

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RISHI SUNAK'S FIRST SPEECH AS PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract: This research analyzes Rishi Sunak's first speech as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on October 25, 2022, through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the researchers explore Sunak's speech in text, discourse practice, and social levels to unveil the underlying meanings and intentions behind his words. Through a micro and macro-level analysis of Sunak's use of linguistic devices, along with investigations into the discourse practice and social context of the speech, the researchers discover Sunak's commitment to: (1) addressing the UK's pressing issues, prioritizing economic stability, and strengthening key policy areas; (2) acknowledging past mistakes and emphasizing a willingness to learn from them; and (3) bridging the gap between the government and the British public and uniting the country during the challenging time.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, political discourse, political speech, Rishi Sunak, the UK Prime Minister

1. Introduction

In recent years, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has emerged as a powerful tool for unveiling the layers of meaning embedded in political speeches. However, despite the growing prominence of CDA in the study of discourse, there remains a notable gap in the investigation of discursive and social dimensions within a number of Vietnamese scholars when critically analyzing political speeches. This study aims to fill the gap by bringing the lens of CDA to the inaugural speech of Rishi Sunak, the incumbent Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Regarding this speech, existing research has primarily focused on specific linguistic aspects such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and rhetorical triangles. While these analyses contribute valuable insights into Sunak's persuasive strategies, a lack of emphasis on the power relations imposed between Sunak and his audience, as well as the social implications and some other political intentions embedded in the speech, still exists. This study seeks to complement and extend the existing research by providing additional examination on vocabulary analysis, modality, logical connectors, textual structure, and social determinants of the speech, which could be done by applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA.

Recognizing the socio-political significance of Sunak's leadership, particularly as the first person of color, born to immigrant parents, and practicing Hindu to assume the role of Prime Minister, this study aims to explore the linguistic devices employed in his inaugural

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speech to discern his ideologies and political intentions. The research primarily focuses on Sunak's inauguration speech on October 25, 2022, analyzing his use of language, grammar, text structures, and metaphor to convey ideology and political goals within the framework of CDA, especially Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Discourse and Political Discourse*

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a specialized Discourse Analysis (DA) branch that focuses on understanding how language use in social and political contexts reflects and perpetuates social power dynamics, abuse, dominance, and inequality. Unlike approaches centered only on description, CDA seeks to explain discourse structures by examining social interactions and structures. Its primary focus is to unravel how discourse structures play a role in enacting, confirming, legitimating, reproducing, or challenging relations of power abuse and dominance in society. Van Dijk (1997) categorizes a discourse as "political" based on two criteria. First, if politicians or political actors produce the discourse, and second, if the nature of political text and talk is to accomplish political activities or practices.

CDA operates based on a set of core principles, including addressing social problems, recognizing the discursive nature of power relations, understanding the constitutive role of discourse in society and culture, acknowledging the ideological function of discourse, recognizing its historical dimension, and highlighting the mediated link between text and society. This interpretative and explanatory nature of discourse analysis is crucial to its effectiveness. CDA provides a potent analytical tool within DA, illuminating the intricate interplay between language and society. By examining language use in diverse contexts, CDA contributes to a deeper understanding of power dynamics, ideologies, and social problems embedded in discourse, thereby facilitating a nuanced exploration of the relationship between language and society.

2.2. *Critical Discourse Analysis*

2.2.1. **Components of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA), as defined by Yule (1996), is "the study of language use with reference to the social and psychological factors that influence communication" (p. 129). Distinct from the traditional DA, **critical discourse analysis** is known as "an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that aims to uncover and challenge power relations, ideologies, and social inequalities embedded in language use and social practices" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). It goes beyond the analysis of language structures and focuses on how discourse reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies, social hierarchies, and power imbalances. CDA explicitly adopts a **critical** approach which is described by Wade and Tavis (2017) as "questioning, critiquing, and challenging assumptions, beliefs, and practices" (p. 20). While DA examines language use and social interactions, CDA emphasizes the analysis of power relations, social structures, and ideologies that shape discourse. CDA seeks to expose hidden power dynamics and challenge dominant discourses that contribute to social inequality (Van Dijk, 2009).

2.2.1.1. *Power*

In CDA, power refers to the ability of individuals, groups, or institutions to exert influence, control, or dominance over others. Here, power is not viewed as a neutral or fixed

concept but rather as something that is dynamic and contested. CDA aims to uncover how power is enacted, maintained, and challenged through language use and discourse, shedding light on how linguistic choices and communication strategies can perpetuate or challenge power imbalances (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

The types of power employed can vary depending on available resources, such as military or violent groups using coercive force, wealthy individuals with financial resources, or individuals like parents, professors, or journalists using their expertise or authority to exert more persuasive influence. Power is rarely absolute and may only be exercised in certain situations or domains. Subordinate groups may resist or accept power to varying degrees.

Reisigl & Wodak (2001) view language as not inherently powerful but acquires power through its usage by those in positions of power. Language plays a significant role in power relations, indexing, expressing, and challenging power. Although power does not originate from language, it can be subverted and altered by it in both the short and long term. CDA focuses on how linguistic forms are used to express and manipulate power, not only through grammatical forms within a text but also through the control of social occasions utilizing the genre of a text.

