



## A Corpus-Based Study of Two Former American Presidents'

### Inaugural Addresses

Dr. Maosheng Hung\*

Associate professor, Department of English, School of Foreign Languages, Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, Fuzhou, PR China

**\*Corresponding Authors:** Dr. Maosheng Hung, Associate professor, Department of English, School of Foreign Languages, Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, Fuzhou, PR China

**Abstract:** This study aimed to investigate how two former American presidents' language tendencies in speech and their personalities were related and how their word choice revealed their personality traits. A total of four inaugural speeches given by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush (two by Clinton, and two by Bush) during their presidency were collected and examined via a set of corpus running software called WordSmith Tools 5.0. The analyses and comparisons conducted on the collected data showed that Clinton was more concrete and positive, talked more to the audience/nation, and censored himself more; Bush was more personal, formal, distant, aggressive, pointed, social, dynamic, detailed, specific, and paid more attention to the future.

**Keywords:** American, address, corpus, inaugural, personality, president

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Corpus

According to Hunston (2002), the term *corpus* is defined by its form and purpose. Linguists usually use this word to describe a collection of naturally occurring language instances. The scope of this collection can be from several sentences to written articles or recordings that are mainly collected for language research. However, this term has recently been used to represent a collection of articles that can be stored and retrieved through a computer. Because computers can store and process a large amount of information, the capacity of an electronic corpus is usually larger than that of a paper corpus that was previously used to study language elements. In addition, a corpus is generally designed for the purpose of studying a certain language. And this specific purpose determines the choice of articles placed in the corpus. Different from libraries or electronic resources, a corpus is not set up to store articles or books.

### 1.2. Characteristics of Using Corpora For Analysis

Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998) stated several main characteristics of using corpora for analysis:

- (1) It can analyze the actual patterns of language use in natural texts.
- (2) It uses a huge and regular integration of natural articles (i.e., corpus) as the basis for analysis
- (3) It uses computers extensively for analysis.
- (4) It relies on both quantitative and qualitative analysis skills.

The advantages of several of these analysis methods actually come from the use of computers because computers can find and analyze complex language usage patterns, store and parse larger natural language databases, and these cannot be handled by hand. In addition, computers can also perform consistent and reliable analysis of data because they do not change their minds or cause burnout at any time like humans. However, although reliance on computers can generate a lot of quantitative data, in order to explore the importance of research findings for understanding the form of language use, the use of corpora for analysis still needs to qualitatively explain the data.

### 1.3. What Analysis can be done With a Corpus?

In fact, a corpus itself cannot do anything except for storing the language being used or being studied. However, if the corpus is sufficiently representative and can be combined with computer software, it can help us make many different observations on the use of language. Generally speaking, such combination can at least reveal (1) the frequency of the vocabulary, (2) the grammatical structure of the vocabulary, and (3) the word(s) or phrase(s) that a word is often used with (Hunston, 2002).

#### (1) The frequency of vocabulary (Frequency)

The words in a corpus can be arranged by computer software in the order of their frequency of appearance in the corpus. The following example is part of the data from a high-frequency vocabulary reference book Hung and Hung (2012) wrote for a publishing company. The content of the book is based on the researchers' past collection of test questions of two major college entrance examinations in Taiwan (i.e., the General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT) and the Advanced Subjects Test (AST)) and written up via a set of corpus analysis software, *WordSmith Tool 5.0*. It can be seen from Table 1 that the definite article *the* appears 3,727 times in the 21 tests, ranking first among all other words, followed by *to* (1,914 times), *of* (1,717 times), *in* (1,387 times), and *and* (1,321 times), *is* (864 times). In addition, among the top 50 words that appear most frequently in these tests, most of them are so-called function words (including prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, question words... etc.). Only a few of the words are content words. The above observations and comparisons can all be shown by running out the frequency of words in the corpus.

