

A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's Language Use in US Presidential Campaign: A New Analytical Framework for Reading Journalistic Texts

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ABSTRACT

The present contribution is an attempt to make a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) comparison between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's presidential campaign discourses, based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. The educational aim of the present study is to introduce an applicable approach through a new analytical framework for reading journalistic texts among EFL learners in order to equip them with the critical ability and analytical skills to achieve a depth-understanding of the texts. So this is a corpus-based qualitative-quantitative study focusing on how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. Through close analysis of texts we can find out where and why implicit messages and explicit meanings are foregrounded or backgrounded. The findings of the current study can be utilized for English foreign language learners to promote their critical ability to analyze the journalistic texts and this, in turn, can enhance the EFL learners' motivation in reading comprehension.

Keywords: Backgrounding, critical discourse analysis, foregrounding, language use, presidential campaign

INTRODUCTION

Fairclough (1995, 1996, 2001, 2010) indicated that critical discourse analysis (CDA) was a *transdisciplinary* (italic in original) form of analysis that emphasized on language as a form of social practice. The ultimate end of CDA is to analyze texts in their social contexts (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough (2010) also articulated the theoretical relationship between language

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and ideology. He discussed “the merits of locating ideology in language structures or language events” (Fairclough, 1995). He outlined a conception of discourse and discourse analysis and argued that “a more diverse range of linguistic features and levels may be ideologically invested than is usually assumed, including aspects of linguistic form and style as well as content” (Fairclough, 1995). He also indicated that ideology was “a property of both structures and events”, but the key problem was to find a satisfactory account of the dialectic of structures and events (Fairclough, 1995). He then argued that language/ideology issues should be put into a more general framework of theories and analysis of power. In this regard, the Gramscian theory of hegemony (1971) was very influential in shaping Fairclough’s CDA approach.

Van Dijk (2015) viewed CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality were enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”. He also articulated that there was a dialectical correlation between the text and context in discourse. He viewed CDA “as a reaction against the dominant formal (often “asocial” or “uncritical”) paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s” (Van Dijk, 2015). Van Dijk (1998) believed that the main task of ideology was to legitimize power and inequality in favor of the ruling class. Ideology was presumed to hide or obfuscate the reality to be at the service of dominant social formation. He also maintained that apart from the negative

function of ideology, it should be noted that ideology had some positive effects, including social solidarity, organizing struggle or sustain oppositions.

Ruth Wodak (2011) provided a remarkable view of CDA. She drew on the more extensive overviews of CDA:

Most generally, CDA can be defined as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research program, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agendas. What unites them is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, identity politics and political-economic or cultural change in society. (p. 38)

Wodak (2001) also reiterated language did not contain power in itself, but it derived its power from the powers of dominant formations. This explains why CDA deals with the relationship between language and power and the analysis of language use of dominant groups (Baker et al., 2008).

CDA approach focuses on three dimensions of discourse: text (linguistic characteristics and organization of the text itself including vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, coherence, and intertextuality), discourse practice (process of text production, distribution, and consumption, according to social factors, and socio-cultural practice (how discursive event shapes the nature of discursive practice). These three dimensions will be analyzed in three processes of analyses which are:

description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis), and explanation (social analysis).

For text analysis on the level of description Fairclough (1996) presented the ten-question model to analyze the text to reveal covered meanings implied in the language use.

Applying Fairclough's CDA model (1995, 1996, 2001, 2010) and utilizing the ten-question model of Fairclough (1996), the present contribution tries to make a CDA comparison between Donald Trump by Plumer (2016), and Hillary Clinton's by Winter (2016) presidential campaign discourse. The current study attempts to reveal the interrelation of discourse structures and ideological structures of their acceptance speech in the US Presidential Election of 2016 as a good sample of his language use in presidential campaign. So, the current contribution is going to find answers to the following questions:

1. What experiential, relational and expressive values do words and grammatical features have?
2. What are the most important linguistic traces that highlight ideology and power in their speech?
3. What are the linguistic features of foregrounding and backgrounding strategies in the texts?

