

The Role of Discourse in Self Constructing the Image of a Leader is Evident in Donald Trump's 2025 Inaugural Address

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ABSTRACT

Discourse is a way of expressing aspects of the world, its processes, relationships, and structures, including the physical world, the spiritual world of thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, and the social world. The immense power of discourse is very clearly demonstrated by authorities, leaders, and politicians in important political activities, such as inauguration ceremonies the President's. President Trump's inaugural address is a perfect example of using language to persuade, manipulate, or influence the audience. He employed various strategies in his speech with the aim of gaining support, challenging the established order, shaping public opinion toward achieving social change, and eliciting deep emotional responses. The results of the study revealed, inter alia, four prominent images of the president Donald Trumps as a savor of the nation, the God-sent president, a president of actions and a unifier. The study also unraveled a variety in the use of linguistic resources to help construct Donald Trump in the discourse. This study will be useful for an understanding of the relationship between language and society when it sheds light on the importance of discursive power and discursive ideology, the creative use of linguistic resources while raising critical language awareness.

Keywords: Discourse, Language, Critical discourse analysis, Power, Political rhetoric.

INTRODUCTION

Language is at the heart of **Bourdieu's** concept of symbolic domination because it sets the rules for what can be thought, said and recognised. Language structures reality: those who master the language of the **ruling groups** – their expressions, rhetorical patterns and subtle nuances – gain access to education, careers and public esteem. Those who resort to deviant, dialectal or ‘incorrect’ forms of expression, on the other hand, are marginalised. **Words** act as social currency, language thus becomes the invisible gatekeeper of social participation.

Language is used to define what is considered “right” and “legitimate”, convey belonging or exclusion and exercise symbolic power quietly and effectively, language thus acts as a social filter: it determines who has access to resources, recognition and power – and who does not (Dirk Stemper). His conceptual toolkits have been widely used in the socially oriented language sciences to analyse the relationships between language, communication and politics (e.g., Blommaert, 2015; Sälo, 2019; Joseph, 2020). Language is not simply a tool for communication - symbolic power struggles underlie any speech act, discourse move, or verbal interaction, be it in face-to-face conversations, online tweets or political debates (Kramsch&Porto, 2020). We know, of course, that language plays a key role in the social recognition of subjects (McNamara, 2019). Speakers wield symbolic power by engaging in communicative practices. The role of language is key to understanding change in social relations and, more

specifically, the process of transformation of material and physical distinctions into symbolic meaning (Kramsch&Porto, 2018)

Although seemingly just a means of communication, language –as one of the functions of the human being– is a reality produced through evolution. It has gradually developed into a complex organism which partially overtook the roles of other means of transmitting information (since any sign or symptom, such as gestures, mime, the flushing of the face, sweating, etc., can be expressed in linguistic form) while developing new competencies towards this purpose (starting with the economical character of the second articulation and ending with the finer semantic and stylistic nuances). It has thus come to convey various types of information: affective, emotional, volitive, behavioural, intellectual, cognitive, aesthetic, social, ethno-psychological, etc. The functions of language progressively tailored its structure, as verbal and non-verbal communication needs generated formal reorganisations. These, in turn, led to anatomic modifications which further increased languages ability to convey information, enhancing it with new roles (language not only communicates, but is communicated; it not only expresses, but emphasises) and values (which indicate attitudes and hierarchies with axiological or cultural roots) (Gafton, 2014).

The term discourse is too often associated with fans of French poststructuralism via Foucault or the English school branded as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), often associated with Fairclough. A critical analysis of discourse, where the object of critique (following Hymes) is the analysis of voice, is defined as “the way in which people manage to make themselves understood or fail to do so” (Jan Blommaert, 2005, p. 4). Meaning is always discursive and the most socially relevant meanings are usually indexical—connected to a personhood, a location, a socioeconomic background, etc. Meaningful objects are more than talk or text, but also the signs, gestures, and shapes often lost in linguistic analysis, such as how a person stands when talking, how their handwriting looks on the page, or the layout of a newspaper advertisement.

Among public speeches, political discourse is characteristically unique in that the speakers tend to make an appeal on both personal and emotional levels. Then, to be convincing, they must not only appear sincere and fully committed to their cause but also must sound plausible, fair and on the side of the good. It is a commonly held belief that individuals with different social roles may use language for achieving specific communicative goals. To interpret the situated meanings in political discourse, therefore, demands a profound knowledge of the existing social, political and economical contexts. Naturally, politicians as social actors are the main focus of the media and present their ideas and claims through political discourse. The authors also argue that political discourse, as a form of public discourse, plays a pivotal persuasive function and its major objectives are: to convince the public of the political measures taken, to win the campaign, and to win the public support for future political actions (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012).

