

# A Walk in the Park: Using CDA and PDA to recognize forms of ideology and power

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**Abstract:** *This paper revisits the key concepts and analytical tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Political Discourse Analysis (PDA). CDA and PDA have developed from vast research domains and unite a great number of analysts with individual goals, approaches and perspectives, thus generating a variety of different interpretations and varying definitions for specific constructs. An attempt is made to clarify CDA and PDA as analytical tools, suggesting ways to recognize forms of ideology and power in texts in relation to the communication of political leaders and political candidates.*

## 1. Introduction

It may be true that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder but there are, however, certain rules and norms we usually reference when it comes to establishing what is esthetically appealing to us or what vexes our sensitivity. Language is by no means different. Considering the vast importance of the power wielded by political leaders, it stands to reason that a better understand of what makes certain speakers stand out from the rest of the crowd and what features appeal to the masses in a leader, may be of interest. This paper discusses how to distinguish forms of ideology and power in texts when political leaders take the floor.

The roots of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) lie in a series of disciplines that have emerged between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s in the field of humanities and social sciences, such as Rhetoric, Text linguistics, Anthropology, Philosophy, Socio-Psychology, Cognitive Science, Literary Studies, Sociolinguistics, Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics. There are as many approaches as there are disciplines that interact with and complement CDA. Some of the issues that have been investigated through CDA include: gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses, political discourses, organizational discourses or dimensions of identity research. Indeed, the unifying principle, or shared perspective, of CDA “relates to the concepts of ‘critic(al)’, ‘ideology’ and ‘power’” (Wodak 2009: 34).

We first flesh out CDA (§2) and discuss the origins of the CDA paradigm (§3). We then concentrate on the notions of power and discourse (§4) and introduce Political Discourse Analysis (§5).

A rather lengthy part of this paper is dedicated to the construct of ideology (§6), where we first examine the influence of ideology on discourse and society, then cover a range of rhetorical strategies linked to ideology.

## 2. What is CDA?

If we dissect the name of the paradigm we come up with two parts, a root and a prefix. The root Discourse Analysis or Discourse Studies (DS) as it is also referred to, is a discipline that researches language, namely linguistic acts – texts and discourses.

CDA distinguishes itself from other disciplines because it doesn't choose words or single sentences as basic units of text, but rather much larger portions or even the entire text. This macro-level of analysis is paired with a vision of ‘context’, understood not simply as a ‘setting’ in space/time or a ‘situational framework’, but rather as something that requires an approach from various angles, calling for inter-disciplinarity.

Text and discourse are core concepts, but they are used with different meanings, depending on the researcher and their disciplinary background. In CDA discourses are believed to be relatively stable uses of language serving the organization and structuring of social life, but there are some scholars that depart from this general vision. While in the English speaking world discourse and text are often used interchangeably and refer to both written and oral texts, the Central European and German academia follows the tradition in text linguistics and rhetoric, hence opting for a distinction between the strictly written ‘text’ and the purely oral ‘discourse’. For other researchers, such as Lemke (1995, 2012), the two words describe, much like they do for Foucault (Rabinow 1984), different levels of abstractness: a ‘text’ is the realization of a discourse, an abstract form of knowledge. Finally, the discourse-historical approach elaborates and portrays discourse as structured forms of knowledge and the memory of social practices, whereas ‘text’ refers to existing oral utterances or written documents.

Given the multiple possible interpretations I attempt to abridge the many possible meanings by simply using the term ‘text’ for any utterance or a written composition with the purpose to

communicate, hence address a topic and provide a vision of it to an audience while following an agenda and specific interest. I opt for this use based on its link to power, which is prominent in the CDA paradigm, since it proposes a view of discourse (or simply language) as a form of social practice, meaning that it is the *trait d'union* between the personal micro-cosmos and the institutional macro-cosmos. It is influenced by the context, e.g. determined by institutions, but at the same time it influences context, thus creating mutually reflexive dynamics.

For CDA scholars and analysts the term (or prefix) 'critical' describes the attitude of awareness when analyzing a text, it precludes and anticipates dealing with a topic or issue that is not merely described, but rather explained, so that it becomes demystified and hence accessible to others. As mentioned above, CDA is deeply interested in power abuse and dominance; indeed, research is primarily focused on the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimized and resisted through language and discourse. Therefore 'critical' is not to be understood in its more common meaning, i.e. criticizing, or being negative. The notion of 'critic' stems from the Frankfurt School, for example, but also from other philosophical/epistemological backgrounds, and signifies not taking anything for granted, opening to potentially alternative readings (justifiable through cues in the texts), self-reflection of the research process, making ideological positions manifested in the respective text transparent, to name a few of its meanings (Wodak and Chilton 2005). As an analytical practice, CDA is the study of an author's (e.g. speaker, writer, etc.) attitude in communication.

