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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Referential Strategies in the Speeches of President George W. Bush after 9/11 Attacks

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study aims at exploring the referential strategies employed by President George W. Bush to represent the elements of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006) in his speeches after the calamity of 9/11 and to find out the motives behind using these strategies. The analysis has been conducted using van Dijk's (2006) macro strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as the main conceptual framework of this study. It was found out that Bush used his discursive power to persuade the people of America for the upcoming global war on terror by naming the possible enemies in various ways. The main motive was to present American people as a united and glorious nation ('Us') and, in this way, to convince them for launching the global war on terror against the perpetrators of terrorism ('others') in America. For this purpose, he frequently used the strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation during his speeches. The study suggests that similar analysis of the speeches of world renowned leaders may be conducted to find out the motives and us-others' divide hidden in their speeches.

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**KEYWORDS**

Discursive Practices, Negative Other-Presentation, Positive Self-Presentation, Predicational Strategies, Propagation, Referential Strategies

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**Introduction**

The event of 9/11 was a catastrophe which brought about a great change in the history of America and the entire world. A sizable number of people were killed and America, the world's superpower, was shaken badly. After that, there was a question mark left on America's security arrangements. The discourse of then President George W. Bush (henceforth also referred to simply as Bush) after 9/11 attacks has been under great debate in the whole world. There were a lot of writings discussing this event and its victims. The discourses of government officials about this calamity were the most important ones especially that of President Bush. Bush addressed American nation many times after this event in which he described its atrocities on the American citizens. He discussed various strategies and decisions America was going to take in order to cope with the situation. Bush also uses referential strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) to negatively represent the enemies of America which include Afghanistan and Iraq and people such as Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussain. With the help of referential strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), he named the enemies of America and hostile regimes in a variety of ways to present them negatively before the American public and the world.

According to van Dijk (1993), the main task of CDA is to explain the relations between social power and discourse. He defines social power in terms of control which a group or organisation exercises over the minds and actions of another group's members. It is mainly built on special access to valuable social sources including jobs, wealth, social status, proper access to communication and public discourse, etc. The powerful people who are dominant on others try to impose their opinion by persuading their subjects using manipulative language. Thus, they limit others' freedom of action as they influence their knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies.

Van Dijk (2003) includes language use, discourse, and verbal interaction at the micro level of the social organisation while he connects the terms of power, dominance, and discrimination between people to the macro level of social analysis. It refers to the fact that CDA fills the renowned gap of micro and macro approaches theoretically. He states that in everyday communication, the macro-micro level and even meso levels which are considered in-between the two, create a unified whole. For instance, a racist speech in a parliament can be regarded as a discourse at the micro level of social communication in the particular scenario of a debate, but simultaneously can enact or become an integral part of legislation or the propagation of prejudice at the macro level (van Dijk, 2001).

El-Hussari (2010) illustrates how CDA can unmask the textual discursive practices by discussing what politicians say and do (van Dijk, 1999). He states that critical discourse analysis does not provide solution to the political problems rather it allows the analyst to understand the conditions behind that problem. In short, it can be used as a useful tool that discovers the hidden meaning of the text so that the audience can find out the relationship between language, power, and position.

### **Literature Review**

We can find a number of studies exploring different persuasive strategies used by different renowned politicians. Ghazani (2016) examines different segments of President Bush and President Obama's speeches using Searle's Speech Act Theory to verify illocutionary act. The basic purpose of Ghazani's research is to expose persuasive strategies as well as covert ideologies that are used to convince the listeners to believe what is being said. In addition, Fairclough's (1995) assumption in CDA has been made a guideline that suggests that the use of agencies and pronouns are to be analyzed to expose persuasive strategies. Ghazani (2016) further utilizes Wodak's (2001) discursive strategies of legitimization to investigate the presentation of self and otherness. The findings of the study reveal that a single utterance can be packed with multiple speech acts. Further, the use of agencies and pronouns can be strategic. As far as positive self-representation and negative other-representation is concerned, the analysis shows that most of the time prediction strategy is found linked with the nomination strategy (van Dijk, 2006). Further, Obama's discourses are found more inclusive when compared to Bush's speeches.

