

6. A Corpus Study of Grammatical Negation in US Presidents' Inaugural Speeches

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1. Introduction

Patterns of grammatical negation are found to be quite frequent in portions of an inaugural address by Argentine President Alfonsín (Lavandera and Pardo, 1987). However, as the authors argue, there is a need for larger studies that analyse negation in corpora of inaugural addresses so as to gain deeper insights into the use of this strategic device by presidents. This chapter aims to fill in this gap through a study of grammatical negation in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics. I scrutinise the inaugural addresses of all 44 US Presidents in search of all instances of grammatical negation¹ and their patterns of collocation and colligation.

Patterns of negation in political discourse have been explored from different approaches. For example, negation has been categorised from a polyphonic discourse analysis standpoint (Ducrot, 1984; García Negroni, 2009, 2016). However, the quantification of the linguistic strategies that politicians use in their discourse has still not attracted enough attention within this perspective (Cfr. Roitman, 2014, 2017). This is where Corpus Linguistics comes into play, as it contributes to understanding the realisations of systemic features in a corpus of texts.

Additionally, register analysis has contributed to characterising the sources of the texts that make up a corpus. Registerial analysis of US inaugural addresses reveals their shift from the veneration of the past to the enunciation of political principles (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990). While their focus on policies has given way to a focus on values (Chester, 1980), their purpose has shifted from personal beliefs to popular values

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(Windt, 1984). Still, it is necessary to try and find the frequencies of patterns² in order to obtain more objective results (Denton and Hahn, 1986). Such is the quantitative analysis of political speech from Truman to Reagan (Hart, 1984), which covers only 14% of the 228-year span of American presidency. This proves the need for a large-scale study on inaugural addresses.

Such a large-scale study can fruitfully be carried out in the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for a number of reasons. First, SFL establishes and defines the systems of language. Second, it allows for the quantification process of language features in a system with the aid of Corpus Linguistics. Additionally, SFL pays great heed to the registers that contextualise the texts constitutive of the corpus.

Previous SFL studies focus on the contrasts between a few presidential speeches (Durán, 2008; Krizsán, 2011) or the analysis of the speeches of a single world leader such as Obama (Kazemian and Hashemi, 2014), Mandela (Martínez Lirola, 2012; Nur, 2015), or Buhari (Koutchadé, 2015). However, so far there seems to be no large-scale studies that cover all the speeches that comprise a closed-set corpus. Such is my aim in this work on the study of inaugural addresses by all US Presidents. Naturally, such an all-encompassing task requires a focus on one particular system of the system networks that constitute language (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). My choice here is the system of negation, after Lavandera and Pardo (1987).

My hypothesis is that since inaugural addresses mark a pivotal point in history (Schlesinger and Israel, 2009), language features such as negation must play a crucial role in US Presidents' discourse. As US inaugural addresses shape new presidential terms, the lexicogrammatical choices made are carefully selected and are expected to exhibit a characteristic pattern. One linguistic device that is highly exploited in political discourse is the pattern of negation in an inaugural address (Lavandera and Pardo, 1987). If this pattern is recurrent in US inaugurals, the frequency of negative polarity items is likely to reach high levels.

The study is organised as follows. Section 2 summarises the theoretical framework of SFL. Section 3 gives details of the corpus and methodology used. Section 4 deals with the results of the study and is organised into four subsections devoted to the overall results, the frequencies of the most pervasive negative polarity items, and *not*-negation and *no*-negation, respectively. The chapter closes with some concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical framework

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a social theory of language that focuses on meaning potential. In this Section, I will briefly summarise some of the most important guiding principles of this theoretical framework, namely context, function and system. Additionally, I will outline the system of negative polarity in English from the SFL approach and present the contextual features of field, tenor and mode in inaugural presidential addresses. Finally, I will schematise the contribution made by Corpus Linguistics.

Within SFL, language is deemed a resource for making meaning that speakers or writers use in specific social contexts. Thus, the language used by doctors in the institutional context when they perform the medical examination of a patient is different from that used by professors in an end-of-term university class when they interact with their students. There are many variables involved in the study of language in context. In the case of political discourse in particular, considered in its narrow sense—i.e., that produced by political actors to achieve political goals in (in)formal contexts (Graber, 1981)—some of the variables at play are the role of the speaker/writer, the interlocutor(s) or intended audience, their parliamentary party, the topic of the speech, and the time of government at which it is pronounced, among many others.

Apart from the social contexts that constrain language use, one of the fundamental tenets of SFL is its functional approach. SFL places a great deal of emphasis on the functional characteristic of language. The functions of language are theoretically unlimited (Thompson, 2014, p. 46). Speakers of a language use it for a range of things: to ask, request or suggest; to complain, deny or promise; to greet, thank or apologise; to inform, report or explain; and to perform many other functions. However, within SFL these functions have been encapsulated in 'the four primary speech functions of offer, command, statement and question' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 135). These functions³ are defined in terms of two basic variables, the role in exchange and the commodity exchanged, as summarised in Table 6.1. Examples (1) to (4), taken from my corpus, illustrate instances of an offer, a statement, a command and a question, respectively.

- (1) Let all nations know that during this administration our lines of communication will be open. [Nixon 1969]
- (2) In this dangerous crisis the people of America were not abandoned by their usual good sense, presence of mind, resolution, or integrity. [Adams 1797]

- (3) Do not allow anyone to tell you that it cannot be done. [Trump
2017]
- (4) ‘May’ Congress prohibit slavery in the Territories? [Lincoln
1861]

A further precept of SFL is its systemic view of language, which entails that meanings in SFL are expressed paradigmatically more than syntagmatically. The main focus of the theory is the system⁴, rather than the structure. When speakers/writers use language, they make choices within the systems available in that language. One of the aims of systemic linguistics is to try and account for the description of the choices made by the users of the language when they perform a specific function in a specific context. The kind of choices that these users of the language make are realised in the lexicogrammar and lexicogrammatical structures available in the system of the language (Halliday and Hasan, 2000; Hasan, 1985).

Table 6.1. Classification of basic functions of language.

		commodity exchanged	
		goods & services	information
role in exchange	giving	offer	statement
	demanding	command	question

SFL is organised in a very intricate network of systems that are highly dependent on the language or variety of language under study. Systemic grammars of languages have approximately between 700 and 1000 systems (Halliday and James, 1993, p. 95). I will focus here on the system of negation. Every clause in a text reflects either one of the two choices in the system of POLARITY⁵. In this respect, every clause is either positive or negative in value. It has been proven that in the overall picture of the English language, positively polarised clauses are chosen 90% of the time while negatively polarised clauses are used only 10% of the time (Halliday and James, 1993). This is expressed graphically in Figure 6.1 with the respective probabilities attached to the two terms: ‘positive, 0.9; negative, 0.1’. This constitutes a highly skewed system wherein the least frequent alternative is said to be the marked choice (Halliday, 1991a).

