Othering and Polarization. Biden vs. Trump

Arshya Keyvanfar[1, 2], Elham Shayegh[3]

[1]Assistant Professor of TEFL, Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch.
[2]Ph.D. Candidate of Anthropology, University of Tehran.
[3]Master of English Translation, Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch. Iran

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to draw your attention to an ever-growing issue, "Othering", in most societies, especially the United States of America, and the crucial role of political leaders on people in their society, and as a result, in the global village. Considering the aim of this research, a most heard political discourse, the first presidential debate of the United States of America in 2020, between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, was analyzed based on Faircloughian critical discourse analysis in terms of othering. The three-dimensions of Faircough's model, description, interpretation, and explanation, were applied on the debate to compare and contrast the two representatives of the two main political parties of the United States of America. The results of the research are described or, if possible, are shown in terms of percentages in tables and a figure. To conclude, based on the findings in this corpus comparative study Joe Biden had a better performance in terms of othering in comparison with Donald Trump in all dimensions of this study, at the first presidential debate in 2020.

KEYWORDS: Critical discourse analysis, Fairclough's CDA mode, presidential debate.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics and all concepts of morality have always been the primary concern of different scholars in different fields, mainly because ethical concepts affect all aspects of human life. During the time, different scholars with various viewpoints have been defining ethics in various ways throughout different sights. Among reputed philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995) has a specific philosophical point of view on ethics, the definition of "self" and "other," and the mutual relation of these two. In his view, we are ethically responsible for responding to the "other" even before responding to the "I." In this sense, othering or polarization stands on the dark side of morality; the tendency to ignore "other" or exaggerate the mistakes of "other", and precisely the opposite, rationalize whatever "I" do. Nevertheless, moral beliefs and ethical discourses play a crucial role in group polarization. Generally, and especially recently, social groups tend to divide into more intemperate factions, and each of them tries to blame other groups for acting and behaving in a wrong way (Isenberg, 1986). On the other hand, othering has many damaging social side effects, such as increasing the risk of war, racial prejudice, genocide, and other violent behavior, along with making more self-asserting prejudiced decisions in a competitive manner and less trustworthy and rational than individual decisions (Newman, 2002 & Sunstein, 2002). Jesse Shapiro, a professor of political economy at Brown University, and Levi Boxell and Matthew Gentzkow (2017), professors of Stanford University, released their research that claimed, in the last 40 years, political polarization among Americans has been overgrowing rapidly compared with other countries. Shapiro's research shows that when individuals in different political parties stop respecting each other, it's hard to develop political compromises, and it is harder to have an excellent public policy. His work shows that an individual's political identity directly affects their behavior and interests. Opinion polarization is directly influenced by the mindset, behavior, and discourses of political leaders. This trend is more seen among Republicans than Democrats (Bacon, 2018). Significantly, the ideological position of speakers is evident through the discourse they create and affects the ideological position of the receivers (Beard, 2000). Indeed, the central part of political discourse studies is about the text and discourse of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament, or political parties, at the local, national, and international levels. "Culture war" by political actors is getting more substantial than "physical war." Consequently, their political thoughts, political discourses, political actions, and political mindset are completely practical to public belief. It shows the significance of maintaining ethical concepts by politicians. The purpose of a critical analysis of political discourse is to show how a political group and its leaders behave with others through the power of their language and how they lead their followers. (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). Fairclough etates (1989) that CDA methodically aims to explore how these nontransparent relationships are factors in maintaining power and hegemony. It draws attention to power inequalities, social injustices, and other imbalances in hopes of encouraging people to correct their actions.

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The purpose of the present study was to explore to what extent othering is seen in politicians' speeches in the United States. Due to the fact that critical discourse analysis is a qualitative method, and such strategies help us better understand political communication, the most heard discourse in the world- the first debate of the current president of America, Joe Biden, and the former president, Donald Trump, before the 2020 presidential election is selected to be compared and contrasted as an appropriate example of political discourse, based on the Faircloughian CDA model. Fairclough's CDA model is the first theoretical framework by which some guidelines were provided for future CDA research; that's why this model is considered the core of the field of critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's model can analyze texts and discourses through a three-dimensional framework, Description, Interpretation, and Explanation. (Fairclough, 1989, p.26-27)

Description: includes analysis formal properties: vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure.

Interpretation: includes the relationship between the text and interaction. It means the text is considered as the product of the process of producing a text and at the same time, is a resource in the procedure of interpretation. The interpretation analysis goes through the cognitive process of the interactions.

Explanation: includes the relationship between interaction and social context on the one hand, and the social effects of the process of production and interpretation, on the other.

In each of these three stages, the scholar deals with the text analysis, but the nature of the stages is different. Eventually, in the explanation, the relationship between social events and social structures is the subject of investigation.

