



GRAMMATICAL METAPHORS AS IDEOLOGICAL MICRO-COMPONENTS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Introductory observations

The present study posits that the important ideological micro-components of political discourse derive from its representation of the future and the rhetorical functions those representations serve in implying the discursive actions. Working within a systemic-functional linguistics framework this study demonstrates how representations of the future are embedded in and projected through political discourse. Grammatical metaphors are essential components of “linguistic efficiency” due to their integration and condensation of mind of several words – indeed whole into a single nominal unit (Campbell and Jamieson 1990).

The purpose of this study is to explore the semantic and structural features of the grammatical metaphors in the rhetorical genre of the inaugural addresses of the US presidents. In the present study, no attempt will be made to analyze the macro-structures of this peculiar type of genre as the attention will be paid to micro-structures of the said genre, namely – verb-based nominalizations. The purpose of using a grammatical metaphor is to get the lexis and the grammar the way the speaker wants it in order to produce a certain effect.

At a time when many Americans have been inspired by the soaring rhetoric of Barack Obama, my research will examine some of the most-memorable presidential speeches, and will show how words and ideas still matter in an age defined by imagery, spin and sound bites, i.e. how through the vocabulary and grammar the presidential inaugural addresses represent the American world-view. Since scholars agree that the rhetorical presidency arose in the twentieth century with Theodore Roosevelt, the analysis commences with Roosevelt’s address, followed by all subsequent presidents’ inaugurals – finishing with George Bush’s inaugural address. The analysis is based on a corpus of selected examples (2,035 grammatical metaphors in



a corpus of 56,387 words) drawn from the inaugural addresses delivered by the presidents of US (see <http://www.bartleby.com>).

Halliday (1985) explains that while written language typically attains a high lexical density often accompanied by a relatively simple grammatical structure, spoken language is usually grammatically complex and often accompanied by a relatively simple choice of words. Consequently, metaphorical density is typical of written language. In the case of presidential inaugural addresses, they are originally written texts delivered orally. Thus, since they are written texts, one might expect to find some kind of metaphorical density in them. Due to the time limits of the speeches, the inaugural texts are cohesive and concise. Thus grammatical metaphors demonstrate preconstructed, i.e. already existing notions.

Theoretical prerequisites

The concept of grammatical metaphor was introduced in Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985) and later developed by his followers Martin (1992), Lock (1996), Eggins (1994), Valeika (1998) to mention a few. The form of grammatical metaphor which has received the most attention is the nominalization of processes. The process is expressed by a verb, which is the core of any sentence. The following types of processes or propositions can be distinguished: material, happening, mental, verbal, relational, and existential (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Dik, 1980; Downing and Locke, 1992; Gerot and Wignell, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Thompson, 1997; Valeika, 1998; Butt, 2001; Banks, 2003). These six process types represent different degrees of dynamism: ranging from material processes as the most dynamic to the least dynamic – existential.

The sentence functions as a grammatical device for describing a situation. A situation typically consists of three components: processes, participants and circumstances. Sentences which encode the said information are of two types: semantically congruent and semantically non-congruent. In semantically congruent sentences, the semantic functions play primary syntactic roles: *President arrived yesterday*, where the Agent *President* is the Subject, the Process *arrived* is the Predicate, the Circumstance *yesterday* is the Adjunct. In non-congruent sentences, the semantic functions play other, secondary, syntactic roles: *President's arrival took four hours*. The Agent *President* and the Process *arrived* function as the Subject, the Circumstance *four hours* as the Objective Complement.

This type of change of semantic functions is called grammatical metaphorisation, and the syntactic unit that demonstrates this change is a grammatical metaphor.

The systemic-functional perspective on nominalizations is closely related to the concept of grammatical metaphor: nominalization is presented as a resource for the creation of 'metaphorical', i.e. lexicogrammatical realizations of semantic categories. To Halliday, nominalization is the result of metaphorization of the Process. Nominalization, to put in Halliday's terms (1994, 352), is "the single most powerful



resource for creating grammatical metaphor”. Nominalization, then, is a linguistic mechanism whereby the process is realized as an Entity. Nominalization can be defined as the process by which non-nominal structural elements are made to function as nominal elements.

