

## Linguistic and Pragmatic Devices in King Abdullah's Speech: A Political Discourse Analysis

Mohamed Tawfiq Bataineh\*

Department of English Language and Translation, Jerash University, Jordan

Corresponding Author: Mohamed Tawfiq Bataineh, E-mail: mtbataineh@yahoo.co.uk

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: November 16, 2018

Accepted: January 21, 2019

Published: March 31, 2019

Volume: 8 Issue: 2

Advance access: February 2019

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

This article investigates a speech delivered by King Abdullah of Jordan at Oxford University. The study is carried out on the basis of political discourse analysis. The researcher commences by outlining the growth of concept of discourse, and elucidating features of political discourse. At a later stage, the scrutiny deals with the analysis of linguistic and pragmatic devices which are utilised in the speech. This paper has revealed those features that are employed in the discourse; to be precise, these are: the use of first person deixis, metaphor as a rhetoric figure, repetition, term choice, and the pragmatic use of language. Eventually, the text analysis demonstrates that the King's speech can be envisaged as a political discourse whose structure is convincing and influential. The researcher has proved that the speech is rich in linguistic elements which are certainly indispensable in language of politics.

**Key words:** King Abdullah, Political Discourse Analysis, Metaphor, Pragmatics, Peace

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most leading political orators in the Arab world who addresses the West is certainly King Abdullah II of Jordan. This study is an implementation of a political discourse analysis (PDA) of the royal speech delivered at University of Oxford, Britain in the year 2008. The speaker is King Abdullah and his audience includes academics, professors, students, and diplomats mainly British, and internationals. The examination is based on the approach of political discourse analysis. The aim of the King's visit to Oxford was to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

The research problem centres on the question: what linguistic choices and effective devices the King resorted to in his speech in order to convey a persuasive message to his audience. This paper analyses the employment of pragmatic and linguistic devices in political discourse. It aims at outlining relevant techniques utilised in political speeches. This is the subject that I will address in this paper. This article also assumes that describing Jordan's King as a 'peacemaker in the Middle East' is embodied in his discourse, and that his political behaviour is linked to his linguistic behaviour.

In this analysis, the researcher only deals with the written form of the speech. When analysing political discourse, it is tremendously essential that the researcher is mindful of the political situation in which the speech was delivered. Political discourse can be considered of being essentially considerate (Schäffner 1997). Although I was among the audience who heard the speech in person, as far as this study

is concerned, it is out of my concern to analyse the prosodic features which the King used during his speech.

### GROWTH OF NOTION OF DISCOURSE

Since early 80s many definitions of discourse emerged which have one way of describing discourse from a structural sense and how language is used beyond sentence level. Those focus on coherent text, and acts of pragmatics of communication. The main idea centres on how meaning is created on a formal or textual level (H.D. Brown 1980: 189) (Richards J, Platt J. and Webber H. 1985: 83-84) (M. Stubbs 1983: 1) (G. Brown and G. Yule 1983: 1) (G. Cook 1989: 6).

At a later stage in the 90s, a new horizon was given to discourse in a more philosophical sight presenting discourse as a political, historical, social and cultural context of creating meaning. It started with the Foucauldian linguistics (Ball 1990: 3). The most recent turn in discourse studies is based on the poststructuralist analyses of social history and contemporary culture by Michel Foucault (Luke 1995-1996: 88). Critical discourse analysis shares with sociolinguistics the belief that language use should be considered in a social context (Luke 1995-1996: 12). Fairclough (1989: 17) deems discourse as an interaction between speakers and listeners or writers and readers. Languages form social relationships and social practices; and they are linked to power. This stage also witnessed the connection between the notions of ideology to discourse (Ivanic 1998: 17). Language is associated with methods of thinking not only with ways

of speaking and writing. The mode people think reflects the way they speak.

### **POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: REALISING THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS**

To elucidate political discourse analysis, it is imperative to define discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a discipline that studies language in use. It is a multidisciplinary field in which the methods of analysis differ according to the reasons of the examination (Schäffner 2013: 48). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a discipline that regards discourse as a social practice (ibid).

