A Critical Discourse Analysis of George W. Bush's Speeches on American Exceptionalism to Propagate War on Terrorism

ABSTRACT

American exceptionalism is a political philosophy with ideological rivals which lets the American people think of political conditions, such as equality, liberty, and democracy as possessions for the USA. It is based on American ideology. The study examines and analyzes the American ex-president George W. Bush's speeches by relating his language to the ideology in the speeches. The aim of the research is to reveal the effects of linguistic manipulations on ideology by linking language to the structure of a society, and to find out the impact of a combination of different ideologies on the audience. It also reveal how language is used positively and negatively to emphasize positive self-representation and negative other-representation. Therefore, it hypothesizes the question: Are Bush’s rhetoric positively or negatively perceived by his community members particularly post the September 11th events? The data selected for this study are seven speeches of Bush from the period of September 2001 till January 2002 that are analyzed linguistically and ideologically within Van Dijk’s (2005) framework. The study arrives at these conclusions: (i) Bush’s rhetoric have emphasized the positive ideologies of the Americans by repeating the positive linguistic expressions, and the negative ideologies of their opponents (the terrorists) by repeating the negative linguistic expressions. (ii) The positive self-representation is explicitly used more than negative other-representation throughout the choice of vocabulary in the speeches.

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The US political leaders have long talked about their country as an exceptional nation whose blessed destiny leads the world to the great freedom and democracy. America is exceptional in its ability to reinvest itself, overcome the past errors of judgment, toward perfect union at home and more enlightened foreign policy abroad. The war on terror is launched by US government after September attacks in 2001. These attacks lead to a moral panic to US administrations for similar attacks in the future without knowing who and where the enemy is. Accordingly, precautions are taken in advance in order to protect its people and interests all over the world.

2- Critical Discourse Analysis

Different labels were used instead of Critical discourse analysis in its first development. The label "critical linguistics" is initially used by Fairclough (1992a) (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 37). It started in the 1970s as power and discourse by R. Fowler, and other scholars to support studying "critical linguistics". Then, it was developed to global movement which was specified to reproduce relations of power in language (Van Dijk, 2008: 8). The emergence of CDA as CL was mostly in a conference held in Britain by many scholars and the focus was on language and discourse (the range of linguistic tools to analyze discourse) in the 1970s (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 2-4). For CDA, language becomes powerful when those who are in powerful positions use it. This illustrates that CDA often selects those
who are oppressed by those in powerful positions as they are responsible for oppressing them to be critically analyzed so as to remove inequalities and improve their social levels. Power is considered the major factor that it focuses on. The intertextual and recontextual elements are also rivaling discourse besides dominance and power. CDA is interested in analyzing relations of domination, and inequalities that are enacted by language (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 14-15). Fairclough (2010: 4) confirms that CDA depends on relations, dialectics, and transdiscipline. It is relational as describing how people are socially related to each other by language. It is dialectical as describing how two different elements are conforming, like language and power. Power is not simply discourse, they are different elements in the social process; discourse is partly power. They flow into each other; discourse can be internalized in power and vice versa. CDA is transdisciplinary form because it is related with different disciplines.

Van Dijk explains that CDA is not a research way, like TGG or SFL. CDA may be guided, and linked with any method approach and field in the humanities. CDA is considered as critical since it concentrates upon social problems particularly its turn in producing power misuse, or domination as it depends on the dominant group experiences (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 96-97). The main factor of its results is the practical relevance. CDA is concerned with social problems (Titicher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000: 164).

3- Frameworks of CDA

3.1 Norman Fairclough's CDA Framework

Norman Fairclough is the most influential practitioner in CDA and his approach is the one that provided the most significant contribution to CDA studies. In 1989, he presented an approach called Critical Language Study (CLS) (Fairclough, 1989: 5). He explains that it has two aims; theoretical and practical. The theoretical aim investigates in how language and power are linked together in which language can produce power. The practical aims are to investigate how language increases consciousness to establish emancipation. This approach discusses that people formulate language according to power they have which enables them to understand it. His book "Language and power" (1989) refers to his as based on various theories, mainly "Halliday's SFL", Foucault's "orders of discourse", "Gramscis's hegemony" and Habermas's "colonization of discourse" (Fairclough, 1989: 25). As it is based upon Halliday's "SFL", language is considered multifunctional since it constructs social identity to have function of identity, it relates social members in a society to have relational function, and it also forms knowledge and experiences to gain ideational function (Fairclough, 1992: 64).

