DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES IN POLITICAL SPEECH:
THE WORDS OF DR. BINGU WA MUTHARIKA

Christopher Green
Department of Linguistics
Indiana University

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of specific discursive strategies in United Nations General Assembly addresses given by Malawian president Bingu wa Mutharika over a period of four years during his presidency (2004-2007). The discursive mechanisms explored include shift of focus through pronoun choice, the strengthening of rhetoric through lexicon and pronoun pairings, and altering the structural organization of the addresses over time to convey the ongoing tale of the political and economic situation in Malawi. Comparative analysis of these features drawn from four General Assembly addresses suggests that Mutharika alters the type and number of such components in his speech in response to political and economic events in Malawi that proceed or fall concurrent with the occasions on which he is speaking. The speeches chosen for analysis are drawn from live webcast recordings of United Nations General Assembly annual sessions in September of each year from 2004 through 2007.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Malawi, pronoun, African linguistics, Mutharika, political discourse

INTRODUCTION

In the short time since he took office as the president of Malawi in 2004, Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika has encountered an abundance of hardships that have challenged both the members of his administration and the success of his presidency. These hardships readily translate to the ongoing struggle of the Malawian people to achieve a political and economic status and devise a plan for sustainability considered favorable by the entire population. Mutharika has fallen from a well-respected and hand-picked successor to former president Bakili Muluzi to the target of assassination attempts and the leader of a nation in political turmoil. This transition from a beginning of hope and high aspirations to troubled uncertainty over a period of just four years has been documented in the transcripts of many presidential speeches given by Mutharika that are available in downloadable format from the website of the government of Malawi (http://www.malawi.gov.mw/). In addition to these transcripts, the United Nations, since 2004, has made available archives of webcast recordings of speeches delivered by presidents and other international leaders, including their corresponding transcripts.
Christopher Green

The sociopolitical propaganda and discursive strategies that Mutharika has used in these addresses to his and other nations over the four years of his presidency, as captured in these transcripts, highlight the increasing desperation of the president and his administration and their struggle to lead Malawi into the future as an economically prosperous and corruption-free nation. This paper will introduce the reader to speeches delivered by Bingu wa Mutharika at various points in his tenure as president of Malawi, as well as to the historical occurrences before and during his presidency that have shaped his words. The words of the president, as expressed in these annual political addresses, will illustrate the particular devices used by this president to rally support for his nation and to strengthen his political agenda in the eyes of the international community.

Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika assumed the role of president of Malawi after a long and active early career in both Malawian and international politics. Malawians recognize Mutharika as one of the founding members of the United Democratic Front, a political party that would later support his nomination for the presidency in the 2004 national election. During his early political career, however, Mutharika left Malawi to seek a post with the United Nations, due in great part to his frustrations with the state of his nation under the rule of its first president, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who ruled Malawi from the dawn of its independence until the first multi-party elections were held in 1994. History has shown that Mutharika was not unique in his criticism of the Banda regime. Shortly after Banda took power, crisis struck the administration, as key members of the government, including cabinet members, began to voice their disapproval for the autocratic style of rule that he had adopted. The response from the president was unwavering as he refused to relinquish the extraordinary powers that Malawians had bestowed upon him in the years leading to independence. These criticisms appeared only to strengthen his hold on the small nation as he sought to remove all dissidents from his path (Muluzi, Juwayeyi, & Makhamba, 1999).

The political situation in Malawi only worsened in the following years, as the government issued the 1966 Act of Parliament that declared the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) the only legal political party of the nation. Soon afterward, the members of the MCP declared Banda “president for life,” thereby feeding the now tyrannical autocracy of his rule (Muluzi et al., 1999, p. 90). The next several decades passed, riddled with censorship (Cullen, 1994), human rights abuses (Chiume, 1992), and uncertainty about the future. The situation began to change underlingly in 1991, when a small group of Malawian politicians formed the United Democratic Front (UDF). Dr. Bakili Muluzi was among the founding members of this group that operated in secret, rallying support for a movement to oust Banda in a multi-

---

1 I shall refer to the 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 General Assembly addresses by Bingu wa Mutharika by year throughout this study. Transcripts of each address along with a webcast can be accessed through the United Nations webcast archives at the URL given individually for each address in the reference section for this work.