Political discourse analysis is a discipline that is concerned with speeches that take place within political environment and which are manifested by political performers such as 'politicians, political institutions, governments, political media, and political supporters operating in political environments to achieve political goals' (Wilson 2001: 398). One of the major objectives of political discourse analysis is to observe which linguistic and rhetorical strategies are utilised and how the language choices that are made in order to achieve a particular political effect. Political discourse analysis takes a look especially at word choice (connotation, euphemism, and loaded words), utilising of functional systems in different ideologies, use of pronouns and how they are used to describe the responsibility of political actors, and some other discursive elements such as metaphors and speech acts (ibid: 410-411).

Chilton and Schäffner (1997: 206) assert that 'politics cannot be conducted without language'. Both language and politics are intertwined, and politics is all about the appropriate use of language (Chilton 2004: 14). According to Schäffner (1997:1) political discourse is an ambiguous notion. It can be referred to as the written text, spoken language or non-verbal communication which is used by politicians for the purpose of accomplishing their missions (Abu-ain 2014: 15).

Van Dijk (2001) claims that context directs all aspects of discourse production and understanding. Political discourse must not only be deemed with regard to its linguistic structures but also in terms of political contexts. Al-Harashseh (2013: 101) argues that a main feature that distinguishes political speeches is that they are context-specific in terms of their intention and function; and they are directed at a particular group of people to influence their opinions and attitudes. Political discourse is persuasive rather than informative. It is mainly guided to explicate plans, and defend decisions and policies in order to get public support (Mehawesh 2016: 56).

Although the analysis in this study is not concerned in the prosodic features in the King's speech, it is worth to refer to the importance of non-verbal communication in political discourse. Pridham (2005: 92) notes that politicians use prosodic features of their voice such as speed, volume, intonation and stress to deliver their message to the audience. Pridham refers to the importance of considering these features when investigating political discourse. Although there is audio and video recording of the King's speech, this analysis is only focused on the written form of the speech.

### **LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE KING'S POLITICAL SPEECH**

Political discourse analysis is, in many aspects, similar to any other kind of discourse analysis. Analysing the specific properties of political discourse may show the difference between discourse structure and the structure of political discourse (Van Dijk 2003: 14). Resorting to figurative language is a prominent technique employed in political speeches. For instance, the King widely utilises metaphor in his speech to reveal the country's peace policies (See 4.2).

David Bell (1975: 93) states that the focus should be on recognising who talks to whom and what they say. Thus, the linguistic analysis of the King's speech can be summarised by:

who is speaking to whom? where? when? and why?

*Speaker:* King Abdullah II of Jordan.

*Audience:*

- A. Target audience: the British, Westerners, Jordanians and international community in general.
- B. Attendants: intellectuals, academicians, politicians, diplomats, and students.

*Place:* Oxford University.

*Time and political status quo:* the prevailing political atmosphere regionally in the Middle East and internationally.

*Objective:* persuading the British, the Europeans and the world community to support peace efforts, and help to bring peace process in the Middle East on track again.

A discourse analysis of this speech can look into the interaction among the speaker and the hearers and the structure of the lexicon. However in this article, the analysis does not consider the prosodic features like, intonation, stress patterns and pauses. This paper has uncovered the following linguistic features that are employed by the King in his speech. Namely, they are: *the use of first personal deixis (We, I), building peace through building metaphors, repetition, term function, and the pragmatic use of language.*

#### **First Person Deixis: Plural and Singular Forms**

Deixis is a major feature of political discourse. Literature in political language has studied politicians' use of deictics for various purposes, ranging from personal to political, from persuasive to manipulative, all basically reliant on both the context of production and the intentions of the speaker (Akinbiyi 2006:181).

'Deixis belongs within the domain of pragmatics because it directly concerns the relationship between the structure of language and the contexts in which they are used' (Levinson 1983: 55). Deictics are classified into three traditional categories: personal, spatial, and temporal (Akinbiyi 2006: 179). Yule (1996: 9) identifies those three types of deixis: (1) personal, usually indicated in the use of personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we', and 'you'; (2) spatial 'here, there', or (3) temporal 'now, then'. These words or phrases function to position a speaker in relation to what is said and to the audience (Pridham 2005: 91).

