Critical Discourse Analysis in English Language Teaching: The American President Speech at the 2023 National Safer Communities Summit

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ABSTRACT

This research endeavours to dissect the intricate web of political communication after thoroughly analysing The American President speech presented at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023 using a comprehensive critical discourse analysis (CDA). This study seeks to clarify the various aspects of power and ideology present in the speech through the utilisation of Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis as the analytical framework. By scrutinising linguistic choices, rhetorical strategies, and discursive patterns, the analysis uncovers the ways in which language functions as a tool for constructing and disseminating political agendas. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research seamlessly combines textual analysis with contextual exploration to unravel not only the linguistic intricacies but also the broader sociopolitical context that frames the discourse. Amidst President Biden's articulation of his vision for safer communities, this study reveals the nuanced intersections of language, power, and governance. By unmasking the underlying power dynamics and ideologies woven into the fabric of political discourse, this research contributes to an enhanced understanding of how language shapes public perception and policy discourse. Ultimately, this study underscores the imperative of critically engaging with political speeches to foster an informed and participatory citizenry, highlighting language's pivotal role in shaping our collective political consciousness.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Discourse, Joe Biden, National Safer Communities Summit 2023, Fairclough's CDA model.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse and communication hold a pivotal role in shaping societies, ideologies, and power structures. The ways in which language is used, the narratives woven, and the messages conveyed are integral to influencing public opinion, policy decisions, and the collective mindset. Understanding the complex interplay between language, power dynamics, and ideology has resulted in the rise of discourse analysis as a crucial instrument for deciphering the intricacies of communication across different contexts (Fairclough, 1995a; van Dijk, 1997).

According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), discourse analysis is a comprehensive approach that combines linguistics and the social sciences to study how language is used. Its goal is to uncover the ways in which language constructs meaning, reinforces norms, and influences interactions within society. This type of analysis is especially important when examining political speeches, as they provide a platform for promoting ideologies, gaining support, and advocating for policy changes.

Critical Discourse Analysis, as highlighted by Fairclough (1995b), stands out as a significant framework within the field of discourse analysis. CDA not only examines linguistic structures but also explores power dynamics, social contexts, and underlying ideologies that both shape and are shaped by discourse. Political speeches offer an interesting focus for CDA because they often encapsulate the desires, strategies, and worldviews of political leaders. This makes them valuable material for analysing the interplay between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 1993; Chilton, 2004).

Considering this context, The American President speech at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023 carries particular importance. The summit serves as a crucial platform where policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders come together to discuss strategies aimed at enhancing public safety. President Biden's speech at this summit can be viewed as a carefully planned approach to tackling concerns, presenting new ideas, and garnering public backing on matters concerning national security and the welfare of the community.

The study reported in this paper examines Joe Biden's speech at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023 using critical discourse analysis as a framework. The speech is scrutinised not only for its language characteristics but also for the power dynamics, ideologies, and societal contexts it portrays and strengthens. The research question guiding this study is: "How does The American President speech at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023 employ linguistic strategies to convey and negotiate power dynamics and ideologies?"

This study holds significance in contributing to a broader understanding of the intricate interplay between language, power, and politics. By dissecting the linguistic and ideological mechanisms at play in President Biden's speech, this research sheds light on how political discourse influences public perception and the potential implications for policy enactment. As the analysis unfolds, we delve into the multifaceted layers of language and its influential role in shaping the sociopolitical landscape, exemplifying the importance of critical discourse analysis in deciphering the intricate tapestry of communication within political contexts

LITERATURE REVIEW
Political Discourse
Political discourse, according to Chilton (2004), pertains to the sharing and interchange of thoughts, viewpoints, and knowledge concerning politics and governance within a society. It encompasses the utilisation of language and persuasive techniques by politicians, government representatives, media outlets, and ordinary citizens to engage in discussions and debates and sway political matters such as policies, decisions, and public sentiment. The significance of political discourse lies in its ability to shape public opinion, rally support for political candidates, and encourage active involvement in democratic processes.

With the advent of digital media and social networking platforms like Twitter and Facebook, discourse, according to Jungherr (2015), has gained significant influence in society. These platforms provide politicians as well as citizens with direct means for immediate political communication that shapes public discourse and influences political events.

