

Language and Power: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Speeches in English

Rusul Abdulkareem Ato¹

Email: rusl_abdulkareem@uomisan.edu.iq

¹Department of English College of Basic Education, University of Misan

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection of language and power through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Donald Trump's "America First" Inaugural Address. By applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, the research examines how Trump's rhetoric constructs and reinforces political ideologies, mobilizes public sentiment, and legitimizes power structures. The analysis focuses on the ways in which Trump's language frames social issues, assigns blame to political elites, and promises restoration of national pride and prosperity. The findings reveal that Trump's speech employs a populist discourse that strategically invokes economic and cultural anxieties to consolidate power and authority. This study contributes to the broader understanding of how political discourse functions to shape public perception and influence socio-political dynamics in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: Language and Power, America First, Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, Donald Trump's

Introduction

The term active learning has appeared recently in the twentieth century and more interest have The interplay between language and power is a crucial area of study within the field of political discourse analysis. Language is not merely a vehicle for conveying information; it is also a powerful tool for shaping public perception, constructing social realities, and legitimizing authority (Fairclough, 2001). Political leaders utilize language strategically to influence the beliefs and behaviors of their audiences, often reinforcing or challenging existing power structures in the process (Van Dijk, 2008; David, 2014; Raza et al., 2024). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a robust framework for examining how discourse functions in these contexts, revealing the ways in which language both reflects and produces power dynamics in society (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Kwekowe, 2024; Statham, 2022; Syahrani et al., 2024).

This research focuses on Donald Trump's "America First" Inaugural Address, a speech that exemplifies the populist and nationalist rhetoric that characterized his administration. Trump's language in this speech is particularly noteworthy for its emphasis on economic protectionism, national sovereignty, and a strong critique of the political establishment. These themes align with the broader discursive strategies identified in CDA, where language is used to construct a narrative that resonates with public anxieties and mobilizes support (Wodak, 2015).

Political speeches, particularly those made by populist leaders, are increasingly becoming central to modern political communication. They shape ideologies and influence the way issues such as immigration, national security, and economic policies are perceived by the public. However, the impact of political rhetoric on societal divisions, ideologies, and power dynamics has not been fully explored. In particular, Donald Trump's "America First" speech provides a useful case study to understand how political leaders use language to construct nationalistic narratives, appeal to emotions, and reinforce divisions between "insiders" and "outsiders." The

problem this research seeks to address is the need for a critical examination of how political speeches, such as Trump's, use language to strengthen political power and shape nationalistic discourses.

The main aim of this research is to critically analyze Donald Trump's "America First" speech through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research will focus on how language in political speeches constructs power, reflects ideologies, and shapes public perceptions. The study intends to explore the rhetorical strategies used in the speech, particularly those related to nationalism, populism, and divisiveness, in order to uncover how they influence the audience's understanding of political issues and their alignment with the speaker's political agenda.

The hypothesis of this study is that Donald Trump's "America First" speech uses language strategically to construct a divisive, nationalistic narrative that appeals to populist sentiments and reinforces existing power structures. Through rhetorical devices such as repetition, emotive language, and the construction of an us vs. them dichotomy, the speech aims to consolidate the speaker's political power, foster a sense of national identity, and marginalize opposing views. The research will hypothesize that language in political speeches plays a central role in shaping public opinion and consolidating political authority, particularly in populist movements.

This research will be limited to analyzing Donald Trump's "America First" speech and will not extend to other speeches or political discourses. The study will focus on the linguistic features of the speech, including the use of repetition, emotive language, and polarization, to understand how these elements contribute to the construction of nationalistic ideologies. The analysis will be confined to Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which will be applied to explore the relationship between the text (the speech), discursive practice (the process of speech production and reception), and social practice (the social context in which the speech occurs). While this approach provides a focused and in-depth analysis, it limits the scope of the study to a single text and theoretical framework.

Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis investigates the relationship between language, power, and social structures by examining how discourse shapes and reflects power dynamics and ideologies. CDA focuses on how language is used to create, reinforce, or challenge power relations and social inequalities. Language plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining power structures. It explores how discourse reflects and influences power relations within various social contexts, such as politics, media, and everyday interactions. Norman Fairclough, a key figure in CDA, argues that language is not neutral but is deeply embedded in power relations and social practices (Fairclough, 1995).

Ideology is central to CDA. Discourse is seen as a vehicle for promoting and sustaining ideologies systematic beliefs and values that influence how people perceive and interpret the world. Teun A. van Dijk highlights that language often serves to reinforce and legitimize ideologies that support existing power structures and social hierarchies (van Dijk, 1998).