According to Trask (1999:68) personal deixis makes distinctions among the speaker, the addressee, and everyone

else (Akinbiyi 2006: 179). Place deictics have less meaning in isolation; it is only when it is known where the speaker is standing that they count and become meaningful (Thomas 1995: 9). Temporal deictic words are concerned with the time of the utterance, which is reflected by the verb tense and adverbs of time e.g., ‘now, then’ (Akinbiyi 2006: 181).

The first personal deictics in the King’s speech are put to good use in their singular and plural forms ‘I, we’. They are used (55) times to convey their traditional singular and plural notions. For example, it is noted that the plural pronoun ‘we’ and its possessive ‘our’ and objective ‘us’ forms are the most frequently occurring deictic words used in the royal speech. There is a high incidence of these deictics at a total of (35) times; ‘we’ is the most frequent (16) times, ‘our’ (13) times and ‘us’ (6) times.

The subjective ‘I’ is used (13) times, its possessive form ‘my’ (6) times, and the least usage is the objective ‘me’ which appears only once, all referring to the King as the guest speaker, and a prominent leader in the Middle East. Table 1 provides distribution of the use of first person pronouns by the King in his speech.

Focusing on the first person pronoun, the King selects six forms of it ‘we, our, us, I, my, me’. His frequent use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ and its possessive and objective forms can be largely influential. His audience are able to identify with this and are expected to be influenced by the King’s attempt to persuade them into accepting his peace proposals.

By using the first person plural pronouns ‘we, our, us’, the King aligns himself with the audience. This creates the sense that speaker and audience are in some way united. Politicians are predominantly keen on using deixis in this manner, as it can propose not only that the speaker and the audience have a shared cause, but also that there is a ‘them’ which exists in opposition to the ‘we’ (Jeffries 2010: 146). In the case of the King’s speech, it is ‘the extremists and peace enemies’ who represent the opposition to the first person plural ‘we’. Also, he feels confident and competent to speak on Arabs’ behalf and express their views. This is illustrated below in the following extract from his speech:

‘Bonds between the Arab, Muslim, and British peoples go back hundreds of years. In the medieval Canterbury Tales, Chaucer tells us the mark of a learned English doctor: to be ‘well versed’ in the work of Al Razi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd’.

As a Hashemite and a descendant of Prophet Muhammad, the King feels suitably qualified to represent the whole Islamic nation. This is explicated below from the King’s speech:

‘Together, we can make a reality of our shared humanity – European, Asian, Arab, Muslim, Christian, Jew, East and West’.

In the King’s speech, his wide use of the pronoun ‘we’ and its possessive and objective variants might have done intentionally to engage the target audience in Britain and the West generally, in some way searching for peace. Also, it is employed to ascertain that all is responsible to find solutions to the problems that threaten the world, not just the Middle East.

### Rhetoric Images: Building Peace Through Creating Metaphors

Beer and De Landtsheer (2004: 7) emphasise the importance of how metaphor interacts with world relations. They accentuate the significance of language, in particular metaphorical language, in international politics. Thus metaphors mediate relation between countries. In (Tourangeau & Sternberg 1982: 204) metaphor is defined as ‘implicit comparisons’.

The King’s speech is typically dense in metaphors. He supports peace through inventing them in his speech. He uses a wide range of metaphors which entail figurative use of the language. Most of them maintain peace efforts in the Middle East. To unpack those metaphors, the researcher has spotted and analysed them. Examples of such metaphors which appear throughout his speech and their explanations are cited as follows:

He uses the metaphor ‘*the threat facing the Middle East today*’. Here, he employs personification; the Middle East which is a geopolitical term is compared to a human being who faces direct threat to one’s life. The metaphor is used as a warning to prevent possible crisis that might affect the international stability.

He makes use of the metaphor ‘*our region is in the firing line*’ to demonstrate his realisation of the dangerous conditions in the Middle East. Here, he compares Middle East, the region where he comes from, to a firing line or a battle place; and that this region shares the qualities of a war zone. The metaphor is representing the meaning of war and its disastrous consequences.

He employs the metaphor ‘*frustration over the Palestinian situation has fuelled radicalism*’. In this metaphor radicalism is described as a fire which expands and gets bigger by frustration caused by the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Frustration in the Middle East is depicted as petroleum material that fuels the devastating fires.

