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**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON RISHI SUNAK INAUGURATION  
SPEECH 2022**

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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini merupakan kajian Analisis Wacana Kritis terhadap pidato pelantikan yang disampaikan oleh Rishi Sunak pada tanggal 25 Oktober 2022, yang membahas mengenai krisis ekonomi Di Inggris Raya. Dengan menerapkan kerangka kerja Analisis Wacana Kritis tiga dimensi Norman Fairclough dan didukung oleh Tata Bahasa Fungsional Sistemik Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday sebagai teori pendukung, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap tingkat mikro, meso, dan makro serta konteks sosial budaya yang tertanam dalam pidato pelantikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk menguraikan data dan sumber-sumber yang dikumpulkan, diikuti oleh evaluasi teoritis dan interpretatif berdasarkan kesimpulan yang ditarik dari bahan yang dianalisis sebelumnya. Analisis tersebut mengungkapkan beberapa fitur linguistik, termasuk 53 data untuk proses transitivitas, 64 kemunculan kata ganti orang, dan 17 penggunaan modalitas. Elemen-elemen linguistik ini ditemukan untuk mewakili tujuan ideologis tertentu yang tertanam di dalam pidato tersebut. Ketiga tahapan Analisis Wacana Kritis menunjukkan bahwa pidato Rishi Sunak berfungsi sebagai media untuk mencapai tujuan politik tertentu, terutama untuk menekankan penguatan ekonomi rakyat agar terhindar dari krisis ekonomi yang lebih dalam. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa pidato tersebut mencerminkan penggunaan bahasa yang strategis untuk menyampaikan maksud politik secara eksplisit, seperti yang terlihat dalam struktur wacana dan pilihan leksikal di seluruh teks pidato.

**Kata Kunci:** Analisis Wacana Kritis, Pidato, Rishi Sunak.

*Abstract*

*This research was a Critical Discourse Analysis of the inauguration speech delivered by Rishi Sunak on October 25, 2022, addressing the economic crisis in the United Kingdom. By applying Norman*

*Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and supported by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as the supporting theory, this research aimed to uncover the micro, meso, and macro levels as well as the sociocultural context embedded in the inauguration speech. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method to elaborate on the collected data and sources, followed by theoretical and interpretative evaluations based on the conclusions drawn from the previously analyzed materials. The analysis revealed several linguistic features, including 53 instances of transitivity processes, 64 occurrences of personal pronouns, and 17 uses of modality. These linguistic elements were found to represent certain ideological purposes embedded in the speech. The three stages of Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrated that Rishi Sunak's speech functioned as a medium to achieve particular political goals, mainly to emphasize the strengthening of the people's economy in order to avoid a deeper economic crisis. The findings also showed that the speech reflected the strategic use of language to convey political intentions explicitly, as seen in the discourse structure and lexical choices throughout the speech text.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, Rishi Sunak, Speech.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, access to information has become a fundamental necessity for the public. Society is no longer merely a passive recipient of current events but actively engages in interpreting, adapting to, and responding to information. Language becomes a vital medium in transmitting information and plays an essential role in modern communication. Several media sources, including the internet, newspapers, and even speeches from reputable figures, all involve language. Language, therefore, is not only a communication tool but also a system of meaning embedded in discourse (Marwan, 2015).

Discourse itself is more than language—it is a package that may include actions, objects, and tools to create social identity (Rogers, 2004). Through discourse, individuals and groups express identity, ideology, and social control. Foucault's concept of discourse sees it as a knowledge system embedded with power and truth in modern society. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), inspired by Foucault, was developed by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun A. Van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak to reveal the power structures and ideologies in language (Haryatmoko, 2022).

This study applies CDA to analyze Rishi Sunak's inauguration speech delivered on October 25, 2022, at Downing Street. The speech, presented shortly after his appointment as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, emerged in a tense political and economic context. As a medium of power and communication, the speech provides insight into how Sunak positioned himself as a leader facing national challenges. Analyzing this speech through Fairclough's CDA framework is crucial to understand how discourse operates ideologically and socially.

This study uses both Fairclough's CDA and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), particularly the transitivity system. This integration offers a novelty compared to previous studies that typically use only one theoretical framework. By combining Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis (micro, meso, and macro) and Halliday's linguistic structures, this research offers a deeper exploration of how discourse shapes public perception, political power, and ideological meaning.