Discursive practices refer to the ways discourse is produced, distributed, and consumed. CDA examines these practices to understand how they contribute to the formation and maintenance of social norms and structures. James Paul Gee emphasizes that analyzing these practices helps reveal the social functions of language and its role in shaping social identities and power relations (Gee, 2014).

Context is crucial in CDA. The broader social, political, and historical contexts in which discourse occurs influence its production and interpretation. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer stress the importance of contextual analysis in understanding how discourse impacts and is impacted by social relations and power dynamics (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Language and Power

The relationship between language and power is central to understanding how communication influences and reflects social dynamics. Language is a key tool for constructing, maintaining, and challenging power relations in various social contexts, including politics, media, and everyday interactions. Language functions as a medium through which power is exercised and negotiated. Norman Fairclough, a prominent scholar in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), argues that language is not merely a means of communication but also a way of enacting power. Fairclough asserts that discourse helps to construct and sustain social hierarchies and power structures, shaping how individuals and groups perceive and interact with authority (Fairclough, 1995).

Power dynamics are often reflected in how language is used to include or exclude individuals and groups. Teun A. van Dijk highlights that discourse can reinforce power relations by promoting specific ideologies that justify and perpetuate existing social structures. For example, language can be used to frame certain groups in a negative light, thereby legitimizing their marginalization or exclusion (van Dijk, 1998). James Paul Gee emphasizes that understanding the role of language in social practices helps reveal how power is negotiated and exercised. According to Gee, language not only reflects social realities but also actively shapes them by influencing how people perceive and respond to social norms and roles (Gee, 2014).

The social context in which language is used plays a critical role in shaping its impact on power relations. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer argue that the broader social, political, and historical context affects how discourse is produced and interpreted. They stress that analyzing these contexts is essential for understanding the ways in which language operates within and impacts power structures (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA.

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the most influential frameworks for analyzing the relationship between language and power. This model is designed to uncover how discourse contributes to the production, maintenance, and transformation of social relations and power dynamics. Fairclough's approach is rooted in the belief that language is a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes societal structures (Fairclough, 1992). The three dimensions of Fairclough's model are:

Text Analysis (Description)

The first dimension involves the analysis of the text itself, including its linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and cohesion. This stage focuses on describing what is said and how it is said, without initially interpreting the social significance of these linguistic choices. It includes analyzing specific linguistic devices like metaphors, modality, and transitivity, which help to reveal the underlying meanings and ideologies within the text (Fairclough, 1995).

Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

The second dimension examines how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed within society. This involves understanding the context in which the text is situated and how it relates to other texts and discourses. This dimension also includes the analysis of intertextuality, which refers to the ways in which a text draws upon, references, or echoes other texts. Discursive

practice is concerned with how texts circulate within specific social and institutional contexts and how they are interpreted by different audiences (Fairclough, 2003).

Social Practice (Explanation)

The third dimension links the analysis of the text and discursive practice to broader social and cultural structures. This dimension is concerned with the social effects and implications of discourse, particularly how it relates to issues of power and ideology. It seeks to explain how discourses contribute to the reproduction or transformation of social structures and power relations. This stage involves understanding the ideological effects of discourse and its role in sustaining or challenging existing power dynamics within society (Fairclough, 1989).

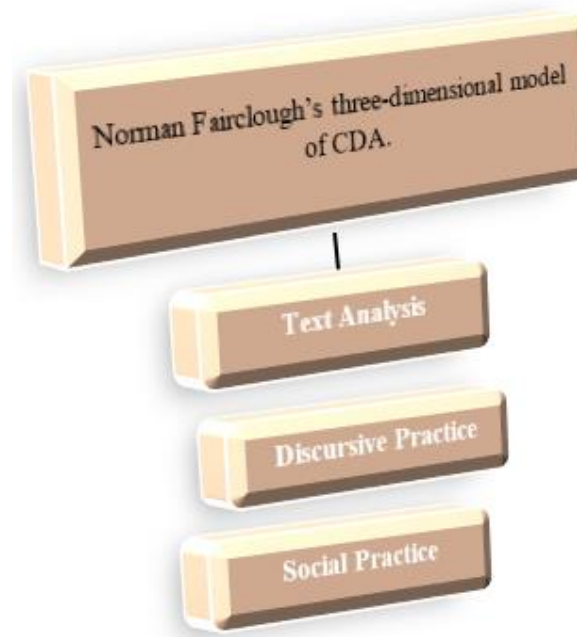


Figure 1. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA

Methods

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary methodology to examine the language and power dynamics in Donald Trump's political speeches, specifically focusing on his "America First" speech. CDA is chosen because it allows for a detailed exploration of how discourse constructs, reinforces, and challenges power relations within specific social and political contexts.