**Table 1.** *The Top 50 Words that Appear Most Frequently in the GSAT and AST*

N	Word	Freq.
1	the	3,727
2	to	1,914
3	of	1,717
4	in	1,387

## A Corpus-Based Study of Two Former American Presidents' Inaugural Addresses

5	and	1,321
6	is	864
7	for	659
8	that	547
9	are	482
10	it	454
11	they	413
12	as	385
13	on	373
14	with	365
15	I	361
16	was	358
17	their	344
18	be	329
19	have	290
20	from	280
21	by	267
22	not	258
23	he	249
24	can	238
25	more	234
26	this	230
27	his	227
28	you	222
29	at	221
30	has	217
31	people	214
32	what	203
33	which	203
34	or	197
35	when	197
36	an	182
37	one	182
38	were	179
39	than	178
40	about	169
41	but	169
42	she	157
43	all	155

44	will	146
45	many	143
46	most	143
47	new	138
48	her	137
49	had	133
50	we	130

**(2) Grammatical structure of vocabulary (Phraseology)**

By using software (i.e., concordancing program) that can find the rules of vocabulary use, the grammatical structure of vocabulary can also be summarized from the corpus. Take for example the data collected in the vocabulary reference book compiled by Hung and Hung (2012) for Taiwanese senior high school students planning to enter universities (see the following Table 2 & Table 3). The concordance function in *WordSmith Tools 5.0* was used to extract all the sentences containing *a/an* (Due to space limitations, only 15 sentences were extracted each.) to understand the differences in the language use of the two articles. From the observation and comparison of the two tables, the following generalizations can be found and made: the appearance of the article *an* must be followed by a word beginning with a vowel, and the distribution of the article *a* is complementary to that of *an*. In addition to this example, the same software can also be used to compare and contrast the grammatical structures of words with the same meaning in the corpus (such as *interesting/interested*) or to find out the different patterns that the same word may have (such as *walk, walked, walks, walking...*).

**Table 2.** *The Sentences Containing a in the Corpus of the GSAT and AST*

N	Concordance
1	ated to be kept under full control. (C) Learn to Lighten Up and Live Longer is <b>a</b> popular book. (D) Stress is always more positive than harmful to the body.
2	According to the passage, which of following is <b>a</b> positive effect of stress? (A) Watching funny movies. (B) Doing relaxing exercise. (C) Avoiding difficult t
3	n, they are lightly rolled and left in <b>a</b> fermentation room to develop scent and <b>a</b> red color. Next, they are heated several more times. Finally, the leaves are d
4	y are heated several more times. Finally, the leaves are dried in <b>a</b> basket over <b>a</b> charcoal fire. Green tea leaves are heated in steam, rolled, and dried. Oolong
5	he mind and body work together to produce stress, which is <b>a</b> bodily response to <b>a</b> stimulus, <b>a</b> response that disturbs the body's normal physiological balance. H
6	<b>a</b> heart attack. The mind and body work together to produce stress, which is <b>a</b> bodily response to <b>a</b> stimulus, <b>a</b> response that disturbs the body's normal phy
7	body work together to produce stress, which is <b>a</b> bodily response to <b>a</b> stimulus, <b>a</b> response that disturbs the body's normal physiological balance. However, stre
8	ee-quarters of American high school juniors said they felt stress at least once <b>a</b> week, some almost daily. Fewer than half of Japanese and Taiwanese eleventh gr
9	ing. Conversely, worry can give <b>a</b> person an ulcer, high blood pressure, or even <b>a</b> heart attack. The mind and

	body work together to produce stress, which is
10	er, stress is not always bad. For example, a stress reaction can sometimes save a person's life by releasing hormones that enable a person to react quickly and
11	Underlined word ulcer in the second paragraph refers to a particular kind of (A) mental illness. (B) physical problem. (C) spiritual healing. (D) physiologic
12	asing hormones that enable a person to react quickly and with greater energy in a dangerous situation. In everyday situations, too, stress can provide that extr
13	reaction can sometimes save a person's life by releasing hormones that enable a person to react quickly and with greater energy in a dangerous situation. In e
14	rea for both languages. People who learned a second language later in life used a special part of Broca's area for their second language, near the one activate
15	y breathe in a space suit. 52. A parachute needs to be opened because it can (A) slow down the shuttle. (B) stop the shuttle from falling. (C) make the shutt

