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# ON THE PRAGMATIC ORGANIZATION OF JFK'S INAUGURAL SPEECH

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As anything in the USA American presidents are subject to various statistics. The one presented by "Chicago Tribune" in 1964 classifies John Fitzgerald Kennedy as the 5th best president in history, losing only to Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt. Interestingly enough, however, the updated survey among historians carried out by the magazine in 1984 brings somewhat different results, the president occupying the 14th position.

Historians generally agree on the point that Kennedy's popularity among his contemporaries and the resulting overestimating of the effectiveness of his presidency were not due to the quality of the administration's policies (which actually brought about the Cuban crisis and other international tensions) but rather to the president's communicative capacity [see e.g. P a s t u s i a k 1987].

This paper explores Kennedy's communicative skills from a linguistic perspective, that is, looks at how messages are organized and packaged linguistically and, also important, how the speaker exerts his control upon the hearer's understanding of the conveyed information. The inaugural speech has been taken as data source mainly for its length and universality. In other words, I believe that a presidential inaugural monologue gives the speaker enough time to develop a sequence of ideas concerning the situation "home and abroad", future policies etc. Since the range of topics the new president is supposed to raise is usually extensive, the inaugural gives him a chance to really enact the leadership and win the support of the nation through careful and coherent presentation of solutions to problems concerning particular groups of interest in the society and in the world. In short then, the inaugural speech constitutes a test of the president's ability to establish a link of communication between him and the nation expecting a clear, satisfactory list of the leader's intentions.

Kennedy was a master of linguistic fulfilment of the hearer's expectations. However, apart from pointing to the "message acceptance facilitators" he used to ensure the popularity of his programmes I shall also make an attempt at showing that on a more careful reading of the text of the inaugural the "facilitators" appear to turn into certain manipulative devices whose use seems to be subordinated to the idea of raising the degree of vagueness of the words used. The impossibility of recognizing some pragmatic elements on the first listening to the inaugural and, as we will see in a moment, the lack of linguistic analyses of political speeches in Kennedy's times, would then explain at least to some extent the mentioned discrepancies in Kennedy's degree of popularity over years.

Another, and perhaps even most important objective of my study is to prove the very analysability of political discourse/text in strictly linguistic terms. Although it was already Franklin Delano Roosevelt who consulted professional linguists while writing speeches (NB: Kennedy rarely did that), not earlier than in early 1980s were first attempts made at constructing descriptive analyses of political language (for examples of this kind of research, see e.g. Safire 1988, Lakoff 1990, Hinck 1993). None of them, however, featured a study of "minimal units" of a formatted text, which some contemporary linguists (e.g Mann and Thompson 1983] advocate for discourse/text analysts. Consequently, I see this paper as a contribution to a systematic study of what Polanyi [1983] calls "Large Scale Mono-logues" or "LSMs" within the area of political language, the analysis of which, I believe, is capable of exhibiting many interesting links between the speaker's message, its illocutionary force and, finally, the pragmatic effect it exerts upon the hearer, whose attitudes ultimately determine the degree of the president's popularity.

It is not easy to propose a self-coherent set of criteria of the analysis of a political LSM, for methodological reasons. The key problem here is the distinction between the notions of "discourse" and "text", which appears to be somewhat vague in the context of a situation in which the speaker actually reads aloud an already prepared text. The general linguistic controversy over what the difference between discourse and text really is does not facilitate the analysis, either. For instance, Labov (1972: 252) defines discourse as "one *utterance* following another in a rational, ru-le-governed manner" (italics mine). For Brown and Yule [1983: 1] discourse is simply "language in use". Stubbs [1983: 9], in turn, takes slightly more literary approach, treating discourse in terms of "what is spoken" and text as "what is written". To complete the image of the controversy let me finally quote Halliday and Hasan [1976: 1]: "*Text* is any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that forms a unified whole" (italics mine).

This paper, for its superordinate pragmatic framework, analyses the inaugural's characteristics in both discursive and textual terms. My approach is not just the result of the apparent linguistic controversy discussed above; it rather follows the Searlian idea of the close relation between two strands in philosophy of language: one that concentrates on the uses of expressions in speech situations and the other that concentrates on the meaning of sentences. According to Searle, "they are strongly related because for every possible speech act there is a possible sentence or set of sentences whose literal utterance in a particular context would constitute a performance of that speech act" (1969: 19). In the case of Kennedy's inaugural the relation is emphasized by the fact of performing dicourse (that is, using language) based on text (that is, on a string of sentences whose connectedness is overtly marked by means of punctuation, division into paragraphs, etc.).