RELATED STUDIES

Some researchers have carried out studies in the field of CDA, for instance, Bednarek and Caple (2014) conducted a study in order to introduce a new framework for the

analysis of news discourse to scholars in CDA and beyond. They tried to emphasize the importance of news values for linguistic analysis. The authors tried to introduce a 'discursive' approach to news values. The new framework for the analysis of such values, which they introduced, aimed at the analysis of text, towards combining quantitative and qualitative analysis by using corpus linguistic techniques. According to the authors, from a linguistic perspective, language can be seen as expressing, indicating, emphasizing or highlighting new values. Their framework for a linguistic analysis of news discourse is situated within the *discursive* approach to news values (italic in original). They analyzed two different case studies to introduce a new analytical framework to achieve their research aims. In the first case study, they demonstrated a systematic linguistic analysis to depict what kind of discursive devices were repeatedly used in the British press. In the second case study, they used a linguistic analysis of news values for a specific topic, event or news actor to establish how they were constructed as news worthy. They finally declared that there are other potential uses of their new framework for CDA.

Abdi and Basarati (2016) conducted a qualitative CDA study on Yemen crisis in ideologically-inclined newspaper headlines of Iran, Arab and the West. The corpus of their research study consisted of 63 headlines taken from 10 newspapers. They went through the newspapers of Iran, Arab nations and Western ones since these three agents were the three major players in the

Yemen crisis and played effective roles in the ongoing events of this country. They utilized Fairclough's 3-dimensional model (1996) to explore the specific themes in the selected headlines. In this way, the analysis of their article focused on the linguistic features of the text, processes relating to the production and consumption of the text (discursive practice), and the wider social practice to which the text belonged. The results indicated that Iranian headlines represented the Houthis as Yemeni people meanwhile; the West and Saudi-led coalition represented the Houthis as rebels. As for the source of such opposing discourses, the study argued that the opposing ideological views of Islam in the Middle East and the discourse of secularism in the West led to contradictory discourses in the region.

In a newest attempt, Alkaff and McLellan (2017) conducted an investigation to compare 'Hard News Texts' in the Malay and English language media in Malaysia. They applied a modified CDA framework (as a 'product' approach) in order to establish the degree of parallelism between the Malay and English media texts reporting the same news. And also they tried to find the policies and processes involved in the construction of print media texts by a 'process' approach based on interviews. They placed the texts side-by-side to enable comparison of length and depth of coverage of the news reports. In this way, they could investigate what ideas or issues were being foregrounded or backgrounded in the texts. The authors also tried to use a quantitative approach to establish the degree of parallelism between

Malay and English language media texts (from the same institutions) reporting the same story. They came to this result that the same news has different stances and ideas.

It is worth mentioning that Bull and Fetzer (2006), KhosraviNik (2015), and Lotfi (2016) conducted studies on the news coverage of newspapers to reveal the ideological burden language features. By contrast with most other works, the present study attempts to present a framework to analyze language use through the CDA approach developed by Fairclough (1995, 1996, 2001, 2010). Despite the importance of this model, the previous studies either ignored or only mentioned in passing.

METHODS

Iranian EFL learners are suffering from lacking critical ability to analyze and discuss the texts to reach the deep or unmasked meaning of the texts. Almost all of them are not familiar with the CDA techniques to realize the ideologically contested words and structures in a text. They are not able to describe a text to find out how societal power relations are established through language use, and also they cannot recognize linguistic traces that imply strategy and ideology. They just remain on the surface meaning of a text. So the present study tries to introduce a critical reading framework based on CDA techniques in order to equip EFL learners to be able to analyze a text critically. This provides and motivates them to enhance their ability in reading journalistic texts.

Although some scattered studies have been conducted in this sphere, they did not introduce an applicable framework for reading journalistic texts. This study tries to fill up the relevant gap.