2.2.1.2. Ideology

Ideology plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining unequal power dynamics, and studying it entails analyzing how symbolic forms convey meaning and how they are utilized in different social settings. In CDA, ideology refers to beliefs, values, and ideas that underpin and legitimize particular social, political, or economic structures. CDA emphasizes that ideologies are not simply reflections of objective reality but are often constructed to serve the interests of dominant groups and institutions. These ideologies can be present in various forms of discourse, including media representations, political speeches, and everyday communication. CDA aims to reveal how ideologies are embedded in language, shaping people's perceptions and influencing their actions. As it exposes dominant ideologies and their role in reinforcing social inequalities, CDA seeks to challenge and deconstruct these structures, fostering social awareness and promoting alternative perspectives (Fairclough, 2001). CDA analysts must be aware of hidden ideological positions in using words, such as when an act of war is defined as “peacekeeping”.

2.3. CDA's Approach to the Study

CDA encompasses various methods and approaches developed by prominent linguists like Ruth Wodak, van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, etc. They have brought to the study of CDA a rich diversity of analytical tools used to unveil the intricacies of language in social interaction. The researchers primarily employ Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework as it provides a holistic analysis of discourse, considering linguistic, social, and cultural dimensions simultaneously and its three-step approach is adaptable and flexible, allowing researchers at undergraduate levels to apply it to a wide range of discourses and contexts, including political speeches like Sunak's. Introduced by Norman Fairclough in his book “Language and Power” (2001), the framework consists of three dimensions:

(1) Textual Analysis (Description): The first dimension involves a detailed analysis of the linguistic features and structures present in the discourse. Fairclough suggests a set of 10 questions for analysts to work on when discovering linguistic elements (see **Appendix 2**). In the analysis of vocabulary and grammar, Fairclough questions their experiential, relational, and expressive values. Experiential values reflect the producer's knowledge, beliefs, and experiences; relational values pertain to the participants' social interactions and power

dynamics, and expressive values are associated with the producer's attitudes, emotions, and evaluations.

(2) Discursive Practice (Interpretation): The second dimension broadens the analysis to consider discursive practices in specific social contexts. This second step of the study examines how discourse is produced and consumed within institutions and social settings.

(3) Social Practice (Explanation): The third dimension expands the analysis further to explore the broader social context in which discourse is situated. This last step of the study considers the social effects of discourse and how language contributes to reinforcing or challenging social structures.

2.4. Review of Previous Studies

2.4.1. CDA Studies in Vietnam

In Vietnam, critical discourse analysis gained its unique position relatively later than those in the world. CDA became increasingly popular among Vietnamese scholars in the last decades, thanks to H. Nguyen's revolutionary publication (2006) "Phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán: Lý luận và Phương pháp" (Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Methodology). The book has been a major source of inspiration and the go-to resource for anyone interested in discourse analysis approaches, along with the studies that he has shown in his lectures, especially in postgraduate courses at ULIS, one of the greatest institutions for studies of foreign languages in Vietnam (Ton Nu & Hoang, 2023).

Since the 2010s decade, it has witnessed a trend of CDA and CDA-related studies for post-graduate scholars. However, preoccupied CDA studies only directed their focus on the first dimension of the CDA which is text analysis while not deeply analyzing or completely ignoring the two other dimensions which are discourse practice and social analysis (Nhat & Hien, 2023).

For instance, the study "A Critical Discourse Analysis of President Obama's 9/11 Memorial Address" published in TNU Journal of Science and Technology by Nguyen Duong Ha and Tran Thi Phuong (2022) applied the Three-dimensional framework by Fairclough in their paper. The study has identified and analyzed power and ideologies through lexical and grammatical devices as well as the macrostructure of the speech. Yet, their study did not conduct further to the other two dimensions, which are discursive practice (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation) which restrained the capability of the research to figure out the background context of the speech to the ideologies and power implemented in the speech. Moreover, as the dimension of explanation was not utilized, it was unknown whether or not the ideologies and power found in the speech affected society and vice versa. The authors are well aware of the previous studies' drawbacks and endeavor to overcome these by providing a more comprehensive analysis of the other two dimensions.

2.4.2. Studies Relating to Sunak's First Speech as the PM of the UK

Until this paper was conducted, only one research paper chose Rishi Sunak's speech for linguistic analysis. In the study "Speech act-based legitimation in selected inaugural speeches of British Prime Ministers" conducted by Buczowski and Strukowska (2022), the researchers analyzed and compared the pragmatic components of Liz Truss' and Rishi Sunak's inaugural addresses as UK Prime Ministers. Buczowski and Strukowska's paper's approach to CDA focused on significant pragmatic aspects of the discourses, such as Speech Acts and Grice's politeness strategies, as well as the theory of the rhetorical triangle in the inaugural speeches by

Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, respectively.

Regarding the first speech by Sunak, Buczowski and Strukowska figured out that the speech mainly used commissive and representative acts. The two authors also analyzed the use of promises through the maxims from Grice's politeness strategies. Furthermore, the usage of pathos, logos, and ethos (key elements of the rhetorical triangle) from Sunak's speech were then identified and analyzed. The lexical density of the two speeches was also analyzed; however, not all key lexical items in Sunak's speech have been discussed, simply because the authors' goal here was only to compare to find out the similarities and different patterns between the two speeches.

