Positive self-representation and negative other-representation in Trump's anti-immigration tweets: A critical discourse analysis approach

التصوير الإيجابي للذات والسلبي للآخر في تغريدات ترامب المناهضة للهجرة: منهج التحليل النقدي للخطاب

TOBBI Saida*

Abstract:

This study aimed at examining the self-other representation in Trump's anti-immigration tweets. It employed Critical Discourse Analysis and van Dijk's Ideological Square. The results showed that Trump used various discursive techniques to represent Muslim refugees and Mexican immigrants negatively while he represented himself positively. To legitimatize his anti-immigration policies, he employed different rhetoric strategies such as victimization, implication, metaphor and comparison. This study contributes to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis and modern literary theory.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; self-other binary; Donald Trump; anti-immigration tweets; ideology.

ملخص:

تهتم الدراسات النقدية بإظهار العنصرية و الايديولوجيات في الممارسات الخطابية، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي التصوير الإيجابي للذات و السلبي للآخر في تغريدات ترامب

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*Batna 2 University / s.tobbi@univ-batna2.dz

Corresponding author : *TOBBI Saida, e-mail: s.tobbi@univ-batna2.dz*

المناهضة للهجرة، حيث تم استخدام منهج التحليل النقدي للخطاب والمربّع الأيديولوجي لفان دايك لتحليل 82 تغريدة من حساب تويتر الخاص بالرئيس الأمريكي ترامب.

أظهرت النتائج أن ثنائية الذات و الآخر تتجلى بقوة في التغريدات، علاوة على ذلك، استخدم الرئيس ترامب العديد من التقنيات الخطابية لتصوير اللاجئين المسلمين والمهاجرين المكسيكيين بشكل سلبي بينما صور نفسه بشكل إيجابي، كما استخدم استراتيجيات بلاغية مختلفة مثل التصنيف، الإثبات، التضمين، الاستعارة، المبالغة و المقارنة لإضفاء الشرعية على سياساته المناهضة للهجرة، إذ تعتبر هذه الدراسة مساهمة في مجال التحليل النقدي للخطاب و النظرية الأدبية الحديثة.

كلمات مفتاحية: التحليل النقدي للخطاب، ثنائية الذات والآخر، ترامب، التغريدات المناهضة للهجرة، الايديولوجية.

1. INTRODUCTION

A great deal of day-to-day communication has migrated to various participatory web platforms which has in turn impacted the way politics is done. Nowadays, most politicians use social media to disseminate their ideologies and attract the attention of larger audiences. The president of the USA, Donald Trump, is no exception. Currently, he has more than 30 million Twitter followers (Liu, 2017). By using an informal and conversational language style in his tweets, he has been successful in reaching large audiences.

In fact, the success of politicians' speeches can be associated with their linguistic techniques that go unnoticed but have a great effect on the hearers (Fowler, 2013). Therefore,

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) attempts to unveil the ideologies that stand behind their words. The present study is guided by Norman Fairclough's (1992) view that politicians not only use language to express their ideas and feelings but also to express their ideologies. It aims to investigate how Trump' anti-immigrant tweets reveal his ideology towards Muslim and Mexican immigrants, two "out-groups" he previously trained his nativist ire on.

2. Theoretical Overview
2.1 Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is geared towards establishing out how language constitutes and sustains unequal power relations. Its leading scholars include: Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, van Dijk and Paul Chilton. This field views language as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Coffin (2001) views CDA as "an approach to language analysis which concerns itself with issues of language, power and ideology" (p. 99). In line with this statement, (van Dijk, 2002) defines CDA as follows:

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (p. 352)

CDA, for van Dijk, is restricted to exercising power through written or spoken form. Moreover, it is a tool that reveals a great part of the speaker's ideology, identity, gender, aims and mostly

political position. Therefore, it is not merely analytic. It is critical in the sense that it sets out to discern the relationship between language and other hidden elements in the social strata.

2.2 Previous Critical Discourse Analysis Studies on Trump's Speeches and Tweets

The elected president of the USA, Donald Trump, has been an important subject of analysis due to his particular way of referring to underprivileged groups in order to maintain his support regarding national security policies, bringing the attention from a variety of social science analysts. Below is a review of some previous CDA studies on his discourse.

