The Power of Language and the Language of Power from Churchill to Obama

The Power of Language and the Language of Power from Churchill to Obama:

Logocracy

By

Rossella Marcianò

A mio Padre, all'ossimoro *forte e fragile*.
A tutto ciò che ha visto e capito per primo,
ai suoi sacrifici, che mi hanno reso chi sono.
Alla magnificenza della sua anima straordinariamente pura,
in un mondo impuro.

Syllables govern the world
—John Selden, *Table Talks,* 1689

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PREFACE

In this country [America] every man adopts some particular slang-whanger as the standard of his judgment, and reads everything he writes, if he reads nothing else: which is doubtless the reason why the people of this logocracy are so marvellously enlightened.
—Washington Irving, *Salmagundi*, 1821

Wherever there is a concentration of power there is, I believe, a potential to change things for the better, but there is also a human propensity to value the power more than the change it can bring.
—Ian Malcolm, *On the power of language and the language of power*, 1991

Washington Irving is probably best known, in the United States and elsewhere in the world, for his brilliant intuition to rename New York City, "Gotham". Not all among Batman's fans recognize that, but quite a few still do. Among his other linguistic merits may be the invention of the expression "the almighty dollar", although this coinage is still a matter of dispute among scholars. He also "invented" the Dutch historian Diedrich Knickerbocker, by delving into the remote and partially constructed Dutch past of Manhattan. As (almost) every American knows, a stellar New York basketball team, "The New York Knickerbockers", still bears this awkward name, though it is now usually shortened to the 'Knicks'.

An avid reader and writer, passionate about politics from his early days, Irving later on in his long life developed a profound disgust for whatever was "political", in Spain, Europe, or in his beloved America. He used the term "logocracy" to define, as well as ridicule, the power of rhetoric in the governing of the affairs of the newly-born USA. According to dictionaries, the term first appeared in 1804. It was not an America coinage, however. Literary historian William L. Hedges affirms, convincingly, that it was invented by Sydney Smith (1771 – 1845), a British wit and Anglican clerk, in that same year[1]. Later on, "logocracy" became quite popular in American literature, and even Charles Dickens, when visiting the US, abundantly used this term, in a derogative sense, of course.

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[1] N. Aycock Metz, "Dickens, Irving, and the American 'Logocracy'", *Dickens Studies Annual* 47 (2016): 1–16.

The power of language in politics, morals, and religion, has been the subject of a growing number of scientific works. As is self-evident, "governing by the power of rhetoric" has been part of the "art of government" since time immemorial, and well before the invention of such a term as "logocracy". In a way, the exercise of power is completely related to the use of language. A tyrant, or a king, a consul, or parliament, cannot work if they do not talk. Dumb, speechless authorities do not exist, and God itself began his relations with the world through an act of speech. Even when gods are silent, someone offers them his/her voice, such as priests and shamans, oracles and prophets. "*In principio erat verbum*". Te philosophy of language and the interpretation of political language and discourse have evolved steadily, over the last two decades, with the immense new power conferred upon speech by new media. While it is legitimate to ask ourselves: "Could we conceive of a power that exercises its action without any single utterance?", we might well find by ourselves an answer: "No, every single power must use language, in a way or another, to *work*." It has not only to use, but to forge its own jargon, often quite different, for terminology as well as for syntax, from the language of the common people. Often, also, it is quite similar to that language, but entirely reformulated, or transformed.

When the author of this book first approached this subject, more than ten years ago, the use of social networks, while already substantial, was far from being pervasive and systematic in the way it is now. Political rhetoric, however, had already evolved, at that time, so as to include the new media, which often shaped it, more than being sheer instruments.

This book deals with politicians that, although they do not belong to a distant past, have already left the scene of major politics, albeit being always present behind the curtain. Obama is considered a shadow-president of Joe Biden. Romney has been the junior United States senator for Utah since January 2019, succeeding Orrin Hatch. He served as the 70th governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007 before losing his presidential contest against Obama in 2012.