The speaker uses symbolic power by engaging in communicative activities. Language is the key to understanding the changes in social relationships, and more specifically, the process of transforming material and physical distinctions into symbolic meaning. In the realm of electoral politics, symbolic power enables candidates to navigate the political landscape through the specific effects of representation, identification and mobilisation, influencing the actions of others. ... (Kramsch, 2020)

This study engages with critical discourse analysis (CDA) which views discourse or language in use not just as an instrument of thought or a means of communication, but also as attempts to reveal what is hidden behind the written words. That is the power relations between discourse and wider social/cultural structures in an attempt to unmask power relationships, biases, etc. (Fairclough, 2001, 2015). Certain individuals use their ideas, and thoughts to “control” or “manipulate” people, or simply persuade them to do things their way.

In Trump's 2025 Inaugural Address, language plays a dual role: it expresses the speaker's own identity, values, and beliefs, while also signaling social identity markers appropriate for specific target groups. This analysis is key to understanding how language is strategically used to reinforce or construct social identity in a political context. Political discourse has immense potential power. The event of the US presidential inauguration, when the 47th US president stepped up to the podium and officially declared his return to the White House for a second non-consecutive term, is worthy of study to affirm the power of this practical language. Alexandra Hutzler (Abc news, 2024) called Trump’s political comeback “a capstone to his singular stamp on American politics” – one victory that’s been defined by his relentless defiance of institutional norms, and his inaugural speech marking his official return to the White House had been expected to include important issues, images of himself, ideologies, showing his stand, convictions, and his own idiosyncrasies by many people; hence, the remark would be a fertile source for a language investigation.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

The present study adopts the critical paradigm, for it leans towards representation of social reality and as such it could lead to changing the way people are thinking about that reality. This study is critical in the sense that it

attempts to uncover the ideologies and messages, and peeling down the meaning layers intentionally used by language users to expose its hidden power. In other words, its goal is to try to get “under the surface”.

This qualitative research aims to investigate the discursive images constructed in the President Trump’s inauguration address. It heads to a descriptive and interpretative discourse analysis while the explanation and the after-effect of the self-public image projection via language is put out of the focus. The current study subscribes to the view of seeing language as a social practice (Fairclough, 2001/2015), and the qualitative research method, namely, content analysis was used to obtain the targeted purpose. The analysis and interpretation of the findings proceeded from the bottom up as data was organized into more abstract units: the making sense of formal linguistic feature which then were abstracted into images - a holistic picture of the president emerged.

The data for this study refers to the speech delivered by the president of America, Donald Trump at the Inauguration Day, which took place in the rotunda of the US Capital on 20th January, 2025. The main goal of this political gathering was to officially presenting a new president to the public. The purpose of the study is to examine the discursive self-image construction of America’s 47th president; thus, there would be no other evidence that could be more crystal clear than his own inaugural speech where the depiction of himself would be painted and constructed in a way to garner the support, the belief or the recognition from listeners; and because of this, it well deserves a thorough investigation in terms of critical language analysis.

The transcribed speech was collected from online CNN. The authenticity and the validity of the speech are guaranteed because it was accompanied by the video file and posted by a well-known online news media. The selection of the speech is expected to realize the aim of this study, and the richness of the background information can inform the discussion included in the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the construction of images of a president in the inauguration address delivered by Donald Trump himself. The Inauguration Day took place in the rotunda of the US Capitol on 20th, January 2025 when the President formally addressed Americans, completing his incredible comeback to the White House for the inconsecutive second time. It is much concerned with the constructed images of the president in his inaugural speech, and the linguistic resources and strategies that are employed by the commander-in-chief. It excludes the aim of conducting any criticism of the speaker, it focuses on analysis to see the effectiveness of the immense power that discourse has given leaders to serve their own interests in particular, as well as society in general.

The current study was conducted within the theoretical and methodological framework of Political discourse analysis (PDA) and Critical Discourse Analysis. So, how the image of the US President was portrayed by fully exploiting the power of discourse on inauguration day will be specifically analyzed through research and evaluation below.

1. Core Concepts

Critical and Critical Discourse

In language studies, the term “critical” was first used to characterize an approach called Critical Linguistics (Fowler et al., 1979; Hodge, 2012). According to these scholars, the use of language could lead to a mystification of social events which could be demystified by a systematic discursive analysis.

Critical linguistics, and later CDA as it is the term preferred and used, set itself the task of producing critical knowledge that can enable enlightenment, and help human emancipation from forms of domination (the Frankfurt School) and hegemony (Gramsci) as it works to reveal structures of power and ideologies behind discourse, thus making visible causes that are hidden. “Critical” does not imply “negative”; rather, it can mean “positive” because it reveals the complexity of social cultural structures, challenges reductionism, and make transparent and manifest opaque ideological and power relations (Wodak, 2006).

