

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PERSUASION AND POWER IN DONALD TRUMP'S INAUGURATION SPEECH 2025

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ABSTRACT

This research examines Donald Trump's 2025 Inauguration Speeches through the lens of critical discourse analysis, analysing persuasion, power and rhetorical strategies. Employing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, the study investigates how Trump constructs persuasion and power dynamic through mobilizing public support. Data were taken from official transcript and video recording of the speech analysed using qualitative methods with descriptive type. The analysis revealed that Donald Trump uses inclusive pronouns, modality, repetition, metaphor, and Aristotelian appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos to build solidarity with his audience and reinforce nationalist rhetoric. A Discursive Practice Analysis revealed the speech has been influenced by political discourse and broadcast to global audiences. The social practice perspective positions the speech within U.S. political traditions and reflecting populist ideology. This approach contributes to the emerging field of political discourse analysis. This field shows that language is more than just a way to communicate, it is also a way to control people and spread ideas.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Donald Trump, persuasion, power, inaugural speech.

A. Introduction

People have many things in their feeling and thought which need to be expressed. In this case, language is the very crucial tool to express people's feeling and thought (Sahrin et al., 2020). The study of how language is communicated the speech can influence to others and covered in critical discourse (Tatiana, 2019). The assumption of Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA) is language not just a tool of communication, but behind the language there is already ideology that language is used as an instrument of power can even be a tool of oppression. Thus, language, power, and ideology can be seen from the usage to the social problem which is going on at that time and to the social power which is trying to influence the ideology of

the community to become closer to something desire by the speaker (Martika et al.,2022). The main focus of CDA is on public utterances, including political speeches, ads, publications, and official documents. Examining the connection between ideology, power, and language is the goal of CDA. It also seeks to reveal how language dominance is used and assessed in the texts. (Mekt et al.,2024). One of the examples of the political speeches is Inaugural Speech. The new president takes the oath of office and gives guidance on plans for significant topics during the presidential inauguration address, a unique occasion. (Khaled and Azzam:2021). It presents an opportunity to address the nation directly and convey a clear message regarding the next four years.

The researcher is interested in analysing the Inaugural speech of Donald Trump on January 20, 2025, because he was elected as the 47th president of the United States of America. Besides that, the political issues after Donald Trump elected as president getting

triumph, all countries giving their eyes on the United States of America because of Donald Trump's inaugural Speech, he declared the beginning of a "golden age of America," emphasizing themes of national sovereignty, economic revitalization, and a commitment to American values. The government only admit males and women, according to Donald Trump's plans to overturn racial and gender social engineering practices and establish a new Department of Government Efficiency. Accusing American ships of unfair treatment and denouncing earlier diversions, he also pledged to retake the Panama Canal from Panama. Donald Trump particularly highlights his ability to persuade people of his policies, such as "Make America Great Again" (MAGA), his gender position, and his attempts to retake the Panama Canal, as demonstrated by the aforementioned examples. This illustrates how Trump persuades people by using his influence.

This study focuses on the elements of persuasion (French and Raven (1959) and power (Aristoteles, 2008) in Donald

Trump's 2025 Inaugural Speech. While many previous studies have examined linguistic features for instance, Chen's 2018 publication titled "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Inaugural Speech from the Perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar" they often overlook these aspects. Chen's work applies Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, a valuable tool for analysing discourse from a social function perspective. However, it does not specifically address the themes of power and persuasion. Furthermore, the study analyses Trump's 2017 Inaugural Speech, which differs significantly from the 2025 speech due to changing political contexts and circumstances.

The researcher doing this research with title "Critical Discourse Analysis of Persuasion and Power in Donald Trump's Inauguration Speech 2025" will focus on Critical Discourse Analysis using Norman Fairclough's theoretical Framework on textual analysis, discursive practices, and the social contexts. By employing Fairclough's framework, this

research goes beyond the surface structure of language to explore the interplay between language, ideology, and power. As Fairclough (1995) emphasizes, CDA is not merely concerned with the linguistic structure of a text, but also with how meanings are shaped and interpreted within specific social, political, and cultural contexts.

