

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Ideological Meaning of Negation in Political Speech

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Abstract: From the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study analyzed the discourse functions of negation in political speech, based on which the ideological meaning of negation is discussed. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following two questions: 1) What kind of discourse functions does negation have in political speech? 2) What ideological meaning does negation imply in political speech through the discourse functions? Taking a corpus of 35 transcriptions of political speech in the official website of the *White House* as the data, this study resorts to the balanced application of quantitative corpus-linguistic methods together with CDA to make more comprehensive observations than those normally use basic qualitative or quantitative methods of text analysis. The study reveals that negation has the discourse functions of introducing the new topic, highlighting the focus, countering the expectation, and modifying the information. In political speeches, the functions of negation play a very important role, such as enhancing the rationality of argument, avoiding the wrong interpretation of the discourse, and blocking information in discourse. Through these discourse functions, speakers could show their stances in a more implicit way, construct their authority images, thus rationalizing their own behaviors, and more importantly, form the binary of “us-them”. Specifically, speakers could vigorously promote their “outstanding measures” and shape a positive image of themselves, and at the same time, they deliberately exaggerate the “powerless measures” of others and construct a negative image of them, so as to achieve the goal of disseminating ideology. This study suggests that negation can create new ideological meanings. It implies that critical discourse analysis can explore the relationship between language representation and ideology from the various functions of language structure, which provides a new research perspective for ideology studies

Keywords: *political speech, negation, Critical Discourse Analysis, ideology*

Introduction

Negation is a very important grammatical and semantic category in natural language, which forms an opposite relationship with affirmation. As a common linguistic phenomenon, “negation” has always been an important research topic in disciplines such as philosophy, logic, psychology, and linguistics. Jordan, (1998) believes that the study of negation began in ancient philosophy in the fifth century BC. The research on negation in the field of linguistics mainly focuses on negative words, syntactic structures of negation, semantic features, pragmatic functions of negation, scope and focus of negation, metalinguistic negation, etc. Its research perspectives involve syntax (Ma *et al.*, 2010, Huang, 2018), semantics (Hoeksema, 2008, Levinson, 2008), pragmatics (Horn, 1985, Burton-Roberts, 1989, Dai, 2019) and cognition

(Gao, 2003, Zhang and Chen, 2020). For negation at the discourse level, the focus is mainly on its pragmatic features (Miao, 2011) and stylistic functions (Hidalgo-Downing, 2000, Norrick, 2018).

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, scholars have also noticed the close relationship between negation and ideology. For example, Jeffries, (2017) believed that negation is a “conceptual practice” that reflects the cognitive processes involved in identifying and expressing salient absence in discourse. Nahajec, (2012) examined the ideological meaning of negation in non-literary discourse and believed that negation may reflect and project a series of beliefs, thus strengthening existing beliefs or shaping language users’ beliefs about the world. Negation not only has the potential to reinforce the

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background norms shared by the speaker/author and the listener/reader, but can also construct expectations that are considered as background norms. Therefore, negation is a mechanism that naturalizes common sense and beliefs and enhances this naturalization.

From the above studies, it can be found that negation can effectively convey ideological meaning through functions such as generating opposite meanings, blocking erroneous information, and projecting expectations, thus having important constructive functions in discourse. However, there are few studies at the discourse level that have examined negation in political speech discourse (Miao and Yang., 2021, Durán, 2023). In view of this, from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this study aims to investigate how negation organizes the information in political speeches, and then explore how speakers can use negation to express their positions and views, so as to achieve effective dissemination of ideology, i.e., how speakers instill, maintain, or change specific viewpoint unconsciously, establish and maintain unequal power relations. Negation from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis

Language and Ideology

Language has never been a neutral medium of communication, it is not simply a reflection of reality, but a tool for constructing the views and beliefs that the hierarchy authority needs to spread (Fowler, 1993). Political speech is even more so; it not only states facts but uses persuasive strategies to make the audience accept the speaker's views and positions and keep them under the control of a specific ideology. Especially for speeches by national leaders, which often involve political topics, the purpose is to convey the leader's ideas and propositions to the public, so that they can identify with and convince them, resonate emotionally, and support their decisions. Speakers often use various language resources with caution, including the reasonable use of the semantic resource of negation.