The textual samples for the current study were chosen for their overall significance in the 2016 presidential campaign. Moreover, "political speeches are highly constructed pieces of discourse" (Jenson et al., 2016). The acceptance speech is one of the most important events in the US presidential campaign. Analyzing the acceptance speech through the CDA would provide a detailed exploration of the central themes and questions which the researchers wish to study.

So, this is a CDA comparative study of Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech on the fourth day of the Democratic National Convention at the Wells Fargo Center, July 28, 2016 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Donald Trump's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC) delivered on July 21, 2016 to reveal how the language was utilized as a part of the presidential campaign to draw the audiences' attention and persuade them to vote.

Donald Trump's speech (text) comprised the total amount of 5144 words. This speech lasted 75 minutes. Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech is comprised of the total amount of 5202 words and it was 15 minutes shorter than Trump's acceptance speech.

According to Meng and Yu (2016) critical discourse analysis in conjunction with a corpus-driven analytical methodology

can make a powerful qualitative and quantitative tool for deconstructing and studying political discourse. So, primarily this is a quantitative method of research which was conducted based on the statistical data especially the most frequent content words in setting a related word list in order to compare and contrast the two speeches. Then a qualitative focused analysis was manipulated on the macro level to see whether the discourse of the texts imply any ideological orientations towards the content of the speeches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present contribution can be considered as the newest attempt in order to show the importance of in-depth understanding of journalistic texts among EFL learners.

A Comparative/Contrastive Analysis of the Most Important Issues of Concerns

The most important issues of concerns in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's acceptance speeches are as follows: 1) Americanism; 2) Immigration; 3) Terrorism; and 4) Economy

Americanism

The table below presents the frequency of the most important related words or vocabulary items that project the meaning of Americanism.

It is not unreasonable that Trump emphasized on America, American(s) and Americanism more than Hillary did (according to the Table 1). Trump wanted

Table 1
Americanism

Related words	Hillary	Trump
Americanism	0	1
America-American(s)	27+11	31+30
(Our) Country	23	31
(Our) Nation	15	11(3 unrelated)
(Our) People	36	20
(Our) Citizens	1	8
Constitution	2	1
(Declaration of) Independence	0	1
Women’s Right	1	0
Democracy	1	0
Equality	1	0
American dream	1	0

to persuade the audiences being agreed that such issues were completely ignored by Hillary Clinton. While Donald Trump explicitly separated “Americanism” from “globalism” by using emphatic wordings: “*The most important difference between our plan and that of our opponents is that our plan will put America first. Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo*”, Hillary Clinton did not mention the ideologically contested word “Americanism” in her speech at all. She utilized a plain positive wording about the present economic conditions of America, “*America is stronger because of President Obama’s leadership, and I’m better because of his friendship*”. And emphasized that “*That’s the only way we can turn our progressive platform into real change for America*”.

Other words and phrases may project the meaning of “Americanism” are “(our) country”, “(our) nation”, “(our) people”

and “(our) citizens). According to the Table 1, Hillary emphasized citizens and citizenship rights by frequently using “(our) people”, “(our citizens)”. She used these wordings in her speech to show her obligations to human rights, women’s rights, democracy and so on, but not specifically on “Americanism”. But Trump emphasized “Americanism” and the “*system that works for the American People*”. While he pointed out lost opportunities and utilized oppositional wordings to stimulate the nations’ unsatisfactory, Hillary tried to emphasize plain general issues which had not included any persuasive wordings: “*America needs every one of us to lend our energy, our talents, (and) our ambition to making our nation better and stronger*”.

Donald Trump skillfully applied ideologically contested phrases such as “Hillary Clinton’s legacy” contrasted with “American legacy” to categorize them in the classification scheme of catastrophically situation of the “rigged system”. By these simple and short clauses, he implied the experiential and expressive values of related words to project the meaning of Americanism.

Immigration

The most important related words or vocabulary items that project the meaning of immigration.