“Critical” is polysemantic, for example, the term may mean the ability to think for oneself rather than to take what is read or heard at face value, or simply just a criticism of the status quo (Breeze, 2011). “Critical” does not only involve description and explanation but also doing away with delusion (Wodak, 2006). “Critical” goes beyond descriptive and structuralist thinking when it declares that it is interpretative and explanatory. This signals a departure from purely descriptive goals of discourse analysis, and a recognition of the crucial role played by deeper, larger social forces (Teo, 2000). This would constitute the key distinction between CDA and other DA approaches. Along this line of reasoning, “Critical”, in this study, is used to refer to revealing and explaining “the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involves unequal relations of power” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 63). To further elaborate, the inaugural speech by the present-elect Donald Trump is an instance of discursive practice that construct ideologies in the form of his ideas, his thoughts and the depiction of himself to the public to exercise some kind of power - power to convince people into believing what he was delivering and constructing up - to sustain the world/ the reality that he wants.

Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA for short scrutinizes discourse in social context. The other term which

was once used interchangeably is Critical Linguistics (CL). CDA is grounded in Rhetoric, Text Linguistics, Anthropology, Philosophy, Cognitive Science, Social Psychology, Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The key goal is to be “fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically power relations, power control and ideologies being expressed, signaled, constituted, and legitimized, and so on by language use or in discourse” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 10).

Defining CDA is no easy task given the fact that it is recognized by many scholars to be not a unitary, homogenous field. Nevertheless, the general understanding in CDA is concerned with the workings of power and ideology in society, and takes a specific interest in how language contributes to, perpetuates and reveals these workings (Breeze, 2011). CDA is widely recognized as an approach to language study which takes the social functions of language seriously. CDA goes beyond descriptive and structuralist thinking when it declares that it is interpretative and explanatory. CDA seeks to develop methods and theory that could better explain the interrelationship between language, power and ideology (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), analysts doing CDA are commonly interested in de-mystifying ideologies and power through the systemic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual); Hence, it could be seen that the questions of power, ideology, and social injustices (in which we have the issue of gender) are the cores of CDA research. The current study draws on an operational definition of a number of key concepts/terms in the field such as, “critical”, “discourse”, “power”, “ideology”, “political discourse”. The next section will be examining and defining them for use in this study.

Discourse and Political Discourse

The term “discourse” is central to CDA, but it is variously defined, and can be sometimes taken to refer to language. As a non-count noun, it refers to language in use, which is socially embedded and inherently intertextual. In other words, discourse is what people do, a form or social practice and social interaction (Van Dijk, 1997). As a count-noun, it is understood as the use of language within a specific field (e.g. political or media discourse), or a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective (e.g. neoliberal discourse, or feminist discourse) Fairclough (2001/2015). Empirically, discourse can be understood as language in real contexts of use; it goes beyond the level of grammar and semantics to “capture what happens when these language forms are played out in different social, political and cultural arenas” (Simpson & Mayr, 2010: 5).

Political discourse is a form of social practice. Defining political discourse is not a straightforward matter (Wilson, 2015). Some analysts define political discourse so broadly that almost any discourse may be considered political. This study takes the view that implies any discourses dealing with politicians, political issues or political events are instances of political discourse. Political discourse is primarily argumentative (Fairclough, 2015). Van Dijk (1997) observes that argumentative genres are “perhaps” the “most pervasive in political discourse as people argue either in favor or against an idea or proposition.

In general, political speeches can be viewed as written texts refined and woven for speaking to the public for most of the cases. Politicians often wield to this type of discourse so as to disseminate their thoughts, proving their political stance and simultaneously showcasing their ideological convictions, be it their strong beliefs or any particular ideas on relevant matters discussed or mentioned in the discourse. When a top-notch leaders and dignitaries resort to public speech to reach their people, they are supposed to get engaged in “a kind of game” in which they desire to win: by persuading the audience to believe in what they are delivering, to side with them in matters being discussed and to the last aim to act in accordance with their will; or if expressed in other words, in order to win they must amass, exert more power than the other players, be it listeners, audience or viewers so that they can advance their goals. Commonly, there are two strategies that can help them to achieve their aims: Cooperation with the others (be it listeners, audience or viewers), and Domination over them.

Power

Power remains at the core of CDA; basically, power refers to the control one has over others; it may come from “privileged access to social resources such as education, knowledge and wealth, which provides authority, status and influence to those who gain this access and enables them to dominate, coerce and control subordinate groups” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 24). The common understanding is that language describes the world, but it is also determined by other social practices in which social relations of power are present both explicitly and implicitly in texts, thus language then is not simply an act of communicating, but a vehicle for conveying some kinds of interests which can lead to social construction and domination (Van Dijk, 1993).

