi nos compatriotes que la puissance de la France n'est pas déclinante, mais que nous sommes à l'orée d'une extraordinaire renaissance, parce que nous tenons entre nos mains tous les atouts qui feront et qui font les grandes puissances du XXI^e siècle.

In fact, this example could also be regarded as a material process since this sentence conforms to the pattern—Noun or pronoun + verb + noun or pronoun, but I would rather classify it into the mental process. The word “convaincre” means to make someone believe something. Macron uses it to describe the mental process by which the French people are encouraged to feel confident about their future development; France thrives when everyone can find a sense of pride and independence in what they do, intended to inspire the responsibility of French people in their daily lives, with the expectation that it will affect the masses. And Macron also conveys a good wish through this word with positive meaning, so as to inspire people to fight for the courage and strength.

B. *Interpersonal Function*

Language skills can build some of the interpersonal relationships that the speaker needs, for example, modal verb could be divided into several categories to show the different mood and the intensity of the willing of the speaker. “Must” belongs to the highest intensity and strongest mood; “should” “could” belongs to the medium one; and “might” belongs to the weakest and is lack of enough confidence. However, in French language, it is hard to distinguish the modal verb, so it will not be discussed in the following part.

1) *Person system*

In political speech, the speaker often chooses different appellations according to different contexts. These different

appellations can reflect the speaker's position and attitude, and help to establish a specific interactive relationship between subjects, so as to realize the interpersonal function of political discourse.

Example 4: Elle se sent menacée dans sa culture, dans son modèle social, dans ses croyances profondes. Elle doute de ce qui l'a faite.

Person system in French is a little bit different from that in English, for example, all the nouns in French are divided into two categories: the masculine ones and the feminine ones. In this example, “elle” means “she” and refers to “France”. It seems that Macron uses a figure of speech that he compares the country France to a female, but actually in French he should use “elle” for the word “France” is feminine. Macron gives the speech in the third person to show his objectivity and justice. In addition, he shows that he is not a self-centered president, but one that can keep the same level with his citizens.

Example 5: Parce que nous aurons rendu aux Français le goût de l'avenir et la fierté de ce qu'ils sont, le monde entier sera attentif à la parole de la France.

In this example, Macron uses “nous” which means we and this word is usually used in political articles. On the one hand, it helps to narrow the distance between the camp that president is in and other parties, as well as the audience, making them feel that the president is quite willing to face the difficulties and challenges together with them, and is willing to solve the problems for the audience. On the other hand, the president invited the audience to be a witness to history and look forward to the future together with him, and to convey that the good life of France requires the French people to create together.

2) *Passivization*

Example 6: Tout ce qui concourt à la vigueur de la France et à sa prospérité sera mis en œuvre : le travail sera libéré, les entreprises seront soutenues, l'initiative sera encouragée.

In the use of Chinese, it is not so common to express something with passive voice, while in western languages passivization is quite popular. The most remarkable feature is “be + past participle”. In this example, Macron uses a series of short passive sentences “le travail sera libéré, les entreprises seront soutenues, l'initiative sera encouragée”, which means that it will give the labor market more flexibility, support the development of enterprise and encourage the initiative. Though Macron uses passive voice, he expresses his active intention. At the same time, he uses parallelism, which can highlight the center of the address, express strong and unrestrained emotions, and enhance the momentum of language. It is an important link to improve the expression effect.

C. *Textual Function*

Textual function is embodied through thematic structure and cohesion. Thematic structure consists of theme and rheme: theme is the object of discourse communication, which is old information; and rheme is to explain the content of theme, which is new information. Cohesion refers to the connections which have their manifestation in the discourse itself. Halliday and Hasan distinguished five types of cohesion: substitution, ellipsis, reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion. And the following part will only focus on

cohesion, since thematic structure in French is complicated and different.

1) *Substitution*

Substitution is to use another word to get the replacement of a word or group of sentence segment. The reader or listener can figure out the correct element based on the previous content.

Example 7 : Pour ce faire, nous aurons besoin d'une Europe plus efficace, plus démocratique, plus politique, car elle est l'instrument de notre puissance et de notre souveraineté. J'y œuvrerai.

It should be "j'œuvrerai à..." which means that I will spare no pains to do something. But the content of "something" is too long and too complex, and it is no need to repeat again, so a pronoun "y" is placed here to serve as substitution. The audience are easy to have their understanding to this sentence.

2) *Ellipsis*

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or part of a sentence. Ellipsis is closely similar to substitution and can be considered as zero substitution.