Under a number of circumstances, and for several reasons, the rhetoric they used in their battle is still present in current political discourse. In a way, their opposition in the 2012 presidential election, especially as it is reflected in their speeches, is a summary of a long tradition of political, public discourse in the Anglophone world.

This book deals also with Johnson's and Farage's first political propaganda against the EU; eventually, Brexit took place, on February 1st, 2020. The analysis of their speeches, that I made originally almost ten years ago, is still of interest, especially if we consider that the power of their language originated a major political event, an earthquake felt all over the world.

Similarly, after Trump, Joe Biden's presidency, at the linguistic level, echoes much of Obama's rhetoric, one of the main subjects of this book. In a way, the Anglophone political discourse of the first decade of the 20th century still dominates the second. *Mutatis mutandis*: the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the war in Ukraine, escaped the horizon of the first decade of the third millennium. The Ukraine war started, however, in 2014, and not in 2022. Some virus had spread already in the first decade of the century. Nothing new under the sun.

The relation between the power of language and the language of power is a subject of constant investigation in the philosophy of language, linguistics, and politics. In a remarkable paper dating from 1991, Professor Ian Malcolm, an Australian doyen in linguistics, defined the terms of the question[2]. At the end of his paper, Malcolm stated that: "Wherever there is a concentration of power there is, I believe, a potential to change things for the better, but there is also a human propensity to value the power more than the change it can bring." Even though I did not know Malcolm's work when I first addressed this topic, I cannot but share his views.

This book is based substantially on "Critical Discourse Analysis" (CDA), which is traditionally meant as "an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice". According to this standard definition, "Scholars working in the tradition of CDA generally argue that (non-linguistic) social practice and linguistic practice constitute one another and focus on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. In this sense, it differs from discourse analysis in that it highlights issues of power asymmetries, manipulation, exploitation, and structural inequities in domains such as education, media, and politics"[3]. While in the last decade

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[2] I. Malcolm, (1991), *On the power of language and the language of power*. Perth, Australia: Edith Cowan University Press, https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks/6912. Access March 2022.
[3] See the classical N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, London: Longman, 1995.

CDA seems to have lost some of its drive, it is still considered an important school in linguistics. For this reason, the author gives, in the first sections of this book, a synthesis of its methodology, even though I can only mention, here, some of the developments of this sub-discipline, as they occurred after the completion of this book.

In particular, CDA has extended its horizons, notably in its application, while it has been the subject of intense scrutiny[4]. At the same time, linguists have criticized CDA to the point of denying its legitimacy as a linguistic sub-discipline: Peter E. Jones argued in 2007 that "the abstract entities of conventional linguistics and pragmatics allow no critical purchase on this integration of communicative behaviour into the fabric of our social lives… The attempts by Critical Discourse Analysts to build a method of political and ideological critique out of such entities is misguided and inevitably leads to a distorted view of the role of communication in society and of the workings of social processes more generally.[5]" Since CDA has proved to be a valid instrument of investigation, while the author does not endorse Prof. Jones' views, she does think that CDA has to be considered as one (among many others) possible approach to the analysis of *political* discourse, in particular.

This work, therefore, cannot claim to belong to linguistics, or the philosophy of language, or, finally to politics or political theory. CDA offers tools to all these disciplines, but it is not entirely encompassed in a single one of them. The results of the research can be used in different environments. It

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[4] See, e. g., A. Lin, "Critical Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics: A Methodological Review", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 2014 (34): 213–232; S. de-Andrés-del-Campo; R. de-Lima-Maestro, "Critical analysis of government vs. Commercial advertising discourse on older persons in Spain", *Comunicar (Spanish)*, 2014 (42), 21: 189–197. For a new methodological perspective and its potential applications, see in particular: M. Guardado, *Discourse, Ideology and Heritage Language Socialization, Micro and Macro Perspectives*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2018. For particular applications, P. M. Smith, "The Application of Critical Discourse Analysis in Environmental Dispute Resolution", *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 2006, 9 (1): 79–100; A. Hazaea, "Methodological Challenges in Critical Discourse Analysis: Empirical Research Design for Global Journalistic Texts", *Journal of Sciences and Humanities*, 2017 (12): 1824–1884; E. Rahimi, "Critical Discourse Analysis and Its Implication in English Language Teaching: A Case Study of Political Text", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2015 (3): 504–511.
[5] P. E. Jones, "Why there is no such thing as "critical discourse analysis"", *Language & Communication*, 2007, (27)4, 337-368.

is not meant as a defence of CDA, but simply as an application of it. Over the most recent years, CDA partially lost its privileged, principal subject of investigation, politics, and freely roamed elsewhere.