It is also important to note that “power can be jointly produced when people believe or are led to believe that domination is legitimate in some way or other” (Machin & Mayr, *ibid.*). It is when we talk about the persuasive influence of power where dominant groups try to get the subordinates to accept their own moral, political and cultural values and institution (*ibid.*). Power needs to be seen as legitimated by people in order to be accepted; and

this process of legitimation could be successfully gained through language. In the end, studies in CDA have been much concerned over the relations of power between text producers and receivers as well as the persuasive language that yields power. In this study, such kind of soft power is seen as persuasive power: the speaker was trying to persuade listeners to his thoughts and ideas so as to gain ideological influence.

Ideology

Another close-knit term to “power” is ideology, and as a matter of fact, there are different approaches to defining ideology. This term is believed to be coined in the early 1800s by French philosopher Destutt, and it is often associated with Marxism, following which ideology is an important means by which dominant forces in society can exercise power over subordinates, and subjugated groups. Ideology is often taken to refer to belief systems held by individuals and collectives (Gasper, 2004).

Ideology has a social function, that is, people develop ideologies to govern their conduct or behavior, and thus will contribute to group cohesion, solidarity and the successful reproduction of the group. It serves to define social identity and personal identity (van Dijk, 1997), but very often, it is developed by dominant groups to reproduce and legitimate their domination/power. Along this line, “Ideology is meaning in the service of power” (Fairclough, 1995). Ideologies characterize the way that certain discourses become accepted in this way and therefore obscure the way they help to sustain power relations. Ideology obscures the nature of our unequal societies and prevents us from seeing alternatives. It limits what can be seen and what we think we can do. Applying their view to doing CDA, we could explain why there is no fixed, single understanding of a discourse; we can have various interpretations of it based on our respective linguistic analysis of the language in use. (Machin & Mayr, 2012)

This study subscribes to the view that ideologies are mental representations of various aspects of the social world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation (van Dijk in Wodak & Meyer, 2016), and that CDA seeks to disclose the ideological and persuasive functions/properties of text (written) and talk (spoken). Investigating ideologies in this study means looking for the president’s self-depiction in his inaugural speech.

This study aims to contribute to understanding the use of linguistic resources in self-image promotion to the public by conducting an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of Donald Trump’s inaugural address. It then tends to focus on how a person of great power wields words to get his ideas and thoughts across to the people while shaping his personal, collective and professional image at his will and of his accord. In the era of newer media, the effect of an event could reach global scale in one instance, as a result, public speeches by politicians are widely and quickly dispersed to reproduce, legitimate and propagate their ideas, helping the ideas of privileged and powerful social groups be routinely heard. Moreover, when speakers of great influence are believed to be able to control, manage and put constraints on which ideas are valuable, which are not, and which should be heard at all (Anderson & Collins, 2001), the critical analysis of discourses a powerful person is of some value academically and socially. And this study aims to affirm the power of political discourse and critical discourse by using the example of a US President’s inaugural address - Donald Trump’s.

2. The Affirmation of Discourse's Power through the Construction of a Presidential Image in the Inaugural Address

In his brief but impactful inaugural speech, Donald Trump effectively used language to turn his rhetoric into a razor-sharp instrument, effectively presenting himself as a strong president with a wide range of personalities, levels of authority, and persuasiveness. In particular, we witness the emergence of a president with:

The Savor of the Nation

One of the main rhetorical strategies used by political leaders to maintain power is to reinforce national identity and pride. In Trump’s 2025 Inaugural Address, we can see a strong appeal to nationalism, positioning himself as the protector of American values and sovereignty. He can emphasize concepts like “America First”, “patriotism”, and “restoring greatness”, evoking a sense of duty and loyalty to the country. These words are intended to consolidate his power by linking his leadership to the aspirations and pride of the American people. Consistently throughout the address, Donald Trump continuously stresses that he is the one who will be a recreator of the nation. He is trying to make believe he will bring back a new life, a new start to America. The words refixed with “re” meaning “again” or “back” appear frequently in Trump’s address, along with aggrandizing words, and words added with the word “again” to demonstrate his move of disseminating his ideology.

Evoking patriotism in an emotional way is an effective way to engage the audience. In his speeches, Trump often mentions national symbols, the American flag, and American values, encouraging the audience to connect emotionally with the country’s identity. This technique often involves successfully linking the nation’s future to the collective action of its people. Phrases like “Our best days are ahead of us” are designed to evoke a sense of hope and optimism, encouraging the audience to align with his vision.