2 A careful comparison of the speech transcripts against webcast recordings made of Bingu wa Mutharika at the United Nations General Assembly meetings revealed a noticeable difference between the two sources. In each instance, the words spoken by Mutharika were overwhelmingly similar but not identical to those included in the transcript. The speeches were thus re-transcribed by the author prior to analysis. Similar discrepancies between actual speech and written transcript are assumed for the speeches available from the Government of Malawi. Due to the lack of audio or video broadcasts of these particular speeches for comparison, written transcripts of these speeches were not included in the analysis that follows.

3 The BBC News Africa lists Bingu wa Mutharika as a founding member of the UDF, though his name is not included in the list of its founding officers included in Muluzi, Juwayeyi, and Makhamba (1999, p. 148).

4 Banda was appointed first as the prime minister of Malawi when it received its independence from Britain, but later became the first president of the country in 1966 when the nation became a republic.

5 Due to his arrival in Malawi in 1958 after many years abroad, Banda was not familiar with many of the political actors of the country. As such, he chose the members of his cabinet and those holding other government offices without having become familiar with them and their views on key issues, and vice versa (Muluzi et al., 1999).
party democratic election. Malawians of all social backgrounds and ethnicities across the country heard the message of the UDF loudly and clearly, as the underground group distributed their information and propaganda in native Malawian languages, as opposed to the unfamiliar English that Banda had prescribed and forced upon them for decades (Muluzi et al., 1999).

The most significant push towards reform, and one that invoked a favorable response from the failing president, came from the pens of some Catholic Church officials in the country. The letter written by these officials urged Banda to consider widespread reform in all areas of national concern, including politics, social policies, and judicial practices. Banda responded by inviting the religious leaders to discuss matters of concern openly with his various ministers. This letter, and the corresponding response from Banda, opened the door for other avenues of dissent against the president. Two years later, the nation held its first multi-party democratic elections, the results of which removed Banda from the presidency and introduced Malawi to a new era of democratic reform. Bakili Muluzi, chairman of the UDF, became the second president of Malawi in the 1994 election.

The transition to a new period in Malawian politics was not an easy one to undertake for the Muluzi administration. Muluzi had come to power on the heels of over thirty years of autocratic rule, laden with abuses and corruption. During his reign as president, Muluzi was commended for re-introducing native Malawian languages to the media, proposing their integration into education curriculum, and supporting literacy for all (Muluzi, 2002). His opponents in the elite class, many of whom were supporters of Banda, met his attempts at education reform with criticism. These members of Malawian society accused Muluzi of lowering the status of English in the nation, therefore corresponding to a decrease in future prospects for Malawian youth and the place of the nation in the international community (Kamwendo, 2003). Although Muluzi took impressive steps to combat the many abuses that ran rampant during the reign of former president Banda, criticisms of his presidency came from many individuals other than those who disagreed with his education policy. As his second presidential term grew to a close, the UDF began a push for what was referred to as the Open Term Bill, a piece of legislation that would allow Muluzi to extend his chances for re-election indefinitely. Many supporters of Muluzi argued that he had made significant advances in the general state of Malawi, and thus he should be allowed to continue to serve the country. Still others argued for extension on the grounds that there was simply no other man qualified to represent the UDF should lawmakers decide that Muluzi could not run for president again (Muula & Chanika, 2004). It was ultimately the continued bid on behalf of Muluzi and his supporters for a third presidential term that led to a decline in his popularity in the final months of his presidency. The UDF members supporting the Muluzi presidency, after learning that the Open Term Bill was doomed to fail, placed their faith in the hands of Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika. The party leaders selected Mutharika as their new front man and succeeded in winning the 2004 presidential election, though receiving less than forty percent of votes cast (IFES, 2007) Muluzi was not out of the Malawian political scene by any means, even after the 2004 presidential election. The UDF nominated the former president to resume his post as chairman of the political party, having been the only person to have held the position since the creation of the party.

