

Discourse Analysis of Taiwan's Presidential Press Releases in Response to the Sunflower Movement

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Abstract: - Language is a type of social practice and a kind of communication with intentions. Critical Discourse Analysis is to examine and analyze written and spoken language in order to unfold the sources of power, dominance, and inequality. The major goals of Critical Discourse Analysis are to examine the people who have power and chances to deal with social problems. Language use of a country's president serves as a good example of the examination of language and power and linguistic strategies. However, there is little research analyzing presidential discourse by van Dijk's model. Therefore, the discourse in this study was analyzed by using van Dijk's model in order to describe, interpret, and explain the discourse from Taiwan President Ying-jeou Ma's press releases released and broadcasted by Taiwan Government. The selected releases were delivered from March 23rd, 2014 to April 7th, 2014, targeting at explaining Taiwan Government's intentions on signing the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services with PRC and soothing the anger of the protesting students. The data of the presidential releases based on van Dijk's socio-cognitive model was categorized into the following three themes: discourse representing US versus THEM, persuasive strategies, and from the rational to the emotional. The study is, thus, to reveal the message hidden in the discourse and linguistic strategies applied by a country's leader.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; presidential press releases

I. INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views languages as a type of social practice and attempts to draw people's attention to the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, which is normally hidden and implicit (Van Dijk "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis"; Norman Fairclough; Ruth Wodak *Language, Power and Ideology*). A dialectical relationship refers to a two-way relationship in which discourse is shaped by social contexts and it also shapes them (Fairclough and Wodak). Hidden and implicit ideologies, social conditions, and power relations are revealed and studied through critical views of CDA. The key CDA theorists include Fairclough (1992, 1993, 1995), van Dijk (1993, 2001), Gee (2005), van Leeuwen (1993), and Wodak (2001). Many CDA theorists define CDA in their own ways (van Dijk 1993, Meyer 2001). Some of them share similar points of view, while others are rather different from each other. Fairclough's approaches (1993) rely much on Halliday's functional systemic analysis (1985), starting with systematic analysis of lexical resources to genres and text metafunctions. Linguistic metafunctions include ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, presenting that discourse is both socially constitutive

and determined. Unlike the approaches of Fairclough (1993), van Dijk (1995) develops methods focusing more on cultural and social contexts, based on four categories (action, context, power, and ideology). Despite of the distinct views held by them, it is generally agreed that CDA should be viewed as an approach made up of different perspectives and ways for the purpose of investigating the relationship between the use of language and social context.

Discourse analysis is, from van Dijk's (1995:17) point of view, ideology analysis, because "ideologies are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies". He further claims that ideologies "indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" (van Dijk 1995:19) and they are manifested through discourse. The manifestation is particularly presented by Us versus Them dimensions, in which people of one group are likely to use positive terms to describe themselves while they present others in negative ones. Besides ideologies, power, also one of the major goals in CDA, is highly emphasized. Through CDA, discourse of those people who are in power and who have the means to deal with social problems is critically examined and analyzed (van Dijk 1993).

For decades, CDA has attracted a number of scholars to analyze and explain the relationship between language and society in sorts of fields, such as in media discourse (van Dijk 1998) and in education (Rogers 2004); different kinds of models have been applied to analyze discourse, such as Fairclough's model (1993), van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1995), Wodak's discourse sociolinguistics model (2001), and so forth. Especially in the analysis of media discourse, van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1995) has been widely referenced and applied. However, there is little research analyzing presidential discourse by van Dijk's model (Yang). The discourse in this study, thus, was analyzed by adopting van Dijk's model and the textual analysis (Halliday; N. Fairclough "Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities") in order to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between language and society on the issue of signing the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services with the PRC and the Sunflower Movement through Taiwan President Ying-jeou Ma's press releases. Presidential press releases could be a portrait of a president's public behavior presented through different sorts of media, which could make a connection (disconnection) with audiences

(Bruner). Successful presidential press releases could win people's heart but failed ones could deteriorate the relationship between presidents and their people.

II. THE CROSS-STRAIT AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES

The Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services (The Trade Pact), one of the follow-up agreements under the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), signed by Taiwan and PRC on June 21st, 2013, covers business services, communication services, construction and related engineering services, health-related and social services, tourism and travel-related services, and so forth. ECFA is a preferential trade agreement between Taiwan and the PRC for the purpose of reducing tariffs and commercial barriers between the two countries. The Trade Pact which is promoted by Taiwan's government would help local businesses in Taiwan expand their market share in the mainland Chinese market, promoting Taiwan's economic development (Ministry of Economic Affairs). It would also enhance to make trade rules more transparent in service sectors and help accelerate business for suppliers from both sides of Taiwan Strait. It, to be noted, would mark a significant step for Taiwan to participate in regional economic integration (Ministry of Economic Affairs).

