

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
HANOI OPEN UNIVERSITY



SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

DO THI PHONG LAN

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES
ON CLIMATE CHANGE AT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTIONS**

MAJOR: ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

CODE: 9.22.02.01

SUPERVISORS: ASSOC. PROF. DR. NGUYEN THU HANH

DR. LE THI MINH THAO

HANOI, 2026

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale of the study

Language is not only a neutral device for communication but a social semiotic system through which reality is constructed, negotiated, and contested. As Halliday (1978) argues in *Language as Social Semiotics*, language simultaneously performs ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, encoding experience, enacting social relations, and organizing meaning into coherent discourse. In this regard, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights how discourse both reflects and shapes power relations, ideology, and social inequality. When combined, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides such micro-level linguistic toolkit as transitivity, mood, modality, and thematic structure; while CDA offers the macro-level critical framework for interpreting how these linguistic choices reproduce or challenge hegemonic structures. Together, CDA and SFG enable a comprehensive analysis of discourse that connects textual patterns to broader socio-political contexts, demonstrating how language functions as both a resource for meaning-making and a site of ideological struggle.

Language is a tool for communication between people. It is used to achieve many communicative functions. According to Bennett (1998), people communicate to express information or have actions done. Language has two functions: transactional and interactional functions. A transactional function means using language to transmit information, whether factual or propositional. This type is used to develop cultural ideas, literature, laws, etc. An interactional function, on the other hand, is characterized by using language to establish and preserve social relationships.

Particularly, when the issues of responsibility distribution and economic contribution have become more apparent on the agenda of the conferences, such conflicting interests and benefits have contributed to the increased complexity and complication of the contested global debates about climate change issues. Certainly, such a pivotal issue in such a lengthy process involving so many governments and people must definitely resort to particular linguistic and discursive meanings in the speeches to justify the different parties' interests, attitudes and behaviors in ways that they appear fair on the one hand and avoid or delay taking action for their own

benefits on the other hand. The situation inspires the author to conduct this research to uncover how language has been manipulated to convey the power relation between the developed and developing countries as well as their responsibilities for climate change.

As the climate change debate has become such a globally sophisticated arena, multiple voices are getting heard. Among them, linguists have delved into the analyses of rhetorical devices, discourse strategies, metaphors, framing, and other aspects of text and talk on climate change. Despite such a body of literature, however, to the best knowledge, virtually no study has focused on the linguistic realizations of the ideologies about the developed and developing countries' responsibilities for climate change discursively constructed in speeches at global climate conferences. In consideration of the increasingly changing power relations among countries in the world, it is significant to conduct a systematic and critical discourse analysis employing linguistic tools with a fairly large sample of spoken political discourse focusing on developed and developing countries at the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties from COP20 to COP28.

1.2. Research aims and objectives

The research aims to uncover the ideologies and power relations employed in speeches on climate change at UN Conventions by applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its central analytical framework, supported by Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a linguistic toolkit. Through a systematic examination of transitivity, mood, modality, and thematic structures, the study investigates how linguistic choices construct representations of agency, responsibility, authority, and legitimacy. By linking these micro-level features to broader socio-political contexts, the research aims to expose the ideological positioning and power configurations that shape global environmental discourse.

1.3. Research questions

This study investigates how ideologies and power relations between developed and developing nations are constructed through discourse in climate change speeches delivered by representatives of the United States and India at the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties (COP20 - COP28).

The research aims at seeking the answers for the following questions:

- 1, *How are the ideologies about the developed and developing countries' responsibilities for climate change linguistically, discursively and socio-culturally manifested via the English speech discourse in the study?*
- 2, *How are power relations between the developed and developing countries linguistically, discursively and socio-culturally manifested via the discourse underlying their respective stances on global climate change negotiations?*

1.4. Scope of the study

This research focuses exclusively on official English-language speeches delivered by representatives of the United States and India at COP20 to COP28 within the UNFCCC framework. These two countries are selected as representative cases of developed and developing nations in the global climate debate.

This study focuses on uncovering how power relations and ideologies regarding climate change responsibilities are constructed and represented in the speeches delivered by representatives of two countries - the United States and India - at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties (COP20 to COP28).

The research is delimited to analyzing English-language speeches officially presented at these conferences, excluding interviews, press releases, or policy documents. The analysis adopts a combined framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), emphasizing how linguistic features serve as tools of ideological expression and power negotiation.

Within the SFG framework, the study specifically focuses on Halliday's metafunctions, particularly the ideational metafunction through the transitivity system, as well as mood and modality under the interpersonal metafunction. These linguistic resources are analyzed across three CDA dimensions proposed by Fairclough (1992): textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice.

The scope of interpretation extends to identifying and explaining how these linguistic and discursive choices reflect the power asymmetry between developed and developing countries and the ideological orientations underlying their respective stances on global climate change negotiations.

1.5. Methods of the study

The research is conducted with major method that is qualitative approach which is particularly suited to examining the implicit and context-dependent nature of ideology and power in political discourse. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, this study aims to provide an in-depth interpretive analysis of how ideologies concerning the differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries in addressing climate change are discursively constructed and sustained.

1.6. Significance of the study

Theoretically, the study contributes to discourse studies by bridging CDA and SFG to explain how linguistic forms embody ideological meanings in international political communication. Methodologically, it demonstrates the applicability of combining textual, discursive, and social levels of analysis to decode the interplay between ideology and linguistic structure. Practically, it provides insights into how discursive strategies in climate diplomacy shape public understanding of global responsibilities and justice.