Quiñonez (2018) investigates how Trump and conservative news media outlets contribute to a national narrative of xenophobia that frames immigrants, particularly those of color, as parasitic and dangerous to the American way of life. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics, Quiñonez (2018) analyzes a collection of transcriptions selected from 100 speeches before and after the 2016 USA Presidential Elections. The methodology focused on the rhetorically-loaded and highly-inflammatory terms, linguistic strategies and metaphorical constructions to dehumanize immigrants. Findings proved that the use of dehumanizing and discriminatory language as well as the use of other discursive strategies had been employed to stoke fear and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Continuing with Trump, Chen (2018) analyzes his Inaugural Speech from the perspectives of transitivity and modality. Using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, the researcher attempted to reveal the speaker's political intention. Findings showed that Trump employed material and relational processes to prove that he is able to change the negative political

and economic situation of the country. Furthermore, he used simple, familiar words, short sentences and declarative mode to generate sympathy and closeness with his audience. The paper concludes that Trump used different language forms to transmit, change and maintain audiences' ideology subtly.

Last but not least, Fritz (2019) aims to identify and interpret the discursive strategies of constructing and denying racism in Trump's presidential campaign tweets. The study was conducted under the scope of Critical Discourse Studies. Results showed that the construction of racism was articulated by attributing negative evaluations to different immigrant groups. Moreover, Trump employed these negative attributes to justify the building of the USA-Mexico border wall, denying that he is a racist.

2.3 Ideology in Critical Discourse Analysis

Ideology has been a central area of investigation in CDA (e.g, Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Wodak, 1989; van Dijk, 1989). It has been so because discourse or any other semiotic behavior has been identified by major linguistic scholars as a location of ideology. However, one major problem immediately noticeable to anyone attempting to study ideology is the difficulty of establishing its specific definition. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) defines *ideology* as "a set of beliefs, especially the ones held by a particular group, that influences the way people behave." In line with this definition, CDA has different aims, one of which is to reveal the speaker's ideology.

The notion of ideology denotes a direct relation with the addresser's political and social beliefs. Scholars in the field of language tend to extend the concept of ideology beyond the political area. van Dijk (2008) defines ideology as a system of

beliefs which he named "social representations" (p. 5), shared by members of a certain social group. To him, this group shares the same attitudes or knowledge. He claims that ideologies are the organizing basic beliefs of these social representations.

2.4 van Dijk's Ideological Square Model

van Dijk (1998) contributes a useful theoretical concept called the "Ideological Square". It encapsulates the twin strategies of positive "in-group" description and negative "out-group" description. van Dijk maintains that the Ideological Square functions to polarize in- and out-groups in order to present the "self" favorably and "others" unfavorably i.e. "We" are "good" and "They" are "Bad". van Dijk (1998, 2004, 2006) posits that there are two stages of the analysis: macro-analysis and micro-analysis. For the macro-analysis, van Dijk identifies four basic strategies that are used in order to legitimize the self and de-legitimize the other: 1). emphasize positive things about "us"; 2). emphasize negative things about "them"; 3). de-emphasize negative things about "us"; and 4). de-emphasize positive things about "them".

In terms of the micro-analysis, this model consists of 25 key terms which can be considered rhetorical discursive strategies (van Dijk, 2006). They are summarized as follows:

1. Actor description: It means providing detailed information of an entity, such as a person, a place, or a thing, as well as the way that this entity plays its role in a social or political context either positively or negatively. As such, in-group members tend to be described positively or neutrally while out-group members negatively.

2. Authority: The speaker mentions authorities to support his/her claim. These authorities can be organizations, people who are considered moral leaders and experts, media, church, etc.

3. Burden: It refers to the human or financial loss of a specific group. This strategy is based on victimizing the in-group.

4. Categorization: It means assigning people to different groups.

5. Comparison: It means determining the similarities and differences between two entities. In van Dijk's Model, in-groups and out-groups are often compared.

6. Consensus: It is a linguistic device used to defend a country against external threats.

7. Counterfactuals: It means highlighting what something or somebody would be like if certain conditions are created or not created.

8. Disclaimer: It means attributing positive attributes to an entity and then presenting a denial of these attributes using terms like: but, yet, or however.

9. Euphemism: It is a communicative tactic where the speaker tries to use milder words instead of derogatory or direct terms. van Dijk (2006) argues that euphemistic expressions are used to mitigate the negative features of the out-group members.

10. Evidentiality: It means the use of facts to support the speaker's claim or idea. van Dijk (2006) states that this strategy is an important move to convey objectivity, reliability, validity and therefore credibility.

11. Illustration/Example: It is used by a speaker to present factual or fictional examples in order to make his/her statement more conceivable.

12. Generalizations: It is a tactic used to attribute negative as well as positive aspects of a specific person or small group to a large population.