The flaunting words such as “flourish” (line 6), “the envy of every nation” (line 7), and “far more exceptional than ever before” (line 14), “a thrilling new era” (line 16) right at the beginning part of the speech also shows the speaker’s persistence of convincing the public that with his return to the presidency, “from this day forward”(line 6), the whole society including, “sovereignty”, “safety”, “justice” will be brought back again while his denying the past four years of the previous president/government in the latter part of the speech.

Repetition is a rhetorical device often used by politicians to emphasize key themes and make their messages more memorable. Trump, in his 2025 speech, employed this method by repeating certain phrases or slogans such as “great”, “strength”, “America”, or “freedom”. This repetition is intended to emphasize the core message of the speech - his vision for the country and his role in realizing that vision. By repeating these concepts, Trump consolidates his power and leadership, equating them with the nation's success and prosperity. Another noted aspect is the repeated use of ‘will’ which makes his statements become assertive and resounding. “Will” employed in adjacent sentences expresses inevitable events mentioned such as the flourishing of the nation, the admiration of other countries for America, the safety of the nation, the justice and the prosperity, the pride and freedom of the United States are going to actually take place no matter what under Trump’s administration; and he – as a savor/ a recreator has plans for all these to happen and is much certain about it at the same time.

Looking further into the language wielded by the current President, the rhetoric of comparison is another feature that helps convey his ideology, including, comparative form, “greater, stronger and far more exceptional than ever before”(line 14); adjacent comparison with antonyms “end-create” to show the bad thing in the past “will end” – the brand-new thing of the now “will ... create”. And especially Trump compared his appearance again at the White House with “a tide of change” and “the Sunlight” (lines 17-18). The aggrandizing wording used in a metaphoric way projects Trump’s confidence, indomitability and complacency that he will bring about the fresh start to the nation, he will make the nation become “proud, prosperous and free”.

The ideology of depicting himself as a savor of the nation is also realized through the dexterous use of “I” and “We”. The whole administration of the nation put under his name, coupled with the use of the word “I”, and a loud and formal claim of his returning to the office helps show his power: being a commander-in-chief; and the importance of his being in the White House. This could be his strategic move of asserting his being an only savor of the nation by singling himself out of the league in some instances – “I”, but then Trump deftly mingled himself in “we” in many other instances so as to bring him close to people: his being a savor for the people and the nation. By using personal pronouns like “we”, “our”, and “us”, Trump creates a sense of familiarity and shared purpose with the audience. This inclusive language can make listeners feel like active participants in his political vision. For example, phrases like “We will rebuild this nation” or “Our greatest days are ahead of us” are designed to align the audience with the speaker, reinforcing a sense of collective action and purpose.

He even downplays the old government to further emphasize his being a savor who will reconstruct the nation from chaos and mismanagement by talking about current state of America. To make prominent the weakness, the failures, the contradiction in the management at home and abroad of the previous administration, the contrast formulas with “while” and “but”, “yet”, “despite” are resorted to; and hence, many problems and issues in American society have been brought into daylight with the witness of his predecessor attending the President’s inauguration, the whole nation watching. He mentions the drop of confidence and trust of US government institutions, the discontent across parties, the wrong immigration policy, the frustration with public education and so on and so forth. And when Trump devalues the previous government, he never forgets to involve people by using “we” – including himself into “we” or “our” to garner the support of Americans, driving them into the witness stand with him. Then, he leads people into the picture with him being their president.

Trump can evoke themes that resonate with the audience's personal experiences, such as economic hardship or national pride. By acknowledging the challenges Americans are facing and positioning himself as the protector of their interests, he evokes a sense of empathy and unity. This language can help bridge the gap between the speaker and the audience, making listeners feel that their concerns are understood and will be addressed. And the people that the incumbent President includes in “we” ranging variously from “everyone” in general, to “government” and to people of specific regions: “badly treated” people of North Carolina, suffering people from Florida, “homeless people from Los Angeles”, “the wealthiest and most powerful individuals”. His strategy is at first conjuring up the grim picture of the nation to the awareness of the people – including people and himself in “We”, and then, he pinpoints the exact sufferers of specific states in America to make his arguments be detailed, clear, precise and sound trustworthy, though flooding in North Carolina, hurricanes in Florida and wildfires in Los Angeles had been resulted from climate change; Trump does not choose to mention the true cause; instead, he levels the criticism singly towards the bad handling of the previous government. He even resorts to the sarcasm to highlight his bitter satire towards the past administration: *‘... the wealthiest and most powerful individuals ... don't have a home any longer. That's interesting.’ (lines 37-39)*

While calling the failures of the past government “betrayals”, he is trying to persuade listeners that he will be the one who can reclaim the belief from the people, reconstruct, restore the nation to its glory “from this moment on” (line 49).

A common technique used to engage audiences is rhetorical questions, where Trump can ask questions that don't require a literal answer but are intended to provoke thought and emotional responses. For example: “Are you ready to make America great again?” or “Who will fight for you?” These questions serve to rally the crowd, encourage their spiritual agreement, and foster emotional investment in the speaker's vision.