1.7. Structure of the study

The dissertation consists of six chapters.

Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the rationale, aims, and objectives of the study, together with the research questions, scope, methods, and significance. It also outlines the structure of the thesis, providing an overview of how the research is organized.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, offers a comprehensive theoretical background to the study. It reviews the key concepts and principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), emphasizing their interrelation in the analysis of ideological and power structures in discourse. Previous studies on climate change discourse are also examined to identify the research gap that this study aims to fill.

Chapter 3, Research Methodology, describes the theoretical and methodological foundations underpinning the study. It explains Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework - description, interpretation, and explanation - and the integration of CDA with SFG for a multidimensional textual, discursive, and social analysis. The chapter also discusses data collection, corpus compilation, and the analytical framework applied to the speeches.

Chapter 4, The Ideologies of Nations via Speeches on Climate Change at United Nations Conventions, presents the main analysis of the ideological constructions in the speeches of representatives from the United States and India at COP20 to COP28. Through the combination of qualitative CDA and SFG techniques, the chapter explores how linguistic choices (such as transitivity, modality, and appraisal) reflect the countries' ideologies and perceived responsibilities for climate change.

Chapter 5, The Power Relation between the Developed and Developing Countries via Speeches on Climate Change at United Nations Conventions, extends the analysis to the dimension of power relations. It examines how discursive strategies reinforce, negotiate, or challenge the asymmetrical power nexus between developed and developing nations in the climate change debate.

Chapter 6, Conclusion, summarizes the main findings, discusses the theoretical and practical implications, and suggests directions for further research. It concludes by highlighting how the study contributes to the broader understanding of climate change discourse, ideology, and global power dynamics.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Basic notions in the thesis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis is a methodology that enables a vigorous assessment of what is meant when language is used to describe and explain. There is a proliferation of terms within critical discourse analysis which is reflective of the various influences in the development of the methodology. There is however a broadly agreed agenda in these studies to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (Fairclough, 1995: 132).

Texts, language, and communication should therefore always be considered in their social context, as they both shape and are informed by wider processes within society. In this manner, texts do not merely passively report upon the world, but imbue it with meaning, fabricate it, shape perspectives, and call the world into being. Discourse can be considered as an active relation to reality (Fairclough, 1992: 41). Fairclough (2003: 26) delineates three characteristics of discourse as part of social action: genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), and styles (ways of being).

Genres refer to particular ways of manipulating and framing discourse, such as political speeches, which provide a framework for audience interpretation and can become loci of power, domination, and resistance. Discourses concern how aspects of the world are represented from different perspectives, while styles relate to identity construction through discourse. Discourse is thus a means of being and doing, and its interpretation involves production, form, and reception, whose interplay generates social effects (Fairclough, 2003: 11).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) – a conceptual framework and methodology Fairclough's three-dimensional model conceptualizes discourse analysis at three interrelated levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The interpretation stage focuses on how discourse processes rely on members' resources (MR), while the explanation stage situates discourse within broader social structures and power relations, showing how discourse both sustains and transforms these

structures (Fairclough, 2001: 136–138). Discourse is therefore more than language use; it is language use seen as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1992: 28).

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar provides a functional account of language by viewing it as a resource for making meaning in social contexts. The framework is organized around three metafunctions: the ideational metafunction, which construes experience through processes, participants, and circumstances; the interpersonal metafunction, which enacts social relations through mood, modality, and appraisal; and the textual metafunction, which organizes meaning into coherent messages. These metafunctions offer analytical tools for examining how linguistic choices realize ideological meanings in discourse.

CDA of a speech text

The analysis of political speeches through CDA highlights how language is strategically deployed to legitimize actions, negotiate responsibility, and construct authority. Speeches at international climate conferences are particularly significant because they operate within complex negotiation contexts, balance national interests, and appeal to global moral frameworks such as climate justice, responsibility, and equity.

Previous research on climate change discourse

Previous studies on climate change discourse have examined media representations, framing strategies, metaphors, and rhetorical devices related to global warming and environmental risk. Content analysis and discourse analysis research has demonstrated that climate change discourse is shaped by political, economic, and ideological interests. However, a review of the literature reveals a significant gap: there is a lack of systematic linguistic analysis focusing on how power relations between developed and developing countries and their ideologies of responsibility for climate change are discursively constructed in speeches at global climate conferences.

2.2. An overview of United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP20 to COP28)

The COP (Conference of the Parties) from COP20 to COP28 are important events within the framework of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), which focuses on assessing global progress in combating climate change. Below is an overview of the characteristics, themes, commonalities and characteristics, based on key information from these conferences (from 2014 to 2023).

General Features:

The COP (Conference of the Parties) conferences from COP20 to COP28, held annually within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), are important events that bring together representatives from nearly 200 countries to assess progress and negotiate measures to reduce emissions, climate change adaptation, and financial support. These conferences often involve world leaders, experts, NGOs, and the private sector, with an ever-expanding scale (from tens of thousands to more than 80,000 people at COP28). The joint structure includes a formal negotiation area (Blue Zone) and an open dialogue area (Green Zone), and formal speeches emphasizing national commitment, calling for shared responsibility, and promoting international cooperation. Linguistic tools such as metaphors, repetition, and intertextual are often used to increase persuasion.