Although key findings of the study have contributed greatly to uncovering Sunak's persuasive strategies, the power relations existing between Sunak and his audience have yet to be underscored. Thus, the authors believe Norman Fairclough's framework of CDA, which provides a closer investigation into other aspects such as modality, textual structure, the connection and interaction within the text, as well as the discourse practice and social aspects, could enlighten the unknown field of the relations between power, ideologies and the audience, the social structures that consume the discourse.

Besides, though their study did reveal primitive political ideologies from the speeches as parts of the results from analyzing linguistic acts and rhetorical triangles, certain aspects of them in Sunak's speech have yet been dissected. Hence, our study endeavors to generate the political messages, intentions, and ideologies implemented from the speech with a more complete and thorough approach.

3. Database and Data Analysis Procedure

3.1. Database of the Study

The paper intends to examine the political speech that Rishi Sunak delivered to the UK's citizens during his first appearance as Britain's Prime Minister at Downing Street on October 25, 2022. The full recording of the 6-minute speech can be found on Rishi Sunak's official YouTube channel¹, and the speech's transcript uploaded on the UK government's website² is utilized for examination in this study.

3.2. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of Rishi Sunak's speech follows an approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative measures, primarily guided by Fairclough's 3D framework for CDA. The qualitative method is the major approach of the study. This is where a meticulous examination of the speech is conducted based on Norman Fairclough's dimensions of description, interpretation, and explanation. This procedure includes identifying linguistic elements, interpreting their meanings, and explaining the socio-political implications embedded in the discourse.

Simultaneously, a quantitative viewpoint is employed as a complementary measure which provides statistical information on the occurrence of specific linguistic features. This involves utilizing AntConc to conduct a frequency analysis of key thematic words and pronouns

¹ "My First Downing Street Speech" uploaded on Rishi Sunak's official YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/870cznYcdX0?si=StpshXFCDg5pqwyg>

² Full transcript of Rishi Sunak's first speech as Prime Minister on 25 October 2022 uploaded on the UK government's official website: <https://shorturl.at/asSU5>

within the speech. In this step, a complete and accurate transcript of the speech is collected, uploaded on AntConc, preprocessed (by removing unnecessary characters, converting to lowercase, and handling punctuation) before a Word List that contains the frequency of the words in the corpus is generated.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Text Analysis (Description)

4.1.1. Analysis of Vocabulary

4.1.1.1. Experiential Values

In his first speech as the Prime Minister of the UK, Rishi Sunak highlights a sense of urgency, accountability, and commitment as the new Prime Minister of the UK. The speech's main theme is Sunak's promises and measures in the work of policy-making that he is planning to conduct during his term. Regarding the central theme, specific words are used to demonstrate the willingness and commitment to fulfilling his promises and measures in the policy-making of the PM, such as "integrity", "professionalism", "mandate", "leveling up", and "embraces".

Sunak's speech also contains two sub-themes. The first sub-theme is the ongoing threats that his government is dealing with and endeavoring to resolve during his term. Particularly, they are economics, healthcare, welfare, and other relevant threats to the UK, namely the environment and security and defense issues. The second sub-theme of the discourse is about building trust, paying tribute to the predecessor, and uniting the general public and other political entities to overcome the struggles as a whole.

4.1.1.2. Relational Values

Regarding the relational values, the vocabulary choice of the speech also fosters the two relationships. The first relationship is between Sunak and the general UK public, which is shown through his commitment and willingness to bear the responsibility of the Prime Minister to fulfill the hopes and expectations of the public. The second relationship is between Sunak and his party, government, and other opposing political parties and entities. In this relation, it seems that Sunak is trying to erase the divisions and oppositions within his party and between political entities and parties to unite as a whole and together overcome the difficult times. The mention of Boris Johnson in the speech exemplifies the relation:

"I will always be grateful to Boris Johnson for his incredible achievements as Prime Minister, and I treasure his warmth and generosity of spirit."

Sunak expresses gratitude to the former UK Prime Minister, who oversaw the final stages of Brexit negotiations and the implementation of Brexit. This appears as Sunak's attempt to bridge the gap between different factions within the Conservative Party and the wider public, emphasizing that the mandate earned by the party in the 2019 election belongs to and unites all of them, regardless of individual differences.

4.1.1.3. Expressive Values

Firstly, in terms of the main theme's vocabulary, nouns like "integrity," "professionalism," and the verb "mandate" demonstrate the will and commitment of Sunak's government. The mention of "integrity" implies the government's commitment to honesty, transparency, and trustworthiness. Meanwhile, "professionalism" shows the government's commitment to a high level of competence, expertise, and adherence to professional standards.

The triple repetition of the word “mandate” throughout the text highlights the speaker's acknowledgment of the electoral mandate given to their party and their commitment to fulfilling the promises made in the party manifesto. “Leveling up” and “embraces” describes vividly how Sunak’s government was going to tackle their promises. The phrase “leveling up” refers to the objective of reducing regional disparities and ensuring equal opportunities and prosperity across different parts of the country, indicating a focus on addressing inequality. “Embraces” suggests a positive and proactive approach to Brexit, indicating a willingness to seize and take advantage of the opportunities it presents.

