Politeness and Politics: A study of President Chen Shui-bian's Rhetorical Strategies

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Abstract

This paper examines the rhetorical strategies of President Chen Shui-bian. It analyzes Chen's verbal devices as they relate to issues such as national identity, partisan frictions and personal interests. It also looks at the pragmatic and strategic functions of various linguistic features used by Chen during his presidency. It adopts a qualitative method and uses data from oral and written sources found on the Internet, and in magazines, newspapers and radio since Chen's presidential campaign.

This paper is conducted within the framework of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), indirectness in political discourse (Chilton 1990, Gastil 1992, Obeng 1997), meaning in interaction (Thomas 1993), and intertextuality (Bakhtin 1981; Barthes 1982; Kristeva 1984; Obeng 2000). More specifically, we are looking at Chen's presidential rhetoric and how it tries to avoid confrontation and opposition from the Chinese authorities, to build consensus within partisan frictions, and to solicit confidence and trust from the people. In other words, we are concerned with how words and phrases are crafted and delivered by the president in order to win support and discredit enemies both on the international front and on keen national issues.

Key words: sociolinguistics, politeness theory, indirectness, rhetorical strategies

禮貌與政治：陳水扁總統的說辭策略

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中文摘要

政治人物對語言的掌握相當熟練，藉運用種種說辭方式，巧妙地替自己化解危機，塑造適當的形象，貼近選民或吸取選票。陳水扁總統更是其中翹楚，他能夠巧妙地利用國語、台語交替使用，以和民眾溝通，更能輕鬆的使用台灣俚語，博得掌聲。在使用間接溝通技巧，如隱喻(metaphor)，典故(allusion)及比喻(analogy)的使用上，陳總統也有過人之處。以後者為例，他曾將自己比喻為聖經中的約書亞，將接替摩西（李登輝）帶領台灣人民至迦南美地（民主大業），在處理兩岸關係時，他自喻為美國總統尼克森，藉此暗示他對大陸政權的態度。而在使用隱喻上，他數度自比為「台灣之子」，更在就職演說中將台灣隱喻為「母親」，人民和總統一樣為「台灣之子」。 諸如此類的用語及語言技巧，已成為台灣的政治論述的特色。本文藉禮貌理論 (Politeness theory, Brown and Levinson 1987)、文本互用 (intertextuality, Bakhtin, 1981; Barthes 1982; Fairclough 1995; Kristeva 1984; Obeng 2000), 及間接溝通理論 (indirect communication, Obeng 1994, 1997)等相關社會語言學理論，進一步探討陳水扁總統的說辭方式、技巧，及語用、策略功能與其所產生的影響。 本文研究方式採用文獻分析及質化方式，收集陳總統自參選期間至今之公開發表演說及相關書面資料及評論。

關鍵詞：社會語言學，禮貌理論，間接溝通方式，說辭策略

Introduction

Politeness, just as much as politics, is all the more important when the president is trying to smooth partisan ruffles and restore the normal functions of government. Moreover, as a national leader, who rises above divisions of partisan ideologies and ethnic groups to recover common concerns and values for the nation, the president has to adopt delicate and sensible linguistic strategies and symbols in order to ease the contentions and tensions from the Chinese authorities and to construct a positive public image domestically and internationally. The president's use of rhetorical devices thus serves pragmatic and strategic functions in a highly contested political discourse. Studying these devices will certainly provide a good opportunity for understanding the complex power relations in Taiwanese politics.

This paper is organized into four parts: first, a brief biography of Chen and his socio-political predicaments; second, a brief introduction of relevant theoretical constructs such as indirectness, politeness (especially positive and negative face) and intertextuality and an illustration of how these notions are worked into Chen's speech; third, analyses and examples of Chen's rhetorical strategies, especially indirect linguistic devices such as metaphors, allusions and analogies; fourth, conclusion.