Accompanying the discussed difference in opinions on the status of discourse/text is a general agreement among linguists [see e.g. B o l i n g e r 1975; G r i m e s 1975, etc.] on the point that an analysis of a monologue can only be carried out along the track delineated by its levels of organization. I have decided to format the text into sentences (only in rare cases do I deal with their internal structure), which are seen as basic "containers" of the minimal units of communication, that is, individual speech acts whose analysis is supported by the study of relational propositions [M a n n and T h o m p s o n 1983], topicality and cohesion/coherence within paragraphs in which they occur. The intermediate level of the LSM's organization is a section, which, in the light of the pragmatic approach to the analysis, is referred to as Speech Event [see H y m e s 1972]. The three speech events distinguished in this paper are additionally analysed with respect to e.g. certain social psychology issues and rhetorical devices, which are occasionally pointed to in the development of the particular section. Finally, the three speech events are considered as auxiliary and preparatory for the emergence of one global/macro speech act, expressing the general idea of the LSM. In other words, following V a n  D i j k [1977] it could be said that the process of establishing LSM's macro speech act requires the deletion of auxiliary and preparatory sequences of speech acts and as we will see the macro speech act identified in the final "Let Us Begin Anew" section has been distinguished exactly in this way (for the discussion of now obvious relation between the theory of global speech acts and the theory of macro action, see again V a n  D i j k 1977: 232–245].

The full list of criteria employed for the analysis of the inaugural looks then as follows:
   – topicality (in the sense of simply "what a given paragraph is about").
   – speech acts (individual).
   – relational propositions.

- cohesion/coherence.
- metaphor/symbol.
- nominalizations.
- rhetorical devices.
- social psychology theories applicable to the study.

At this moment I feel obliged to make two points clear. First, I am aware of the fact that the provided set of criteria may not be exhaustive; nevertheless, I consider it sufficient for drawing conclusions which are in line with the discussed objective of this piece of research. Second, although some of the criteria seem to be subordinated to larger categories of textual/discursive evaluation (e.g. relational propositions vs coherence), their individualization is supposed to stress the particularly important role they play in the analysis.

Finally, in the light of the controversy over whether the derivation of the illocutionary force of an utterance finds its source in the successful realisation of the speaker's intention or in the listener's interpretation of the utterance [see e.g. A u s t i n 1962 vs. S e a r l e 1969] it should definitely be underlined that no analyst deprived of the data concerning the immediate perlocutionary effect of the LSM can take full responsibility for the absolute objectivity of the study. In the case of this paper, however, attempts have been made to raise the degree of the analytic objectivity, mainly via contrasting historians' opinions on Kennedy's performance [see e.g. George K a t e b 1969; Theodore D r a p e r 1969] with the effects of the research into the actual text of the inaugural (for example, the "promises and warnings" from the second section of the speech have been identified as such partly on the basis of historians' conviction that the president's contemporaries stressed the combination of conciliatory mood of his speech with sharpness of particular phrases used). Let it also be remembered that cases in which the source of the illocutionary force remained vague ultimately gave rise to the hypotheses concerning manipulative aspects of the inaugural, the discussion of which has been incorporated into this study.


## 2. I TAKE UP THE TORCH FOR A NEW GENERATION
### AS THE MACRO SPEECH ACT OF KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL


The three speech events constituting the macro speech act have been labelled as follows: WHAT WE ARE
                    WHAT WE CAN DO
                            LET US BEGIN ANEW, the global speech act having been identified on the analysis of the third section of the inaugural via the

deletion of the auxiliary and preparatory sequences of speech acts appearing mainly in its first and second section. In other words it is assumed that Kennedy would not have been able to convey the main idea of the speech but for the introduction of a certain number of relevant performatives into the preparatory parts of his performance.

To avoid obscurity I refer to every sentence of the text only by its number in the development of the speech. The same principle holds for paragraphs; in this case, however, I use Roman numerals (the text of the inaugural is provided in its full format in the Appendix). The italicised parts of sentences employed for the analysis operate only as markers explaining particular characteristics of the text and appear in parentheses, occasionally accompanying a brief comment on the function of a given fragment of the progressing speech. At places, the choice of textual examples is highly selective (see e.g. Nominalizations), for it bases on the degree of importance of the word/phrase to the analysis within the framework of the criterion used.

The analyses of the three speech events end with summaries which are meant to reveal the pragmatic links and transitions between the sections of the inaugural.

## 2.1. Speech event 1: WHAT WE ARE (I–V; *1–9*)

### 2.1.1. Topicality

I; *1–2*: cyclicity of democratic change in the history of America.
II; *3–4–5*: outline of the world situation, American democracy endangered.
III; *6–7*: historical obligation of the USA to defend human rights.
IV; *8* (transitional): letting the world know the American obligation.
V; *9* (transitional): call for listening to the details of "what the USA have to offer".

### 2.1.2. Speech Acts

I; *1–2*: assertion.
II; *3–4–5*: assertion.
III; *6*: assertion; *7*: declaration, indirect warning (conceptual introduction to the idea of the macro speech act).

IV;   *8*: declaration, indirect warning (in fact, interpreted later by Vietnam
       hawks as evidence of Kennedy's determined Cold War mind-set, see
       e.g. D r a p e r 1969).
V;    *9*: conclusion, indirect invitation to further listening.

### 2.1.3. Relational Propositions

*1–2*; *3–4*: reason (*for*; the chosen linkage pattern is definitely in line with
       the descriptive character of the two initial paragraphs since it triggers
       the speaker's presentation of explanatory background for strong claims
       made in *1* and *3*; the extraposition of the conjunctive *for* may serve
       the purpose of attracting the listener's attention).
*4–5*: sequence (*and*; the second part of the text is understood to follow the
       first one; elaboration within *5*).
*6–7*: justification (*6* explicitly attempts to establish the appropriateness of
       the performance of the speech act in *7*; elaboration: object (*Americans*)
       – attribute (*born in this century...*) within *7*).
*7–8*: justification.
*8–9*: concluding restatement (sequence within *9*).