III. THE SUNFLOWER MOVEMENT

Because of the insufficiency of a more comprehensive and effective communication between the government officials and the public in Taiwan, a student-led protest (the Sunflower Movement) against the signing the Trade Pact with the PRC, was held on March 18th, 2014. A gang of Taiwan students launched a series of street rallies and demonstrations to occupy

the Legislative Yuan for more than a couple of weeks, raising international attention (Sanchez and Li). The protesting students asked the government to scrutinize the Trade Pact article by article before signing it with the PRC for they were in fear of being taken advantages or taken over by the PRC.

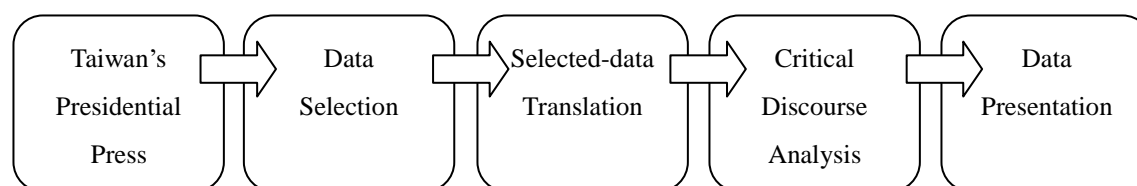
IV. FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY

In this study, the presidential press releases were analyzed by van Dijk's socio-cognition model (1998:61-63) and the textual analysis (Fairclough 1989, Halliday 1985) both from micro- and macro-perspectives in the following aspects: (1) examining the context of the discourse: historical, political, or social background of a conflict and its main participants; (2) identifying positive and negative opinions about US versus THEM; and (3) examining all linguistic structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure.

V. DATA

The current study reveals a critical discourse analysis of the presidential press releases regarding the Sunflower Movement delivered by Taiwan President Ying-jeou Ma. The press releases provide data to analyze how language is used to present the speaker's intentions, ideology, and thoughts. The data of the study comprises of four pieces of President Ying-jeou Ma's press releases dating from March 23rd, 2014 to April 7th, 2014. The selected press releases are all related to the trade pact and in response to the students' protest (the Sunflower Movement). Among the four pieces of press releases, only one of them (March 26th, 2014) is provided from the Taiwan government website in Chinese version while the remaining three, both in Chinese and English. The Chinese one was translated and back-translated to reach high-level of reliability.

Figure 1. Data analysis procedure



VI. THEMATIC AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSES OF PRESIDENTIAL PRESS RELEASES

The following analyses of the data reveal four broad themes: discourse representing Us versus Them (Taiwan versus other Asian countries and the KMT versus the DPP), direct quotes from elites and experts, the rule of three, and from the rational to the emotional. Below is a detailed description and explanation of the themes.

6.1 Discourse representing Us versus Them

6.1.1 Taiwan versus other Asian Countries

From Excerpt 1 to 4 (see Excerpt 1 below and Excerpt 2 to 4 in Appendix), it is obvious that Taiwan, from the perspectives of President Ying-jeou Ma, is just a small economic entity, seeking more opportunities to sign free-trade pacts but due to obstacles in diplomacy, not many countries would like to do so with Taiwan. Compared with Singapore, Korea, Japan, and the PRC, Taiwan needs to pay more commodity taxes. President Ying-jeou Ma mentioned the above four Asian countries as examples to tell Taiwanese people that Taiwan's economy could be as good as theirs as long as the trade pact would be signed as soon as possible. If people in Taiwan did not keep up with them, they would be kicked out and blocked in their own small territory. The true

problem of Taiwan's economy lies in free trade. Taiwan, thus, still needs to work more on regional economic integration in order to be able to compete with Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and other Asian countries.

Excerpt 1 (March 23rd, 2014)

As you know, Taiwan has a small and open economy. External trade accounts for 70 percent of our economic growth. Because of our diplomatic predicament, although many countries are perfectly willing to do business with Taiwan, they hesitate when it comes to signing a free trade agreement (FTA) with us. This is why we have signed only seven FTAs or ECAs. (And of these, only three were signed with major trade partners.) We lag far behind Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and mainland the PRC. Tariffs are levied on our exports at rates that are 3 to 7 percent higher than those applying exports from these other countries. Therefore, we must try to sign more FTAs as soon as possible so that we will not be marginalized.