Ideologies are "expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse" (Van Dijk, 2006). The specific way language is used reflects ideology and power relations, which people often cannot perceive. The purpose of critical discourse analysis is to clarify these ambiguous discourse issues (Fairclough and Wodak, 2012). Compared to affirmation, negation is a marked language form. In natural language, the number of marked language forms is much smaller than the number of unmarked forms, and negation is

no exception. Studies have shown that the frequency ratio of affirmation and negation in discourse is approximately 9:1 (Matthiessen, 2006). Although the use of negation is not as frequent as affirmation in spoken and written language, negation has its special function and is an indispensable form in discourse. (Leech, 1983) pointed out that if negation must be used, it must be to achieve some special purpose. This study suggests that the use of negation in political speeches is closely related to the transmission of ideology.

Discourse Function of Negation and Ideology

This study proposes that there is a certain interaction between the discourse functions of negation and ideology in political speech. On the one hand, language constructs and reflects social reality; on the other hand, social reality determines the specific use of language. In systemic functional linguistics, the concept of metafunction closely links language with society through grammar. From the perspective of language function, any clause simultaneously embodies the three essential functions of language. Since the ideology as a product of the social system is reflected in the language system, the discourse function of language inevitably reflects ideological meaning (Xu, 2015). That is to say, the discourse function of negation is the basis for the ideological meaning in discourse.

Negative expression not only represents the speaker's negative stance, but also includes the speaker's understanding and subjective evaluation of the pre-context knowledge of negation, the listener's relationship identity, and the perlocutionary negation effect (Yang, 2018). In political speeches, speakers can express their attitudes, opinions, and viewpoints through negation and make subjective evaluations. By negating the subjective expression of the speaker, the speaker's ideology is embedded in a rather covert form. That is to say, the speaker is able to convey a specific ideology to the audience through negative expression.

Critical discourse analysis reflects a clear characteristic of participating in political activities, which can reveal the ideological meaning hidden in the language use of different social entities through analyzing their language forms (Zhao and Tian, 2022). Based on this, from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, by examining the use of negation in political speeches, the ideological meaning hidden behind the language strategy can be revealed, and the social distance and power relationship between the speaker and the audience can be understood.

Materials and Methods

Material Selection

The material of this study was the political speech of the Presidents of the United States on COVID-19 published on the official website of (Zhang, 2016) the *White House* from 2020 to 2023. The author conducted a preliminary search and downloaded 50 articles based on the appearance of “Coronavirus” and “COVID-19” in the “News Marks” section. Because the texts retrieved solely through keyword searches contained articles with mismatched topics, this study further screened the corpus. When conducting further selection, each article was carefully read throughout and then articles not focusing on the topic of COVID-19 were removed. After removing the irrelevant articles, 35 articles were selected as the corpus. Finally, this study built a small corpus of 61005 words, namely the “Corpus of political speeches of the US president on COVID-19”.

The selection of this corpus mainly considers the following two points: firstly, the study of political leaders’ discourse is of great significance for analyzing the construction methods, implicit and explicit strategies, and ideological dissemination of foreign political discourse (Zhang, 2016). In addition, during COVID-19, the President of the United States made a large number of speeches in this regard, for the convenience of language data collection. Secondly, as a persuasive communication activity, political speeches carry the attitude of the speaker and can be seen as some kind of interaction and negotiation between the speaker and the audience. During this process, the speaker will inevitably use multiple language forms to achieve this goal. Among them, the various discourse functions of negation can well serve the speaker and convey a certain ideology. In specific socio-cultural contexts, the study of critical discourse on political speeches can be conducted by the linguistic representation of negation, so as to explore the viewpoints, positions, and ideologies behind the discourse.

Corpus Annotation and Count

There were explicit and implicit forms of negation in natural language. Explicit negation is a form of negation that contains obvious negative signs, while implicit negation is a form that affirms form but negates meaning. Explicit negation in English includes syntactic negation and morphological negation. Syntactic negation is mainly achieved through the negation word “not” and its abbreviated form “n’t”, and can also be achieved through the negation word

“no”. Other explicit negation words that constitute syntactic negation include nouns (nothing, none, nowhere), adverbs (never), pronouns (no one, nobody), and conjunctions (nor). Morphological negation is achieved by attaching negative morphemes to other morphemes or words. The implicit negation in English is mainly realized by implicit negation words and implicit negation sentences.

According to this classification system of negation, we use the corpus software UAM Corpus Tool version 3.3 to annotate the negation in the corpus with a clause as a unit and use its statistical function to extract the frequency and examples of negation in the corpus, to explore the overall distribution characteristics of negation in political speeches. Both explicit and implicit negation were identified according to the semantics based on the specific context. For those with ambiguities and hard to identify, another scholar of this field was inquired, and the discussion was carried out to make a final decision.

