Critical Discourse Analysis of the Political Speech of the Algerian President, Abdelmajid Tebboune, after Contracting the COVID-19

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Abstract ;	Article info
In This article focuses on utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in studying Arabic political discourse. The aim of the paper is to search the intended ideologies and the critical linguistic aspects in the political speech delivered by the Algerian President, Abdelmajid Tebboune, while at hospital in Germany on 13th December, 2020. The study puts these themes in their social and political contexts, with an emphasis on the lexicon used. The speech has been extracted from YouTube. So as to achieve the main objective of the paper, CDA is used as a theoretical framework to explore the speech. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA is used to analyse the data	 ✓ Second ✓ Critical ✓ Discourse Analysis, ✓ Political Discourse

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obtained. Macro and micro analyses were conducted in an effort to connect social and linguistic practices. The results of the paper disclose that the speech under study has its distinguishing characteristics and that language was used diligently to reach the intended objectives of the speaker.

- ✓ *Analysis, semantic*
- ✓ *macrostructures,*
- ✓ *semantic*
- ✓ *microstructures.*

I -Introduction

Prior to embarking on an analysis of the speech of the Algerian President, Abdelmajid Tebboune, while at hospital in Germany, it would be helpful to present an abridged background on the events of the time so as to contextualize his speech. In late October 2020, the president flew to Germany in order to treat serious health complications caused by COVID-19. The two-month absence of President Abdelmajid Tebboune paralysed the government domestically and weakened its position internationally. Internally, several decisions were postponed and procedures to promote the unstable economy and fight the disease were frustrated. Regionally, the White House recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara territory.

On January 3rd, 2021, the president flew back to Germany for further treatment for complications in his foot resulting from a Corona virus infection.

This paper explores the political speech delivered by the Algerian President, Abdelmajid Tebboune, following his treatment in Germany. While many researches have explored political speeches from different stands and during critical points of time, this study analyses a political speech delivered on a very crucial time for Algeria and the Algerians. The president's discourse will be analysed from a linguistic angle, an approach on how language can be used carefully to reach the intended objectives of the speaker. This article aims to analyse an original Arabic-language discourse using the CDA approach of Norman Fairclough's, presented in 1992. In an attempt to understand the extent to which the speaker's ideologies are echoed in his linguistic choices, this analysis will investigate the structure, the meaning and the language of

Tebboune's speech by observing the semantic macrostructures (meaning) as well as the lexical style. To do so, the article will be divided into three parts, the first of which is a theoretical one. It exposes a requisite skeletal presentation of CDA, main criteria of political discourse and key principles of Fairclough's model. The second section is methodological and gives a critical account to discourse analysis. The third part displays the major findings of the analysis.

1. Theoretical Underpinnings

1.1. Discourse

Discourse is a complex concept to define. According to Van Dijk (1977), discourse can be defined as text in context, as action and process which are "liable for empiric analysis" (2). Fairclough (1989, p.24) differentiates between discourse and text, stating that discourse is "the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part". While discourse refers to verbal communication that can be observed in the usage of spoken, written and signed language, a text, according to Halliday and Hassan (1976), refers to "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length" (5).

Political discourse, according to Van Dijk (1997), refers to "the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels" (12). He adds that politicians selectively choose the lexical items that they believe they would "effectively emphasize or de-emphasize political attitudes and opinions, garner support, manipulate public opinion, manufacture political consent, or legitimate political power" (25).

1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The analysis of discourse, including political discourse, is the analysis of language in use (Brown et.al. 1). It is an investigation of what that language is used for (ibid). Critical Discourse Analysis, on the other hand, is an approach to language analysis that deals with elements related to language, power and ideology (Fairclough, 1997, p.9). It considers language as a form of social practice where language users perform in a group of cultural, social and psychological frameworks.

CDA is not limited to the study of the relationships between textual structures; rather, it explores the relationships between textual structures and their function in context. "Critical", according to Fairclough (1992, p.18), "implies showing connections and causes which are hidden". Therefore, the task of Critical Discourse Analysts is to display the hidden elements of the discourse which are not evident for the public.