—Paolo L. Bernardini (University of Insubria)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to highlight the main differences between Liberal and Conservative discourse, by comparing and contrasting the styles of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in the case of American Rhetoric, and by describing the evolution of Labour and Conservative Oratory in the case of British Rhetoric.

This descriptive-analytical investigation will scrutinize selected speeches given by the most influential speakers of both countries, examining them in the light of Hallidayian Systemic Functional Grammar from the critical perspective of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995), whose model for CDA consists of three interrelated processes of analyses: the object of the analysis (verbal and visual texts), the processes by which the object is produced and perceived by the audience (interpretation) and, finally, the socio-historical conditions that influence these processes (explanation).

On the basis of this theoretical framework, I shall attempt to link social practice and linguistic practice, as suggested by Fairclough, as well as the possible interrelatedness of textual properties and power relations.

Furthermore, this work attempts to reveal covert ideologies which are 'hidden' in texts, starting from the theoretical conceptualization of Batstone (1995: 198-99), who states that:

> Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to reveal how texts are constructed so that particular (and potentially indoctrinating) perspectives can be expressed delicately and covertly; because they are covert, they are elusive of direct challenge, facilitating what Kress (1989: 57) calls the "retreat into mystification and impersonality".

For these reasons the initial part of the first chapter will be devoted to the description of Critical Discourse Analysis, a perspective which will represent the starting point of the analytical part of my work. Some generic definitions of CDA will be outlined, as will its historical evolution, before, finally, the most significant and influential approaches are described, namely those developed by Van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough, the scholars who more than anyone contributed to the evolution of CDA.

At the ideological level, the main differences between Liberal and Conservative worldviews will be described using George Lakoff's theory (2002). This theory simplifies the contrast between Progressive and Conservative mind-sets by presenting them as styles of parenting. In this way Lakoff outlines two contrasting reference models: the first, called the 'Strict Father Model', assigns highest priority to such things as moral strength, respect for authority and self-discipline and corresponds to a Conservative mind-set. The second, defined by Lakoff as the 'Nurturant Parent Model', focuses instead on empathy for others, help for those who need help and compassion and caring. This is typical of a Progressive worldview.

After describing such models, we shall see how their contrasting priorities result, both in American and British contexts, in very different ways to perceive Political Discourse. Subsequently, in the first chapter of the book, I shall adopt an analytical approach to compare and contrast the divergent rhetorical styles adopted by the leading actors of the 2012 Presidential election in the United States, Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. The analysis will introduce and describe many of the most influential figurative techniques commonly used by persuasive orators; techniques such as *tricolon*, *anaphora*, *antithesi*s, *antistrophe*, alliteration, and so on. Such a description will also bring to mind Orwell and his famous essay entitled *Politics and the English Language* (1946), which examined the connection between political orthodoxies and the debasement of language.

At a syntactical level, a considerable part of the analysis will centre on 'person *deixis*', examining the occurrences and correlates of the pronouns 'we' and 'they', commonly used to create oppositional relationships between in-groups and out-groups, often with negativity towards the 'others'. More specifically, the focus will be on the collective lexeme 'we' and its intrinsic capacity to convey a sense of unity and belonging, thus reporting on the distancing effect achieved in political speeches by means of personal pronouns.

Regarding the interpersonal function of discourse, which embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations (Zhuanglin, 1988), we include analyses of Transitivity and Modality, which are useful for showing the social relationship, the scale of formality and the relationship between power and language. Therefore, modal verbs, modal adverbs, notional verbs, tense and all the parts of the speech which express the 'modalization', have been extensively analysed in order to show the

ideological position of the speakers in discourse.