### 2.1.4. Cohesion – Coherence

*1–2*: conjunction (*for*).

*3–4*: conjunction (*for*).

*4–5*: conjunction (*and*).

*8–9*: reference (*this*).

*4–5*: (linking concept of danger: *power* vs *at issue*).

*6–7*: (linking concept of historical obligation).

*6–7–8*: (implicit transitional link: "what we are" determining "what we are ready to do").

### 2.1.5. Metaphor/Symbol

*7* (a symbolic use of *torch* subordinated to the idea of conceptual introduction
       to the full performance of the global speech act).
*8* (metaphorization for euphemistic purposes in *pay any price ... to assure
       the survival and success of liberty*; the expression having been derived
       from the underlying LIBERTY IS SUBJECT TO PURCHASE concept,
       capable of obfuscating the literal meaning of the utterance (give lives?)).

### 2.1.6. Nominalizations

*1 freedom.*
*5 rights of man.*
*8 liberty*; all the expressions leaving their interpretation to the listener, who may be tempted to adjust the understanding to his/her own expectations).

### 2.1.7. Rhetorical Devices

*7–8*: (oratorical, Lincolnesque *let*-phrases, which the speaker can use not only for the purpose of underlining the solemnity of the ocassion but also for shifting his responsibility for the proposed actions, thus avoiding any direct enactment of leadership).

### 2.1.8. Social Psychology Theories Applicable To The Study

*8* (... *support any friend, oppose any foe* ... expression makes *pay any price* phrase acceptable to the public, due to human tendency to avoid mental dissonance resulting from the juxtaposition of unquestionable vs questionable claims (linearly presented within the enumeration pattern), the latter ones being made "consistent" with the listener's beliefs (see consistency theories, F e s t i n g e r 1957).

### 2.1.9. Conclusion

The general idea of the first section of Kennedy's inaugural speech is to present history-grounded spiritual image of contemporary America that would justify the president's conception of future policies, making them seem natural in historical context. In other words, the illocutionary force of Speech Event 1 facilitates the listener's acceptance of the exposé of "promises and warnings" that constitute the president's vision of future and attitude towards various "interest groups" in the world.

The section seems to be divisible into two parts. In the first "descriptive" part Kennedy outlines hardly questionable beliefs and values of the nation, whereas in the second "feeling of obligation" (to defend freedom, rights of man, independence etc.) part he gradually prepares a topical and

intentional transition into the second section of the speech, subordinated
to the necessity of explaining HOW the USA are going to defend worldwide
their sacred ideas of liberty and human equality.

The linguistic realization of the Speech Event 1 intent appears to be as
follows. Kennedy begins the speech with a series of assertions and highly
descriptive topicality, supported by easy-to-follow cohesive framework and
rather "static" reason/sequence relational propositions. However, once the
obligation to act is first suggested (6–7), the cohesion of the text gives way
to somewhat complicated in intent decoding structures of coherence (8),
performative topicality appears, and justification relations combined with
strong declarations/indirect warnings start paving the way for revealing
"what America can do" to enact the obligation imposed upon the country
by its heritage.

Among the textual devices which may seem attractive and communicable,
but which are in fact highly manipulative there are mainly nominalizations and
the discussed metaphor, capable of limiting the listener's understanding
(consistency theory!) of the speech to what suits interests of the speaker
operating with the so-called "vessel words". Also employed for manipulative
purposes are *let*-phrases (responsibility shift) and cohesion/coherence imbalan-
ces (it seems logical to conclude that Kennedy uses cohesive structures to
simplify the process of decoding the message, whereas his coherence often
obfuscates the meaning, which , as he can say at any moment, "is still there").

## 2.2. Speech event 2: WHAT WE CAN DO (VI–XIII; *10 – 26*)

### 2.2.1. Topicality

VI; *10–12*: America will remain loyal to its *old allies*.

VII; *13–15*: America will not exert any *colonial control* over newly liberated
states unless they do not support their freedom (in case of communistic
subversive actions?).

VIII; *16–17*: Guided again by a sense of historical obligation to assume
responsibility for world affairs America will help poor peoples *help
themselves* (!) to eliminate the possibility of civil wars outbreak.

IX; *18–21*: America will initiate a *new alliance for progress* to ensure that
the western hemisphere remains *master of its own house*.

X; *22*: America will support the United Nations to make the organization
act effectively.

XI–XIII; *23–26*: America is ready to *begin anew-* with *those nations who
would MAKE THEMSELVES our adversary* (!; capitalisations mine

– manipulative shift of political responsibility) – mutual *quest for peace*, no military concessions being offered. *26* (transitional) underlines the necessity for cooperative actions whose details are going to be presented in the final section of the inaugural.

## 2.2.2. Speech Acts

VI; *10–12*: promise, assertion.