Regarding the sub-theme of challenging issues, he mentions the economic crisis, “energy markets and supply chain” destabilization, as well as the revitalization of economic growth. The word “profound” is used in the phrase “facing a profound economic crisis”, emphasizing the seriousness and depth of the crisis and indicating its significant impact and far-reaching consequences. Meanwhile, “lingers” in the phrase “The aftermath of COVID still lingers” suggests that the effects of COVID are persisting or remaining present, implying that they have not yet completely dissipated.

The term “destabilized” used in the phrase “Putin’s war in Ukraine has destabilized energy markets and supply chains” conveys that the war has disrupted or unsettled the stability of energy markets and supply chains, highlighting the negative consequences. Other issues such as environmental issues, migrations, social welfare, schools, and healthcare. Additionally, the word “mistakes” is used two times in “But some mistakes were made” and “But mistakes nonetheless” emphasizing Sunak’s realization of past errors and miscalculations in decision and policy makings of the past years, though they are inevitable.

In terms of the second sub-theme, the new Prime Minister of the UK uses “tribute”, and “restlessness” to pay homage to the predecessor, building trust as well as uniting the general public and other political stakeholders to overcome the current hardship together. Notably, Sunak shows commitment and willingness for the responsibility he is taking charge of as well as acknowledging the predecessor’s effort. Particularly, the word “tribute” in the sentence “I want to pay tribute to my predecessor Liz Truss” indicates a show of respect, admiration, and acknowledgment for the previous Prime Minister's efforts. Furthermore, “restlessness” in “I admired her restlessness for creating change” suggests a sense of eagerness, drive, and determination to bring about change, portraying it in a positive light. In addition, the double usage of “trust” in “Trust is earned.” and in “I have work to do to restore trust after all that has happened” both show his values to the faith that the party and the people supporting him have in Sunak while acknowledging the responsibility to regain trust from British people.

Secondly, the phrase “I will” appears with the highest repetition in the speech, with 7 times being mentioned by the PM and mostly when he wants to emphasize his dedication and determination to fulfill the goals outlined:

“**I will** work day in and day out to deliver for you.”

“**I will** deliver on its promise.”

Also regularly showing up in the speech is the phrase “I understand”:

“**I understand** how difficult this moment is.”

“(…) And **I understand** too that I have work to do to restore trust after all that has happened.”

Here, Sunak acknowledges the hardships experienced by the public, particularly during the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the mistakes of his predecessor, which resulted in the faded trust in the government of the UK citizens. The

repetition of “I understand” reflects Sunak's willingness to listen to the concerns and experiences of the people he represents, signaling a sense of accountability and empathy. Through this strategic implementation of repetition, Sunak effectively establishes his credibility, appeals to the audience's emotions, and conveys a compelling vision for the future, thereby strengthening his message and encouraging support for his proposed agenda.

4.1.1.4. Metaphors

Given his previous role as the finance minister guiding Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is probable that Sunak's main focus will be on reviving the UK's struggling economy and restoring the country's reputation within the investment community. When mentioning the country's economic stability and credibility of the government, Sunak refers to them as the “heart” of the agenda, implying that these aspects are the core values and priorities of Sunak's government: “I will place economic stability and confidence at the **heart** of this government's agenda.”

The metaphor “heart” is once again employed in the statement: “And the **heart** of that mandate is our manifesto”. In the political context, the manifesto represents the core principles and promises of the party. Sunak attempts to uphold the Conservative Party's manifesto and refers to it as the essence that keeps the political body alive and functioning.

4.1.2. Analysis of Grammar

4.1.2.1. Experiential Values

The SVO sentence structure is most frequently used in Sunak's speech, emphasizing the author's experiences and responsibilities and the actions they are advocating for. This structure positions Sunak as an active agent, taking charge of addressing challenges and priorities and addressing the citizens as “patients” who will benefit from his actions. The active voice is also regularly used in Sunak's speech, emphasizing the subject as the doer of the action. Accordingly, only 6 out of 47 sentences are in passive form, which accounts for nearly 12,8%. Meanwhile, the number of active voice sentences in the text is 29 out of 47 sentences, constituting approximately 61,7%. Sentences like “I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda” and “I will unite our country” all follow the SVO structure and have an active voice, which conveys a sense of responsibility and proactivity.

4.1.2.2. Relational Values

Firstly, regarding his choice of modes, Sunak predominantly uses declarative sentences to communicate his commitments, intentions, and policy priorities throughout the speech. The declarative mode is characterized by making statements or assertions and presenting information as facts or beliefs. e.g., when the PM states: “I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda”, or “The government I lead will not leave the next generation with a debt to settle”, clear assertions about his government's priorities and goals are shown. In political speeches, the declarative mode is effective as it can lend an air of authority and credibility to the speakers and influence public opinion.

Similarly, the declarative statements in Sunak's speech enhance his role as the new leader of the government, allowing him to present his plans, commitments, and promises with confidence and conviction.