Since metaphors are sensitive to metafunction, this study focuses on what Halliday considers the two main types of grammatical metaphors in the clause: ideational (i.e. metaphors of transitivity) and interpersonal (i.e. metaphors of mood). In ideational metaphors, lexico-grammatical features are re-arranged to put forth a certain view of reality, i.e. they constitute an alternative way of constructing a picture of reality. One type of clause is expressed as another type and the processes and qualities (attributes) are construed as if they were entities, through the process of nominalization. Nominalization is claimed to be the type of ideational metaphor. Consider:

- (1) *Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, reverend clergy, fellow citizens, we observe today not a victory of party, but **a celebration of freedom** – symbolizing an end, as well as **a beginning** – signifying **renewal**, as well as **change** (John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, Friday, January 20, 1961).*
- (2) *These are not just my goals, and they will not be **my accomplishments**, but **the affirmation of our nation’s continuing moral strength** and our **belief** in an undiminished, ever-expanding American dream (Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address, Thursday, January 20, 1977).*

In the example above, to put it in transitivity terms, the congruent forms *we celebrate freedom* (a material process clause), *X begins* (happening process clause), *X renews* (happening process clause), and *X changes* (happening process clause) have become grammatically metaphorized forms embedded in mental process clause. Similarly, the second example presents nominalizations *I accomplish* (material process clause), *our nation’s continuing moral strength affirms* (verbal process clause), *we believe* (mental process clause) embedded in relational process clause.

The semantic features of nominalizations

As it was mentioned, the *Process* in propositions exists in two modes: congruent (i.e. expressed by the finite form of the verb) and non-congruent, or metaphorical (i.e. expressed by a nominalized form of the verb). The use of one or the other mode is determined by informational-pragmatic factors and language economy requirements: the speaker or writer, depending on his/her intentions or goals in referring to a situation, can use either the congruent or the non-congruent form of the proposition. Propositions used non-congruently lose much of their verbal quality: joining the ranks of nouns, they are not in a position to express categories peculiar to the verb – tense, person, aspect, voice, mood, order, i.e. categories which refer the situation to the context. Being deprived of the said features, abstract nouns can now express generic notions, i.e. entities thought of as independent of participants, e. g.:



- (3) *But **hope** is good, and so are strength and vigilance (George Bush, Inaugural Address, Friday, January 20, 1989). vs.*
- (4) *Here today are tens of thousands of our citizens who feel the understandable satisfaction of those who have taken part in democracy and seen **their hopes** fulfilled. (George Bush, Inaugural Address, Friday, January 20, 1989).*

Transformationally, generic (non-specific or non-referential) nominalizations are related to propositions referring to a non-specific situation, while non-generic (specific or referential) nominalizations are related to a specific situation. So, the sentence (3) is based on the generic proposition: *X hopes*. The sentence (4) is transformationally related to the specific propositions: *They hope*.

The verb-based nominalizations used in the corpus presented two categories: partially substantivized and fully substantivized. Partially substantivized nominalizations presented the process as an indivisible whole, i.e. non-distributively. Consider:

- (5) ***Change** has brought new meaning to that old mission (Lyndon Baines Johnson, Inaugural Address, Wednesday, January 20, 1965).*
- (6) ***Communication** and commerce are global; **investment** is mobile; technology is almost magical; and ambition for a better life is now universal (Bill Clinton, First Inaugural Address, Wednesday, January 21, 1993).*

Fully substantivized nominalizations behave like countable nouns proper – they can be freely used in the singular and in the plural. When used so, they denoted either individual completed acts of the process or the results (products) of the process. Consider:

- (7) ***Such new economic developments** must be devised and controlled to benefit the peoples of the areas in which they are established (Harry S. Truman, Inaugural Address, Thursday, January 20, 1949).*
- (8) *The inauguration ceremony marks **a new beginning, a new dedication** within our Government, and a new spirit among us all (Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address, Thursday, January 20, 1977).*
- (9) *Thomas Jefferson believed that to preserve **the very foundations of our nation**, we would need dramatic change from time to time (Bill Clinton, First Inaugural Address, Wednesday, January, 21, 1993).*
- (10) *Appreciating that economic need, military security and political wisdom combine to suggest **relational groupings of free peoples**, we hope, within the framework of the United nations, to help strengthen such special bonds the world over (Dwight D. Eisenhower, First Inaugural Address, Tuesday, January 22, 1953).*
- (11) ***Our fortifications** are yet in a state of only partial completeness, and the number of men to man them is insufficient (William Howard Taft, Inaugural Address, Thursday, March 4, 1909)*



It will be noted, however, that one and the same nominalization functioned both as a partially substantivized unit and as a fully substantivized unit:

- (12) *In these four years, we have been touched by tragedy, exhilarated by challenge, strengthened by **achievement*** (Bill Clinton, *Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997*). vs.
- (13) *My fellow Americans, as we look back at this remarkable century, we may ask, can we hope not just to follow, but even to surpass **the achievements of the 20th century in America***<...> (Bill Clinton, *Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997*).