6 The March 1992 letter, entitled “Living Our Faith,” was supported by various religious groups around Malawí and led to eventual involvement by supranational organizations, including the United Nations, that urged Banda to consider the much needed reforms. Nearly one year later, in February 1993, a second letter was issued, entitled “Choosing our Future,” which encouraged Malawians to continue to strive for their deserved human rights (Cullen, 1994; Muluzi et al., 1999).
DATA

It has been less than four years since Mutharika won the fourth Malawian presidential election, and as a result, little published material exists in texts or academic journals documenting the events of his presidency up until the present time. An abundance of materials exist, however, documenting the presidencies of Dr. Hastings Kumuzu Banda and Dr. Bakili Muluzi, the first and second presidents of Malawi, respectively (e.g., Chiume, 1992; Cullen, 1994; Muluzi, 2002; Muluzi et al., 1999; Muula & Chanika, 2004). Muula and Chanika (2004) is the only work listed above to mention Mutharika, and even then, the reference to the future president is only that he ran as a candidate for the presidency with support of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The majority of materials that one can find pertaining to Mutharika and his presidency are available in electronic format through various websites, most of which recount a timeline of significant events that have taken place since he took office on May 24, 2004. The most valuable material that has documented the course of the Mutharika presidency is available on the website of the government of Malawi (www.malawi.gov.mw), including a complete archive of presidential speeches delivered by Mutharika since the beginning of his administration. This archive includes speeches given on a multitude of occasions, including the presidential inauguration, addresses to the Malawian Parliament, and visits abroad. An important addition to this material is the archived webcast recordings of the presidential addresses given annually at the United Nations General Assembly. One can locate the addresses given by Mutharika from 2004 through 2007 at the United Nations Webcast Archive (http://www.un.org/webcast/ga.html).

In addition to the information contained on websites of the government of Malawi and the United Nations, one can find information about the Mutharika presidency from the websites of news agencies such as BBC News: Africa (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm), Afrol News (http://www.afrol.com/countries/malawi), and Africa News (http://www.africa-interactive.net). While the information published by these networks is journalistic rather than scholarly, the articles have highlighted important recent events in the Mutharika presidency, including commentary and criticism of his various policies. The articles discuss the focus of the president on strengthening the economic status of Malawi (IPS, 2007) and his championing of a strict anti-corruption policy in the Malawian government (Hennig, 2007b).

Information on the Mutharika presidency, available from the website of the Central Intelligence Agency (World Factbook: Malawi, 2006) explains the split that occurred between Mutharika and the UDF shortly after his presidency began. The site cites the Mutharika anti-corruption policy as the main fodder that forged a rift between the president and the party on whose recommendation he became president. Mutharika has since formed a new political party supporting his administration called the Democratic Progressive Party. Other articles discuss aims by the UDF, under the chairmanship of former president Muluzi, to impeach Mutharika and support a run by Muluzi for a third term as president in the 2009 election (Hennig, 2007a). The growing struggle of the Mutharika administration to gain and maintain support for their agenda at home and abroad has echoed in the annual addresses given by the president over the course of his presidency at the United Nations General Assembly meetings. Recent events reported by Afrol News and Africa News signal a culmination of unrest on both political and economic levels that may likely result in a true domestic crisis in Malawi in the near future (e.g., Hennig, 2007a; Hennig, 2007b; IPS, 2007; Wines, 2008).

The speeches chosen for analysis in this study were drawn from the United Nations General Assembly webcast archive available from the website of the United Nations (http://www.un.org/webcast/ga.html), a resource available since 2004. These General Assembly meetings span several days in September and/or October of each year. The regular
Discursive Strategies in Political Speech

intervals of these addresses provide a distinct timeline on which one can compare both domestic and international events shaping Malawi. These addresses cover, for all intents and purposes, the entirety of the Mutharika presidency, and therefore, in and of themselves, span a period of time in which significant national events occurred involving Mutharika and his administration.

Four addresses were selected for analysis drawn from the United Nations General Assembly meetings in the years 2004 through 2007. The address given by Mutharika in 2004, at a date just four months after his inauguration in March, marks his first official address to the global community, as stated by the president in the address itself. This address, ‘Sharing Global Prosperity’ highlights the many challenges facing Malawi and other poor nations, particularly in Africa. The addresses from the years that follow allow the reader to track many key issues from a chronological standpoint, including the changing goals of the United Nations as a whole, the support given to poor nations from the international community, and more specifically, the response of the Malawian government to this support and their successes and failures in putting it to appropriate uses in order to achieve the higher goals set forth by the United Nations for improving and developing the Third World. The first address in 2004 is the only one of the three given by Mutharika where political troubles in Malawi were not rampant. February 2005 brought the first political troubles to the forefront of Malawian news, as former president Bakili Muluzi began his quest to run for a third term of office (IPS, 2007). In his most recent 2007 speech, in spite of continued political unrest and the death of his wife, Mutharika portrays himself as the strong and confident leader of a nation that has progressed in achieving the Millennium Development Goals set forth by the United Nations.7