Prior research has often only briefly discussed the significance of Donald Trump's rhetoric. Based on Hassan's publication (2018) "Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Inaugural Speech", He analysed the first inaugural speech of Donald Trump as the 45th president of United States of America. The study focusing on Halliday's systemic functional grammar, examining key linguistic features such as transitivity, modality, personal pronouns, and coherence to uncover the speaker's political intentions and ideological stance. The different of this research is they don't explain more about persuasion and power involve in inauguration speech of Donald Trump. This study focusing on analysing on the first inaugural speech of Donald Trump too where

exactly it's different context with Donald Trump's second inaugural speech. The other hand this research adds figurative languages like metaphor as the concern of this research.

According to Yousfie and Mouhadjer (2024) They analysed linguistic features, discourse strategies, and thematic elements in Donald Trump's Inauguration Speech 2017, this emphasized more about linguistics features than power and persuasion involved in Inaugural speech of Donald Trump's 2017. This research concern about the first inaugural speech of Donald Trump where the context and the contain are different from current situation and condition political in United States of America.

B. Research Methods

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model serves as the main analytical tool in this investigation. CDA offers a systematic and thorough approach to researching the role that language plays in power and persuasion, especially in political debate. Text analysis, discursive

activities, and sociocultural practices are the three interconnected aspects of this methodology.

The main source of data was transcripts of a speech given by Trump and analysis adopted a qualitative method. This study examines Trump's use of language, vocabulary, and rhetorical devices like metaphor and repetition, starting with text analysis. The analysis reveals how these elements convey power, convey persuasion, and produce meaning. Discursive strategies, such as how audiences comprehend, distribute, and create speeches, are covered in the second half. Lastly, aspects of sociocultural practices guide the conversation to broader social contexts such national identity and cultural polarization, which are used to reveal how Trump's statement affect public opinion.

The data used in this study comes from the official transcript of Donald John Trump's Inaugural Address delivered on January 20, 2025, at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., as well as official transcripts from several other sources, such as:

According to Creswell (2009)

qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem. This study presents data in narrative and descriptive text rather than numerical data. Data analysis was conducted in four steps: identification, classification, description, and explanation. To reach conclusions, this method utilizes data interpretation based on the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the underlying theories. Furthermore, the researcher employed Fairclough's three-dimensional approach: textual analysis, discursive practices, and social practices.

Persuasion

Van Dijk (1997) defines persuasion as the process by which individuals are influenced to change their opinion as a result of a speech. According to Aristoteles (2008) three modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos, logos) have been used to analyse political rhetoric. a) Ethos/Credibility ***"I've heard your voices in the campaign, and I look forward to working with you in the years to come"* (Line 77-78)** The phrase ***"I've heard"*** showed that Trump listens to

and cares about other people. This fosters a perception among others that he is a person of truth and integrity. ***"I look forward to working with you."*** This emphasizes the importance of partnership over domination and portrays Trump as a trustworthy leader who wants to collaborate with others. As cited from Subedi (2025) trustworthiness (establishing honesty, integrity, and reliability in the communication) are the elements of Ethos, b) Pathos/Emotional ***"Just a few months ago, in a beautiful Pennsylvania field, an assassin's bullet ripped through my ear. But I felt then and believe even more so now that my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again."* (Lines 57-59)**

The vivid imagery of an "assassin's bullet" created shock, fear, and sympathy because it highlights Trump's suffering and vulnerability in the audience, while the phrase ***"Saved by God"*** taps into the audience's faith and moral convictions. As cited from Subedi (2025) Emotional language (using words, stories, or imagery that evoke specific emotions, such as empathy, sympathy, anger, or joy) are some elements of Pathos, c) Logos/Logical

"If we work together, there is nothing we cannot do and no dream we cannot achieve."* (Line 75)** This line provides reasoning for cause-and-effect logic, with the phrase ***"If we work together" representing the cause and ***"There is nothing we cannot do and no dream we cannot achieve"*** representing the effect. In this context, Trump emphasizes that collective cooperation (working together) is the key to success. As cited from Subedi (2025) Evidence, (providing factual information, statistics, examples, and expert opinions) are the elements of logos.

Power

Language, power, and ideology are central themes in critical discourse analysis (CDA). Through language human beings are able to communicate with one another (Aeni, 2024). According to French and Raven (1959), power can be classified into five categories. 1) Social rank, age, rules, and aptitude gaps all shape legitimate power. 2) Referent power derives from an individual's capacity to persuade others to like him. 3) Expert power is derived from an individual's talent, skills, experience, knowledge, and intelligence. 4) Reward power

derives from an individual's ability to make people like him.