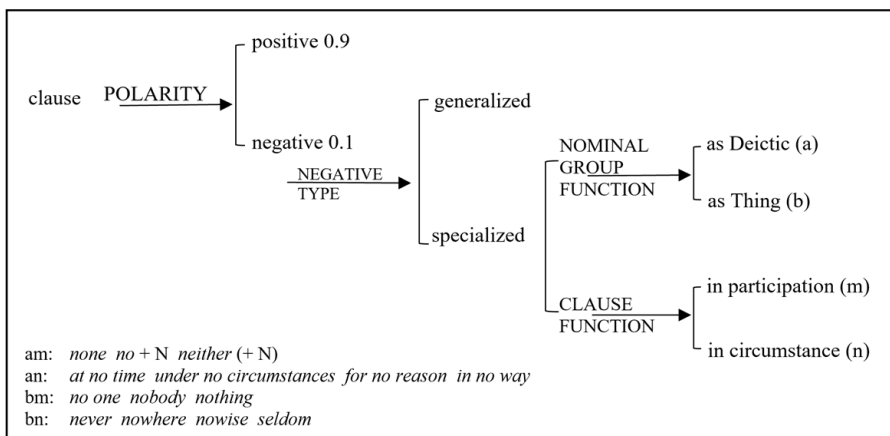


Figure 6.1. The system of POLARITY in English.

Source: Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 23). Copyright 2014. From *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* by Michael Halliday and Christian Matthiessen. Reproduced by permission of Taylor and Francis Group, LLC, a division of Informa plc.

At a more delicate level, negative polarity can be subdivided into two types, so that every negatively polarised clause is either generalised or specialised. The former is realised in English through the full lexical item *not* or its contracted version *n't*. The latter is realised through a number of lexical items that can be classified in parallel from two functional points of view. Thus, each of these items simultaneously realise a function in the nominal group and one in the clause. While the nominal group function can be either that of a Deictic⁶ or a Thing, the function of the negative polarity item in the clause is realised by either a participant or a circumstance. The intersection of these function types renders four possible options as a result, namely a Deictic in participation, a Deictic in circumstance, a Thing in participation and a Thing in circumstance. The whole array of possibilities offers five different choices, which are illustrated in examples (5) to (9), all taken from my corpus, wherein the negative polarity items are highlighted. Negative polarity items *not*, *none*, *no*, *nothing* and *never* respectively illustrate instances of generalised negation (5) and specialised negation (6–9). *None* in (6) is a case of Deictic in participation, *no* in (7) is a case of Deictic in circumstance, *nothing* in (8) is a case of Thing in participation and *never* in (9) is a case of Thing in circumstance.

- (5) For the first time in this century, for the first time in perhaps all history, man does *not* have to invent a system by which to live.
 [Reagan 1989]

- (6) *None* can fail to see the danger to our safety and future peace if Texas remains an independent state or becomes an ally or dependency of some foreign nation more powerful than herself. [Polk 1845]
- (7) I give my aid to it by renewing the pledge heretofore given that under *no* circumstances will I consent to serve a second term. [Harrison 1841]
- (8) *Nothing* will be wanting on the part of this Government to extend the protection of our flag over the enterprise of our fellow-citizens. [Johnson 1865]
- (9) *Never* did a government commence under auspices so favorable, nor ever was success so complete. [Monroe 1817]

The typical test that can be applied in order to check the negative value of a clause is to add a question tag of reversed polarity. The corresponding question tags that could have been added in (5) to (9) are *does he?*, *can they?*, *will I?*, *will it?* and *did it?*, respectively.

As was said before, the probabilities of each of the alternative choices in a specific system are contextually constrained. One of the most important variables that influence lexigrammatical selections is that of register (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999; Matthiessen, 2015). Register is defined as ‘the configuration of semantic resources that a member of a culture typically associates with a situation type’ and involves the contextual elements of field, tenor and mode (Halliday, 1975, p. 182). Field is concerned with what texts are about, tenor refers to the social roles of the users of language and mode denotes the channel of the communicative event. The field of the texts that constitute my corpus is the 44 inaugural speeches delivered by US Presidents. In them, each president informs American citizens—and more recently, a worldwide audience—of his priorities and goals while in office. The tenor is a monologic one through which a president-elect is addressing his audience. The mode is pre-planned oral communication.

SFL studies can be complemented with the aid of Corpus Linguistics, which is an empirical approach to the study of language. The principle behind Corpus Linguistics is that ‘grammatical systems are probabilistic in nature’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 52). For example, in the system of clause types in (at least) western languages, clauses in the active voice are far more likely to occur than those in the passive voice. By the same token, finite and declarative clauses are more frequent than non-finite and interrogative ones, respectively. The frequencies with which these alternatives in a system occur in a register of a language can easily be measured with the

aid of Corpus Linguistics. This renders the results obtained more objective and statistically validated (Bod, Hay and Jannedy, 2003).

This phenomenon was observed by Halliday some sixty years ago. Even before the early days of SFL, Halliday in his studies on Chinese made use of Corpus Linguistics (Halliday, 1959). What is more, the early theoretical underpinnings of the theory, which deal with the intonation of English, are based on the analyses of large corpora of authentic text (Halliday, 1963, 1967). Although some advances have taken place in the description and explanation of the systems of language (see e.g., Thompson and Hunston, 2006), there is still a wide gap to be filled. To begin with, Corpus Linguistics makes it easier to explore the lexical pole of the lexicogrammatical cline. For example, Stubbs (2006, p. 29) explores the psychological speaker's interpretation and speech acts encoded in Searle's terms (Searle, 1969) of lexical units such as *the naked eye* or *reach a ripe old age*.

However, the exploration of the grammatical pole of the lexicogrammatical cline proves a much more time-consuming task and requires a high level of manual analysis. A possible solution to this problem is to sacrifice the length of the corpus in order to obtain a complex, detailed grammatical analysis. This is the methodology used by Nesbitt and Plum (1988), wherein they intersect the systems of TAXIS and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS in a corpus of 2,733 clause nexuses taken from interviews. An alternative solution is to concentrate on a theoretically limited system in terms of the array of choices available and investigate their frequencies in a large corpus. This is what Halliday and James (1993) opt for in their exploration of the systems of POLARITY and PRIMARY TENSE in the English finite clause in a corpus of 18 million words. A third solution is to resort to an archive of texts that belong in different registers and focus on a system that may be difficult to interpret. This is what Matthiessen (1999, 2006) performs in his study of the system of TRANSITIVITY in a corpus of 1.5 million words. The following Section explains the corpus and methodology I have used in this chapter.

3. Corpus and methodology

My corpus is made up of 44⁷ inaugural addresses delivered by US Presidents (122,848 words). This corpus is closed in character in the sense that it comprises all inaugural presidential speeches pronounced so far, from Washington 1789 to Trump 2017. Besides, while 14 presidents were re-elected, I have considered only the inaugural speech of their first term. The whole list of speeches with details of party,

period, date, and word count is given in Table 6.2. Only the first president, George Washington, was unaffiliated to a political party. By the mid-nineteenth century the bipartisan system of government that currently prevails was well established. While 13 of the last 30 presidents succeeded a president of the same party, there have been nine alternations from Democratic to Republican presidents and eight changes from Republican to Democratic ones.

As can be seen, speeches are very dissimilar in length. While the shortest speech is 433 words long (Arthur 1881), the longest is 9231 words long (Johnson 1865). The mean of the whole group of data is 2792 words and the standard deviation is 1978 words. If the sample is reduced to the thirty addresses whose length lies around the mean, the mean and standard deviation of this sample is 1878 and 585 words, respectively. This renders the speeches more even in length and the results observed more comparable. Still, in order to make the speeches fully comparable, I have reduced the raw numbers of the results obtained to their frequencies, as is explained below.

I semi-automatically tagged all instances of negative polarity items with the aid of Wordsmith Tool (Scott 1998) and UAM CorpusTool (O'Donnell 2008). The former allowed me to identify all instances of negative polarity items such as: *not*, *no*, *none*, *neither*, *never*, *seldom*, and so on in the corresponding clauses in which they appear and to quantify the results obtained. The latter helped me identify and quantify functional and class features of the clauses and groups in which the above-mentioned items appeared. I pasted all negative polarity items onto a spreadsheet file, wherein I added a number of traditional and functional features of these items and the number of finite clauses in each speech.

