



## A Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 Inaugural Address as the 45<sup>TH</sup> President of United States of America

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### Abstract

*The study investigates the “Inaugural Address” of Donald Trump in his second inauguration ceremony on 20, January, 2025 to explore the ideological stance of the president. It applied Norman Fairclough’s (2015) three dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), highlighting the impression markers such as pronouns, modal verbs, repetition and parallelism to explore Trump’s ideological stance of crisis and renewal of America. His speech opposes the progressive values such as immigration reform and gender diversity and gives emphasis to the reformation of national security, economic strength and sovereignty of the country through the lens of populist and conservative ideologies. To him, these will overcome the crisis of the country and he is the sole leader who can bring such reforms. The speech portrays persuasive rhetoric strategies which frames Trump as the national savior amidst the crisis. It reveals the strategic use of language in political speeches reinforcing nationalistic discourse and contradictory ideologies are disregarded.*

### Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Impression Markers, Donald Trump, Three Dimensional Model, Crisis and Renewal

### Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates the structural relationships of inequality, dominance, power relations and control which are produced through language (Wodak 2001). Unlike discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis not only examines written and spoken texts as object of inquiry rather it attempts to take a critical approach towards discourse. It is done by uncovering the social structure in which a text is produced and how they create meaning in their interaction within the discourse. It provides a way to move between close analysis of text, interaction and social analysis of various types (Fairclough 2015). CDA begins by highlighting issues concerning with society. It does not directly analyze the text and talk rather it begins with pointing the prevailing hindrance which occupies the sociologists, political scientists and educationists. Critical discourse analysis deals with the production of certain ideologies and discourses in political or public sphere, therefore, CDA is not restricted to specific discipline; it is a multi and interdisciplinary domain. It begins with the dialogue between discipline concerning linguistics and semiotic analysis (Fairclough 2001). The domain does not only involve analysis of the text and talk rather it include also the aspects of being critical. It aims to know the connection between language and other social elements which are hidden (Fairclough 2015).

Fairclough (2015) claims that its criticality also commence to social change by uncovering the social issues, connecting them with other aspect of social reality and eventually posturing new strategies to change the existing social order. CDA primarily focuses on the social issues that are motivated by discourse analysis (Van Dijk 2001). Fairclough (2001) argues that CDA is the investigation of linguistics and semiotic elements of social issues and processes. However, critical discourse analysis often includes top down approaches where it focuses on the macro level of

discourse that connects its link with micro level practices. In doing so, CDA highlights the issues of ideologies, power relations and inequality.

The domains that grab the attention of discourse analysts among them are presidential speeches. In the inauguration ceremony of the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S president Donald Trump delivered his "Inaugural Address" on 20, January, 2025 in the U.S Capitol. The speech is interwoven with mixed promises and ambiguities that posture some of the opportunities and hurdles for the president in his second term of presidency. Trump, in his speech, give particular emphasis to the crisis and renewal of the country.

His ideologies are not new to the public, Donald Trump, The New York businessman and a former reality TV show star becomes the president of America for the second time. He is the first president of America without any former political and military background. After his presidency in 2016 to 2020 and his attempts to break down the government during Jeo Biden tenure, it was difficult for him to become the president for the second time. Despites the odds he took the oath as the 45<sup>th</sup> president of America in the election of 2024. Unlike other presidents of the American history, Donald Trump does not try to unify the nation rather he maintains his revelries and fights even after the election campaigns and taking control of the office. He used his megaphone of presidency to criticize the members of his own administration, news media and other elected officials. After more than 26,000 tweets that he sends during his presidency revealing his infancy views on broad issues lead him to be so provocative that twitter banned him from its platform. The position of Trump is views as a political outsider whose bluntness, outspoken demeanour and his attempts to challenge the traditional presidential conduct lead him widens the gap between Democrats and Republicans within the administration. Moreover, during his first reign of presidency he imposed restriction on immigration, disputes with China, promoting racial and gender discrimination and fledging into health care and economic crisis (Pew Research Center 2021).