1) Legitimate power

"We will not allow ourselves to be taken advantage of any longer"* (Lines 8-9)** This statement demonstrates legitimate power because Trump speaks not just as an individual, but as the voice of the American state. By employing the inclusive pronoun ***"We," he asserts the authority of the presidency to safeguard national interests. He has the right to represent the U.S. people, which makes this statement very important.

2) Referent Power

***"I've heard your voices in the campaign, and I look forward to working with you in the years to come."* (Line 76–77)** In this line, Trump seems to be close and caring to the people (American). This builds referent power by making citizens feel personally connected to him and his leadership, as if he is "one of them."

3) Expert Power

"We will be the envy of every nation, and we will not allow our jobs and wealth to be stolen"

anymore.” (Line 7–8) This reflects expert power, because Trump frames himself as someone who understands economic threats and has the knowledge to protect American jobs. By identifying the problem as "jobs and wealth being stolen" and offering a solution in the form of policy protection, he presents himself as an expert who can safeguard prosperity.

4) Reward Power

“If we work together, there is nothing we cannot do and no dream we cannot achieve.” (Line 200-201)

Trump uses reward power. He promises collective success if citizens follow his leadership. This reward is national greatness and the fulfilment of dreams, which motivates people to support Trump’s agenda.

5) Coercive Power

“All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came. We will reinstate my Remain in Mexico policy.” (Lines 89-91) This is a clear example of coercive power, which is defined as the use of force or threats to achieve a

desired outcome. Those who break immigration laws will face severe consequences and strict enforcement, according to Trump's warnings. By emphasizing the consequences, he asserts control through the fear of penalties.

Textual Analysis

1) Pronoun Usage

Table 1 percentage of pronoun usage found in inauguration speech of Donald Trump 2025

No	Pronoun	Occurrences	Percentage %
1	We	79	43.17%
2	Our	70	38.25%
3	I	34	18.58%
Total		183	100%

This study examined the subjective first-person singular and plural pronouns **"I"** and **"we,"** as well as the possessive form "our." Trump used the personal pronouns **"we"** (79) and **"our"** (70) times, according to the transcript. The employment of the first-person plural and possessive forms is inclusive, fostering a sense of shared purpose between Trump and the citizens of the nation. The personal pronoun **"I"** was used 34 times, showing his role as a pivotal leader

with personal authority. For example, Trump stated, ***"I will immediately begin the overhaul of our trade system to protect American workers and families"*** (Lines 118-119), this line signalling his commitment to an ***"America First"*** economic strategy as president. This signals a commitment to dramatically transforming the way the U.S. engages with the global economy.

2) Modal Verbs

No	Types of Modalities	Occurrences	Percentage%
1	Will	93	93.00%
2	Should	3	3.00%
3	Can	2	2.00%
4	Could	1	1.00%
5	Must	1	1.00%
Total		100	100%

The study analysed the modal verbs used in Trump's inaugural address to explore the speaker's degree of certainty and intentions, as well as Trump's predictions, expectations, and decisions regarding the country's future. Modal verbs such as ***"Will"*** and ***"Must"*** reflect the potential and certainty of Trump's actions to renew and resolve America's crises. Trump used ***"Will"*** 93 times in his speech, making it the most frequently used modal verb in his

vocabulary. According to Palmer (2001) in Mood and Modality, the modal verb ***"Will"*** express not only futurity, but also volition, determination, and prediction, depending on the speaker's attitude. Statements such as ***"We will be the envy of every nation"*** (lines 7–8) and ***"We will be a nation like no other"*** (line 218) portray a vision of future success and superiority, persuading listeners to believe in Trump's vision's achievability. By using ***"Will"*** in line 218, Trump transforms his ideology of American exceptionalism into a collective and certain goal.

3) Repetition and Parallelism

Throughout the text, Trump reiterated specific words and phrases to evoke an emotional and nationalistic appeal, invoking a sense of renewal of patriotism in the United States. For example, he repeated the phrase ***"We will not,"*** as in ***"We will not be conquered, we will not be intimidated, we will not be broken, and we will not fail."*** (Line 224). He also repeated phrases such as ***"Our country, our cities, our government, our society, our nation, our citizens"*** and words such

as **"Thank you." Thank you very much, everybody." Wow. Thank you very, very much"** (lines 1–2), to express sincere gratitude and humility at the opening of the speech were frequently used in Donald Trump's rhetoric.