Themes and Timeline:

1. COP20 (2014, Lima, Peru): Focused on preparation for the Paris Agreement, with the finalization of Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and the promotion of the legal framework for emission reduction.
2. COP21 (2015, Paris, France): The highlight was the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which pledged to keep temperature rises below 2°C, giving priority to 1.5°C, and establishing financial mechanisms for developing countries.
3. COP22 (2016, Marrakech, Morocco): Known as the "COP of Action", focusing on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and launching the Marrakech Fund to support adaptation.

4. COP23 (2017, Bonn, Germany/Fiji): Emphasizing the role of small and vulnerable island states, along with promoting the Lima-Paris Plan of Action (LAPA).
5. COP24 (2018, Katowice, Poland): Finalization of the "Katowice Handbook" for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, with a focus on reporting and transparency rules.
6. COP25 (2019, Madrid, Spain/Chile): Focus on carbon markets and strengthen commitments to reduce emissions, although it does not achieve major breakthroughs.
7. COP26 (2021, Glasgow, UK): Stepping up our commitment to reduce methane emissions, ending fossil fuel financing, and launching the first global review process.
8. COP27 (2022, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt): Emphasis on climate finance, establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund for vulnerable countries.
9. COP28 (2023, Dubai, UAE): The highlight is the "UAE Consensus", which for the first time recognizes the need to transition away from fossil fuels, along with a commitment to triple renewable energy and the first global assessment.

Common features:

1. Common objectives: All COPs are aimed at limiting temperature rise, promoting emission reductions, and supporting adaptation, based on a common but distinct principle of responsibility.

2. Focus on finance: Each conference discusses financial assistance from developed countries to developing countries, with an initial target of \$100 billion per year.
3. Progress Review: From COP26, conferences began a global assessment process (Global Stocktake) to measure the effectiveness of commitments.
4. Diverse participation: Stakeholders from governments, NGOs, to the private sector all have a role to play, with an increase in the influence of indigenous ethnic groups and youth.

Unique features:

1. Location and local context: Each COP reflects the characteristics of the host country, as the Fiji-led COP23 emphasizes the islets, while the COP28 in the UAE (an oil-producing country) is controversial about the role of fossil fuels.
2. Specific results: COP21 achieved the landmark Paris Agreement, COP27 established a damage fund, and COP28 reached a consensus on fossil fuel transition, while other COPs (such as COP25) were less groundbreaking.
3. Political challenges: Some COPs (such as COP28) face controversy over conflicts of interest (e.g., the president is the CEO of an oil company), while others (such as COP26) are affected by geopolitical tensions (Ukraine war).
4. Negotiation progress: From COP20 to COP28, the level of success in negotiations varied, from laying the foundation (COP20) to binding or enforceable decisions (COP21, COP28).

2.3. Summary

This literature review has outlined the theoretical foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and reviewed previous research on climate change discourse. It identifies a clear research gap concerning the discursive construction of power relations and responsibilities between developed and developing countries in the context of UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties. Addressing this gap, the present study applies a combined CDA–SFG

framework to analyze climate change speeches from COP20 to COP28, providing a systematic linguistic account of ideology and power in global climate governance.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This chapter outlines the overall design of the research methodology including research paradigm, research approach, research design and research methods which mention data of the study, data analysis procedure, conceptual and analytical framework. The chapter of Research Methodologies also lays out the analytical framework in which Fairclough's Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) are adopted in qualitative analysis, and some corpus tools are employed to provide quantitative evidence for the qualitative analysis.

The study seeks to examine how ideologies and power relations between developed (the US) and developing (India) countries are linguistically, discursively, and socio-culturally constructed in English speeches on climate change, particularly in relation to responsibility and negotiation stances within global climate governance.

3.2. Analytical framework

The analytical framework of the study is grounded in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which comprises textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. At the textual level, the study examines linguistic features such as transitivity, modality, thematic structure, and evaluative language to uncover how experience, social relations, and ideology are linguistically constructed. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis focuses on processes of text production, distribution, and consumption, particularly in the institutional context of UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties. At the social practice level, the study interprets discursive patterns in relation to broader socio-political contexts, including global climate governance, economic inequality, and geopolitical power relations.

Systemic Functional Grammar as an analytical tool

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar provides the linguistic apparatus for the textual analysis in this study. The ideational metafunction is employed to analyze patterns of transitivity and agency, revealing how responsibility for climate change is attributed or obscured. The interpersonal metafunction is used to examine modality, mood, and appraisal resources, which indicate speakers' degrees of commitment, authority, and alignment with audiences. The textual metafunction is applied to

analyze thematic organization and information flow, showing how arguments are structured and foregrounded in climate change discourse.