The study is conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. The object is Rishi Sunak's first speech as Prime Minister, which aims to restore trust and address economic instability after the Covid-19 crisis. The study aims to uncover the textual features, discourse production and consumption practices, and the sociocultural context that influences the speech. These findings are expected to provide both academic insight and practical

awareness for readers regarding how language can shape thought and action in political contexts.

This study is beneficial both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of Fairclough's CDA and Halliday's transitivity system. Practically, it can serve as a reference for readers, students, and future researchers to understand how discourse operates in shaping ideology and power. It also encourages critical awareness of language use in social and political communication. This research is limited to analyzing the text of Rishi Sunak's speech based on the three dimensions of CDA and the use of transitivity, modality, and pronouns. It does not cover non-verbal elements such as gestures or other visual features.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which can systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the data. According to Moriarty Jo (2011, p.5), qualitative methods can be applied to various research approaches from different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics. This study relies on perception so that it can bring up social and political phenomena in the context of the text itself.

Creswell (2023, p. 22) explains that qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the intentions of individuals or groups towards social or human problems using interpretive or theoretical frameworks. This study combines qualitative and descriptive data methods to analyze Rishi Sunak's inauguration speech, aiming to describe the language used and how it relates to ideology and power.

According to Kamila, Guzal, and Visola (2020, p. 168), the descriptive method is one of the oldest and most commonly used in linguistics, and it can describe the facts in precise figures based on observed phenomena. Thus, qualitative descriptive analysis is considered suitable for this study, as it simplifies data collection and research when analyzing the transcript using qualitative approaches.

The object of this research is Rishi Sunak's inauguration speech as British Prime Minister on October 25, 2022, delivered at Downing Street. The primary data is the transcript from The New York Times, uploaded by Henry Nicholls. The secondary data is a video titled My First Downing Street Speech from Rishi Sunak's official YouTube channel.

Data collection began by searching for the transcript and video. The transcript was downloaded from The New York Times website, while the video was obtained from YouTube. Both were then saved as data for analysis.

This study uses Norman Fairclough's CDA framework and Halliday's transitivity system. Data are selected based on relevance to the research objectives, then analyzed using three levels: Micro Level (textual analysis), Messo Level (discourse practice), and Macro Level (sociocultural context). The transitivity system is used to identify types of processes such as material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. Additionally, the analysis includes modality and personal pronouns to reveal the ideological and interpersonal aspects embedded in the speech.

### **Object of the Study**

The object of this research is Rishi Sunak's inauguration speech as British Prime Minister on October 25, 2022, at Downing Street. The data consists of two forms, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data is in the form of a manuscript obtained from the website [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), The New York Times, uploaded by Henry Nicholls on October 25, 2022, with the title, Rishi Sunak's First Speech as U.K. Prime Minister: Full Transcript. Then, the secondary data is in the form of a video that can be accessed through Rishi Sunak's official YouTube channel, entitled My First Downing Street Speech, and uploaded on October 25, 2022.

### **Data Collection**

This study uses videos and transcripts as data to confirm the validity of the data that will produce findings and the following are several stages in data collection that are written:

#### 1. Searching for the script and video

To collect primary data, one must first visit The New York Times website, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/25/world/europe/rishi-sunak-speech-uk-prime-minister.html>, and download the transcript of Rishi Sunak's speech which will then be analyzed. The secondary data is available on Rishi Sunak's official YouTube website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=870cznYcdX0> entitled My First Downing Street Speech, and uploaded on October 25, 2022. This video is the only source of visual data used in this study; the video is approximately 6:00 minutes long.

#### 2. Downloading the script and video

The second stage is after the data from the script and video are collected, this study requires the data to be downloaded and then saved. In particular, the script as the main data to be analyzed. The script is obtained in the form of a pdf file.

3. Making an outline and cross-check based on the data

The third stage is to validate the data even more from the script and video as primary and secondary data sources to determine the objectives and focus of the analysis.

4. Categorizing the data in the speech with CDA method

In the fourth stage, categorizing the speech is based on words and sentences in the form of paragraphs and tables according to Norman Fairclough's CDA method.

### **Data Analysis**

The steps are as follows:

1. Analyzing the language choices found in speech at the sentence level and word level in the transcript of the speech text using a combination of Halliday's SFL theory at the micro level. Then, finding the meso level, and macro level with Norman Fairclough's CDA method.
2. Analyzing and pointing out how the socio-cultural context outside the text can influence Rishi Sunak's speech in his inauguration speech using Norman Fairclough's CDA method.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Micro Level (Analysis Text)**

#### **1. Transitivity**

In the transitivity system, Halliday (2004, p.245) identifies three major types of processes in English clauses: Material, Relational, and Mental processes. He also introduces types known as minor processes, which include Behavioral, Existential, and Verbal processes. However, this study focuses solely on the five process types, as these are the ones that occur in this study.