President Chen Shui-bian and the socio-political predicaments of Taiwan

Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election on the 18th of March 2000, with 39% of the vote, a number wide enough to put the Kuomintang (KMT) out of political limelight, yet too narrow to leave Chen with a mandate. As a "minority president" (*shaoshu zongtong*), Chen and his cabinet had to form a coalition government with which many difficult tasks needed to be

tackled, both on the domestic and international fronts. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) hard-liners have voiced increasingly nationalistic sentiments, with which Chen will try to strike a balance in order to retain his presidential neutrality and his partisan affiliation.

Chen has also had to prove that he can work with the KMT mainstream, many of whom are sore at the election losses and are still in the majority in the Legislative Yuan and control many island-wide business sectors. Above all, he has to prove to China, and to the rest of the world that he can handle all the domestic issues, maintain national dignity and prosperity, and negotiate with China on terms and time frames that are acceptable to both sides.

Such are no easy tasks for Chen and he needs not only political skills but also linguistic skills to ease frictions and to please foes. Chen is good at inspiring enthusiasms, especially among blue-collared workers and the younger generation with whom he can cement instant bonds by using indirect speech features such as analogy, allusion or metaphor and performs such tasks in Taiwanese. Unlike most of the heavyweight politicians in Taiwan, who tend to emphasize their foreign education and training (especially, America) and impress the media and voters with their fluency in foreign languages (especially, English), Chen inspires with his can-do spirit, maverick style and in taking pride of his humble background as a tenant farmer's son, fighting his way, first through poverty, then earning a law degree at National Taiwan University, gradually establishing himself as the political superstar in the then opposition party, DPP.

In addition to creating successes, Chen also knows how to face defeats and to make a comeback. On the day of his defeat to Ma Ying-jeou for a second term as Taipei mayor in 1998, Chen cited a statement of Churchill, who said "a great city is known for the people's cruelty to their leader." And like Churchill, who later made a comeback after the local election, Chen was preparing for his run for the presidency and finally won the 2000 election.

His ability to play into the media, to work with the crowd, to seize the moment and to relate to people from the working class is further evidenced in his autobiography, *The Son of*

Taiwan. Chen is also one of the many Taiwanese politicians who are willing to take on more than one role to get the job done, at least in costumes during the campaigning. He has been dressed as, among the most notable, a superman, a famous baseball player, and a male impersonator of Statue of Liberty. And he has quoted the Bible, ancient Chinese texts, referred himself to Joshua, while anticipating the peaceful power transition from the KMT to DPP. Inspired by other politicians whose daring and marks Chen takes serious notes, he also compared himself to Nixon and Kim Tae Chung in handling the cross-strait issues. Chen's rhetorical strategies can further include switching from one dialect to another, for example, from Mandarin to Taiwanese, or by making reference to trendy roles in movies and sports, such as *Titanic*, or *Superman*, or baseball favorites, or by using indirect speech such as allusion, analogy and metaphor.

In short, Chen is a seasoned politician who not only has the political skills but also the linguistic skills to deliver messages, to work the crowd and to seize the moment. Studying his rhetorical strategies should prove worthwhile to the understanding of how language and politics work together in Taiwan's increasing democratization.

Relevant theoretical constructs and illustrations

This paper is conducted within a framework of ideas from indirectness in political communication (Obeng 1994, 1997), meaning in interaction (Thomas 1993), politeness (especially, positive and negative face, Brown and Levinson 1987) and intertextuality (Bakhtin 1981; Barthes 1982; Fairclough 1995; Kristeva 1984; Obeng 2000). Obeng (1994, 1997) has defined a framework of oblique communication as consisting of implictness and rhetorical structure. The verbal implictness further includes features such as allusion, circumlocution, evasion, innuendo and metaphor. For our analysis, we will focus on allusion, analogy, and metaphor, as they are seen to be more prominent in Chen's rhetoric. Robin Lakoff (1973, 1979)

describes that indirectness is preferred for two reasons: to save face if a conversational contribution is not well received, and to achieve the sense of rapport that comes from being understood without saying what one means. Tannen (1989) further mentions that by requiring the listener or reader to fill in unstated meaning, indirectness contributes to a sense of involvement through mutual participation in sense making (p. 23).