3.2 Ruth Wodak's CDA Framework
Ruth Wodak’s framework is called the Discourse-Historical Approach. It relates to socio-philosophy of critical theory (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 65). It includes the dialectical relationships between interaction and the context in which they are involved. The situational context influences discourse, and in turn, discourse influences social actions (ibid). This approach seeks to facilitate the analysis of implicitly prejudiced utterances, and to assist in revealing allusion as hidden in utterances by using repertoires. One important aim of this approach is the practical relevance of its findings (Stefan, Meyer, Wdak and Eva, 2000: 165).

3.3 Van Dijk’s CDA Framework

Van Dijk has established a socio-cognitive approach which connects the structures of texts, cognition, and society. This approach consists of a triangle relationships of discourse, cognition, and society. The relation is controlled cognitively and the structures of discourse and society are changeable (Van Dijk, 2015: 64). He (2014: 23-24) states that mental models are crucial for discourse and knowledge production because they are both the starting point and the intended results of discourse; language users generally do not communicate for its own sake, but in order to transmit personal experiences and specific knowledge they have in turn acquired from other sources. Discourse and knowledge are not only intentional as representations of state of affairs, but also contextual. All discourse is produced and understood in specific communicative situations. The same discourse may be true in one situation, false or satisfied in another because of the variable interpretations of its deictic expressions.

4- Aspects of CDA

4.1 Ideology

It refers to unequal power relations which are formed and kept in language. Language is the means which presupposes ideology in certain situations (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 10). In CDA, "ideology" means unequal power relations that are made in language (Wodak, 2002: 9). Here, the social, religious, and economic life are related to ideology. Through voice intonation, syntax, meanings, coherence, presupposition, metaphor and argumentations, discourse are the basic ways to reproduce ideologies. According to Van Dijk (1998: 126), the community members can mentally gain ideology through their shared social practice. It can be established in their everyday actions. So, it is socially and cognitively personal opinions and knowledge which they act and experience in discourse. Fairclough (2001: 3) states that ideologies can be imposed into language of the news by the political dominance and control of the powerful members of a society. Dominance means "power and control" which can be practiced either through "coercion" or "consent". Power and control are primarily practiced in news discourse through the use of persuasive discourse in order to gain the public consent. Thus, ideologies
operate in news discourse by subtle consent through what Gramsci (1975) calls "hegemony".

4.2 Identity

Identity means self. It is unobvious, opaque and changeable. Hodge (2012: 5) refers to "identity" as a slippery since it exposes troubles for individuals, either it refers to one person, or it refers to collateral loss of that person in a community as all members are called. As mentioned by Fairclough (2003: 160-161), identification distinguishes personally, and socially identified members. It cannot be reduced to social identity, it is not only a matter of a language, but identity is also closely associated with discourse. It is the influence made in speech. Personal identity (personalities) is the ability to manufacture the person's social roles. So, the social identity constrains the personal identity. For Van Dijk (1998: 122-123), it is based on the influence that discourse makes on individuals who are emotionally linked since they are cognitively and socially based. Social identities are limited not only to the cognitive realm, but can also be identified by community members as in actions, like protesting.

4.3 Power

CDA deals with domination since it means power and control. They occur between community members according to their religion, ethnicity, or cultures by applying their societal exercise on other people (Stitcher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter, 2000: 164). This factor concentrates upon how power is manufactured in language, and how it is influenced by it, like spoken language, or across different cultures for the participants (Fairclough, 1989: 45). Van Dijk (2002: 353) explains that CDA concerns in how units of languages are made or produced in relations to domination and power relationships in a community. Fairclough (2010: 26) states that power differences and inequalities arise from relations between ethnically and culturally different groups, for example, between men and women, adults and young people, people of working class and retired ones, and managers and other workers.

