

Denial in Speech of Trump against Covid19: A Critical Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

Denial is an act of refusing something or rejecting someone to do something. It is a way of contradiction of bad or negative things. So far, the present study deals with such a concept by selecting one of Donald Trump's speeches. This speech is rich with the ideology of denial. Nevertheless, this study is limited to Donald Trump's speech at a rally in South Carolina on February 28, 2020. Trump here denies coronavirus being pandemic but only a controlled case. The study aims at analyzing denial through critical stylistic perspective. This is done through using Jeffries's model of analysis (Textual Conceptual Functions). The study proves that most of the critical stylistic tools set by Jeffries are present in the analysis. The devices used in the data are significant for the critical interpretation of the selected speech because they are remarkable in reflecting the ideology of denial of Trump. Trump used this mechanism (denial) for the sake of hiding the foible in his policy and rejecting any spot that weakens his political picture in front of the audience.

Key Terms

Critical stylistics, covid-19, text world theory, psychology, critical stylistic tools.

1.1 Introduction

Critical stylistic analysis affords the missing link (ideology) between stylistics, the detail implements for understanding how text product on the basis of linguistic choice, and critical discourse analysis. It is an elaboration of both approaches (Jeffries and Walker, 2019:53-55). Surveying the ideology of denial is not a facile task. Therefore, many researchers go with subjective methods to rummage those ideologies. So, this paper espouses critical stylistics as a method to reveal denial ideology in one of Trump's speech about Covid-19. This study aims at: (1) Finding out the linguistic structure of denial. (2) Identifying the stylistic tools utilized in Trump's Speech and determining the most dominant stylistic ones that Trump prefers to use.. (3) Exploring other ideologies in the analyzed texts.

Concerning the mentioned objectives, it is theorized that: (1) Trump employed diverse stylistic techniques to express his rejection of coronavirus. (2) The primary stylistic tools employed revolve around naming and describing, prioritization, and negation. (3) There is one prominent ideology behind the analyzed Trump's speech. This paper is limited to Donald Trump speech at rally in South Carolina on February 28, 2020.

Enriching the discipline of linguistics, especially critical studies, is important through a study that focuses on the concept of denial in political speeches. Furthermore, it elucidates the utilization of this notion by the orator and the manner in which he depicts the coronavirus. Consequently, it facilitates comprehension of policy language. This has advantages not only for linguistics but also for the realm of criticism by providing fresh perspectives on the concept of denial.

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1.2 Background

1.2.1 Denial and Language

Denial alludes to an act, to announce something unfaithful, untenable, or unworthy of thought or, when it alludes to a condition, or to imply what is real. Deny mostly infers a refusal and as a rule a firm or outspoken refusal to accept as true, to allow or capitulate, or to recognize the presence or claims of something, like (deny the report that the British minister has surrendered). This invokes that the person is no disgusting and doltish pessimist who denies the presence. In short, any sentiments more than the simply physical (Merriam-Webster, 1984:226-7).

1.2.2 Denial and Psychology

The action of not admitting that something sad or painful is true or real. Psychologically, denial involves the conscious suppression or exclusion of negative thoughts, emotions, desires, or events. It might manifest as denial of a terminal illness, a financial problem, an addiction, or a partner's betrayal. Denial is a subconscious mechanism that serves to address emotional conflict or alleviate discomfort (VandenBos, 2015:296).

Denial is a defense mechanism where someone tries to reject an uncomfortable fact and insisting that what he believes is not true in spite of what may be overwhelming evidence (Oxford collections Dictionary , 2003:203).

Denial encompasses not just an individual's own state of mind, but also extends to the realm of public, social, and cultural phenomena. On an individual level, denial involves the cognitive aspect of not acknowledging the facts, the emotional aspect of not being disturbed, and the moral aspect of not recognising wrongness or taking responsibility (De Haan, 2016:12).