Thomas (1993) offers concrete ways of sorting out indirectness used in daily conversations. By subscribing to Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle and its related conversational maxims, she offers ways for a hearer to work out what a speaker means by the words he or she utters (pp. 55-84). In addition, she offers four relevant points in discussing the issue of indirectness. They are: 1) not all indirectness is intentional; 2) indirectness is costly and risky; 3) assumption of rationality; 4) the principle of expressibility (pp. 119-122). Furthermore, she points out a number of factors, which appear to govern indirectness in all languages and cultures. The main factors are: 1) the relative power of the speaker over the hearer; 2) the social distance between the speaker and the hearer; 3) the degree to which X is rated an imposition in culture Y; 4) relative rights and obligations between speaker and the hearer (p.124).

Whereas Thomas (1993) provides concrete accounts and examples of how indirectness is intended, achieved, and sorted out in daily conversations, Obeng (1994; 1997) brings this notion to the realm of politics and analyzes figures of speech such as allusion, circumlocution, evasion, innuendo and metaphor to illustrate the pragmatic functions of indirectness in political discourse. According to Obeng (1994; 1997), indirectness is crucial in political discourse, where the stakes are high and diplomacy is required. Political actors tend to communicate in vague and oblique ways in order to protect and further their own careers and to gain both a political and interactional advantage over their political opponents. Political interests and political necessity, as well as personal face-saving, motivate indirectness. Indirect verbal communication allows the accomplishment of certain potentially tense, risky,

or difficult utterances under the guise of other licit and less difficult utterances. Indirect means of communication can also avoid the kind of negative consequences referred to by Bosman (1987, p.98) as the "boomerang effect". That is, strongly intense language tends to have a negative effect. In addition to verbal indirectness, other notions such as intertextuality and politeness are also important for our study and we will explain their relevance to the present study and provide pertinent examples in the following section.

To put it in a simple way, intertextuality can be understood as the linguistic practice of borrowing the ideas or materials from previously existing texts into the present text in order to influence and sway readers (hearers). However, when such simple notions are situated in a complex discourse, such as politics, where power, crisis, or even war are central elements, the verbal act of transforming a previous text into the present can be interpreted as a web of dialogue (Obeng 2000, p. 299). That is to say, a previous one shapes each text, and it in turn reshapes the interpretation and vision of the present one and the one following it. A "web of dialogue" is thus created, which further transforms the context of such dialogue. Obeng (2000) further points out that attitudes expressed in the texts draw on public knowledge, linguistic conventions, political (ethnic) ideals, social conditions, cultural values, and historical processes. Fairclough (1995:61) also points out that intertextual analysis is an interpretation, which locates the text in relation to social repertoires of specific cultural and social understanding. Intertextuality, in short, speaks of the heterogeneity of meaning and form in a contested discourse.

An example of how to transport a previous text into the present in order to create a web of dialogue should help elucidate the above point. In President Chen's inaugural speech, three times at the beginning of his speech, he said, "Taiwan stands up." This was a paraphrase from one of Mr. Mao Zedong's famous remarks, "The Chinese people have stood up," made at the

Tiananman Square, before his proclamation of the People's Republic on October 1, 1949,[1] after the KMT's last troops defected into Taiwan. Choosing a date such as the presidential inauguration to make such a socio-political reference is a careful linguistic act and it can signify at least three things. First, a power transition was made in Taiwan, as Chen's party, the DPP won over the presidency and the KMT lost its ruling prestige after more than fifty years in power. (The KMT lost its power to the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) in 1949 and left for Taiwan to search for a basis to reclaim China.) Second, the people in Taiwan, now under a different political regime, should feel proud and stand up for the new leadership. (The people in China, after years of civil war, should have stood up and supported the new leadership.) Third, the new leadership (the DPP/CCP) will help the people (Taiwan/China) stand up to new tasks and challenges. What is left unsaid in this historical reference is the increasingly tense relationship across the Taiwan Strait over issues such as national identity; yet such a symbolic gesture at least has put forward socio-historical commonality and opened doors for future dialogue.

