The present study investigated into how identity of speakers was positioned in the stories told in the political discourse. Bamberg (2013) pointed out that ‘Positioning Analysis would be best capturing the interactionally situated properties of narrating practices, and how they inform the situated practices of navigating identity.’ Membership Categorization Analysis (Sacks 1972) was used to examine the positioning of speakers and hearers.

The data for the present study was the collection of speeches delivered at the US National Democratic Convention in 2008. The focus of the analysis was placed upon the 23-minute speech delivered by a previous Presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton.

The analysis of the speech revealed that the historical stories served as at least following two functions: (1) self-identification and (2) representation as in the following example:

Example:

And I know what that can mean for every man, woman, and child in America. I’m a United States Senator because in 1848 a group of courageous women and a few brave men gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, many traveling for days and nights, to participate in the first convention on women’s rights in our history.

By telling a story of an event occurred in 1848, the speaker positioned herself as a women’s rights advocate. Before this story, the speaker was introducing herself as a politician who had been fighting for the women’s rights for more than 35 years, and the women’s advocate seems to be the category which was relevant to this situation. In addition, the speaker was constructing the identity to relate to New York, which was the state the speaker was representing as a senator.

Thus, the story-tellings in the political discourse enabled the speaker to construct multiple positionings. The present study further examined the membership categorizations constructed through the story-tellings in the political discourse.

Keywords: membership categorization, political discourse, story-telling.