An individual who is in denial will go without from activity (will not take steps in reaction to the undesirable information). Thus, refusal is continuously a collective exertion when individuals learn what they're socially anticipated not to check out, not to listen or indeed not talk about. So, collective dissent is predicated on a shared recreation of reality amid which difficult substances aren't recognized (De Haan,2016:12).

1.2.3 Denial, Rejection and Negation

The act of denial is in a compact with rejection and negation. Negation acts in contents ('unhappy' is the negation of 'happy') while rejection is, instead, a mental attitude. Denial is, instead, an act which can be either linguistic or non-linguistic (shaking one's head) (Faroldi ,2014: 82). So, denial refers to the assertion of a negation, and a rejection may be a belief during a negation. Recent theories deviate from this conventional view maintaining that negation is to be clarified in terms of denial or rejection, instead of contrariwise, while other theorists considered that negation may be a separate phenomenon from denial (Ripley, 2011:623). Thus, the central idea is rejection ,it is not a belief during a different proposition, but a posh attitude towards an epistemic principle. Denial is going to be reserved for holding true the negation of the epistemic principle, while rejection is used for pertaining to a posh attitude thereto (Kraft,2017:9).

The important condition for rejection is that one withholds a belief in the epistemic principle in **question**, while the second one is when someone proposes oneself to disbelieve the epistemic principle when knowledge is possible (Ibid.:10).

1.2.4 Critical Stylistics

Critical stylistics as a term is utilized to highlight the stylistic activity investigating the methods in which social meanings are demonstrated through language. This analysis is stimulated and

shaped by critical linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. (Norgaard ,et al, 2010:11).The word 'critical' in critical discourse analysis is hoped to argue a specifically socialist view of the analysis of language. Whatever, this is by no means planned by Lesley Jeffries who invented the “critical stylistics” term as she makes that point clear that the word 'critical' in critical stylistics is only a procedure of disclosing the ideology in any text, regardless of one's personal opinions, which are a matter of choice (Muhammad, 2017:34). In this scenario, stylistics offers a range of methods that are expected to be more comprehensive than any other examination of critical discourse, although it may not be entirely exhaustive. The techniques, referred to as 'textual conceptual functions' (TCF), aim to reveal the underlying beliefs conveyed through the linguistic choices made by the text producer. They establish a sophisticated and comprehensive set of techniques, which critical discourse analysis is deficient in (Ibid.).

1.2.5 Trump's Ideology

Political ideology can be characterized as an assortment of beliefs that are stated around the correct arrange of society and how it can be accomplished (John, et al, 2009:309). However, the language of ideology is argumentative, (Cristopher and Stimson,2012:1). It is a product as much of social forces and political strategy as of anything steady or immutable. The huge statue of American politics is usually strife between liberal and conservative 'accounts of ideological positions' affections over symbols, over policy, over even culture.

Otherwise, the ideology of Trump encompasses a focus on nationalism which is revealed by “America first” and winning against other nations. He is not a liberal, a conservative, or a realist. His politics is portrayed as being celebrity populism. Trump's foreign policy outlooks as a populist nationalist ideology in action. Although Trump is not an isolationist, his insular and militaristic beliefs can sensibly be called Jacksonian. The forceful and troublesome nature of much of Trump's talk makes the errand of coming to distant much better understanding of Trump's ideology all the more vital (Lieven, 2016:7-8).

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The Adopted Model

This study is forged as a critical stylistic one, and it depends on adopting the textual conceptual model of Jeffries (2010). This approach has ten tools, which encompass naming and describing, expressing actions/events/states, equating and contrasting, exemplifying and enumerating, prioritizing, suggesting and assuming, negating, hypothesizing, presenting other's speech and thinking, and portraying time, location, and society. All of them are recognized as crucial stylistic instruments.

1.3.1.1 Textual Conceptual Model

At the core of critical stylistics lies the notion that a level of meaning exists between the systematic and contextual aspects of language, essentially reflecting Saussure's concepts of 'langue' and 'parole'. Within the realm of contextual meaning, texts or utterances utilize language resources to portray a specific perspective of reality or the fictional world found in literature. It is this particular level of meaning that investigators focus on to determine the role of texts in representing the world. Hence, literary conceptual capacities come into play, assisting in uncovering various implications created by certain types of writings (Jeffries, 2014:214).