Secondly, Sunak's use of pronouns is also notable:

Table 1*Frequency of Personal and Possessive Pronouns in Rishi Sunak's Speech*

Pronouns	Personal Pronouns	Times Appeared	Relative Frequency	Possessive Pronouns	Times Appeared	Relative Frequency
First-person	I	27	65.8%	My	4	17.4%
	We	4	9.7%	Our	7	30.4%
Second-person	You	6	14.6%	Your	5	21.7%
Third-person	He	0	0%	His	4	17.4%
	She	0	0%	Her	0	0%
	They	0	0%	Their	0	0%
	It	4	9.7%	Its	3	13%
Total		41	100%	Total	23	100%

The substantial usage of first-person personal pronouns, with “I” at 65.8% and “we” at 9.7%, reflects Sunak's focus on asserting his own role and the collective responsibility of the government. The frequent use of “I” highlights his personal involvement, determination, and leadership as the Prime Minister. It reinforces his agency and positions him as an active agent of change, while the use of the inclusive pronoun “we” suggests a sense of shared responsibility and unity, emphasizing collaboration within the government and potentially appealing to collective action from the audience.

The regular use of the second-person personal pronoun “you” at 14.6% and possessive pronoun “your” at 21.7% in addressing the audience reflects Sunak's intention to engage and connect with them on a personal level. By directly involving the listeners through “you” and “your”, Sunak seeks to establish a sense of inclusion, making the audience feel personally addressed, involved in his message, and in his government's service. This strategy aims to create a stronger connection and elicit a more receptive response from the audience. This can also be seen as an attempt to establish a sense of accountability and trust. By addressing the audience directly, the PM takes on the responsibility of making promises and commitments to the listeners.

Moreover, speaking in front of the people as the new PM, Sunak holds a position of authority and influence. As the pronoun “you” is used to address the audience, Sunak establishes a power dynamic where he assumes the role of the communicator, and the audience assumes the role of the recipient. This dynamic can shape the interpretation of Sunak's political intentions and the perceived relationship between the national leader and the citizens.

4.1.2.3. Expressive Values

To commence with, the use of modal auxiliary verbs in Sunak's speech serves to convey a range of expressive values and rhetorical effects. Modal verbs express possibility, necessity, obligation, or intention, adding depth to Sunak's statements and shaping the audience's perception of his political intentions. The modal verb “will” is used frequently throughout the

speech, with a total of 12 occurrences (accounting for 85.7% of the modal verbs used in the speech) showcasing Sunak's strong intention and determination to take action. Phrases like “I **will** work day in and day out to deliver for you” convey his unwavering commitment and drive to bring about positive change. The modal verb “can” accounts for the remaining 14.3% of the speech’s modal verbs, implying possibility and capability. Sunak uses this modal verb to emphasize what is achievable, particularly in the face of challenges: “I can bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today”.

Furthermore, the use of parallelism, where similar grammatical structures are repeated, reinforces Sunak's statements and adds a persuasive quality to his discourse. This is exemplified in the sequence:

“A stronger NHS. Better schools. Safer streets. Control of our borders. Protecting our environment. Supporting our armed forces.”

Apparently, parallelism used in the sequence highlights a series of policy priorities, amplifying their significance and reinforcing the author’s vision. It is notable that all the subjects have been elided in these sentences, and before uttering them, Sunak was referring to the promises of the Conservative Party’s manifesto. This leads to the alignment of Sunak’s speech with the core values and principles of the Conservative Party, which effectively showcases the party's focus on issues that resonate with their conservative ideology, emphasizing their dedication to strengthening essential sectors and ensuring societal well-being.

4.1.2.4. Connective Values of the Text

Connective values refer to the role of formal features in establishing connections between different parts of a text, providing cohesion to the discourse (Fairclough, 2001). In the case of Sunak’s speech, the researchers focus on the role of the logical connectors in helping Sunak establish his ideologies in the speech.

Firstly, the connector "but" is employed to acknowledge past mistakes or challenges while highlighting his determination to address them:

“**But** some mistakes were made. Not born of ill will or bad intentions. Quite the opposite, in fact. **But** mistakes nonetheless.”

Through the phrase “Quite the opposite, in fact”, Sunak contrasts the notion of “ill will” and “bad intentions” with a more positive perspective, highlighting his intent to distance himself from assigning blame. The conjunction "but" serves as a pivotal linguistic device here, signaling a shift that allows Sunak to underscore his willingness to address these mistakes constructively and demonstrates a pragmatic and balanced approach to his role as the new PM. The careful arrangement of these sentences enables Sunak to position himself as a leader who acknowledges past missteps, refrains from casting blame and instead focuses on the importance of learning from these errors for the betterment of the UK. Aside from “but,” the connector "and" are also used by Sunak in various sentences to suggest that economic stability, national unity, and dedicated work of the government are all interconnected and essential components of his approach:

“**And** I have been elected as leader of my party, and your Prime Minister, in part, to fix them.”

“**And** that work begins immediately.”

“Trust is earned. **And** I will earn yours.”