#### **Material Process**

Datum 2

“Putin’s war in Ukraine **has destabilized** energy markets and supply chains the world over.”

Putin’s war in Ukraine	has destabilized	energy markets and supply chains	the world over.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance: Location</b>

It can be seen that *Putin’s war in Ukraine* (Actor) which is the perpetrator of the action that causes *has destabilized* (Process) which is a verb phrase that indicates an action that has been done, causing changes *in energy markets and supply chains* is categorized as a (Goal), and has an impact on the whole world, *the world over* (Circumstance: Location). In this context, the war carried out by Putin in Ukraine resulted in an undesirable change in circumstances. In addition, this sentence is a statement from the speaker as an acknowledgment of a challenge that will be faced in the future.

### Relational Process

Datum 8

“Right now **our country is facing a profound economics crisis.**”

...our country	is facing	a profound economics crisis.
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

According to Halliday (2014), Relational processes function to identify, classify, or attribute qualities to entities, and in political discourse, this often manifests as the construction of national identity or crisis narratives. In the highlighted clause, *our country* acts as the Carrier, and *is facing* (Process) is a verb that connects *our country* with a profound economic crisis (Attribute). This sentence illustrates the attributive relationship between our country as the Carrier and *a profound economic crisis* (Attribute), where *our country* is given an attribute or explains how the condition.

### Mental Process

Datum 15

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

I	understand	how difficult this moment is
<b>Senser</b>	<b>Process: Cognition</b>	<b>Phenomenon</b>

The mental process involved is cognition, as indicated by the verb *understand*. The pronoun *I* here is Senser, and the process that occurs here is the Senser understanding the phenomenon of *how difficult this moment is*. This sentence, shows that Senser’s empathy and understanding of the difficulties that are currently occurring.

### Verbal Process

Datum 9

“I **want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Liz Truss**, she was not wrong to want to improve growth in this country, it is a noble aim.”

I	want to pay tribute	to my predecessor, Liz Truss...
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

In the highlighted clause of the sentence, *want to pay tribute* (Process) is a verb that indicates a verbal action. The verb phrase *pay tribute* is specifically the act of conveying appreciation or respect through words, either spoken or written. The Verbiage (*to my predecessor, Liz Truss*) is practically the content of Sayer's want to say. It is what Sayer (*I*) wants to convey, specifically to Liz Truss.

### Existential Process

Datum 19

“**There are always limits, more so now than ever**, but I promise you this, I will bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today.”

There	are	limits	more so now than ever...
	<b>Process</b>	<b>Existent</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

This sentence suggests the transitivity of the Existential Process with the presence of the demonstrative determiner *there*. The verb *are* (Process) shows existence and emphasizes

the existence of *limits* (Existent). Meanwhile, *always* and *more so now than ever* (Circumstance) provide additional information about time's information. This sentence gives the impression that the current situation is extremely difficult and full of limitations.

## 2. Modality Analysis

In this study, 17 data from clauses used modalities such as will, can, would, could, and must. Modal verb will more often throughout Sunak's speech than other modal verbs. Modal verb *will*, there were 12 clauses, 1 data for *can*, 2 data for *would*, 1 data for *must*, and 1 data for *could*.

Datum 1

“I **will** place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda.”

Datum 19

“There are always limits, more so now than ever, but I promise you this I **will** bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today.”

Datum 10

“The government I lead **will** not leave the next generation, your children and grandchildren, with a debt to settle that we were too weak to pay ourselves.”

Datum 3

“I **will** unite our country, not with words, but with action.”

Datum 21

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

Datum 5

“I **will** deliver on its promise: a stronger N.H.S, better schools, safer streets, control of our borders, protecting our environment, supporting our armed forces, levelling up and building and economy that embraces the opportunities of Brexit, where businesses invest, innovated and create jobs.”

Datum 22

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

The frequent use of the modal verb *will* shows the speaker's emphasis on his certainty, commitment, intention, and determination to take action, fulfill his promises, and create better changes in the future. As explained, modal verbs express necessity, obligation, possibility, and intention. Here, the modal verb *will* mostly shows Sunak's commitment to the British people that he will achieve positive changes with unwavering determination.

### 3. Pronouns Analysis

Pronouns in semantic view, can be included as the actor-goal and doing-happening. Subjective (I, you, he, she, it, we, they), Objective (me, you, them, us, him, her, it), and Possessive (my, your, their, our, her, his, its).