5 - American Exceptionalism

5.1 Evolution of Exceptionalism

An idea of exceptionalism means isolation. America is seen as the leader during every period since the late 19th century. It is considered as a cover for every ideological plan that America attempts to expand its interests. This concept is like many other concepts, such as: "manifest destiny", "city on hill", and etc. Its aim is
para-ideological since it crystallizes certain ideas to discuss the world through its role. Its Puritan idea is promoted as an ideal mission to control the world as justifiable reasons for progress. Its objectives are to remodel the world countries in an accord with its ideal values, and promote its superpower over the world order. (McEnvoy-Ley, 2001: 23 – 24).

5.2 Explanation of American Exceptionalism

There are different explanations of US exceptionalism which are realism, that draws upon its superpower, culture that deals with its universal significance, institution that is related to its systematic institution, and politics which is linked to its political orders.

5.2.1 Realism

This explanation refers to the American superpower exceptionally post the year of 1945. It can exempt itself from the orders of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and can stop operating this court. Other world countries do not have such capacity to do so. Here, it tries to keep itself as powerful and sovereign nations over others (Ignatief, 2005: 11-12).

5.2.2 Culture

History of America makes it significant due to its principles and values. What values it contains does not make it need from other countries and even it attempts to export such values to them. Its values are sacred for its people and became adopted through political powers since its revolution to prove the American rights that they live by them. (ibid).

5.2.3 Institution

The American institutions are surrounded by special laws that their decision makers made them to safeguard their normal citizens from any politics attempt to exploit them. Such laws obey the human rights to be legitimized in keeping its stability and comply with international foreign treaties.

5.2.4 Politics

The US culture of politics is important in applying and maintaining the rights of the minorities which are protected by issuing the civil rights for people who live under its political umbrella, such as family law, and women's rights. They are enhanced by racial equality and to be boosted by international human rights which are compatible in their exercise (Ignatief, 2005: 16-19).
6- Types of American Exceptionalism

It consists of three types: The first is called "exemptionalism"; America guarantees protecting its nationals from any legal accountability when it enters in signing treaties with its allied countries to assure that American military will not be brought to ICC (international criminal court). Here, it exempts itself from practicing illegal commitments. The second type is "double standards"; the standards that it follows differ from that other world countries follow. America and its ally condemn the reports that United Nations bodies issue in their reports about their own citizens, but criticize the abuses of their opponents which are mentioned by the same organization. The third type is "legal isolation" which permits the American judges to use rights of liberal democratic countries. It excepts itself to resist use human rights of foreign countries to support them in their interior opinions (Ignatief, 2005: 3-5).

7- Data Selection and Description

The data selected for this study have been taken from the article, https://georgebush-whitehouse.archives.gov, which consists of all the speeches of US ex-president George W. Bush from 2001 until 2008. The speeches that have been taken only those concern with the terrorist acts, and which considered as the most influential speeches in agitating the public opinions and international attitudes against terrorists. They also have significant role in unifying the whole nation against outside enemy. Speeches on terrorism have been part of American politics for a long time. They seem to have somewhat become more popular with ex-president Bush, since 2001, as a result of events of September. Most Americans subscribe to the idea of "American Exceptionalism" because of its history and constitution, America is the most powerful country around the world. The study employs CDA, as it deals with the subject of terrorism by focusing on the linguistic portrayal of terrorism in the speeches of the American ex-president Bush. The number of the speeches have been selected are seven for this study.

8- The Model Adopted

The model adopted for this study is Van Dijk's (2005) CDA framework which tends to find out the United States of America as an exceptional country in fighting terrorists by revealing how ideology, context, and mind control manifest in Bush's speeches. Thus, this model is considered as the most appropriate one for this study which is more semantic-oriented framework. The ideological textual categories are twenty-five which are:
**Actor description:** to describe how actors behave in rhetoric.