For the quantification process and for the sake of comparability between speeches, I obtained the frequencies of each negative polarity item found per 100 clauses. This was carried out by dividing the actual occurrences of negative polarity items by the number of finite clauses found in each speech. Later, I applied a number of filters in order to focus on specific features. Finally, I applied a chi-square test to verify the strong dependence of some of the different functional subsystems of the system network in this particular register. Figure 6.2 exhibits a small sample of the general results of five of the negative polarity items that are present in the first thirteen US Presidents' speeches, namely *no*, *not*, *n't*, *cannot* and *never*. Figure 6.3 illustrates a portion of the codification of every instance of three related lemmas found in the corpus, namely *not*, *n't* and *cannot*. This kind of codification allowed me to manually check the features of some specific items. The following Section analyses the results obtained.

Table 6.2. List of speeches.

N	President	Party	Period	Date	N° words
1	Washington	None	1789–1797	30 Apr 1789	1430
2	Adams, J	F	1797–1801	4 Mar 1797	2318
3	Jefferson	DR	1801–1809	4 Mar 1801	1724
4	Madison	DR	1809–1817	4 Mar 1809	1175
5	Monroe	DR	1817–1825	4 Mar 1817	3366
6	Adams, JQ	DR	1825–1829	4 Mar 1825	2912
7	Jackson	D	1829–1837	4 Mar 1829	1126
8	Van Buren	D	1837–1841	4 Mar 1837	3833
9	Harrison [†]	Whig	1841	4 Mar 1841	8444
10	Tyler	Whig	1841–1845	9 Apr 1841	1672
11	Polk	D	1845–1849	4 Mar 1845	4802
12	Taylor [†]	Whig	1849–1850	5 Mar 1849	1088
13	Fillmore	Whig	1850–1853	2 Dec 1850	8322
14	Pierce	D	1853–1857	4 Mar 1853	3331
15	Buchanan	D	1857–1861	4 Mar 1857	2823
16	Lincoln ^{††}	R	1861–1865	4 Mar 1861	3634
17	Johnson, A.	D	1865–1869	4 Dec 1865	9231
18	Grant	R	1869–1877	4 Mar 1869	1127
19	Hayes	R	1877–1881	5 Mar 1877	2480
20	Garfield ^{††}	R	1881	4 Mar 1881	2976
21	Arthur	R	1881–1885	22 Sep 1881	433
22–24	Cleveland	D	1885–89, 93–97	4 Mar 1885	1681
23	Harrison	R	1889–1893	4 Mar 1889	4393
25	McKinley ^{††}	R	1897–1901	4 Mar 1897	3965
26	Roosevelt, T	R	1901–1909	1905, 4 Mar	983
27	Taft	R	1909–1913	1909, 4 Mar	5428
28	Wilson	D	1913–1821	1917, 5 Mar	1526
29	Harding [†]	R	1921–1923	1921, 4 Mar	3325

(Continued)

Tabell 6.2. (Continued).

N	President	Party	Period	Date	N° words
30	Coolidge	R	1923–1929	1925, 4 Mar	4055
31	Hoover	R	1929–1933	1929, Mar 24	3753
32	Roosevelt, F. D. [†]	D	1933–1945	1933, Mar 4	1885
33	Truman	D	1945–1953	1949, Jan 20	2272
34	Eisenhower	R	1953–1961	1953, Jan 20	2460
35	Kennedy ^{††}	D	1961–1963	1961, Jan 20	1365
36	Johnson, L. B.	D	1963–1969	1965, Jan 20	1505
37	Nixon	R	1969–1974	1969, Jan 20	2124
38	Ford	R	1974–1977	1974, Aug 9	849
39	Carter	D	1977–1981	1977, Jan 20	1229
40	Reagan	R	1981–1989	1981, Jan 20	2427
41	Bush	R	1989–1993	1989, Jan 20	2320
42	Clinton	D	1993–2001	1993, Jan 20	1598
43	Bush	R	2001–2008	2001, Jan 20	1592
44	Obama	D	2008–2017	2008, Jan 20	2413
45	Trump	R	2017	2017, Jan 20	1453
T					122848

[†] Died of a natural cause while in office.

^{††} Assassinated while in office.

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
			clauses	words	no	p 100 cl	not	per 100	n't	per 100	cannot	per 100	never	per 100
President	Party				no		not							
Washington	None	30 Apr 1789	122	1430	8	6,5	3	2,5	0	0,0	1	0,8	2	1,6
Adams, J	F	4 Mar 1797	198	2318	6	3,0	16	8,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	0,5
Jefferson	DR	4 Mar 1801	147	1724	1	0,7	12	8,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	0,7
Madison	DR	4 Mar 1809	100	1175	2	2,0	10	10,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	1,0
Monroe	DR	4 Mar 1817	288	3366	5	1,7	16	5,6	0	0,0	1	0,3	3	1,0
Adams, JQ	DR	4 Mar 1825	249	2912	1	0,4	4	1,6	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Jackson	D	4 Mar 1829	96	1126	2	2,1	2	2,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	1,0
Van Buren	D	4 Mar 1837	328	3833	7	2,1	27	8,2	0	0,0	0	0,0	8	2,4
Harrison	Whig	4 Mar 1841	722	8444	36	5,0	54	7,5	0	0,0	0	0,0	13	1,8
Tyler	Whig	9 Apr 1841	143	1672	7	4,9	3	2,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	0,7
Polk	D	4 Mar 1845	410	4802	14	3,4	34	8,3	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Taylor	Whig	5 Mar 1849	93	1088	2	2,2	5	5,4	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Fillmore	Whig	2 Dec 1850	711	8322	19	2,7	44	6,2	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,3

Figure 6.2. Sample of general results.

												VG-yes								
												clause								
		not n't cannot			Main Sub	Fin no-Fin	act pas	no-m modal	no-int interr	pres past fut	tot	Mate								
1	1789-1797	Washington	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1								
						2						0								
						3	1	1		1	1	1	1	1						
						4						0								
2	1797-1801	Adams, J	16	0	0	5	1	1	1	1	1	1								
						6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						7						0								
						8						0								
						9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						11						0								
						12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						13						0								
						14						0								
						15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						16						0								
3	1801-1809	Jefferson	12	0	0	17						0								
						18		1	1	1	1	1	1							
						19						0								
						20		1	1	1	1	1	1							
						21		1	1	1	1	1	1							
						22	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						23	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						24		1	1	1	1	1	1							
						25		1	1	1	1	1	1							
						26	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
						27						0								
						▶ All not Not & Will Not & Can Summary													⊕	

Figure 6.3. Sample of codification of specific lemmas.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Overall results

Results show that in the specific register of American inaugural addresses under study, the frequency of negative polarity is much higher than that reported in the literature (Halliday and James, 1993; Matthiessen, 2006). I have found a mean of 25.8% of negatively polarised clauses, as shown in Figure 6.4. Thus, on average, US Presidents choose more than 1 out of 4 clauses in their inaugural speeches to be negatively polarised clauses. By contrast, Halliday and James (1993) find only 10% of clauses in an 18-million-word corpus of written text are negative polarity clauses, and Matthiessen (2006) obtains a frequency of 8.5% of negative polarity in interviews. A slightly higher frequency of negation is found in a corpus of 50,000-word written text (Tottie and Paradis, 1982; Tottie, 1991). Their findings reach a total of 12.8 negative items per 1000 words, which is equivalent to approximately 15 negative items per 100 clauses, i.e., 15% of clauses are negatively polarised clauses. However, they include affixal forms such as prefixes *in-* or *un-*, which constitute instances of morphological negation and are not considered in the sources abovementioned or in my study.