1.3. Fairclough's model

Norman Fairclough, one of the eminent scholars who established CDA as an area of research, argues that the analysis of a specific discourse requires a three-dimensional process: text analysis (description); processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation). He asserts that "CDA gives attention to the dynamic interplay between text production, the text itself, and text interpretation or consumption" (1992, p.3). In other words, the interpretation of a given text requires analysis of the social and discursive practices to acquire a complete understanding of the analysed text. Based on this model, the political speech under study is analysed in relation to semantic macrostructures (topics) and semantic microstructures (local meanings). While the first presents the major topics that occupy the speech, the second deals with the main critical linguistic elements of the speech: intertextuality of text, religious utterances, and repetition.

2. Analysis and Discussion

2.1. Social and Discursive Practices

Since CDA requires the consideration of the social conditions that impact textual production, it seems useful to give a historical background about the situation in Algeria when the president delivered this speech.

The huge anti-government demonstrations which took place in 2019 eventually ended President Bouteflika's long rule. The presidential elections that followed were won by Abdelmajid Tebboune. Soon after his arrival to presidency, Algeria found itself on the cusp of a critical domestic and regional uncertainty. This period of unrest, worsened by the outbreak of COVID-19, have delayed Algeria's endeavours to regulate the frailties.

In October 2020, the president reportedly contracted the COVID-19 and was flown to Germany for treatment. His long absence destabilized the regime, and growing dismay at the government's actions boiled over in another wave of protests. Regionally, Algeria lost influence on the Western Sahara issue to Morocco.

As for the discursive practice, the speaker produces the political speech in a five-minute video message. The president delivered his speech on December 13th.

2.2. Linguistic practices

This paper follows a two-stage analysis of the political speech under study macro analysis (topics) and micro analysis (main linguistic features). This part exposes the major findings of the investigation in each of these levels.

2.2.1. Ideological Analysis: Semantic macrostructures in Tebboune's Speech

The political speech delivered by president Tebboune sent a number of important messages to Algerians and to the entire world. These are outlined as follows:

- Greeting

The first message delivered by the Algerian President is greeting the people who were watching the video.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و صل اللهم و سلم على إمامنا و حبيبنا سيدنا محمد ألف صلاة و ألف سلام عليه.

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and may God bless and grant peace to our Imam and our beloved Prophet Muhammad, a thousand prayers and a thousand peace be upon him

- Informing

This second message informs the Algerians of the health status of the president.

أيتها المواطنات، أيها المواطنون الأعزاء، كما تعلمون منذ ما يقرب شهرين أُخِذت إلى الخارج على جناح السرعة لما كان قد أصابني من وباء كورونا. اليوم و الحمد لله بفضل الله عز وجل و عنايته ولطفه و كذلك بفضل أطبائنا في المستشفى العسكري و الأطباء الألمان الحمد لله طريق التعافي بدأت فيه.

Dear citizens, as you know, nearly two months ago, I was urgently taken abroad, when I was hit by the Corona epidemic. Today, praise be to God, thanks to God Almighty, His care and kindness, as well as thanks to our doctors in the Military Hospital and German doctors, thank God, I began the path of recovery.

- Reassurance

The third message, which reassures the Algerians that the legislative elections will take place in due course and that the sanitary situation is under control, is represented in a number of extracts as follows:

بالنسبة للانتخابات طلبت من الرئاسة أن يروا مع اللجنة المكلفة بقانون الانتخابات الجديد لكي يكون حاضرا في أقرب وقت لكي ننطلق في العملية التي تأتي بعد الدستور.

Regarding the elections, I asked the presidency to see with the committee in charge of the new election law so that it [the law] would be present as soon as possible so that we could start the process that comes after the constitution.

بالنسبة لفيروس كورونا، الحمد لله ان رجعت الامور تدريجيا من 1300 حالة إلى ما يقارب 520 حالة. الشكر لله و الشكر كذلك لكل من ساهم في انخفاض هذا العدد.