**Authority:** political figures or organizations are expressed to support cases.

**Burden:** concluded things are displayed.

**Categorization:** To use different expressions to refer to different groups mentioned in the speech.

**Comparison:** Comparison occurs in talk to positively and negatively compare two different groups.

**Consensus:** It is a cross-party or national in situation where the country is threatened.

**Counterfactual:** A claim or hypothesis, or other belief that is contrary to the facts is to show what something or somebody would be like in situation.

**Disclaimers:** Combinations of those positively and negatively represented. They are connected by (but).

**Euphemism:** The discourse producer uses certain expressions to lessen their impact on the audience. It is an avoidance of negative impression formation.

**Evidentiality:** Proofs may be used to make discourse more objective and credible.

Example: Example mentions in a speech to illustrate and make cases clearer.

**Generalization:** It is accomplished when speakers may make generalization or attitude to formulate positive or negative feelings.

**Hyperbole:** It is an overstatement (figurative language) that exaggerates a particular condition for emphasis.

**Implication:** It is the understanding of what is not explicitly expressed.

**Irony:** What the speaker says differs from what he means through language use.

**Lexicalization:** The discourse producers' choice of lexical items. Meaning may be understood according to the difference in selecting of words.
**Metaphor:** It is a figure of speech that has rhetorical effect in referring to one thing by mentioning another.

**National self-glorification:** It is positive reference to the speaker's nation. It is combined with nationalist ideologies.

**Norm expression:** To convey the norm of what somebody or something should/not be done.

**Number game:** Discourse producers apply numbers or statistics to enhance credibility.

**Polarization:** The speaker polarizes the properties of in-group and out-group.

**Populism:** It is the political ideas intended to represent or promote the interests and opinions of ordinary people's needs or wishes.

**Presupposition:** The speaker presupposes something or somebody.

**Vagueness:** Vague expressions or forms are mentioned not to refer to identical thing.

**Victimization:** It shows ingroups as the victims, and the outgroups negatively represented (Van Dijk, 2005: 735-739).

### 9- Data Analysis and Discussion

**Speech1:** President Bush's Address to the Nation on the September 11th, the oval office, Washington D.C., September 11, 2001.

**Actor description**

Positive self-representation: 1-(... give blood and …) L20-22, 2-(we go forward to defend freedom…) L55.

The president tries to positively describe the response of the whole American people in showing help and solidarity with those affected by the terrorist acts. And he tries to remember them of their freedom which is a must to be defended from anyone intends to distort their nation. He shows that defending such principles is fair and justified.

Negative other representation: (the very worst of human nature) L19.
Here he also tries to negatively describe those who committed the terrorist attacks as the worst thing people can see in their lives to emphasize the intentions of the enemies against the population of America.

**Authority**

Positive self-representation: The speaker makes use of *(the members of Congress)* L40, as the legislators for the important decrees to send a message to the audience that he is authorized in making a decision against the enemies.

**Burden**

Positive self-representation: After the discourse producer showed the audience how the terrorists committed their attacks against the American people, he specifies the conclusion, *(to defend a great nation)* L12, that the Americans accepted to bear to show their responsibility and advantages in defending their country against such terrorist threats.

**Categorization**

Positive self-representation: *(our friends and allies)* L44.

The speaker selects expressions which have strong impressions on the audience to mention those who help America to be distinguished from the evil ones, and show that they are justified to gain their trust and also those who stand side by side with the Americans in this conflict so as to enhance their ideological attitude for unique goals.


Here he selects such expressions above which have negative influence on the audience to categorize those who are negatively represented in his speech in order to be distinguished, and also to create negative impression and interpretation against them.

**Comparison**

Positive self-representation: *(...stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time)* L53-54.

The speaker compares the past enemies with the current ones. He implicitly promises to defeat the current ones as others were defeated before.
He tries to enhance the American people's emotions against this new enemy and to stand behind their unique principles whom this new one attempt to destroy.

**Conse**

nsus

Positive self-representation: 1-(*our fellow citizens…*) L1, and 2-(*we…*) L55.

The president does not exclude himself in his speech from his own people, but he presents himself as one of the normal people who live together in one country when he uses the pronouns (*we/our*) in order to show unification and cohesion among the one community members that have the same goals and duties for the sake of their own country.