**Table3.** *The Sentences Containing an in the Corpus of the GSAT and AST*

N	Concordance
1	leaves and leaf buds on a clear sunny day and letting the leaves dry for about an hour in the sun. Then, they are lightly rolled and left in a fermentation roo
2	arts of the brain when learning a second language. He used an instrument called an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) to study the brains of two groups of bilingu
3	movies can reduce pain and promote healing. Conversely, worry can give a person an ulcer, high blood pressure, or even a heart attack. The mind and body work
4	7. I had to _____ Jack's invitation to the party because it conflicted with an important business meeting. (A) decline (B) depart (C) devote (D) deserve 8
5	anger, who perform an 21 act in a difficult situation, and heroes who live an ordinary life like us, who do their work 22 by many of us, but who 23
6	at hunting (B) was good at disguising (C) had beautiful skins and paws (D) was an enemy to the white man 2Ä 53 !Ü 56 ÄD-°ÄD²Ö Recently, Dr. Stuart Campbell o
7	f the gray wolf (D) appreciated the gray wolf's hunting skills 51. What was an important reason for the fast disappearance of the wolf? (A) The wolf could
8	ed state-of-the-art 3-D/4-D scanning services to expectant parents. He performs an average of 30 scans a week. His outspoken enthusiasm for this blessed technol
9	and some with disappointment. 55. Which of the following people is most likely an anti-abortionist? (A) Anne Carp. (B) Geoff Brodie. (C) Stuart Campbell.
10	over a woman's right to choice. After all, nothing can be more persuasive than an unborn child's beaming face. 53. What is the author's attitude toward a
11	every two American marriages ending in divorce, custody of children has become an issue in the American society. Up until the late 1970s, it had been common pr
12	B) integrity (C) intimacy (D) ingenuity 6. The discovery of the new vaccine is an important _____ in the fight against avian flu. (A) breakthrough (B) commi

13	helves at a rate of 20 percent per year, the highest rate in the world. In such <b>an</b> environment, a product has to have more than just a nice graphic design to di
14	as a symbol of appreciation, love and care. Packaging has, therefore, attained <b>an</b> important place in Japan's economy. The packaging market is worth over €D7.4
15	Bam most famous for? (A) Beautiful palm trees. (B) Frequent earthquakes. (C) <b>An</b> old mud and straw castle. (D) Treasures from the Far East. 47. The use of ba

**(3) A group of two or more words that usually go together (Collocation)**

Collocation refers to the tendency of two or more words to occur together frequently. It can be often seen in all kinds of languages. However, to measure it more reliably in a statistical way, it must be aided by corpus and computer.

The following Table 4 is an example extracted from the corpus built by Hung and Hung (2012) for their vocabulary reference book. From this example, it can be concluded that the English word *related* most often occurs with the preposition *to* and “be” verbs in the questions of the GSAT and the AST in the past 10 years. The preposition *to* always appears in the right side of *related* and is right next to it. The “be” verb *are*, in contrast, appears on the left side of *related*. However, if we want to further confirm whether *related* is also used in conjunction with *to* in other contexts or just in general use, we need a larger and more complete corpus that covers the contexts or general conditions for conducting inductive analysis to obtain results.

**Table4.** An Example Extracted from the Corpus Built by Hung and Hung (2012) for Their Vocabulary Reference Book

N	Concordance	Set	Ta
1			
2	@17@ twenty-five non-medically related technological innovations that		
3	time for. (A) appealed to (B) took to (C) related to (D) saw to 15. Why do we		
4	physician office visits are for stress-related illnesses and complaints. Stress		
5	to follow because they were ____ related to the topic under discussion. (A)		
6			
7			
8	poems on his paintings are often not related to objects in the real world. (D)		
9	stresses, his creations are closely related to his unique personal history.		
10	Greek word for curls and locks is related to intriguing and tempting		
11	(D) Our reaction to pain is closely related to our expectation of pain. 54.		
12	of my subconscious emotions were related to my relationship with my father.		
13	instance, heat stress and other heat-related health problems are caused		
14	mummies, both of which are closely related to Egyptian religious beliefs. The		