Brown and Levinson (1987) define "face" as something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in any social interaction (p.61). Furthermore, aspects of face are treated as basic wants, which every member knows every other member desires, and which in general is in the interests of every member to partially satisfy. The components of face can also be restated as: 1) negative face, which emphasizes the desire of an individual not to be impeded by others, and 2) positive face, which emphasizes the desire of an individual to be accepted into the group and can include the desire for identity and consensus (Brown and Levinson 1987, pp. 61-62; Chilton 1990, p.204). Positive face therefore can be interpreted as the desire to be accepted, appreciated and recognized, and negative face can be treated as the desire for autonomy and independence.

[1] For more details about Chen's other verbal features in the inaugural speech, read *The New York Review of Books*, New York; June 29, 2000.

Such notions are important for political discourse since "face" can be challenged and exploited, and the question of how to exploit one's positive face and to protect the negative one from being impeded are essential in politics where power, identity, integrity are constantly contested. Chilton (1990) reinterprets the Brown-Levinson analysis of politeness and applies it to political texts, especially texts in international communication. His points are illustrated by an analysis of speeches by Gorbachev and Reagan in which domestic and international contexts affect the verbal acts performed. In addition to suggesting that such analysis should be situated in historical contexts, he also notes that political discourse can be seen to use positive- and negative-face strategies in consensus building and in the performing of "face-threatening" acts, that is coercive, intrusive, or persuasive verbal acts.

Chilton (1990) is important for our analysis of President Chen's political rhetoric since much of what Chen has to deal with revolves around building a consensus among domestic partisan ideologies, negotiating with Chinese authorities, and exploring new international recognition, all of which center around autonomy, identity, and recognition. For example, in Chen's inaugural speech, he mentioned several leaders—Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Lee Teng-hui and acknowledged their contributions. Knowing that China and Taiwan still hold different, if not conflicting views on which is the genuine regime, Chen deliberately used the neutral honorific term "Mr." (xiansheng) for all three leaders, in place of more specific yet provocative terms such "compatriot," "chairman," and "president" respectively. Such a polite and at the same time, political verbal choice recognizes all three leaders as equals (positive face) and proves that Chen is well aware of the need for delicate diplomacy between himself and leaders across the Strait, and that a crisis might be provoked if the wrong terms of address are used.

In short, in this section, we elaborate notions such as indirectness, meaning in interaction, intertextuality and politeness, especially notions such as positive and negative face and cite examples from Chen's speech to illustrate how they can be worked for and against an issue. In

the next section, we will look into more specific indirect speech features and explain how they can break or make a political deal in a contested context.

Examples and analyses on Chen's use of metaphor, allusion and analogy

In addition to some of the notions mentioned in the previous section, we also find Chen's usage of metaphors worth noting. His skillfulness in adopting metaphors can find many precedents from other prominent political figures. For example, Semino and Masci (1996) study the metaphors used by Silvio Berlusconi, the media tycoon who became Italy's Prime Minister in 1994. Their study focuses on metaphors drawn from the language of football, war, and the Bible. They argue that Berlusconi adopted different metaphors in an attempt to alter the way in which Italians relate to politics, to create a positive image for Berlusconi and his new political party, and to attract particular sections of the electorate. This study is relevant to the present analysis of Chen Shui-bian's rhetorical strategies, since Chen, like Berlusconi is fond of using metaphors in order to build a positive self-image, to put down his opponent, to mobilize particular voters, and to solidify national morale. For example, during the 1998 Taipei mayoral race, Chen used food and animal metaphors against his KMT opponent, Ma Ying-jeou. By referring to himself as *bao-zi,* a steamed bun, one of the most popular *local* snacks and referring to Ma as a *pizza,* one of the most popular *foreign* snacks, Chen was implying his "genuine Taiwaneseness," while hinting at Ma's "foreignness." Chen is also skilled in using kinship metaphors. One example occurred during the final TV debate in the 1998 race, when he referred to managing city affairs as being like a "mother preparing box lunches for her children, a task which can't please everybody." He expanded upon this metaphor by saying that, despite how exhausted and frustrated he felt about managing Taipei, he would not abandon his obligations and responsibilities for the Taipei citizens, just like a mother would never abandon

her obligations and responsibilities for her children (Wei 2000). Another example can be found in Chen's presidential inaugural speech, where he referred to each citizen of Formosa as a "child of Taiwan" just like him[2]. "In whatever difficult environment, Taiwan will be like a selfless, loving mother, who never stops giving up opportunities and who helps us achieve our beautiful dreams." Here again, Chen's use of a "mother" metaphor successfully helps him appeal to the heart of emotions and thus to solidify national morale on a day as important as inauguration day.