He utilises the metaphor ‘*powerful models are at hand*’. It does not mean that we physically hold the concept of models in our hands. Powerful models are compared to physical objects which can be tangible. This means that those ideal solutions are available and we have easy access to them. Here, he confirms that peace is attainable.

**Table 1.** Use of first person plural and singular pronouns

First Person Plural 35 times			First Person Singular 20 times			Total 55 times
Subjective	Possessive	Objective	Subjective	Possessive	Objective	
We	Our	Us	I	My	Me	
16	13	6	13	6	1	

He applies the metaphor '*it is moderation, not extremism that opens the way to that future*'; in this metaphor moderation is described as a key to peaceful future. He promotes the idea of moderation that enhances opportunity of peace, and considers moderation as a key to better future for peoples of the Middle East.

He makes use of the metaphor '*we meet here today, on a day – June 4<sup>th</sup> – that resonates in the ears of every Arab*'. The word 'resonate' to mean 'to ring' is used metaphorically. This date is compared to a bell which rings and reminds the Arabs of their defeat in 1967 war. He used this metaphor to demonstrate that the Palestinian issue is still of much concern to all Arabs.

Finally, he employs the metaphor '*rejecting the voices of extremism and hatred*' to conceptualise his call for peace. The connotation of this metaphor is fighting extreme ideologies. In this metaphor, he creates juxtaposition between the word 'voices' which refers to 'people' who adopt those thoughts of extremism and hatred.

### Repetition

Research in discourse analysis has revealed that there are diverse forms and functions of repetitions. Holmes and Stubbe (1983: 203) observed the various functions of repetition in spoken discourse. These include increasing the power of the fundamental message and using repetition as a softener to manage and moderate the speech situation. Types of repetitions play a key role in creating coherence and interpersonal interaction.

Political speeches are distinguished by a definite cluster of linguistic features. Repetition, a frequently used rhetorical device in discourse, is a primary feature employed in political addresses. Adopting a pragmatic analysis to the King's speech, it is evident that he has utilised repetition to perform various functions in interactional discourse with the audience. The following example from his speech demonstrates the employment of repetition:

'...good schools.... gender equality.... and jobs, jobs, jobs- some 200 hundred million more...'

Repetition of the word 'jobs' serves the purpose of the speaker, which is to give special significance to creating jobs and decreasing unemployment rates as he believes that unemployment and poverty pave the way to radicalism and extremism. Ultimately, this threatens peace opportunities in the Middle East.

### Term Choice

Collins and Glover (2002: 4) affirm that politicians exercise specific linguistic strategies designed to attain support from citizens. For Collins and Glover, language manipulation can be a flourishing strategy to persuade audience to support politicians. Newmark (1991: 146) asserts that politics is the most general aspect of human activity and it habitually appears in influential affecting terms. Mainly in political speeches, emotive expressions are used to stir up feelings of audience and persuade them to gain support. Political texts are measured by intensity of resorting to powerful terms in

speech because they add more essence to the discourse. An inappropriate choice of word, term, idiom or structure in the environment of political matter can result in main fallacy.

Collins and Glover (2002: 22) assert that the significance of terms does not lie in the words themselves, but rather in the way they are uttered, by whom, and to what effect. In his speech, it is clear that the King selects his political terms to gain support of the international community. He utilises terms in particular ways to develop support from his target audience. For instance, he incorporates such political and intellectual terms in his speech, like: *Global Dialogue, Innovative Thinking, Social Responsibility, Human Understanding, Radicalism, Peaceful Engagement, Moderation, Extremism, and Strategic Space*. Each term has a specialised meaning; and it emphasises Jordan's political attitudes and opinions. Additionally, since his audience are students, the King also makes reference to three Islamic historical figures with links to the university education, namely: Ibn Sina 'Avicenna', Al Razi 'Rhazes', and Ibn Rushed or 'Averroes', and to the renowned medieval English poet Chaucer.

### The Pragmatic Use of Political Language

Pragmatics is recognised as the study of intended meaning. Green (2008: 2) defines pragmatics as 'understanding intentional human action. Thus, it involves the interpretation of acts assumed to be undertaken in order to accomplish some purpose'.

