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A Linguistic Analysis of Racist Discourse in Some Speeches of Donald Trump and Martin Luther King: A Contrastive Study

M.A. Thesis in Linguistics

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Abstract

This study explores the intertwined relationship between language and ideology through a critical analysis of some political speeches selected for two influential American leaders in two different eras. Thus, it is an interdisciplinary study where linguistics, politics and socio-culture are essential constituents. By conducting a contrastive study between the political discourse of the contemporary American President Donald Trump and the late American civil rights movement leader Martin Luther King, the researcher attempts to explore the discursive strategies that each of them employs while presenting the issue of the racial minorities in the American society. In this regard, the ideology of racism is the focus of the researcher whose objective is to uncover the underlying ideology that lies beneath each speaker's discourse and to show how far each speaker can successfully manipulate his language to serve his ideological intentions and political purposes. Therefore, van Dijk's ideological square model is applied as the measuring unit that distinguishes between the racist and anti-racist discourse while using the Self and Other presentations as the major criteria. In addition, van Dijk's model of ideological structures is also integrated to provide a sufficient linguistic analysis that covers the main discourse structures for both Donald Trump and Luther King. Finally, the study concludes that Trump's discourse, being characterized by both elements of self-glorification and Other-derogation, falls under the category of the racist discourse while Luther King's discourse can be classified as anti-racist mainly through the dominance of the negative self-presentation together with the positive Other-presentation.

Keywords: ideological discourse analysis, Martin Luther King, Donald Trump, racist discourse, anti-racist discourse.

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List of Abbreviations

ACAPS: Assessment Capacities Projects

AntConc: Anthony concordance

CDA: critical discourse analysis

DHA: discourse-historical analysis

ENAR: European Network Against Racism

IDA: ideological discourse analysis

PDA: political discourse analysis

Chapter one

Introduction