In the realm of politics, various forms of communication are utilised, including public speeches, debates, media coverage, posts on social media platforms, and written publications. Political discourse often incorporates persuasive techniques such as emotional appeals, logical arguments, and rhetorical devices to sway public opinion and gain support for specific political agendas (Van Dijk, 2017).

Wodak and Meyer (2009) explain that political discourse analysis is an area of research that focuses on the language used in political communication within the context of power dynamics and social settings. Scholars in this field examine how language constructs political identities, creates social divisions, and either validates or challenges political authority (Fairclough, 1995a). Furthermore, political discourse analysis sheds light on how language manipulation and media narratives are employed to shape public perceptions and control the narrative surrounding politics (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012).

Critical Discourse Analysis
CDA is a multidisciplinary field that explores the relationship between language, authority, and beliefs in societal conversations (Van Dijk, 1993; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). CDA aims to investigate how language is used to both uphold and challenge social inequalities and power structures. According to van Dijk (1993), CDA focuses on analysing how language is employed in different texts to promote certain ideologies and social norms favoured by dominant groups. It also examines how language can be strategically utilised to marginalise and disempower marginalised groups. By doing so, CDA aims to uncover the hidden power dynamics present in discourse practises. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) highlight that CDA goes beyond analysing explicit or surface-level meanings; it also seeks to uncover implicit meanings and underlying socio-political motivations. This approach involves examining both the linguistic aspects of a text and its broader sociocultural context in order to understand how language is shaped by society and vice versa.

CDA has found extensive application in analysing political speeches, media portrayals, policy documents, and various forms of digital communication (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Wodak, 2001). It offers a valuable set of tools for comprehending the way language operates as a battleground for power dynamics and how it can serve as a means to drive social transformation. According to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), it is important to note that CDA is not a rigid approach but rather a flexible methodological framework. Researchers have the freedom to customise and integrate different linguistic and discourse analysis techniques based on their unique research inquiries and specific contexts

Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis
Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis presents a comprehensive framework for examining how language, power, and ideology intersect in communication. It comprises three interconnected dimensions: text analysis, processing analysis, and social analysis (Fairclough, 1993).
a. Text Analysis: This dimension focuses on the linguistic features of discourse, such as grammar, word choice,

and rhetorical devices used in a particular text. It involves analysing at a microlevel to understand how language choices contribute to meaning and representation within the text.

b. Processing Analysis: This dimension explores the broader practises of discourse within which the text is situated. It examines the customs, rules, and norms governing language usage in specific contexts while considering the social, cultural, and institutional influences that shape communication.

c. Social Analysis: This dimension delves into the social and cultural environments where both text and communication practises exist. Its goal is to uncover power dynamics, ideologies, and dominant structures that impact discourse in society while also being influenced by them.

Fairclough's model emphasises the dialectical relationship between language and society, where discourse both reflects and shapes social structures and power dynamics. CDA allows researchers to carefully examine how language is employed to either uphold or question prevailing ideologies and power dynamics in different social settings (Fairclough, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a pragmatic research paradigm, acknowledging the benefits of mixing multiple methodologies to grasp complex social processes (Maxwell, 2013). Pragmatism stresses the practical ramifications of research, seeking relevant findings that contribute to both theoretical knowledge and real-world applications. At its heart, this work is descriptive in character, trying to present a full analysis of the linguistic, ideological, and power dynamics in The American President speech at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023.

Descriptive research gives an in-depth investigation of a given phenomenon, providing a nuanced exploration of many features (Creswell, 2014). To capture the complexity of discourse and comprehensively comprehend the underlying power structures and ideologies, a mixed-methods approach is adopted. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), this approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to create a more holistic picture of the issue being examined. It enables a well-rounded study by merging textual aspects with larger contextual concerns. The analytical procedure adopted in this research relies on corpus analysis, which entails carefully investigating patterns in a massive collection of texts (Baker, 2006).

This strategy allows for the detection of repeated language patterns and the examination of underlying themes and methods utilised by the speaker. To examine language and investigate the deep link between power and ideology, the researcher applies Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis. This paradigm gives a systematic framework for investigating how language intertwines with social power and how discourse reflects and maintains social systems (Fairclough, 1995b). The methodology comprises three aspects: text analysis, processing analysis, and social analysis, offering a complete lens through which to understand the speech. The corpus under scrutiny is The American President speech at the National Safer Communities Summit in 2023.