A sharp contrast between other Asian countries' prosperity and Taiwan's recession is created through President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse. His talks present Taiwan's hopeless economic situations oppressed by unfavorable conditions while other countries in Asia which were almost in line with Taiwan economically decades ago have been leaping forward to a brighter economic world. A better economic society is what Taiwan people have been looking forward to for years and President Ying-jeou Ma promotes the trade pact with the PRC along with Taiwan people's desire. The desire could only be fulfilled by signing the pact with the PRC from President Ying-jeou Ma's views. Besides this, numerical contrasts have been made. Numerical figures are proposed to raise the credibility of President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse and to build a more concrete economic discrepancy between Taiwan and other Asian countries.

The discourse of President Ying-jeou Ma is not simply a presidential speech, but a persuasion and campaign talk delivering significant information to the public. The people are informed of the current Taiwanese economic situation compared with other countries which have signed trade agreements with other countries. Except Taiwan, other countries in Asia have been in an economic circle in which commerce could be boosted up (Figure 2). The problem hindering Taiwan's declining economy lies in the indecisiveness to cooperate with other countries economically, especially with PRC.

Figure 2



6.1.2 The KMT and DPP

The ruling party, here, refers to the KMT while the opposition, the DPP. The DPP has been in both direct and indirect conflict with the KMT for many decades. Because of the purposal of signing the trade pact with the PRC, their conflict has become intensively serious. President Ying-jeou Ma, also Chairman of the KMT, asks the opposition party to stop boycotting or arousing people's concerns for being merged by the PRC. What the Taiwan government does is for Taiwan people's own benefits, not for the people of the PRC. In his discourse (Excerpt 5), negative phrases are frequently applied to make association with the opposition party, such as 'to overturn the joint resolution,' 'to cease engaging in parliamentary obstruction,' 'preventing the continued view of the agreement in committee,' and 'against the wishes of the majority of the public.' It seems that President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse creates a vivid divide between the general public's mutual agreement and the DPP's purposeful impediment.

Excerpt 5 (April 7th, 2014)

I urge the opposition parties not to overturn the joint resolution reached by the ruling and opposition parties, and to cease engaging in parliamentary obstruction aimed at preventing the continued review of the agreement in committee. Otherwise, they will be acting against the wishes of the majority of the public.

Given the above analyses, it is suggested that the discourse of President Ying-jeou Ma presents a sharp contrast between Taiwan and other Asian countries or between the KMT and the DPP. The linguistic strategy applied here is 'positive self-presentation and negative other presentation' (van Dijk 2001:103). Good parts would be emphasized by 'topicalizing positive meanings, by using positive lexical items in self-descriptions, (and) by providing many details about good actions' (van Dijk 2001:108). Both being the Taiwan's president and the chairman of the KMT, President Ying-jeou Ma strategically emphasizes the good parts of the KMT while he emphasizes the bad ones of the DPP. The KMT, to be more specific, is the party which has been working so hard to make Taiwan more visible and more competitive. Taiwan could be as good as other Asian countries only if the DPP did not prevent Taiwan from being more progressive by boycotting proposals made by the KMT. To be noted, the speaker of the selected discourses, President Ying-jeou Ma, is a figure with power and authority; his discourse also could make the contrast between Taiwan and other Asian countries or between the KMT and the DPP much sharper and stronger (Campbell and Jamieson).

6.2 Persuasive Strategies

6.2.1 Direct quotes from elites and experts

Three big names are mentioned in President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse (see Excerpt 6 and 7 below), which are highly related to Taiwan's commerce or business. Future economic situations are the biggest concern for people in Taiwan

especially after signing the trade pact with the PRC. President Ying-jeou Ma, however, strategically brings forth significant people in commerce as big supports for the trade pact, reassuring the general public. The first-mentioned person, Central Bank Governor Perng Fai-nan, has been winning the majority of Taiwan people's heart as a justice figure which keeps fighting against untrustworthy large companies, and has been rated as one of the world's best central bankers by Global Finance magazine for his excellent performance for more than ten times (Perng ranked once again as top-tier central banker in 2014).