Data Collection

The data for this study consists of the full text of Donald Trump's "America First" speech, delivered on January 20, 2017, during his inauguration as the 45th President of the United States. This speech was selected due to its significance in articulating Trump's key political stance and its impact on national and international discourse. The speech was obtained from publicly accessible transcripts available through reputable news organizations and official government websites to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Analytical Framework

The analysis of Trump's speech is guided by Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which includes the following dimensions:

Textual Analysis: This dimension focuses on the linguistic features of the speech, such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices. The analysis looks at how Trump uses language to construct particular identities, relationships, and representations of reality.

Discursive Practice: This involves examining how the speech is produced, distributed, and consumed. The analysis considers how the speech is framed, the context in which it was delivered, and how it was received by different audiences. It also looks at the intertextuality of the speech—how it references, draws upon, or contrasts with other discourses.

Social Practice: This dimension situates the speech within broader social and political contexts. The analysis explores how the speech reflects and contributes to power dynamics, ideological constructions, and social change. It examines the implications of the "America First" discourse for both domestic and global politics, including its impact on nationalism, populism, and international relations.

Results and Discussion

Text (1): "From this day forward, it's going to be only America First, America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength."

Analysis:

In this excerpt, the language is forceful and direct, employing repetition ("America First, America First") to emphasize the core message of the speech. The phrase "only America First" is declarative and exclusionary, underscoring the speaker's intention to prioritize American interests over those of any other nation. Key vocabulary choices like "protect," "ravages," "stealing," and "destroying" evoke a sense of threat and urgency. The verbs suggest an ongoing or imminent danger that must be countered. The structure of the sentences, which often begin with "We must" or "Every decision," gives the speech a commanding tone, reinforcing the idea of decisive action.

The text also employs a cause-and-effect structure: "Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength." This suggests that the proposed actions are not only necessary but will yield positive results, appealing to the audience's desire for security and economic well-being. This speech is delivered in the highly formal and symbolic context of a presidential inauguration, which is designed to set the tone for the incoming administration. The audience includes not only American citizens but also international observers, making the discourse both a national and global statement.

Intertextually, the speech draws on a long tradition of American political rhetoric that appeals to patriotism and national unity. However, it diverges from previous inaugural addresses by its starkly protectionist stance, which contrasts with the more globally-oriented policies of Trump's predecessors. The repetition of "America First" ties back to a slogan that was used in the past, most notably by the America First Committee in the 1940s, which advocated for U.S. isolationism before World War II. By resurrecting this phrase, Trump invokes a historical discourse of nationalism and protectionism, but repurposes it for the contemporary context. The way this speech was circulated and interpreted across different media outlets also reflects its divisive nature. Supporters often highlighted it as a clear and bold reassertion of American sovereignty, while critics viewed it as isolationist and exclusionary, potentially damaging to international relations.

At the level of social practice, this excerpt reflects and reinforces broader socio-political trends, particularly the rise of populism and nationalism in the United States and other parts of the world. Trump's rhetoric taps into the economic anxieties of many Americans who feel that globalization and trade policies have disadvantaged them. The speech constructs a binary opposition between "us" (Americans) and "them" (other countries), fostering a sense of national unity through the identification of external threats. This kind of rhetoric is effective in mobilizing public support, but it also risks deepening divisions, both within the United States and between the U.S. and other nations.

The ideological underpinnings of this discourse are closely tied to neoliberal and protectionist economic policies, which advocate for strong national borders and prioritizing domestic economic interests. The focus on "American workers and American families" appeals to the working and middle classes, who are depicted as the primary beneficiaries of these policies.

Text (2): "We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world—but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow."

Analysis:

In this passage, the language is carefully chosen to project a message of both strength and humility. The phrase "friendship and goodwill" suggests a positive, cooperative approach to international relations. However, this is immediately balanced by the assertion that "it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first." This juxtaposition creates a narrative where national sovereignty is prioritized, even in the context of global cooperation. The text uses contrasting phrases: "We do not seek to impose" versus "let it shine as an example." This contrast serves to emphasize the idea that the U.S. will not actively force its values on others but instead expects that its way of life will naturally be admired and possibly emulated. The use of the verb "shine" carries connotations of inherent goodness and superiority, subtly suggesting that the American way of life is a beacon for others.