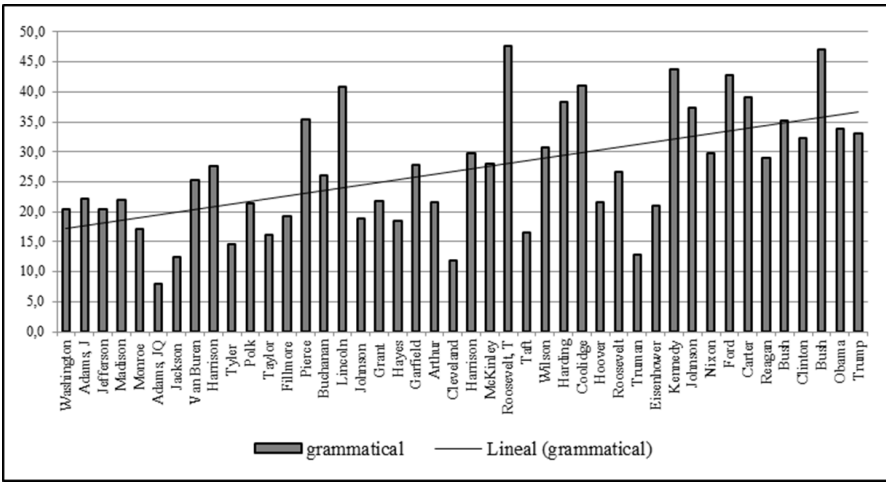


Figure 6.4. Frequencies of negative items per 100 clauses in speeches.

As is shown by the linear trend line in Figure 6.4, negative polarity increases chronologically over the 228-year time span covered in my corpus. Thus, later US Presidents tend to select polarised clauses in their inaugural addresses more overtly than their former counterparts. This discoursal strategy allows them to scaffold a more polarised discourse to craft their future policies in opposition to those of their predecessors in office (Hetherington and Weiler, 2009). This increasing level of polarisation may be the result of the characteristic weakness of bipartisan presidential regimes (Mainwaring, 1993).

However, once the results are reorganised from the lowest to the highest frequency rather than chronologically, as shown in Figure 6.5, further interesting trends are revealed. To begin with, four of the speeches that appear toward the lowest end in Figure 6.5 were delivered by presidents Truman, Tyler, L. B. Johnson and Taylor, who accessed the presidency after the death of a previous leader⁸. Their inaugural addresses are not pronounced in opposition to the policies of their predecessors (Campbell and Jamieson, 2008). Truman's inaugural address, for example, occurs after the end of World War II and is thus mostly devoted to his foreign policies rather than his local ones. He pronounces the lemma *world* 24 times in his speech and 6 out of his 7 instances of *not* co-occur with this lemma in the same sentence (see example (10)). Thus, his address has a prospective character driven by the fear of a new world order based on communism rather than a retrospective one.

- (10) Hundreds of millions of people all over the world now agree with us, that we need not have war – that we can have peace. [Truman 1949]

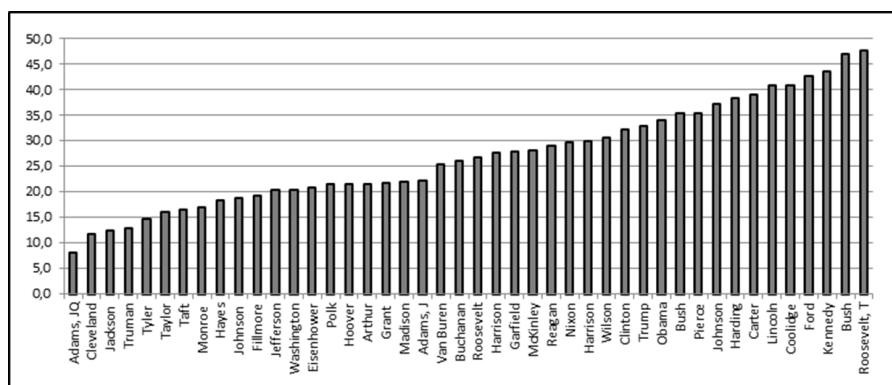


Figure 6.5. Redistribution of frequencies of negative items per 100 clauses.

Tyler's speech, in turn, can fairly be considered an inaugural address, as President Tyler, rather than formulate his future policy, elaborates on the contingencies that surround his access to office and he pledges to follow the guiding principles established by the late President Harrison. A. Johnson and Fillmore, who succeed the assassinated President Lincoln and President Taylor respectively, pronounce inaugural addresses with a word count of 9231 and 8322 words, respectively, which makes them the longest in American history. Each of these two speeches triples the length of the average inaugural address⁹, which lowers the frequency of negative polarity items in each considerably.

Additionally, within the least negatively polarised inaugural addresses are speeches by presidents affiliated to the same party as their predecessors and lie therefore as an endorsement to—rather than an opposition to—the policies of the previous term¹⁰. President Taft, for example, mentions *my (distinguished) predecessor* 7 times in his speech and 6 out of the 36 instances wherein he uses the word *not*, he does so in the context of a counterfactual condition that makes reference to his party affiliation, as in example (11).

- (11) I should be untrue to myself, to my promises, and to the declarations of the party platform upon which I was elected to office, if I did not make the maintenance and enforcement of those reforms a most important feature of my administration. [Taft 1909]

In the same line, Republican President Hayes' words do not run counter to those of his previous leader, Republican President Grant. Rather, President Hayes devotes most of his speech to outlining his principles of reconstruction in the aftermath of the Civil War. It is precisely in this portion of his address that he mostly uses negation in the crafting of equality between rival factions, as is shown in example (12).

- (12) [...] my best efforts in behalf of a civil policy which will forever wipe out in our political affairs the color line and the distinction between North and South, to the end that we may have not merely a united North or a united South, but a united country. [Hayes 1877]

Finally, President Monroe also cherishes his immediate predecessor and his policy. So much so that 67% (28 out of 42) of the instances of grammatical negation that he exploits co-occur with other forms of negation, which renders this double negation a positive value (Osmankadić, 2015). For example, in (13), *we cannot fail* can be interpreted as *we will succeed*.

- (13) If we persevere in the career in which we have advanced so far and in the path already traced, we cannot fail, under the favor of a gracious Providence, to attain the high destiny which seems to await us. [Monroe 1817]

Conversely, at the other end of the scale, the presidents who exploit a high degree of negative polarity clauses in their inaugural addresses frequently resort to this strategy in order to orchestrate a discourse that runs counter to that of their former leaders or to the prevailing principles of the opposing party¹¹. Six out of ten of the presidents whose inaugural speeches exhibit the highest frequency level of negative polarity also signal an alternation with the party of the immediately previous president¹². Thus, Presidents Bush Jr., Kennedy, Lincoln, Carter, L. B. Johnson and Pierce, whose speeches reach the negative polarity levels of 47%, 43.7%, 40.9%, 39%, 37.3% and 35.5%, respectively, belong to the opposing party as their immediate predecessor.