4.1.3. Textual Structures

The text's macro-structure focuses on the speech's broader organization and arrangement of content. Sunak's speech is organized around clear sections addressing specific topics or policy areas, accordingly, his government is shown as prioritizing economic stability and confidence, followed by other key policy areas like healthcare, security, education, and environment. The sub-themes focus on acknowledging past challenges, paying tribute to the predecessors, and uniting the country, consolidating his approach to governance. The sections at the same time follow a logical progression (e.g. starting with the challenges faced by the UK and then proposing solutions and policy measures; starting with acknowledging past mistakes and then outlining the corrective moves.) Thus, the speech becomes coherent and persuasive, guiding the audience through all existing issues and the government's intended responses.

The opening and conclusion of the speech are also noteworthy. Sunak begins with a powerful introduction where he mentions the King's invitation to form a government:

“I have just been to Buckingham Palace and accepted His Majesty The King's invitation to form a government in his name.”

This sets the tone for the speech, implying that Sunak now officially takes on the role of the leader. The speech later concludes with the same power as the opening, as the Conservative Party's core policies and values, as well as their commitments to lead the country forward, are reiterated by the new PM:

“We will create a future worthy of the sacrifices so many have made and fill tomorrow, and everyday thereafter with hope.”

4.2. Discourse Practice (*Interpretation*)

4.2.1. Situational Context

4.2.1.1. Contents

The question of “What's going on?” is proposed by Fairclough (2001) as one of the dimensions of a situation and can be answered by considering the contents, including activity, topic, and purpose of the discourse.

Firstly, the activity here is the act of delivering an official political speech that includes establishing a new Prime Minister's presence, outlining his policy direction, fostering unity and optimism, and encouraging public engagement in his government's agenda.

Secondly, Sunak's speech's primary topics revolve around (1) the UK's ongoing challenges (including the need for economic stability; the policies toward key sectors including healthcare, national defense, environment, and education), (2) his government's credibility, (3) the tribute to his predecessors, and (4) the unity of the country. This choice of topics can be explained by considering the social context of Sunak's speech:

Sunak's first speech was delivered amid a severe economic crisis in the UK, influenced by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. Liz Truss's resignation as Prime Minister resulted from her policies, which caused financial market disruptions and a party rebellion. Her economic policies, centered around low-tax and low-regulation measures, proved adverse amidst soaring inflation and weak economic growth. Sunak acknowledges these mistakes and refers to himself as the one to fix them.

At the same time, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) was facing challenges such as high waiting rates and potential strikes by healthcare workers over pay and working conditions. The new Prime Minister bears the responsibility to address these issues and find

solutions to improve NHS functioning.

Regarding assistance to Ukraine and the country's defense spending, while running for leadership in the summer, Sunak said he would maintain the support of the UK and would visit Kyiv soon if he won the election ("Rishi Sunak: The Most Urgent Problems Facing the New Prime Minister," 2022). However, with rising energy costs aggravating the lives of Britons, Sunak needs to do much to convince voters to accept the reality that their financial hardship is the price to pay for the defense of Ukraine. In other key areas, the UK was also facing challenges such as illegal immigration, strikes over pay, and climate change.

Before Sunak, the credibility of Tory leaders had been tarnished. Aside from Liz Truss and her failed financial policies, her predecessor - Boris Johnson's handling of the Chris Pincher scandal was the final straw. Surviving a party vote of no confidence and being fined for violating COVID-19 restrictions during the lockdown weakened his standing. Now assuming the role of Prime Minister, Sunak shoulders the responsibility of rebuilding public trust in the Conservative Party's leadership and addressing Brexit-related concerns and grievances, not to mention the credibility the new PM has to build as he became the leader of the UK without a national vote, at the age of 42, and after only seven years serving as an MP.

Regarding Brexit, the UK's economic woes cannot be entirely attributed to the exit, but its effects were becoming clearer as the country struggled in indicators such as business investment and trade recovery. The economy was lagging behind other G7 nations, and predictions suggested a significant GDP loss due to Brexit (Partington, 2023). Moreover, as the new PM, Sunak must find a solution to the Northern Ireland protocol, a complex issue that has escalated beyond technicalities due to his predecessors' actions.

Amid the social context mentioned above, the purposes of Sunak's speech are multifaceted. It aims to (1) outline Sunak's government's policy priorities and promises, (2) gain the support of diverse groups present in the audience, including voters, party members, and various social sectors of the UK, (3) inspire trust and confidence in the government's ability to deliver on its promises, and (4) emphasize the collective responsibility and shared mandate of the government and the public in building a prosperous future for all citizens.

4.2.1.2. Subjects

In the case of Sunak's speech, the primary individuals involved in the speech are Rishi Sunak himself as the newly appointed Prime Minister of the UK and the audience consisting of the UK's general public, political stakeholders, and decision-makers who are incredibly crucial for being the recipients of Sunak's message and playing a role in shaping the reception and impact of the speech.

Additionally, while not explicitly mentioned in the speech, there are implied actors such as political advisors, Conservative Party members, and other government officials who contribute to the formulation and support of Sunak's position as Prime Minister.

4.2.1.3. Relations

As discussed in section 4.1.1.2 of the paper, the relationships incorporated in the speech are (1) between the government and the public, and (2) between the leader of a party and his party, government, and opposing political entities.

