

Initiator for Generating Successive Applause: Verbal Techniques in George W. Bush's Address*

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the verbal strategies that a public speaker can use to generate successive applause from an audience. Successive applause is generated by the use of a verbal device called a “list” (Iwai 2014). This list strategy, however, does not function to elicit audience applause in itself; rather, it needs to be produced after a particular kind of utterance, which I call an “initiator”. In this paper, applying a conversation analytic (CA) approach (cf. Atkinson 1984a; Sacks et al. 1974), the functions of the initiator will be explored. The data used come from George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union address.

The background of this study, including a brief review of related works and the subject to be examined, will be provided in the next section. Section 3 will then demonstrate how an initiator makes successive applause generation with a list possible. Based on this analysis, in section 4 I will investigate another function of the initiator relative to the speaker-audience turn exchange configuration, i.e. the shifting of the turn exchange configuration from the normal asymmetric one to a turn-by-turn symmetric one.

2. Background

The study of public speeches has traditionally focused on written texts, which often exclude the audience and their behaviors from analysis (e.g., Brock and Scott 1980; Dobson 1919; Kennedy 1994). Since Atkinson's (1984a) pioneering study, however, researchers have explored public speeches from the perspective of speaker-audience interaction (e.g., Brodine 1986; Gray and Potter 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986; Keith and Whittenberger-Keith 1988/1989).¹ Adopting the methodology of conversation analysis (CA), which utilizes detailed verbatim transcripts based on video and audio recordings, these works have systematically analyzed mutual interplay between the speaker and the audience. Among others, Atkinson (1984a, 1984b) and Heritage and Greatbatch

(1986) made the important discovery that audience applause never occurs randomly in the course of speech but rather does so in particular sequential positions as the oration proceeds.

Iwai (2014), in this line of research, explored how public speakers invite successive applause from an audience. The analysis showed that successive applause is routinely generated by means of a verbal device called a “list”. The list is a widely known rhetorical device and typically has a structure such that an identical part of speech (a list item) is produced repetitively within a single utterance.²

(1) (From Bush’s 2001 State of the Union address)

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01      Bush:      But the only way to defeat terrorism  (0.1)
02                  as a threat to our way of life (1.0) is to
03      L1-> stop it, (1.0)
04      L2-> eliminate it (0.5)
05      L3-> and destroy it where it grows. (0.7)
06 Audience:      xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
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In (1), three verb phrases, “stop it” (line 03), “eliminate it” (line 04), and “destroy it” (line 05), construct a list, being produced in a repetitive fashion within a single utterance (lines 01-05). Lists like this are a potent tool for inviting audience applause (line 06) (cf. Atkinson 1984a: 57-72, 1984b: 384-391; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986: 125-127).

However, lists used for successive applause generation do not take such a prototypical organization of the previous example (1); they consist of list items, each of which serves as an independent utterance per se (by saying “independent utterance”, I mean something equivalent to a “turn-constructual unit” (TCU) in conversation³). A completion point comes each time a list item has been uttered, which hence leads a speaker to be able to generate applause successively. This process can be presented schematically as the following simple transcript diagram:

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Speaker:      First list item
Audience:     Applause
Speaker:      Second list item
Audience:     Applause
((List item-applause exchange continues))
Speaker:      Final list item
Audience:     Applause
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Here is a fragment from George W. Bush's State of the Union address from 2002 within which the speaker generates successive applause from the audience.⁴

(2) (From Bush's 2002 State of the Union address)

Bush: ... WE MUST MAKE SOCIAL SECURITY FINANCIALLY
Stable (0.5) AND ALLOW PERSONAL RETIREMENT
ACCOUNTS (0.4) FOR YOUNGER WORKERS WHO CHOOSE
THEM. (0.4)

Audi: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

01 -> Bush: **Members, you and I will work together in the**
02 **months ahead on other issues.**
03 (1.0)

04 L1-> <Productive ↑farm ↓policy.>[.hhhh
05 Audi: [Ya::[y. Yay.]
06 => [x-xxxxxxx] xxxXXXXXXXXX=
07 =XXXX[XXxxxxxxxxxxx]

08 L2-> Bush: [A cleaner en]vironment[:.
09 => Audi: [x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx=
10 =XXxx[xxxx]

11 L3-> Bush: [Broa]der home ownership, (.)
12 ESPECIALLY AMONG MINORITIE[S.
13 => Audi: [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx=
14 =XXXXxxx[xxx]

15 L4-> Bush: [And wa:ys to encourage the good
16 work of charities, (0.5) ↓and faith-based
17 group[s.
18 => Audi: [x-xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx-x-x
19 Bush: I ask you to join me on these important domestic
20 issues (.) ((Talk continues.))