For example, while President Bush Jr. overtly thanks both his adversary Al Gore and former President Clinton, he also makes a call for unification of the country (see example (14)) in an attempt to leave behind the long-disputed events of the recount of the Florida votes which won him the presidency. This rhetorical device of appealing to soften the effect of highly contested campaigns in the fight for the presidency has become an obligatory initial stage in the register of inaugural addresses (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990). After the seminal inaugural speech by President Kennedy (example (15)), all US Presidents appeal to a unified country¹³ that leaves aside party differences. However, only half choose negative polarity in this portion of their first speech as presidents.

- (14) [S]ometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent but not a country. [Bush Jr. 2001]
- (15) We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom [...]. [Kennedy 1961]

By the same token, President Lincoln, whose presidency marks the institutionalisation of the Republican Party (see Table 6.2 above), revolutionises the American political scene with new anti-secessionist schemes. His inaugural address, which is regarded as probably one of the best ever delivered and is evoked by later presidents throughout American history, is mostly devoted to this new guiding principle. Negative polarity and contrasts are among the linguistic resources that make this speech so memorable. In it, *no*-negation is very frequently used to the point of reaching 10% of all negative polarity items in this speech, as is shown in example (16).

- (16) I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. [Lincoln 1861]

Additionally, negative polarity is masterly exploited in subjunctive and interrogative clauses to the highest level, as example (17) illustrates. Moreover, interrogative clauses are used 22 times in this speech, 8 of which are negatively polarised.

- (17) In any law upon this subject ought not all the safeguards of liberty [...] to be introduced, so that a free man be not in any case surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well at the same time to provide by law [...]? [Lincoln 1861]

However, as Chilton (2004) argues, polarisation in political discourse operates in deictic domains that extend in more global rather than local time-spatial levels. Negative polarity is brought into discourse to construe experiential meanings and to enact interpersonal ones (Halliday, 1998, p. 27), which evoke the word of past leaders. In this way, US Presidents use this strategy both to portray themselves as the champions of nationally cherished values inherited from their honoured forbears and also to imply that their adversaries stand on the opposite side. Thus, the grammatical choice used by President Bush Jr. in example (18) brings to mind the frequently quoted words of President Kennedy shown in example (19).

- (18) I ask you to be citizens: Citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens building communities of service and a nation of character. [Bush Jr. 2001]
- (19) And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man. [Kennedy 1961]

Still, the aim of this work is not to trace the discourses that later speeches evoke or to find the sources of the metadiscursive instances¹⁴ present in them. Rather, my aim is to present the recurrent patterns characteristic of the register of inaugural speeches, which are an outstanding feature of this particular register. In the following subsection, I delineate my findings in the whole corpus and attempt an explanation of the results obtained.

4.2. Frequencies of negative polarity items

The occurrences of the most frequent negative polarity items in my corpus are shown in Figure 6.6. Other grammatical items such as *none*, *nobody*, *nowhere* and *seldom* are very infrequent and constitute less than 10% of cases when taken together. As is deduced from the results, *not*-negation, including the variants through the attached morpheme in *cannot* and the reduced form *n't*, reaches 56.25% of all instances. The second most recurrent negative polarity item, the negative determiner *no*, appears in all inaugurals with a frequency of only 26.42%. Thus negation at clause level through the adverb *not* in all its variants doubles negation at the level of the noun group through the determiner *no*.

This is in line with the findings in Biber et al. (1999, p. 170), wherein the ratio of *not*-negation to *no*-negation ranges from 2.1, 3.1 to 9.1 in the registers of news, academic/fiction, and conversation, respectively¹⁵. Thus, if I disregard conversation, which is comparatively different from all other registers (Biber et al., 1999, p. 12), it can be said that the register of inaugural political speeches can be regarded as similar to the other three registers in terms of the variable *not/no* ratio. This suggests that this feature is not necessarily characteristic of the register under study but a feature of the English language as a whole.

Still, there is great variation in the frequencies of *no*-negation that US Presidents use in their inaugural addresses, as is shown in Figure 6.7.

While in President Harding's speech this frequency reaches a peak of 14.8%, in Kennedy's inaugural there is not a single instance of *no*-negation. It is striking that whereas the former is considered one of the worst speeches in American history, the latter is regarded as probably one of the best crafted inaugural addresses. However, it is not necessarily the high or low frequency of determiner *no* that makes a speech a memorable text per se. Yet, while Harding's inaugural makes use of long sequences of negation in a row, as shown in example (20), example (21) illustrates a well crafted extract in which oppositions¹⁶ are intelligently exploited in Kennedy's inaugural.

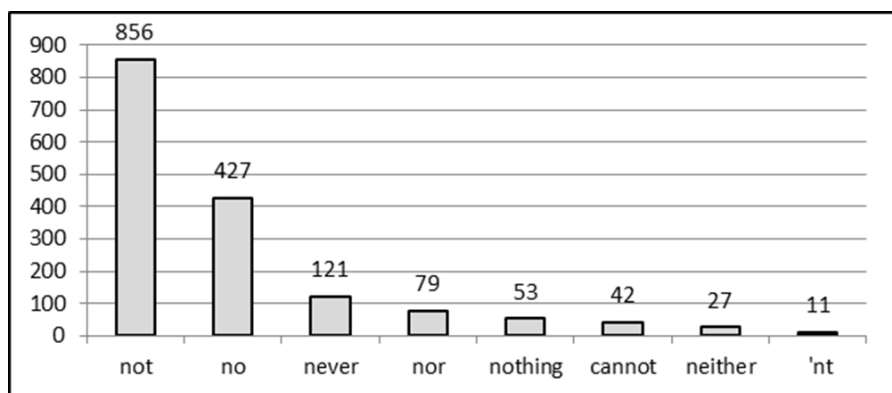


Figure 6.6. Occurrences of most frequent negative polarity items.

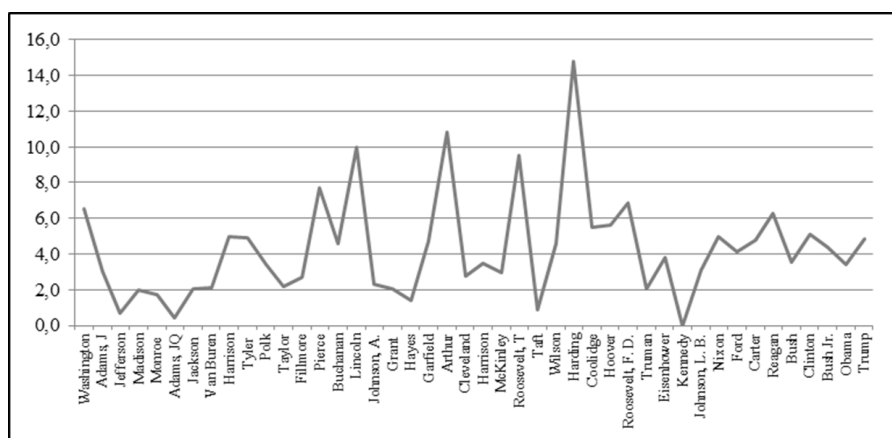


Figure 6.7. Frequency of no-negation in inaugural addresses.

- (20) Our supreme task is the resumption of our onward, normal way. [...] We shall give no people just cause to make war upon us; we hold no national prejudices; we entertain no spirit of revenge; we do not hate; we do not covet; we dream of no conquest, nor boast of armed prowess. [Harding 1921]
- (21) Now the trumpet summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself. [Kennedy 1961]

As the frequencies of *not*-negation and *no*-negation taken together cover 83% of all instances in my corpus, I turn to a more thorough analysis of their uses in the following subsections.