Howe (1988) studies metaphor in contemporary American political discourse and draws his data from newspapers and periodicals that cover the years 1980-1985. His study finds that the metaphors used in contemporary American political discourse draw heavily and systematically on the terminology of sports and warfare. These sources provide metaphors for use in both campaign rhetoric and in the jargon of political professionals. His study further concludes that politics is typically conceived of either as a rule-bound contest-- sports metaphors, or as an unpredictable exercise of power-- war metaphors. However, the heavy use of war- and sports-related metaphors might have the effect of excluding women from participating in the dominant discourse of politics and thus from achieving political power.

The relevance to Howe's work for the present paper lies in its analysis of the cultural aspects of the dominant metaphors, and the effects that they may have on a specific population. Based on the present researcher's previous research, Taiwanese political discourse draws heavily on the terminology of "weather," "melodrama," "stock trading," and "war" (Wei 1999). Our preliminary observations on President Chen's use of metaphors include examples of "animal," "food," "kinship," and "natural phenomenon." The frequent use of "kinship" metaphor, such as "mother" is very interesting and worth further investigation since it has been adopted not only by Chen but

[2] Chen had referred to himself as "the son of Taiwan" (Taiwan Zhi Zi) and had published a book under this title, where he detailed his humble upbringing in a small town in Tainan, a southern city in Taiwan, as a tenant farmer's son and his socio-political struggles.

also by the first female vice-presidential candidate, Wang Ching-feng in the 1996 presidential and vice-presidential election. Wang referred to her role as a prospective national leader as "mother who was concerned for her children." She thus offered refreshing perspectives on how issues such as national security, corruption and pollution should be resolved from the perspective of a mother's genuine concern of the welfare for her children. For Wang, her choice of "mother" metaphor might help differentiate herself from other male candidates and proved to the voters her deftness and sensitivity in diplomacy and politics, while for Chen, his choice of "mother" metaphor and comparing his management of city affairs to "mother preparing box-lunches" might also differentiate himself from other male politicians, who at least in words have shown relatively less concerns for domestic affairs and thus ingratiate female voters.

Another interesting study that has implications for the present paper comes from WAUDAG (1990)[3], in which the authors study the metaphors and other rhetorical devices of a single politician, George Bush, who served as president of the United States from 1989-1993. That paper particularly delineates how the language (text- and sentence-structuring, metaphors, etc.) of the address works to construct both the privileged public figure of the president and a spirit of collective identity and consent for the audience, while still espousing particular political assumptions and goals. Based on its analysis of Bush's inaugural speech, the study concludes that Bush's use of metaphors is banal, lacking the high tone of a Kennedy-style inaugural. However, banal metaphors are easily understood, and use images accessible to every adult or child in the country---points of light, hand of friendship, reluctant fist, book of history, new breeze blowing, kite of freedom, and so forth. Mr. Bush may have adopted this strategy in order to appeal to every young American, but the danger is that such a strategy could conflict with the aim of satisfying a more adult, skeptical and critical audience (WAUDAG 1990).

[3] WAUDAG stands for the University of Washington Discourse Analysis Group: George L. Dillon, Anne Doyle, Carol M. Eastman, Susan Kline, Sandra Silberstein and Michael Toolan.