Excerpt 6 (March 20th, 2014)

Over the past few days, specialists and business leaders have made some very good comments. Central Bank Governor Perng Fai-nan said, "Taiwan must go forth. Taiwan cannot be marginalized. The Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement can help Taiwan's integration into the global economy." Chairman Lai Cheng-i of the General Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of PRC said, "We hope the students at the Legislative Yuan will go back to school and allow the Legislative Yuan to return to normal operation, so that it can review the services agreement article by article."

Excerpt 7 (March 29th, 2014)

Bruce C.H. Cheng, honorary chairman of Delta Electronics, said, "The Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement will have no effect on Taiwan's business sector. It cannot be delayed too long and should be passed quickly." According to the last public opinion poll released by Business Today weekly, 12 of the 13 chairs of university economics departments in Taiwan support the agreement, believing it will be beneficial to Taiwan's economy.

Governor Perng's talk, thus, weighs significantly in most people's mind. Not only important figures from the commercial world support the pact, but significant academic faculty is in favor of it. It seems that leading people in different fields are all embracing the pact and looking forward to a brighter future created by signing the pact.

6.2.2 The rhetoric rule of three

The rhetoric rule of three is frequently applied in the President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse (see Excerpt 8 below and Excerpt 9 to 12 in Appendix). In his talks, the 'three-part phrases' strategy occurs to strengthen the language power, further convincing the audience of his thoughts (Atkinson).

Excerpt 8 (March 23rd, 2014)

My fellow countrymen, the service sector is our economic mainstay. It accounts for about 70 percent of our gross domestic product (GDP), and nearly 60 percent of our workforce. However, our service exports lag far behind those of **Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Republic of Korea**. Taiwan's innovative and high-quality service industry has high-caliber human resources. But it is unable to fully utilize

this talent and expertise because Taiwan's markets are too small.

6.3 From the rational to the emotional

The last paragraphs of President Ying-jeou Ma's four pieces of discourses are to bring all the people in Taiwan together, to set up a mutual goal to fight for a better future, and to ask blessing from God. The first-mentioned paragraphs, based on facts and figures, are to present President Ying-jeou Ma's purpose of signing the pact with the PRC. The purpose is all for Taiwan people's own benefits, not for people in the PRC. The last paragraphs (take Excerpt 13 as an example), to a contrary, show a more emotional tone, binding the people together to work for Taiwan and to pray to God for prosperity.

(Excerpt 13) 2014.0329

My fellow countrymen, we can all hold different views on public policy while still caring deeply for Taiwan, but we're in this together—we all have a shared mission and responsibility to keep Taiwan moving forward. At this time, we must unite for Taiwan and trust in our democratic institutions as the best way to resolve disputes. Only in this way can Taiwan continue marching forward.

God bless Taiwan! Let us work together for the sake of Taiwan!

Excerpt 14 and 15 also serve as a more emotional example of President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse. In the discourse, he uses 'our young friends' and 'my young friends' to make himself much closer to the young people who occupied the Legislative Yuan and protested against the trade pact. The position of the president is lowered, not condescending anymore. The president is, in other words, a friend of the young people.

Excerpt 14 (March 29th, 2014)

To our young friends in the legislative chamber, and to our countrymen preparing to take to Ketagalan Boulevard tomorrow, I want to express my deepest feelings: I have heard your voices. I entirely understand your concerns, which it is the responsibility of the government to handle. I hope that one day we can sit down together and have a serious discussion on all the issues you are worried about, including salaries, employment, housing, starting families, and the future direction of Taiwan's economy, in an effort to find solutions.

Excerpt 15 (March 29th, 2014)

I sincerely hope, my young friends, that in addition to expressing the intensity of your passion for Taiwan, you will also exercise the clarity of your minds to find a path forward for Taiwan.

Given the above analysis, it is obvious that President Ying-jeou Ma does not stand high up in the sky, but just right close to every individual in Taiwan, listening to their needs and caring for them.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