13. Hyperbole: It is a linguistic strategy used for exaggeration. van Dijk (2006) asserts that it is a "semantic rhetorical device for the enhancement of meaning" (p. 365).

14. Implication: It means suggesting something without saying it explicitly.

15. Irony: It refers to the deliberate dissimilarity between what is said and what the discourse producer intends to convey.

16. Lexicalization: It is the use of semantic features of words to portray something or somebody positively or negatively.

17. Metaphor: It refers to the contrast or comparison of two phenomena or things that bear no similarity to assign the attributes of one to another.

18. National self-glorification: It is the positive representation of a specific country through certain positive references, like history, achievements, and traditions.

19. Norm expression: It means mentioning the norms of how something should or should not be done and what somebody should and should not do.

20. Number game: It means using numbers. van Dijk (2006) argues that "numbers and statistics are the primary means in our culture to persuasively display objectivity" (p. 366).

21. Polarization: It means categorization of people. In-group members and their allies are attributed positive features, whereas out-group members are given negative characteristics.

22. Populism: It is a political strategy used by the speaker or political leader to gain more popularity.

23. Presupposition: It is an implicit assumption about the world where the speaker uses language in order to achieve his goals without any evidence or proof.

24. Vagueness: It means that the speaker uses vague expressions having no well-defined referents.

25. Victimization: It is an important political strategy used in "us-them" binary. It means portraying out-group individuals negatively to make the in-group members look like the victims of all mishaps or unfair treatments of the out-group members.

The present study attempts to use these discursive strategies under the framework of CDA to answer the following questions:

1. How does Donald Trump establish the "self-other" binary in his anti-immigration tweets? In other words, how does he delimit the in-group and out-group?

2. How does Donald Trump represent the "self" positively and "other" negatively?

3. How do the discursive strategies of positive self-representation and negative other-representation construct racism in his tweets?

3. Methodology
3.1 Choice of the Method

CDA was adopted as a framework in the present study because it is, as Fairclough (2013) contends, the best methodological approach to critical-qualitative-communication research in relation to power and ideology. Specifically, the Ideological Square Model presented by van Dijk was employed for linguistic analysis because of two reasons: First, it clearly focuses upon the macro strategy of positive self-representation

and negative other-representation (van Dijk, 1998, 2004, 2006). Second, it does not only reinforce the present study's "self-other" dichotomy, but it also provides a series of discursive strategies through which this schema is operationalized in language.

3.2 Introduction of Donald Trump

Donald John Trump was born in June 14, 1946, in New York. He is the 45th president of the USA after Barack Obama. In 2015, he announced that he would enter the presidential competition. Unexpectedly, on July 19, 2016, he won the presidential election by defeating Hilary Clinton. He majorly anchored his campaign on issues such as: unemployment, illegal immigration, Islamic terrorism, national security and Obama care. To push through his agenda, he built his campaign around the slogan, "Make America Great Again." He has continuously expressed his dissatisfaction on how America is being endangered by weak policies against immigration (Kranish & Fisher, 2017).

3.3 Description of the corpus

The corpus selected for this investigation derived from the Twitter account of Donald Trump @realDonaldTrump. The corpus data were selected from Donald Trump's Twitter account because "Trump's success in becoming the Republican candidate was achieved by dominating the agenda of mainstream media via his use of Twitter" (Schroeder, 2018, p. 66). The corpus was constructed with the following procedure: *The Trump Twitter Archive* by Brendan Brown was accessed. It is an online software that collects and stores every tweet by Trump since he started his Twitter account. This software was employed because it is easy to use as it offers the whole bank of tweets published

by Trump which can be sorted by date, keyword and device. From an amount of 39,794 tweets until Dec. 27, 2019, the search was narrowed down with the following criteria: a set of keywords related to ethnic issues was used. Examples of these keywords are: immigration, immigrants, refugees, Islam, Syrians, terrorists, border, great, Mexicans, Hispanic, Latino, travel ban. The search started from June 16, 2015, the day in which Trump announced his presidential candidacy until Dec. 27, 2019, the date in which the researcher started constructing the corpus. After filtering the data, the total number of tweets to incorporate in the corpus was 82. However, for the sake of brevity, analysis of six tweets only appears in the present paper.

4. Analysis
4.1 Representation of Islam and Muslims

Table 1 includes three tweets selected from the present study's corpus. They portray Islam and Muslim immigrants and refugees. They are numbered to help refer to them. T1, for instance, means Tweet 1.