In (2), Bush produces a list organized by four list items in lines 04, 08, 11, and 15 (indicated by arrows with L1, L2, L3, and L4). Note that each list item is an independent utterance (TCU) in its own right and receives audience applause afterward (indicated by arrows '=>'). These rapid turn exchanges between the speaker's utterances and the audience's applause thus create a sequence of successive applause generation.

However, the point is that these list items never have the power to elicit audience applause on their own; to that end, they need to be produced as *applaudable*. What makes this possible is the utterance in lines 01-02 ("Members, you and I will work together in the months ahead on other issues."), which is produced just prior to the start of the list. Hereafter, I call this type of utterance an

“initiator” for successive applause generation. In this paper, I will analyze how this utterance allows the speaker to carry out subsequent successive applause generation with a list (section 3); then, the analysis will focus on another functional aspect that the initiator has relative to the turn exchange configuration of oratory (section 4).

3. Initiation of Successive Applause Generation

Successive applause generation through lists is made possible by two main functions of the initiator: *projection of a list* and *projection of applaudable actions*.

First, list projection owes a lot to the use of a “prospective indexical” (Goodwin 1996: 17-19), which is a term that “cannot be retrieved from the extant context” (Clayman 2013: 156). Goodwin (1996) explains:⁵

The sense of what constitute the “problem” [a prospective indexical] is not yet available to recipients but is instead something that has to be discovered subsequently as the interaction proceeds. Recipients are set the task of attending to subsequent events in order to find what particulars constitute “the problem” [a prospective indexical] on this specific occasion. (Goodwin 1996: 18; bracket author).⁶

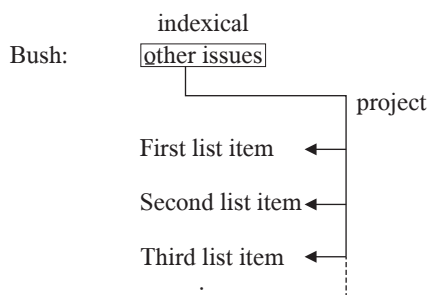
Utterances that include a prospective indexical become referentially ambiguous and hence “project further talk to disambiguate what is being said” (Clayman 2013: 156). In Bush’s initiator in example (2), repeated below in (2)’, the phrase “other issues” (line 02) is used for its prospective indexical.

(2)'

01 -> Bush: Members, you and I will work together in the
02 months ahead on other issues.

This utterance is referentially vague in terms of what specific topics constitute “other issues”. This phrase then gives the audience an idea that such specifications will be provided in the course of subsequent interaction. Furthermore, because the prospective indexical (“other issues”) takes the plural form, the utterance also forecasts that such specifications will be delivered in a listing manner, as Figure 1 below illustrates.

Figure 1. Projection of list



Thus, an initiator projects, or helps the audience to anticipate, that the speaker will begin a list. This projection is then confirmed by the speaker's production of the list items in lines 04, 08, 11, and 15 as “<Productive ↑farm ↓policy.>”, “A cleaner environment.”, “Broader home ownership, (.) ESPECIALLY AMONG MINORITIES.”, and “wa:ys to encourage the good work of charities, (0.5) ↓and faith-based groups.” (see (2) in page 3).