**Disclai**

mers

Negative other-representation: Reversals: (*…to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But ... failed*) L9-11.

The discourse producer presents contradiction of information between what the terrorists intend to achieve in committing their actions in the first clause, and their failures in the second ones. He links between the negative other-representation and positive self-representation to accomplish the ideological based attitudes of what discourse is about.

**Euphem**

ism

Positive self-representation: The speaker here uses the expression (*ended*) L5-6, instead of (*killed*), and also uses (*shake*) L133, instead of (*destroy*) in order to mitigate or avoid the audience negative impression that may obsess their minds.

**Evidentia**

lity

Negative other-representation: (*Today, our nation saw evil*) L19.

The president provides the audience or his community members with what they have seen in their eyes as an evidence of such evil actions against people to manage and control their attention towards how the speaker intends to achieve his discourse purpose, and also to convey credibility of his speech.
Positive self-representation (the brightest beacon for freedom in the world) L17. The speaker presents his own nation as an example of freedom that other nations lack to justify and verify the reasons behind the terrorist attacks as pretexts pushed them to do so against America in order to defend the viewpoints he exhibits in his speech, and may also achieve certain political goals.

Generalization

Positive self-representation: (I thank the many world leaders) L42.

The discourse producer uses the quantifiers which are standard expressions to represent the generalized information that he develops in discourse to make it more influential and beneficial as a type of nationalist rhetoric.

Hyperbole

Positive self-representation: (…win the war…) L45.

The speaker uses such hyperbolical expressions to stress and emphasize the positive actions and properties of the American people to enhance their ideological based attitudes towards their own country, and also to strengthen their stands in the war situation to defend them from such enemies.


He uses these hyperbolic expressions above to express and emphasize the negative deeds of the enemies in the audience perception, and to enhance their ideological based attitudes against them. He also tries to increase the differences between Americans have and what the terrorists act.

Implication

Positive self-representation: (…the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them) L38-39; the president doesn't explicitly express the type of punishment, but he keeps it implicitly on the part of the audience to infer that not only the terrorists themselves who will be punished, but also the countries which support them.

Lexicalization
Positive self-representation, such as the noun phrases are: 1-(freedom) L2, 2-(justice) L38, adjectives are: 1-(strong) L11, and the verbs are: 1-(defend) L1.

The speaker selects such lexical items which have effectual influence on the audience interpretation to emphasize and highlight the positive characteristics of the force of good (the Americans) in order to call other communities to ally with them, and also to manage their minds towards the positive goals he intends to achieve.

Negative other-representation, such as the noun phrases are: 1-(evil) L6, adjectives are: 1-(terrorist) L3, and the verb is: (frighten) L10.

These lexical expressions which have effectual influence on the audience are used to highlight and emphasize the evil intentions of the enemies against people that the president mentions to draw a clear image of the force of bad, and also to create negative impression and interpretation against them.

Metaphor

Positive self-representation: The discourse producer uses the metaphorical expression (the steel) in (...dent the steel of American resolve) L15, which is known as solid metal to express the frigidity and unity of the American people.

Negative other-representation: He also uses the metaphorical expression (evil) in (…these evil act) L35, which is unfamiliar word used in the language of the president to stress on the bad actions of those negatively represented, and also to explain that such negative deeds do not belong to human beings so as to agitate ideological the attitudes and opinions against them.

National self-glorification


Here the speaker glorifies and praises his own community members and the country they live in as an attempt to control and manage their thoughts for achieving certain political goals, and also to send a message to other communities that it is just to respond for defending such nation.

Norm expression
- Positive self-representation: (Our first priority is to get help ...) L27-29.
The president conveys in his speech the norm that the community members should help each other, and he also urges them by taking precautions that their nation should be protected from any terrorist acts. He shows his national intentions in defending the interests of the whole community.

**Polarization**

Positive self-representation: 1-(*Our country is strong*) L11, 2-(*Our military is powerful*) L24, and 3-(**we stand together...**) L44-46.