2. METHOD

The current research aimed to compare and contrast the polarized mind and behavior of the current president of the United States of America, Joe Biden, vs. the former president ,Donald Trump, based on the Faircloughian CDA model, to figure out to what extent othering is observed in their speeches. As the present study was a descriptive, qualitative, and comparative research based on the selected corpus, the type of the design of the study could be considered as corpus-comparative. The paper applied the three-dimensional critical discourse analysis of Fairclough's model to all parts of Trump and Biden's speech in the first presidential debate 2020, with signs of othering based on the Faircloughian model in the description, interpretation, and explanation dimensions. If possible, the results obtained from the analysis were presented in terms of percentages and shown in the form of Tables and Figures to provide a clear understanding of the results.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Description Dimension: Discourse as a Text in the First Presidential Debate in Terms of Othering

According to the Faircloughian model, the first dimension to investigate was the formal properties of the text, namely vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. Fairclough (1989, pp.110-12) offers a list of ten questions with some sub-questions to analyze a text. Here, the researcher tried to find out to what extent the two candidates used items that expressed othering in the first US presidential 2020 debate.

According to the research, in the vocabulary part of the first debate, in terms of experimental values of ideologically contested words, some words were used by the two candidates -especially by Biden- to moderate othering, such as People, Folks, Americans, Country, and United States to show that they care about all Americans, and did not consider them with whatever political tendencies, as others. Furthermore, some other words such as: Democrats, Democratic Party, Republicans, and Your Part were used by them - especially by Trump- containing the exact meaning of othering towards their opponent.

Table 3.1. Ideologically contested words

Items	Trump	Biden
To moderate othering	44.3%	**55.6%**
To show othering	**69.5%**	30.4%

Another sub-question of experimental values is about cohesion which deals with linking different parts or sentences of the text or speech. Both candidates used rewording, over wording, synonyms, antonyms, and hyponymy several times in their speech that contains the meaning of othering. Thus, Trump has obviously a higher percentage of using them to transfer the concept of othering.

Table 3.2. Ideologically meaning related words

Items (Othering)	Trump	Biden
Rewording	**63.4%**	36.6%
Synonyms	50.0%	50.0%
Antonyms	**52.6%**	47.3%
Hyponymy	**75.0%**	25.0%

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In terms of relational values of vocabs, first no euphemistic expression with the meaning of othering was found because euphemisms are usually used to make a speech more polite and beautiful, still because of the nature of the debate, especially this debate, no euphemism with the meaning of othering was uttered.

Formal and informal sentences are other signs of relational values, both of them mostly spoke informally, and it is entirely intentional to show they are not separated from the others. They consider themselves as a part of people. But, soon, their speech turned unfriendly due to the unfriendly environment of the debate, which was another sign of othering in the vocabulary part of the Faircloughian CDA model.

In the grammatical part of the first debate, for experimental values of grammatical features, the combination of all SVO, SV, and SVC sentences was used by both candidates. On the other hand, Generally, in debates, candidates need to elaborate their future plans to impress people to vote for them; therefore all kinds of functional processes, which are experimental values such as Mental, Verbal, Existential, and Relational values, were used, but the Material process predominated, which shows this debate deals more with actions than participants' thoughts and feelings. Considering the fact that predominated functional process -the Material Process- used to blame the other one, and can be counted as another sign of othering. Most sentences were active to show the speaker's clear-cut idea and have more impression on their audience and opponent, but some passive sentences were used by the two candidates. Moreover, they both had utterly negative impressions of their opponent's behavior and actions, and a positive impression of activities of their Party, or themselves, as a sign of othering in grammatical experimental value of this model.

In terms of relational values of grammatical features, the first presidential debate includes more declarative sentences than interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. Although interrogative and imperative sentences were expressed by each candidate to condemn their opponent.

Modality has two types: relational modality shows the level of authority of the speakers, and expressive modality deals with the amount of truthful speech of them. Modals indicate the relationship between the ability and the degree of probability, and they show the degree of advice, suggestion, possibility, obligation, necessity, capability, and probability. Among the modals were used in the sentences with the meaning of othering, 'will' were used the most by Trump, and 'would' were used the most by Biden, which shows the high probability of occurrence in their point of view.

Table 3.3 Modality (Expressive and Relational)

Modals	Trump	Biden
Can	23	23
Could	9	12
Will	**43**	33
Would	18	**49**
Should	17	8
Have to	11	12
Ought to	1	1

Pronouns used in their speech sometimes had general meanings and sometimes had the sence of othering. Generally, 1101 pronouns were used by both of them. Among pronouns that conveyed the meaning of othering, 69.1% were uttered by Trump, and 30.8% were employed by Biden.
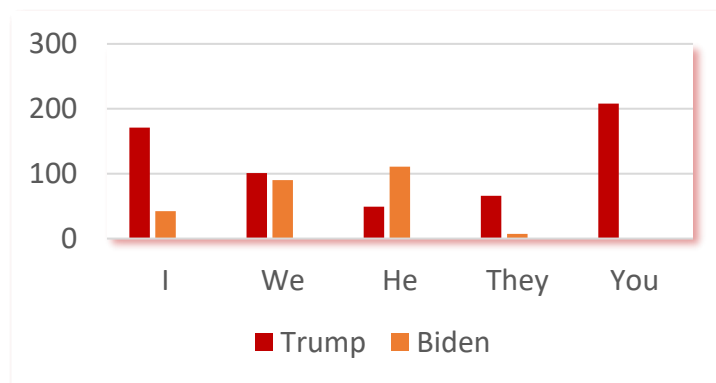

Figure 3.1 pronouns (Relational values)

In addition to all kinds of logical connectors, such as intertextuality, presupposition, intentionality, situational, and politeness, some connectors, such as and, or, well, indeed were used several times.

