
A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' and Barack Obama's 'Yes We Can' Using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

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ABSTRACT

This study compares Martin Luther King Jr.'s I Have a Dream speech and Barack Obama's Yes We Can speech using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The aim is to examine how language is used to express ideology, persuade audiences, and promote social change. A qualitative comparative research design was adopted, and the official transcripts of the two speeches were analyzed through three levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The findings show that both speakers use repetition, inclusive pronouns, and emotionally powerful vocabulary to create a sense of unity and inspire their audiences. However, the two speeches differ in their main focus. King's speech emphasizes civil rights, justice, and equality, while Obama's speech highlights political participation, hope, and national unity. The analysis also demonstrates that the historical and social contexts of each speech strongly influence their messages and persuasive strategies. Overall, the study confirms that political discourse is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion, constructing ideology, and encouraging social transformation. It also shows the value of Fairclough's model in understanding the relationship between language, power, and society.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, political speeches, ideology, social change.

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a means of communication; it is also a powerful social practice that shapes beliefs, influences public opinion, and reflects ideological positions. Political speeches, in particular, serve as strategic tools through which leaders communicate visions, establish relationships with audiences, and construct social realities. Through carefully selected linguistic choices, political figures can persuade, inspire, and mobilize people toward social and political change.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has emerged as an important analytical approach for examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology. CDA investigates how discourse contributes to the production and reproduction of social inequality, dominance, and institutional influence. Among the prominent approaches in this field, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing discourse at three interconnected levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This model allows

researchers to move beyond linguistic description and explore broader social and ideological implications embedded in discourse.

Political speeches have attracted considerable attention within CDA studies because they often reveal underlying values, intentions, and mechanisms of persuasion. Speeches delivered during periods of social transformation are particularly significant due to their influence on public attitudes and collective identity. Two notable examples are Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech *I Have a Dream* (1963) and Barack Obama's campaign speech *Yes We Can* (2008). Although separated by several decades and different socio-political contexts, both speeches became symbolic representations of hope, equality, and societal change in American history.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech emerged during the Civil Rights Movement and focused on racial equality, justice, and the demand for civil rights for African Americans. In contrast, Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speech was delivered in the context of a presidential campaign and emphasized unity, political participation, and collective national progress. Despite differences in context and audience, both speeches employ persuasive language strategies and ideological constructions that merit systematic comparison.

Previous research has examined political discourse using various CDA frameworks, including studies that explored linguistic features and ideological dimensions of influential speeches. However, limited attention has been given to conducting a comparative analysis between these two historically influential speeches through Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. Therefore, this study seeks to compare the discursive structures, linguistic choices, and socio-political meanings represented in both speeches.

The present study aims to apply Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model to analyze Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches. Specifically, it examines how textual features, processes of discourse production and interpretation, and broader social contexts contribute to constructing persuasive political messages. Through this comparative analysis, the study intends to provide deeper insight into the relationship between language, ideology, and social change in political discourse.

2. Statement of the Problem

Political speeches have long been recognized as influential forms of discourse through which leaders communicate ideology, construct social identity, and influence public perception. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, provides an effective framework for investigating how language operates within broader social and political structures. Previous studies have demonstrated that political speeches often employ linguistic and rhetorical strategies to shape audience interpretation and promote particular social values.

One recent study conducted by Benarose (2024) applied Fairclough's model to Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech *I Have a Dream* and revealed how linguistic choices, rhetorical appeals, and discourse practices contributed to constructing themes of justice, hope, and collective identity. The study emphasized King's strategic use of pronouns, lexical choices, and persuasive appeals such as ethos, pathos, and logos to reinforce social change and audience engagement.

Despite the contribution of Benarose (2024), the analysis was limited to a single speech and did not provide a comparative perspective that could explain how similar ideological messages are constructed across different historical and political contexts. In addition, there remains limited research comparing influential American political speeches using the same analytical framework to determine whether discourse strategies evolve while maintaining similar persuasive functions.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by conducting a comparative critical discourse analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speech using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. The study seeks to identify similarities and differences in textual structures, discursive practices, and socio-cultural dimensions employed in both speeches to achieve persuasion and social influence.

3. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How are linguistic and textual features employed in Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches according to Fairclough's textual dimension?
2. How do discursive practices contribute to constructing persuasive and ideological meanings in both speeches?
3. In what ways do social and historical contexts influence the production and interpretation of the two speeches?
4. What similarities and differences exist between Martin Luther King Jr.'s and Barack Obama's use of discourse strategies?
5. How does Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model explain the relationship between language, power, and social change across both speeches?

4. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Apply Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model to analyze Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches.
2. Identify linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in both speeches.

3. Examine the discursive processes that shape audience interpretation and persuasion.
4. Explore the influence of historical and socio-political contexts on discourse construction.
5. Compare the ideological patterns and persuasive mechanisms employed in both speeches.
6. Contribute to Critical Discourse Analysis research by extending the findings of Benarose (2024) through comparative investigation.

5. Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become one of the most influential approaches for examining the relationship between language, ideology, and power. CDA views discourse as a social practice that both reflects and shapes social realities. Among the major scholars in this field, Fairclough introduced a three-dimensional analytical framework consisting of textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This framework enables researchers to investigate linguistic structures while simultaneously considering the processes of production, interpretation, and broader social contexts.

Political discourse represents one of the most widely studied areas within CDA because political speeches frequently serve persuasive and ideological purposes. Through discourse, political leaders construct identities, promote values, and influence public opinion.

Several studies have examined Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches from different linguistic perspectives. Alvarez (1988) and Hmouma (2024) analyzed *I Have a Dream* as a speech event and emphasized the interaction between performance, audience participation, and social context in constructing persuasive meaning.

From a critical discourse perspective, Sipra (2013) applied Fairclough's approach to King's speech and demonstrated that linguistic choices in political discourse reflect broader socio-political inequalities and ideological positions. The study highlighted the relationship between discourse structures and social power.

More recently, Benarose (2024) applied Fairclough's model specifically to *I Have a Dream* and found that King employed discourse strategies that strengthened collective identity, promoted social justice, and encouraged public participation. The analysis showed that rhetorical appeals, pronoun selection, and lexical patterns played a significant role in creating persuasive influence and reinforcing ideological messages.

Additional linguistic studies have approached King's speech from alternative frameworks. Research based on interpersonal metafunction analysis found that mood structures, modality, and repeated pronoun usage strengthened interaction between speaker and audience and increased persuasive impact.

Although previous studies have extensively examined Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech independently, fewer studies have explored comparative discourse analysis between historically influential American speeches using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. Existing research tends to focus either on rhetorical devices or on isolated textual analysis rather than examining how discourse practices and social conditions interact across different historical moments.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to extend existing scholarship by comparing Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches within a unified CDA framework. Through this comparison, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for persuasion, ideological construction, and social transformation across generations.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **qualitative comparative research design** using **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** based on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. Qualitative research was selected because the purpose of the study is to interpret meanings, linguistic choices, ideological representations, and socio-political implications embedded in political discourse rather than measure numerical variables.

The study applies a comparative analytical approach to examine similarities and differences between two influential political speeches: Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* (1963) and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* (2008). Through comparison, the study aims to identify how discourse functions across different historical moments while maintaining persuasive and ideological objectives.

This research extends the analytical direction established by Benarose (2024), which examined King's speech independently using Fairclough's framework and demonstrated the usefulness of CDA in revealing relationships among language, rhetoric, and social influence. The present study broadens that perspective by introducing a comparative dimension between two political speeches delivered in distinct socio-political contexts.

Data of the Study

The data consist of written transcripts of two political speeches:

1. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech delivered on August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
2. Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speech delivered on January 8, 2008, following the New Hampshire Democratic Primary election.

These speeches were selected through purposive sampling because both speeches:

- achieved broad public influence;
- address themes of social change and collective identity;
- employ persuasive rhetorical strategies;
- represent different political periods in American history.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected official speech transcripts from publicly accessible sources. The speeches were converted into textual data and organized for systematic analysis.