The speaker tries to polarize the positive characteristics (*our country*), (*our military*), and the positive attributing properties, in the third sentence, of his own nation that he displays in his discourse. And he also displays such things to show that what America has contrasts with what the enemies have in order to promote the Americans' ideological attitudes for their own country. He uses the pronouns (*we/our*) to create positive distance between himself and American people.

Negative other-representation: (*… huge structures collapsing… terrible sadness, and… unyielding anger*) L7-10.

These attributing properties of the terrorists the speaker mentions in rhetoric to remind the audience in the terrible acts of the September events and what they have caused to emphasize and highlight their evil actions against the American people, and also to create negative impression and interpretation against them.

**Presupposition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presupposition Triggers</th>
<th>Presupposition</th>
<th>Types of Presupposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Our military is powerful)</em> L24</td>
<td>He positively presupposes that America has powerful military to assure Americans safety.</td>
<td>Existential presupposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(…bring them to justice)</em> L37)</td>
<td>He positively promises his own nation to punish the enemies.</td>
<td>Factive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(The victims were in airplane…)</em> L3</td>
<td>He negatively presupposes that those victims resulted from the evil actions.</td>
<td>Structural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vagueness

Positive self-representation: (*.. no one will keep that light from shining*) L17-18.

The president uses the vague expressions, such as the generic pronoun (*one*) which has no specific referent in his speech in order to make it more constrained and avoid apparent bias to his country. This will give the community members assurance of being safe with positive feelings.

Victimization

Positive self-representation: (*America was targeted ...*) L16.

The discourse producer tries to depict his own nation as the victims of the evil acts of the enemies in order to show other communities that they have been assaulted in their own country, and to push them to take part in America's campaign against terror before they suffer the same. He tries to convey that the country is associated with such threat with no reasons.

Negative other-representation: (*the terrorist who committed these acts...*) L38-39.

He also depicts those who are negatively represented in committing the evil actions against the innocent as the source of hurting the innocent to highlight their evil actions, and also to show that they are the first who started the attacks in order not to be blamed in reacting against them. He also tries to create the ideological attitudes and opinions against them.

10- Conclusions

They start with answers for the hypothesized questions:

1-Are Bush's rhetoric positively perceived by the American community members particularly post the September 11th?

Bush's war rhetoric are positively perceived by the American community members particularly post the September 11th when he explicitly addresses them as they are in a proactive position to fight back an enemy who targeted the country in severe attacks. By considering America as an exceptional country because of its history and values, the US was able to enforce its power and uniqueness on all the world countries. Whereas he exaggerates in the threats of terrorists in their minds and the events are still obsessing them as they were seen as a shock and terrible ones in the country.

2-Are they negatively perceived by the American citizens particularly post the September 11th?
They are not negatively perceived by the American citizens particularly post the September 11th.

3-The analysis has shown the structural categories which employed to reinforce and support George W. Bush's ideology and political strategies to express self-confidence and encourage hope through the persuasive acts of repeating positive phrases which are used more than negative ones to create a sense of hope and patriotism among the audience. He refers to the terrorists threats underscoring them and their capabilities to defeat them.

4-He expresses the positive things of himself, and also of his nation. He selects positive expressions to refer to his own country as utopian. He also mentions the authorities, procedures, and also glorifies culture and principles which have positive impact over the audience thoughts for supporting the political decisions made that help create positive image about America in general.

5-Whereas he highlights the negative things of the opponents in his speeches by selecting negative expressions which have negative influence on the audience about them. He apparently accuses them as well as denotes their hateful ideology to display their evil image to be uprooted against them.

6-Freedoms of Americans are the primary motivating factor for the terrorist attacks that appear in most Bush's speeches. He uses the word "freedom" as an exceptional value for Americans. So, it seems an exclusive form of the United States of America.

7-He portrays the word 'evil' much like freedom to coordinate his use of both freedom and evil to push the audience for rallying beyond his plans for a military campaign against terrorism implying the struggle between the forces of good and freedom, from one hand, and the forces of bad, on the other hand.
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