VII; *13–15*: promise, declaration, indirect warning (of American interference in the case of being soft on communism; historical analogy backup used for the performance of the act of warning; all the speech acts imposed upon one addressee (!), expected in fact to follow the US political line).

VIII; *16–17*: empty promise, declaration, motivating assertion.

IX; *18–21*: promise, assertion, declarative warning (recipients of the acts of promise and warning different).

X; *22*: promise.

XI–XIII; *23–26*: proposal, indirect assertive warning, persuasive conclusion in the transitional *26*.

## 2.2.3. Relational Propositions

*10–11*: motivation/reason.

*10–12*: motivation/reason (oversentential).

*11–12*: thesis–antithesis (two conceptions contrasted, Kennedy identifying with one and rejecting the other; the structure appealing to the listener as providing a clear-cut vision of the world; thesis – antithesis also within *12*).

*13–14; 13–15* (oversentential): elaboration (abstraction: instance, a useful scheme for creating an impression of being specific).

*14–15*: thesis – antithesis (*but*; elaboration – abstraction: instance within *15*, the sentence clearly violating the Gricean maxim of manner for the introduction of the symbolic element into the "instance" part, combined with "highly" coherent *them-those* relation [consider the unclear status of the referent of *those* – does the pronoun refer to past situation as the declarative character of the text might suggest or does it serve the performance of the future-oriented act of warning ?]).

*16–17*: motivation/reason (reason within *16*).

*18–19*: thesis–antithesis (reason within *18*).

*19–20; 19–21* (oversentential): elaboration/solutionhood (it seems strange that a solutionhood – like pattern comes first so late in the speech, for

its use benefits the speaker in terms of triggering the listener's conviction
that the speaking person is capable of dealing with public problems).

*20–21*: sequence (*and*).

*22* (within): reason.

*23* (within): elaboration – abstraction: instance; reason (*before*).

*23–24*: thesis – antithesis (*quest for peace* vs *not ... weakness*).

*24–25*: elaboration – abstraction: instance (*not ... weakness* vs *arms ...
sufficient*).

*25–26*: sequence (elaboration – abstraction: instance within *26*).

### 2.2.4. Cohesion – Coherence

*10–11–12–13–14*: reference (*we-we;
states-them*).

*14–15*: reference/conjunction (*we-
-we; but*).

*15* (within): reference (if *those* is to
contribute to future performative
orientation of directly formulated
message).

*18–19*: reference (*this*).

*20–21*: conjunction (*and*).

*22* (within): reference (*it – its*), con-
junction (*and*).

*23–24*: reference (*nations – them*).

*24–25*: conjunction (*for*).

*15* (within; provided that *those* is
treated as a device for historical
analogy buildup, aimed at con-
structing an indirect act of war-
ning).

*16–17*: (*free society* – America).

*19–20*: (*hostile powers* vs *oppose
aggression or subversion*).

*23* (within; *nations* vs *both sides*;
this, coherence-based idea of di-
vision seems to be globally in-
coherent with the prevailing con-
cept of worldwide unity in co-
operation).

*24–25*: (*not ... weakness* vs *arms ...
sufficient*).

*25–26*: (needs looking back for the
identification of "both sides").

*26* (within; *nations* vs *both sides*).

### 2.2.5. Metaphor/Symbol

*15* (including the concept of *tiger* (whose association with the US image
requires in fact reading the text) into one of the most complicated
pragmatically (see above) segments of the entire speech raises the degree
of vagueness of the words which are normally supposed to elaborate

on the preceding part of text carrying general information. Also, the use of the symbol forcefully introduces the enumeration of capabilities of the American superpower).

### 2.2.6. Nominalizations

*12–13*: (the units *challenge* and *iron tyranny* seem to lack some agentive elaboration, typical of e.g. verbal constructions ("The Soviets challenge us...") that usually contribute towards clarification of the link between the agent and the experiencer).

### 2.2.7. Rhetorical Devices

*11–12*: (parallelism for oratorical effect).
*20–21*: (*let* for responsibility shift and oratorical effect).
VI–XI (initial repetitions of *to* addresses for producing the impression of being organized and "having everything under control").
*25* (doublespeak for vagueness).

### 2.2.8. Social Psychology Theories Applicable To The Study

In the second section of his inaugural Kennedy produces a number of confusing addresses to opinion leaders (see the "two-step flow" model of communication, Lazarsfeld 1948) in particular countries/their political institutions, letting them publicly distort the message (consistency theory) via selecting its highly "peripheral" interpretations. Being thus able to counter any undesirable interpretation of his vague language both in America and on the international scene, the president deprives himself of the control upon the processed information that is going to circulate round the territories referred to as "American spheres of influence").

### 2.2.9. Conclusion

The second section of the inaugural is supposed to answer the question how Kennedy's administration, burdened with its moral obligation, is going

to support freedom and independence around the world. Simultaneously, it is meant to help the president enact his leadership via the global, organized, forceful and clear-cut presentation of foreign policies, leading to the conclusion that the other superpower should also become engaged in the cooperative process of solving world problems. The commissive speech pattern (enumeration of capabilities) chosen for the performance of Speech Event 2 facilitates the process of encoding the discussed intent.