As for Coronavirus, thank God, things have gradually returned from 1,300 cases to nearly 520 cases. Thanks to God and thanks also to everyone who contributed to the decrease in this number.

بالنسبة للحياة الاقتصادية، أعتقد أن الأمور ماشية، ماشية و ميزانية 2020 ربما تظهر أننا قاعدين في الطريق الذي سطرناه بأن لا يمس أي مواطن ذو دخل ضعيف بضرائب جديدة.

As for economic life, I think things are going on, going on and the 2020 budget may show that we are sitting in the path we have taken by not touching any low-income citizen with new taxes.

- Emphasizing Algeria's Strength

The speech carries an important message related to Algeria's regional power. Tebboune emphasized that Algeria has always been strong and will remain so.

بالنسبة للأوضاع السياسية في المنطقة، فالجزائر قوية و اقوى من كل ما قد يظنه البعض. ما يجري حاليا كلنا كنا ننتظر فيه و لكن الجزائر لا تتزعزع و هنا آخذ مقولة و قول ولي الله الصالح سيدي عبد الرحمن الثعالبي: إن الجزائر في أحوالها عجب و لا يدوم فيها للناس مكروه ما حل بها عسر او ضاق بها متسع الا و يسر من الله يتلوه.

As for the political situation in the region, Algeria is strong and stronger than what some might think. We all predicted what is going on now, but Algeria is not shaken, and here I take the saying and the statement of the good of God, Sidi Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alabi: Algeria is in its conditions a wonder, and its people's sufferings last not. Every time a hardship happens to it, relief from God directly follows after.

- Recommending

The last part of the speech is addressed to the Minister of Interior and Governors where the president recommends them to make the school entry a successful one.

بالنسبة للدخول المدرسي و الدخول الجامعي، الحمد لله، الحمد لله، أوصي فقط مرة أخرى بالأخص بعد سقوط الثلوج و الأمطار، أوصي السيد وزير الداخلية و الولاة على التطبيق الحرفي لما اتفقنا عليه بالنسبة لمناطق الظل و بالأخص بالأخص بالأخص للوجبات الساخنة و النقل المدرسي.

Regarding school entry and university entry, praise be to God, praise be to God, I recommend only once more, especially after snow and rain have fallen, the Minister of Interior and Governors, recommend them, to literally applicate what we have agreed upon with regard to the shadow areas, especially, especially, especially, the hot meals and school transportation.

In the macrostructures discussed above, both cohesion and coherence of speech, two elements shaped by ideological perspectives, can be found. While cohesion refers to the continuity in the surface structure (word and sentence) of the discourse, coherence refers to continuity in meaning or the overall interrelated-ness of the discourse (Louwerse & Graesser, 217).

2.2.2. Local meanings: Semantic Microstructures in Tebboune's Speech

The ideological beliefs discussed above are expressed through specific semantic microstructures as they are under the control of the speaker who selectively decides which propositions and lexical content will be transmitted to the listener.

This section deals with the critical linguistic part of the study. Analysing Tebboune's speech, the most distinct features can be found in intertextuality of text, religious expressions, and repetition.

- Intertextuality of Text

As an important political rhetorical technique, intertextuality requires borrowing from other texts in producing a new one. It is a persuasive method used to make the audience consider what the speaker says. Tebboune's use of intertextuality can be considered as a purposeful use. This assumption would be advocated through the following direct borrowing used by Tebboune in his text:

هنـا آخذ مقولـة و قول ولـي الله الصـالح سيدي عبد الرحمن الثعـالبي: إن الجزائر فـي أحوالهـا عجب و لا يدوم فيها للناس مكروه ما حل بها عسر او ضاق بها متسع الا و يسر من الله يتلوه.

and here I take the saying and the statement of the God's Representative, Sidi Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alabi: Algeria is in its conditions a wonder, and its people's sufferings last not. Every time a hardship happens to it, relief from God directly follows after.

Tebboune borrows an extract from the Algerian great thinker Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alabi to stress the idea that the future of Algeria is secure despite of the challenges dangers that surround it.