Comparing and contrasting the wordings in Table 2 implies that Trump made a classification scheme replete with ideologically contested words. It gives him a persuasive language use to attack

Table 2
Immigration

Related words	Hillary	Trump
Immigration	2	9
(Illegal) Immigrant(s)	0	10
Refugees	0	4
(Illegal) Border(s)	3	8
Violence	3	11
Crime(s)	0	7
Human Smuggling	0	1
Lower Wages	0	1
Killing	0	9
Murdered	0	2
Homicide(s)	0	1
Brutal(ly)	0	2
Dangerous immigration policy	0	1

his opponent very efficiently. Most of the ideologically contested words are introduced by many “oppositional wordings”. These related words or vocabulary items project the negative meaning of immigration such as “illegal immigrants”, “(illegal) borders”, “terrorism”, “terrorists”, “violence”, “crimes”, “human smuggling”, “lower wages”, “killing”, “savagely”, “murdered”, “homicide”, “brutal (ly)”, and “radical and dangerous immigration policy”.

Hillary drew a classification scheme full of positive wordings which were ideologically contrasted with Trump's negative rewordings. Not only she did not utilize the negative synonyms for immigrants but also she tried to apply positive statement “*And we'll build a path to citizenship for millions of immigrants who are already contributing to our economy!*” In this way, she tried to persuade a larger of the population to vote her. Donald Trump in his

classification scheme utilized such wordings to project the negative social consequences of immigrants and immigration, but Hillary Clinton utilized positive wordings to project the economic benefits of immigration,

“I believe that when we have millions of hard working immigrants contributing to our economy, it would be self-defeating and inhumane to kick them out”. And “Comprehensive immigration reform will grow our economy and keep families together - and it's the right thing to do”.

Trump used parallelism structure as a form of foregrounding such as “*Mass amnesty, mass immigration, and mass lawlessness*” to present a persuasive negative experiential and expressive value on immigration policy.

Fairclough (1996) focused on how a text's choice of wordings depended on and helped create, social relationships between participants. These social relationships can be shown by using euphemistic expressions. While Trump euphemistically used some expressions to show his sympathetic feelings on the victims of “murder” and “violent crimes” committed by “gangs” (he means immigrants), Hillary applied euphemistic words implying experiential and relational values to support immigrants and introduced herself as a passionate advocate of them. She rejected US/THEM division and said, “*We have to heal the divides in our country*”. Or “*I refuse to believe we can't find common ground here*”. Trump intended to show that crises were consequences of the “open

border policy” but Hillary used wordings to show the positive experiential and relational values on the issue of immigration.

It seems there is no important place for “metaphor” in Hillary and Trump’s speech in part of related to immigration. In fact, Trump’s strategy was to speak very clearly utilizing simple and short sentences.

Their speeches were replete with so many grammatical features such as topicalization, nominalization, and juxtaposition which comprised experiential, relational and expressive values. Trump used a lot of simple sentences to blame his rival on all deplorable conditions, for example, “Americans are suffering”, topicalization like “radical and dangerous immigration policy” and “Homicides last year increased by 17% in America’s fifty largest cities”. And finally, he came to this result that she “is not fit to lead our country”. Hillary, on the other hand, tried to “de-emphasize our bad things” and in this way she had unconsciously trapped herself into a self-defeating position.

Terrorism

The most important related words or vocabulary items that project the meaning of terrorism.

Table 3
Terrorism

Related words	Hillary	Trump
Terrorism	1	9
Terrorists	1	2
ISIS	2	4
Islamic radicals (terrorists)	0	4
Savage killers	0	1
Law and order	0	9

According to the Table 3, terrorism and the related words or vocabulary items that project the meaning of terrorism are comprised a significant part of Trump’s speech. Trump explicitly and aggressively applied some hyponyms and over-wordings to create negative connotations such as “Islamic radicals” or “Islamic terrorists”, and “criminals”. Trump tried to blame Hillary for all her responsibility for widening terrorism:

“Our convention occurs at a moment of crisis for our nation. The attacks on our police, and the terrorism in our cities, threaten our very way of life. Any politician who does not grasp this danger is not fit to lead our country.”