However, Jeffries explains that although textual conceptual functions and their associated tools may not be all-encompassing, they do present a consistent framework. This framework is not restricted to these specific tools; additional similar devices can be incorporated while maintaining the basic model (Ibid).

1.3.1.2 Critical Stylistic Tools

1.3.1.2.1 Naming and Describing

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This covers the selection of specific nouns from a range of options in the language to denote an object or an individual, the consolidation of additional information within noun phrases (i.e., modification), and the conversion of verbal processes into nouns (i.e., nominalization). These tools can have ideological implications as they reveal the attitude and ideological assessment of their users. For instance, the selection of nouns indicates the opinion of the text producer towards the subject, while the organization of information through noun groups and nominalization makes certain information more likely to be accepted without debate (Jeffries, 2016:12).

1.3.1.2.2 Representing Actions/Events/States

This function depicts the process of selecting transitivity. This demonstrates the semantic role of a noun phrase in relation to linguistic components. It demonstrates how a speaker or writer conveys the scenario based on actions, events, or states. It seeks to demonstrate the party accountable for the action that occurred (Ibid.:164).

1.3.1.2.3 Equating and Contrasting

This technique uses the formation of similarities by comparing and the building of contrasts by differentiating. There are specific syntactic indications or linguistic expressions that can separate both comparing and differentiating. However, in every case, these markers are not always definitive, and supplementary indicators may be included (Jeffries, 2010:51).

1.3.1.2.4 Implying and Assuming

Such tools involve presuppositions, which are assumptions embedded within the text to establish a 'shared' reality. They include definite noun phrases that create existential presuppositions; verbs indicating a change of state, factive verbs, iterative verbs, and comparatives that initiate logical presuppositions. Furthermore, pragmatic techniques encompass rhetorical questions, deictics, and other space builders such as inclusive pronouns (Jeffries, 2016:153)

1.3.1.2.5 Hypothesizing

Jeffries (2010:14-5) states that selecting modality is one means of identifying ideologies in a text by addressing the hypothetical scenarios that modality offers. She acknowledges that modality is among the primary functional systems employed by Halliday (1985) in his linguistic descriptions and has been extensively used in critical approaches (ibid). In other words, modality is stimulated through various features in texts (modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, modal adverbs or adjectives, conditional structures, etc.) (ibid.:118).

1.3.1.2.6 Prioritizing

This instrument incorporates methods that allow the creator of a text to emphasize or de-emphasize its content through techniques such as passivation, clefting, and others (Jeffries, 2010:88).

1.3.1.2.7 Exemplifying and Enumerating

Exemplifying and enumerating are very similar and difficult to distinguish. As a result, readers must rely on "pragmatic inferencing" to differentiate them. The primary distinction between these two is that when exemplification occurs in a text, the list is suggestive, whereas with enumeration, the list provided in a text is exhaustive (Jeffries, 2016:164).

1.3.1.2.8 Negating

Negation involves constructing fictional realms (particularly within narratives) to advance and amplify an ideology, such as instilling fear, cultivating desire, or fostering belief, in the mind of the reader. It elicits both positive and negative aspects of reality (Jeffries, 2016:165).

1.3.1.2.9 Representing Time, Space and Society

This demonstrates how the text arranges its focal point and directs the reader's focus towards that focal point. By adopting this approach, a reader or listener gains a perspective that is embedded inside the text, so enhancing their awareness of the underlying ideological messages conveyed through the text (Ibid.:166).