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study of political speech, rather than searching for the sociocultural or anthropological input influencing the words of Bingu wa Mutharika, will focus on the discursive strategies that the third president of Malawi uses in his addresses that assist him in rallying support for his agenda and aligning himself with supporters and other colleagues in the international community. The traditional theoretical framework within which studies aiming to address such issues fall is critical discourse analysis. Gee (1999) describes this method of analysis by referring to language in an Aristotelian light, explaining that every sentence that we speak or write is laden with political undertones and overtones that color our words with expressions of our underlying political tendencies. He suggests that features of our speech, including our lexicon, style, stance, and use of rhetoric define what we perceive as “normal,” “acceptable,” “real,” and “possible,” as well as how speech reveals our perspective of the world and the power or dominance that we hope to gain by means of the words we choose to employ. This description by Gee echoes the ideals for a framework of critical discourse analysis as developed in seminal works by linguists in decades past, including many that relate the ‘politics’ of language to actual political discourse (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1985, 1989, 1995, 2003; Obeng, 2002a, 2002b; Shapiro, 1989; van Dijk, 1993, 1998).

Van Dijk defines the intended scope and purpose of critical discourse analysis by explaining that such an analysis explores the role that discourse plays in producing and/or challenging dominance; either social or political (van Dijk, 1993). He then elaborates on this

framework by defining key principles of concern, including the concept of dominance; the exercise of social power. The analytical framework that van Dijk has proposed, in which the analyst searches for structures, strategies, and properties of speech that contribute to the negotiation of dominance permits us to look at specific linguistic tools (lexical, syntactic, grammatical, and structural) that Mutharika has used in negotiating the dominance of his political ideologies and agenda over those who oppose him. Such a critical analysis of the linguistic structures that Mutharika has used to “do politics” in his speeches will permit us to gather some insight into the discursive strategies that this president employed in order to relay the political and economic status of Malawi at various points throughout his presidency and to rally support from his colleagues on both the international and global levels.

ANALYSIS

The remaining portion of this study will discuss several discursive strategies used by President Mutharika in speeches to the General Assembly of the United Nations in mustering support for his nation and in drawing attention to the political and economic status of Malawi. We will view these strategies as evidenced from analysis of his four addresses to the United Nations General Assembly in the years 2004 through 2007. The discursive mechanisms and propaganda that Mutharika uses throughout the course of these four speeches allow the reader to consider diachronically the linguistic changes that Mutharika made in each annual appeal to the international community. Analysis will reveal that the types and number of particular components used in these addresses correlate largely with the rapidly changing national and political environment in Malawi. Among the discursive mechanisms that Mutharika alters throughout these addresses are shift of focus through pronoun choice, strengthening of rhetoric through lexicon and pronoun pairings, and altering the structural organization of the addresses over time to convey the ongoing tale of the political and economic situation in Malawi.

Pronouns and Position

Recent work by a new generation of critical discourse analysts on the use of pronouns in political speech for the expression of identity (Allen, 2007; Íñigo-Mora, 2004; Matu & Lubbe, 2007; Oktar, 2001), in-group versus out-group status (Adetunji, 2006; Bousofara-Omar, 2006), solidarity (Kuo, 2002), stance (Ragnarsdóttir & Strömqvist, 2005), and other such political constructs points toward the continued importance of developing new methodologies and theories based on the use of these linguistic devices in the speeches and addresses of politicians and other spin doctors in countries spanning the globe. These works only serve to complement the vast array of studies on the subject in the areas of pragmatics, linguistics, and linguistic anthropology provided by well-known critical discourse analysts as mentioned earlier in this work (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1989, 2003; Obeng, 2002a; van Dijk, 1993, 1998).
portions of each address, specifically the second section mentioned in which material relates specifically to Malawi and its domestic climate. We will return to a deeper consideration of this structure below.