### **Research Question**

1. What are the impression markers Donald Trump used in his address?
2. What are the ideological stances presented in Donald Trump's narrative of crisis and renewal in his inaugural address?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To find the impression markers used in Donald Trump's speech.
2. To explore the ideological stance of crisis and renewal in the address of Donald Trump.

### **Review of the Literature**

Critical discourse analysis is used as a methodological tool in research to explore the dynamics and the relationship between language, power and social context. Fairclough's (2015) three dimensional model is a multidimensional approach that enables to understand how power and ideology are being produced and reproduced within the discourse. It emphasizes the importance of linguistic choices, the production and consumption and social conditions of the text as interdependent elements to understand discourse. The flexibility of framework makes it adaptable for different research contexts (Jank 1997).

Fairclough's three dimensional model was first introduced in his book entitled 'Language and Power' (1989). Further, he presented the revised version of his book and the model in 2015. The three dimensional model of Fairclough is divided into three stages or layers of analysis. The first stage is the textual analysis (description). It examines the textual content of the analysis which involves the linguistic analysis including the lexical items, sentence structure and sound system. According to Fairclough (1989) the second stage is the discursive practice (interpretation) in which "interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction" (26). It demonstrates the relationship between discourse, its production and consumption. Discourse does not only focus on the text, but it also considers the discursive practices, therefore, it illustrates the other factors of the discourse to unravel the inter-textuality of the given text. The inter-textual level reveals the relationship between the text, discourse and its context, hence, providing a glance over the factors of the production and interpretation the discourse in the society (Fairclough 2015). The third stage is the social context (explanation) which involves the study of the "relationship between social context and interaction" (Fairclough, 2015, 58-59). Discourse is considered a social practice and in this part the analysis is concern with the social, cultural and historical contexts to explore the hidden power dynamics, language and ideology within the discourse (Fairclough 1989).

Awawdeh and Al-Abbas (2023) analyze the Donald Trump's speeches during the corona virus pandemic. The study includes two speeches of him; the first speech was delivered in February 26, 2020 and the second one in April 27, 2020. It highlights the ideological stance and the shift in the rhetoric of Trump as the pandemic evolved by applying Fairclough's (1995) Three Dimensional Model. Trump's linguistic choice of the words and phrases are explored including modal verbs, comparative, superlative and use of certain pronouns which posture the themes of nationalism, unity, American superiority, self-glorification and egoism. His frequent use of lexical items such "American citizens" and "we" reveals a sense of unity and collective responsibility while the use of the personal pronoun "I" refers to his egoism, used when referring to his decision-making abilities and achievements, hence, a reflection of self-glorification. The speeches demonstrate that the linguistic choice in political discourse assert authority and ideological agendas which reflect the interconnectedness of language, power and ideology. Umaraj and Mohammed Hasan (2020) conduct a critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's speech of 16 June, 2015 which is named as Announcing Candidacy for President in the New York by using Van Dijk's socio cognitive model. The analysis of his speech highlights Trump's use of particular linguistic choice of words and his ideological framing presents him as great and strong leader of his nation among the tenets. Trump did so by presenting a positive self-representation of himself and positioning a negative other-presentation which is the ideological square of Van Dijk's model. Trump used this strategy to portray himself as the savior of the American nation and condemning Obama and his administration as unfit and incompetent. His speech tackles the issues of Mexican immigration, Middle East conflicts, healthcare which become worse under the administration of Obama via presenting a negative self-image of Obama's rule in America. Trump highlights and further give emphasis to these problems through the use of metaphors, repetition, use of certain pronouns and generalization of showing how bad it is for America to be ruled by Obama and how good it will be when Trump become the prudent of the nation thus saving it from the disasters that it is now fledging through. Moreover, American presidents, particularly Donald Trump, appeal nationalistic sentiments by using metaphors and creating binary of "us vs them" strategically (Ali & Jenkins, 2023). The findings of the studies are aligning with the focus of the current study where impression markers are used for legitimizing power in political sphere. Similarly, Chen and Bryant (2022) explore the discursive construction of calamities in political realm. The study reveals the strategies political leaders use to frame social and economic instability to justify the implementation of authoritative policies and legitimize the use of power. The inaugural address of Trump utilizes a comparable strategic narrative where he emphasizes the decline of America and his exclusive ability and authority to restore its greatness and glory. Breeze (2021) examines the study on climate change rhetoric in political speeches which are delivered at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences. He conducts a CDA to investigate the usage of inclusive pronouns "must and will" creating a sense of urgency and carefully choosing passive constructions which remove direct responsibility. The findings show particular usage of grammatical structures to assert responsibility and pledge ideological legitimacy.