Table 1. The distribution of negation in the speeches.

	Negation	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit negation (n=783, 70.35%)	Syntactic negation	565	50.76
	Morphological negation	218	19.59
Implicit negation (n=330, 29.65%)	Implicit negation words	319	28.66
	Implicit negation sentences	11	0.99
Total		1113	100

From Table 1, it can be seen that syntactic negation is most frequently used, followed by implicit negation words, and then morphological negation, while the use of implicit negation sentences is very limited. Compared to implicit negation, explicit negation is used more frequently. The exploration of negation’s function in the following text mainly focuses on the syntactic negation within the explicit negation.

Results and Discussion

The Discourse Function of Negation

In the corpus of this study, negation appears up to 1113 times. A large number of negations were used in each political speech, mainly syntactic negation. In political speeches, negations have their special uses, such as indicating differences in things, creating suspense, and opposing expectations. The following analysis will illustrate the function and meaning of negations with

examples based on the corpus.

Topic Opening Function

The topic opening function is to use certain syntactic means to provide a topic for the discourse, that is, the person or thing that the discourse will discuss, explain or narrate (Zhang, 2001). When negation appears at the beginning of a political speech, it can also open up a topic for the discourse while conveying information. By negating a proposition, the speaker is actually reminding the audience that a new topic will emerge, gradually focusing on the topic to be discussed and successfully attracting the speaker's attention. For example,

[1] "While we do not yet know motive, as I said last week, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the ongoing crisis of gender-based and anti-Asian violence that has long plagued our nation. I urge Congress to swiftly pass the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which would expedite the federal government's response to the rise of hate crimes exacerbated during the pandemic, support state and local governments to improve hate crimes reporting, and ensure that hate crimes information is more accessible to Asian American communities". (*Remarks by President Biden in Press Briefing, March 21, 2021*)

At the beginning of the speech, the speaker used the negative clause "While we do not yet know motive" to remind the audience that the topic would revolve around "the ongoing crisis of gender-based and anti-Asian violence". Here, what is denied is the "motive" itself, and this information is new and unknown to the reader. Therefore, the negation placed at the beginning of the discourse can remind the speaker that a new topic will emerge, arouse readers' strong curiosity, and lay the foundation for the discussion of the topic in the following text.

Negation presupposes the existence of its affirmative meaning cognitively, and when we negate it, it implies the emergence of other possible situations. When the speaker initiates a relevant topic through negation, it also creates interaction with the audience on a certain topic. By using negative sentences, the speaker establishes a strong correlation between the speech topic and background knowledge or shared knowledge between both parties. Therefore, negative sentences placed at the beginning of a discourse often serve as a transitional function. Meanwhile, the topic-opening function of negation can also be seen as a topic-switching function in specific situations. By negating the previous topic it indicates the need to start a new one. Since negation is not just a discourse strategy, but

also a cognitive state, introducing a topic through negation can effectively attract the audience's attention.

Focus Highlighting Function

By negating, it is possible to achieve a comparison of similarities and differences between two things or situations, such as the past and present, in order to highlight a certain phenomenon or thing. At this point, it is often by negating the former and emphasizing the latter, or by negating the latter and emphasizing the former. In speech discourse, this opposition between affirmation and negation has a strong rhetorical effect. By comparing two or more, the audience can better understand a phenomenon or thing, thereby enhancing the rationality of the argument and making the listener more convinced. For example,

[2] "I mean, our big war is not a — it's not a financial war. It's a war — it's a medical war". (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, March 19, 2020*)

[3] "This is a medical crisis; this isn't a financial crisis". (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, March 24, 2020*)

In examples [2] and [3], the speaker pointed out that the COVID-19 is a medical crisis, not an economic crisis. By negating *financial war/crisis* through *not/n't*, *financial war/crisis* and *medical war/crisis* are opposed. This confrontation makes the nature of COVID-19 clearer. In this way, the audience will compare the similarities and differences between the two from a cognitive perspective, so as to have a deeper understanding of the COVID-19. For example,

[4] "We're really all working together. Democrat, Republican, conservative, liberal — we're all working together. This is not about parties; this is about our country. Now the American people are ready to rise to the occasion once again". (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, April 16, 2020*)

In example [4], the speaker emphasized the view that coping with COVID-19 is the task of the whole nation by denying "parties". Rather than saying "this is about our country" directly, the speaker first deny that it is the responsibility of an organization or party to deal with the epidemic and then points out that this is the task that all Americans should undertake. This kind of

comparison and prominent reasoning can be more impressive and have a better publicity effect.