These General Assembly addresses span four years, and as such they cover the entire length of the Mutharika administration. At the point where Mutharika gave his first United Nations General Assembly address in September 2004, he had just successfully run for the presidency as a hand-picked candidate for the UDF political party. Although he carried just over one-third of the popular vote in the election, he acquired the presidential office. Mutharika may have lacked considerable support from the people of Malawi, but he had the full support of the parliamentary majority of the UDF; the strongest political party of the time. The 2004 address, entitled “Sharing Global Prosperity” is replete with statements of his goals and aspirations for a strong and prosperous future for the small African nation. The underlying theme of the entire speech is that of empowerment, both of Malawi as a nation in the international arena and of every Malawian. A considerable portion of the speech emphasizes a vision of future prosperity for Malawi while appealing to the international community for monetary support, certain modern technologies, and raw materials. While his addresses in the years that follow have similar content, Mutharika frames his participation and responsibility in the successes and failures of Malawi, as well as the strength of his appeal to the international community by altering the types and frequency of specific pronouns used throughout his addresses. The concept of ‘framing’ in discourse is most famously explicated by Goffman (1981), while those regarding the construction of responsibility and distancing through pronoun use have been explored in more recent work by Bolivar (1999) and also by Kuo (2002).

The pronoun choices that Mutharika makes in his speech are often those that emphasize his inclusion in the nation as a whole, as well as the inclusion of all Malawians in the considerations of the government. Such strategic use of pronouns that assist politicians in connecting themselves with their fellow countrymen and women is not uncommon in political discourse (Obeng, 2002a). Mutharika utilizes such traditional in-group pronouns of unity, such as we, our, and us in his deliveries which convey his ongoing intent to create a society of oneness and solidarity to the international community and ultimately to his Malawian constituents at home. Although he uses such in-group pronouns, Mutharika never hesitates to place himself as the focus of responsibility for the development and implementation of the various programs and policies that he explains throughout his addresses.

Mutharika uses a surprisingly consistent amount of in-group pronouns throughout the four address sections considered in this study. The actual numbers range between 27 and 33 occurrences of either we, our, or us, with the highest number occurring in 2005 and the lowest amount in 2006. The number of occurrences of I and my appear to be more telling, as the range falls from 24 in 2007 to only 6 occurrences in 2006. The percentage of singular to plural pronoun use is highest in 2007 at 43% and lowest in 2006 at 18% of the total first person pronouns used in the delivery. Bolivar (1999) suggests that the use of such first person singular and plural pronouns indexes the level of solidarity and responsibility the speaker wishes to portray. The data gathered from the four addresses by Mutharika suggests that, rather than alter the occurrence of the first person plural to respond to issues of solidarity or oneness with Malawians, Mutharika instead alters the percentage use of I and me in years in which he chooses to enhance either his authority (in 2005) or responsibility for success (in 2007). Recall that Mutharika gave his 2005 General Assembly address just a few short months after political struggles emerged between him and his former ally Bakili Muluzi in February 2005 (IPS, 2007). One can therefore surmise that portraying presidential authority to the international community in such a turbid political climate through this address would be justified. The 2007 General Assembly speech provides a slightly different motivation for the
pronoun choices mentioned above. This address, “Malawi and the Millennium Development Goals,” reports on successes that the Mutharika administration has had in the fight against maternal and child mortality, disease, and low standards for education in spite of the ongoing political struggles plaguing Malawi. Mutharika readily claims responsibility for these successes by means of his pronoun use throughout the address. Wilson (1990) describes similar instances of “self-positioning” in reference to specific political figures in the United States, although rather than dispersing the level of responsibility through pronoun use from a default first person singular, Mutharika often shifts pronouns from the first person plural to the singular to emphasize his role in a given situation or outcome.

A comparison of the sentences used to open the portion of each address concerning the specific interests of Malawi is telling in terms of the distance and responsibility that Mutharika exhibits to the General Assembly over the span of four years. The examples below illustrate a contrast between the exclusive use of first person plural pronouns in 2004 with the exclusive use of the corresponding singular pronouns in 2007. The 2005 address is markedly different in that Mutharika uses a combination of pronouns, including the out-group second person plural you to address the Assembly while substituting Malawi for the typical first person plural pronoun.

2004: “We have discovered that we need to seriously transform the economic structures in our country to begin to produce wealth.”
2005: “Let me assure you that Malawi appreciates the role played by the international community and the United Nations, in efforts to eradicate poverty…”
2007: “I wish to focus my address on Malawi’s efforts to meet the objective of the Millennium Development Goals.”