The speeches of the politicians before and after the election campaigns mark as an essential feature in political discourse. Such discourse is better analyzed under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis to uncover the hidden agendas and ideological stances of the politicians. However, the critical discourse analysis of the campaign speech of Nana Akufo-Addo during the 2016 manifesto launch of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Addy and Ofori (2020) used Fairclough's three dimensional model to examine Nana Akufo-Addo speech. They highlight the use of personal pronouns and repetition of the phrase in the speech asserts solidarity, framing identity and persuading the audience to vote for Nana Akufo-Addo. The study provides that how the speeches of the politicians strategically employs certain linguistics tools to produce a sense of empathy with the voters and portrays oneself as an ideal leader that can solve the issues of the public. The findings uncover the figures of political discourse align themselves with societal needs and interest while distinguishing themselves from opponents. A critical discourse analysis of the speeches by Donald Trump and Theresa May were explored by applying M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar framework. The study examines the use of modality and personal pronouns in political discourse where they analyze Trump's 2017 UN General Assembly address and May's 2018 G20 Summit speech. It is highlighted that political speakers tend to model verbs such as "will", "can" and "must" to assert authority, obligation by pursuing the audience to act on their political agendas. While the use

of personal pronouns such as “I” and “we” reveal a sense of collective goals, unity and connection with the audience. Political discourse tends to convey certain political ideologies through language of persuasion (Li and Zhang 2019).

Moreover, Kanwal and Garcia (2019) examine the two speeches of Hillary Clinton's Campaign Launch Speech and her final Primary Campaign Speech during 2016 using the three dimensional model of Norman Fairclough (2015) of critical discourse analysis and Gee's (2014) Frame Problem Tool as theoretical model. They analyze the framing of gender identity and its role in political discourse through the use of language in the speeches of Hillary Clinton's speeches. The researchers used Fairclough's (2015) model to highlight the linguistic features of the text, interaction, and social context of the speeches. Gee's (2014) framing tool reveals Clinton's construction of gender narratives employing the themes of “fight” and “family”. Moreover, Sadeghi and Hosseini (2022) illustrate the debates of Iranian presidents by applying Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model in CDA, focusing on identity construction. The authors highlight the discursive strategies that political persona acquires to present themselves as morally righteous and patriots while framing the opponents as corrupt. Their study is significant in understanding the ideological divide in political speeches. The portrayal of “us vs. them”, which is prominent in Trump's speeches, emphasize the binary of identity and the subtlety of ideological boundaries. The research reveals that political discourse and usage of language not only reflects but it also reinforces social and political divisions.

### **Methodology**

The study applies a qualitative research approach for the critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's “Inaugural Address” given on January, 20, 2025. The theoretical framework for the given study is Fairclough's (2015) three dimensional model.

### **Data Collection**

The data for the present study consists of Donald Trump's “Inaugural address” delivered on January, 20, 2025 at the U.S Capitol, Washington D.C in his second term as the president of America. The rationale for the current study is that the first speech of any president tends to unravel the ideology, power and his responsibility and accountability after taking control of the office. More precisely, Donald Trump's address is important because it is the second term of him as the president of America which brings new hope and challenges for the citizens as Trump is audit to bring prosperity and end the crisis of the country. His inaugural address is a 30 minutes speech which can be retrieved from the White House. (2025, January 20). *The inaugural address of Donald J. Trump*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/>.