This study is relevant to our research since it looks into the practical effects of rhetorical strategies on different sets of readers, and points out the many, sometimes conflicting, readings that readers generate from a specific linguistic device. In our analysis of President Chen's rhetorical strategies, we also argue that the ambiguities and indeterminacy in political discourse are the norms and that they serve both pragmatic and strategic functions. After all, since much of politics involves conflict creation and conflict management, adopting verbal indirectness, which allows politicians to say one thing but mean another, seems to be ideal for the capricious nature of politics.

A seasoned case in point is from Chen's use of a "stone" metaphor. It was found in Chen's handling over the resignation of the former Primer Tang Fei and it should explicate WAUDAG's point and point out the indeterminacy of the indirect usage in political discourse where a linguistic device, such as metaphor can work to ease frictions among political rivals yet at the same time, might backfire when interest groups demand justifications otherwise.

After the ex-premier, Tang Fei handed in his resignation, citing health reasons, there have been a lot of speculation over why Tang resigned in the media, mostly revolving around the incompatibility of the managing styles between Tang, a high ranking KMT general and Chen who has been the DPP superstar and who is trying very hard to balance his impartial role as a president and his allegiance to the DPP party. With Chen's winning of the presidency and the KMT becoming the opposition party, there are still lots of unresolved issues and ideologies between the two rival parties. Matters are further complicated with the media constantly referring to Chen as the "minority president," (*shaoshu zongtong*) i.e. he only got 39.6% of the votes and reminding him and his cabinet that the KMT, though they lost the presidential election, still holds more than half of the seats in the Legislative Yuan, and can bring forces of opposition to any policies that Chen tries to implement. Worse, Taiwan's stock market has dropped more than 30%, Chen's approval rating fell to less than 40%, from a high of 77%, and many predicted an economic crisis and political impasse due to the inconsistency of policy

implementation (*Time*, 10/30/2000*)*.

In response to mounting speculations over the "real" reason for Tang's resignation, Chen issued a statement at a public gathering[4] after he accepted Tang's resignation and said

Text:

"Guoqu sige yue lai, xing zhengfu fuwu tuandui youxie wenti, xianzai yijing ba lushang de *shitou* nakai le, ye ba chequang zuole yixie zhenxiu, jiang chungxin jixu shanglu, xiwang dajia yao dui Taiwan weilai de jingji fazhan you xinxin" (*Jingji Ribao* [Taipei], 2000.10.06).

Trans:

"For the past four months, there have been problems in the new government, now *the stone* has been removed and the car has been fixed in order to get back on the road. [I] hope you all will have confidence for the economic developments in Taiwan." (*Economics Daily* [Taipei], 2000.10.06).

Chen's use of "stone" might just be an off-hand remark, a metaphor, implying some of the difficulties inherent in his administration, but it has generated a lot of heat and criticism, not only from the now opposition KMT, but also from the DPP. The polyphone of what exactly does "stone" mean reflects some of the obstacles and dilemmas that Chen has to tackle, since the KMT argues that "stone" refers to Tang, who was chosen, used and then dismissed because of his KMT and military connections in order to compensate Chen's DPP partisanship and to boost the military morale (*Economics Daily* [Taipei], 2000.10.07). Chen later denied such charges, i.e. motivations for why Tang was chosen and clarified that "stone" referred to the disagreements among the DPP members who complain that Chen have been compromising his partisan ideologies since he took office (*United Daily* [Taipei], 2000. 10. 07). Again, Chen

[4] The statement was made on the 5th of October at the 11th annual Award Ceremony of the National Product Quality (*Di Shiyi Jie Guojia Pinzhi Jiang Banjiang Dianli*) (*Economics Daily* [Taipei], 2000. 10.06).

denied such charges. Other than pointing out how metaphor can be adopted by interest groups and politicians for pragmatic and strategic purposes, the "stone" metaphor also points out that indeterminacy and unintended consequences of an indirect speech feature can further complicate the power struggle among rival parties and interest groups.

Other than metaphor, Chen is also known for using allusion. For example, he had referred himself to Joshua, who succeeded Moses and took the Israelites to the Canaan. Like metaphor, the use of an allusion can serve various pragmatic functions. They can signify a struggle for moral high ground, as when President Lee Teng-hui is called Moses, or in Chen's self referral as Joshua. Or, they can be a symbolic gesture in a power struggle, as when former Provincial Governor James Soong is referred to as Sun Wu-kung, one of the main characters in the popular Chinese novel, *Journey to the West* (Wei 2001).