Morgan (2014) explores referential strategies in Bush and Obama's speeches about war on terror towards Iran employing dialectical-relational critical discourse analysis approach devised by Fairclough's (2010). He presents the three important strategies employed by social actors to legitimize certain measures they want to take. These strategies include appealing to emotions that induce fear, "speech proposals of a hypothetical future, and rationality of the decision process" (Morgan, 2014, p.7). He says that Bush develops certain systems to refer to the enemies such as terrorists, extremists, regimes, etc. with the help of referential strategies when discussing the activities of Iraq. The similar systems are also employed by Obama in his speeches when he recontextualises the similar referential strategies while describing the situation of Iran. The overall purpose of using these

strategies seems to be emphasizing the great threat faced by America and to legitimize the global war on terror as Wodak and Meyer (2001) and Gartner (2002) state that certain people and social communities try to defend and legalize the exclusion, bigotry, oppression and abuse of other persons through describing the negative actions done by the 'other' (Reyes, 2011).

Pascual's (2008) research study aims to explore the linguistic representation of the Argentinean social actors through a critical discourse analysis of the news stories published by BBC online during a period of two months preceding and leading to the fall of President Fernando de la Rúa in December 2001. This study focuses on theories within the critical paradigm in education field and also uses some concepts of critical discourse analysis and Systematic Functional Linguistics. The use of referential strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) was the main linguistic strategy selected for analyzing the data. Argentinean social actors were identified and categorized using Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) taxonomy for naming people. Results of Pascual's (2008) study reveal that BBC strongly focused on the situation of the political and financial elites of Argentina.

The pedagogic focus of the study of Pascual (2008) is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) critical reading at university level and the way teachers may serve as promoters of the development of critical abilities and attitude by raising awareness of the linguistic strategies used by authors to imprint certain ideologies in the minds of their reader through the texts.

According to Hart (2007), discourse structures constitute social inequality and this can be explored through CDA. A little attention has been given to the metaphorical structure in explicit CDA. Hart's (2007) research develops a coherent theoretical framework for CDA and metaphor. As conceptual metaphor theory is perceived to be incompatible with CDA, therefore, Hart adopts conceptual blending theory for his framework. British National Party's 2005 general election manifesto applied the framework for nation and immigration.

Mohammadi and Javadi (2017) analyse Donald Trump's 2016 acceptance speech in the Presidential Elections of the United States. They investigate interrelation between ideological structures and discourse in Trump's speech. Utilizing the model of critical, their study reveals how language is used to propagate power and hidden strategies. Their study focuses on the relational, experiential, expressive values of the words, grammatical structures, and the use of metaphors in Trump's speech. The study discovers linguistic traces in the formation of a particular strategy and ideology. The findings can be stimulating for English foreign language learners to foster their analytical skills.

Similarly, Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017) maintains that rhetoric and politics are connected with each other and the former is considered an instrument of persuasion and manipulation used by the latter. This researcher studies Muhammadu Buhari's maiden speech (delivered as a Military Head of State and inaugural states in 1984) and inaugural speech (delivered as a President with executive powers in 2015). The study reveals the skillful implementation of personal pronouns that help in the description of various identities and projection of a variety of ideologies and that the backgrounds from which he spoke influenced his choice of pronouns. The critical discourse analysis of Buhari's speech reveals that by tactfully choosing personal pronouns, he creates the identities that reflect the civilian and military backgrounds from which he speaks; also he creates the in-groups and out-groups through which he desires to project the persuasion and despotism of democratic and military regimes respectively.

Jamison (2017) presents a rhetorical analysis of Donald Trump's Presidential Candidacy Announcement speech using document analysis. He analyzes the rhetorical proofs and speech delivery in the above-mentioned speech. Trump uses all three types of rhetorical proofs defined by Aristotle (1954) namely logos, ethos and pathos. It is concluded that pathos (emotional proof) is the most frequently used proof in the speech of Trump. Trump makes use of many emotions in his speech including calmness, friendship, anger, hatred, fear, confidence, ambition and envy; among all these emotions, hatred has the highest percentage, that is, 21.9 %. While delivering his speech, he uses storytelling, manages his body postures well, uses effective tone, proper pauses, and simple visuals aids which help make a successful speech.