The effect of emotional content on the pragmatic aspect of discourse production is well employed by the King, particularly when he regards the honorary degree as an honouring to all Jordanians. In this dedication he intends to envisage the firm relation between the King and his people, and hold in high esteem to Jordanians. Another example is the usage of the intimate expression 'my friend', speaking to Lord Chris Batten, Oxford Chancellor. The intended message is showing decency and close relationship.

The speaker starts his speech by saying the widely known religious expression in Arabic '*bism ullah ar-rahman ar-rahim*' that literally means 'in the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful'. This is a deliberate usage to send a message about his Arab and Islamic identity to audience. However, the expression '*as-salamu alaykum*' which literally means 'peace be upon you' may pragmatically serve a more appropriate religious expression in Arabic because the main message in the King's speech is to urge and persuade the West and particularly Britain to reinforce peace endeavours.

### CONCLUSION

Thus far, I have been investigating the use of the first person pronouns as deictic words, the pragmatic functions of the figurative use of metaphors, repetition and use of appropriate terminology in political discourse, from the perspective of King Abdullah's speech at Oxford University.

Findings reveal that the King's discourse structures are persuasive and effective. The selection of topics, terms and use of deictic words, the use of rhetoric figures, and the

pragmatic management act as effective devices directed to his audience. Those linguistic and oratorical strategies that the King utilised in his discourse must have created political influence; they have the purpose of having an effect on audience. In his speech, the King's linguistic behaviour proves his values and attitude to the subject.

The intended objectives of the King in his political discourse can be explicit and direct, or implicit and indirect. Those goals should usually be known before the preparation of the speech. In this speech, the King aims at persuading the British, Europeans and the world community to support peace efforts, and helping to bring peace process on track again.

## REFERENCES

- Akinbiyi, A. (2016). *Inclusion and Exclusion in Political Discourse: Deixis in Olusegun Obasanjo's Speeches*. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 5(2), 177-191. Nigeria: Oyo State College of Education.
- Al-Harahsheh, A. (2013). The Translatability of Figures of Speech in Khalid Mashaal's Political Speeches: A Critical Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(3), 100-114.
- Ball & Foucault (1990). *Foucault & Education: Disciplines & Knowledge*. Routledge.
- Beer, F. A. & De Landtsheer, C. (2004). *Metaphorical World Politics*. (Eds.). Michigan: Michigan State University Press.
- Bell, D. (1975). *Power, Influence, and Authority*. New York; London; Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (1980). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Chilton, P & Schäffner, C. (1997). 'Discourse and politics', in Teun A. & Van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction, Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. 2, London: SAGE.
- Collin, J. & Glover, R. (2002). *Collateral Language: A User's Guide to America's New War*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Escribano, M. (2017). *Denotation and Connotation in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump: Discourse Analysis of the 2016 Presidential Debates*. MA Thesis, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Ghaleb, R. & AbuSeileek, A. (2012). The Pragmatic Functions of Repetition in TV Discourse. *Research in Language*, 10(4), 445-460.
- Green, G. M. (2008). *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding*. NY: Routledge.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Holmes, J. & Stubbe, M. (1983). *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Jeffries, L. (2010). *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English*. Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Katan, D. (2004). *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.
- Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Luke, A. (1995-1996). *Text and Discourse in Education: An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis*. Review of Research in Education, 2, 3-48.
- Newmark, P. (1991). *About Translation*. Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Pridham, G. (2005). *Designing Democracy: EU Enlargement and Regime Change in Post-Communist Europe*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richards, P. & Webber (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*. Harlow: Longman.
- Schäffner, C. (1997). 'Strategies of Translating Political Texts', in Trosborg Anna (Eds.), *Text Typology and Translation*. John Benjamins.
- Schäffner, C. (2004). Metaphor and Translation: Some Implications of a Cognitive Approach. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36, 1253-1269.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse Analysis: The Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in Interaction: an Introduction to Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Tourangeau, R. & Sternberg, R. (1982). Understanding and Appreciating Metaphors. *Cognition*, 11, 203-244.
- Trask, R. L. (1999). *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Underhill, J. (2011). *Creating Worldviews: Metaphor, Ideology and Language*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Discourse studies and hermeneutics. *Discourse Studies*, 13, 5.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.