From the above example, it can be seen that by contrasting negation and affirmation, the one that needs to be emphasized can be highlighted cognitively, thus negation has a discourse function of focus highlighting. This kind of highlighting can greatly shift and control the audience's attention and cognition, and can effectively spread the speaker's ideology, making it widely used in speeches.

Counter-expectation Function

Counter-expectation “refers to the situation that contradicts the contextual expectations of the background (Fan, 2019). Zhang, (2015) divided semantic negation into two categories: statement negation and presupposition negation. Presupposition negation is to negate the expectations of the listener. Based on this, this study believes that negation can deny people's expectations, which exist in the listener's consciousness from the time the discourse is produced. The expectation of being denied can come from the current context or from common sense in daily life. For example,

[5] The U.S. military has deployed thousands of personnel to build 23 temporary hospitals with more than 16,000 beds. And we have the potential to build many more if we needed them, but we're all ready to go. But I don't think we're going to need them, which is great — great news. (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, April 10, 2020*)

In example [5], the speaker pointed out that it has built 23 temporary hospitals with more than 16000 beds, and even has the ability to build more to cope with COVID-19. At this point, the audience's subconscious expectation is that the epidemic is very serious, beds are tight, and they must be prepared to build temporary hospitals at any time. However, the speaker immediately dispelled the audience's assumption and lifted their expectations with negation. The speaker used the negative expression to let the audience know the action and strength of the US government to deal with COVID-19 on the one hand, and to tell the audience that the epidemic is well-controlled in the US on the other hand. Therefore, negation has the effect of killing two birds with one stone.

Negation can also refute the corresponding affirmative propositions it presupposes, thereby achieving the effect of counter-expectation. This counter-

expectation form is often used at the beginning of a discourse to introduce the topic that needs to be explained. For example,

[6] “This method has also been used for more than a century, and that's the blood-related therapy — you know, more than a century to fight off infectious diseases. So it's not unusual. Our level of complexity has changed, but it's a concept that's been used for a long time, including during the Spanish Flu epidemic”. (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, March 30, 2020*)

In example [6], the negative structure “it's not unusual” presupposes the existence of its corresponding affirmative proposition “it's unusual”. The speaker wants to demonstrate that the United States has experience in dealing with this epidemic, and with past experiences, it can handle it calmly, so there is not much special about this epidemic. In this way, the speaker wanted to refute the idea that COVID-19 was difficult to deal with.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the use of negation can deny and refute presuppositions and expectations, enhancing the coherence of discourse information and avoiding misunderstandings by listeners. Many times, the counter-expectation function of negation is achieved in conjunction with expressions such as *but* indicating concessions.

Information Modifying Function

The negation can correct the information being processed in the discourse by denying it, thereby preventing erroneous information (Hidalgo-Downing, 2000). For example,

[7] “So when the fake news gets out there and they start talking about the United States is number one — but we're not number one; China is number one, just so you understand. China is number one by a lot. It's not even close. They're way ahead of us in terms of death. It's not even close”. (*Remarks by President Trump and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, April 18, 2020*)

In example [7], the speaker first pointed out that there was a report that the mortality rate of COVID-19 in the United States was the first in the world, and then used negation to refute this news, indicating that the United States was not the first in the world. Not only that, the speaker then pointed out that China is the first, and used two consecutive negative structures to indicate that China's mortality rate is much higher than that of

the United States. In short, the speaker used a negative structure to refute the previous journalist's report.

[8] "A safe and phased reopening of our economy — it's very exciting, but it does not mean that we are letting down our guard at all, in any way. On the contrary, continued diligence is an essential part of our strategy to get our country back to work, to take our country back". (*Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing, April 23, 2020*)

In example [8], the speaker first affirmed the recovery of the US economy during the COVID-19, and then used a negation to point out that this didn't mean that the American people can relax their vigilance. The negation here not only blocks the information in the previous text, but also lays the groundwork for the subsequent development.

From the above two examples, we can see that the information-modifying function of negation can help authors refute certain "incorrect" or "untrue" information they believe, correct and reject all voices that are detrimental to their own interests, and thus make readers trust and support their own views.