The data collection process involved:

1. Obtaining official speech transcripts.
2. Reading and reviewing the speeches several times.
3. Segmenting texts into meaningful analytical units.
4. Identifying recurring linguistic and rhetorical patterns.
5. Organizing extracts according to Fairclough's analytical dimensions.

6.2 Analytical Framework

This study employs Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model as the primary analytical framework.

First Dimension: Textual Analysis (Description)

This level focuses on internal linguistic characteristics of the text, including:

- Vocabulary and lexical selection
- Pronoun use
- Repetition
- Metaphors
- Sentence structure
- Modality
- Cohesion and rhetorical devices

The objective is to determine how language choices contribute to persuasion and ideological construction.

Second Dimension: Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

This dimension investigates how discourse is produced, distributed, and interpreted.

The analysis focuses on:

- Intertextuality
- Audience engagement
- Persuasive strategies
- Context of speech production
- Relationship between speaker and listeners

Third Dimension: Social Practice (Explanation)

This level examines broader social and historical factors influencing discourse.

The analysis considers:

- Political context
- Social inequalities
- Historical background
- Ideological implications
- Social change and power relations

The three dimensions are integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of discourse beyond surface linguistic structures.

Procedures of Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted through the following stages:

Stage 1: Textual Description

The researcher identified lexical patterns, repetition, pronoun use, modality, and rhetorical structures.

Stage 2: Interpretation of Discursive Practice

The researcher examined how each speech addressed audiences and constructed persuasive meanings.

Stage 3: Social Explanation

The findings were interpreted within their historical and socio-political contexts.

Stage 4: Comparative Interpretation

The results of both speeches were compared to identify convergences and divergences across Fairclough's dimensions.

Validity and Reliability

To increase analytical trustworthiness, the study adopted repeated reading and systematic coding procedures. The interpretation of findings was supported by previous CDA studies and compared with existing literature discussing political discourse and rhetorical analysis. The analytical categories were applied consistently across both speeches to ensure comparability.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Textual Analysis (Description)

According to Fairclough's first dimension, textual analysis focuses on the linguistic characteristics of discourse and examines how language choices contribute to meaning construction and ideological expression. This section analyzes lexical choices, pronoun use, repetition, rhetorical devices, and sentence structures in Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches.

7.1.1 Lexical Choices

Lexical selection plays a central role in political discourse because words carry ideological meanings and influence audience interpretation.

In *I Have a Dream*, Martin Luther King Jr. employs vocabulary associated with freedom, justice, equality, hope, and national identity. Frequently repeated words such as *freedom*, *justice*, *dream*, *nation*, and *liberty* reinforce themes of civil rights and social transformation. These lexical choices create an emotional and moral appeal that positions racial equality as a national responsibility rather than an individual demand.

Examples of dominant expressions include:

- "I have a dream"
- "Let freedom ring"
- "Justice"
- "Freedom"

These expressions function symbolically and strengthen the speech's persuasive effect.

By contrast, Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* relies heavily on vocabulary connected to unity, change, participation, and collective action. Repeated expressions such as *change*, *hope*, *people*, *future*, and *together* establish a discourse of national cooperation and political engagement.

Examples include:

- “Yes we can”
- “Change”
- “Together”
- “Hope”

Although both speeches promote social progress, King’s lexical choices emphasize civil rights and moral justice, whereas Obama’s discourse emphasizes political participation and collective responsibility.

7.1.2 Pronoun Use

Pronouns represent an important linguistic strategy because they construct relationships between speakers and audiences.

In King’s speech, the repeated use of inclusive pronouns such as *we*, *our*, and *us* minimizes distance between the speaker and listeners. These pronouns create solidarity and present the struggle for equality as a shared social mission.

Examples include:

- “We cannot walk alone.”
- “We will be able...”

The pronouns transform individual demands into collective aspirations.

Similarly, Obama frequently uses inclusive pronouns to construct national unity.

Examples include:

- “Yes we can.”
- “We are one people.”

Obama’s use of *we* expands beyond political supporters and creates an image of inclusive citizenship.

Comparatively, both speakers employ pronouns to generate identification; however, King’s discourse emphasizes collective struggle, while Obama’s emphasizes collective achievement.