To generate the illocutionary force of Speech Event 2 Kennedy makes use of the following linguistic devices. Employed for creating the image of American power are combinations of promises and warnings, usually provided within the framework of thesis-antithesis sequences (*13–15*). These sequences play another very important role, contributing towards evoking black-and-white perception of the world on the part of the listener (note the frequent use of *but*) who finds comfort in specification "what's good and what's bad" and also in having a leader that shares his belief in universal truths (note the fact of presenting them in simple language, based on cohesive relations as in *10–12, 18–19*). Finally, remembering that the listener evaluates the performance of the speaker on the basis of clear organization of the speech and degree of supportive detail, Kennedy develops a series of topics that seem to satisfy all the "groups of interest" addressed, narrowing down the message through the use of elaboration-abstraction: instance schemes, however misleading they might turn out to be (*15; 24–25* or *20*, which does not even name the *hostile powers*).

It can be observed that although Kennedy frequently resorts to "empty phrases" as in *11–12*, the fragments of the text which are addressed to the representatives of territories constituting American spheres of influence are built within coherence-based frameworks, capable of obfuscating the employed meanings, which in that case appear in extreme density (VII–VIII). The intersentential coherence comes out again in its full shape towards the end of the section, where Kennedy feels obliged to formulate concluding declarations (*23–26*; note how the apparently neutral statement in *25* combines with *24* to form an assertive warning). The vagueness of the text seems to be achieved not only by the manipulative use of complicated relations of coherence, but also through doublespeak (*25*), nominalizations (*12–13*) , lack of overtly-marked statements of undertaking responsibility (*we* pronoun replacing the first person singular *I*), and unclear symbolism (*15*). Still, remembering that the discussed elements are hard to identify on the first listening to (or even reading) the text of the speech it should be concluded that for the reasons suggested in the preceding paragraphs the second section of the inaugural brings Kennedy much closer to achieving successful linguistic imposition of the macro speech act.

### 2.3. Speech event 3: LET US BEGIN ANEW (XIV–XXVII; *27–52*)

#### 2.3.1. Topicality

XIV; *27–29*: to *begin anew* a series of negotiations based upon the principle of mutual *sincerity* and *civility*.

XV; *30*: to seek unity, not division.

XVI; *31*: to establish worldwide *control of arms*.

XVII; *32–33*: to establish scientific and economic cooperation between *both sides*.

XVIII; *34*: to unite efforts to give freedom to *the oppressed* in the world (Lincolnesque quotation from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans; last of the eight consecutive sentences begun with *let*).

XIX; *35*: to construct (on the basis of cooperation) *new world of law* and *peace*.

XX; *36–38*: completing the task needs decades, but time has come to start.

XXI; *39–41*: all Americans summoned to "begin" *the course*, their contribution being decisive for its *success or failure*.

XXII; *42*: specifying *the course*: *a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war* (!).

XXIII; *43–44*: call for a *global alliance* ready to fight *the common enemies of man*.

XXIV; *45–48*: Kennedy's "welcoming" his political responsibility, revelation of a sense of mission (*I* used for the first(!) time in the speech).

XXV; *49*: idealistic call on Americans to dedicate their actions to the benefit of the country.

XXVI; *50*: call on *citizens of the world* to join America in all efforts to ensure worldwide freedom of man.

XXVII; *51–52*: Kennedy's administration is ready to come up to *high standards of strength and sacrifice*, leaving the evaluation of its actions to future historians and realizing that *on earth God's work must truly be our own*.

#### 2.3.2. Speech Acts

XIV; *27–29*: proposal, assertive warning (*sincerity....to proof*).

XV; *30*: proposal.

XVI; *31*: proposal.

XVII; *32–33*: proposal.

XVIII; *34*: proposal, command (in the light of the precisely arranged sentential context, which, due to the avoidance of "let us give freedom to" construction, distances the USA from the image of the "oppressor", indirectly imposed upon "the other side").

XIX; *35*: conditioned proposal.

XX; *36–38*: assertion (for underlining the leader's sense of history – compare the first section of the speech), proposal (declaration of spiritual strength).

XXI; *39–41*: assertion (responsibility shift; activating the nation through the imposition of historical obligation – compare the first section of the speech; possible negative perlocutionary effect of *41* alleviated by stressing the importance of individual effort in leading the country).

XXII; *42*: command (in the context of the performance of XXI; use of a psychological technique for gaining public acceptability of *struggle against ... war* idea – see the oncoming set of comments on social psychology issues relevant to the analysis of the section).

XXIII; *43–44*: question, indirect request.

XXIV; *45–48*: assertion, declaration, assertion (first overtly-marked (*I..*) enactment of leadership in the speech).

XXV; *49*: command, indirect request (conclusion from III, XXI etc.).

XXVI; *50*: command, indirect request (conclusion from VII, XIII, XVIII etc.).

XVII; *51–52*: command, indirect declaration, concluding rhetorical proposal, assertion.

### 2.3.3. Relational Propositions

*27–28*: elaboration – abstraction : instance (circumstance within *27* (*let us ... – remembering...*), the relation arising when one part of text establishes a situation, and the other part is interpreted within or relative to that situation).

*27–29* (oversentential): elaboration – abstraction: instance.