Regarding the first relationship, the speech demonstrates Sunak as a national leader outlining his government's priorities; the audience, on the other hand, as the recipient and evaluator of the speech. Embracing the role of the leader, Sunak highlights his accountability

while trying to bridge the natural gap between a leader and his people by the use of inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our" (as analyzed in section 4.1.2). Regarding the second relationship, Sunak's speech portrays him as a leader who values party unity, prioritizes governmental responsibilities, and potentially seeks opportunities for cross-party collaboration (the speech does not explicitly mention specific cross-party collaboration or engagement with opposing political entities, the phrase "I will unite our country" suggests Sunak's intention to foster a sense of unity that goes beyond party lines.)

4.2.2. Intertextual Context

Intertextuality refers to the impact of discourse on history and vice versa. It is utilized in political speeches to influence opinions and promote acceptability among the populace (van Dijk, 1997b). Sunak's first speech demonstrates compassion, determination, and focus on the future, aiming to restore trust and prioritize people's needs.

4.2.2.1. Historical Context

Sunak strategically infused historical context into his speech among the complex global scene, where COVID-19's persistent influence and the destabilizing effects of Putin's conflict in Ukraine continue to echo. The Prime Minister states, "Right now our country is facing a profound economic crisis... The aftermath of COVID still lingers... Putin's war in Ukraine has destabilized energy markets and supply chains the world over." These references demonstrate Sunak's awareness of historical events that have impacted the current challenges faced by the country.

4.2.2.2. Influence of Earlier Texts and Conservative Party Manifesto

Sunak's speech is based on the Conservative Party's manifesto, emphasizing unity, shared responsibility, and commitment to delivering on promises, also highlighting the party's policy goals and commitments. David Cameron and Boris Johnson's speeches share common themes of addressing economic challenges, emphasizing unity, and expressing a commitment to delivering on promises.

In his first speech as Prime Minister, David Cameron emphasized the importance of unity and shared responsibility. He stated, "I want to talk about our shared future, about the good we can do together, about the days when we can build a society and an economy that really works for everyone." In comparison, Boris Johnson focused his remarks on Brexit and the commitment to implementing the referendum decision in the phase that Brexit was nearly at the forefront of news coverage. He declared, "I will take personal responsibility for the change I want to see." Johnson emphasized hope for the future in his speech, which was marked by confidence and decisiveness. He said, "I will make sure that we leave the European Union on October 31st, no ifs, no buts."

4.3. Social analysis (Explanation)

In this stage, the researchers shall examine the potential social effects of Sunak's speech.

On the one hand, the PM's speech reproduces social determinants, and persuades and maintains influence, power, and relations between Sunak, the political leader of the Conservative party, and political actors, entities, the media and the general public of the United Kingdom.

The general public of the UK seemed to have reacted positively after his speech as well as the assumption to be the Prime Minister of the UK of Rishi Sunak. Particularly, a political

poll result conducted by Red & Wilton Strategies (a well-known British polling and strategic consulting company) on October 26th, 2022 (1 day after the speech) showed that the net approval ratings of Rishi Sunak and the Conservative party increased by 2% (Redfield and Wilton Strategies, 2022). Meanwhile, Omnisis (a well-known market research company in the UK) conducted a political poll on October 27th, 2022 (2 days after the speech). Its result showed that the net approval ratings of Rishi Sunak increased by 12%. Moreover, his party's net approval rating also grew by 2% compared to the statistics before the assumption of Rishi Sunak as the Prime Minister of the UK (Omnisis, 2022).

On the other hand, it also creates burdens, responsibilities, and duties back to Sunak. Particularly, it establishes responsibilities and duties for Sunak to repair ongoing issues and recover trust between the government and the general republic. Ten months after the first speech, the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom's effort in his work seems to have achieved success or resulted in failures in various fields. Yet, one could clearly see that the PM has endeavored to fulfill many of the promises he made in the speech. In other words, the promises he made in the discourse have transformed into responsibilities, duties, and a compass for Sunak to keep him exercising his executive powers in the trajectory that he showed the public before. Additionally, it could be fathomed that it is the result of the two-way relations, powers and impacts between the discourse producer (Rishi Sunak) and the discourse receivers (political actors and entities, media and general public of the UK), which are also the social organizations, institutions, and structure in this case.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

The researchers have identified several linguistic devices used by Rishi Sunak in his first speech as the UK's Prime Minister on October 25, 2022.

In terms of vocabulary, the author employs (1) words and phrases conveying urgency, accountability, and commitment to policy-making along with words expressing emotions and attitudes; (2) rhetorical devices including metaphor and repetition. In terms of grammar, the author frequently uses (1) the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) sentence structure, (2) active voice, (3) the declarative mode; (4) first-person and second-person pronouns, (5) modal auxiliary verbs, (6) parallelism, and (7) logical connectors. Moreover, the broader organization of the speech also helps display the author's political intentions.