7.1.3 Repetition as a Persuasive Device

Repetition is one of the most powerful rhetorical strategies in both speeches.

King repeatedly employs the expression *I have a dream* to establish rhythm and reinforce future-oriented social aspirations. The repeated phrase functions as both a rhetorical and ideological anchor.

Similarly, Obama repeatedly uses *Yes we can* to create momentum and encourage audience participation.

The repeated expressions serve several discourse functions:

- strengthening memorability;
- emphasizing ideological messages;
- increasing emotional engagement;
- encouraging audience identification.

Although the speeches were delivered in different contexts, repetition serves a similar persuasive function.

7.1.4 Sentence Structure and Rhetorical Style

King's speech contains longer, rhythmic, and emotionally charged sentences that reflect the style of public oratory associated with social movements. Parallel structures and figurative language strengthen persuasive intensity.

Obama's speech demonstrates relatively shorter and more direct sentence constructions designed to communicate accessibility and political mobilization.

The difference in structure reflects distinct communicative purposes:

- King → social transformation and moral appeal.
- Obama → political participation and national unity.

7.1.5 Summary of Textual Analysis

The textual analysis demonstrates that both speeches employ strategic linguistic choices to influence audiences and construct ideological meaning. Lexical selection, pronoun use, repetition, and rhetorical structure contribute to persuasive communication in both speeches. However, while King emphasizes justice and civil rights through emotionally expressive language, Obama emphasizes political engagement and collective agency through accessible and inclusive discourse.

7.2 Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

Fairclough's second dimension focuses on discourse as a process of production, distribution, and consumption. Rather than analyzing language at the textual level alone, this dimension examines

how speeches are created, how audiences interpret them, and how discourse interacts with existing social narratives and communicative practices.

This section investigates audience engagement, intertextuality, production context, and persuasive communication in Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches.

7.2.1 Production of the Speeches

Political speeches are produced within specific social and institutional contexts and are designed to achieve particular communicative goals.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* was delivered during the March on Washington in 1963 at a critical period in the American Civil Rights Movement. The speech emerged within a context characterized by racial segregation, demands for legal reform, and calls for social justice. Its production reflected collective concerns rather than individual political ambition. King's role as a civil rights leader shaped the discourse toward moral authority and social transformation.

By comparison, Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speech was produced during the 2008 presidential campaign after the New Hampshire Democratic Primary. Unlike King's speech, which focused primarily on civil rights activism, Obama's discourse was situated within institutional politics and electoral communication. The speech aimed to motivate voters and strengthen political participation through optimistic messaging.

The production contexts of both speeches significantly influenced discourse construction and persuasive strategies.

7.2.2 Audience Interpretation and Reception

According to Fairclough, discourse acquires meaning through audience interpretation.

King's speech addressed multiple audiences simultaneously, including African Americans seeking civil rights, political institutions responsible for reform, and broader American society. The discourse invited listeners to interpret equality as a shared democratic value rather than a sectional issue.

Audience interpretation was strengthened through emotional language, symbolic references, and collective pronoun usage. The speech encouraged active identification with the social movement.

Obama's speech similarly targeted multiple audiences but emphasized inclusiveness across political and social divisions. Through recurring expressions such as *Yes We Can*, the audience was positioned not as passive listeners but as active participants in national change.

Although the intended audiences differed, both speeches transformed listeners into agents of collective action.

7.2.3 Intertextuality and Discursive Connections

Intertextuality refers to the incorporation of previous texts, historical references, and established social meanings within discourse.

King's speech demonstrates strong intertextual connections through references to constitutional principles, democratic values, historical struggles, and religious traditions. These references establish legitimacy and connect contemporary demands to broader national narratives.

Examples include references to:

- the American promise of equality;
- constitutional ideals;
- religious imagery and moral justice.

These references reinforce the credibility and persuasive authority of the speech.

Obama's speech also demonstrates intertextuality through references to historical struggles, collective memory, and narratives of democratic participation. Obama frequently invokes themes associated with national progress and social advancement.

Importantly, Obama's discourse echoes rhetorical traditions found in earlier American public speeches, including themes of hope and collective empowerment that became prominent in civil rights discourse.

