

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DONALD J. TRUMP'S SPEECH ON US PRIME TIME ABOUT CORONAVIRUS IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines delivered speech by the American former President, Donald Trump in 2020 about coronavirus in America. The researcher has taken the data from YouTube that belongs to CNBC Television which was broadcasted live from the White House on March 11, 2020. In this speech, there is a relationship between language, power, and ideology. Therefore Critical Discourse Analysis is conducted to reveal the concepts and hidden ideologies implied in Trump's speech. There are three problems to be solved, namely: What is the social wrong in Donald J Trump's speech, what are the obstacles to addressing the social wrong in Donald J Trump's speech, and how the social order needs the social wrong in Donald J Trump's. This study uses qualitative approach and three-dimension of CDA by Norman Fairclough. The result shows that there are three social wrongs in Donald Trump's speech; Trump's instability in evaluating coronavirus seriousness, Trump's self-positive evaluation to his government and negative evaluation to others, and COVID —hate crimes against Asian and non-originally Americans. The obstacle to social wrongs being tackled are coronavirus outbreak in America and other countries disability to stop the virus, time of election campaign, and Trump misinformation in delivering his speech.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), coronavirus, ideology, xenophobia

1) INTRODUCTION

Donald Trump delivered his speech on US Prime time about coronavirus in America. The emergence of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in December of 2019 has quickly led to global pandemic. It is significant to analyze Donald J Trump's utterances in his speech about coronavirus outbreak in America for two reasons. First, the massive impact of Trump's speech in times of America and other countries disability to stop the threat of coronavirus. The second reason is the time of election campaigns in America, which might affect his speech. According to AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) Hate National report from March 19, 2020 to March 31, 2021 there were 6,603 incident reports to stop AAPI Hate. Of the 6,603 hate incident reports included in the report, 4,193 hate incidents occurred in 2020 and 2,410 of hate incidents occurred in 2021. The most significant target of discrimination is China. The writer hopes that after analyzing Donald J Trump's utterances the understanding about social wrong Donald J. Trump speech on United States prime time about coronavirus in America becomes clearer. This research will discuss further about the social wrong, the obstacles in addressing the social wrong and how the social order needs the social wrong in Donald J. Trump's speech about coronavirus in America.

According to Van Dijk, (2004, p.352) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a kind of discourse analytical studies that generally research the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident studies, critical discourse analysts take explicit positions and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately to resist social inequality. Norman Fairclough tries to create a discourse analysis model that has contributions to social and cultural analysis, so he tries to combine the tradition of textual analysis with the wider context of society. Fairclough takes semiotic process for compiling critical discourse analysis, he divides discourse analysis into 3 dimensions (Fairclough 2010, p.133) namely text that refers to writing and is analyzed linguistically by paying attention to 3 vocabulary, semantics, and sentences.

Discourse is a dimension related to the production and consumption process of text. It focuses on the way the text takes existing discourses and genres. Socio-cultural is a dimension that relates to contexts outside the text, an understanding of the intertextuality begins to enter into this dimension, meaning that there are social events in which the text is formed. Fairclough offers a four-step method of critical discourse analysis. First, Focus upon a social wrong, CDA is a form of critical social science geared to a better understanding of the character and reasserts of social wrongs, the obstacles to addressing them, and possible ways of overcoming those obstacles. Second, identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong. Stage 2 approaches the social wrong in a rather indirect way by asking what it is about the way in which social life is structured and organized that prevents it from being addressed. Third, consider whether the social order needs the social wrong. Stage 3 leads us to consider whether or not the social wrong is inherent to the social order, whether or not it can be addressed within it, in what sense might the social order needs the social wrong. Lastly, Identify possible ways past the obstacles. Stage 4 moves the analysis from negative to positive critique: identifying, with a focus on dialectical relations between discourse and other elements, possibilities within the present social system for overcoming obstacles to addressing the social wrong in question.

2) METHODS

Qualitative research was used in analysing this study. In line with Creswell (2009, p.4) who stated that qualitative research was a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, as in this study is Former President of America, Donald J. Trump's speech about coronavirus. This research did not involve with numeric, which is one of the qualitative research characteristics. The researchers took the data from a video on YouTube that belongs to CNBC Television, entitled —Watch President Donald Trump's Address to the Nation on Coronavirus Pandemic which was broadcasted live from the White House on March 11, 2020, for 9 minutes 45 seconds. The script of the speech was taken from an online article named Nytimes. In this case, the researcher acted as a non-participant observer. Non-participant observation means that the writer did not participate nor did the participation to the setting of the research.