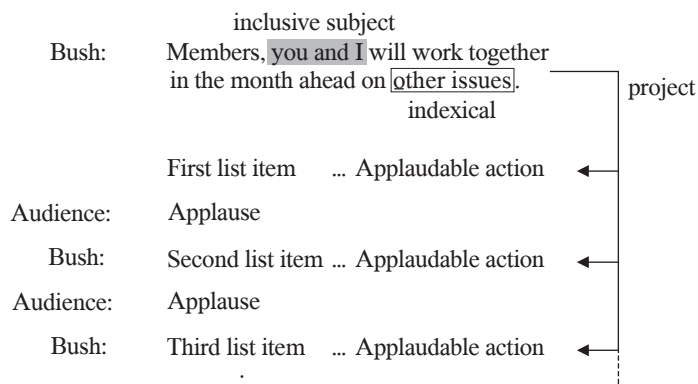
Second, initiators have the function of projecting applaudable actions. Atkinson (1984b: 375-377, 1985: 167), by analyzing large amounts of data from political speeches, found that audience applause occurs with overwhelming regularity after a speaker has just performed actions that are recognizable either as praising/boasting “us” or attacking/ criticizing “them”. The former includes actions such as declaring future plans, presenting policies, praising party's activities, and introducing someone; the latter involves actions like attacking or criticizing opposing parties, nations, and so forth.

Initiators project that praising/boasting applaudable actions are forthcoming. There are two main constructional elements that allow this projection. The first element is an inclusive subject that sets both the speaker and the recipient(s) as its objectives. In Bush's initiator, “you and I” is selected for the subject, which includes both Bush (speaker) and the audience members (recipients). This subject alerts the audience that the upcoming utterance will be about “us”. The second element is the prospective indexical, “other issues”, and what kind of content it foreshadows. By hearing “other issues”, it is easy for the audience to assume that the phrase includes some details that Congress must address to improve American society. In other words, the prospective indexical forecasts something praiseworthy and approvable.

With these two constructional elements, Bush's initiator is readily understandable to the audience as prefacing applaudable actions about “us” (i.e., declaring praiseworthy and approvable plans). Furthermore, because the initiator projects a list, it allows the audience to predict that these

actions will be implemented consecutively through prospective list items. These processes of action projection can be visualized as follows.

Figure 2. Projection of applaudable actions



Thus, by having two projecting functions—projection of a list and projection of applaudable actions—Bush’s initiator signals that there is a following list that will give the audience an opportunity to applaud.

Bush’s verbal strategy motivates audience behaviors in two ways (the discussion of this paragraph was inspired by Goodwin [1996]; Mandelbaum [2013]; Sacks [1974]). First, it guides what type of response the audience should have. Under oratorical circumstances, the audience has a number of choices for displaying their stance to the speaker, such as applause, laughs, boos, heckles, jeers, and so forth. Among these alternatives, the initiator designates applause as an appropriate response that the audience should take next. Second, it also indicates where in the subsequent course of speech the audience should produce the selected response. Because the audience presumably knows that the speaker is attempting successive applause generation with a list, they can try to align with this projected trajectory of interaction by applauding each time a list item is uttered. In this way, while the initiator provides the framework for interpreting the speaker’s subsequent actions, at the same time it regulates how the audience should behave next.

Other examples of initiators found in my data other than Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address include, for instance, the following three sentences (*italics and dotted lines indicate a prospective indexical and an inclusive subject, respectively*).

(3a) “Together, we should take *the next steps*.”

(From Bush's 2008 State of the Union address)

(3b) “Tonight, we face *new and sudden national challenges*.”

(From Bush's 2011 State of the Union address)

(3c) “There are- (.) *many other ways* that Congress can ↑help.”

(From Bush's 2007 State of the Union address)

Three phrases, “next steps”, “new and sudden national challenges”, and “many other ways” are used for the respective prospective indexicals, all of which are in the plural. (3a) and (3b) have “we” as the inclusive subject, involving both the speaker and the audience. As for (3c), the word “Congress” can be interpreted as implicitly inclusive because the audience is made up of Congress members. All of these constructional features project the subsequent list that will be applaudable.

4. Shift of Turn Exchange Configuration

In section 3, I have demonstrated how an initiator makes it possible to generate successive applause by signaling that there is a forthcoming list containing applaudable items. In this section, I examine another function of initiators in relation to the turn exchange configuration⁷ of oratory, i.e. shifting from the normal asymmetric configuration to a turn-by-turn symmetric one.