Example 8 : Je songe au Général de Gaulle, qui œuvra pour redresser la France et lui rendre son rang dans le concert des nations. Je songe à Georges Pompidou, qui fit de notre pays une puissance industrielle majeure. (...) À Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, qui sut faire entrer la France et sa société dans la modernité. (...) À François Mitterrand, qui accompagne la réconciliation du rêve français et du rêve européen...

These four sentences make up a parallelism. All of them begin with "je songe" which means "I sing the praise of someone", although the third and the fourth sentence elide "je songe", we know that they express the same connotation.

3) *Reference*

Reference refers to the relation between a discourse part and a preceding or following part. Reference deals with the semantic relationship vary as substitution and ellipsis deal with the relation between grammatical units: word sentence parts and clauses [12].

Example 9: Le monde et l'Europe ont aujourd'hui, plus que jamais, besoin de la France. Ils ont besoin d'une France forte et sûre de son destin.

"Ils" in the second sentence refers to "Le monde et l'Europe" in the first sentence in order to avoid repetition and to make the discourse concise.

4) *Conjunction*

Conjunction is the relationship with indicates how the subsequent sentence of clause should be linked to the proceeding on the following part of the sentence [12]. This is usually achieved by the use of conjunctions.

Example 10 : Nos institutions, décriées par certains, doivent retrouver aux yeux des Français l'efficacité qui en a garanti la pérennité. Car je crois aux institutions de la V^e République et ferai tout ce qui est en mon pouvoir pour qu'elles fonctionnent selon l'esprit qui les a fait naître.

"Car" is equivalent to because, which is a conjunction representing reasons, thus the second sentence is an explanation and supplement of the first sentence.

5) *Lexical cohesion*

Lexical cohesion refers to the links between the

content—Words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, which are used in subsequent segments of a discourse. And it has two types: reiteration and collection. Reiteration includes not only repetition but also see no name. Reiteration can also occur through the use of a word that is systematically linked to a previous one [12]. And it includes five types: repetition, synonymy, hyponymy or hyperonymy, meronymy and antonymy. Collocation deals with the relationship between words on the basis of the fact that these often occur in the same surroundings.

Example 11: La division et les fractures qui parcourent notre société doivent être surmontées, qu'elles soient économiques, sociales, politiques ou morales; car le monde attend de nous que nous soyons forts, solides et clairvoyants.

This example belongs to meronymy relation of reiteration. Because "économiques, sociales, politiques ou morales" (economic, social, political or moral) are parts of "notre société" (our society).

Example 12 : Partout, on se demandait si les Français allaient décider à leur tour de se replier sur le passé illusoire, s'ils allaient rompre avec la marche du monde, quitter la scène de l'Histoire, céder à la défiance démocratique, l'esprit de division et tourner le dos aux Lumières, ou si au contraire ils allaient embrasser l'avenir, se donner collectivement un nouvel élan, réaffirmer leur foi dans les valeurs qui ont fait d'eux un grand peuple.

This example belongs to collocation. As it is inaugural address of French president, the words that he selected should be political ones, for example: "quitter la scène de l'Histoire" which means to leave historical stage, "céder à la défiance démocratique" which means to doubt the democracy, and so on. These are typical and classical words used in this kind of articles.

D. *Summary*

By the corpus analysis of the inaugural address of Emmanuel Macron, it could be found that his address shows the three functions of language fairly completely. Through several various language devices, including devices of cohesion, figures of speech and so on, Macron clearly transfers the information that he wants to express to the public. At the same time, Macron maintains the image of France as soon as possible and not belittle other countries or areas, which accords with his position of new president.

V. *CONCLUSION*

Within the framework of critical discourse analysis theory, this paper, combining the theory of systemic functional grammar of Halliday, from the concept of language function, interpersonal function and textual function of the French President Macron inaugural address were analyzed. It is to explore the function of each different specific embodiment of the meaning and function, and the speaker's tendency of thought and implicit speech intention. This paper has found that Macron applied a series of language techniques in his speech, which reflected his position and attitude, accurately propagated the image of his country, aroused the resonance and patriotism of the audience, narrowed the distance between him and the audience, and finally achieved a certain speech effect.

However, this study has several shortcomings. First, it is a tempt of analyzing French article with English language, during the process, the authors have met some difficulties because of linguistic disparities between two languages and they have been thinking whether it is correct to do such research. Second, as time and conditions are limited, this research is lack of statistical analysis of data, which makes the research not rigorous enough. Third, the corpus analysis is not so thorough. And for next time the authors will try to improve these disadvantages in their study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

F. A. Zheng conducted the research, wrote the paper, collected and analyzed the corpus; S. A. Zang checked and corrected the mistakes during the corpus analysis procedure.

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