“After four years of Hillary Clinton, what do we have? ISIS has spread across the region and the entire world. Libya is in ruins, and our ambassador and his staff were left helpless to die at the hands of savage killers. Egypt was turned over to the radical Muslim Brotherhood, forcing the military to retake control. Iraq is in chaos. Iran is on the path to nuclear weapons. Syria is engulfed in a civil war and a refugee crisis that now threatens the West. After 15 years of wars in the Middle East, after trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost, the situation is worse than it has ever been before.”

Hillary tried to mitigate the problem of terrorism by applying an implicit collocation structure which implied that terrorism can be diminished by some reforms. *“We should be working with responsible gun owners to pass common-sense reforms and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, terrorists and all others who would do us harm.”*

Economy

The most important related words or vocabulary items that project the issue of economy.

Table 4
Economy

Related words	Hillary	Trump
Economy/Trade	1	18
Poverty	0	4
Laid-off factory workers	0	1
Not employed	0	1
Ignored (people)	0	1
Tax Laws	0	4
Job killing/ Job killers	0	2
Rigged system	0	5
Corruption	0	1

According to the Table 4, Hillary views U.S. economic conditions very optimistically: *“we will build an economy where everyone who wants a good paying job can get one”*. *“Our economy is so much stronger than when they took office. Nearly 15 million new private-sector jobs. Twenty million more Americans with health insurance. And an auto industry that just had its best year ever. That’s real progress”*. *“We will not build a wall”*. She shows a mitigated negative view on the economy by relating to democracy: *“I believe that our economy*

isn’t working the way it should because our democracy isn’t working the way it should”. *“I believe that when we have millions of hardworking immigrants contributing to our economy, it would be self-defeating and inhumane to kick them out”*.

Trump’s speech was full of two strategies in applying negative evaluation: parallelism and emphatic style. He knew how to influence on his audiences by applying a range of wordings associating negative evaluations: *“58% of African-American youth are now not employed”*, *“2 million more Latinos are in poverty”*, *“14 million people have left the workforce entirely”*, *“President Obama has almost doubled our national debt to more than \$19 trillion, and growing”*. He applied some nominalizations such as *“laid-off factory workers”*, *“the forgotten men and women of our country”* as a good strategy to attack his rival. In this way, he tried to depict all the deplorable conditions which Americans have got stocked, and then by using sympathetic wording he introduced himself as the only savior, *“These are people who work hard but no longer have a voice. I am your voice”*. Trump applied some phrases such as *“colossal mistakes”*, *“colossal disasters”* and *“job killing trade”* as a linguistic strategy to *“Emphasize their bad things”*. Trump clearly utilized an aggressive language on the economic relationship between the U.S. and China, *“China’s outrageous theft of intellectual property”* or *“our horrible trade agreements with China, and many others, will be totally renegotiated”*.

He also projected the negative expressive value of “rigged system” and “corruption” through emphatic style “*I know that corruption has reached a level like never ever before in our country*”. “*Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it. I have seen firsthand how the system is rigged against our citizens*”.

CONCLUSIONS

Initially, the current study is a quantitative method of research that is implemented based on the statistical data especially the most frequent words in order to compare and contrast the two speeches. Then a qualitative focused analysis has been done in order to reach the macro level of the speeches. Both speeches cover a wide diversity of different issues. It is worth mentioning that the candidates’ acceptance speech is a good sample of methodological instrument pertaining and including most of the linguistic components can be applied for the purpose of the present study.

As Chalak and Ghasemi (2017) found “accepting a CDA approach to language teaching and learning could be much more interesting for language learners to read between the lines and not in the lines in order to search for cultural, societal, and political differences dominated throughout the textbooks”.

The current study came to the following answers and statements of the research questions on the basis of the above method analysis.