4.3. Not-negation

The adverb *not* can have a wide or a narrow scope. In the former, considered in SFL an instance of clausal negation, the particle *not* affects the whole clause and can be paraphrased as *it is not the case that X*. In the latter, considered in SFL an instance of group negation, the lexeme *not* affects only a constituent of the clause. Example (22) exhibits an instance of clausal negation, while examples (23), (24), (25), (26) and (27) illustrate cases of group negation, wherein the particle *not* has scope over a prepositional phrase, an adverbial group, a noun group, an adjectival group and a pronominal group, respectively.

- (22) Discord does not belong to our system. [Monroe 1817]
- (23) [...] by having the ownership and control of their property, not in the Government, but in their own hands. [Coolidge 1923]
- (24) [...] the General Government should give its aid [...]; but that should only be when a dollar of obligation to pay secures precisely the same sort of dollar to use now, and not before. [Grant 1869]
- (25) 'The sovereignty of the States' is the language of the Confederacy, and not the language of the Constitution. [A. Johnson 1865]
- (26) [...] no pretense of utility, no honest conviction, even, of what might be expedient, can justify the assumption of any power not granted. [Fillmore 1850]
- (27) It may be foreign nations who govern us, and not we, the people, who govern ourselves [...]. [Adams 1797]

The distribution of the tokens of scope of negation is shown in Figure 6.8. As expected, the particle *not* has a wide scope over the whole clause more recurrently—681 out of 888 instances—than a narrow scope over all other constituents taken together.

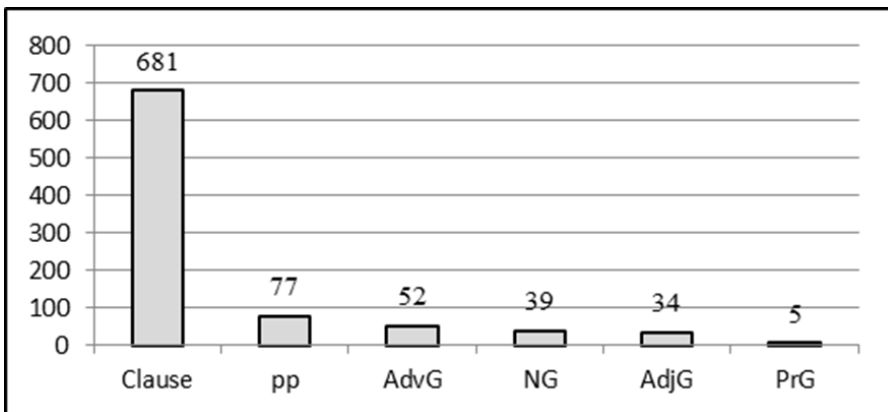


Figure 6.8. Scope of negation.

I now turn to the intersection of clausal *not* with further grammatical features in the system of the clause. Results are exhibited in Figure 6.9, wherein negatively polarised clauses are intersected with six clausal systems in a parallel fashion.

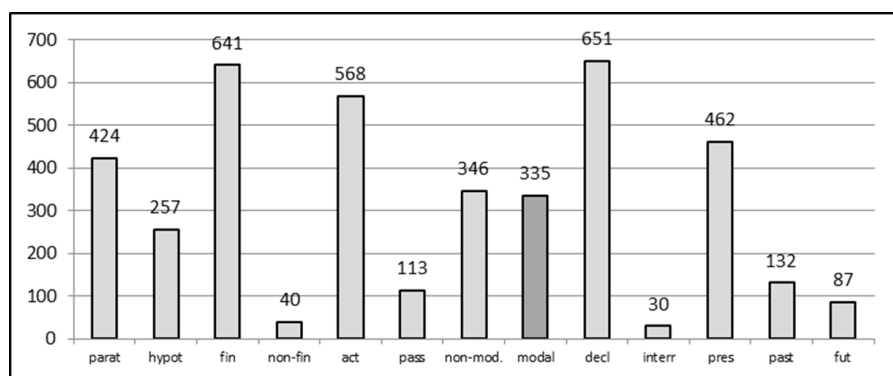


Figure 6.9. Intersection of negative polarity and clausal systems.

Thus, clauses are tagged and quantified into paratactic or hypotactic, finite or non-finite, active or passive, non-modalised or modalised, declarative or interrogative, and in the present, past or future tense.

My findings show that most of these systems of the clause are unaffected by the choice of negative polarity. Thus declarative clauses (96%) prevail over interrogative ones (4%), finite (94%) over non-finite ones (6%) and active (83%) over passive ones (17%). These patterns of negatively polarised clauses are fairly similar to those in the overall pattern of English (Matthiessen, 2006), which suggests that the systems of MOOD, FINITENESS and VOICE are independent of POLARITY. Along with these highly skewed systems of the clause, the systems of TAXIS and TENSE are also unaffected by negative polarity, as paratactic clauses prevail over hypotactic ones (62% vs. 38%) and present over past and future (68%, 19% and 13%, respectively).

However, there is one clausal system that is noticeably affected by the choice of the negative alternative in the system of POLARITY, namely the system of MODALITY. That is to say, once negative polarity is chosen, the distribution of modalised clauses reaches an equiprobable level (Halliday, 1991b). This contrasts with the results in Biber et al. (1999, p. 486), who find that English clauses as a whole exhibit a highly

skewed distribution towards non-modalised ones (83% non-modalised vs. 17% modalised). In a more specific 4,429,976-word corpus of speeches by US Presidents, non-modalised clauses are found to be the unmarked choice while modalised clauses reach the scant level of 5% (Ahrens, 1995).

Still, it is not only the choice of modalised clauses that is favoured by negatively polarised clauses but it is also the relative distribution of the modals chosen that is altered. Figure 6.10 illustrates a comparison of the frequencies of the eight most recurrent modals in the negatively polarised clauses with those in all clauses – negatively polarised or not – in my corpus.

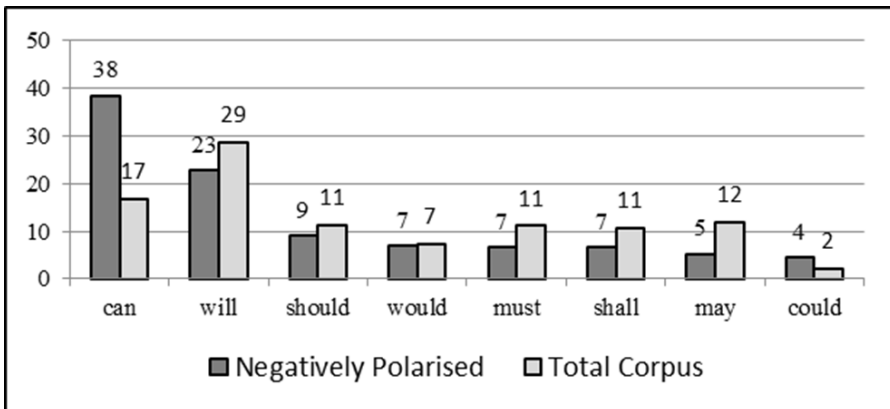


Figure 6.10. Comparison of relative frequencies of 8 modals in negatively polarised clauses and total corpus.

As is shown in Figure 6.10, whereas the most recurrent modal in all clauses is *will* (29% of occurrences), the most frequent modal in negatively polarised clauses is *can* (38% of occurrences).