If we talk specifically about CDA done on President George W Bush, the previous studies have analyzed the element of terrorism in the speeches of Bush so far. Also they have analyzed the rhetoric in his speeches but none of the scholars has explored the concept of referential strategies in the speeches of President George W Bush till now. The current study will specifically see the referential strategies in his speeches.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Data Collection**

The selected data includes two formal speeches of President Bush addressed after the 9/11 incident. The speeches are named as 'Bush 1' and 'Bush 2'; these titles will be used from now onward. The source of data was <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov>. Brief details of the speeches have been provided below.

Bush 1: Address to the Nation on Operations in Afghanistan, delivered in the Treaty Room of The White House Washington, D.C. on October, 2001:

This speech discusses that America has begun the war in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda training camps. Bush prepares the Americans' minds for further wars by saying that the battle is broader and America will fight against every nation and every regime that sponsors terrorists.

Bush 2: State of the Union Address to the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, made in The United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. on January 29, 2002:

This speech addresses the progress of the war on terror in Afghanistan. Bush mentions the actions of American military in Philippines, Bosnia, and Somalia as well. In addition, he says that the next target is to wage war with the regimes that support terrorism such as the regimes of North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Critical discourse analysis of these speeches has been conducted keeping in view the concept of referential and predicational strategies presented by Reisigl and Wodak (2001); these explain that referential strategies focus on a variety of labels given to actors, for instance, only the first names, their full names, or the given titles as well as the ways of modifying actors with relative clauses or adjectives and how all these influence the interpretation of the reader. They say that in the act of naming, social actors are represented, for example, in-groups and out-groups. This is done in a number of ways, such as membership categorization devices (Sacks, 1972), metaphors, metonymies and synecdoche.

Fairclough (2003) explains that the ways of naming people significantly impact the way in which they are viewed. A writer has various naming choices which are the sources to place people in the social world. These choices help a person to highlight certain aspects and to ignore others.

The present study figures out that Bush uses various referential strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) in his post 9/11 speeches and uses them as linguistic tools to express the elements of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006). Van Dijk explains that if positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies are consistently used, they may uphold the existing attitudes and form new negative ideologies and views regarding others. In this study, it is assumed that Bush tried to make American public empathize with him with the help of these elements in his speeches. Presenting America positively using positive images and portraying the hostile persons, organisations and regimes negatively using various negative labels may help him in his endeavor to convince the American public that the global war on terror is necessary and inevitable for safety of America and the world. This study follows qualitative approach of research.

## Results and Discussion

### Referential Strategies

In the following, the selected speeches of Bush have been analyzed critically using the concept of referential strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001).

Three methods of reference have been found in the selected speeches of Bush. Firstly, giving the attackers and the terrorists in general different negative labels; secondly, naming the terrorist organisations and the hostile regimes and using various negative labels to describe them and thirdly, giving positive labels to represent America and its allies and naming the victims of the 9/11 incident. In the following, these methods of reference have been discussed individually in detail and it has been described how they play great role in positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006).

### Describing the Attackers Negatively

The first method of reference identified in this study is using negative labels for the enemies and naming the terrorist organizations in order to create their negative impression.

**Table 1**  
**Examples of Negative Labels**

No.	Statements/Examples	Speech and Line No.
1	"The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the <i>barbaric criminals</i> who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name."	Bush 1:L30
2	"If any government sponsors the <i>outlaws</i> and <i>killers of innocents</i> , they have become <i>outlaws</i> and <i>murderers</i> themselves."	Bush 1:L39-40

3	“Thousands of <i>dangerous killers</i> , schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by <i>outlaw regimes</i> , are now spread throughout the world like <i>ticking time bombs</i> , set to go off without warning.”	Bush 2:L54-55
4	“My hope is that all nations will heed our call, and eliminate the <i>terrorist parasites</i> who threaten their countries and our own.”	Bush 2:L75

In example 1, Bush uses the phrase ‘barbaric criminals’ to refer to the enemies of America and supposedly of the entire world. As barbarism is contemptible, terrorists have been deemed to receive hatred and wrath of American citizens. Here, referential strategy has been used for negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006). America’s enemies are the social actors which are constructed as out-group (Wodak and Reisigl, 2001). Bush’s motive seems to be that terrorists should be presented in such a negative way that Americans should not feel any sympathy for them.