A similar analysis has been conducted with reference to the second context examined, concerning British prime-ministerial rhetoric, to offer an evolutionary analysis of the persuasive speeches delivered by the most effective British communicators of recent years, from Baldwin to Cameron in the case of the Conservative Party, and Bevan to Brown in the case of the Labour Party.

In this case too, through the investigation of verbs, pronouns, conjunctions, metaphors and so on, we shall try to portray a complete picture of how persuasion is accomplished through specific and intentional lexico-grammatical choices. Hence, we shall see how, while the Conservatives managed to develop a more coherent language model across time, corresponding perfectly to the highest values proposed by the referential Strict Father Model; by contrast Labour politicians seem to have failed in developing their own distinctive language.

For this reason, the most recurrent topic within the Labour Oratory of recent decades is about 'Change', as proved by Blair's 'Third Way', an attempt to renew the British Labour Party by depicting it as 'the party of change'. Furthermore, since nowadays British Oratory of both parties seems to be experiencing a certain decadency and decline, at the end of the section I added an analysis of leaders outside the main parties, whose more populist perspectives seem increasingly able to reconnect people and politics.

Thus, the final two sections will deal with descriptions of the rhetorical skills of Nick Clegg, the then leader of the Liberal Democrats, and Nigel Farage, the then leader of the UK Independence Party. Both speakers seem more able, than Gordon Brown or David Cameron for instance, to position themselves and their political campaigns on a street level, through a more participative and populist Rhetoric which attempts to create proximity and affinity with the audience.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS?

Some definitions

As mentioned in the Introduction, the scholars who more than anyone else have contributed to the development of Critical Discourse Analysis are Teun Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, and Norman Fairclough.

First and foremost, according to Van Dijk (1998: 352), Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) can be defined as:

> 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.

Starting from here it can be argued that CDA is not so much a direction, school or specialization but rather an innovative perspective which aims to provide a different mode of theorizing and analysing written and spoken texts in order to reveal the discursive sources of power and bias.

In a similar way, Fairclough (1993: 135) defined CDA as:

> discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Similarly, Wodak (2001) claims that CDA is:

> a perspective which highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies. This is partly the matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. It is fruitful to look at both 'power in discourse' and 'power over discourse' in these dynamic terms (Wodak, 2001 as cited in Desta, 2012: 75).

In summary, it can be argued that CDA aims to observe and make transparent the relations between discourse and power, inspecting the persuasive strategies used by politicians in order to appeal to the audience.

Main tenets of CDA

Regarding the main tenets of CDA, together, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) established eight foundational principles which encapsulate the essence of CDA. With the first principle, they state that "CDA addresses social problems" and that language is a social practice through which the world is represented. That means that CDA does not limit itself to the analysis of language and language use, but it also focuses on the characteristics of social and cultural processes. Thus, CDA adopts a critical approach in order to reveal the exercise of power that is often hidden in discourses, and the main goal pursued is to obtain results which are of practical relevance to cultural, social, political and even economic contexts (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Indeed, the second tenet of CDA argues that "power relations are discursive". That means that language is subtly used to exercise power, domination and prejudice and, therefore, in such a context CDA aims to make explicit and to explain how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

The third principle states that discourse constitutes society and culture and is historical, in the sense that it acquires a meaning only if situated in a specific social, ideological and cultural context. Furthermore, it also means that every instance of language use contributes to reproducing and transforming society and culture. The next principle establishes that "Discourse also does ideological work" – representing and constructing society and reproducing unequal relations of power. Moving forward, another important principle states that "Discourse is historical" – connected to previous, contemporary and subsequent discourses.

That means that a given speech can be understood only with reference to its historical context – that is to say on the social field or domain in which the discursive event takes place.

The next principle is that "relations between text and society are mediated". CDA, thus, aims to make connections between sociocultural processes and structures on the one hand, and the properties of texts on the other. Such a tenet entails that the relationship between text and society is not merely

deterministic; on the contrary it evokes an idea of mediation.