1.3.1.2.10 Space, Time and Social Presentation

The field of analysis focuses on how content creators construct the world in terms of spatial, temporal, and societal dimensions. This field is commonly referred to as "text world theory". Jeffries relies on the use of deixis to achieve such dimensions. The importance of deixis rests in its ability to provide a precise translation of a particular expression in a specific context. Conversely, the absence of this information might lead to misinterpretation (Jeffries, 2010:148-9). The potential behind deictic expressions is to highlight a certain time, place, and social circumstance. The speaker of a certain text in certain time and put is assumed to be at the deictic center. The English language has the taking after fundamental categories of deictic expressions (Ibid.):

- 1- Deictic expressions of place which are expressed by the use of adverbs such as here and there; demonstrative such as this, that, those, and these, prepositional structures such as in front of, opposite to, etc.
- 2-Deictic expressions of time which are expressed by adverbs now and then, verb tenses, demonstrative, adverbials later, earlier, etc.
3. deictic expressions of social which are expressed by title (Mr., DR.), and address forms (first name, nicknames, formal names).

1.3.3 Methodological Procedures

This study will follow the critical stylistic tools by Jeffries(2010) to invoke the language and the underlying meaning of denial in Trump's speech at a rally in South Carolina. The following procedures are adopted:

1. Selecting certain extracts from Donald Trump's speech at a rally in South Carolina on February 28, 2020.
2. Analyzing each extract according to the ten tools.
3. Uncovering the ideology behind using each tool.

1.4. Data Analysis

The following selected extracts from a Donald Trump speech of rally at (www.rev.com) serves analysis clearly, as:

1. *"All I can say is that the fake news just doesn't get it, do they? They don't get it. They just don't get it.....No, it's crazy. Crazy! It's a crazy deal. No, the fake news media, they've been trying to figure this out for years. They still don't get it though. They don't get it".*
2. *"Now the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus, you know that right? Coronavirus, they're politicizing it.....We did one of the great jobs. My administration has taken the most aggressive action in modern history to prevent the spread of this illness in the United States. We are ready. We are ready. Totally ready".*
3. *"That's why I tell you when we have the flu with 35,000 people and this one we have to take it very, very seriously. That's what we're doing. We are preparing for the worst".*
4. *"We will do everything in our power to keep the infection and those carrying the infection from entering our country. We have no choice".*

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5. *"It's okay. USA. So a number that nobody heard of, that I heard of recently and I was shocked to hear it, 35,000 people on average die each year from the flu. Did anyone know that? 35,000, that's a lot of people. It could go to 100,000, it could be 27,000".*
6. *"And so far we have lost nobody to coronavirus in the United States. Nobody..... And it doesn't mean we won't and we are totally prepared. It doesn't mean we won't, but think of it. You hear 35 and 40,000 people and we've lost nobody and you wonder the press is in hysteria mode. CNN fake news and the camera just went off, the camera".*
7. *"Now you see it with the coronavirus, you see it. You see it with the coronavirus. You see that. When you have this virus or any other virus or any other problem coming in, it's not the only thing that comes in through the border. And we're setting records now at the border".*
8. *"We're prepared for the absolute worst. You have to be prepared for the worst, but hopefully it will all amount to very little I ordered the suspension of foreign nationals who have recently been in China from entering the United States. An action which the Democrats loudly criticized and protested and now everybody's complimenting me saying".*
9. *"A virus starts in China, bleeds its way into various countries all around the world, doesn't spread widely at all in the United States because of the early actions that myself and my administration took against a lot of other wishes, and the Democrats' single talking point, and you see it, is that it's Donald Trump's fault, right? It's Donald Trump's fault. No, just things that happened".*
10. *"Democrats said, 'That's terrible. He's doing the wrong thing. He needs eight and a half billion, not two and a half.' I've never had that before. I ask for two and a half, they want to give me eight and a half, so I said, 'I'll take it'".*
11. *"we have the best professionals in the world, the best in the world and we are so ready.....I also created a White House virus task force. It's a big thing, a virus task force. I requested 2.5 billion dollars to ensure we have the resources we need".*
12. *"Whether it's the virus that we're talking about or many other public health threats, the Democrat policy of open borders is a direct threat to the health and wellbeing of all Americans".*
13. *"I'm doing well in the polls despite the worst fake news and worst presidential harassment in the history of the United States. We've got phenomenal numbers. No, it's true. The worst presidential harassment in history".*