3) RESULTS

There were three social wrongs found in Trump's speech; Trump's inconsistency in evaluating COVID-19 seriousness, Trump's self-positive evaluation to his government and bad evaluation to others, and coronavirus "*hate crimes*" against Asian and non-originally American. There were also some obstacles in addressing the social wrong in Trump's utterances. Trump understood that the virus posed a major threat to the country early in the outbreak, and he chose to lie about it. It killed around 2,000 Americans every day. This condition made Trump increasingly aimed his vitriol at China. However, the pandemic caused Chinese and Asian Americans "*emotional distress*" and led to an uptick in racially motivated violence against these communities across the country. The time of election campaign also influenced Trump to give self-positive evaluation to his government and lied at some points so that he gained support and sympathy from all

Americans. The position of Donald J Trump as president at that time gave him power to rule and persuade the audience. However, his inconsistency in evaluating the virus triggered hate crimes towards Asian, especially China

4) DISCUSSION

The three dimensions of CDA by Fairclough in the speech of Donald J Trump was found on this reasearch. First, the language text analysis has three points such as text structure, grammar, and repetition. The text structure was divided into opening, content, and closing. The opening consists of greetings like “My fellow Americans” and the introduction of coronavirus outbreak in America. The content consisted of Trump’s action to defeat coronavirus, then self-positive evaluation to Trump’s government and bad evaluation to others, after that he mentioned China, Trump acknowledged coronavirus seriousness but he also played down coronavirus seriousness. Closing consisted of the conclusion about the speech and thanking Americans.

Grammar is divided into activepassive sentences and pronouns. The use of active-passive sentences makes it impossible to report the events in a neutral way. Trump used active sentences more than passive sentences. In active sentences, the subject is placed in front. That placement makes the subject become a major theme in the sentence. So that, the subject gets more attention than other phrases of the sentence. In pronoun, Trump used the pronoun “we” more than “I” to establish solidarity and involvement whereas the pronoun “I” is largely associated with individualism. In his speech, Trump’s used the pronoun “we” to show that the coronavirus is the responsibility of all Americans and also to make the audience feel the solidarity and involvement that they all face the same crisis. However, Pronoun “I” also indicates that he was dominant and powerful.

Moreover, it can be noted that Trump focused on the economic domain as strategy to defeat coronavirus by repeated word that is related to economy. There was a wide range of economic repeated words by examining his speech. Overwhelming evidence that the former President Trump’s vision and plans were centred on the notion of economy more than health emergencies such as medical support. After analysing his utterances, it was revealed that Trump tried to distinguish himself and his administration as the safe guard of America.

The second dimension was discourse practice analysis. There were three points in analysing discourse practice analysis such as contextual analysis, social practice analysis, and power relation. In contextual analysis, Donald Trump acknowledged the seriousness of coronavirus, criticized China as the source of the virus, gave self-positive evaluation for his government, and avoid being a politician; however he was again running for president in the 2020 election. In social practice analysis, as the American president at that time, Donald J Trump explained the things he would do to defeat coronavirus and protect all Americans by focusing in economic strategy. In power relation Trump showed his position as the president of America at that time by saying “My fellow American” from the greeting. The third dimension was sociocultural practice analysis. In this situation, Donald Trump explained the current situation in America and tried to protect the American economy. After Trump’s speech was delivered all around America, the case of Asian Hate increased and followed by a rapid reversal of a decade-long decline in Anti-Asian also known as Xenophobia.

3.1 Social Wrong

The researcher focused on three social wrongs: inconsistency in evaluating coronavirus seriousness, self-positive evaluation to government and negative evaluation to others, and coronavirus “hate crime” against Asian and non-originally American also known as Xenophobia. Trump’s speech is critically viewed as containing inconsistency in some points. At the very beginning, he 6 started to assure the threat of the virus, but then he lessens the degree of the seriousness. For its seriousness, it was told a crisis “*the virus spread its horrible infection*”, “*very*

dangerous health crisis”, and *“global pandemic”*. However, such dangerous infection is viewed as just a temporary moment and something normal, many nations have faced such unforeseen viruses’ *“this is just a temporary moment of time”*. It could be argued that Trump’s inconsistency in evaluating coronavirus seriousness leads us to wonder about his inconsistency and fear towards such a serious crisis.