From this point of view, while Fairclough analyses this mediation by looking at 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough, 1992a, 1995a), Wodak and Van Dijk add a socio-cognitive level to their analysis.

Another important principle which deserves a mention argues that CDA is interpretative and explanatory, that is to say that CDA goes beyond textual analysis in order to interpret and explain texts. These interpretations and explanations are dynamic and open and imply a systematic methodology and an investigation of context.

To conclude, the last principle which CDA is founded upon argues that "Discourse is a form of social action". This final tenet contains the essence and the main aim of CDA: that is to uncover opaqueness and power relationships hidden in texts, thus bringing about change in communicative and socio-political practices (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Evolution of CDA

The linguistic and philosophical foundations on which CDA is founded upon can be connected to certain branches of social theory and interactional sociolinguistics.

First of all, on the philosophical level, some concepts of CDA are widely influenced by Marx's critique of the process of exploitation of the working class and also by the Gramscian theory, which argues that power can be exercised not only through repressive coercion but also through the persuasive potential of discourse.

Staying on the philosophical level, Habermas (1981) also contributed to the development of CDA with the notion of 'validity claims', whose main function was to guarantee that the speaker could adduce supporting reasons that would convince the listener to accept the utterance. Indeed, at the heart of Jürgen Habermas' explication of communicative rationality is the contention that all speech acts oriented to understanding raise three different kinds of validity claims simultaneously: claims to truth, truthfulness, and normative rightness.

A further contribution to the rise of CDA as a cognitive approach came from Foucault (1972), who combined a structuralist view with a praxeological interpretation stating that discourse is a supra-individual practice, one that belongs to collectives rather than individuals.

Moving toward the linguistic level, it was in the late 1970s, based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, an internationally influential grammar model which viewed language primarily as a social act, that a group of linguists of the University of East Anglia developed what is known as 'Critical Linguistics', a new multidisciplinary approach to Political Discourse which viewed language as simultaneously performing three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual functions (Sheyholislami, 2001: 1).

Mentioning Fowler (1991: 71) and Fairclough (1995: 25), while the ideational function embodies the experience of the speaker, the interpersonal function refers to the speaker's own evaluation of the phenomena in question and provides a link between the speaker and the listener.

Lastly, the textual function is an enabling function, aiming to connect discourse to co-text and con-text, and which makes speakers able to produce texts that can be understood by listeners. The aim of this innovative approach was thus to explore the relationship among language, ideology and power.

Thus, it can be said that the starting point for a new, interdisciplinary method was Laclau and Mouffe's social constructivism, extensively described in the work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, written in 1985.

According to this ideology the main feature on which every political discourse is founded upon is the so-called 'Anti-essentialism', which claims that objects and practices acquire meaning only as a part of particular discourses. That means that it is impossible to define, for instance, notions like 'democracy', 'Marxism' or 'socialism'

> by conferring to them any cluster of positive or negative properties which remain the same in all possible political situations (Žižek, 1989: 98).

The core of this ideology is that meanings associated to discourses are not completely fixed but should be interpreted, depending on the times and places where the discourse is developed and for the purposes of communication. Consequently, referencing Fairclough (1989), it could be added that text/discourse do not exist in a vacuum. They are enacted within a social context, are determined by the social context and contribute to the way in which the social context continues to exist.

Thus, based on this ideology, Critical Linguistics was developed in order to explicate abuses of power by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details and to consider the social and political contexts in which those texts/discourses circulated.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that as time passed by it became clear that CL was paying little attention to social hierarchy and power; Fairclough himself started claiming that CL did not sufficiently focus on the interpretative practices of the audiences and assumed that the audiences interpreted texts in the same way as analysts. As a result, as concerns with the earlier work of CL were raised, CL was further developed, finally evolving into what has become known as 'Critical Discourse Analysis', as extensively described by Norman Fairclough in his publication *Language and Power* (1989).

In short, the main difference between CL and CDA is that the latter also takes into consideration the role of the audience, broadening the purpose of the analysis beyond the textual level. Moreover, CL seemed to be too focused on grammatical and lexical analysis while paying less attention to the inter-textual one.