Grammatically, the sentences are structured to assert both intention and principle. The use of "will" and "do not seek" are declarative, making the statements sound definitive and non-negotiable.

This segment of the speech is delivered in the highly symbolic context of a presidential inauguration, where the language is not just for domestic audiences but is also meant to send a message to the international community. The speech uses the genre of political oratory, which traditionally balances the articulation of national values with diplomatic overtures.

Intertextually, the passage draws upon long-standing American discourses of exceptionalism and self-determination. However, it contrasts with previous U.S. foreign policy rhetoric that often emphasized the spread of democracy and liberal values. Here, the emphasis is on non-interference and the respect for other nations' sovereignty, which marks a shift toward a more isolationist stance. The repetition of the concept of "first" in both "America First" and "their own interests first" creates a discursive alignment with the populist, nationalist rhetoric that characterized Trump's campaign. It suggests a world order where every nation is encouraged to prioritize its own needs, reflecting a transactional approach to international relations rather than one based on multilateral cooperation. The media and public reactions to this part of the speech varied widely, with supporters praising it as a pragmatic and respectful approach to foreign policy, while critics argued that it signaled a retreat from America's leadership role on the global stage.

At the level of social practice, this excerpt reflects and reinforces a broader political and ideological shift towards nationalism and away from globalism. The rhetoric aligns with the populist movement that gained momentum in the U.S. and other parts of the world, advocating for national sovereignty and the prioritization of domestic interests over international commitments. The speech constructs a particular version of national identity, one that is independent, self-reliant, and uninterested in enforcing its values on others. This reflects an ideological stance that resonates with segments of the population who feel that previous policies of globalization and international intervention have neglected or harmed their interests.

The broader social implications of this discourse are significant. By framing the U.S. as a nation that respects other countries' rights to prioritize their own interests, the speech simultaneously justifies America's own turn inward and reduces the emphasis on global cooperation and alliances. This has the potential to reshape international relations, encouraging a more fragmented and competitive global landscape.

Furthermore, the speech can be seen as part of a larger discourse of American exceptionalism, but with a twist—while it still suggests that the U.S. is a model for others, it pulls back from the missionary zeal of spreading its values abroad. This reflects an underlying tension in the U.S.'s role in the world: wanting to be seen as a leader, but not wanting to bear the responsibilities that come with that leadership.

Text (3): "For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own."

Analysis

In this excerpt, the language used is emotionally charged and purposefully contrasts past actions with the proposed new direction. The phrases "enriched foreign industry" and "subsidized the armies of other countries" imply that the previous U.S. policies were misguided or even harmful, prioritizing the needs of other nations over America's own. Words like "expense" and "depletion" convey a sense of loss and vulnerability, suggesting that the U.S. has weakened itself by supporting others. The structure of the sentences, especially the repetition of "we've" followed by a verb, creates a rhythm that reinforces the criticism of past actions. This patterning emphasizes the speaker's narrative of past mistakes and positions the new administration as a corrective force. The contrast between "foreign industry" and "American industry" as well as "other nations' borders" and "our own" sets up a clear opposition, framing the situation as a zero-sum game where benefits to others have come at the direct expense of American interests.

In terms of discursive practice, this speech reflects a common populist rhetorical strategy of painting the past as a period of decline due to the actions of out-of-touch elites, while presenting the speaker as the champion of the common people. This text specifically taps into the fears and frustrations of those who feel left behind by globalization, suggesting that the country has been exploited by others because of the failures of previous leaders. The use of "we" creates a collective identity, aligning the speaker with the audience and suggesting that both have been wronged. This part of the speech is situated within a broader discourse of American decline and renewal, which has been a recurring theme in U.S. political rhetoric, especially during times of economic uncertainty. However, Trump's discourse is distinctive in its directness and in its willingness to blame not just foreign countries but also past American leadership for these perceived failures.

At the level of social practice, this rhetoric reflects and reinforces a nationalist ideology that prioritizes domestic over international concerns. It appeals to a sense of economic nationalism, where the protection of national industries and borders is seen as paramount. The implications of this discourse are significant, as it fosters a worldview in which international cooperation is seen as potentially harmful, and where the focus should be on unilateral actions to protect national interests.

This type of language can have a powerful impact on public opinion, shaping perceptions of both past policies and future directions. By framing past policies as betrayals of national interests, the speech justifies a shift towards more isolationist and protectionist policies, which can alter both domestic attitudes and international relations.

Text (4): "We are one nation and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams. And their success will be our success."