This speech reflects the president's emphasis on public safety and community well-being. In this selected dataset, the study analyses the distinctive ways in which President Biden uses language to explain his vision, provide cures, and handle the intricacies of national security.

RESULTS

Noun Choice in President Biden's Speech

In Table 1, the researcher shares the results of examining the noun choices in President Biden's speech. This analysis focuses on the nouns that were repeated most often in his speech, giving us valuable insights into the main themes and topics he emphasised when speaking to the American people. Based on the most commonly repeated nouns in the text, the researcher found that they include gun, people, weapon, and empire. The table provided below displays how frequently these nouns appear.

Table 1: The most recurrent nouns in Biden's speech

Word	Frequency	Percentage
Gun	40	49%
People	20	25%
Weapon	11	14%
Law	10	12%

Personal Pronouns in President Biden's Speech

Table 2 presents the personal pronouns that President Biden frequently used in his speech. These pronouns play an important role in shaping how people relate to each other and conveying the president's intentions. By using these pronouns often, President Biden aims to create connections, take responsibility, and foster a sense of collective commitment with the American people.

Table 2: The most recurrent Personal Pronouns in Biden's speech

Personal Pronoun	Frequency	Percentage
I	131	32%
You	108	27%
It	92	22%
We	79	17%

Modal Verbs in President Biden's Speech

Table 3 showcases the modal verbs that President Biden frequently uses in his speeches. It reflects his strong vision, determination, and dedication to tackling national issues and advancing policy agendas. The choice of these modal verbs by the President indicates different levels of certainty, obligation, and potential outcomes, offering valuable insights into his rhetorical techniques for highlighting his administration's achievements and expressing confidence in its capabilities.

Table 3: The most recurrent modal verbs in Biden's speech

Modal Verb	Frequency	Percentage
Have	33	46%
Can	27	37%
Will	12	17%
Modal Verb	Frequency	Percentage

DISCUSSION

Noun Choice

The usage of the term "gun" in the speech holds immense importance. Its repetitive mention underscores its significance within the conversation and sheds light on the matter of gun violence and safety. By opting for this specific word, the speaker engages in diverse speech acts, including informing and persuading the audience regarding this subject. Moreover, "Gun" is likely intertwined with other texts or narratives on gun violence, creating intertextual connections. The word presupposes certain beliefs about firearms and their impact, influencing the audience's perception. Understanding how the audience interprets "gun" is vital, as its emotional impact and contextual usage shape the overall message conveyed by the speaker. By analyzing this word choice in the speech, persuasive strategies and intended effects surrounding the complex issue of gun safety and violence can be uncovered.

Extract 01: "We did overcome an unrelenting opposition of the gun lobby to gun manufacturers and so many politicians who hide behind the belief that they'll never have to pay a price for their inaction when they oppose commonsense gun legislation."

Extract 02: "And we did it through a bipartisan effort that included a majority of responsible gun owners. Because whether we're Democrats or Republicans, we all want families to be safe."

The repeated use of the noun "people" in the speech also holds significance. The frequent recurrence of "people" highlights the speech's focus on the impact of gun violence on individuals and society as a whole. The speaker likely employs this word to evoke empathy, emphasising the human aspect of the issue and garnering emotional engagement from the audience. Additionally, the use of "people" might connect to shared values and experiences, creating a sense of unity and shared responsibility in addressing the problem of gun violence. By examining the contextual elements and speech acts associated with "people," the speaker's intentions, the emotions invoked, and the implied relationships between different groups concerning the topic at hand can be better understood.

Extract 03: "Think about the number of people who would be dead today that are alive because we could sue them and they paid billions of dollars for their — for the damage they were doing."

Extract04: "I know many people here who have been impacted by gun violence, lost someone they loved, fought so hard for so many years. A lot of you are tired."

The third most repeated noun in this speech was the word "weapon" which occurred 11 times. The repetition of "weapon" highlights a shift in focus from the general concept of "gun" to a more specific and broader category that includes various types of weapons. The use of "weapon" suggests a broader discussion about violence and its means beyond just guns. By choosing this term, the speaker may seek to underscore the severity of the issue and advocate for a comprehensive approach to addressing all types of weapons used in violent acts. The interpretation of the repeated term "weapon" would involve considering the speech acts and presuppositions associated with it. Understanding the contextual use of "weapon" will shed light on how the speaker aims to shape the audience's perception of the problem, potentially aiming for stronger regulations or policies concerning various weapons, not limited to guns. It may also evoke a sense of urgency in addressing the broader issue of violence in society.