In the sentence (12) *achievement* denotes the process as a whole and is used in the singular while *the achievements of the 20th century in America* in the sentence (13) denotes specific results of the process. The difference between partially and fully substantivized nominalizations may be reflected in the choice of the restricters.

Depending on the inner character of the underlying verb, verb-based nominalizations fall into four types: *activity*, *state*, *achievement* and *accomplishment*. In the literature (Vendler 1967, 97–121; Mourelatos 1978, 415-434), by activity is meant process (duratives), state, as the name implies, involves no dynamics, by achievement is meant verbs that denote either the inception or the end of a process, and, finally, by accomplishment is meant verbs that have an end-point built in. Consider respectively:

- (14) *And **the hopes** in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people* (Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Second Inaugural Address, Monday, January 21, 1957*).
- (15) *As I stand here today, having taken the solemn oath of office **in the presence of my fellow countrymen – in the presence of our God** – I know that it is America's purpose that we shall not fail* (Franklin D. Roosevelt: *Fourth Inaugural Address, Saturday, January 20, 1945*).
- (16) *Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure **the survival and the success of liberty*** (John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address, Friday, January 20, 1961*).
- (17) *This policy represents **a new departure** in the world* (Calvin Coolidge, *Inaugural Address, Wednesday, March 4, 1925*).

The following subsection will examine the structural features of nominalizations.

The structural features of nominalizations

The restricting elements (modifiers) were of two kinds: 1) restricters that presented constituents of the underlying structure; 2) restricters that resulted from generalizations.



zed transformation. Being peculiar nouns, nominalizations, unsimilar to other nouns, represent propositions. In transforming a proposition into a nominal form, we may or may not preserve its constituents: participants and circumstances. From the point of view of the co-text (i.e. the linguistic environment), two types of the nominalizations were used in the corpus: absolute (i.e. with zero modification) and non-absolute nominalizations (i.e. with material modification). Absolute material nominalizations are in fact nominalizations with unactualized participants and circumstances. Absolute nominalizations did not dominate in the inaugural addresses, which suggests that the absence of modification was mostly due to the requirements of the connected text: constituents that present ‘given information’ are either ellipted or replaced by appropriate pronouns. Furthermore, the presidents of US tried to be persuasive and not to sound too abstract and laconic. Consider respectively:

- (18) **Reconstruction, readjustment, restoration** all these must follow (Warren G. Harding, Inaugural Address, Friday, March 4, 1921).
 (19) Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out **our nation’s promise** through civility, courage, compassion and character (George W. Bush, First Inaugural Address, Saturday, January 20, 2001).

The most frequent participant constituents retained were the *Inanimate Agent*, the *Affected Patient*, and the *Effected Patient*, which in the nominalization (in a nominal word-combination) assume the role of restricters (modifiers). Consider:

- (20) But **change** has given us new weapons (Lyndon Baines Johnson, Inaugural Address, Wednesday, January 20, 1965).
 (21) Instead, we have drifted, and **that drifting** has eroded our resources, fractured our economy, and shaken our confidence (Bill Clinton, First Inaugural Address, Wednesday, January 21, 1993).
 (22) **Growing connections of commerce and culture** give us a chance to lift the fortunes and spirits of people the world over (Bill Clinton, Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997).
 (23) **America’s belief** in human dignity will guide our policies, yet rights must be more than the grudging concessions of dictators; <...> (George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address, Thursday, January 20, 2005).

This can be accounted for by the general stylistic peculiarities of political register: in presenting his speech, the president, anxious to be objective, avoids using human *Agents* as much as possible. To cite Holme (2003, 409), “the genre is one which appraises or explains the events that it unfolds. It therefore recounts the events inside a cause and effect structure that tends to reduce human actors to a hypothetical presence”.