Datum 3

“**I** will unite our country, not with words, but with action.”

In this sentence, the first-person pronoun *I* acts as the doer of the action that will provide unity with real action, not just mere rhetoric. The singular character of the first-person pronoun *I* also emphasizes the speaker as the person who will be responsible and committed to achieving unity.

Datum 19

“There are always limits, more so now than ever, but I promise **you** this I will bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today.”

In this sentence, the second-person pronoun *you* is used to refer directly to the audience addressed in the speech. So, the pronoun *you* refers directly to the audience who will receive the promise.

Datum 10

“The government I lead will not leave the next generation, your children and grandchildren, with a debt to settle that **we** were too weak to pay ourselves.”

The first-person plural pronoun *We* here can be understood as an exclusive pronoun, in the sense that *We* here refers to the government led by the speaker (*The government I lead*). Henceforth, *We* here specifically refers to the government.

Datum 18

“**It** is only right to explain why I am standing here as your new prime minister.”

In terms of cohesion, the pronoun *It* in this sentence refers back to another sentence that precedes this sentence, which goes: “*I have just been to Buckingham Palace and accepted His Majesty the King's invitation to form a government in his name.*” Therefore, it can be seen that the pronoun *It* in this sentence refers to the initial act of taking office and legitimacy that Rishi Sunak had previously done at Buckingham Palace.

Datum 12

“And I know **he** would agree that the mandate my party earned in 2019 is not the sole property of any one individual, it is mandate that belongs to unites all of us.”

In terms of cohesiveness, the pronoun *He* in this sentence refers to a word that is present in the preceding sentence which goes as: “*I will always be grateful to Boris Johnson for his incredible achievements as prime minister...*” Given this, it can be seen that the referent of the pronoun *He* is Borish Johnson.

Datum 9

“I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Liz Truss, **she** was not wrong to want to improve growth in this country, it is a noble aim.”

In this sentence, the pronoun *She* refers to Liz Truss. The pronoun *She* refers to a word that is present in the preceding sentence which goes as: “*I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Liz Truss...*” Given this, it can be seen that the referent of the pronoun *She* is Liz Truss.

The number of total personal pronouns used across the speech is as the following:

Personal Pronouns	Number of Occurence
I	27
You	11
We	11
It	7
My	4
He	3

As cited in Gonzales, W. (2024, p.44), states that the first-person singular pronoun is used to distance the speaker from the audience and emphasize the speaker's achievements. This is in line with this study. As many as 27 times the speaker used the first-person singular pronoun *I*, which emphasized his role and responsibility for his promises.

### **B. Messo Level (Discourse Practice)**

Rishi Sunak's speech focused on how he wants the audience to interpret his message. He used the first person singular pronoun *I* 27 times, which means Sunak wanted to emphasize that he is a responsible leader and an active agent of change. Sunak's use of the inclusive *We* in his speech created a closeness between himself, his government, and his audience.

Discourse Practice Analysis (Messo Level) or Interpretation Stage shows the relationship between the discourse production process and the contextual background of the discourse. The intertextual elements found in Rishi Sunak's speech, such as references to previous governments or shared national experiences, are not simply rhetorical devices. They serve as a means of creating continuity, demonstrating alignment with public interests, and strengthening institutional legitimacy. From a CDA perspective, this is important because it shows how discursive practices are shaped by and contribute to broader political narratives. Fairclough (2001) argues that texts do not stand alone but have social situations and ideological content.

In other words, all the results found and discussed in this stage affect how speakers will be careful in constructing their discourse to support the assured goals of the speaker, as shown in the case of Rishi Sunak's speech. Sunak strategically uses language and rhetoric to shape the audience's interpretation and build the legitimacy of his leadership. Finally, to answer Fairclough's framework on the role of language, the speaker uses language here to convey information about various things, including influencing and convincing the audience, with the goals mentioned above to be remembered.

### **C. Macro Level (Sociocultural Practice)**

Formally, Fairclough states that to find out the social effects, and social determinants of discourse, it must be analyzed by using three levels of social organization (situational level, institutional level, and social level). Here is a detailed of the Explanation Stage:

In Situational terms, the discourse (speech) was delivered when England was experiencing several problems, especially regarding the economic crisis, health, education, and environment, as well as several policy mistakes that had been made by the former Prime Minister before Rishi Sunak took office. Political instability as explained in the previous stage, and Sunak's questionable legitimacy because as is known Sunak was elected as the new UK's Prime Minister not based on a general election but was appointed directly by the King.