The distribution of modalised clauses in all my corpus is fairly similar to that reported in Biber et al. (1999, p. 486), wherein modal *will* is the most frequent (26% of occurrences). One of the meanings of this polysemous modal is to indicate the speaker's/writer's intention. This meaning is highly exploited by US Presidents in their inaugural addresses. Yet, as *cannot* frequently appears in the context of a positively polarised modal *will* in my corpus, it can be argued that there is strong interplay between these two modals, whereby politicians promise what they will do on the grounds of what cannot be the case, as is shown in example (28).

(28) It cannot be doubted that the proposed reductions will for the present diminish the revenues of the Department. [Fillmore 1850]

The strong interplay between the systems of POLARITY and MODALITY is statistically confirmed with a chi-square test. Once the findings of the two most frequent modals in my corpus, namely *can* and *will*, are intersected with those in the system of polarity, as depicted in Table 6.3, the value obtained for χ^2 is 59.46 at a level of significance 0.001. This entails that while the choice of negative polarity triggers the choice of modal *can* and precludes the choice of modal *will*, the choice of positive polarity triggers the choice of modal *will* and precludes the choice of modal *can*.

Table 6.3. Intersection of POLARITY and 2 modals.

	will	can	T
Negatively polarised	66	111	177
Positively polarised	731	353	1084
T	797	464	1261

A further intersection of the two most frequent alternatives of negation, through *not* and *no* with the system of PROCESS TYPE, is dealt with in the following subsection.

4.4. No-negation

As opposed to the type of negation analysed in the previous subsection, which affects primarily the whole clause, *no*-negation has always a narrow scope and is thus called local negation. In my corpus, the negative determiner *no* modifies fundamentally a noun with a frequency of 89%. The other uses of *no*-negation are as a modifier of an adverb 7% of the time and a modifier of a pronoun in 4% of the cases. The 10 most frequent nouns that collocate with *no* in my corpus are depicted in Figure 6.11, among which political organisations such as *nation*, *people*, *power* and *government* stand out. Although none of these appear as typical collocates in more general corpora (Biber et al., 1999, p. 173), their higher occurrence in my corpus of political speeches is not unexpected.

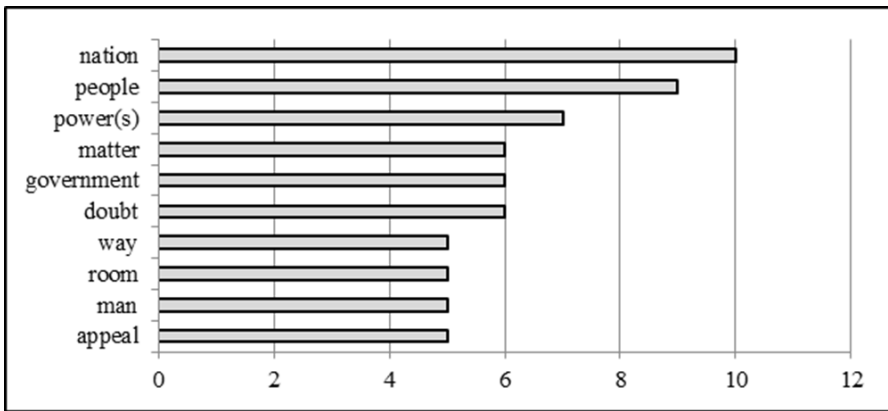


Figure 6.11. Most frequent noun collocations with *no*.

Additionally, within the most frequent collocates of *no* are the nouns *doubt* and *appeal*, which constitute instances of grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 1998). This linguistic strategy consists of a transcategorisation scheme more complex though not less frequent than the rhetorical device of lexical metaphor, which is so pervasive in political discourse (Chilton, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2005). Grammatical metaphor and lexical metaphor operate at the two distant poles of the cline of lexicogrammar. Therefore, there is a clear parallelism between Chilton's three strategic functions of language in politics—coercion, (de)legitimation and (mis)representation—and Halliday's three metafunctions of language – experiential, interpersonal and textual (Semino, 2008, p. 86).

Grammatical metaphor allows users of a language to reconstrue experiences through incongruent linguistic realisations. For example, an event, which is congruently expressed through a clause in language, can have a more incongruent realisation through a noun. This is what happens in example (29a), whereby President A. Johnson depersonifies the *appeal to force* so as to avoid taking or assigning responsibility for an action that is controversial. The unpacking of the grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 1991b) through a more congruent realisation of (29a) is offered in (29b).

- (29) a. [...] the events of the last four years have established, we will hope forever, that there lies no appeal to force. [A. Johnson 1865]
 b. [...] what happened in the last four years – The Civil War, we hope that we will never appeal to force again. / we hope that we will never go to war again.

As *no*-negation frequently appears in the context of grammatical metaphors, this particular register is likely to exhibit a higher level of the verbal processes that are characteristic of expounding registers such as academic discourse, in which grammatical metaphor is very frequent (Matthiessen, 2015). This renders the contrast between the processes used in *no*-negation and those in *not*-negation worthy of analysis. Results are shown in Figure 6.12.

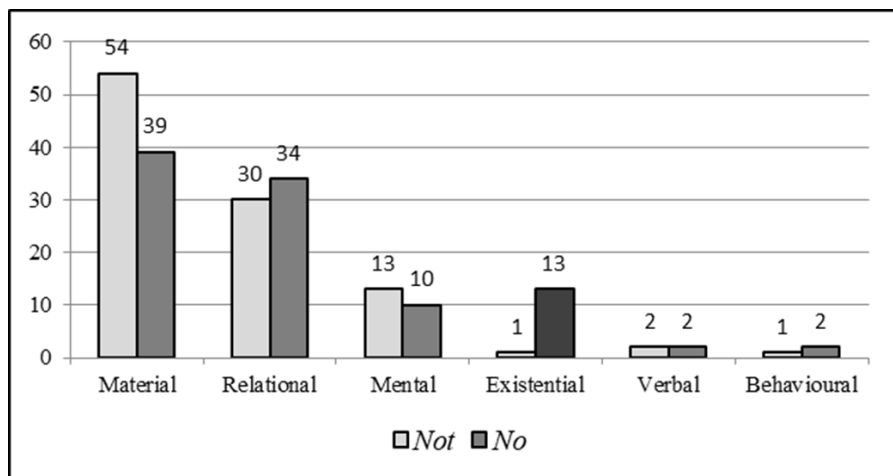


Figure 6.12. Comparison between relative frequencies of processes under not-negation and under *no*-negation.

A number of points are worth mentioning here. To begin with, in the particular register under study, material processes are by far the most frequent processes in negatively polarised clauses, either through *not*-negation (365 tokens = 54%) or through *no*-negation (167 tokens = 39%). While these figures are not fully consistent with those found in the literature for the overall system of English, in the register of political discourse, results tend to converge more closely. For example, it has been found that material processes are relatively less frequent in negatively polarised clauses than in their positively polarised counterparts (26% vs. 34%, respectively) (Matthiessen, 2006, pp. 126–128). Besides, the frequency of material processes has been found to be very sensitive to the register type, ranging from 32% to 48% across different registers (Matthiessen, 2015).

More specifically, in the study of political speeches, material processes seem to be more recurrent than in other registers (Durán, 2008;

Kazemian and Hashemi, 2014; Adjei, Ewusi-Mensah and Okoh, 2015; Adjei and Ewusi-Mensah, 2016), wherein material processes range from 39% to 59%. US Presidents seem to choose this higher frequency of material processes because they feel the need to portray themselves as leaders of action, particularly in their early stages in office (Durán, 2008; Wang, 2010). Moreover, it is through the excessive use of material processes that US Presidents project an image of themselves as both national and world leaders (Kuusmanen, 2015).