*28–29*: thesis – antithesis.

*30–31*: sequence (thesis – antithesis within *30* (*instead of*); reason within *31* (*and*)).

*31–32*: sequence (thesis – antithesis within *32* (*instead of*)).

*32–33*: elaboration – abstraction: instance.

*33–34*: sequence (reason within *34*).

*35* (within; condition (*if-let*), elaboration – abstraction: instance (*new endeavor – new world of law*), thesis – antithesis (*not... – but...*).

*36–37*: sequence.

*(36–37)–38*: concession (the speaker acknowledges in *but let us begin* the appropriateness of one point which detracts from the other point made in the preceding *36–37*).

*39–40*: reason (content, i.e. idea of "obligation" as the marker)

*40–41*: sequence (symbolic basis of the relation (*give testimony-graves* = died)).

*40–42* (oversentential): sequence (within ; double thesis-antithesis (*not-though*) as the "thesis" component in the superordinate thesis – antithesis relation (*not... – but...*), double elaboration (process: step; abstraction: instance)).

*43–44*: elaboration – whole: part.

*45–46*: circumstance (*history*; thesis – antithesis within *46* (*...do not shrink from... – ...welcome...*) – contrast with previous implicit responsibility shifts).

*46–47*: elaboration – set (the president represents the country): members.

*47–48*: reason (elaboration – abstraction: instance within *48* (*endeavor-energy, faith, devotion*)).

*49–50*: (within; concluding, strong thesis – antithesis; idealistic approach reaching the very peak, expressed within "black-and-white" framework ("I am telling you what you should do" attitude) used as a vagueness-based message acceptance "facilitator").

*51–52*: sequence (*ask of us... – lead the land...*).

### 2.3.4. Cohesion – Coherence

*27–28–29*: reference (*us-us*).

*30–31*: reference (*both sides-both sides*).

*34–35*: reference (*both sides-both sides*).

*35–36*: reference (*endeavor-this*).

*36–37*: reference (*this-it*).

*37–38*: conjunction (*but*).

*43–44*: reference (*we-you* (as part of *we*)).

*45–46*: reference (*defending freedom-this responsibility* – note the clarity of the cohesion-based enactment of leadership).

*46–47*: reference (*I–I*).

*47–48*: reference (*us-we*).

*48–49*: conjunction (*so*).

*32–33–34*: (*both sides-us* (political context as the link)).

*39–40–41*: (*In your hands, my fellow citizens... – ... each generation of Americans... – ...graves of young Americans* – realistic presentation of the dangers of service through the coherence-based structures).

*(40–41)–42*: (general information vs *us* for the imposition of personal involvement; the idea of *struggle against... war* sort of "spirited into" the text).

*(44–48)–49*: (moral obligation – idealism relation as the linkage pattern).

*49–50*: (comparative extension of the above relation).

*51–52*: (*let us... – ...lead the land* conditioned by obligation to reveal *strength and sacrifice*).

### 2.3.5. Metaphor/Symbol

*42* (supportive use of *trumpet* for pragmatic, history-grounded idealism).

*43* (*forge... ...alliance* metaphorical expression for underlining difficult, but noble character of the *new endeavor* – compare the blacksmith's job – in line with the manipulatively presented idea of the importance of individual effort in leading the country (*39*)).

*46* (negation of the imaginative *shrink from* phrase for creating the aura of the president's greatness).

*48* (new ideas seen in terms of *fire* of *new, historic endeavor* (note the development of the *torch* concept), the metaphorization coherent with Speech Event 3 function).

### 2.3.6. Nominalizations

Again, the words/phrases like *national loyalty (40)*, *struggle (42)*, *sacrifice (51)*, etc. lack complementation, which could provide for answering the arising questions, respectively, "to whom", "of what kind", "to what extent" and so on, thus clarifying the message (compare verb + complement constructions, e.g. "to sacrifice life").

### 2.3.7. Rhetorical Devices

– *Let* repetitions for: responsibility shift/underlining the length of the list of proposals/oratorical effect.

– Antitheses for the enactment of leadership ("I am telling you what you should do" attitude, gradually preparing the listener for the strongest explicit imposition of presidential persuasion in *49*).

– Rhetorical questions (XXIII) for underlining the spiritual strength pervading the indirect answers (XXIV; "Yes, we can 'cos we're Americans" attitude).

– Elevated language coherent with the important *historic effort* phrase, following the idea of Kennedy's "new beginning".

– Global perspective taken in *33* for stressing the president's leadership capacity.

### 2.3.8. Social Psychology Theories Applicable To The Study

– Theory of Exposure Learning (Z a j o n c 1980; the more people are exposed to an idea, the more they are apt to accept it. Zimbardo and Leippe 1991; people find comfort in familiarity) – note the repetitive use of pragmatically conciliatory *let* phrases ensuring the leader the image of a realist whose primary objective is to put an end to the cold war period.

– Consistency Theory (Kennedy's nominalizations can trigger the emergence of dissonance between the meant illocutionary force and the exerted perlocutionary effect, which forms the basis for linguistic manipulation – remember the assumption of C. T. discussed in 2.1.).

– Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann 1991; communication effects are the greatest where the message is in line with existing opinions, people support popular views, suppressing unpopular ones, to avoid social isolation) – note the high frequency of the president's use of morally unquestionable slogans (*fruitful life for all mankind, world of law* etc.) for making the speech apparently communicable.

– Message Acceptance Theory (K a r l i n s and A b e l s o n 1970; if the speaker can get the listener to agree with him on a few linearly presented issues, the mutual agreement on the sequentially following them claims is reached much more easily) – in *42* Kennedy "attaches" the *war* idea to the preceding sequence of hardly disputable command-like propositions, thus limiting the listener's range of "undesirable" connotations related to the possible military engagement of the country.

### 2.3.9. Conclusion

Following the transitional conclusion (*26* – cooperative effort needed to solve world problems), in the third section of the inaugural Kennedy develops a series of general proposals directed at the countries of the Soviet bloc, simultaneously making an idealistic call on American people. Neither, however, the expression of the proposals seems conciliatory, nor the call is fully clear, which appears to undermine the principles stressed by Kennedy in the famous Kennedy–Nixon debates [see H i n c k 1993]. Paragraph XIV, for example, contains an assertive warning, while paragraph XVIII constitutes in fact a command. Employed for the purpose of suggesting "what the other side should do" are frequent thesis-antithesis constructions (*28–29* etc.), one of them used also for revealing "what the world should

do" (*50*). These parts of the section which are addressed primarily to the American nation carry in turn presidential responsibility shifts (*39–41*), accompanied by manipulatively coherence-based phrases, whose implicit purpose is to prepare Americans for years of sacrifice, without telling them explicitly what it (sacrifice) means (*42*), or providing them with a reasonable explanation WHY they should agree upon personal engagement in public affairs, "decisive" for the *success* of the *course* (except for fulfilling the historical obligation, its burden in fact imposed on the nation by the president – see XXIV).

The very idea of LET US BEGIN ANEW lies thus not so much in the spirit of the general proposals and empty calls, as in the presentation of the emergence of a new leader, whose combination of idealism, a sense of history, cool passion, realism and pragmatism hardly bears any resemblance to the characteristics of other post-war presidents of the USA. Enacting the leadership, Kennedy ultimately uses the first person singular pronoun in *46*, revealing the mixture of idealism and historical pragmatism in XX. It is interesting to note that these parts of the text which best characterize the president as the genuine leader of the country are cohesion- and thesis-antithesis-based for the purpose of perlocutionary clarity. Frequent nominalizations, however much vagueness they might trigger, are convincing, since the listener rarely undermines basic values or moral obligations (consistency theories, spiral of silence etc.!). Finally, repetitions of the same ideas (pragmatism-based cooperation, worldwide unity in effort) ensure Kennedy positive communication effects (exposure learning).

What seemed apparently "new" in Kennedy's political persona in 1961 can easily be identified on the analysis of the macro speech act derivation. As it has already been mentioned, Kennedy would not have been able to convey the main idea of the speech but for the introduction of a certain number of relevant performatives into these parts of his performance (Sections 1/2, Paragraph XIV opening the third section) which have the auxiliary and preparatory function for the ultimate, explicit (*I...*) verbal enactment of a new type of leadership. The presentation of the president's sense of history (Section 1) constitutes a basis for the presentation of the president's realistic, organized approach to world problems (via the recognition of the US missionary role; Section 2), which in turn lays a foundation for the presentation of Kennedy's pragmatism-based idea of worldwide unity (via the recognition of its necessity; Section 3), combined with the idealistic concept of passionate, but still controlled, great determination. Consider the inaugural speeches of Truman or Eisenhower and it should become clear that in the light of their performance the linguistic realization of Kennedy's apparent intentions strikes the listener with its unique character

in terms of both the *course* presentation (unity!) and leadership's image (pragmatism!), the two elements determining the very nature of the global speech act identified towards the end of Section 3, that is, on the listener's collection of all "data" explaining the speaker's intent.

## 3. CONCLUSION (I PASS THE TORCH TO A NEW GENERATION AS THE ALTERNATIVE?)

However seemingly coherent and, more important, convincing the sequential linguistic realization of the I TAKE UP... idea might be, I guess the alternative macro speech act should come as no surprise to the reader of this paper, for much has already been said about the manipulative essence of certain elements introduced into Kennedy's inaugural speech for the purpose of shifting the presidential responsibility upon the American people (*let* constructions, vague coherence relations etc.). In closing, I would like to comment on two textual characteristics whose absence from Kennedy's performance decisively contributes towards perceiving the intent of the inaugural in the way suggested above, given obviously that the recipient of the global message has an access to the text and reads it closely.

One of the textual "shortcomings" I have in mind is the lack of solutionhood relational propositions, whose presence in a text elaborates on the message in terms of providing immediately the addressee with a set of solutions to problems itemised by the speaker, quite often with the intention of stressing his/her realism and sense of responsibility. In Kennedy's speech the relation of solutionhood does not in fact link individual sentences, but holds between larger units: the closing part of Section 2 and the proposals-packed, opening paragraphs of Section 3, which, in the light of the lack of elaboration on particular proposals, indirectly weakens the presidential enactment of leadership (see the comments on the role of proposals in the presentation of Kennedy's pragmatic idea of unity).