Bernard Grofman (1989) has studied the use of allusion in political satire and he maintains the following: (1) satirical allusions are implicit arguments that must be "decoded by the listener or reader;" (2) often, allusions can be understood at more than one level, depending upon the sophistication of the audience; (3) for an allusion to be fully successful, it must not contain elements that appear to contradict the satirist's central thrust; (4) for an allusion to be at all successful, its surface meaning must be comprehended by the audience, even if details of interpretation are missed; and (5) some allusions are "richer" and more apt than others, even though we may simultaneously hold several allusions in our mind with respect to the same object.

For our analysis of Chen's rhetorical style, we want to take Grofman's ideas further and argue that one must not only take into account the reader's familiarity with the source of the allusion, but also his or her knowledge of the power struggle among the political personages, the hegemonic consensus at the national as well as the international level. That is, the person who initiates the choice and use of a specific allusion in reference to another politician and the subsequent interpretations found in the written medium should be taken into account for the

different readings of a specific allusion.

More examples from Chen should further explicate this point. In handling the delicate cross-Strait relationship, President Chen once referred to himself as President Richard Nixon of the United States. Nixon was the Republican president who first normalized diplomatic relation with China. By alluding to Nixon's deft handling with the normalization with China, Chen successfully avoided direct confrontation with the Chinese authorities and even evaded tough questions and interrogations from the DPP, which to a certain extent still held firm to Taiwan independence, a definite invitation to war from the Chinese authorities' point of view. Like President Nixon, no one can charge President Chen with being soft on communism, and like President Nixon, President Chen, too, knows that what is important for his own political future and regional peace and how to reduce the chances of violent conflict[5].

Other than referring to himself as one of the characters in the Bible, Chen also quotes passages from the Bible to lend him more strength or to escape confrontation when facing tough competition and handling difficult tasks. For example, he quoted a famous passage by the Apostle, Paul in the *New Testament, Philippians 4:12* where Paul said: "

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (*United Daily* [Taipei], *01.30.1999).*

Chen used this passage to answer questions on whether he would run in the year 2000 presidential race. The "diplomatic immunity" as Obeng (1997) proposes, came to rescue Chen from confronting whether he would face nomination conflict with the former DPP leader, Hsu Hsing-liang, who later denounced his party membership and joined the year 2000 presidential race as an independent candidate. Such is also what Lakoff (2001) terms "non-responsive

[5] This comment is taken from "Taiwan stands up" in *The New York Review of Books,* New York, June 29, 2000.

response", i.e. answering tough questions by using circumlocution, evasion, or indirect verbal strategy.

In addition to using metaphor, biblical passage and allusion, Chen is also good at using analogy, especially when he tries to make a personal remark in a difficult situation and he often does so in Taiwanese. Like metaphor and allusion, analogy provides politicians with linguistic means for comparison, and it does so at phrasal level. A skilled politician can help voters (readers) to see the similarity or difference of two issues (objects) and make his point(s) indirectly. Again, the strength of the analogy, like that of allusion and metaphor, depends on how well the voters (readers) understand the issues (objects) compared, and the socio-political contexts of how the analogy is made. There is always an element of indeterminacy, as we mentioned in previous sections, but the rhetorical effects of analogy are nevertheless impressive and strategic, if used carefully. For example, Adrian Beard (2000) offers that commenting on a political scandal, a journalist wrote: "Whenever you have power you will have sleaze. It's just like a dog and fleas (p.28)."

Whether there is any similarity between a politician with power and a dog with fleas is something to be pursued elsewhere, but the accessibility and immediacy of the analogy and how the latter helps stick to readers (voters) mind is the focus of attention.