4) Metaphor

According to Fairclough (1989), metaphorical language simplifies abstract concepts and shapes how audiences perceive them. Throughout his speech, Trump strategically uses metaphors to transform complex political and economic ideas into concrete, emotionally captivating narratives. For instance, he uses the metaphors **"The pillars of our society lie broken"** (lines 23–24) and **"confidence and pride are soaring like never before"** (lines 80–81). In the former, Trump uses an architectural image to symbolize the collapse of social and moral foundations. The word **"Pillars"** symbolizes the essential supports that hold a nation together. By describing these pillars as **"Broken,"** Trump implies that America's core values and systems have been damaged by previous leadership. This metaphor evokes a sense of crisis and urgency.

In contrast, the second metaphor, **"Confidence and pride is soaring like never before,"** draws from images of movement and elevation. The verb **"Soaring"** suggests upward motion and freedom, symbolizing the revival of the national spirit and optimism.

Discursive Practices

The speech examines how Trump's discourse is formed and perceived within its broader political and social context. Strategically designed to appeal to a wide audience, it reaches loyal supporters, disenchanted citizens, and even critics. Rooted in narratives of American exceptionalism, sovereignty, and national strength, Trump's speech emphasizes themes of restoring law and order, protecting national borders, and revitalizing the economy, all of which align closely with the priorities of conservative constituents. Additionally, by acknowledging the support of African American and Hispanic communities, Trump broadens his appeal beyond his traditional voter base, presenting his presidency as a unifying and inclusive force across diverse segments of American society.

Furthermore, Trump distances himself from progressive ideologies, such as gender diversity and liberal immigration policies, by contesting certain elements of their discourse. For example, he has asserted that **"There are only two genders: male and female,"** which explicitly contradicts contemporary discussions and initiatives promoting gender inclusivity.

Social Practices

At the level of social practice, the speech reflects and reinforces the interplay of sociopolitical forces within American society. As he begins his second term in office, Trump expresses public disappointment with governmental institutions while advocating for cultural transformation. His choice of language aligns with conservative concerns about immigration, globalization, and progressive social movements.

The speech reflects ongoing cultural discussions about identity. Trump takes a clear stance against gender diversity, emphasizing traditional values that closely align with conservative beliefs. This position sets him apart from younger, more liberal audiences who advocate for

inclusive and pluralistic notions of gender identity. The contrast highlights a cultural divide between the president and segments of the public who hold different social values. Throughout his address, Trump expresses strong sentiments of nationalism and American exceptionalism, situating the speech firmly within a socio-political framework. Statements such as **"America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration of the entire world"** (Lines 155-156) illustrate his vision of renewed national dominance, self-reliance, and superiority. Through this nationalist rhetoric, Trump aligns himself with the global rise of populism, presenting himself as a leader of the movement against globalization and liberal cultural change.

E. Conclusions

This research has revealed how Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration speech employs language as a tool of persuasion and power by using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. According to

Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) outlined in his 1995 work, there are three-dimensional approaches to analysing discourse, linking textual features to broader social and cultural contexts.

At the textual level, Trump employed various linguistic devices to strengthen his persuasive impression. Trump frequently used inclusive pronouns such as **"We"** and **"Our"** to create a sense of solidarity with the American people, positioning himself as their representative. Trump also mostly uses modal verbs such as **"Will"** and **"Must"** rather than **"Maybe"** or **"Might"** to convey future actions that have a high degree of certainty and obligation. Moreover, Trump highlights metaphors to symbolic performances like **"The golden age of America"** and **"Sunlight pouring over the entire world"** to create an optimistic vision during his presidency. The last, repetition and parallelism **"We will"**, Trump emphasized this as concepts of solidarity, and safety to create a sense of certainty and authority, while persuading the audience both emotionally and rationally.

At the discursive practice level, the speech was not just Trump's personal voice, but a constructed political text that was produced with the involvement of speechwriters, advisors, and political strategists. It evokes intertextuality, incorporating references to earlier inaugural speeches and popular slogans like **"America First."** Furthermore, this second inauguration speech of Donald Trump has become a highly mediated event, broadcast live on television, radio, and across digital platforms.

At the social practice level, Inaugural addresses have long been part of the U.S. tradition of presidential rituals used to unify the nation. Trump has adapted this ritual, filling it with his own nationalist rhetoric. For instance, the speech constructs power dynamics, Trump positions himself as a saviour and opposes a corrupt establishment to create a strong us-versus-them division.

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