The use of the aforementioned linguistic devices, coupled with the discursive and social analysis, have clearly displayed Sunak's ideologies and political intentions:

Firstly, Sunak has shown his commitment, awareness, and willingness to bear the role and responsibility of the UK's PM as well as the new leader of his government and political party by addressing the speech to numerous ongoing issues that the UK has been facing up with. The lexical choices and rhetorical devices used throughout the speech evidently put economic stability, which is expected to embrace the opportunities of Brexit, as the top priority of Sunak's agenda. Following it are promises in other key policy areas, including strengthening the NHS, supporting the armed forces, controlling the borders, protecting the environment, and improving education.

Secondly, it is shown that Sunak has endeavored to reduce aggressions and divisions within his political party by gratefully paying homage to the previous PMs and emphasizing the core values of the Conservative Party. Sunak acknowledges that mistakes were made, and

simultaneously affirms a great extent of willingness to learn from past errors and take corrective action.

Thirdly, by making promises and utilizing rhetorical and grammatical features flexibly in the discourse, it is demonstrated that Sunak has been trying to erase the distance and cynicism of the British general public and media on the government. Moreover, Sunak's aim to unite the country to overcome the UK's hard times and head toward a brighter future is also conveyed through the use of linguistic devices.

In the end, the research sheds light on some initial, primitive ideas and thoughts about the two-way relations, power, and impacts between the discourse and the society, the discourse producers, and the discourse receivers.

5.2. Implications

The CDA of Rishi Sunak's inaugural speech has far-reaching implications, in that:

(1) It enriches the analyzed database of political speeches, ideologies, biases; discursive and rhetorical strategies used to influence public opinion and shape decision-making and political agendas;

(2) It could contribute to political and social criticism, enable discerning consumption of political discourse, and provide the public with an effective tool to consider their political decisions;

(3) It could hold policymakers accountable by highlighting potential discrepancies between words and actions.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Studies

This paper provides a foundation for future investigations into political discourse and leadership communication, the relations, and the two-way impacts of discourse on macro social structures, organizations, and institutions. On the aspect of Linguistics and Political science, more diverse comparative studies of inaugural speeches from different countries and exploring multimodal dimensions of political communication could provide a broader perspective on language's role in shaping national identity and political agendas. On the aspect of Sociology, more studies should be conducted to further analyze the relations and the impact of political discourse on social structures, hierarchies, institutions, organizations, and vice versa.

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Appendix 1

The entirety of Rishi Sunak's first speech as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (addressed on 25th October 2022)

Due to word count and length limitations, the authors utilize a QR code to access Appendix 1 of this study.



(Please scan the QR code for the entire PDF version of the speech)

Appendix 2

Fairclough's 10 suggestive questions for textual analysis in the Three-dimensional framework

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.) (pp. 92-93). Pearson Education.

A. Vocabulary

1. *What experiential values do words have?*

What classification schemes are drawn upon?

Are there words which are ideologically contested?

Is there rewording or overwording?

What ideologically significant meaning relations (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy) are there between words?

2. *What relational values do words have?*

Are there euphemistic expressions?

Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3. *What expressive values do words have?*

4. *What metaphors are used?*

B. Grammar

5. *What experiential values do grammatical features have?*

What types of processes and participants predominate?

Is agency unclear?

Are processes what they seem?

Are nominalizations used?

Are sentences active or passive?

Are sentences positive or negative?

6. *What relational values do grammatical features have?*

What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?

Are there important features of relational modality?

Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?

7. *What expressive values do grammatical features have?*

Are there important features of expressive modality?

8. *How are (simple) sentences linked together?*

What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?

What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

C. Textual Structures

9. *What interactional conventions are used?*

Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10. *What larger-scale structures does the text have?*

PHÂN TÍCH DIỄN NGÔN PHÊ PHÁN BÀI PHÁT BIỂU ĐẦU TIÊN CỦA RISHI SUNAK TRÊN CƯƠNG VỊ THỦ TƯỚNG VƯƠNG QUỐC ANH

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết phân tích bài phát biểu đầu tiên của Rishi Sunak trên cương vị Thủ tướng Vương quốc Anh vào ngày 25 tháng 10 năm 2022, qua góc nhìn phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán (CDA). Áp dụng khung lý thuyết ba chiều của Norman Fairclough, nhóm khám phá bài phát biểu của Thủ tướng Sunak ở các cấp độ văn bản, thực hành diễn ngôn và xã hội để tìm ra các thông điệp và ý định đằng sau lời nói của ông. Thông qua các phân tích ở cấp độ vi mô và vĩ mô về cách Thủ tướng Sunak sử dụng các công cụ ngôn ngữ, cùng với việc phân tích thực hành diễn ngôn và bối cảnh xã hội của bài phát biểu, nhóm tác giả chỉ ra cam kết của Thủ tướng Sunak trong việc: (1) giải quyết các vấn đề cấp bách của Vương quốc Anh, ưu tiên ổn định kinh tế và tăng cường các lĩnh vực chính sách quan trọng; (2) thừa nhận những sai lầm trong quá khứ và nhấn mạnh sự sẵn sàng học hỏi từ những sai lầm đó; (3) thu hẹp khoảng cách giữa chính phủ và công chúng Anh cũng như gắn kết đất nước trong một thời kỳ đầy rẫy những thử thách.

Từ khóa: phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán, diễn ngôn chính trị, bài phát biểu chính trị, Rishi Sunak, Thủ tướng Vương quốc Anh