The video version is retrieved from CNN. (2025, January 20) Watch President Donald Trump's Full Inauguration Speech [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNArBr\\_J8mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNArBr_J8mA)

### **Data Analysis**

The study adopted Fairclough's (2015) three dimensional model of CDA. It provides linguistic tools for exploring the impression markers to uncover the ideology of Trump's narrative of crisis and renewal of America. The researcher used the method because it is suitable for the analysis and justifies the objectives of this research. The qualitative research approach of the present study is based on Fairclough's (2015) three dimensions model of description, interpretation and explanation.

### **Result and Findings**

In this section the “Inaugural Address” of Donald Trump as the 45<sup>TH</sup> president of America is analyzed using Norman Fairclough's (2015) three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The model consists of three inter-related dimensions such as textual analysis (description), discursive practice (interpretation) and social context (explanation). It explores the language use in Trump's speech which produces power, authority and ideological stance within the political discourse; examining the impression markers and his ideological stance on the crisis and renewal of the country in his term. He frames himself a savior of the nation which is on its brink of collapse and his leadership can restore its former glory of the country.

### **Textual Analysis (Description)**

The textual analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural address focuses on the impression markers that he used in his speech and highlight his ideological stance that he construct through the narrative of crisis and renewal of America. The impression markers such as pronoun, repetition of certain words and phrases, parallel sentences and modal verbs that frame his narrative of crisis and renewal.

***Pronouns***

The pronouns that are explored in this study are the subjective first-person singular and plural pronouns “I” and “we”, the possessive form “our”. Trump used the personal pronoun “we” 80 and “our” 53 times in the speech. The use of first person plural and its possessive forms are inclusive which produce a sense of shared purpose between Trump and the citizens of the country. While the personal pronoun “I” was used 34 times that shows his role as a central leader and holds a personal authority. For example, he states, “I was saved by God to make America great again,” referring his presidency with a divine cause. Hence, this dual use of pronouns frames Trump’s authority and power that can change the current course of the country while aligning him with the American citizens.

***Modal Verbs***

The study analyzed the of modal verbs used in the inaugural address of Trump as it helps to explore the intentions and degrees of certainty of the speaker and it also portrays Trump’s possible hopes, predictions, and decisions regarding the future of the country. The modal verbs such as “will” and “must” reflect the certainty and potential of Trump’s actions for the renewal and resolving the crisis of America. He used “will” 119 times in his speech; it is the most highly frequent modal verb that he adds in his diction. The use of “will” in negation or passive form reflects conditional outcome (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005) The statements such as “We will restore justice” and “We must be honest about the challenges we face” reflects a sense of ineluctability and moral responsibility that enables Trump’s agenda to appear both significant and urgent. It also reassures the people of America by projecting his confidence that his plan of making “America great again” will succeed.

***Repetition***

Throughout the text, Trump repeated certain words and phrases to create an emotional and nationalistic appeal and a sense of renewal of America’s pride in his inauguration. He repeated the phrase such as “ever before\ never before”, such as “America will soon be greater, stronger, and far more exceptional than ever before” and “The American dream will soon be back and thriving like never before”. The phrases like “our country, our cities, our government, our society, our nation, our citizens and the words like “change and freedom\free” were frequently used in the rhetoric of Donald Trump.

***Parallelism***

Trump uses parallelism to create a strong rhythm to line up his ideological stance of crisis and renewal of the country. He used three independent clauses to show his commitment for the future such as "We will not forget our country, we will not forget our Constitution, and we will not forget our God". Further, he amplifies parallel grammatical structure and rhythmic patterns, for example, "We will not be conquered, we will not be intimidated, we will not be broken, and we will not fail" and "We will stand bravely, we will live proudly, we will dream boldly." (Donald Trump, 2025).