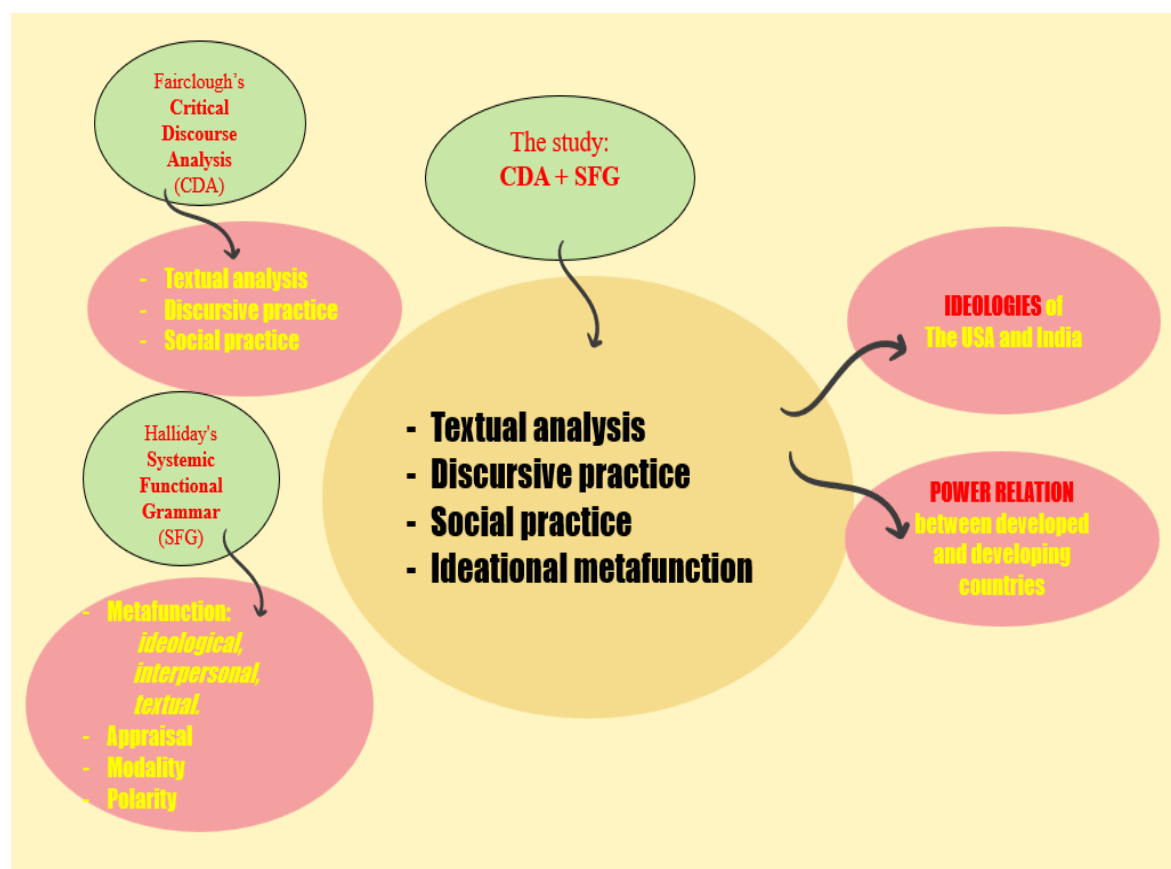


Figure 1. CDA and SFG - the multi-dimensional combination

3.3. Data selection

The data for the study consist of 18 official speeches delivered in English by representatives of the United States and India at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties from COP20 to COP28. These speeches are selected because they represent two contrasting national positions within global climate negotiations: a developed country with significant historical emissions and a developing country emphasizing equity and the right to development.

3.4. Procedures of analysis

The analytical procedure involves several stages. First, the speeches are collected from official UNFCCC sources and compiled into a corpus. Second, relevant linguistic features are identified and coded in accordance with the

CDA–SFG framework. Third, quantitative patterns are identified to support qualitative interpretation. Finally, the findings are interpreted in relation to ideological positioning and power relations between the United States and India within the context of international climate negotiations.

3.5. Reliability and validity

To ensure reliability and validity, the study applies consistent analytical criteria across all texts and triangulates findings across different metafunctions and analytical levels. The integration of CDA and SFG enhances the explanatory power of the analysis by linking micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social structures and power relations.

3.6. Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology and analytical framework employed in the study. By combining Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis with Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar, the research provides a systematic and theoretically grounded approach to examining ideology and power in climate change speeches delivered at COP20 - COP28.

CHAPTER 4

THE IDEOLOGIES OF NATIONS VIA SPEECHES ON

CLIMATE CHANGE AT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTIONS

4.1. Linguistic representation of Ideologies in the US and India speeches (COP20–COP28)

This section examines how ideologies are linguistically constructed in U.S. and Indian climate speeches within Fairclough’s CDA and Halliday’s SFG framework. It

argues that ideological positions on climate responsibility are embedded in vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures, reflecting differing perspectives on global cooperation, equity, and development.

4.1.1. Vocabulary analysis

This subsection analyzes lexical choices as key indicators of ideological positioning in climate discourse. It shows that vocabulary is strategically used to construct different interpretations of responsibility, cooperation, and justice in the speeches of the United States and India.

The U.S. speeches employ vocabulary emphasizing global cooperation, shared responsibility, and collective action, framing climate change as a common global challenge. At the same time, terms related to innovation and leadership construct the United States as an active and leading actor in global climate governance.

Indian speeches foreground vocabulary related to equity, climate justice, and development, emphasizing differentiated responsibilities and historical emissions. These lexical choices frame climate change as both an environmental and socio-economic issue, highlighting the developmental concerns of developing countries.

This subsection highlights the contrast between the two discourses: the U.S. emphasizes shared responsibility and global cooperation, while India stresses equity and historical accountability. These differences demonstrate how lexical choices are used to construct and legitimize competing ideological positions in climate negotiations.

4.1.2. Grammar analysis

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, grammar functions as a key resource for constructing ideological meanings and representing power relations in discourse. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics, this section has shown that grammatical choices such as nominalization, pronouns, voice, mood, and modality are not merely structural features but play a crucial role in shaping how climate change responsibilities are discursively constructed.

The analysis reveals that both the United States and India employ grammatical strategies to construct climate change as a collective global issue; however, notable

ideological differences emerge. The U.S. discourse tends to foreground collective responsibility and future-oriented commitment through the frequent use of inclusive pronouns (e.g., *we*, *our*), active voice, and modal verbs such as *will*. These grammatical patterns contribute to constructing a discourse of global cooperation, shared responsibility, and leadership.