Therefore, it was mostly this critique that led to the establishment of CDA, which cannot be considered as a unitary theoretical framework, but as a shared perspective involving a wide range of different approaches and focusing mostly on the 'intertextual analysis', defined by Fairclough (1992: 84) as:

> basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate.

Finally, another feature CDA depends on is the socio-cultural context of the communicative event, which includes three different levels: economic, political and cultural.

Main directions in CDA

Van Dijk and the dimension of Us versus Them

The main directions of CDA are provided by the scholars who more than anyone else have contributed to its emergence and evolution, above all Van Dijk, probably the most quoted practitioner of CDA.

The model developed by Van Dijk is the so-called *socio-cognitive* model, based on the idea that:

> Discourse is not simply an isolated textual or dialogic structure. Rather it is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes (Van Dijk, 1988:2).

In this manner, Van Dijk adds to the textual and structural level of media discourse the "analysis and explanations at the production and 'reception' or comprehension level" (Boyd-Barrett, 1994 as cited in Sheyholislami, 2001: 3). Moreover, according to Van Dijk (1995: 30), discourse analysis is perceived as ideology analysis and this leads to an approach constituted of three parts: social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis.

In short, the element which differentiates Van Dijk's approach from other approaches is the *socio-cognitive* element, defined by him as:

> the system of mental representations and processes of group members (1995: 18).

Crucial, within the mental representations of individuals, influenced by shared ideologies and attitudes, is the mental representation constructed over the 'Us versus Them' dimension, when the speaker aims to represent himself and his own group in positive terms, while describing the 'others' in negative terms.

Wodak and the Discourse-Historical Model

Ruth Wodak focused her analysis on what is known as 'Discourse Sociolinguistics'*,* which she defines as:

> a sociolinguistics which not only is explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context, but also accords both factors equal importance. It is an approach capable of identifying and describing the underlying mechanisms that contribute to those disorders in discourse which are embedded in a particular context - whether they be in the structure and function of the media, or in institutions such as a hospital or a school - and inevitably affect communication (Wodak, 1996: 3).

In short, for Wodak and her colleagues, the most important feature of CDA is always the context, first and foremost the historical context. In this sense, Wodak states that:

discourse is always historical and connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before (1996: 12).

In addition to this, another feature which distinguishes Wodak's approach from Van Dijk's is that of interpretation. Indeed, according to Wodak (1996: 13), the correct interpretation does not exist; on the contrary, readers and listeners, depending on their background knowledge, information and their position, might have different interpretations of the same communicative event.

Fairclough and the 'Order of Discourses'

The model developed by Wodak primarily focused on the historical context and a hermeneutic approach is very close to the model elaborated by Fairclough. What is worth pointing out is that Fairclough, more than anyone else, has built a useful framework for the analysis of discourse as social practice, a framework which proposes a three-dimensional model. Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, in their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002: 66), describe this model, arguing that, for Fairclough, the concept of discourse has a triple dimension. First of all, discourse refers to "language use as social practice"; secondly, discourse refers to the "kind of language used within a specific context and field"; and thirdly, discourse refers to "a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective". In this last sense the term distinguishes any discourse from other discourses on the basis of the social practice which lies behind it. This allows us to distinguish, for instance, a Conservative discourse from a Liberal one, a feminist discourse from a Marxist one, and so on.

To sum up, the three functions proposed by Fairclough are: an identity function, a relational function and an ideational function. Therefore, in every communicative event language has three dimensions (Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002: 79):

- It is a text (speech, writing, visual image, etc.)
- It is a discursive practice
- It is a social practice
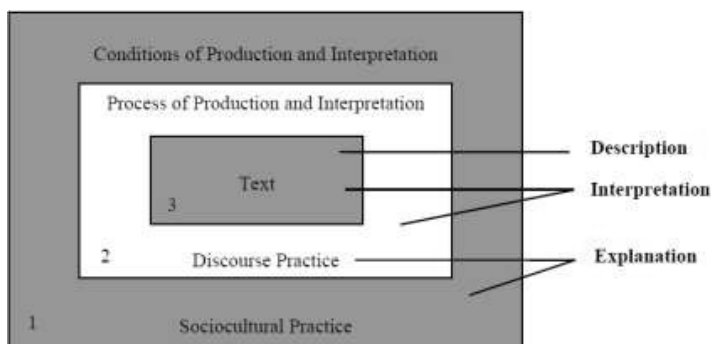
Fig. 1-1 Table from Aghagolzadeh et al., citing Janks (2002: 27)

As shown in the table above, the first dimension is that of the text.