President Ying-jeou Ma tactfully expressed his concerns for the Trade Pact and the Sunflower Movement through his press releases. The press releases were to inform Taiwan people of the significance of signing the Trade Pact with the PRC, without igniting the opposing people's dissatisfaction or anger. President Ying-jeou Ma, at the same time, lowered his position to be an open-minded listener, listening to the voice of the students who occupied the Legislative Yuan. Three themes were revealed from the presidential press releases: discourse representing US versus THEM (Taiwan versus other Asian countries and the KMT versus the DPP), persuasive strategies (direct quotes from elites and experts and the rule of three), and from the rational to the emotional. The analysis of the press releases is in accordance with what van Dijk (1995) claimed that WE are democratic while THEY are not and Our soldiers are fighting for freedom while the Others are terrorists. A sharp contrast between other Asian countries' prosperity and Taiwan's recession mentioned in the President Ying-jeou Ma's discourse could make people in Taiwan feel anxious to face a gloomy future due to the economic disconnection with the PRC. Additionally, President Ying-jeou Ma strategically emphasizes the good parts of the KMT while he also claims the bad ones of the DPP. His press releases repeatedly delivered the message that the present economic situation in Taiwan could be better if the DPP did not prevent Taiwan from reaching out for more economic resources. Persuasive strategies, obviously presented in the presidential press releases, were to persuade Taiwan people into embracing the goodness of signing the Trade Pact with the PRC. The strategies included the quotes from some significant people in Taiwan and the rhetoric rule of three for the purpose of emphasizing the necessity of the signing it. President Ying-jeou Ma, kindly and warmly, stood by the side of the protesting students through his discourse. The students, claimed by President Ying-jeou Ma, should not be blamed but to be encouraged and inspired. Their actions, of course, did not deserve condemning but praising. The gap between the Taiwan government and the younger generation seemed to be bridged through President Ying-jeou Ma's a friend-like discourse.

Through analyzing the language strategies in the presidential press releases of President Ying-jeou Ma, the implication beyond sentences could be unfolded. The analysis of this study, similarly, supports the main ideas of CDA – “dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” can be described, interpreted, and explained (Wodak 2001:2). The discourse of the press releases is the construction of socio-political ideologies. The ideologies are shown through language when political speakers, such as a country's president, use various strategies to achieve their goals (O'Barr and O'Barr 1976). The sources of power and dominance are unfolded from the discourse of the press releases, particularly the utilization of positive evaluation of US and negative terms describing THEM (van Dijk 1995, 2001). Linguistic strategies, last but not least, applied by a

country's leader, make the press releases more convincing, credible, and comforting (Miller and Stiles). To sum up, the power of language could be presented differently by different sources of identities; the strategies of language could also be applied differently for different purposes.

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Appendix

(Excerpt 2) 2014.3.23

On March 11, the Republic of Korea and Canada announced the signing of an FTA. South Korea is the first Asian country to sign an FTA with Canada. About 97.5 percent of Korean goods, including cars, automobile components, refrigerators, and washing machines, will enjoy zero tariff treatment. But Taiwan's exports to Canada are subject to tariffs. How then are we to compete with Korea?

(Excerpt 3) 2014.3.23

The Republic of Korea is Taiwan's main trade competitor. In the past decade, its ruling and opposition parties worked hand in hand under four different presidents, bringing the number of FTAs it had signed from just one to 11 at present. These FTAs, including those signed with the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), cover more than 40 countries. Korean businesses enjoy market access and preferential tariff rates around the world. Our businesses, meanwhile, can only watch as they slowly become less competitive. We lag behind Korea by a decade, and can hardly catch up even if we start now. How can people keep saying that there is no need to hurry?

(Excerpt 4) 2014.3.23

My fellow countrymen, the service sector is our economic mainstay. It accounts for about 70 percent of our gross domestic product (GDP), and nearly 60 percent of our workforce. However, our service exports lag far behind those of Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Republic of Korea. Taiwan's innovative and high-quality service industry has high-caliber human resources. But it is unable to fully utilize this talent and expertise because Taiwan's markets are too small.

(Excerpt 9) 2014.0323

As early as the 1980s the US service industry had already made inroads into Taiwan's market. At the time, all of these concerns existed, but what was the result? **McDonald's**, **KFC**, and **Starbucks** all entered our market, but our own sector quickly learned from their business models and developed Taiwan-style coffee shop franchises, such as 85°C, and even created added value that is now marketed around the world.

(Excerpt 10) 2014.0326

The real problem of Taiwan's economy lies in **trade liberalization**, **industrial adjustment**, and **integration into the global economy**. We still need to move forward in order to be able to compete with Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea.

(Excerpt 11) 2014.0329

Research by the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research shows that with the services agreement our services exports to mainland PRC can be expected to increase by 37 percent, or NT\$12 billion (US\$394 million), while creating up to 12,000 jobs. Support for services agreement is thus support for **Taiwan's services sector**, **Taiwan's job market**, and **Taiwan's economy**.

(Excerpt 12) 2014.0329

We have promoted the agreement **to stimulate Taiwan's services sector**, **to ensure Taiwan's economic vitality**, and **to create conditions conducive to Taiwan participating in the process of economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region**. All three of these objectives are extremely important for Taiwan.