The mentioned lack of descriptive elaboration on proposals expressed in paragraphs XIV–XIX completes the evidence in favour of reading the text through the prism of the alternative macro speech act framework. Look at the graph below (horizontally–number of paragraphs; vertically – number of words in each paragraph) and it will become clear how little Kennedy was able to say with respect to the propositions supposed to suggest new solutions and the explicit will to undertake presidential responsibility.
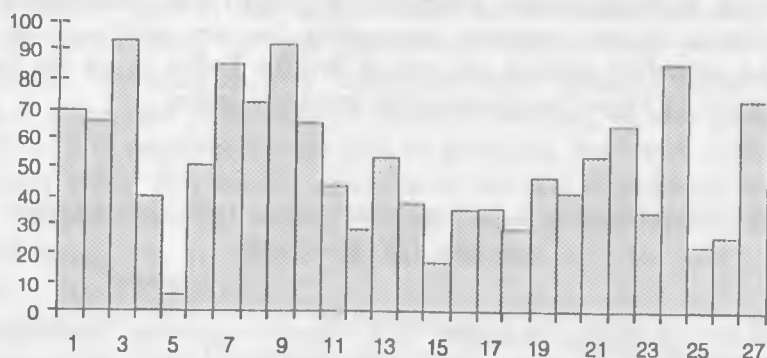
Obviously, both the "superficial" and the "profound" interpretations of the pragmatics of Kennedy's performance are only examples of my subjective approach to the analysis of a political LSM and, for the reason of the discussed perlocutionary research limitations, can hardly constitute anything else than an attempt at drawing conclusions from the existence of what I would call "illocutionary force clusters" expressed via speech acts and their supportive textual environment (relational propositions etc.). However, the very possibility of drawing these conclusions, which tend to be in line with political science and historical findings, seems to prove the analysability of a political LSM within the framework of a formalized linguistic set of criteria.

The choice of criteria employed for this analysis has been determined to a certain extent by the accessibility of linguistic data. Unfortunately enough, having no access to the full recording of Kennedy's speech, I decided to exclude from the analysis the observations made on listening to the excerpts of the performance (e.g. concerning the president's tendency to use rising or falling-rising intonation with high terminal pitch in declarative sentences, which could shed some light on the challenging properties of the text [H a l l i d a y 1967]). I believe that future research on political LSMs should consider the phonological aspect of the performance as extremely important in the context of all possible extensions of the proposed list of evaluation criteria.

# APPENDIX

## The inaugural speech of president J. F. Kennedy
## Washington, D. C., January 20, 1961

I (*1*) We observe today not a victory of a party but a celebration of freedom – symbolizing an end as well as a beginning – signifying renewal as

well as change. (2) For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago.

II (3) The world is very different now. (4) For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. (5) And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe – the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

III (6) We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. (7) Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans-born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage – and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

IV (8) Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.

V (9) This much we pledge – and more.

VI (10) To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. (11) United, there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. (12) Divided, there is little we can do-for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

VII (13) To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. (14) We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. (15) But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom – and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

VIII (16) To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. (17) If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

IX (18) To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge – in a new alliance for progress – to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. (19) But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. (20) Let all

our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. (*21*) And let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

X (*22*) To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support – to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective – to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak – and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

XI (*23*) Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

XII (*24*) We dare not tempt them with weakness. (*25*) For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

XIII (*26*) But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course – both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

XIV (*27*) So let us begin a new – remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. (*28*) Let us never negotiate out of fear. (*29*) But let us never fear to negotiate.

XV (*30*) Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

XVI (*31*) Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms – and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

XVII (*32*) Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. (*33*) Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths, and encourage the arts and commerce.

XVIII (*34*) Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah – to "undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free."

XIX (*35*) And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in a new endeavor – not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

XX (*36*) All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. (*37*) Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. (*38*) But let us begin.

XXI (*39*) In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. (*40*) Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. (*41*) The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

XXII (*42*) Now the trumpet summons us again-not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need – not as a call to battle, though embattled we are – but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

XXIII (*43*) Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, than can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? (*44*) Will you join in that historic effort?

XXIV (*45*) In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. (*46*) I do not shrink from this responsibility – I welcome it. (*47*) I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. (*48*) The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it – and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

XXV (*49*) And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country.

XXVI (*50*) My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

XXVII (*51*) Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. (*52*) With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking his blessing and his help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

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## Piotr Cap

### PRAGMATYKA ORGANIZACJI PRZEMÓWIENIA INAUGURACYJNEGO J. F. KENNEDY'EGO

Autor podejmuje próbę analizy monologu politycznego z perspektywy teorii aktów mowy. W studium tekstu kategorią porządkującą i nadrzędną w stosunku do zaproponowanych ośmiu kryteriów analizy (m. in. kohezji i koherencji) jest tzw. makroakt mowy. Opisany proces jego lingwistycznej derywacji naświetla problem efektu perlokucyjnego przemówienia, który, w odczuciu autora, nosi znamiona manipulacji językowej opartej w znacznej mierze na wykorzystaniu psychologicznych technik perswazji.