1.4.1 Naming and Describing

Generally, Trump in his speech tries to deny "coronavirus" as "an epidemic". Therefore, he names this virus, as in extract 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12, by noun phrases as "the fake news", "a crazy deal", "the fake news media", "flu", "coronavirus", and "illness". But later on, unconsciously he uses the noun phrases "virus", "the worst", and "amount of very little" to assign the epidemic. **Ideologically**, naming choices that Trump used reflect the appearance of the epidemic as a regular disease, not an epidemic. So that, he does not identify it as a new virus, but just influenza, in short, he denies that "coronavirus" may be a risk to the Americans. Trump criticizes press throughout naming choices "the fake news" and "hysteria mode", and the Democrats by "wrong thing".

The adjectives "crazy", "ready", "totally ready", "totally prepared", "absolute", and "very little", all, in extract 1, 2, 3, 8, and 10, refer to the contradiction between reality and what Trump wants to convey. If the virus is just flu, what is the reason behind repeating the adjective "ready"? **Ideologically**, that was an indirect announce that it is really dangerous. He tries to clarify that "coronavirus" is smaller than the upcoming rally. He focuses on the upcoming elections, thus affecting the people's conviction that he does his best to control this epidemic. There is no need

to fear as there are things more important than corona. In other words, winning the elections is more precious than people's lives.

1.4.2 Representing Action, Events, and States

Coronavirus is presented throughout material action intention verbs, in extract 1, 2, and 11, as "doesn't get", "don't get", "has taken", "did", "to prevent", "will do", "to keep", "created", and "am doing". Through the use of these verbs, Trump tries to show that he denies "coronavirus" as a big danger to people. **Ideologically**, he is evading from his responsibilities towards this epidemic. While the material action supervision verbs "have lost", and "bleeds" explain the actual case of that virus, in extract 6 and 9, it takes people's lives and spreaded quickly. Verbalization as in verb "tell", and relational intensive verbs "are", "is" reflect what Trump thinks about that virus, in extract 1, 3, 5, and 11.

Extract 9 delivers "corona" behavior with material action intention verbs "starts", "bleeds", "doesn't spread". This illustrates that "Corona" does not pose a risk in America as it does not spread quickly. But the truth is the opposite. **Ideologically**, this is another evidence that Trump is denying "Corona" as a global epidemic.

In addition to the image of denial, Trump criticizes press and the Democrats throughout material intention verbs "trying to figure" and "are politicizing". **Ideologically**, Trump manipulates all means to prove that he is not worried and anxious. It is just a simple virus that does not warrant a panic of the press. In other words, what the press and the Democrats say is a weapon to overthrow Trump, but Trump is authorized to win the elections.

1.4.3 Equating and Opposition

Equating is so clear in extract 3, and 5 by comparing "coronavirus" with "flu". Nevertheless, Trump gives "Corona virus" and "flu" the same value. **Ideologically**, Trump underestimates corona as a pandemic and breaks the risk that it creates. putting "Corona" and "flu" in the same scale indicates that corona means nothing to Trump, in time the whole world has a hysterical state due to corona. In short, Trump denies "Coronavirus" as a global epidemic.

Including large numbers of deaths due to "flu", in extract 5 and 6, is a natural thing. If Trump compares it to the deaths of "Corona" around the world, this indicates that Trump expects the worst, which is the death of people as a result of corona, this shows the carelessness of Trump.

1.4.4 Enumerating

There is nothing more important than people's lives and the president has a duty to protect the lives of the people. The opposite appears in Trump's speech when the whole world talks about corona and measures prevention to curb this virus, Trump finds himself in the place of delivering the speech about the elections, adding a simple glimpse of what measures he has taken to confront the virus. The pragmatic value of denial is to reflect that corona is something can be under control. A rally is more important than the epidemic.