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In the text structure part of Fairclough's CDA model, Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) expressed that political discourses, like other texts, are multi-functional, and they are not categorized in one text structure categorization, but political debates have different parts, and the part that is the persuasive is categorized in Problem- Solution text structure, and the part which is critical is categorized in Cause- Effect text structure. And finally, in the interactional conventions, the moderator had to control the turn of speech, like in all debates. However, the turn of speech was not controllable because of several interruptions especially by Trump.

3.2 Interpretation: Discourse as a Discursive Practice in the First Presidential Debate in Terms of Othering

In the second dimension of the Faircloughian CDA model, the main focus is on the audience's perception, and what they perceive from the discourse, what its effect on society is. At this level, the features such as actions, interactions, social relations, beliefs, attitudes, the material world, desires, power relations, time and space, social events, and social structures are undertaken. One of the assumptions of CDA is the effects of beliefs and perspectives of a creator of a text or speech on its audience, and a text can have a direct relationship with the social structures. The purpose behind this debate was to convince people to vote for them and ensure them a better future if they were elected. The text consumption process relates to how people comprehend it. The text encompassed all Americans, Politicians, and other countries. USA Today revealed that American presidential debates have always had a significant effect on people's decisions, especially for those who have been in a dilemma for choosing their president, but this time it looks different. New York Times wrote 48 million and 700 hundred Americans had voted before the debates, which means that these debates in 2020 had the most minor effect on people's decisions. Most of the voters had made up their minds before the debates, and the last debate had 63 million audiences which had 10 million reductions, and it shows the most negligible effects of the debates in 2020. Also, the event had gotten a considerable reaction from world audiences and massive criticism from different Media all around the world. The UK called the debate an ill-tempered dispute between the two furious candidates rather than a meaningful debate. The Guardian said it was a national humiliation. French newspaper described the debates as "Chaotic, childish, grueling." German newspaper Der Spiegel's headlined "A TV duel like a car accident." Italian newspaper wrote "Chaotic, rowdy, and based on mutual contempt." In Russia, one broadcaster reported "one and a half-hour exchange of insults." Another one wrote, "There was no constructive dialogue." Chinese Global Times reported, "the most chaotic presidential debate ever." BBC Persia News wrote, "angry and tense duel." In Iran, Fars titled "Electoral crisis," In the distribution process, these debates were received as a sign of hatred, anger, and a fight to win at any cost. The debates were known as perfect samples of the politically polarized situations in the United States.

3.3 Explanation: Discourse as a Social Practice in the First Presidential Debate in Terms of Othering

The discourse as social practice clears the speaker's individuality, social class, political and cultural identity. In this debate, both of the nominees showed their highly polarized mindset, but the way they used formal or informal style reveals their cultural manner and shows that they tried to have a friendly manner towards others. By using some sentences which had the meaning of unity and collaboration, Biden showed more willingness to bring harmony to society than Trump. Sentences like he would be a president of all Americans, and he would look into red or blue states in one eye were good claims for this manner. Although, Trump tried to show that he cares about people and understands them deeply, Biden's speech revealed more sympathy with Americans, mainly with middle-class people, especially the time he spoke about his background. Both candidates claimed that they gave equal rights to African-Americans and black people to demonstrate their tendency to equality in society. However, their choice of vocab, aggression, interruption, accusation, more importantly, having no similar point of view even on one topic indicates their highly polarized political politicians.

In the end, it can be concluded that in terms of othering, Biden had a better performance in the first presidential debate of the United States of America in 2020.

4. CONCLUSION

In recent years, polarization and othering have been an ever-growing issue in most countries all around the globe, and if this trend continues, the world will face more and more side effects like genocides, prejudices, and wars. Considering the direct impact of politicians' mindset on their discourse and behavior, and consequently on people's attitude locally to globally, the current study aimed to draw your attention to the discursive structures of the most-heard presidential debate –the first presidential debate of the United States of America 2020- through Fairclough's 3D model. This paper was an investigation to find out, compare and contrast the signs of othering in the political discourse of the American politicians, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, who were representatives of the main political parties in the US –Republicans and Democrats. A Fariclough's three-dimensional model has been investigated on this discourse. Description dimension was done by applying the list of ten questions of this model, the Interpretation and Explanation dimensions were analyzed based on the facts during the debate and its reflection in the United States and other countries. To conclude, based on this qualitative research, several signs of othering have been detected in the speech of both nominees, but Joe Biden as a representative of the Blue Party, had a better performance rather than Donald Trump in terms of othering.

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