The One Chosen by God – A Consequential President

Before Trump talks about the incident occurred to him in Pennsylvania, he puts himself on scale with his predecessors in America's long history of presidency; and tips the scale to his side. Trump does not talk about his specific talents, but the challenges and trials which he has been enduring for the past eight that singles him out from other commanders-in-chief in the past is, yet the self-aggrandizement of him could be strongly felt when American history did have wartime presidents like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln; and multiple presidents who were assassinated like John F. Kennedy, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush. Even though, when admitting that he “has learnt” along the way, his deft strategy could also be sensed: he is trying to gain favor from the audience and listeners for being humble while still showing his character of always wanting to be outstanding in the crowd.

Trump, then resorts to a proof of the challenge he confronted with most recently - his being the target of an assassination to convince people that he is chosen by God to be the president of America: “*I was saved by God to make America great again.*” (line 59)

Interestingly, he equates ‘people’ in the American justice system who tried to indict him for the past years, who “tried to take my freedom” (line 55) with an attempted assassin, who died at the scene of the attempt; and the fact that him being escaped from assassination, and now being the incumbent president of the United States for an inconsecutive second term despite being allegedly indicted, was the divine intervention. Trump is making people believe that it is the God's will, and he is trying to make God common sense with him.

He was “challenged and tested” by God and he has successfully gone through all the attempts against him, and he is not simply safe and sound, but shines, which is proved by the victory of his being elected as the 47th president of America “a powerful win in all seven swing states” (line 69), and “the popular vote by millions of people” (line 70); thus, he would like to propagate the idea that if he is sent by God, you – Americans all back up behind him, and that is the undisputed reality. He goes further by claiming the day he got the victory in the presidential race “Liberation Day” – “January 20th, 2025, is Liberation Day.” (line 64), and again stresses the logic of his win, “the greatest and most consequential election in the history of our country” (line 65). Here, many people may question about what he wants to liberate America from. The term “Liberation day” is often resorted to so as to mark the liberation of a place/a country from a war when they regained their sovereignty or freedom from foreign invaders or intruders. Certainly, Trump does not refer to any military war in America because there is none, Americans have not been under siege literally; yet, what he is alluding to is to claim the day he won the position of a commander-in-chief as a new fresh start for America when the country is led by a person ‘saved by God.

And God-sent president like him will carry Martin Luther King's legacy as well, “We will make his dream come true” (line 76). Martin Luther King Jr. is famous for his speech “I have a Dream” which envisioned equality, and Trump includes Martin Luther King, a very reverent icon in America in his cause with the aim to get the support of all Americans for his next 4 year-term in the White House.

Wielding the technique of name-drop, his argument would go like if he has the underpinning of God, the fulcrum of widely admired Martin Luther King, his “administration will be inspired by a strong pursuit of excellence and unrelenting success” (line 79), and he – being the one chosen by God, deserves and worths people's support: “tremendous outpouring of love and trust” (line 72).

A President of Actions

One of important functions of an inaugural speech is the present-elect details his/her plans to lead the country for the four years ahead, so that, the people could figure out the idea of what the president will focus on. In this case, Trump also projects himself as a president of actions who is going to implement a heap of orders for the betterment of the nation by spending most of his speech painting himself as a committed president. Trump began by identifying the problems or challenges facing America - such as economic decline, security threats, or political division. This section begins the story of a nation in need of strong leadership to overcome adversity. For example, phrases like “America is in crisis”, “We are at a crossroads”, or “Our nation has been forgotten” frame the speech within a context of urgency and the need for change.

“The Hero's Journey”, where the main character faces challenges, takes action, and ultimately achieves transformation. In the case of Trump's inaugural address, America (and more broadly, Trump himself) could be

positioned as the hero of the story. As in any hero's journey, there is often a "call to action" where the main character is summoned to respond to a crisis. For Trump, this moment is considered his rise to the presidency. He presented his leadership abilities as the solution to the nation's crisis, emphasizing his unique qualities and vision for the future. Statements like "I will restore the greatness of America" or "Together, we will bring prosperity" serve as calls to action, inviting the audience to join the journey of recovery and renewal.

To show the highest position he is holding – being a commander-in-chief of the country, who has the ultimate power to decide the nation's path of "restoration" he singles him out by employing a great number of the pronoun "I".