The most frequent circumstantial (non-inherent) constituents retained were *time*, *duration*, *frequency*, *place*, *manner*, *means*, and *instrument*. In the process of nominalizations, they either changed their categorical status (e.g. *recently*→ *recent*,



rapidly→ *rapid*, *full*→ *fully*) or preserved it (e.g. *late*→ *late*, *hard*→ *hard*). As regards circumstantial elements, circumstances in *-ly* dropped the suffix and entered the nominalization as adjectival restricters: adjectives were the most common restricters used with the nominalizations. Consider:

- (24) **Recent suggestion** that something had occurred on the isthmus to make the lock type of the canal less feasible than it was supposed to be when the reports were made and the policy determined on led to a visit to the isthmus of a board of competent engineers to examine the Gatun dam and locks, which are the key of the lock type (William Howard Taft, Inaugural Address, Thursday, March 4, 1909). Cf. *X suggested recently*
- (25) *We must hold up their hands, and speaking for the incoming administration I wish to say that I propose to devote all the energy possible and under my control to pushing of this work on the plans which have been adopted, and to stand behind the men who are doing faithful, **hard work** to bring about the early completion of this, the greatest constructive enterprise of modern times (William Howard Taft, Inaugural Address, Thursday, March 4, 1909). Cf. *X works hard.**

As it is seen in the examples above, in the process of nominalizations, the constituents of the underlying proposition may undergo ‘linguistic processing’, i.e. before becoming constituents of the prospective nominalization, they may change their categorial status. As such constituents are assigned the role of restricters in the nominalization, we have the right to expect that they will be turned into the corresponding adjectives.

Concluding remarks

The non-congruent forms always have the effect which can go from the aesthetic to the ideological. The presidents deliver persuasive speeches to move the Congress and the people and, consequently, to move the people to stir the Congress. The inaugural addresses of US presidents are a discrete kind or type of oratory. Presidential inaugurals are a genre distinct from other forms of presidential discourse: the inaugurals are an instance of epideictic or ceremonial rhetoric.

The occurrence of a grammatical metaphor greatly increases the general volume of information the clause or the sentence expresses: the greater the number of included nominalizations, the greater the volume of the information expressed by the sentence. Thus grammatical metaphors are crucial, ideal for the discourse which places a premium on the transference of information in an economical and condensed way.

The present study has been limited to a fairly small scope; however, the phenomenon of grammatical metaphor proved to open new possibilities for investigating them in other types of political discourse.

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Solveiga Sušinskienė

GRAMATINĖS METAFOROS – IDEOLOGINIAI POLITINIO TEKSTO MIKROKOMPONENTAI

Santrauka

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *gramatinė metafora, nominalizacija, kongruentinis, nekongruentinis, iš dalies substantyvizuotas, visiškai substantyvizuotas.*

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad svarbūs politinio teksto mikrokomponentai yra siejami su tuo, kaip jis reprezentuoja ateitį. Šios retorinių funkcijų reprezentacijos pasitelkiamos nusakant diskursyvius veiksnius. Dėl integracijos ir minties kondensacijos gramatinės metaforos yra esminiai lingvistinio poveikio komponentai. Šio darbo tikslas yra išnagrinėti Jungtinių Valstijų prezidentų inauguracinių kalbų semantinius ir struktūrinius gramatinių metaforų požymius. Analizei pasirinktos 20 amžiaus prezidentų inauguracinės kalbos pradedant nuo Teodoro Ruzvelto ir baigiant Džordžu Bušu. Iš viso 56 387 žodžių korpuse rastos 2 035 gramatinės metaforos. Dėl laiko limitu inauguracinės kalbos yra glaustos, tad gramatinės metaforos atskleidžia iš anksto sugalvotas sąvokas.

Nominalizacijos yra viena iš gramatinės metaforos rūšių. Nominalizacijos traktuojamos kaip proceso metaforizacijos. Procesas suvokiamas ne kaip autonomiška struktūra, bet kaip struktūra, susijusi su proceso dalyviais ir cirkumstantais. Procesai gali būti dviejų formų: kongruentiniai (išreikšti asmenuojamąja veiksmažodžio forma) ir nekongruentiniai (išreikšti nominalizuota veiksmažodžio forma). Ištyrus pavyzdžius paaiškėjo, kad semantiniu požiūriu nominalizuoti procesai yra dviejų kategorijų: iš dalies substantyvizuoti ir visiškai substantyvizuoti. Pirmieji nusako procesą kaip visumą ar proceso dalį. Antrieji žymi proceso rezultatą arba individualius proceso aktus. Išnagrinėjus struktūrinius nominalizacijų požymius paaiškėjo, kad jos gali būti skirstomos į absoliučias, t. y. su nuline modifikacija, ir neabsoliučias, t. y. su materialia modifikacija.

Analizė parodė, kad gramatinė metaforizacija yra pravarti kalbos ekonomijai ir padeda interpretuoti šalies politinę viziją. Be to, gramatinės metaforos išplečia informacijos apimtį sakinyje: kuo daugiau nominalizacijų, tuo daugiau galima pasakyti.