***Discursive Practice (Interpretation)***

It focuses that how Trump’s discourse is framed and interpreted within the political and social context. The speech is constructed to resonate with public which includes Trump’s supporters, disillusioned voters and his critics too. His speech is based on narratives of American exceptionalism, sovereignty and power. Trump focuses on restoring law and order, safeguarding American borders and strengthening the economy that aligns with the interests of conservative voters. He acknowledges African American and Hispanic communities’ support, widens the appeal of his presidency as a symbol of unity and inclusivity.

Moreover, Trump rejects the progressive ideologies like gender diversity and immigration policies by challenging their certain aspect of their discourse. For example, Trump claims that “there are only two genders: male and female,” the statement which opposes contemporary debates and programs regarding gender diversity. Further, he views immigration as an “invasion” and immigrants as “alien” and “criminal” and his determination to “send troops to the southern border” posture his ideological stances that are similar with conservative ideology regarding national security and cultural identity. These discursive practices are of polarizing that are appealing for his advocates. This polarization reinforces Trump’s identity who challenges the status quo and supports of right wing values.

Trump’s speech reflects Inter-textual tendencies which are another aspect of discursive practice within the political discourse (Van Dijk 1997). Trump from his previous campaigns emphasizes the idea to “Make America Great Again” and “America First”. These slogans create a

continuous loop between his first and second terms where he posture his commitment to American sovereignty and glory. At the very first and the last paragraph of his inaugural address, he claims “the golden age of America begins just now “and “our golden age has just began” which give emphasis his leadership and power that will restore the legacy and greatness of America.

**a. Social context (explanation)**

The study, further, situates Trump's inaugural address within broader social context with reveals the ideological and cultural stances that shape the production and perception of the text. The speech at the level of social practice portrays and reinforces the dynamics of socio-political forces in America. Trump, at the beginning of his second tenure at the offices, tends to convey the disillusion within the institutions of government and lobbying cultural change. His diction is aligned with conservative tension about immigration, globalization and progressive social values which presents his leadership as against such progressive policies. He frames the immigration policies as a security crisis by using the terms like “dangerous criminal” and “foreign gangs”.

The speech also reveals cultural debates regarding identity. Trump opposes the gender diversity and he emphasizes on traditional and cultural values, aligning with conservative cultural ideologies. It directly postures his stances which alienates younger and more liberal public who promotes much more inclusive and divisive gender identity. It highlights the divide of cultural values between the newly elected president and his audience who promote different ideologies. Trump demonstrates nationalism and exceptionalism in his address with also places the text in socio-political context. His statements such as, “America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth” and “America will be a manufacturing nation once again...” refer his future vision of American dominance, superiority and self-reliance. Trump with his nationalistic rhetoric reflects his ideas with global trends of populism which frame his image as a sole companion of the movement against globalization.

The power dynamics and relations are central to political speeches that enable to produce meaning (Fairclough 2013). Trump presents himself as the powerful authority that is capable of addressing and resolving the challenges of his country. For instance, he states, “I have been tested and challenged more than any president in our 250-year history” framing himself as a resilient leader. He criticizes the previous administrations which directly delegitimize his political opponents and it gives emphasis to his promises of reform and renewal, reflecting his ideological agenda.

**Conclusion**

The critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump' 2025 Inaugural Address reflects the use of language in political discourse to promote certain ideology and reinforce national identity within power dynamics. By applying Norman Fairclough's (2015) three dimensional model, the research analyzed impression markers used his speech and his ideological framing through the narrative of crisis and renewal of America. Trump's construction of the narrative of crisis and renewal enable him to position himself as the savor of his nation and bringing back its former glory. His speech involves his frequent use of certain pronouns, model verbs, repetition and parallelism produce an emotional appeal and posture his power and authority. His rhetoric is aligned with nationalistic and populist ideology where he challenges certain policies like immigration and gender diversity.

**Recommendations**

1. Using multimodal critical discourse analysis incorporating nonverbal element which an better illustrate the persuasive strategies in political speech.
2. A longitudinal research on Trump's speeches to analyze how his ideological stances evolved during his term in 2017 and 2025 which will give an overview of his shift and firmness of his rhetoric of patriotism and savoir in political discourse.

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