In Chen Shui-bian's case, he is good at making analogy and says it in Taiwanese to either get himself out of a hot seat or to make a sarcastic remark. For example, at a press conference held after the former Premier Tang Fei's resignation, when most questions centered around Chen's plans for policy implementation and economic growth, Chen spoken in Taiwanese and compared improving the current economic slow down in Taiwan as planting *tonghao*, a local grown vegetable, which is very popular in cuisine such as *Shabu Shabu*, one cannot rush and expect outcome overnight (*Economic Daily* [Taipei], 2000.10.07).

Another example of Chen's use of analogy is found when he first proposed the idea of "people's government" (*quanmin zhengfu)* and was trying to solicit applications from experts

across all political parties to join in the cabinet. Chen made the following comment:

(Taiwanese[6]) Tiong7-chiah8 e5 soaiN7, goa2 siong-sin3 choat8-tui3 put kou-toaN, choat8-tui3 hi2-to lang5 e7-hiau2 lai5 pou3-kau koan, phang5-tiuN5, chiah tioh8. Sou2-i2, kang5-khoan2 chit8 ui7 hui-siong5 ho2 e5 cheng3-ti7 kang-cho3-chia2, choat8-tui3 boe7 kou-toaN, boe7 chek8-bok8.

(Translation) " I believe that the delicious mango will not be lonely because a lot of people will buy them. Therefore, for the same reason, a fairly nice politician will never be feeling alone. " (Data is taken from SetN TV Recordings of Chen's 2001.03.19 speech)

As in the last example, we see Chen is using food analogy to make a point. Like the "thousands points of light" analogy used by President George Bush, Chen's choice of analogy is also very accessible to the general public and thus might serve the purpose to create involvement, especially when it is spoken in Taiwanese, a language choice which symbolizes equality, informality and solidarity in Taiwan. Though in both cases, food analogy was used, it might serve different pragmatic functions and the readers will have to find meanings to their own satisfaction from various contexts. For example, Chen's comparison of improving the economics as planting *tongho* might be both a demonstration of his quick wit to dodge a tough question. Yet, at the same time, it might also be a gesture for him to pay tribute to his roots and to create involvement with blue-collar workers and farmers who are among the hardest hits during an economy recession. It will be out of the researcher's reach to ask the president what *exactly* did such analogy mean, but the point is that the ambiguities are powerful enough to answer some of the tough questions and to leave enough space for further speculations. Furthermore, by letting the listener or reader fill in unstated meaning, indirectness contributes to a sense of involvement through mutual participation in sense making (Tannen 1989: 23).

[6] This paper adopts Professor Chen Xin-xi's Mandarin-to-Taiwanese Translation System, which uses the Church Romanization for Taiwanese transcription.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to analyze the rhetorical strategies of President Chen Shui-bian and has found that several indirect verbal features such as analogy, allusion and metaphor are among some of the most common features of Chen's speech. By examining these verbal features within the theoretical frameworks of oblique communication (Obeng 1997), meaning in interaction (Thomas 1993), intertextuality (Bakhtin 1981; Barthes 1982; Kristeva 1984; Obeng 2000), and politeness theory (positive and negative face, Brown and Levinson 1987), we are able to better understand how indirect verbal features can be used to achieve pragmatic goals such as face saving, involvement, and evasion of responsibility. The study of rhetorical strategies in political discourse provides a good opportunity to understand complex power relations nationally and internationally and the socio-cultural context of language use in Taiwanese politics. There have been scholarly works on political rhetoric in Taiwan, mostly quantitative studies from journalistic or political science perspectives (Zhang 1994, Chen and Chen 1992; Zheng 1992; Lei 1985; Lin 1995; Hsia 1987; Huang 1995; Sun and Weng 1995). Sociolinguistics works on political rhetoric prior to the 1996 presidential campaign are scarce, with the exceptions of Kuo (1994, 2001) and Wei (1999). However, there seems to be a slow increase of interest in analyzing political rhetoric since 1996 and several theses have been produced (Chang 2000; Chen 2000; Jin 2000; Song 2001). Still, no sociolinguistics work has been done on rhetorical strategies of a president. Thus, this paper serves to break new grounds and further provides an interdisciplinary study of politics and language in Taiwan.

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