The use of the first person plural pronouns in the 2004 address places an emphasis on in-group solidarity at the onset of the Mutharika administration, while the use of first person singular pronouns in the 2007 address signals a claim of responsibility by Mutharika for overcoming political and economic odds. The 2005 example provides an interesting question about the status of different types of inclusive pronouns. Íñigo-Mora (2004) explores a variety of uses of the first person plural pronoun we in which she suggests that typical use of this pronoun in such addresses would be considered “rhetorical” or “generic.” One could propose, however, that the use of the collective term Malawi, rather than I and the people of Malawi, as Mutharika uses elsewhere, acts as another type of impersonal we. Because this word is impersonal, on a scale of general pronominal distancing (Rees, 1983), using Malawi rather than we is an effective way to create distance from oneself. Such an interpretation, that Mutharika is distancing himself from the in-group in 2005, echoes the political climate of Malawi at that time.

Mutharika uses second and third person pronouns only five times over the span of four addresses; their (x2) in 2004, you (x1) in 2005, their (x1) in 2007 and those (x1) in 2007. The president used no second or third person pronouns in his 2006 speech. The two instances in which Mutharika uses the third person plural possessive pronoun their in his 2004 address are in reference to the international community as a whole.

On their part, the industrialized nations need to seriously address the major concern of the poor countries.

---

8 See Note 7 for information about the Millennium Development Goals.
We want to walk with the industrialized nations. We don’t want to be carried on their shoulders.

Studies of politeness and indirectness (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987; Brown & Levinson, 1978; Fairclough, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Haugh, 2006; Martí, 2006; Nakane, 2006; Obeng, 2000, 2002a) may lead one to question the use of such out-group pronouns in this direct and potentially face-threatening manner. One can compare, however, the use of third person plural pronouns in both the 2004 and 2007 speeches with the use of a higher percentage of first person singular pronouns in the addresses of the same two years. On the scale of general pronominal distancing (Rees, 1983), these two sets of pronouns are most dissimilar. On the basis of such pronoun use, and drawing from conclusions above about the use of a high percentage of first person singular pronouns, one can posit a correlation between portrayed authority/responsibility by Mutharika and a subsequent tendency to distance himself through the use of other out-group pronouns.

Pronouns and Lexicon

Each of the addresses by Mutharika highlighted a particular theme regarding the relationship of Malawi to the international community. In each instance, the president chose colorful and charismatic lexical terms to strengthen his rhetoric and therefore to convey his concerns about the policies of the United Nations and about the status of his nation and other poor nations in the global community. The analysis below will illustrate that rhetoric in addresses by Mutharika is strengthened further by the collocation of lexical terms with specific pronouns. Work by Adetunji (2006) has similarly posited that speakers pair their intentions and attitudes expressed in speech with their choice of pronouns and other indexicals. Seminal work by van Dijk (1995) and Bakhtin (1981) and more recent work by Matu & Lubbe (2007) and Oktar (2001) highlight the importance of such choices in the expression of position, identity, goals, voice, attitudes, and other such indicators of political ideology. Boussofara-Omar (2006) suggests, in her study of Tunisian President Ben Ali, that one of the main components of successful political discourse is the arousal of pathos and the establishment of ethos by speakers, both of which one can accomplish through a careful selection of words.

President Mutharika appeals to both pathos and ethos in his addresses, although he accomplishes these tasks in unique manners. In arousing pathos from the international community on behalf of his and other poor nations, Mutharika highlights a number of situations spanning from healthcare, to education, economy, and politics to rally support in several different forms from the United Nations and its constituent members. Throughout the series of four General Assembly speeches, Mutharika places his pathos-generating focus on a different level according to the immediate task at hand, both internationally and in Malawi itself. Mutharika used his 2004 address, “Sharing Global Prosperity,” to appeal to the international community in a more generalized way by focusing, as the title suggests, on issues plaguing his and other nations on a global level. His description of global crises stemming from disease and poverty includes a number of vivid adjectives and verbs that highlight his rhetoric. Mutharika completes his greetings and opening remarks in the following excerpt, where the focus of the message points away from Malawi and towards the global community stemming from his use of only a single pronoun.

“The title of my statement is “Sharing Global Prosperity.” This is to underscore the fact that one of the most daunting challenges facing the developing countries today
is to achieve a balance in economic transformation and growth between the rich and the poor countries so as to eradicate poverty among the latter. Poverty is manifested in a number of ways, including food shortages, the spread of readily-preventable diseases, inadequate potable water, primary health care...poverty is degrading and erodes human dignity.”