Analysis:

In this excerpt, Trump's language uses collective and inclusive terminology to create a sense of unity and shared experience. The repeated use of "our" and "we" emphasizes a collective identity and a bond between the speaker and the audience. This inclusive language is designed to foster a sense of solidarity and common purpose. The phrases "one nation," "their pain is our pain," and "their dreams are our dreams" are emotionally resonant and work to align the speaker with the audience on an emotional level. This creates a shared experience and mutual empathy, reinforcing the idea that the speaker understands and is committed to addressing the concerns of the people.

By framing success as a collective endeavor, "their success will be our success," the text suggests that the prosperity of individuals is intertwined with the nation's overall success. This linkage aims to motivate and inspire, positioning the speaker as a leader who is deeply invested in the well-being of all citizens.

In terms of discursive practice, this language functions to construct a narrative of national unity and shared goals. It contrasts with other parts of the speech that emphasize division or critique past policies, instead promoting a vision of togetherness and mutual benefit. This approach is common in political rhetoric, where leaders often seek to bridge divides and foster a sense of common cause.

The social practice reflected in this excerpt involves an appeal to collective identity and national cohesion. By emphasizing shared pain, dreams, and success, the speech seeks to unite the audience under a common vision and promote a sense of collective responsibility and mutual support. This approach is intended to galvanize public support and build a strong, unified front for the administration's goals.

Overall, the use of inclusive and emotionally charged language in this segment aims to strengthen the connection between the speaker and the audience, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose that supports the broader narrative of national renewal and collective action.

Text (5): "The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs. While they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language is designed to differentiate between the political establishment and the ordinary citizens, creating a stark contrast between the two. The phrase

"The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country" positions the political elites as self-serving and disconnected from the needs of the general population. This rhetorical strategy aims to appeal to those who feel neglected or betrayed by traditional political structures. The use of "Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs" reinforces this divide by highlighting the disconnection between the perceived success of the political elite and the actual experiences of everyday people. The repetition of "their" and "your" creates a clear binary opposition, underscoring the idea that the benefits enjoyed by the elite are not shared with the broader population.

The final sentence, "While they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land," contrasts the elite's perceived celebrations with the struggles of ordinary families. This juxtaposition is meant to evoke empathy for those who are suffering and to position the speaker as an advocate for their needs. It also serves to further discredit the political establishment by suggesting that their successes have come at the expense of the average citizen.

From a discursive practice perspective, this excerpt fits within a broader populist discourse that seeks to challenge the status quo and present the speaker as a champion of the common people against a corrupt or out-of-touch elite. The language is intended to resonate with individuals who feel disenfranchised or ignored by previous administrations, framing the speaker as a transformative leader who will address these grievances.

At the level of social practice, this rhetoric reflects and reinforces a broader narrative of political alienation and populist sentiment. By emphasizing the disconnect between the establishment and ordinary citizens, the speech taps into a widespread dissatisfaction with traditional political structures and policies. This approach aims to galvanize support by presenting the speaker as a voice for those who feel overlooked or exploited by the political system.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses language to create a powerful narrative of division between the political elite and the general population, aiming to build support among those who feel marginalized and to position the speaker as a reformist leader committed to addressing their concerns.

Text (6): "We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and Hire American. We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world—but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language employs straightforward and directive phrases like "Buy American and Hire American," which serve as clear, actionable policies. The simplicity of these rules underscores a commitment to prioritizing domestic industry and employment, aligning with the broader theme of national interest and self-reliance. The language here constructs a clear boundary between domestic and international concerns. By emphasizing "Buy American" and "Hire American," Trump is not only promoting domestic economic interests but also invoking a sense of nationalistic pride. The directive nature of these rules suggests a pragmatic approach to economic policy, aimed at enhancing national economic strength and reducing dependence on foreign entities.

The second part of the excerpt, "We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world—but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first," introduces a diplomatic dimension. The use of "friendship and goodwill" conveys a willingness to engage with other nations positively, but this is tempered by the

assertion of national self-interest. This duality reflects a broader discourse of balancing national priorities with international relations.