In contrast, the Indian discourse places greater emphasis on differentiation, equity, and moral obligation. This is reflected in the relatively higher use of third-person pronouns (e.g., *they*, *their*), passive constructions highlighting impacts on vulnerable groups, and modal verbs such as *must* and *should*. These grammatical choices reinforce the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and foreground the socio-economic and historical dimensions of climate change.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that grammatical features function as important discursive tools through which ideological positions are constructed and negotiated. While both countries frame climate change as a shared global challenge, the U.S. discourse tends to universalize responsibility, whereas the Indian discourse emphasizes inequality and differentiated obligations. These differences reflect broader power relations and competing perspectives within international climate governance.

4.1.3. Textual structure

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, textual structure plays a significant role in organizing discourse and guiding the interpretation of ideological meanings. Beyond vocabulary and grammar, the way a text is structured contributes to how arguments are developed, how priorities are foregrounded, and how power relations are subtly constructed.

The analysis indicates that both the United States and India employ structured and coherent discourse patterns typical of diplomatic speeches, including problem–solution frameworks, thematic progression, and strategic emphasis. However, differences emerge in how each country organizes its discourse to support its ideological stance.

The U.S. speeches tend to adopt a forward-looking and solution-oriented structure. Climate change is often introduced as a global challenge, followed by an

emphasis on national commitments, technological innovation, and international cooperation. This organizational pattern reinforces a discourse of leadership and collective action, positioning the United States as an active and responsible global actor.

In contrast, the Indian speeches frequently foreground contextual and justificatory elements before presenting solutions. Greater emphasis is placed on historical responsibility, developmental needs, and issues of equity at earlier stages of the discourse. This structural pattern allows India to legitimize its position by situating climate action within broader socio-economic realities, thereby reinforcing arguments related to fairness and differentiated responsibilities.

Overall, the textual organization of the speeches reflects distinct ideological orientations. While the U.S. discourse prioritizes global cooperation and future-oriented solutions, the Indian discourse emphasizes contextualization, equity, and justification. These structural differences illustrate how discourse organization itself functions as a strategic resource in constructing and negotiating power relations within international climate negotiations.

4.2. Discursive practice analysis

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, discursive practice highlights how discourse is produced, distributed, and interpreted within specific socio-political contexts. The analysis shows that the climate speeches delivered by the United States and India at United Nations conferences function not merely as individual texts but as institutional and strategic communicative acts embedded in global climate negotiations.

In terms of production, the speeches are constructed by governmental and diplomatic actors and therefore reflect official national positions and policy orientations. The U.S. discourse tends to foreground technological innovation, market-based solutions, and global partnerships, while the Indian discourse emphasizes climate justice, sustainable development, and differentiated responsibilities. These production processes demonstrate how national ideologies are embedded in institutional discourse.

Regarding distribution, the speeches are disseminated through international platforms such as United Nations conferences, official documents, and global media channels. This wide circulation enables national narratives to enter and shape the broader global climate discourse, interacting with other policy and media texts within the international negotiation framework.

From the perspective of interpretation, the meanings of the speeches are shaped by diverse audiences, including policymakers, negotiators, and the global public. These audiences interpret the discourse in relation to ongoing negotiations and competing interests. As a result, the U.S. speeches are often read as projecting leadership and commitment, whereas the Indian speeches are interpreted as advocating equity and the interests of developing countries.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that discursive practice plays a crucial role in constructing and legitimizing ideological positions in climate discourse. While the United States emphasizes leadership and voluntary commitments, India foregrounds equity and structural inequality. These differences reflect broader power relations and ideological tensions between developed and developing countries within the global climate governance system.

4.3. Socio-cultural practice

Within Critical Discourse Analysis, socio-cultural practice refers to the broader social, political, and economic contexts that shape and are shaped by discourse. The analysis of socio-cultural practice in this study situates the climate speeches of the United States and India within the global climate governance system and the evolving geopolitical landscape.

The findings indicate that the discourses produced by the two countries are deeply embedded in their respective socio-economic conditions and political positions. As a developed country and a major historical emitter, the United States operates within a context that emphasizes technological leadership, economic transformation, and global influence. This context underpins a discourse that frames climate change as a shared global challenge, often promoting cooperative and forward-looking solutions.

In contrast, India's discourse is shaped by its status as a developing country with pressing socio-economic priorities, including poverty alleviation, energy access, and sustainable development. Within this socio-cultural context, India consistently emphasizes climate justice, equity, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. These discursive patterns reflect broader structural inequalities in the global climate regime.

At a wider level, the analysis reveals that global climate discourse is influenced by shifting power relations between developed and developing countries. The traditional dichotomy between "developed" and "developing" nations is increasingly complex, as emerging economies like India play a more prominent role in international negotiations. This changing landscape contributes to the reconfiguration of responsibilities, expectations, and power dynamics in climate governance.

Moreover, the socio-cultural context of international climate negotiations, particularly within the United Nations framework, promotes certain dominant discourses such as sustainability, global cooperation, and climate urgency. However, these dominant narratives may also obscure underlying inequalities and conflicting interests among nations.