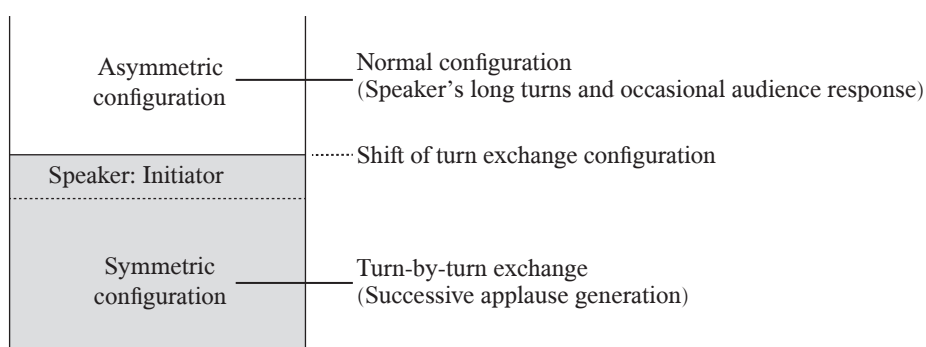
Within the context of oratory, an audience is generally restricted in how and when they can respond to what the speaker says (Atkinson 1984b: 371); they are permitted to display their stance only occasionally at certain points in the flow of speech. Turn exchanges in public speaking thus take the regular form of progressing between the speaker's long turns and occasional short responses from the audience. This structure between the speaker and the audience is quite asymmetric in terms of turn holding.

When successive applause is generated, however, things are very different. In this type of context, participants are required to suspend the normal turn exchange rules of public speeches such that the audience is expected to be involved in the ongoing oratory more frequently than usual. Through the applause of the audience that occurs each time the speaker has uttered a list item, speaker-audience turn exchanges proceed turn-by-turn in quick succession. Thus, the turn exchange configuration in the successive applause generation context is more symmetrical and more dialogical because the audience has an almost reciprocal relationship with the speaker.

While the initiator introduces a series of opportunities for successive applause, it simultaneously

shifts the speaker-audience turn exchange configuration from the normal asymmetric structure to a turn-by-turn symmetric one. Though it would appear that the shift to this more dynamic interaction requires the speaker to take advantage of some special measures, we have already seen in section 3 how tactfully the speaker constructs his initiator to achieve this. As Figure 3 illustrates below, initiating successive applause generation with this utterance is nothing more than shifting the turn exchange configuration from a normal asymmetric one to a turn-by-turn symmetric one.

Figure 3. Shift of turn exchange configuration by initiator



Thus, the initiator enables the speaker to enter into an oratorical interaction in which the audience plays the role of a substantial co-constructor of ongoing oratory.

Finally, we briefly focus on another element of Bush's initiator from example (2), repeated below in example (2)". At the beginning of this utterance, the phrase, "Members" is used relatively independently in terms of syntactic position.

(2)"

01 -> Bush: **Members,** you and I will work together in the months
02 ahead on other issues.

This word seems to serve an important role in shifting the turn exchange configuration by having the signal function that Atkinson (1984a: 50) attributes to "now" and "however". Atkinson (ibid.) points out that public speakers quite commonly use those words to initiate sequences that invite audience applause and explains the reason as that:

they [words like “now” and “however”] provide speakers with a simple and economical way of signalling to the audience that they are launching into something different from what was going on previously. And that something might, of course, turn out to be calling for additional attention, and perhaps even applause. (Atkinson 1984a: 50; bracket author) .