Of interest in this excerpt is the series of oppositions that Mutharika introduces into his address that have the potential to generate pathos in his colleagues. Not only does his message highlight the difficulties facing developing countries, but it also introduces distance between the developing versus developed nations in the opposition of rich and poor. One can find two more subtle oppositions spoken by Mutharika in his description and juxtaposition of diseases and health care. By describing diseases as “readily-preventable,” Mutharika implies that developing nations would defeat this difficulty easily with the proper resources. Water, a necessity for life, he then describes as “inadequate” in these nations. While it is far beyond the scope of this study to include discussion on the many different views on ideology and intent as it relates to discourse, cognition, and philosophy, I appeal to the information found in van Dijk (1995) for an overview of the semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive notions that one gains access to through the study of discourse.

In the 2005 General Assembly address, Mutharika moves away from global considerations of poverty and disease that he highlighted in his 2004 address, and in turn, places the focus of his address on his own nation and the ways in which these crises affect his fellow Malawians. Mutharika, once again, returns to a skillful use of pronouns that place focus on Malawi. While the excerpt included above from the 2004 address about global poverty is devoid of all but one pronoun, the following excerpt from the 2005 address is strengthened by their inclusion. As the severity of the issues presented increases in each sentence, the distance (Rees, 1983) portrayed through pronouns decreases. The final two sentences of the excerpt, although lacking a pronoun, express even stronger content through the use of the verbs claim and kill.

“Malawi faces serious problems in instituting an effective system of political economic governance. My country continues to face critical challenges in determining our political agenda, which in turn affects our development efforts. We still face extreme poverty, food shortages, hunger and malnutrition. HIV/AIDS continues to claim more lives. Malaria is still killing millions each year.”

A similar change in pronouns from sentence to sentence that serves to affect the distance portrayed by the speaker comes in the 2006 General Assembly address, “In Search of Global Partnership for Development.” In this instance again, the collocated lexical content dictates the appropriate pronoun use by the president.

“Malawi seeks international partnership in HIV and AIDS prevention management. We recognize that our country on its own cannot successfully wage the battle against HIV and AIDS without the full support of the international community. I am happy to say that during the past two years, Malawi has made tremendous progress in AIDS awareness campaigns.”

9 Following the discussion above, I will consider Malawi to be an impersonal first person singular pronoun.
This excerpt follows the same pattern of decreasing pronoun distance as observed above in the 2005 address excerpt. The lexical content points towards an alternate analysis however. Rather than arousing pathos in members of the General Assembly, as found in the 2005 excerpt, the 2006 excerpt begins with an appeal to the international community for partnership and ends with the expression of an achievement by the Mutharika administration on behalf of his nation. The initial appeal to the international community is a potentially face-threatening act, as it inflicts an imposition on those members of the community to act on behalf of Malawi. Critical discourse analysts have written extensively on the necessity to minimize such face threats, as well is to minimize impoliteness or directness through pronominal distancing (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987; Marti, 2006; Obeng, 2002a, and others). Mutharika uses an impersonal form of the first person pronoun, as argued for above, thereby distancing himself from the request and decreasing the immediate face threat to his colleagues.

The final sentence of the excerpt reveals that Mutharika also constructs his ethos, dominance, or authority through the use of the fronted first person singular pronoun. Mutharika expresses the achievement by his administration in the ongoing fight against disease that he has highlighted in his two previous General Assembly speeches in 2004 and 2005. Once again, one can link the ideas of responsibility and authority with the use of such pronouns, however in this instance, the lexical content following particular pronouns allows one to construct the motivation behind the pronoun choices that the president makes. Boussofara-Omar (2006), van Dijk (1993), and Bolivar (1999) offer addition discussion on these types of relationships.

**Structural Organization**

The final discursive element that we will explore diachronically in the General Assembly addresses of President Bingu wa Mutharika to the United Nations concerns the macro-structure of the addresses themselves. A closer look at the macro-structural organization of the 2005, 2006, and 2007 addresses reveals alterations in their structure correlating with changes in the political agenda of the president. In the section above concerning pronouns and focus, we introduced the reader to the observation that the General Assembly addresses given by Mutharika under consideration in this study consisted of three distinct sections. The first of these sections contained words of welcome and statements to the General Assembly body as a whole. The section that followed, in each instance, contained information that focused specifically on Malawi, its place in the international community, and ultimately how its status, both politically and economically, relate to its role in the international community. The analysis above on pronouns and focus draws from this section of the addresses. The final portion of the addresses contained material that shifted away from Malawi proper to more general concerns, as well as closing remarks.