In the same way, Bush uses strong words such as “outlaws and killers of innocents” for the enemies of America in the example 2 saying that the governments supporting them will also become “outlaws and murderers”. The implication of this referential strategy is that Bush wants American people to realize that the governments sponsoring terrorism are also equally responsible for this crime and as they are outlaws and murderers, they should be punished by all possible means. He is probably preparing American people for a future war against such governments.

By using words such as ‘outlaws, killers and murderers’, Bush negatively represents the ‘other’ with the possible motive of achieving a favorable response from the public of America. The use of such moral and emotive vocabulary is significant to express the intensity of anger and hatred for the enemies. Using these words may particularly aim at instigating disapproval and derision of the American public for the enemies.

Example 3 is another similar example having the elements of negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006). Bush has employed the metaphor of “dangerous killers” and the simile of “ticking time bombs” to represent the enemies in these lines. This may play a role in arousing the feelings of fear among the people and may make them feel that these enemies are terrifying like time bombs so they should be dealt with immediately and strict measures should be taken against them as soon as possible.

Another metaphor of “terrorist parasite” has been employed by Bush to make the audience detest the terrorists to the greatest possible extent in example 4. According to Bush, terrorists should be disgusted and despised by the whole world. Here, he refers to all nations making the terrorists a universal danger for the entire world. His motive seems to gain support of everyone in the world not just the American citizens. Thus, enemies of America have been represented as out-group (Wodak and Reisigl, 2001) which is a negative presentation.

### **Naming the Hostile Organisations and Hostile Regimes**

Bush also uses names of the hostile organisations and hostile regimes to defame them in front of American people and the whole world as it is shown in Table 2. This strategy might be used so that Americans identify the enemies with names and these names should become the symbol of hatred for them. Then it will be easy for the American government to target them in future.

**Table 2**  
**Examples of Naming the Hostile Organisations and Hostile Regimes**

No.	Statements/Examples	Speech and Line No.
5	Close terrorist training camps; hand over leaders of the <i>al Qaeda network</i> ; and return all foreign nationals, including American citizens, unjustly detained in your country.	Bush 1:L11-13
6	"A <i>terrorist underworld</i> – including groups like <i>Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Jaish-i-Mohammed</i> – operates in remote jungles and deserts, and hides in the centers of large cities."	Bush 2:L67-68
7	"North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens."	Bush 2:L84
8	"The <i>Iraqi regime</i> has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children."	Bush 2:L89-91

In example 5, Bush has named Al-Qaeda network directly in order to target it and present it negatively before the people of America and the whole world.

In example 6, the terrorist organizations have been named in order to describe them negatively among American public. Van Dijk's macro strategy of negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 2006) is evident as all of them have been collected under the umbrella of "terrorist underworld". The way Bush names America's enemies represents the attitude of Bush government towards them and also determines to some extent the audience's ways of looking at them.

In example 7, North Korean regime has been presented negatively by saying that it is preparing for war but is heedless of its citizens as they are being starved. In example 8, Iraqi regime has been targeted by Bush as a regime that is involved in cruel and illegal activities. Van Dijk's (2006) strategy of negative other-presentation is evident here. Using poison gas to murder its 'own citizens' refers to the fact that if this regime can mercilessly kill its own citizens, then it will do the same or even worse with the enemies.

### Positive Presentation of America and the Naming of Victims

The third method of reference found in the present study is that America has been presented very positively at many points in Bush's speeches which is a clear manifestation of positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 2006).