On the other side, Trump also minimizes the vulnerability of coronavirus by resorting to the history of other nations by saying *“From the beginning of time, nations and people have faced unforeseen challenges, including large scale and very dangerous health threats. This is the way it always was and always will be.”* Trump also ranked the United States as the best-prepared country to face a pandemic, he also assured Americans that *“the risk remains very low”* and he had taken *“very good decisions”*. However, by June 2020, the United States stood out for the worst pandemic response of any country. Its cases were high and rising, its population confused and embroiled in citizens’ struggles about the virus.

The second social wrong in Trump’s utterances in his speech was that he gave self-positive evaluation to his government and negative evaluation to other countries. The sentences below show Trump gives self-positive evaluation to his government; (1) *It only matters how you respond, and we are responding with great speed and professionalism.* (2) *Because of the economic policies that we have put into place over the last three years, we have the greatest economy anywhere in the world, by far.* By using over wording of great speed and professionalism, he gave self-positive evaluation on the government preparations and responding to the virus. Trump described the policies he has adopted to develop the American economy as the most successful that made the American economy the greatest in the world. Trump defends his administration approach and trying to satisfy the people that such threat should not worry about so much.

However, it was also found negative-evaluation to other countries on Trump’s speech. The clauses below show Trump’s bad evaluation to others; (1) *The European Union failed to take the same precautions and restrict travel from China and other hotspots. As a result, a large number of new clusters in the United States were seeded by travellers from Europe,* (2) *And taking early intense action, we have seen dramatically fewer cases of the virus in the United States than are now present in Europe,* (3) *At the same time, we are monitoring the situation in China and in South Korea. And, as their situation improves, we will re-evaluate the restrictions and warnings that are currently in place for a possible early opening.* Trump gave negative evaluations as a strategy against the EU. In order to show his successful plan in facing coronavirus, Trump compared the impact of his precaution to the European Union criticizing it as being unable to ban and restrict travelling from China and other affected countries as the American government did. As a result of UE’s disability to take the necessary precautions and restrictions, there have been a large number of American cities affected by the people returning to America. Trump also compared coronavirus cases in America and other countries whose cases were worsened than America to show that America is better in controlling the virus. And take Trump projects his seriousness and responsibility to face such crisis by adopting transparency and keeps the American people updated about his plan.

3.2 Coronavirus “Hate Crimes” Against Asian and Non-originally American

Along with the increased numbers of patients of coronavirus, the fright of this contagious disease, at the same time, stood in rapid growth in the global community. The mounting numbers of public fright about coronavirus, without doubt, was not the sole wave which had been crashed the earthly society. In fact, not only had been verified as a pandemic with a high number of affected people in wide-ranging areas, coronavirus had also endangered several sectors in community’s life outside of the death 8 statistics. Various sectors such as health, economic, social, and security are reportedly experienced a sizeable impact of this outbreak. Trump’s utterances in accused China for the virus: (1). *...the coronavirus outbreak that started in China and is now spreading throughout the world.* (Donald J Trump, 11th March 2020 NBC News) (2) *We*

got hit by the virus that came from China (Donald J Trump, 4th July 2020 NBC News) (3) That name gets further and further away from China, as opposed to calling it the Chinese virus, kung flu virus, Wuhan virus. (Donald J Trump, 24th June 2020 NBC News) (4) We are here to for it was almost exclusively made in foreign lands in particular China where ironically the virus and others came from China's secrecy deceptions and cover-up allowed it to spread all over the world 189 countries and China must be held fully accountable. (Donald J Trump, 4th July 2020 NBC News)

Donald Trump's speech about coronavirus in America has arisen the case of Asian hate in America. According to AAPI (Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders) Hate National report from March 19, 2020 to March 31, 2021 there were 6,603 incident reports to stop AAPI Hate. Of the 6,603 hate incident reports included in the report, 4,193 hate incidents occurred in 2020 and 2,410 of hate incidents occurred in 2021. Figure 4.1 shows the data statistic of types of discrimination. Based on the types of discrimination, there were verbal harassment, shunning, physical assault, civil right violations — e.g., workplace discrimination, refusal of service and being barred from transportation, and online harassment.