**1.4. The Application of Corpora**

A corpus can be used in a wide range. In addition to the research on ideology, culture, translation, stylistics and compilation of grammar books and dictionaries, the most common application of corpora is in language teaching (Hunston, 2002). Usually, the application of a corpus in language teaching is nothing more than two levels. One is that through the establishment and analysis of the corpus, teachers summarize the language characteristics they want to teach and students must learn. For example: in order to be successful in the business field in the future, students from the department

of business must be very familiar with English business terms that are often used in international trade. At this time, their teachers can help students find these vocabulary and terms through the concept of corpora, followed by organizing and introducing them to students systematically. The second level is to allow students to interact with a corpus. Through their own establishment and use of the corpus, they can classify the knowledge they want to learn and then enhance their self-learning. However, this level of application needs to have enough computer equipment in the language class rooms so that students can learn by themselves effectively (Schmitt, 2010).

Based on the aforementioned description and introduction, it seems that corpora have seldom been used to explore the relationship between politician's language tendencies in speech and their personalities. Hence, the current study attempted to investigate how two former American presidents' language tendencies in speech and their personalities were related and how their word choice revealed their personality traits by focusing on their inaugural addresses during their presidency.

## 2. METHODS

This study was conducted by analyzing and comparing the inaugural speeches of two former American presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The research design was composed of three stages of research process. The first stage was to construct a specialized corpus of inaugural addresses for each of the presidents. The second stage was to elicit the top 100 frequently occurring words in each corpus. The last stage was to compare the top 100 words of these two corpora and see how these words were consistent with their personalities.

### 2.1. Instrument

This study used a corpus-based approach with *WordSmith Tools 5.0* as its instrument. Basically, *WordSmith Tools 5.0* includes three text analysis tools: a monolingual concordancer (Concord) and wordlist extractors (WordList and KeyWords). The integrated suite of programs can process .html, .xml and .txt files. The WordList tool lets users obtain a list of all the words or word-clusters in a text, arranged in alphabetical or frequency order. The concordancer, Concord, allows users a chance to see any word or phrase in context -- so that they can see what type of company it keeps. With KeyWords users can find the key words in a text. From the introduction of the main function of the three tools, the WordList tool is to demonstrate word frequencies. Therefore, the WordList tool aided in discovering the most frequent words from the collected inaugural addresses of the two former American presidents (i.e., Bill Clinton and George W. Bush) in the current research.

### 2.2. Corpora Construction

The collected two inaugural speeches of Bill Clinton were delivered on Jan. 20, 1993 and Jan. 20, 1997 respectively. They were built as a corpus, and the corpus contained a total of 3,779 tokens. As for the two collected inaugural addresses of George W. Bush, they were made on Jan. 20, 2001 and Jan. 20, 2005 respectively. The speeches were built as another corpus, which included 3,670 tokens. All of the four inaugural speeches were acquired from the website of Miller US Presidential Research Center of University of Virginia.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

This project proceeded in four steps. These steps were carried out by using *WordSmith Tools 5.0*. For

the first step, all data of Bill Clinton's and George W. Bush's inaugural addresses were collected and made in MS-Word documents (.doc). The second step was to convert the MS-Word documents into plain text files (.txt) respectively with *WordSmith Tools 5.0*. In the third step, from the plain text files, *WordSmith Tools 5.0* generated a word frequency list for each corpus via the tool of WordList. The results showed the most frequent words in an ordered list for each corpus. Right after that, in the fourth step, based on the word frequency lists, the top100 frequently occurring words from each corpus were manually elicited, analyzed and compared.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. The Most Frequent 100 Words in the Corpus of Clinton's Inaugural Speeches

In an attempt to analyze the corpus of Bill Clinton's inaugural addresses, the current study initially sought the most frequent 100 words via the WordList tool of *WordSmith Tools 5.0* program. The raw data of the top 100 frequent words in the corpus of Clinton's inaugural speeches is displayed in Table 5. As can be seen in Table 5, the word *the* reoccurred the most often. It was used as a function word and had the highest ranking with 131 occurrences. The other most frequently occurring words were *and*, *our*, *to*, and *of*. Also, a word that fits into the category of content word, that is, the word form of "be" verb *is*, ranked as the 9<sup>th</sup> most occurring word.