From a discursive practice perspective, this language operates within a framework of economic nationalism and protectionism. It reflects a shift from previous administrations' more globalist policies, focusing instead on enhancing domestic economic benefits. The language signals a clear departure from internationalist policies, emphasizing that while the U.S. will engage with other nations, it will do so on terms that prioritize American interests. This excerpt also taps into a broader populist rhetoric that challenges the established global economic order. The emphasis on domestic rules and interests is meant to resonate with voters who feel that previous policies have undermined American economic stability and growth. By framing international engagement as secondary to domestic priorities, the speech aligns with a populist narrative that critiques globalization and prioritizes national sovereignty.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reinforces a nationalist agenda that seeks to reshape America's role in the global economy. By advocating for policies like "Buy American" and "Hire American," the speech promotes a vision of economic self-sufficiency and resilience. This approach can influence both public opinion and policy-making, steering discussions and actions towards a more protectionist and nationalist stance in economic and diplomatic matters.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses clear and directive language to advocate for national economic interests while presenting a nuanced approach to international relations. The discourse reflects a commitment to domestic priorities and a strategic approach to global engagement, aligning with broader populist and nationalist themes in the speech

Text (7): "This American carnage stops right here and stops right now. We are one nation and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams. And their success will be our success."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language is both dramatic and unifying. The phrase "This American carnage stops right here and stops right now" employs strong, decisive language to signal an end to perceived chaos and decline. The term "carnage" is vivid and emotionally charged, suggesting a severe and destructive state of affairs. By stating that this condition "stops right here and stops right now," the speaker aims to convey immediate and transformative action, positioning himself as a decisive leader capable of bringing about change. The subsequent sentences, "We are one nation and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams. And their success will be our success," shift the focus from addressing past issues to building a collective future. The repetition of "our" creates a sense of inclusivity and shared identity. This inclusive language is designed to foster unity and solidarity among the audience, suggesting that the speaker and the people are united in their experiences and aspirations.

The language here functions to bridge divides between different groups within the nation. By framing various challenges and aspirations as common to all, the speech seeks to create a unified narrative that resonates across diverse segments of society. This narrative positions the speaker as someone who understands and represents the collective needs and desires of the American people. From a discursive practice perspective, this segment of the speech aligns with a populist strategy that seeks to unify the public by addressing collective grievances and promising a shared vision of success. The rhetoric emphasizes a break from past failures and advocates for a new, inclusive approach. This approach is intended to build support and generate a sense of communal purpose.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader effort to address and remedy national discontent. By acknowledging widespread pain and promising collective success, the speech aims to resonate with a broad audience and position the administration as a remedy to past inadequacies. The language serves to consolidate support by presenting a vision of national renewal and shared achievement.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses emotionally powerful language to address past issues and foster unity. The rhetoric aims to create a sense of shared experience and collective future, reinforcing the speaker's position as a leader committed to addressing national challenges and achieving common goals.

Text (8): "For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language is used to create a powerful critique of the political establishment and to frame the current administration as a remedy for past failures. The phrase "a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost" sets up a clear opposition between the elite and the general public. The language implies that a select group of individuals has benefited at the expense of the broader population, fostering a sense of injustice and exploitation.

The text uses terms like "reaped the rewards" and "borne the cost" to emphasize the disparity between the elite's gains and the public's suffering. This contrast is designed to resonate with audiences who feel disenfranchised or economically disadvantaged. The subsequent statements, "Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth" and "Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed," further highlight this disparity by suggesting that the political class has enjoyed prosperity while the working-class has experienced economic decline.

From a discursive practice perspective, this language fits within a populist discourse that seeks to challenge and delegitimize the political establishment. By framing the political elite as self-serving and disconnected from the needs of the average citizen, the speech aligns itself with a narrative of populist rebellion against entrenched power structures. This approach aims to rally support by positioning the speaker as an outsider or reformer who will address the inequities created by the political establishment.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader critique of the political system and its impact on economic conditions. The language serves to reinforce a populist agenda that prioritizes the needs and concerns of ordinary people over those of the political elite. By highlighting economic struggles and job losses, the speech aims to create a sense of urgency and legitimacy for the proposed changes.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses critical and emotive language to draw a stark contrast between the political elite and the general population. The rhetoric seeks to mobilize support by addressing perceived injustices and presenting the current administration as a corrective force against past failures.

Text (9): "The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs. While they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump uses language to create a strong dichotomy between the political establishment and ordinary citizens. The phrase "The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country" positions the political elite as self-serving and negligent toward the needs of the general public. This framing suggests that the political system has failed to address the concerns and needs of ordinary people, focusing instead on its own benefits. The repetition of "their" and "your" in "Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs" further emphasizes this divide. The language contrasts the successes of the elite with the struggles of the general populace, reinforcing the perception that the political class's achievements are disconnected from the real experiences of everyday Americans.