Extract 05: "We are sending dangerous weapons, particularly assault weapons, to Mexico. To Mexico. They're asking us, 'Please stop it. Cut it off at the border.'"

Extract 06: "That's why they like to buy them, so criminals can use them to commit crimes and not leave behind a registration of who owned the weapon."

The frequent recurrence of the noun "law" in the speech, totaling 10 instances, highlights the speech's substantive emphasis on legal aspects concerning guns, weapons, and gun violence. This lexical choice strongly suggests that the speaker aims to advocate for or discuss the critical role of enacting, amending, or enforcing laws pertaining to gun safety and control. Through this deliberate repetition, the speaker likely seeks to underscore the significance of legislative measures in addressing gun violence and promoting safety in relation to firearms. Analysing the interpretation of "law" would entail exploring the speech acts and presuppositions associated with this term, thereby providing valuable insights into the speaker's views on the intricate link between legal measures and the prevention of gun-related incidents. Additionally, it may unveil the speaker's stance on specific legislative actions and their perceived efficacy in curbing gun violence. Moreover, the strategic use of "law" might be intended to evoke a sense of responsibility and accountability, urging lawmakers and institutions to undertake appropriate actions that ensure public safety regarding guns and other weapons.

Extract 07: "We also established a zero-tolerance policy for rogue gun dealers who willfully violate the law. Now, instead of a slap on the wrist, their licenses are revoked."

Extract 08: "I know you've had a full day of summit, getting into details of the law. But, folks listening at home, here's a quick summary of what's — what the law is doing."

Personal Pronouns

In President Biden's speech, the frequent use of the personal pronoun "I" (131 occurrences) underscores a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and commitment. This extensive usage aims to demonstrate the President's dedication to taking charge of various challenges facing the nation, projecting a sense of leadership and assertiveness. By positioning himself as accountable for driving change and addressing the concerns of the American people, the repetitive "I" might serve to project a commanding presence and a resolve to make tangible changes. However, to fully grasp the intended effect on the audience and the overall message conveyed by the speech, a contextual analysis of each instance of "I" is essential.

Extract 09:"As I just said when I signed the law: a call to action to do more. Because I don't see that this was enough, and neither do you."

Extract 10: "I've never forgotten them, and I never will forget them. And I'll never stop fighting for them. I promise you."

The repeated reference to "you" (108 occurrences) indicates a direct address to the audience, establishing a connection with the American people. President Biden strategically employs "you" to make listeners feel involved and included in his vision for the nation. By creating a sense of unity and shared responsibility, he encourages active participation from the audience in addressing the country's challenges and advancing its goals. Through this personal approach, President Biden aims to engage and mobilise the public, fostering a sense of collaboration and partnership in the pursuit of progress and positive change. Analysing the specific contexts in which "you" is utilised would provide deeper insights into the rhetorical strategies employed in the speech.

Extract 11: "You're the best educated, most involved, least selfish, and most consequential generation in American history."

Extract 12: "you can prevent the next tragedy, you can save life, you can save families. In the process, you can continue to save the country. And I mean that."

The frequent use of the personal pronoun "it" (92 occurrences) signifies a strong emphasis on concrete policies, proposals, and initiatives. President Biden's repetitive utilisation of "it" highlights his focus on specific actions and solutions to address pressing national challenges. Moreover, the pronoun serves as a rhetorical tool to create coherence and maintain clarity in the speech by referring back to previously mentioned ideas. Through the consistent presence of "it," the President reinforces his commitment to addressing key matters and implementing actionable plans for the nation's betterment. Analysing the specific contexts in which "it" appears would offer a deeper understanding of the policy areas and issues prioritised by President Biden and how he frames his proposed solutions.

Extract 13: "Executive action that made it illegal to manufacture so-called "ghost guns.""

The term "we" occurs 79 times throughout President Biden's speech, showing a conscious attempt to establish a feeling of common responsibility and togetherness among the audience. By utilising "we," the President aims to promote a common identity and inclusion, stressing that the difficulties encountered and the solutions presented are a collaborative enterprise involving both the government and the American people. This purposeful usage of "we" resonates with the president's vision of a collaborative approach to solving social concerns and conveys a call for collective action. It also emphasises the belief that the government and the public must work together to accomplish shared objectives, fostering a sense of involvement and ownership in the nation's success. The

frequent usage of the pronoun "we" underlines the President's goal to develop agreement and promote a common commitment towards a brighter future for everyone.