“Members” in line 01 also has this signal function. With its position at the beginning of the utterance, it enhances the audience’s attention and signals to them that there is an upcoming shift in the speech.⁸

Among the three other examples of initiators that I previously presented in (3a), (3b), and (3c), two of them (“Together, we should take *the next steps*.” and “Tonight, we face *new and sudden national challenges*.”) have similar types of signal words, “together” and “tonight” respectively. These words thus alert the audience about the upcoming shift in the turn exchange configuration at an early stage, before the core parts of the initiator appear.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have demonstrated how the speaker uses initiators to make it possible to successively generate applause with a list. Previous research has shown that successive applause generation is iteratively enforced with a list (Iwai 2014), but this strategy itself does not generate the applause. This study showed that list items can become applaudable by two projecting functions of the initiator: projection of a list and projection of applaudable actions. It was also demonstrated that as the initiator thus presents the framework for understanding the speaker’s subsequent utterances, it simultaneously guides audience behaviors as well. In section 4, I analyzed another function of the initiator, the shifting of the turn exchange configuration. Through the use of the initiator, the speaker shifts the turn exchange configuration from a normal asymmetric one to the more symmetrical one in which the speaker-audience exchanges progress turn-by-turn.

In this analysis, I have used a conversation analytic approach as the central procedure. This kind of interactional linguistic study allows us to elucidate the dynamic dimensions of oratory, which are obscured in traditional textual analysis. This study shows that speaker-audience interplay is based on multi-layered levels of human interaction involving ideas (semantic level) and actions and turn exchanges (pragmatic levels)¹⁰ and at the heart of it always lies participants’ mutual orientation. While it is true that oratory is a formal and systematic social activity that primarily involves the speech of one person, it never loses its interactive properties because it is created for and addressed to other people.

Notes

* I would like to thank my mentor Professor Dr. Noriko Onodera. She has guided me through this study, and her insightful comments, both general and specific, are what has allowed me to complete this paper. All errors are my own responsibility.

¹ All of these studies examine speaker-audience interactions involving applause. However, CA studies on oratory have focused on other audience behaviors in addition to applause generation. For example, Greatbatch and Clark (2002, 2003, 2005) have explored laughter as an affiliative audience response; in contrast, Clayman (1992, 1993) and McIlvenny (1996) have investigated sequential environments in which audience disaffiliation is expressed through booing and heckling.

² The following transcription conventions are used in this paper:

(0.4)	Periods of silence in tenths of seconds
(.)	A period of silence shorter than two-tenths of a second
<u>underline</u>	Stress or emphasis
co:lon	Prolongation of the immediately prior sound
↑↓	Markedly higher or lower pitch
.	Falling intonation
,	Continuing intonation
CAPS	Especially loud sounds relative to surrounding speech
< >	Slowing down
.hh	In-breath
[	Beginning of overlapping between talk and applause
]	End of overlapping between talk and applause
=	Latching, with no temporal gap between two lines
xXXXxx	Applause, with lower- and uppercase letters marking quiet and loud applause, respectively; the number of X's (or x's) does not indicate applause duration except where it overlaps with talk.

³ The definition of “turn-constructional units” (TCUs) here is based on Clayman (2013: 151). Turn-constructional units may be “sentences, clauses, phrases, and individual words. Each TCU is a coherent and self-contained utterance, recognizable in context as ‘possibly complete’” (ibid.).

⁴ This address was held at U. S. House Chamber in the United States. The audience consisted of members of Congress.

⁵ In the following excerpt, the word “problem” is used as an instance of a prospective indexical.

⁶ One prototypical sequential environment in which a prospective indexical occurs is the prefacing of a story in ordinary conversation. For example, “interesting thing” serves as a prospective indexical in the following sentence: “The most *interesting thing* happened to me today.”.

⁷ “Turn” is the concept generally used in an analysis of conversation. Clayman (2013) argues that :
spoken interaction ordinarily unfolds in accordance with the norm that participants should take turns at talk, with speaking rights thus restricted to one party at a time. (Clayman 2013: 151).
Usually, oratory progresses with participants’ orientation of “one activity at a time, the available options being either *talk* by a speaker or *response* by the audience” (Atkinson 1984b: 378; italics original). In this paper, by adopting the concept of conversational turns, I define turns of oratory as such that they are allocated either to the speaker’s talk or the audience’s response (e.g., applause); I define exchanges between them as “turn exchanges”.

⁸ In addition to that, “Members” is a vocative. Vocatives are in general used to call someone’s attention and this perspective also seems to contribute to shifting the configuration.

⁹ “Together” is also an inclusive kind of word. So it goes with the inclusive subject, “we”.

¹⁰ This labeling of levels is based on Schiffrin (1987: 24-26).

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