Concerning the research question 1, findings of the research revealed that how the two Presidential nominees tried to draw upon some classification schemes through ideologically contested words. The research indicated that in what ways they applied synonymy, hyponymy and antonymy to convey ideological significant meaning relations. For instance “crime”, “gangs” and “violence” are hyponyms and also synonyms of “terrorism” in Trump’s speech. Furthermore, the present study revealed that in what ways they tried to show their dominance (power) by using very simple sentences in which the agent is explicitly clear. How they used nominalization in active sentences, and how they applied inclusive and exclusive pronouns.

Both of them applied simple vocabularies and short sentences to make a very provocative and intimately language use, because their audiences were all Americans, either educated or uneducated people. And this helped them minimize the social distance between the speakers and the audiences. In this way, strategically they could make a very emotional situation to express their feeling and attitudes to the nation. Another reason for applying simple sentences especially in the form of (SVO), (SV) and (SVC) is that this kind of sentences convey the experiential values which in turn can help the speaker attack directly the opponent, besides, it helped them to put the blame of catastrophically situation on the other side. So, the agent is very clear and most of the sentences are in an active voice. Their speeches are replete with conjunctions

such as “and” and “but”. This kind of usage pattern, however, could help them to apply a very persuasive and powerful language use. Most of the sentences are declarative. In a declarative form, the speaker can show his/her power very easily. Applying simple declarative sentences (SVO), they tried to put them in the same position as the audience. Furthermore, it would be a persuasive tool to introduce themselves very sympathetic and responsible for the main nations' problems. Both of them applied idiosyncratic pattern of emphatic speech style but in different wordings full of experiential, relational and expressive values. In short, language was being used in an instrumental way as a part of a wider objective to convince the audience to vote them.

Concerning the research question 2, findings of the research revealed that there are a lot of linguistic traces that highlight ideology and power in both speeches. Both speeches covered a wide diversity of different issues, and it provided appropriate textual samples for the present research contribution. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in one of the most important speeches in their lives tried to set forth some selected crucial problems relating to Americans and some vital global affairs in such a way to attract the attention of their parties and the voters as well. The textual samples are replete with linguistic features that highlight their ideology and depict their willing to project their power. Since Trump has introduced himself as an opponent to the status in quo, he could make a wider

space and capacity to use opposing wordings to attack his rival successfully “*My plan is the exact opposite of the radical and dangerous immigration policy of Hillary Clinton*”. Applying lots of ideologically contested words through topicalizations, nominalizations helped Trump to stand in a good position “*Communities want relief from uncontrolled immigration*”. Ideology in Trump's speech can be revealed via considering two familiar sentences “*Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo*” and his main motto in the presidential election in a short imperative sentence “*Make America Great Again!*” But Hillary Clinton stood on the government side. And this made a very self-defeating situation to her. While Donald Trump applied a male-oriented pattern of negative and aggressive language speech, Hillary utilized positive connotations to draw the audience's attention to her motto “*stronger together*”.

Concerning research question 3, the findings of the research depicted that both of the two rivals tried to utilize different kinds of foregrounding and backgrounding strategies. Halliday (1973, 1978) introduced foregrounding as the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting, whereby some features of the language of a text stood out in some way. Analysis of the text showed that Donald Trump applied this kind of strategy more than Hillary Clinton. For instance “*I know that corruption has reached a level like never ever before in our country*” or “*She supported the Trans-Pacific Partnership which will not only destroy our manufacturing but it will make*

America subject to the rulings of foreign governments. And it is not going to happen". Trump frequently applied opposing and aggressive language through parallelism as a form of foregrounding, "Mass amnesty, mass immigration, and mass lawlessness". Although almost both of them could apply the linguistic strategies in their speech, it seems Trump could make a wider capacity and atmosphere to use persuasive words, phrases, and sentences because he introduced himself as an opponent and a critic of the government. To sum up, scrutinizing the texts critically depicted how they used positive sentences for foregrounding and negative sentences for backgrounding to an US/THEM relations.

The current study can be utilized for English foreign language learners to promote their critical ability to analyze the journalistic texts and this; in turn can enhance the EFL learners' motivation in reading comprehension.

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