This dimension focuses on the formal features and involves linguistic analysis in terms of

> vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion- organization above the sentence level (Fairclough, 1995b: 57).

The second function is Discourse Practice, a dimension which mediates the relationship between text and social practice and which

> straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other (Fairclough, 1995b: 60).

According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), this second dimension includes, first and foremost, the analysis of the discourses and genres which are articulated in the production and the consumption of the text (the level of discursive practice). Secondly, it implies the analysis of the linguistic structure (the level of the text). This includes considerations about whether the discursive practice reproduces or, instead, restructures the existing order of discourse and about what consequences this has for the broader social practice (the level of social practice). The third and last function, the social practice, involves three different aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values).

Political Discourse

The dimension that I shall analyse throughout my book is the political dimension, in an attempt to stress and make transparent the relationship between language and power.

According to Van Dijk (1998: 360), the role of every political discourse is the enactment, reproduction and legitimization of power and domination.

Similarly, for Wodak (2001), who is even more focused on politics, language on its own is not powerful; "it gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (Andreassen, 2007:25, citing Wodak, 2001). From here, as stated by Andreassen (2007), since the discursive reproduction of dominance is the main object of CDA, the discourse delivered by powerful people, politicians for instance, becomes the most important data.

To mention Wodak again:

> […] this explains why CL [i.e. CDA] often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and opportunity to improve conditions […] (Wodak 2001: 10).

Starting from these assumptions, when introducing Discourse Analysis within a political context it needs to be said that the study of political discourse is very ancient. Its emergence coincides with the birth of the art of discourse known as *Rhetoric*, which could be defined as:

> An art that aims to improve the capability of speakers that attempt to inform, persuade or motivate audiences in specific situations (Corbett, 1990: 1).

Hence, from ancient Greek times to the late 19th century, it was a central part of Western education to move audiences to action, through persuasive appeals - *logos, pathos* and *ethos* - in order to achieve specific objectives.

Yet, in more modern times, it was Orwell who first focused the attention on the political power of language, extensively debated in his famous article *Politics and the English Language* (1946). In this essay, Orwell describes exhaustively the decline of the English language, pointing the finger at politicians, who are considered the main cause of this decline.

Therefore, according to Orwell, politicians tend to adulterate the language in order to manipulate thoughts. He himself suggests that

> political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible (Orwell, 1969: 225).

Indeed, politicians try to hide the negative aspects within their speeches such that the audience may not see the horrifying truth behind them. For this reason, the aim of Discourse Analysis in a political context has always been to reveal what is hidden behind the formal functions of language; this was the intention not only of Orwell but of other political scientists, such as Murray Edleman, for instance, who deals with the symbolic manipulation of reality for the achievement of political goals.

In a more political direction, Pĕcheux argues that the meanings of words became transformed in terms of who used them:

> [...] Here words (and their interaction) in one formation were differently interpreted within another. Conservative or right-wing views of terms like "social benefit" and "defense spending" may differ radically from interpretations available within a socialist or left-wing discourse (Pĕcheux, 1982 as cited in Schriffin et al., 2001: 401).

The idea is always that the core goal of political discourse analysis is to seek out the ways in which language choice is manipulated for specific political effects. For this purpose, in this book I shall try to reveal the hidden meanings of a selection of political discourses, involving all levels of linguistics, from lexis to pragmatics.

At the lexical choice level there are studies of such things as loaded words, technical words, and euphemisms.