Thus, both speeches rely on historical continuity while adapting discourse to contemporary needs.

7.2.4 Distribution and Public Circulation

Another important element of discursive practice concerns how discourse reaches audiences.

King's speech was originally delivered to a live audience and later circulated through newspapers, radio broadcasts, educational materials, and historical documentation. Its continued reproduction transformed the speech into a cultural and political symbol.

Obama's speech benefited from both traditional media and digital communication platforms. Television broadcasting, internet dissemination, and public engagement expanded its influence beyond immediate political contexts.

The mechanisms of circulation contributed to extending the persuasive power of both speeches across generations.

7.2.5 Comparative Interpretation of Discursive Practice

The analysis demonstrates that both speeches were strategically designed to produce social engagement and audience participation.

However, important differences appear:

- King constructed discourse around social resistance and moral legitimacy.
- Obama constructed discourse around political participation and collective progress.
- King emphasized historical injustice.
- Obama emphasized future opportunities.

Despite these differences, both speeches transformed public discourse by encouraging collective identity and mobilizing audiences through persuasive communication.

7.2.6 Summary of Discursive Practice

The second dimension of Fairclough's model reveals that meaning is not produced solely through linguistic structures but through interactions among production context, audience interpretation, intertextual references, and public circulation. Both speeches demonstrate how political discourse becomes socially influential when language is aligned with historical conditions and audience expectations.

7.3 Social Practice (Explanation)

Fairclough's third dimension views discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes society. At this level, discourse is examined in relation to ideology, power structures, historical conditions, and social transformation. Language is not treated as neutral communication; rather, it is understood as a social action capable of influencing institutions, public consciousness, and collective behavior.

This section explains how Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches function within their broader socio-political environments and how they contribute to constructing ideological meaning and social change.

7.3.1 Discourse and Ideology

Political discourse often communicates ideological positions through language choices and persuasive structures.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech reflects an ideology centered on equality, civil rights, justice, and peaceful social transformation. Through repeated references to freedom and national values, King challenges systems of exclusion while simultaneously reinforcing democratic principles. The discourse presents social change as both necessary and morally justified.

King's language constructs a collective identity that encourages audiences to view racial equality as an essential component of national progress. Rather than promoting confrontation, the speech frames transformation through peaceful advocacy and shared human values.

In contrast, Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* promotes an ideology of political participation, optimism, and collective agency. The speech constructs change as achievable through democratic engagement and civic responsibility.

Obama's discourse emphasizes empowerment and national cooperation. Through repeated references to collective effort, the speech encourages citizens to perceive themselves as active participants in shaping political outcomes.

Although both speeches promote change, their ideological orientations reflect different historical priorities: King emphasizes social justice and rights, whereas Obama emphasizes democratic inclusion and collective progress.

7.3.2 Power Relations and Social Influence

According to Fairclough, discourse is closely connected to power because language influences how individuals understand social reality.

King's speech challenges established power structures associated with racial inequality and institutional discrimination. The discourse functions as a mechanism of resistance by questioning dominant social arrangements and advocating equal rights.

Importantly, King does not reject national identity; instead, he reinterprets existing democratic values to argue for inclusion and justice.

Obama's speech reflects a different relationship with power. Rather than resisting institutional structures, the discourse operates within political institutions and encourages participation in democratic processes.

Through language, Obama positions citizens as contributors to political change rather than observers of political authority.

The speeches therefore represent two complementary forms of discourse:

- King → discourse as social resistance.
- Obama → discourse as institutional participation.

7.3.3 Historical and Social Context

Historical context strongly influences discourse production and interpretation.

King's speech emerged during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, a period characterized by demands for racial equality and legal reform. Social conditions shaped both the content and reception of the speech.

The discourse reflected public concerns related to civil rights while contributing to broader social awareness.

Obama's speech emerged during a period of political transition and public demand for renewed national direction. The speech addressed social expectations for political participation and emphasized the possibility of collective achievement.

Although separated by approximately forty-five years, both speeches appeared during moments of significant public expectation and societal change.

This historical positioning contributed to their lasting influence.