Overall, the socio-cultural practice analysis demonstrates that climate discourse is not neutral but is shaped by broader structures of power, ideology, and economic conditions. The United States and India construct their discourses in ways that reflect and reproduce their positions within the global system. While the U.S. discourse aligns with narratives of leadership and shared responsibility, the Indian discourse foregrounds issues of equity and structural imbalance. These contrasting perspectives highlight the ongoing negotiation of power and ideology in the global climate debate.

4.4. Ideational metafunction

The analysis of the ideational metafunction reveals how the United States and India linguistically represent experiences, actions, and responsibilities in climate change discourse. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics, the findings show that different process types (material, relational, and mental) are strategically employed to construct distinct ideological meanings.

Material processes dominate in both corpora, reflecting a strong focus on actions, commitments, and policy initiatives related to climate change. However, the U.S. speeches tend to associate these processes with agency and leadership, while the Indian speeches often link them to development efforts and collective challenges. Relational processes are used to define climate change, assign attributes, and construct evaluative meanings, particularly in framing issues such as climate justice and global responsibility.

In addition, the representation of participants highlights ideological differences: the U.S. discourse frequently foregrounds inclusive actors such as “we” to construct shared responsibility, whereas the Indian discourse more explicitly differentiates between developed and developing countries. Circumstantial elements further contextualize actions in terms of urgency, necessity, and global impact.

Overall, the ideational metafunction analysis demonstrates that linguistic resources are systematically used to construct differing narratives of responsibility, capability, and equity. These patterns reinforce the broader ideological positions of the two countries within international climate negotiations.

4.5. Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the United States and India’s climate change speeches through the integrated framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics. The findings from textual analysis, discursive practice, socio-cultural context, and ideational metafunction consistently reveal distinct ideological constructions of climate responsibility. While the U.S. discourse emphasizes leadership, global cooperation, and future commitments, the Indian discourse foregrounds equity, development, and differentiated responsibilities. Across all levels of analysis, linguistic choices function as key resources in constructing and legitimizing these perspectives. Overall, the chapter demonstrates that climate discourse serves as a site where power relations and ideological positions are actively negotiated within the global climate regime.

CHAPTER 5

THE POWER RELATION BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES VIA SPEECHES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTIONS

5.1. Textual representation of power relation

This section shows how power relations in climate discourse are constructed through language choices at the level of vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure. The United States tends to build power through leadership discourse, technological

prowess, and global cooperation, while India emphasizes fairness, historical responsibility, and the right to development.

At the vocabulary level, the United States uses terms related to *leadership* and *innovation* to reinforce its central position, while India uses concepts such as *climate justice* and *equity* to create moral legitimacy. At the grammatical level, the United States often emphasizes competence and commitment (will, can, proactive), while India emphasizes obligation and inequality (must, should, passive).

At the level of grammatical structure, power relations are constructed through choices such as pronouns, voices, and affectionate verbs. The U.S. often uses the pronoun *we* in combination with active constructs and modal verbs such as *will* and *can* to build an image of a capable actor and a leading role in global climate action. In contrast, India uses a grammatical strategy that clearly distinguishes groups of actors, combined with modal verbs such as *must* and *should* to emphasize the obligations and responsibilities of developed countries. The use of passive sentences in Indian discourse also contributes to the highlighting of systemic obligations rather than personalization of the agent. Overall, the grammatical choices not only reflect but also contribute to the reconstruction of power relations: the United States emphasizes power through competence and action, while India emphasizes discourse power through arguments of duty, fairness, and structural inequality.

In terms of textual structure, the United States builds a "leadership narrative" by stating achievements first and then calling for cooperation, while India builds a "narrative of justice" by emphasizing inequality first and then asking for support. Overall, these linguistic strategies reflect how the two countries position their power and negotiate positions in the global climate governance system.

5.2. Discursive practice

This section analyzes climate discourse as a social practice, in which speeches at COP conferences are not only policy statements but also strategic tools for countries to negotiate power and influence in global climate governance. U.S. discourse typically emphasizes cooperation, technological innovation, and leadership, while India focuses on equity, development rights, and differentiated responsibilities among nations.

On the production side, speeches are institutional products, reflecting national strategy: the United States builds leadership and capacity, and India reinforces its stance on equity and the interests of developing countries. On the distribution side, speeches are spread through international channels and the media, becoming part of the global discourse school, where countries compete in shaping perceptions of climate responsibility.

In terms of interpretation, speeches are understood by different actors as political strategies: U.S. discourse strengthens leadership, while Indian discourse challenges power inequality.

In general, through the process of production-distribution-interpretation, climate discourse becomes an important means of creating, maintaining, and negotiating power relations in the global climate system.

5.3. Social practice

This section places climate discourse in the context of global power structures, where speeches reflect and recreate the asymmetry between developed and developing countries. The United States, with its economic, technological, and institutional advantages, often constructs leadership discourse based on capacity for action and innovation, while India emphasizes equity, the right to development, and historical responsibility to challenge the existing power order.

The *principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities* plays a central role in the discourse of developing countries, helping to reposition climate obligations in a more equitable way. Meanwhile, the U.S. discourse tends to redefine responsibility as a current competence rather than a historical obligation, thereby reinforcing hegemonic power.

In addition, the U.S. climate discourse has also transformed according to its internal political landscape: from multilateral cooperation under Barack Obama, to nationalism under Donald Trump, to a return to global leadership under Joe Biden.

Overall, at the level of social practice, climate discourse not only reflects but also contributes to the maintenance and restructuring of power relations in the global climate governance system.