3.3 Obstacles to Addressing the Social Wrong

The first obstacle to addressing social wrongs is coronavirus outbreak in America and other countries disability to stop the virus. The coronavirus pandemic had brought the danger of ignoring science and evidence into sharp focus, and one thing is now clear; the former president of the United States understood that the virus posed a major threat to the country early in the outbreak and he chose to be inconsistent in addressing coronavirus seriousness. Another evidence for Trump's inconsistency was recorded in Washington Post journalist, Bob Woodward, on 7th of February, when only 12 people in the United States had tested positive for the coronavirus, Trump described the virus as five times more deadly than the even the most several flus. "This is deadly stuff" said by Trump in the recorded interview, which was released only on September 2020.

However, in public, Trump delivered a very different message. On 10th of February, Trump told his supporters at a rally not to worry, and said that by April, when temperatures warm up, the virus would miraculously go away. "This is like flu" he told a press conference on 26th of February. In a TV interview a week later: It's very mild. In another recorded interview with Woodward on 19th of March, Trump said he had played down the risk from the beginning. "I still like playing it down because I don't want to create a panic", Trump said. After the tapes were released, Trump defended his efforts to keep people calm while simultaneously arguing that he had the risk posed by the virus. But health experts said that explanation does not make sense and the former president was endangering the public by misrepresenting the threat posed by the virus.

Furthermore, Trump's speech was also influenced by the time of election. April 25th, 2019 –August 18th, 2020 was the time of election campaign. Trump tried to gain support and sympathy from All Americans by giving self-positive evaluation to his government and placed himself as the guard of America. However, trump avoid being a politician by saying " *We must put politics aside, stop the partisanship and unify together as one nation and one family*" as an attempt to emphasize his collectively in facing severe crisis such as coronavirus spread. Trump slowed down his campaign activities at a moment when many big public events are being 10 cancelled to stem the spread of the virus. According to BBC News, Trump held his campaign trail less than two weeks after testing positive for coronavirus. He told thousands of supporters, may not wearing mask at a rally in the battle ground state of Florida.

Trump was also being mistaken at some points in his Speech. Trump was expected to gain support by the citizen because of his utterances. However, Trump claimed to stop the virus by suspending all travel from Europe to the United States for the next 30 days. In fact, the travel restrictions would not apply to US citizens, legal permanent residents returning from Europe. He

also claimed to stop the virus by applied some rules, including trade and cargo. However, followed up in his tweet, trade and cargo would not be subject to restrictions. Trump got many criticisms for his administration's response to the coronavirus as his inconsistency and his mistake in addressing his action to defeat the virus. He seemed clueless about what the moment was.

Lastly, US-China tensions flared over coronavirus also influenced Trump's utterances. Tensions were high between America and China on only on the case of coronavirus but also on the number of other issues, including technology and trade. Within a month, the death toll in the US had topped 21,000, and the pandemic was in rapidly progressing, killing around 2,000 Americans every day. This condition makes Trump increasingly targeting his vitriol at China. Trump backed an unsubstantiated theory suggesting that the virus might have originated in a laboratory in Wuhan, and argued that the world health organization had helped China cover up the outbreak in the earliest days of the pandemic. Trump's statements during speeches and his postings on social media during the pandemic caused Chinese and Asian Americans "*emotional distress*" and led to an uptick in racially motivated violence against these communities across the country. 6,603 was the number of anti-Asian hate incidents that were reported across the country between March 19, 2020 and March 31, 2021, according to a report compiled 11 by non-profit coalition Stop AAPI Hate.

3.4 The Place of Social Wrong

The insensitivity to the general assumption that language is merely a means of communication, whereas in fact already contains ideology and becomes an instrument of power. Language is easily used to dominate, oppress or discriminate. As the president at that time, Trump had power to give information and persuade the audience. Trump's inconsistency in evaluating coronavirus and misleading in addressing his speech caused massive reactions among Americans, one of them is Xenophobia. The fact that Trump addresses China for the virus is undeniable. However, Trump denied being racist by saying "*It's not racist at all. No, not at all. It comes from China, that's why. It comes from China. I want to be accurate*" Trump told reporters at the White House coronavirus task force's daily news briefing. As the former president of America, Trump had power to stop the thread of Asian Hate in America. Instead of stopping Asian Hate, Trump triggered his citizen to hate Asian especially China through his speech. Trump focused in the economic sector rather than health care system in order to save American's economy due to coronavirus spread. However, three months after this speech released Trump's administration failed public health response is mirrored by its failure to respond the economic crisis. 37.6 million Americans filing for unemployment insurance since the beginning of March and the official unemployment rate reaching 14.7% in April. This case was up dramatically from 3.5% in February comparing to South Korea, recorded 3.8% in April only slightly above the 3.3% recorded in February.

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