The analysis below concerning the macro-structural features of three General Assembly addresses argues that Mutharika altered the composition of his address on a structural level in response to developments in his political agenda over the span of three years. This analysis draws on the opinion set forth in van Dijk (1977) that one can consider such macro-structures analogous to lower level interpretations about focus, motivation, and ideology of the speaker.

Before delving into the structural features of the addresses, it is important to consider a recurring theme in the content of the 2005 and 2006 addresses, specifically the championing by Mutharika of the Republic of China (hereafter Taiwan) and his push
for the acceptance of this nation into the United Nations. One finds evidence for these motivations when considering the ongoing struggle between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (hereafter China) during this span of time to assert their individual influences in Malawi (Wines, 2008). Wines (2008) indicates that prior negotiations between Taiwan and Malawi ultimately failed upon more appealing offers in the eyes of the Mutharika administration from China. This struggle echoes in the three General Assembly addresses given by Mutharika, however indirectly. There is no mention of this situation in the 2004 United Nations address.

The sectional organization of the 2005 address is similar to that mentioned above, in that it consists of opening remarks, material specifically about Malawi, and a section of closing remarks. The 14:45 minute-long speech is organized as follows: opening 2:19 (~15%), Malawi focus 8:40 (~60%), and closing 4:46 (~33%). The closing section of this address begins by entreat the General Assembly to consider reform of its policies on eligibility for membership. Mutharika draws comparisons to the independence of Taiwan with analogous happenings in the former Soviet Union, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Singapore and then rallies for the United Nations to uphold similar standards in considering Taiwanese membership.

The content of the 2006 General Assembly address clearly indicates that the United Nations did not grant membership to Taiwan, and thus Mutharika responds by fronting important formation about their offer of membership to Montenegro in his address. Rather than reserving such discussion for the closing section of his address, Mutharika inserts a 33-second statement within his opening remarks congratulating the President of Montenegro and his people on their recent invitation for membership. He provides no mention of Taiwan at that time but later returns to the subject after a shortened section focusing on Malawi to entreat the United Nations once again to offer membership to Taiwan. The total time devoted to the specific concerns of Malawians is decreased from 60% of the address in 2005 to only 45% in 2006. The opening and closing remarks, including information concerning Montenegro and Taiwan, comprise the other 55% of the address. Boussofara-Omar (2006) refers to similar manipulations of political speech, such as altering sentence structure, making purposeful grammatical mistakes, and shuffling word order, as the development of “new discursive authority” and “a presidential voice in the making.” Therefore, one can argue that, if macro-structural alterations such as those mentioned in this analysis are analogous to lower level discursive constituents as suggested by van Dijk (1977), then this is yet another way, in addition to shifting focus through pronouns and strengthening rhetoric through lexical choices, that Mutharika is portraying responsibility and authority throughout these addresses in response to a changing political agenda. A more drastic change to the macro-structure of the addresses came in the 2007 General Assembly speech in which Mutharika devoted over fifteen minutes (nearly 90%) of his address to Malawian concerns and only 10% of his time to opening remarks, while omitting any remarks about Taiwan. This foreshadows the announcement in early 2008 that the Mutharika administration chose to forgo economic partnership with Taiwan in lieu of a more favorable opportunity to partner with China (Wines, 2008).

**CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the history of the Mutharika administration from a sociopolitical standpoint, as well as events preceding his inauguration that have had an effect on the political, economic, and social status of the nation. Analysis highlighting
specific discursive components used by the president of Malawi in four General Assembly addresses delivered to the United Nations over a period of four years has illustrated that Mutharika used specific pronouns that shift focus and responsibility towards and away from him on different occasions for different means. This analysis also revealed that the collocation of specific pronouns with key lexical items has the ability to strengthen the weight of rhetoric. A comparison of these addresses over the span of the Mutharika presidency suggests that the alteration of these components in addresses by the president correlates with the changing political and economic climate of Malawi and with the exercise of authority and responsibility for Malawian concerns by the president. A final component that Mutharika changes over the span of his General Assembly addresses is the macro-structure of the addresses themselves. The suggestion that these macro-structural changes are analogous to alterations of lower discourse components and accomplish a political purpose is supported in other work in the critical discourse analysis framework and is strengthened by comparative study of these General Assembly addresses.

REFERENCES