The concluding sentence, "While they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land," underscores the disparity between the political elite's perceived indulgence and the economic hardships faced by average citizens. The juxtaposition of celebration in the capital with widespread struggle creates a powerful emotional appeal, highlighting the sense of injustice and exclusion felt by many. From a discursive practice perspective, this language aligns with a populist rhetoric that critiques the political establishment and advocates for reform. The speech seeks to resonate with voters who feel marginalized by the political system, framing the speaker as a champion of the ordinary citizen against a corrupt and out-of-touch elite.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader populist narrative that addresses and seeks to remedy feelings of disenfranchisement and economic hardship. By highlighting the disconnect between the elite's successes and the struggles of the general population, the speech aims to mobilize support and generate a sense of urgency for change.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses emotive and critical language to draw a stark contrast between the political establishment and the public. The rhetoric aims to build a narrative of inequality and exploitation, positioning the speaker as a reformer who will address these issues and prioritize the needs of ordinary Americans.

Text (10): "We are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People. For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump uses language to create a narrative of political reform and empowerment. The phrase "We are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People" establishes a clear intention to shift authority away from the political elite and toward the general public. This statement frames the administration's goal as returning control to ordinary citizens, positioning it as a corrective measure to address past imbalances. The critique of the political elite is evident in "For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost." Here, Trump uses the term "small group" to refer to the political elite, implying that their interests have been prioritized over those of the broader population. The phrase "reaped the rewards of government" suggests that the elite have benefited disproportionately from their positions, while "the people have borne the cost" conveys a sense of exploitation and neglect. The subsequent statement, "Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth," further emphasizes the disparity between the success of the political establishment and the economic struggles of ordinary Americans. This juxtaposition is designed to create a sense of injustice and to frame the current administration as a solution to this problem.

From a discursive practice perspective, this language is aligned with a populist rhetoric that challenges the status quo and advocates for a redistribution of power. The discourse is intended to resonate with individuals who feel disenfranchised by the political system, portraying the speaker as an advocate for their interests and a reformer who will rectify past grievances.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader populist narrative that critiques the political establishment and promotes a vision of government that is more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens. By emphasizing the transfer of power and the failures of the political elite, the speech seeks to galvanize support for the administration's agenda and to address widespread feelings of political alienation.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses persuasive and emotive language to highlight the perceived failures of the political elite and to advocate for a shift in power back to the American people. The rhetoric aims to build a narrative of reform and empowerment, reinforcing the administration's position as a champion of the public against a corrupt and self-serving political system.

Text (11): "This moment is your moment. It belongs to you. The people are forgotten no longer. Everyone is listening to you now."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language is designed to empower and include the audience in the political process. The repeated assertion "This moment is your moment. It belongs to you" creates a sense of personal ownership and significance for the audience. By framing the moment as belonging to the people, Trump aims to foster a sense of agency and validation among his listeners. The phrase "The people are forgotten no longer" addresses past grievances by suggesting that the general population had previously been ignored or neglected. This statement is a direct critique of previous administrations or political elites, positioning the current administration as responsive and attentive to the needs of the people.

The concluding line, "Everyone is listening to you now," reinforces the idea that the public's voice is now heard and valued. This statement implies a shift in power dynamics, suggesting that the administration will be attentive to the concerns and demands of the populace.

From a discursive practice perspective, this language aligns with a populist strategy aimed at legitimizing the administration by emphasizing a break from past practices. The rhetoric seeks to create a narrative of inclusion and responsiveness, positioning the speaker as an advocate for the people who is dedicated to addressing their concerns.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader populist and reformist agenda. By claiming that the people are no longer forgotten and that their voices are now being heard, the speech seeks to build support and create a sense of communal achievement. This approach is intended to address feelings of disenfranchisement and to reinforce the administration's commitment to engaging with and representing the interests of ordinary citizens.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses inclusive and empowering language to affirm the importance of the audience and to signal a shift in political priorities. The rhetoric aims to build a sense of connection and validation, reinforcing the speaker's position as a leader who values and listens to the concerns of the public.

Text (12): "We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams."

Analysis

In this excerpt, Trump's language employs repetition and direct promises to appeal to the audience's sense of national pride and hope for improvement. The repetitive structure of "We will bring back" serves to emphasize commitment and determination. Each promise "our jobs," "our borders," "our wealth," and "our dreams" is framed as a recovery of something that has been lost or diminished. This approach is designed to resonate emotionally with the audience, evoking a sense of nostalgia and urgency.

The phrase "We will bring back our jobs" addresses economic concerns by promising to restore employment opportunities. This language targets voters who are dissatisfied with current economic conditions and feel that their job prospects have been undermined.

