

The 1st Personal Pronouns as Evasive Devices in the 2016 Taiwanese Presidential Debate

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Abstract : This study aims to investigate the 1st personal pronouns as evasive devices used by presidential candidates in the 2016 Taiwanese Presidential Debate within the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). This study finds that the personal pronoun 'I' is the highest frequent personal pronoun in the 2016 Taiwanese Presidential Debate. Generally speaking, the first personal pronouns were used most in the presidential debate, compared with the second and the third personal pronouns. Hence, a further quantitative analysis is conducted to explore the correlation between the frequencies of the two 1st personal pronouns and the other pronouns. Results show that the number of the personal pronoun 'I' increases from 26 to 49, with the personal pronoun 'we' decreases from 43 to 15 during the debate. Though it seems the personal pronoun 'I' has a higher tendency in pronominal choice, statistical evidence demonstrated that the personal pronoun 'we' has the greater statistical significance ($p < 0.0002$), compared with that of 'I' ($p < 0.0116$). The comparatively small p-value of the personal pronoun 'we' means it 'has a stronger correlation with the overall pronominal choice, and the personal pronoun 'we' is more likely to be used than the personal pronoun 'I'. Therefore, this study concludes that the pronominal choice varies with different evasive strategies. The ingrained functions of these personal pronouns are mainly categorized as 'agreement' and 'justification'. The personal pronoun 'we' is preferred in the agreement evasive strategies, and 'I' is used for justifying oneself. In addition, the personal pronoun 'we' can be defined as both 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' personal pronoun, which rendered 'we' more functions not limited to agreement evasive strategies. In conclusion, although the personal pronoun 'I' has the highest occurrences, the personal pronoun 'we' is more related to the first pronoun choices.

Keywords : critical discourse analysis (CDA), evasive devices, the 1st personal pronouns, the 2016 Taiwanese Presidential Debate

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