**Table 3**  
**Examples of Giving Positive Titles to America and Naming the Victims**

No.	Statements/Examples	Speech and Line No.
9	"The United States of America is a <i>friend to the Afghan people</i> , and we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith."	Bush 1:L29-30

10	"America and Afghanistan are now <i>allies against terror</i> . We'll be <i>partners</i> in rebuilding that country."	Bush 2:L18-19
11	"Last month, at the grave of her husband, <i>Michael</i> , a CIA officer and Marine who died in Mazur-e-Sharif, <i>Shannon Spann</i> said these words of farewell: "Semper Fi, my love. <i>Shannon</i> is with us tonight."	Bush 2:L41-42
12	And this evening we welcome the <i>distinguished interim leader of a liberated Afghanistan: Chairman Hamid Karzai</i> .	Bush 2:L20
13	"At a memorial in New York, a <i>little boy</i> left his football with a note for his lost father: Dear Daddy, please take this to heaven. I don't want to play football until I can play with you again someday".	Bush 2:L37-39

In examples 9 and 10, American government and its citizens have been presented positively. In example 9, America has been referred to as "a friend to the Afghan people". Thus positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 2006) of 'we' and 'America' is employed and it has been explicated that America is strict only for those hostile and evil regimes who work destructively for others and even for their own subjects whereas it is friend of the people around the world having no discrimination on the basis of race or religion. In example 10, America and Afghanistan have been called "allies against terror" and "partners" to rebuild Afghanistan. Here, Afghanistan is also a part of 'self' while positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 2006) is used because it is allied with America to achieve its targeted goals. Later in example 12, the phrase "liberated Afghanistan" also reveals that it was a joint endeavour of America and Afghanistan that turned Afghanistan from a subjugated state into a liberated one.

Bush also uses names of some of the victims and the members of their families in his speeches; it seems to be useful in arousing the sympathetic feelings among the people. In addition, the covert purpose seems to aggravate the scorn and disgust in the minds of American citizens against the attackers and their supporters. Discursive mind control (van Dijk, 2003) is employed here. In example 11, Michael and Shannon work as symbols of all the victims of cruelty done by the enemies on 9/11. The American citizens are likely to have great sympathy for them and hate the attackers even more. In the same way, in example 13, once again Bush refers to the victims directly to gather people's sympathy for them and aggravate hatred for the enemies. People may feel that the attackers have taken away the precious lives of people's dear ones. So, they deserve the severest punishment and that America is justified in waging a war against such inhuman persons.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

It is concluded that various referential strategies (Wodak and Reisigl, 2001) have been extensively used by President George W. Bush in his speeches after 9/11. These strategies were used to present the enemy as inevitably evil and worthy to be punished. Naming the enemies specifically using their full names and giving their negative description helps to point towards them so that American people should identify them as their enemies and also as enemies of the entire world. In this way, they are likely to support the government considering it right in its approach towards the enemies such as Osama, Saddam Hussein and the hostile regimes such as Taliban, Iraqi and Iranian regimes.



The study shows that referential strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) have played a prominent part in Bush's speeches by presenting America and its allies in all the positive ways and portraying the enemies in utterly negative ways by giving them certain negative labels. They help in the ideological control of the minds of American citizens by trying to change their beliefs about various people, groups and nations. The possible motive of Bush administration is to pave the way for starting a war against the enemies and using a variety of persuasive strategies to gain the support of the public in this regard. These referential strategies are employed to make American public feel that the enemies are essentially evil and there are no traces of goodness left in their hearts. Thus, the social representations (van Dijk, 2003) of the common people are ideologically controlled by the American government. They are made to think that it is necessary to fight against enemies such as the hostile regimes of Afghanistan and Iraq in order to survive in the world. War is the only just and possible way to deal with the terrorists, if freedom, peace and security of the world are to be preserved.

Future studies can focus on comparing referential strategies in the speeches of President Bush and leaders of other nations and compare their motives behind using them in their discourse. In the Pakistani context, research studies can be conducted to find out whether the famous politicians and leaders make use of referential strategies in their speeches or not and if they use, what is their possible effect on the Pakistani citizens. Similar studies based on other aspects of critical discourse analysis (e.g. framing) can be conducted to develop a deep understanding of political discourse among masses. Such studies can also be used academically by emphasizing upon the underlying meaning and hidden agendas of various kinds of discourses in classrooms.

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