The pronoun "I" coupled with such as words, "my administration" (line 122), "under my leadership" (line 128) illustrates Trump's intention of describing himself as a man of action, a man of doing what he has promised to voters, from stopping illegal crossing at U.S. southern border to the ending of the policy "catch and release" by which migrants can be release into the country while they are awaiting an immigration hearing, bringing back the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 which is meant to guard against invasion by a foreign nation or government, beating the inflation, promising to produce more oil and gas though the United States is already producing more oil than any country in history, ending the Green New Deal to call back electric vehicle mandate, building the External Revenue Service to amass money from foreign source for the country, setting up and authorizing a new Department of Government of Government Efficiency, invoking free speech, stopping weaponizing the power of the state to persecute political opponents, opposing trans rights while claiming two genders – male and female, to offering service members reinstatement, working to ease the tension in the Middle East (between Hamas and Israel), bringing the hostages home, changing the name of the body of water to the South of the U.S. – the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, restoring the name of the highest mountain in Alaska – to Mount McKinley, and reclaiming the Panama Canal which was given to Panama during the Carter administration, decades after the United States completed construction on it.

Obviously about the results of his "actions today" (line 109), only the time ahead of his 4-year tenure can tell, yet in the speech, he never forgets to draw people into his cause by using "we" right after his "orders".

An obvious power relation negotiation between Trump – the speaker and the audience – be it the people who are listening to him right on the spot and the viewers or listeners watching/listening to his speech live from their home can be gauged here. He is cognizant of his being a commander-in-chief of the nation; and as the man of great power, who has an easy access to the public speech to get close to the people and then influence their minds, subjecting them to his ideologies; yet he is also aware of the power of the people, marshalling their backing to his ideological path would work much for him in a favorable way. Therefore, though they are all his "orders", in order to implement plans and get them done successfully he calls people in, leaguering them with him in "we".

The use of "will" in the instances makes the speech go smoothly and sound rhythmic while creating organization for the speech. Simultaneously, "will" illustrates the speaker's strong will, projecting his determination, his resolution and commitment to having all his actions carried out to the core and to the best effects.

Moreover, the nearly equal employment of "will" in "I will" and "we will" could be intentionally resorted by Trump; it could be that one one hand, he wants people to recognize his absolute power, dictating things to be done via such verbs as "sign", "declare", "end", and "direct", on the other hand, he sides people with him, getting them into devoting themselves into the cause of the country reconstruction with him.

It is crystal clear that, he is in the position of "the commander-in-chief" who has absolute and sacred mission to serve the nation; and together with people in "we" – "inclusive we" will execute all the actions and bring them to the best results. Though he consistently proves the power of the president of the country by declaring a number of orders, the accountability and the implementation of all these "series of historic executive orders" (line 82) are assigned to the hands of Americans. He is mindful of the power of the people, and that having their support and getting them to execute his ideas and actions will just make him stronger and enjoy the sense of a real winner that won the popular vote in the presidential race.

By negotiating the power with people while still in control of the situation, he could kill two birds with one stone: asserting his great power of being a commander-in-chief - he directs and he signs orders, but sharing the responsibilities and charges with people; and thus, the rights he gets for himself, yet the obligations he lets people shoulder with him; however, this propagating ploy of his ideological influence is done deftly via the use of "I" and "we" in the way that people would feel they are respected when they are got involved in the sacred cause of the country reconstruction and betterment. Trump is selling him as a president of actions who will bring in the 'Golden Age' of America with people's support and responsibility sharing.

A Unifier

The last segment of the president's address seems to be in contrast with the previous part, where he is portraying/ depicting himself as a unifier in terms of "I" and "we" employment; instead of using "I" in multiple

times as in the previous part, in this section of the speech he favors the prevalent employment of “we” and the resort to the “nation” as one.

In terms of the using of the pronoun “I”, Trump sets up his image as a leader –encouraging, spurring people, and getting people to work and act together; and above all, he is promising to be by his people’s side: “my message to Americans” (line 163), “I stand before you as a proof ...never believe ... something is impossible” (line 186), “I am with you” (line 202). These three instances imply his intention of delivering the message of unity. He himself is behind the unity of the whole nation and he now acts as a unifier who is backing and boosting the solidarity, the belief and togetherness of Americans and the nation.

Taking him as a symbol of the resilience – implying his coming back from twice-impeached and disgraced former president in the wake of January 6, 2021, an assassination survivor and winner of the popular vote in 2024 presidential election – he is trying to selling himself as a unifier, getting people together to strive for the nation.

When the “I” is in the dime light, the “we” and the “nation” are brought into the foreground; and Trump constantly unites people in one power by saying “Together, we will ...” (line 166) and “we will...”. The zero and first conditional sentences are also used in this part of speech to emphasize his claim that their dream definitely comes and will happen if people act as he says – working together.

Though being the commander-in-chief, he wields his language to show he still needs people in his cause; this humble way of addressing could gain him much positive sentiment and upholding from Americans; Also, the sentence “With your help, we will restore America's promise...” (line 198) can be rewritten as a first conditional sentence: if I have your help, we will restore America's promise; and then his message is clear, that is of bonding people in the common cause of the nation’s reconstruction with the strong belief in the success of that cause.