Table 1. Tweets representing Islam and Muslim refugees and immigrants

Tweets	Posting date
T1: Hillary has called for 550% more Syrian refugees and countless more refugees from across the Middle East, but won't even mention radical Islamic terrorists.	Oct. 19, 2016
T2: I'm calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the	Dec. 7, 2015

hell is going on. We have no choice. According to Pew Research, among others, there is great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population.	
T3: Islam hates us. People coming into this country have this hatred of the USA. Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine. Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.	Mar. 9, 2016

Source: Tweets selected from the current study's corpus

Many of the most blatantly anti-Muslim statements of Trump's campaign were intimately intertwined with his conflation of refugees with Muslim terrorists. T1, for example, is supported by the macro strategy of *us versus them*. Trump employs the polarization strategy as he implies that Syrian immigrants are radical Islamic terrorists. Here, he uses the strategy of generalization by accusing all Syrian and Middle Eastern refugees of being radical Islamic terrorists.

In T2, Trump declares that Muslims should not be permitted to set foot in the USA. For this purpose, he employs authority as a discursive technique by using the personal pronoun "I". Moreover, he uses the strategy of generalization. He accused all Muslims of being responsible and accountable for all types of upheavals and disruption in the world. He further argues that Americans should be given strong protection against Muslims. The counterfactual discursive technique is engaged by

Trump, stating that it is deemed necessary to ban the Muslims from entering America as "we have no choice" except banning them; otherwise, they may cause a serious threat to the lives of Americans. This establishes Muslims as a credible threat to the security of America. By using the Pew Research Centre data to legitimize his arguments through authority and evidentiality, Trump then employs the generalization strategy once again when saying that "large segments of the Muslim population" hate Americans. It is not made clear which segments are referred to nor how many Muslims he is referring to. This is a particularly effective strategy as generalization categorizes all Muslims as the threatening out-group.

It can be claimed that T2 highlights the second prominent aspect of van Dijk's concept of the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 1998, 2004, 2006) which is "emphasize negative things about them." In this particular scenario, Trump negatively pictures the Muslims through the hyperbolical generalization, "there is great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population". It must be pointed out that in T2, there is no mention of the positive practices of Muslims in the USA. Thus, it can be argued that by excluding the positive aspects of Muslims altogether, T2 also reflects the fourth aspect of van Dijk's Model "de-emphasize positive things about them".

In T3, Trump uses two micro-strategies: generalization and hyperbole. He claims that all Muslims hate Americans. He also hyperbolically declares that the Muslims' hatred against the Americans is beyond any limits. This accusation marks the first feature of van Dijk's model "emphasize negative things about them" because in this statement Trump represents the out-group negatively by stating they "have no sense of reason or respect for

human life." This assertion presupposes that he himself and Americans in general (the in-group) have a sense of reason and great respect for human life. The polarization strategy that is used here neglects the reality that some Americans do not respect Muslim communities. Indeed, after the events of 9/11, Muslims have been facing a number of anti-Muslim discriminatory practices and sentiments from many Americans.

4.2 Representation of Mexico and Mexicans

Table 2 shows how Trump frames Mexican immigrants.

Table 2. Tweets representing Mexico and Mexican immigrants

Tweets	Posting date
T4: Mexicans are not sending their best. People that have lots of problems. Bringing drugs. They're rapists. They're not sending you.	July 8, 2015
T5: Ann Coulter has been amazing. We will win and establish strong Borders, we will build a WALL and Mexico will pay. We will be great again.	Jan. 23, 2016
T6: Only very stupid people think that the United States is making good trade deals with Mexico. Mexico is killing us at the border and at trade!	June 27, 2015

Source: Tweets selected from the current study's corpus

The first part of T4 "Mexicans are not sending their best. People that have lots of problems. Bringing drugs. They're rapists" mirrors the second feature of the Ideological Square because it emphasizes negative things about "them". Here, Trump uses a number of micro-strategies simultaneously. He employs actor description when he describes the out-group members in a negative way: drug dealers, rapists, etc.

Furthermore, by saying that "Mexicans are not sending their best", he implies that all Mexican immigrants are bad people. This can be considered a generalization. In addition to actor description and generalization, the strategy of burden is employed too.   By saying "People who have lots of problems", Trump implies that Mexican immigrants endanger the public safety of the American citizens, because most of them are "rapists" and "drug dealers". This is also a way of victimizing the in-group members. At the end of T4, the first feature of van Dijk's Model (emphasize positive things about 'us') appears when Trump says "They're not sending you". This implies that the in-group members, unlike the out-group ones, are good.