5.4. Ideational metafunction with power representation

This section analyzes how ideational metafunction is used to create power through the expression of agents, actions, and responsibilities in climate discourse. The United States mainly uses *material processes* (lead, invest, build, accelerate) to build an image of a positive actor, thereby building power based on technological capacity, investment, and the ability to implement solutions.

In contrast, India favors *relational* and *verbal processes*, emphasizing values such as fairness, responsibility and international obligation, thereby building moral authority and normative arguments.

This difference reveals two models of discourse power: the United States emphasizes action-based power and capability-based power, while India emphasizes power based on justice and normative/moral power.

Overall, the conceptual function not only describes the climate reality, but also contributes to shaping competing understandings of leadership, responsibility, and power in global climate governance.

5.5. Chapter summary

This chapter analyzes how power relations are constructed and negotiated in climate discourse through speeches at COP20- COP28, based on the CDA and SFG frameworks. At the textual level, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structure contribute to the formation of two distinct power discourses: the United States emphasizes leadership and technological prowess, while India emphasizes equity and the right to development.

At the level of discourse practice, speeches serve as strategic tools for countries to position influence and negotiate responsibilities in global climate governance. At the level of social practice, discourse reflects and reproduces power asymmetries between developed and developing countries, and is influenced by internal political contexts, particularly through the eras of Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden. At the conceptual level, language choices continue to reinforce two models of power: the United States is based on competence and action, and India is based on moral legitimacy and climate justice.

Overall, the chapter shows that climate discourse is a central space where nations create and negotiate leadership, accountability, and legitimacy in the global climate system.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This last part of the thesis recapitulates the aim and objectives of the study, the research methodology, and the major findings which answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis, focusing on the power relations and ideologies as well as their language manifestations in climate change speeches. Additionally, this part discusses implications, limitations of the study and highlights some future directions for subsequent research.

This dissertation investigates the ideological constructions and linguistic representations of responsibility and power in climate change discourse through an

extensive analysis of speeches delivered by representatives of the United States and India at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties (COP20 - COP28). By integrating Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), the study reveals how language functions as a medium through which political actors construct, reproduce, and contest ideological positions and global hierarchies in the climate change debate.

6.1. Recapitulation

This critical discourse analysis of English speech texts on climate change was conducted to achieve three main goals: a practical goal, a methodological goal, and an educational goal.

Theoretically, it contributes to discourse studies by bridging CDA and SFG to explain how linguistic forms embody ideological meanings in international political communication. Methodologically, it demonstrates the applicability of combining textual, discursive, and social levels of analysis to decode the interplay between ideology and linguistic structure. Practically, it provides insights into how discursive strategies in climate diplomacy shape public understanding of global responsibilities and justice.

The first aims to decipher the power relations between the developed and developing countries at the global climate debate, the ideologies about these countries' responsibilities for climate change as conveyed through COPs of the global climate conferences, to investigate the language used in conveying these ideologies, to explain why the language was used the way it was in the discourse, and in so doing contribute to a greater understanding of the nations' ideologies about the global climate change arena. The second aims to contribute to the existing body of research which applies corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis in research on climate change issues. The qualitative analysis was conducted with the support of quantitative corpus techniques in the corpus comprising 18 speeches from UNFCCC website and other resources. Within the scope of this study, the sample articles covered nine consecutive COPs in the study period of 2014 - 2023 because the COP is the UN's supreme climate decision-making body with almost 200 member countries, and these conferences attract really enormous attention. Thus, the data is sufficient for the purpose of the study. Thirdly, the educational goal is to enhance further understanding of the

significance of CDA and SFG as well as to assist educators in developing education programs about climate change and critical thinking.

On balance, the study results showed that the linguistic features, discursive practices and social factors were entangled in the discourse on climate change, constituting the nations' ideologies and shaping the listeners' understanding of the asymmetrical power relations between the developed and developing nations in the global climate talks. During the study period, these power relations and ideologies help explain the complexity and limited effectiveness of international climate negotiations.

In conclusion, this study contributes to both theory and practice by showing how the combination of CDA and SFG provides a robust framework for analyzing complex political discourse. It deepens understanding of how linguistic forms encode ideological positions in global environmental governance and offers a model for future research on international political communication and critical environmental linguistics. Overall, the findings confirm that language is not merely descriptive but constitutive of global climate politics, and demonstrates the intricate relationship between language, ideology, and power in climate discourse. The study contributes a structured CDA - SFG analytical model for examining international political discourse.

6.2. Implications

The findings of this study provide significant *theoretical*, *methodological*, and *practical* contributions to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis.

From a **theoretical perspective**, the study reinforces the explanatory power of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) when combined with Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in decoding the ideological and power-laden nature of political language. It demonstrates that the integration of Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Halliday's metafunctional framework can effectively capture both the macro-level social forces and the micro-level linguistic patterns that constitute climate discourse. The findings thus contribute to expanding the theoretical scope of discourse studies, especially in contexts where language functions as an instrument of international negotiation and ideological representation.

From a **methodological perspective**, the study exemplifies a comprehensive and longitudinal approach to discourse analysis. By examining speeches across nine consecutive COP conferences, it highlights how the continuity and shifts in linguistic choices reflect evolving global agendas and national priorities. This diachronic lens

allows for a more dynamic understanding of discourse, emphasizing that ideological positioning in international communication is not static but adapts strategically to geopolitical and environmental contexts.