In political speeches, the functions of negation are not either or, and a negative sentence may have multiple discourse functions simultaneously. The functions of opening topics, highlighting focus, counter-expectations, and modifying information help speakers express their views and positions, while providing a shortcut for the dissemination of ideology. That is to say, the use of negation in political speeches expresses a certain ideological meaning.

The Ideological Meaning of Negation in Political Speeches

In critical discourse analysis, ideology has been considered a central notion that represents how relations of power are established, maintained, and legitimized (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). It has a characteristic that any language user inevitably carries in language use, namely "an attitude, viewpoint, belief, etc. of the language user" (Li and Li, 2014). Ideologies, which include both social and cognitive functions, enable social group members to organize groups and coordinate social activities, interactions, and common goals, in addition to protecting or defending shared interests and resources. ((Chen, 2011). That is to say, ideology is the worldview that constitutes social cognition and the representation of the real world (Fairclough, 2003), and the ideological meaning as a product of the social system is reflected

in the language system.

Organizing discourse through negation, such as modifying certain information, questioning certain viewpoints, etc., to some extent reflects the speaker's attitude and position towards the event and what they want to express. Therefore, when negation plays its discourse function, it is inevitably accompanied by the transmission of ideological meaning. The use of these negations in the characterization of COVID-19 can reflect the speaker's position, perspective, view, and intention. Based on the above analysis of the discourse functions of negation, the following will specifically discuss the ideological meaning of negation in political speeches.

Building a Self-authoritative Image

In political speeches, speakers need to constantly position themselves invisibly in a position of power, highlighting their authority and increasing their appeal. Negation reflects the interactivity of language communication. When using negation, the speaker not only believes that a proposition is false when negating it, but also believes that the listener may believe that the proposition is true. With negation, speakers can question and negate certain viewpoints, clearly state their views and positions, and highlight their authoritative position. In examples [5] and [6], the counter-expectation function of negation can help the speaker deny the audience's possible misconceptions, understandings, or existing misconceptions, thereby maintaining their authoritative image.

Furthermore, in political speeches, speakers can highlight their self-authoritative image by negating imperative sentences. Negative imperative sentences are often used between individuals of high status and those of low or equal status, mainly expressing the speaker's varying degrees of negative reasoning towards the listener, manifested in six levels: request, comfort, reminder, dissuasion, criticism, and prohibition, among which dissuasion and criticism are the most common (Peng, 2012). In the speech on the COVID-19, the speaker used negative imperative sentences for many times. In the process of interaction with the audience, the speaker highlighted his authority and convinced himself. For example,

[9] "Now is not the time to let down. Now is not the time to celebrate. It is time to do what we do best as a country: our duty, our jobs; take care of one another; and fight this to the finish. We can and will do this, but don't let up now. Don't let up now". (*Remarks by President Biden in Press Briefing, January 21, 2021*)

In example [9], through the continuous use of four negative sentences, the speaker reminded and admonished the audience with a more authoritative voice. At this stage, he should always remember his mission, continue to fight against the COVID-19 epidemic, and never let up. It can be seen that the repeated use of negations makes the speech more urgent and infectious in tone, which can give the audience a psychological impact and create a sense of urgency that must be accepted.

In addition, as shown in examples [7] and [8], the information modifying function can help speakers refute certain “incorrect” or “untrue” information they believe, correct and discard all voices that are unfavorable to themselves, thereby gaining the trust and support of the audience.

Constructing the Opposition between “us” and “them”

Ideology has evaluative characteristics and often involves binary oppositions, such as women/men, us/them, white/black, East/West, capitalism/socialism, war/peace, etc. The speaker chooses the representation of discourse based on their own interests to achieve the production and reproduction of ideology (Van Dijk, 2011) believes that ideological discourse is usually constructed according to an “ideological square”. Through it, the discourse is divided into “us” and “them”. Ideological discourse usually emphasizes the positive side of “us” and weakens the negative side of “us”; on the contrary, it emphasizes the negative side of “them” while downplaying the positive side of “them” (Van Dijk, 2011).

Political speech can be seen as such an ideological discourse, as it always constructs discourse according to such an ideological square. This can be illustrated by the use of negations and other strategies in discourse. In speeches on COVID-19, the President of the United States repeatedly opposed “the United States” to “other countries”, thereby highlighting the positive “us” and the negative “them”.