Extract 9 justifies enumeration in describing "corona" by "starts", "bleeds", "doesn't spread" and his health measures by "myself" and "my administration". **Ideologically**, instead of enumerating the decisions and measures he took regarding the epidemic, he refers to himself as a hero to protect America. He does not take strict measures to limit the spread of the epidemic.

1.4.5 Prioritizing

Most sentences are simple, but most of objects specially those justifying denial "corona" and complements are complex. The speech contains many repetitions of sentences and adjectives, as "doesn't get it", "ready", "nobody", **ideologically**, all are remitted as defensive ways against the denial.

1.4.6 Implying and Assuming

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Trump is a direct person in his speeches. He does not need a lot of pragmatic words to express what is inside. Thus, there are few sentences that suggest a pragmatic meaning, even when he wants to deny "Corona" as a pandemic. **Ideologically**, he uses sarcasm and describes "corona" as "false news", that is, a direct accusation to the press that it maximizes things worthless. Nevertheless, Trump criticized Democrats for "politicizing the epidemic", he does not want "Corona" to influence his policy.

Repetition took an important space in Trump's speech. Trump repeats the words "ready" and "nobody" to explain the idea that the new virus does not pose any danger and the US government is able to control the worst conditions. Therefore, he supports his position by mentioning a small amount of money to confront the epidemic, which reflects what the Democrats have said. **Ideologically**, it indicates that Trump is deliberately setting a small amount for health requirements due to the small value of the epidemic. In other words, "Corona" does not need this much cost, and thus it is the fallacy of Republicans because the truth is the opposite.

The sentence "Nobody have lost in America" means that Trump waits the first victim to die due to "Corona", in order to believe that it is a global and dangerous epidemic. Trump again denies the true size of what "Corona" will cost economically and politically. Actually, people's lives are not important and the important thing is winning the elections, so Trump pays any evil that would harm his reputation in order to win the second term.

1.4.7 Hypothesizing through Modal Choices

Modality colored the speech at two points in extract 3, and 8 throughout the modal verb "have to". These modals function as obligation to take the necessary measures to reduce the spread of "Corona". **Ideologically**, the less number of using modals of obligation covers the carelessness of Trump against "Corona"; again he denies "Corona" as a global pandemic.

1.4.8 Negation

Another tool is negation which is the prominent feature of this speech. Trump uses morphological negation as "do not get", "does not", "not" and repeating them widely to reject "Corona". He uses syntactic type "no", "nobody", as well, to illustrate that America does not affected by this pandemic. Whilst the verb "prevent" comes to handle Trump's defense against "Corona". **Ideologically**, taking the denial as a defensive way to weaken "Corona" and a tool to deny this epidemic leads to the opposite result. This is because Trump failed in declaring "Corona" as a global epidemic.

1.4.9 Presenting Other's speech

The speech contains only one direct speech in extract 10 with the verb "said". Trump uses what the Democrats criticized as a defense and evidence of what he mentions about the financial value he needs to confront "Corona". **Ideologically**, he uses the words of his enemy as a defense means to support his ideas and what beliefs.

1.4.10 Presenting Time, Space, and Society

All deixes are straightforward references. Each component has the direct reference or the proper name. **Ideologically**, direct reference is not interesting to the audience because it carries no additional vague information, and this direct reference of the deixes shows the power Trump enjoys as first a businessman and second as the president of a strong country as America.

1.5 Conclusion

In time the whole world was shocked and struggle against the global epidemic, Trump underestimates but denies it. Shifting the focus to a rally reflects the denial ideology Trump has. The selected speech was about the upcoming elections where he was inspired by the virus as a trivial thing, where it is reflected by using many stylistic tools such as description, denial, and naming. So, Trump used the ideology of denial and carelessness to disguise anything that can stand as stumbling block against the rally.

Less using negation indicates that what he said is true. The repetition of using the pronoun (I) shows that all the tremendous efforts undertaken by the American government were orchestrated by him, and he is the right leader in the midst of all these actions. These are remarkable and proved successfully in reflecting the ideology of denial in Trump's speech.

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