From a **practical perspective**, the research provides insights relevant to both political communication and education. In political communication, it sheds light on how states employ language to construct legitimacy, negotiate power, and shape global perceptions of responsibility. These insights can be useful for diplomats, policymakers, and international organizations engaged in climate negotiations, as they underline the role of linguistic framing in facilitating or hindering collaboration. In education, the study can inform the teaching of discourse analysis and critical thinking by demonstrating how linguistic awareness can foster deeper understanding of global issues such as sustainability, justice, and shared responsibility.

6.3. Limitations

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, the research focuses exclusively on official speeches by two countries, the United States and India, within the UNFCCC framework. Although these cases are highly representative of the developed - developing divide, the inclusion of additional actors (e.g., China, the EU) could enrich the comparative dimension and provide a more comprehensive view of global climate discourse.

Second, while the combination of CDA and SFG offers a robust analytical foundation, the study's qualitative nature may involve an interpretive bias inherent in critical analysis. Although the researcher ensured methodological transparency and triangulation of evidence, some subjective interpretation of linguistic meaning is inevitable in discourse studies.

Third, the study confines itself to speech texts, excluding other forms of communication such as interviews, press releases, and policy statements that also contribute to the broader climate debate. Future analyses incorporating multimodal or intertextual perspectives could better capture the full discursive complexity surrounding climate change communication.

6. 4. Suggestions for further research

A thorough understanding of the language used in the construction of the global climate conferences requires much more research than just the study reported in this thesis. Considering the results and limitations of this study, the following directions for further research are recommended.

Building upon the findings and limitations, several directions for future research are proposed.

First, future studies could expand the corpus to include **a wider range of countries** and **regional blocs** to investigate how different political, economic, and cultural contexts influence the linguistic construction of climate responsibility. Such comparative analyses would deepen understanding of how ideologies circulate and evolve across global, regional, and national levels.

Second, longitudinal research could be extended **beyond COP28** to trace how shifts in global leadership, environmental crises, or geopolitical conflicts reshape the discourse of responsibility and cooperation. This would help identify emerging patterns of convergence or divergence among nations in framing climate change action.

Third, integrating **quantitative corpus-based tools** (e.g., keyword analysis, collocation networks) with qualitative interpretation could enhance analytical precision and reduce subjectivity. A mixed-methods approach would enable a more systematic mapping of linguistic patterns that encode ideological and power relations.

Lastly, further studies could explore the **pedagogical applications** of CDA and SFG in environmental education and language teaching. By incorporating critical discourse perspectives into classroom practice, educators can help learners develop both linguistic competence and critical awareness of how language mediates global challenges.

Future research using CDA and SFG may serve to elucidate areas previously overlooked by scholars. CDA and SFG are a powerful complement to other methodological and theoretical approaches to research. Combining CDA with other approaches will serve to further illuminate understanding of power structures that permit or impede access to prominent issues in society.

6.5. Concluding remarks

In sum, this dissertation has offered an in-depth analysis of how ideology and power are linguistically constructed in the climate change speeches of the United States and India across nine COP conferences. It has shown that the discourse of climate change is not merely a reflection of political reality but an active force that shapes perceptions, policies, and relations among nations. The integration of CDA and SFG has proven an effective lens through which to uncover the intricate interplay between language, ideology, and global power structures. It is hoped that the insights

gained from this study will inspire further scholarly inquiry and contribute to a more equitable and critically informed dialogue on global climate governance.

RESEARCHER'S ARTICLES RELATED TO THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

1. Do Thi Phong Lan (2024). Application of Systemic Functional Grammar theory in Critical Discourse Analysis of English political texts, *International Research Symposium Proceedings (The International Symposium on English as a Medium of Instruction and English Language Teaching: Trends and Challenges in Vietnamese Universities)*. ULIS, VNU. ISBN: 978-604-357-350-3, Publishing house for Science and technology (811-827).
2. Do Thi Phong Lan (2025). A critical review on new studies in the book "Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar" Revised by Christian M.I.M Matthiessen, *International Research Symposium Proceedings (The International Symposium on English as a Medium of Instruction and English Language Teaching: Trends and Challenges in Vietnamese Universities)*. HOU. ISBN: 978-632-607-501-4, Publishing house for Science and technology (25-50).

3. Do Thi Phong Lan (2026). Critical discourse analysis and Systemic functional grammar in Climate change speeches: A literature review. *Journal of Science Hanoi Open University*. No. 136, 2/2026, ISSN 2734-9217 (42-51).
4. Do Thi Phong Lan (2026). A critical discourse analysis of speeches on climate change by the representatives of the United States and India at the COP20 United Nations Conventions. *VietESL 2025 International Conference Proceedings: Practices, Opportunities and Challenges*. Hanoi Pedagogical University 2, Regional English Language Office (RELO), & National Foreign Languages Project. Vietnam National Publishing House. ISBN: 978-604-430-5641-9.
5. Đỗ Thị Phong Lan (2026). Phân tích đối chiếu đại từ trong các bài phát biểu của Hoa Kỳ và Ấn Độ tại Hội nghị các bên về biến đổi khí hậu của Liên Hợp Quốc. *Tạp chí khoa học Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội (Journal of Science Hanoi Open University)*. No. 12A, 6/2026, P-ISSN 3030-4016 (50-57).
6. Đỗ Thị Phong Lan (2026). Đối chiếu diễn ngôn phát biểu của Hoa Kỳ và Trung Quốc tại Hội nghị các bên tham gia Công ước khung của Liên Hợp Quốc về biến đổi khí hậu từ góc độ Ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống. *Tạp chí khoa học Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội (Journal of Science Hanoi Open University)*. No. 15A, 9/2026, P-ISSN 3030-4016 (243-250).