Van Dijk, (1998) believes that ideology is a social representation that can not only express one’s own ideas through discourse but also change others’ perspectives. Highly polarized representations of events increase the likelihood of readers failing to recognize the ideological discourse embedded in media narratives (Ahlstrand, 2021). When making a political speech on the COVID-19, the Presidents of the United States rationalized their own behaviors by using the discourse strategy of negation, so as to build a positive self-image. On the contrary, when talking

about other countries, they build a very negative image of “them” to highlight the “extraordinary achievements” and “remarkable achievements” of the United States in responding to the COVID-19. It is obvious that these ideological representations do not match the facts. In his speech, the President of the United States praises himself by constantly belittling and denying other countries, using exaggerated and unfounded remarks, and implementing discourse hegemony, aiming to win the support and trust of the people. The result is to deceive, dominate, and manipulate the public through political speeches.

Moreover, by negating presuppositions, implicit meanings can be created, which are also very effective for the dissemination of ideology. The less easily ideology is perceived, the better its effect. When giving a speech on the COVID-19, speakers often make implicit subjective evaluations of things or situations through negation, hiding the ideology they want to convey in carefully planned discourse expression. During the speech, the Presidents of the United States construct a positive “us” and a negative “them” through this implicit evaluation, making the audience more supportive of him, thus secretly constructing ideological meaning and achieving their political intentions. Compared to explicit negation, implicit negation can convey negative evaluation positions in a gentler tone, avoiding disharmony in interpersonal interactions.

Whether representing reality, expressing positions, or organizing information, the speaker always intentionally constructs “us” and “them” in the political speech. This is closely related to the opposing meaning constructed by the negation itself. The negative structure can be used to construct opposing meanings, constructing the real world and internal experiences into a state of binary opposition. Fairclough, (1992) believed that the dominant “ideology discourse structure” has the ability to “naturalize” ideology and turn it into a seemingly “common sense” outside of ideology that is accepted by people. However, due to the internalization of this ideology in discourse and the manifestation of “naturalized” and “common sense” characteristics through various covert strategies, it is often ubiquitous but difficult to detect. From the above analysis, it can be seen that the speaker manipulates the audience’s cognition by negation. On the one hand, they vigorously promote their “outstanding measures” and shape a positive image of themselves, while on the other hand, they deliberately exaggerate the powerless measures of other countries and construct a negative image of them.

In general, in political speeches, negation helps the speaker to express their position more covertly and dominate and control the audience, thereby establishing and maintaining power relations and achieving political intentions. Correspondingly, due to the covert nature of this process, the audience is often unaware and even manipulated by the speaker without realizing it, and is willing to accept the ideology instilled by the speaker.

Conclusion

Negative expression reflects the subjectivity of the speaker/author and can trigger emotional discomfort (Israel, 2004). As a marked form, negation has limited usage in both spoken and written language. At the same time, negative expressions have clear pragmatic “intentionality” and “directionality”, reflecting the speaker/author’s intention and purpose, and requiring a certain pragmatic effect (Ye, 2018). Therefore, as the opposite of affirmation, the use of negation in political speeches has never been arbitrary, but rather for a certain purpose and has a special function and significance. Based on the US presidents’ political speeches on COVID-19, this paper explores the discourse function of negation and, on this basis, explores the ideological meaning of negation in political speeches. It has been found that negation has discourse functions such as topic opening, focus highlighting, counter-expectation, and information modification. These functions have played a significant role in political speeches, such as enhancing the rationality of argumentation, avoiding misunderstandings of discourse information by listeners, and blocking erroneous information. In summary, negation is closely related to the dissemination of ideology. By negating these discourse functions, the speaker effectively expresses their position and viewpoint, constructs their own authoritative image, rationalizes their behavior, and forms a binary opposition between “us” and “them”.

Foucault, (1978) asserts that discourse can transmit, produce, and reinforce power, but at the same time, discourse can undermine and expose power, rendering it unstable and possible to thwart. Therefore, discourse can be seen as an effective tool for the power class to spread their values and influence people’s thinking and consciousness. The political speeches of national leaders are even more so. In political speeches, speakers often employ language choices to spread their views and beliefs to the audience, winning their support and trust. Negation, as a discourse strategy, can effectively spread ideology in political speeches. This study suggests that negative expressions can create new ideological meanings. Therefore, critical

discourse analysis can start from the various functions of negation, explore the relationship between language representation and ideology, and provide a new research perspective for ideology studies.

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