- Religious expressions

A number of religious lexical register has been noticed in the speech. The following is an example of the religious expressions employed by the Algerian President in his speech:

اليوم و الحمد لله بفضـل الله عز وجل و عنايتـه ولطفه و كذلك بفضـل أطبائنـا فـي المستشفى العسكري و الأطباء الألمان الحمد لله طريق التعافي بدأت فيه.

Today, praise be to God, thanks to God Almighty, His care and kindness, as well as thanks to our doctors in the Military Hospital and German doctors, thank God, I began the path of recovery.

- Repetition

Any critical linguistic investigation on political discourse should take repetition into consideration. Repetition in Arabic argumentative discourse, according to Al-Jubouri (9), may fall under one of three levels: the morphological level, the word level and the chunk level. This

paper, however, focuses on word repetition as a recurring device used in the speech under study.

Word repetition in the speech is not merely an artistic device, but it has a pivotal rhetorical function. Al-Khafaji (19) believes that repetition "can have didactic, playful, emotional, artistic, textual and rhetorical functions". The following extracts from Tebboune's speech clarify this point.

In the following extract, the word "especially" بالأخص has been repeated three times.

أوصي السيد وزير الداخلية و الولاة على التطبيق الحرفي لما اتفقنا عليه بالنسبة لمناطق الظل و بالأخص بالأخص بالأخص للوجبات الساخنة و النقل المدرسي.

I recommend the Minister of Interior and Governors, to literally applicate what we have agreed upon with regard to the shadow areas, especially, especially, especially, the hot meals and school transportation.

The message the president intends to deliver here is taking care of the students in remote areas. Repetition is used to emphasize his idea.

The above analysis has shown how intertextuality, religious expressions and repetition, tools for lexical cohesion, have been used to support Tebboune's ideology and political strategies. One of these strategies is to emphasize Algeria's strength through the persuasive act of repeating positive words. Another is the reassurance strategy through which he refers to the challenges Algeria is facing. To do so, Tebboune has refuged to the repetition of specific words which have affective as well as persuasive power.

3. Major Findings

The investigation of the speech has answered the two questions of this paper. The first question is: "What are the intended ideologies included in Tebboune's text?" The findings of the first part of the investigation have demonstrated that the most important ideological components of the speech can be outlined in the following key elements:

- Reassuring the Algerians about the economic and sanitary (COVID-19) challenges.

- Declaring Algeria's strength despite the domestic and regional dangers surrounding it.
- Informing his audience of his health status after having contracted the COVID-19.

The general underlying theme of the speech is emphasizing that the country is secure and that the government is able to face any challenge, domestically and internationally. This paper investigated the ideological aspects of Tebboune's political speech. The analysis, which is rooted in Fairclough's notions of ideology existing in text, was an endeavour to connect the discourse with the social practices and to decrypt the hidden ideology of the speech under study.

The second question is: "What are the distinguishing linguistic components and strategies employed by Tebboune to persuade his recipients of his ideology?" The findings of the investigation have demonstrated that the president refers to intertextuality and the employment of religious expressions, and that various linguistic strategies, the use of repetition for example, are employed by the speaker to transmit his ideas.

It can be concluded that the language in Tebboune's speech affects and is affected by the social, cultural and political phenomena surrounding him. In this study, it has been found that intertextuality of text, combined with religious expressions and repetition have been used extensively in Tebboune's speech not only to raise the language style, but also to avail the ideological purposes discussed earlier. It has been employed to influence and persuade the public.

Conclusion

Critical Discourse Analysis is the approach that explores the relationship between ideology and language. It presents effective approaches for analysing public speeches. In this paper, understanding the social and historical contexts that escorted the creation of the text led to a better understanding of the speech. The linguistic function and socio-cultural function interrelatedness as presented by Fairclough have been exposed by the results of the analysis.

The employment of various discourse registers in Tebboune's speech, combined with extensive use of intertextuality and repetition, demonstrates that language as a means of communication can be attentively used not only to reflect the stylistic part of the user but also to reflect his ideology, manifested in his endeavours to impact the receivers of his text.

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The Speech can be