The promise to "bring back our borders" speaks to concerns about immigration and national security. By framing this as a priority, Trump aims to appeal to those who are worried about border control and the perceived impacts of immigration on national stability. "Bring back our wealth" suggests a restoration of economic prosperity that may have been lost. This statement implies that previous policies or administrations have failed to ensure economic growth and that the current administration will rectify this issue. Finally, "bring back our dreams" taps into a broader, more abstract notion of national aspiration and personal fulfillment. It evokes the idea of a renewed American Dream, suggesting that the administration will work towards ensuring that individuals can achieve their personal and professional goals.

From a discursive practice perspective, this language reinforces a populist and nationalist rhetoric that critiques past failures and promises a return to a perceived better state. The repetitive promises are designed to create a strong, positive narrative of recovery and renewal, appealing to a wide audience by addressing both tangible and aspirational concerns.

In terms of social practice, this rhetoric reflects a broader populist agenda focused on addressing economic and security issues while also appealing to nationalistic sentiments. The language aims to mobilize support by addressing perceived grievances and offering a vision of a revitalized nation where lost opportunities and aspirations are reclaimed.

Overall, this excerpt from Trump's speech uses repetitive and emotionally charged language to promise restoration and improvement. The rhetoric is designed to build confidence and rally support by focusing on key issues of economic prosperity, national security, and personal fulfillment.

Results and Discussion

The results of the research summarize the key findings derived from analyzing Donald Trump's "America First" speech. These results align with the research objectives of exploring how language reflects and constructs power dynamics, ideologies, and social relations in political discourse. Below are the main findings:

Language as a Tool for Constructing Power

The speech demonstrates that political language is a powerful tool for asserting authority and shaping public perception. Trump uses rhetorical strategies, such as repetition, direct address, and emotive language, to build a persuasive and authoritative narrative. For example, phrases like "America First" and "We will win like never before" emphasize a unifying and empowering vision, positioning the speaker as a strong and reliable leader.

Discursive Construction of Ideology

Trump's speech reflects and reinforces nationalist and populist ideologies. Through discursive choices, the speech frames the United States as a victim of unfair global practices and highlights

the need for protectionism and sovereignty. This framing appeals to the audience's emotions and shared identity, portraying external forces (such as globalization and immigration) as threats and positioning Trump's policies as solutions.

Polarization Through Us vs. Them Discourse

The results highlight the use of polarization in the speech, where Trump frequently employs an us versus them narrative. By contrasting the United States (we) with external forces (they, other nations, or bad trade deals), the speech reinforces division and positions outsiders as adversaries. This strategy strengthens the alignment between the speaker and his audience while marginalizing perceived opponents.

Simplified and Accessible Language

Trump's choice of simple and direct language ensures that his message is widely accessible. The repetitive use of key terms like "great", "victory", and "strength" emphasizes positivity and optimism. This accessibility allows him to connect with a diverse audience, particularly those who feel alienated by more complex or elitist political discourse.

Legitimization of Power Through Historical Narratives

The speech draws on historical narratives and intertextual references to validate Trump's leadership and policies. By referring to past economic and political challenges, Trump positions himself as the solution to ongoing struggles, thus legitimizing his role as a defender of national interests.

Reinforcement of Power Structures

The analysis reveals how Trump's speech sustains existing power structures by appealing to dominant ideologies and societal fears. His rhetoric fosters allegiance among his audience while simultaneously marginalizing dissenting voices and opposing perspectives. This dual role of political language highlights its capacity to both unite and divide.

Conclusion

The research highlights the significant role of language in constructing and sustaining power relations. Political speeches serve as powerful tools for influencing public perception, shaping ideologies, and asserting authority. Through the use of rhetorical strategies and deliberate linguistic choices, leaders craft narratives that resonate with emotions, establish credibility, and create a sense of unity or division among audiences. The analysis of Trump's "America First" speech demonstrates how political discourse reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies. By framing globalization and immigration as external threats, the speech appeals to nationalist sentiments, aligning the speaker with the concerns of his audience. This ideological positioning legitimizes political agendas and consolidates the leader's authority. The speech also reveals the polarizing nature of political language, using an us versus them narrative to foster unity within the target audience while excluding or marginalizing others. Such strategies highlight the dual role of language in uniting groups under a shared identity and simultaneously creating division. The study concludes that political speeches are not merely expressions of ideas but powerful instruments for shaping social realities and maintaining or challenging power structures. The findings emphasize the importance of critical discourse analysis in uncovering the underlying ideologies and power dynamics embedded in political communication.

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