Extract 14: "We are sending dangerous weapons, particularly assault weapons, to Mexico. To Mexico."

Extract 15: "And it's time we establish universal background checks and require safe storage of firearms."

Modal Verbs

In President Biden's speech, the modal verb "have" is the most commonly used, occurring 33 times. Modal verbs occupy important relevance in political speeches, expressing diverse meanings such as duty, possibility, and need. The recurring use of "have" in Biden's statement conveys a feeling of responsibility, dedication, and acknowledgement of prior deeds or successes. This modal verb underlines the administration's successes and continued attempts to solve important challenges, displaying their devotion to their aims and ambitions. The use of the modal verb 'have' must also be acknowledged for its role as an auxiliary verb, particularly when forming perfect tenses.

Extract 16: "In this moment, we have to remember what — I got to know him — Nelson Mandela — when I tried to get to Africa — to South Africa to meet him."

Extract 17: "And some people in this room have turned your pain into purpose — I suspect all of you have; your loss into determination; and your anger — justifiable anger — into a deep-seated commitment."

Following "have," the modal verb "can" is the second most frequent, occurring 27 times. In political speeches, "can" typically conveys a sense of potential, capacity, or promise. President Biden's usage of this modal verb conveys faith in his administration's abilities to make positive shifts and accomplish their goals. The frequent use of "can" signifies hope and desire to handle issues collectively and advance in numerous sectors, reflecting the conviction that the country can overcome hurdles and establish a brighter future.

Extract 18: "You're changing the culture, proving we can do more than just thoughts and prayers. You're changing our politics."

Extract 19: "not every state has a governor as competent as Governor Lamont, and I mean that. But they can do a lot more. Look what the Gov has done here in this state."

The modal verb "will" is the third most repeated, occurring a total of 12 times in the speech. In political speeches, "will" signifies an intense dedication to certain acts or pledges in the future. President Biden used this modal verb to emphasise his desire to achieve various policy agendas and efforts throughout his tenure. The recurrent use of "will" indicates certainty and belief in his administration's capacity to execute on stated goals and vision for the nation, indicating his will to make significant improvements and accomplish commitments promised to Americans.

Extract 20: "We will ban assault weapons in this country. We will ban multi-round magazines. We will hold gun makers liable. We will beat the gun industry. We will beat big money that sits behind them and the politicians who refuse to stand up and act."

Recapitulation

Having conducted an in-depth analysis of President Biden's speech, several key points emerge:

a. President Biden strategically utilizes noun choice, personal pronouns, and modal verbs in his speech to effectively communicate his vision and engage the audience.

b. Biden' noun choices emphasise personal responsibility, audience engagement, specific policies, and collective action, respectively.

c. President Biden extensively uses "I" to project leadership and accountability, while "you" fosters a sense of inclusivity and involvement for the audience. "It" reinforces specific policy areas, and "we" underscores collective responsibility and cooperation.

d. Modal verbs, used by President Biden, convey responsibility, confidence, and commitment to future promises and agendas

CONCLUSION

In the ever-evolving landscape of political communication, this study embarked on a journey to decipher the multifaceted interplay of power dynamics and ideologies inherent in The American President speech at the National Safer Communities Summit 2023. Through the lens of Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this research unearthed how language serves as a potent tool for the construction and dissemination of political agendas.

The meticulous analysis of the speech illuminated the intricate ways in which linguistic choices, rhetorical strategies, and discursive patterns are harnessed to influence public perception, negotiate authority, and shape policy discourse. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study not only delved into the textual nuances but also contextualised the speech within the broader sociopolitical landscape, underscoring the dynamic relationship between language and social practises. As President Biden articulated his vision for safer communities, the analysis revealed the undercurrents of power that underpin such messages, highlighting the

intersections of discourse, ideology, and governance.

This research sheds light on the profound impact of discourse in shaping our understanding of sociopolitical realities, emphasising the need for critical engagement with political speeches to foster informed civic participation. Ultimately, this study contributes to the scholarly dialogue on the intricate ways in which language operates as a vessel for power and ideology, prompting us to question, deconstruct, and navigate the narratives that shape our collective consciousness.

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