As for the comparison between the frequencies of PROCESS TYPES under *not*-negation and *no*-negation, the most striking difference is the higher level of existential processes that co-occur with *no*-negation. While the former reaches the scant level of 1%, which is in line with the figures in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 308), the latter considerably increases up to 13%. This difference is proved to be statistically significant through a chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 86.65$). This implies that at the level of significance 0.001, while the choice of *not*-negation favours material processes over existential ones, the choice of *no*-negation favours existential processes and disfavours material ones.

Relational processes also increase, though more slightly, from 30% in the scope of *not*-negation to 34% in the scope of *no*-negation. These two types of processes allow for a higher degree of grammatical nominalisation, as is shown in example (30a), which exhibits an instance of an existential process and (31a), which illustrates the use of a relational one. Both of them have more congruent realisations in their (b) counterparts.

- (30) a. [...] there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere. [Lincoln 1861]
- b. [...] we will not invade, or use force against or among the people anywhere.
- (31) a. [...] we have no desire for territorial expansion [...] [Hoover 1929]
- b. [...] we do not intend to expand our territory.

The increase of the relative frequencies of both existential and relational processes in the case of *no*-negation is carried along with a decrease of the frequency of material processes. It is worth noting that the more congruent realisations expressed in the (b) counterparts above involve the use of the material processes *invade* and *use force* in (30) and *intend* and *expand* in (31).

The use of *no*-negation with existential and material processes allows US Presidents to exploit higher levels of grammatical metaphor. With this grammatical device, users of the language resort to a higher

level of deagentivisation and to a very dense packing of verbal complements into Things that can be modified in a complex manner (Halliday, 1991b). Thus, for example in (30a), President Lincoln does not express *who will not invade who* or *who* the Agent of *use the force* is. Similarly, in (31a), President Hoover does not make it overt *who will not expand their territories*, as the more congruent realisation in (31b) shows through the unpacking of the grammatical metaphor used in its original counterpart in (31a). Additionally, the Complements of the processes *there be* in (30) and *have* in (31) are very dense nominals that are treated as abstract entities whose Heads are *using* and *desire*, respectively, which are postmodified by long prepositional phrases in both cases. These nominals are deemed objective entities in the world of reality as presidents construct their discourse persuasively.

5. Conclusion

As Charteris-Black (2005) argues, the more democratic a society, the more effective its politicians' persuasive strategies need to be. US Presidents, who champion themselves as democratic leaders, find the need to exploit linguistic strategies in their inaugural addresses to mark a memorable new beginning (Atkinson, 1984). While this is carried out through the careful selection of lexical items, it is even more successfully achieved through the exploitation of the grammatical pole of the lexicogrammatical cline (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 64). One such linguistic strategy, as I have argued in this chapter, is the increasing choice of grammatical negation in their speeches.

This chapter has analysed the frequency of negative polarity clauses in a closed set of inaugural addresses by US Presidents. It has been shown that US Presidents choose a comparatively higher degree of negative polarity than that found in the overall pattern of English. What is more, not only is the selection of negative polarity a systematic feature of their inaugurals but this register also exhibits an increasing trend in the chronology of US inaugural speeches. Thus, later presidents find a higher need for a choice of negation in their inaugurals than their earlier counterparts.

Additionally, we have seen that presidents that assume office after the death of an immediate leader and those who succeed a former co-partisan president tend to choose a lower level of negation in their speeches as they do not need to distance themselves from the policy of the previous term. On the other hand, the presidents who alternate party with their predecessor tend to express themselves in a more polar

way as a token of the veering course they intend to apply to American history. Thus, the use of negative polarity in inaugural addresses tends to express the speaker's promise of distance from a previous course of action.

A further result has been the fact that clausal negation through the adverb *not* is twice as frequent as the more local type of negation realised by negative determiner *no*. This latter type of negation allows politicians to fully exploit the linguistic device of grammatical metaphor, through which they can avoid the mention of the Agent under crucial circumstances. Besides, with this strategy, politicians produce a discourse with an objective rendering typical of academic registers. Finally, the higher degree of *not*-negation in this register favours the use of modal *can* and disfavors the use of modal *will*. By the same token, *no*-negation increases the frequency of existential processes to the detriment of material ones.

From the methodological point of view, my intention in this chapter has been to strike a balance between linguistic analysis and an explanation of the grammatical choices in context (Chilton, 2003, p. 411). While it is a time-consuming task to analyse the context in which every instance of negative polarity is produced in a 228-year corpus, in this chapter I have reported tendencies of the negation frequencies found. This is what Matthiessen (2006) calls to distance from the pole of instantiation in registerial analysis and advance towards the systemic end of the cline of language. By reporting frequencies of negation in US presidential inaugural addresses, I have offered a deeper insight into the characterisation of this register. Further lines of exploration can be the analysis of other systems in the register of inaugural addresses or the comparison of the system of negation in other registers.

Endnotes

1. Grammatical negation is what Tottie (1991) calls non-affixal negation as in *This is not possible* or *There is no possibility*, as opposed to the affixal type of negation as in *This is impossible*. Alternative labels are, respectively syntactic and morphological negation (Hamawand 2009). The latter type is also known as nexal negation (Jespersen 1917). I have also considered in this study the types of incomplete negation such as *hardly*, *barely* and *seldom* (Jespersen 1917), although they are very infrequent in my corpus.

2. Whereas patterns of binary oppositions are mentioned in the literature (Atkinson 1984, Chilton 2004), frequencies of these patterns are still not reported.

3. The notion of function in SFL is further elaborated in Halliday (1984).
4. Two opposing but complementary viewpoints of language in SFL are language as system and language as instance (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 27).
5. Here I follow the convention within systemic functional linguistics, according to which lexicogrammatical systems are identified in capital letters and functions are symbolised with their initial in capitals.
6. In SFL, functions are capitalised by convention. For example, for the definition of Deictic in SFL, see Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 368).
7. As can be seen in Table 6.2, the actual number of speeches is 44, as President Cleveland assumes the presidency in two non-consecutive periods.
8. None of the 8 presidents that accessed the presidency after the death of their predecessor delivered an actual inaugural address although they did address the Congress thereafter. That is why four of the speeches considered for the analysis here – those by T. Roosevelt, Coolidge, Truman and L. B. Johnson – are those given at the point of accessing the presidency through election, which in actual fact is considered their second inaugural (see Table 6.2).
9. For example, Pres. Lincoln includes in his inaugural address a long quote of an article of the US Constitution on slavery.
10. This is probably the reason why the 13 presidents who serve a second term resort to a comparatively lower frequency of negative polarity in their second inaugural address. However, for lack of room, I have left 2nd inaugural addresses unanalysed here.
11. See for example, some examples of contestive inaugural addresses in Ryan (1993, p. xviii).
12. The frequency of negation is even higher in presidential campaigns than that in inaugural addresses (Lau and Rovner 2009).
13. This appeal to unifying the country appears at least since T. Roosevelt delivers his inaugural in 1905. However, there is no mention of the opposing party until the speech by Kennedy.
14. The literature in this regard is abundant. See, for example, Clarke (2004) for the metadiscursive references in Kennedy's inaugural speech. The construction of rhetorical shifts and their historical connections are explored in detail in Widmaier (2015).
15. See also the results in Tottie (1991).
16. Well-crafted oppositions are among the most effective linguistic resources in a politician's speech that arise a resounding 'claptrap' in their audiences (Atkinson 1984).

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