7.3.4 Discourse as an Agent of Social Change

Fairclough argues that discourse does not simply describe society; it participates in shaping it.

King's speech became associated with social transformation because it translated collective demands into persuasive public language. Through discourse, abstract ideals such as justice and equality became socially recognizable goals.

Similarly, Obama's speech transformed political participation into an accessible and emotionally meaningful narrative. The repeated call for collective action contributed to public engagement and broader political mobilization.

Both speeches demonstrate that language can function as a mechanism through which societies negotiate values, identities, and future directions.

7.3.5 Comparative Explanation of Social Practice

The comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences.

Similarities:

- Both speeches promote social transformation.
- Both construct collective identity.
- Both rely on persuasive discourse to influence public attitudes.
- Both connect individual experiences with national narratives.

Differences:

- King emphasizes civil rights and social justice.
- Obama emphasizes political participation and democratic engagement.

- King challenges social inequality directly.
- Obama focuses on institutional change and national unity.

These differences illustrate how discourse adapts to historical circumstances while maintaining persuasive and ideological functions.

7.3.6 Summary of Social Practice

The third dimension of Fairclough's model demonstrates that political speeches operate as forms of social action. Both *I Have a Dream* and *Yes We Can* reflect broader ideological and historical conditions while simultaneously contributing to public understanding and social transformation. Through discourse, both speakers construct persuasive visions capable of influencing collective consciousness and social behavior.

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7.3.5 Comparative Explanation of Social Practice

The comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences.

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- Both speeches promote social transformation.
- Both construct collective identity.
- Both rely on persuasive discourse to influence public attitudes.
- Both connect individual experiences with national narratives.

Differences:

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conditions while simultaneously contributing to public understanding and social transformation. Through discourse, both speakers construct persuasive visions capable of influencing collective consciousness and social behavior.

8. Conclusion

This study applied Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis to conduct a comparative analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* and Barack Obama's *Yes We Can* speeches. The analysis examined discourse at three interconnected levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice to explore how language functions as a mechanism for persuasion, ideology, and social influence.

At the textual level, the findings revealed that both speeches employed strategic linguistic features including lexical selection, repetition, pronoun usage, and rhetorical structures to strengthen persuasive communication. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech demonstrated extensive use of emotionally expressive language emphasizing freedom, justice, and equality, whereas Barack Obama's speech employed inclusive and motivational language centered on change, unity, and collective participation.

At the level of discursive practice, the study showed that meaning is shaped not only through linguistic structures but also through production conditions, audience interpretation, intertextual references, and public circulation. Although both speeches targeted broad audiences and promoted collective engagement, their communicative purposes reflected different social contexts. King's speech was produced within the Civil Rights Movement and focused on social reform, while Obama's speech emerged from an electoral environment and emphasized political participation.

At the social practice level, the findings demonstrated that discourse functions as a social action connected to ideology and power relations. King's speech challenged structures of social inequality and promoted civil rights through peaceful advocacy, while Obama's speech encouraged civic engagement and institutional participation. Despite differences in historical context, both speeches contributed to constructing collective identity and promoting social transformation.

The comparative findings support Fairclough's argument that discourse simultaneously reflects and shapes society. The study also extends the analytical contribution of Benarose (2024) by moving from a single-speech investigation toward comparative critical discourse analysis, providing broader insight into how persuasive political language operates across historical periods.

Overall, the study concludes that political speeches remain powerful instruments for constructing ideology, influencing audiences, and shaping social consciousness through strategic language use.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct comparative Critical Discourse Analysis studies involving speeches from different political and cultural contexts.
2. Researchers may apply Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model to contemporary digital political communication and social media discourse.
3. Language instructors should integrate political speech analysis into discourse and language courses to improve students' critical reading and interpretive skills.
4. Future studies may combine Critical Discourse Analysis with rhetorical analysis or corpus linguistics to produce more comprehensive findings.
5. Comparative studies involving additional political figures and historical periods are recommended to expand understanding of ideological representation in discourse.
6. Educational institutions should encourage students to examine the relationship between language, power, and society through authentic discourse materials.

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