**Table 5.** *The Word Frequency List of Bill Clinton's Inaugural Addresses (1~100)*

Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.
1	the	131	26	it	13	51	I	7	76	once	4
2	and	91	27	this	13	52	more	7	77	promise	4
3	our	74	28	Americans	12	53	no	7	78	renew	4
4	to	69	29	century	12	54	work	7	79	renewal	4
5	of	64	30	time	12	55	across	6	80	revolution	4
6	we	63	31	today	12	56	own	6	81	season	4
7	in	41	32	let	11	57	American	5	82	service	4
8	a	39	33	when	11	58	as	5	83	still	4
9	is	33	34	who	11	59	democracy	5	84	their	4
10	for	25	35	so	10	60	done	5	85	there	4
11	world	25	36	an	9	61	each	5	86	way	4
12	America	22	37	change	9	62	great	5	87	whom	4
13	have	21	38	nation	9	63	idea	5	88	your	4
14	must	20	39	what	9	64	millions	5	89	bold	3
15	us	19	40	at	8	65	on	5	90	cannot	3
16	are	18	41	be	8	66	those	5	91	capital	3
17	that	18	42	do	8	67	again	4	92	celebrate	3
18	but	16	43	my	8	68	been	4	93	children	3
19	with	16	44	now	8	69	better	4	94	civil	3
20	by	15	45	will	8	70	challenges	4	95	communities	3



21	new	15	46	you	8	71	citizens	4	96	congress	3
22	not	15	47	can	7	72	economy	4	97	edge	3
23	all	14	48	fellow	7	73	generation	4	98	every	3
24	people	14	49	government	7	74	less	4	99	families	3
25	from	13	50	has	7	75	make	4	100	free	3

### 3.2. The Most Frequent 100 Words in the Corpus of Bush's Inaugural Speeches

By using the WordList tool of *WordSmith Tools 5.0* software, the frequency list of the top 100 frequent words used in the corpus of George W. Bush's inaugural addresses can be seen in Table 6. The top five words used were function words, and they included *the* (142 times), which was utilized generally as a determiner. Moreover, *of*, *and*, *in*, and *our* were the next most common (function) words. Then the word *is* as a verb appeared in rank 8.

**Table 6.** *The Word Frequency List of George W. Bush's Inaugural Addresses (1~100)*

Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.	Rank	Word	Freq.
1	the	142	26	nation	11	51	its	6	76	great	4
2	of	118	27	every	10	52	justice	6	77	life	4
3	and	114	28	their	10	53	know	6	78	make	4
4	in	54	29	because	10	54	must	6	79	now	4
5	our	52	30	country	9	55	people	6	80	some	4
6	to	40	31	one	9	56	seen	6	81	States	4
7	we	39	32	own	9	57	work	6	82	there	4
8	is	31	33	with	9	58	at	6	83	United	4
9	that	28	34	be	9	59	cause	6	84	us	4
10	freedom	27	35	as	8	60	but	5	85	yet	4
11	have	26	36	history	8	61	came	5	86	before	4
12	by	24	37	when	8	62	has	5	87	find	3
13	will	23	38	world	8	63	long	5	88	also	3
14	America	21	39	Americans	8	64	a	5	89	always	3
15	for	19	40	no	8	65	or	5	90	another	3
16	on	17	41	free	7	66	rights	5	91	chosen	3
17	it	16	42	from	7	67	those	5	92	Clinton	3
18	this	16	43	president	7	68	tyranny	5	93	come	3
19	I	16	44	time	7	69	which	5	94	defended	3
20	liberty	15	45	who	7	70	an	5	95	determined	3
21	not	15	46	can	7	71	character	4	96	did	3
22	are	14	47	citizens	7	72	choice	4	97	dignity	3
23	you	12	48	day	6	73	fellow	4	98	do	3
24	your	12	49	hope	6	74	fire	4	99	enemies	3
25	all	12	50	human	6	75	good	4	100	excuse	3

## 4. DISCUSSION

The current study used *WordSmith Tools 5.0*, a set of corpus running software, to analyze and compare the top 100 frequently occurring words on the word lists of inaugural speeches addressed by two former American presidents, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, and to find out the consistent personality traits accordingly. From the results of Table 5 and Table 6, the following analyses and comparisons can be done.