The institutional matrix of this discourse (speech) is divided into: the first is the media institution that broadcasts the recording of the speech nationally and worldwide, and then there is the British Political institution, namely the House of Commons. Recognize that the Prime Minister's power majority comes from the support of the House of Commons. The power inherent in the Prime Minister in the British parliamentary system of government gives institutional weight to every word uttered in his speech. Therefore, Sunak must consider the response from the members of parliament, both from his party and the opposition. As the leader of the ruling party, Sunak, in his speech, must provide an agenda and promises made by the party when it won the previous election to maintain unity and support from party members.

The struggle in the political matrix in this discourse is the speaker's attempt to create a narrative in his speech not only as a policy statement but also as part of a broader political struggle. As mentioned in the discourse practice or interpretation stage, Sunak is fighting to strengthen his legitimacy, improve the economy, unite his party, contend with the opposition party, and form positive public opinion. As shown in the previous analysis stage, Rishi Sunak's speech discourse employs a specific strategy to inspire, persuade, and mobilize his audience to build a sense of solidarity and unity to show collective responsibility. All of these strategies are forms of the speaker's struggle in the political matrix of discourse whose goal is to build a solid unity between the government and the people.

At the social level, discourse is associated with the speaker as the British Prime Minister and his relationship with society, directly with the domestic community (British citizens) and indirectly with the world community. In the scope of the British social level, discourse becomes an instrument for the speaker in his struggle to create a positive moral image as a

leader for his ratification as the elected Prime Minister. In doing this, the speaker struggles to convince the audience, as seen in the Discourse Practice or Interpretation stage. Furthermore, the speech delivered by Sunak not only conveys a political and economic vision but also responds to various social dynamics. This is expressed and stated in:

Datum 30

“This government will have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level.”

Here, the speaker tries to deliver a statement that he promises to uphold integrity, accountability, and professionalism to rebuild public trust (the British people) and that his government will be responsible to the people. With a government with integrity, accountability, and professionalism, it can implement fair and equitable policies. It can reduce inequality and increase social justice. In this sentence, Sunak is trying to rebuild a social contract between the government and society. It shows the awareness that to achieve a just and stable society, good governance is needed.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **A. Conclusion**

Using Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework, in this study, it was found that for the Transitivity process, there was a total of 53 occurrences of data, for Personal Pronouns there was a total of 64 occurrences of data, and last, for Modality, there was a total of 17 occurrences of data. For the Transitivity process, the total number of occurrences of the transitivity process is 53 times, with the Material process contributing as the most used with a total of 23 occurrences, the Relational process 13 times, the Mental process 13 times, the Verbal process 3 times, and the Existential process 1 time. For the personal pronouns and their variations, this study found a total data is 64 times occurrences from pronouns used in speech, with the pronoun I being the most used with a total of 27 occurrences, followed by You 11 times, We inclusive and 1 exclusive with a total of 10 times, then It 7 times, My 4 times, He 3 times, and the least used is the pronoun She 2 times. In terms of the vocabulary of the Modality section, there are a total of 17 times occurrences, the most used is Will with a total of 12 occurrences, followed by Would 2 times, Can 1 time, Could 1 time, and Must 1 time.

In the Messo Level discusses the worsening economic conditions of the UK due to failure caused by several factors, including the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine

War, and the misapplication of policies by the previous government. These problems are the background to Rishi Sunak's speech or produce his discourse.

The Macro Level discusses economic strengthening and the strategies that will be carried out by Rishi Sunak as the new UK's Prime Minister. The integration of the sociocultural context that exists beyond the text in this study highlights how linguistic choices in political speech are never neutral. These linguistic choices serve an ideological function to construct a certain image of leadership, trust, and unity. Using of active structures, assertive modalities, and strategic pronouns by speakers in discourses contributes to restoring authority to meet public expectations in times of crisis. These findings emphasize the importance of CDA not only in deconstructing language but also in revealing the social and political agendas contained in a discourse.

### **B. Suggestion**

Looking at the final results of this study, suggestions for future Critical Discourse Analysis research are to write more theses using various Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks from other experts such as Theo Van Leeuwen and Sara Mills. It is also recommended for future CDA researchers to conduct Critical Discourse Analysis on political speeches using more than one speech transcript as a comparison for the object of analysis. The purpose of this suggestion is for CDA researchers to produce richer and more interesting findings, so that the analysis becomes more comprehensive.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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