At the grammatical level, I shall propose an analysis of several functional systems, including the analyses of 'modality' and 'tense'. There are also studies of pronouns and their distribution relative to political and other studies of more pragmatically oriented objects such as metaphors and other rhetorical devices.

At the interpretative level, I shall propose an explanation of the most common and persuasive propagandist strategies, hidden behind a certain kind of figurative language.

CHAPTER 2

AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC: A CONTRASTIVE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF OBAMA AND ROMNEY'S DEBATING STYLES

Introduction: Aim of the Chapter

Throughout the following section I shall analyse American Rhetoric, focusing my analysis on the differences between Liberal and Conservative discourse.

This will be achieved by analyzing the contrasting rhetoric of Obama and Romney, the stars of the 2012 Presidential election in the United States.

Therefore, such an analysis will scrutinize selected speeches of both candidates, analysed in the light of the Hallidayian Systemic Functional Grammar, from the critical perspective of Norman Fairclough (1995), claiming that "ideologies reside in texts" and that "it is not possible to 'read off' ideologies from texts" and that "texts are open to diverse interpretations."

According to this idea I shall attempt to link social practice and linguistic practice, as well as the possible interrelatedness of textual properties and power relations. The intention is to reveal the covert ideology which is 'hidden' in Obama and Romney's speeches, debates and interviews, thus seeking to disclose how those speeches are constructed so that particular perspectives and concepts can be expressed delicately and covertly.

Liberal versus Conservative Discourse

First and foremost, to be able to decipher Obama and Romney's discourses, we have to describe and highlight in what way Liberal discourse differentiates from Conservative discourse. Such a description is mainly founded upon George Lakoff's metaphor of the 'Nation as Family', a model which simplifies and contrasts the divergent political viewpoints

upon human nature held by the conservative 'right' and liberal 'left' in contemporary Western discourse. Indeed, as George Lakoff (2002: 30) states, Liberals and Conservatives, in their speeches, choose different topics and different words: conservative discourse, for instance, shows a great number of words such as 'virtue', 'discipline', 'strong', 'self-reliance', 'responsibility', 'authority', 'enterprise', 'traditional', 'dependency', and 'elite'; while Liberals are more likely to talk about 'social responsibility', 'free expression', 'human rights', 'equal rights', 'health', 'care', 'human dignity', 'diversity' and 'ecology'. Of course, this great difference of topics arises from different ideologies.

Indeed, in terms of political ideology, the essence of all forms of Liberalism is 'individual liberty' (Gutmann, 2001); furthermore, as underlined by Sowell (2002), liberals tend to have an optimistic view of human nature, thinking that people should be left as free as possible. In contrast, Conservatism evokes a more pessimistic vision of human perfectibility, arguing that people are innately selfish and imperfectible; therefore, if that hold by Liberals could be defined as an 'unconstrained vision' according to Sowell, on the contrary Conservatives hold what he calls a 'constrained vision', in which people need the constraints of authority, institutions and tradition to live peacefully with each other.

In terms of personalities, we could use the analysis conducted by McCrae (1996), who argues that Liberals are inherently more open to experience, change and novelty, whereas Conservatives show a greater preference for things that are familiar, stable and predictable (Jost, Nosek, Gosling, 2008; McCrae, 1996).

In terms of political narrative, which is the field we are most interested in, this contrast merges into different kinds of ideological narratives. As Christian Smith (2003: 64) observes, "we are animals who make stories but also animals who are made by our stories"; thus, on the basis of this idea Smith identifies a 'liberal progressive narrative' and a 'social conservative narrative'. Such a distinction is founded upon Haidt and Joseph's (2004) moral foundations theory, which states that people operate in accordance with certain implicit moral intuitions about five basic things: (a) 'harm-care' (hurting people is wrong; relieving suffering is good), (b) 'fairness-reciprocity' (fairness and justice are good; people have certain rights that need to be upheld in social interactions), (c) 'in-group-loyalty' (people should be loyal to the group, therefore loyalty and patriotism are good; betrayal is bad), and (d) 'authority-respect' (people should respect the social hierarchy).