From the use of 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronouns, *my* appeared eight times in Bill Clinton's inaugural addresses, and *I* occurred seven times. In George W. Bush's inaugural speeches, *I* appeared 16 times. It seems that Bush was a little more personal than Clinton. In terms of the use of 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronouns, Clinton used *we* 63 times, *our* 74 times, and *us* 19 times. Bush used *we* 39 times, *our* 52 times, and *us* 4 times. Obviously, Clinton used much more 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronouns than Bush, and this suggests that Bush was more formal and distant than Clinton. Furthermore, *you* appeared eight times, and *your* occurred four times in Clinton's addresses. The same 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns appeared 12 times respectively in Bush's speeches. This finding indicated that Bush seemed more aggressive and pointed than Clinton. Regarding the use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural pronouns, *their* appeared four times in Clinton's addresses. The same word occurred 10 times in Bush's. It can thus be concluded that Bush was more social and Clinton.

From the use of the words addressed to the audience/nation, *Americans*, *American*, and *America* appeared 12, 5, and 25 times respectively in Clinton's addresses. In Bush's, *Americans* appeared only eight times and *America* 21 times. In addition, *people*, *citizens*, and *promise* were used 14, 4, and 4 times respectively in Clinton's speeches. In Bush's, *people* was mentioned six times and *citizens* seven times. These statistics suggest that Clinton talked more to the audience/nation than Bush.

The use of indefinite pronouns can also reveal something related to a speaker's personalities. In Clinton's inaugural addresses, he mentioned *all* 14 times, *it* 13 times, and *those* five times. In Bush's, he mentioned *all* 12 times, *some* four times, *one* nine times, *it* 16 times, and *its* six times. Apparently, Clinton was more concrete and less abstract than Bush. Moreover, based on the data of Table 5 and Table 6, it can also be found that Bush used more verb types than Clinton. This tells us that Bush was more dynamic than Clinton.

Furthermore, the auxiliary verb *will* that indicates future tense was used eight times in Clinton's speeches and 23 times in Bush's. This indicates that Bush paid more attention to the future than Clinton. From the use of prepositions, Bush's addresses included more prepositions than Clinton's speeches did (Bush: 294 times; Clinton: 262 times), which denoted that Bush was more detailed than Clinton.

With respect to the use of negative words, *not* was mentioned 18 times in Clinton's addresses, and *no* was used seven times. The same words appeared 15 and 8 times respectively in Bush's speeches. The data suggest that Clinton censored himself a little more than Bush did. Quantifiers were used in Bush's inaugural addresses much more than those in Clinton's. For example, in Bush's speeches, *all* occurred 12 times, *every* 10 times, *all* 12 times, *one* nine times, *no* eight times, *some* four times, and *another* three times. In Clinton's, *all* appeared 14 times, *more* seven times, *no* seven times, *each* five times, *less* four times, and *every* three times. The statistics signifies that Bush was more specific. In

addition, the two former American presidents' use of positive adjectives also tells that Clinton was a little more positive than Bush: *great* was mentioned five times and *better* four times in Clinton's addresses; in Bush's speeches, *good* occurred four times and *great* appeared four times as well.

### 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, from the analyses and comparisons of the top 100 frequently used words on the word lists of inaugural speeches addressed by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush above, it can be concluded that Clinton was more concrete and positive, talked more to the audience/nation, and censored himself more; Bush was more personal, formal, distant, aggressive, pointed, social, dynamic, detailed, specific, and paid more attention to the future.

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### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

**Dr. Maosheng Hung** received his M.A. and Ph.D. in TESL from the University of Kansas. Dr. Hung is currently teaching as an associate professor for the Department of English at Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade in China. His research interests include second/foreign language acquisition, corpus linguistics, and teaching English pronunciation.

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