T5 represents the first feature of the Ideological Square i.e. emphasize good things about "us". Trump employs the micro-strategy of authority when he uses Ann Coulter, a far-right media commentator and an expert in American foreign affairs, as an ally to support his proposition of building a wall along the USA-Mexico border. It is unclear whether he employs the personal pronoun "We" to collectivize to all Americans or he and Ann Coulter as allies. Then, it is expected that establishing strong borders would be related to nationalist self-glorification "We will be great again." This slogan was raised in every stage of Trump's election campaign. Here, the actor Trump tries to develop a vivid connection between him and America being associated with its past glory. This striking slogan is a compelling populist strategy that is intended to develop bonds between the in-group members.

Still in T5, Trump maintains a specific sort of categorization, according to which he regards himself and his policies good for Americans, while all of the ex-politicians and

his opponents are implicitly depicted as ineffective. In order to build this impact, he utilizes the techniques of populism and comparison. Thus, it can be claimed that is in line with the first feature of the model also because it emphasizes positive things about 'us'.

T6 mirrors legitimizing the self and de-legitimize the other. This tweet has two *self-other* binaries. The first one is Trump vs. his opponents and the second one is the USA vs. Mexico. With regard to the former, Trump uses the micro-strategy of actor description to describe people who do not believe in his proposals of tensioning relations with Mexico regarding immigration flows and trade deals. That is to say, individuals who do not agree with him are blatantly *very stupid.* Here, Trump positions himself as the only savior when he implies that he, unlike his rivals, is smart and aware of the danger of the Mexican immigrants that come across the border. In this way, he represents the self positively and the other negatively. With regard to the second self-other binary, Trump employs the micro-strategy of metaphor to victimize the United States "Mexico is *killing us".* By portraying Mexico as a national enemy, Trump delimits the in-group and out-group.

5. Discussion
5.1 Construction of positive "self" and negative "other"

Analysis of Trump's anti-immigration tweets reveals that a number of strategies were used in the construction and delimitation of the in-groups and out-groups. Using the inclusive "we", Trump constructs the in-group identity of belonging, legalizes his anti-immigration policies and establishes them as a national need. Besides, he uses "we" in T2 "We have no choice" and T5 "we will build a WALL [...] We will be great again." to

convince voters of the risk of immigration. In this way, he constructs a positive self that is endangered by external factors. Moreover, Trump establishes the basic delimitation of self and other by the employment of the personal pronoun "they". In this way, he sets a perspective of otherness in the representation of the in- and out-groups. Further, to portray the other unfavorably, Trump uses demonization as in T1 "radical Islamic terrorists" when referring to Syrian and Middle-Eastern refugees and criminalization as in T4 "They're rapists." when referring to Mexican immigrants. The strategical objective here is associating criminal behavior and vicious habits with immigrants, omitting the fact that there are American citizens who can also commit crimes. Hence, the problem is about immigration, and not crime itself.

5.2 Racism in Trump's Anti-immigrant Tweets

There is a direct link between Trump's plans to ban Muslims' and Mexicans' immigration and racism. A major element in his tweets is the radicalization of Islam. His reply to Prime Minister Theresa May on Nov. 30, 2017 "Don't focus on me, focus on the destructive Radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom" after she criticized his sharing of far-right videos reflects how he recognizes Islam. Similarly, in one of CNN's interviews, the host Anderson Cooper asks Trump, "Do you think Islam is at war with the west?" Trump responded, "I think Islam hates us. the difference between Islam and radical Islam is hard to see." However, before accusing all Muslims of being radical Islamists, Trump should first know what Islam is and how millions of peaceful Muslims in the USA and around the globe behave. Moreover, the flow of drugs, criminals and illegal immigrants is experienced in many

areas in the world. However, when it comes from Mexico, Trump thinks that it constitutes a profound threat to national security. Now, creating the xenophobic narrative of "other", "bad" and "evil" that describes Latinos has become a part of Trumpism. These findings are in line with Quiñonez (2018).

6. Conclusion

In the present study, the researcher has argued that Trump's tweets emphasized several controversial yet populist issues of the USA such as immigration, terrorism, and national security. The current study has also investigated how van Dijk's four macro strategies of "self" and "other" and 25 micro-strategies help us figure out the imprints of Islamophobia and racism in Trump's tweets. The most frequently used discursive techniques are: actor description, generalization, authority, implication, hyperbole, metaphor, comparison, and populism. All of these strategies feed into the polarization strategy of "us" versus "them", where the representation of Muslim as well as Mexican immigrants is underpinned by the explicit positioning of "them" as an out-group entity with negative references.

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