It can be noticed that the sentences employing “we” to present him as a unifier of the nation are often short, simple sentences, and they are written and delivered in a symmetrical way,

The effect that this rhetoric way of writing works for Trump’s favor, and thanks to this strategy a vivid picture of Trump as a unifier could be quickly imprinted in the audience’s minds, and live there for long, for they are repeated by “we will ...”, and short enough to be remembered.

Besides the employment of “we”, wielding to the nation as a whole is any step taken by Trump in order to conjure up his image as a unifier. Trump taps on important issues to rekindle the nation pride, the nation’s concern, such as addressing the “chronic disease epidemic” (line 166), advocating healthier food to keep children safe and healthy, boosting technology and astronomy to plant “the stars and stripes” in the planet Mars (line 171). He talks about ambition in the “lifeblood of a great nation” (line 172), mentions each single groups of people, ranging from explorers, builders, innovators to entrepreneurs and pioneers; and then acknowledge, make reference to American ancestors with the aim of praising them for their “the spirit of the frontier” (line 174), and their great achievements and dedications to the nation, including taming wilderness, crossing deserts, scales, mountains, ending slavery, harnessing electricity, splitting atoms, etc. (lines 178-181). He extols the nation when being united together: “There's no nation like our nation” (line173) and “No one comes close” (line177), “We will be a nation like no other, full of compassion, courage and exceptionalism” (line 205)

He confidently claims that with his leading (in I), with the help of people getting together with him (in inclusive We) and the strength, the spirit of the whole nation as one –the ‘Golden Age’ (line 216) of America will be achieved.

The last part of Trump’s address is full of language of unity, he even mentions the unity of the world, “... stop all wars and bring a new spirit of unity to a world that has been angry, violent and totally unpredictable.” (line 206-207) though in the previous section, he wants to put America first, taking back the Panama Canal, changing the name of Mexico Gulf and questioning international organizations, invoking the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

CONCLUSION

Trump's 2025 inaugural address illustrates the power and crucial role of language in shaping public sentiment and driving social transformation. In his speech, Trump employs rhetorical appeals and linguistic functions to demonstrate a carefully calculated effort to evoke loyalty, mobilize support, and reinforce ideological values. He presented himself as a talented leader with practical solutions thru logical arguments; he portrayed himself as a resilient figure with a divine mission thru appeals to authority; and he energized the audience with hope, pride, and urgency thru emotional appeals. He achieved all these results by applying different discourse strategies. The study emphasizes the deliberate use of clear and straightforward language, emotional appeals, repetition, and memorable slogans in the speech. These factors together enhance the effectiveness of the speech in establishing a connection with the audience and influencing public perception. It could be argued that applying CDA to Trump's inaugural address highlights the importance of language in questioning situational spread and shaping alternative narratives that ultimately lead to societal change. Furthermore, the differing perceptions and reactions to Trump's inaugural address highlighted the deep polarization and ideological conflict within American society throughout Trump's presidency. Trump supporters praised his commitment to creating change and restoring the country, viewing his

language as a disruption of the established political system and a champion of their own interests. However, critics have criticized his language as divisive, expressing doubts about its compatibility with democratic principles and its ability to worsen social conflict. This study has contributed to a better understanding of the complex relationship between language, politics, and society in the United States by examining how political identity is constructed through discourse and how social interpretations influence this process. This analysis focuses on the importance of thoroughly studying political discourse and its social consequences, particularly during a period of increasing polarization and ideological conflict.

From these findings, there are several key points that need to be reiterated. First and foremost, language is used with definitely specific purposes. In the case of Trump's speech, in terms of image construction that he would like to project to the public, at least four discursive images were found out, they are the nation's savior, the God-chosen president, a president of action, and a unifier. The hidden message in political speeches or any discourse should be taken into due consideration for the influence they could yield on the discourse receivers. Secondly, the effect of discourse is of no question; however, in order to gauge the impact, it needs a combined implementation of multiple methods, for example interviews, questionnaires, opinion-polls with a wide range of participants, etc. and also the time – the time to carry out the gauging methods, the time to see the realization of what has been said by specific speakers. Thirdly, we cannot restrict to one understanding to a single discourse; multiple comprehension is expected from different people of different political stance, upbringing and knowledge. Fourthly, the power of language is undeniable, it is strong weapon wielded by people, especially people of position if they desire to disseminate their viewpoints and discursive images to people with the aim to gain favorable opinion of them; Last but not least, people should be aware of the manipulative and argumentative nature of language, so that the critical mind and thinking could be employed to help build up the right understanding of discursive event./.

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