Among the many competing definitions, what emerges is that CDA surely does not represent a single school but rather a paradigm. It proves to have a dual nature, since it is not only a method or methodology but it also establishes theories about text production and text reception.

### 3. Origins of the CDA Paradigm

The origins of the CDA network stretch back to the launch of Teun van Dijk's journal *Discourse and Society* in 1990, and the series of meetings that have continued in time, starting in 1991 in Amsterdam, again initiated by Teun van Dijk and attended by researchers like Ruth Wodak, Theo van Leeuwen, Norman Fairclough, Luisa Rojo and later by many more. Since then, some scholars, like Kress and Scollon, have left the group, moving into different fields of research and adopting new theoretical frameworks, but new members have also joined, such as like Jay Lemke and Phil Graham, thus adding further depth to the movement (Wodak 2009: 3).

CDA inherits a lot from the original Frankfurt School and later from Habermas, given that the latter succeeded in combining the classical critical theory of the Frankfurt School, based on the Marxist vision of Historical materialism, with American Pragmatism, Piaget's and Kohlberg's model of Cognitive Development as well as Freud's Psychoanalysis. The paradigm has then evolved into its present focus on language and discourse through the UK based Critical Linguistics movement.

There are many platforms for academic work and exchange, such as the journals *Critical Discourse Studies*, *The Journal of Language and Politics* and *Discourse and Communication and Visual Semiotics*. Further, there are several e-journals and books published on critical research. Two prominent sources are CADAAD (Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines), an interdisciplinary community of researchers who are critically involved with discourse and the journal *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Culture and Society* edited by Ruth Wodak, Greg Myers and Johann Unger.

### 4. Power and Discourse

For a more acute perception of the concept of power, it is initially important to understand what power is and how it originates. In the CDA paradigm, power is described as control, control over social practice, control over discourse, over what can be said and how, control over access to information and ultimately control, or at least influence, over what people in a society think. The objective is not to merely look for particular wording or phrasing in a text, since language, in the form of verbal or written interaction and communication, is only what is called the micro-level. CDA, on the other hand, also looks at the powers-that-be and institutions that exercise influence and dominance, all part of the macro-level. CDA aims to analyze both phenomena and bridge the gap between them, by finding the linking element but, as we have mentioned, there are potentially different approaches that can be used.

In order to have some control over knowledge, organizations "depend on communities of practice because of the expert knowledge fostered in these communities which exclude all those who are not part of these communities" (Wodak 2009: 14). This specific knowledge, or "power knowledge" (Gordon 2000) advances the interdependence between power and knowledge, power being based on knowledge and power also molding knowledge, according to particular strategies or interests (see Rabinow 1984 and Gordon 2000). And, we must not forget, that people who are part of an organization or group "both create and sustain their own particular reality. [...] The essence of the position is that people

respond only to things that have meaning for them” (Gioia, 1986: 67).

Keeping this in mind, it should be no surprise that “container metaphors” (Wodak 2009: 64) are often used to speak to people that define themselves as members of groups or organizations. Example of container metaphors are the melting pot, the heart of Europe, i.e. metaphors used to represent nation-states.

Taking this notion one step forward we can see how a simple approach for scouting out forms of ideology in discourse is to center our analysis on dichotomies, as suggested by Van Dijk (2015):

- The group–member approach relies on the fact that any social group and organization, representing the macro-level, is always composed of members, i.e. language users who engage in discourse on a micro-level, but – since they are members of social groups, organizations, or institutions – their interaction between the groups is carried out by or through their members;
- The actions–process approach also looks at social acts of individual actors as constituent parts of group actions and social processes, such as legislation, news making, or the reproduction of racism;
- The context–social approach points out how a situation of discursive interaction can be both part of a local and global level and subject to constraints on discourse imposed by both levels;
- The personal and social cognition approach stresses that language users are at the same time individuals and social actors, having therefore both their own personal memories, experiences and opinions and at the same time what is called social cognition, which amounts to those ideas that are shared with members of their group or culture as a whole.

Differently from the dichotomies that link macro- and micro-structures through solely analytical relations, the last one listed above establishes a socio-cognitive connection between society and discourse because it identifies language as social practice, influenced by the most intimately personal and the most widely shared elements of society.

A fundamental premise to bear in mind in relation to power is that there are different types of power based on what is used to wield power, which can range from brute force to influence and status. In many cases dominance is achieved through knowledge and access to information which has become a vital resource in our globalized world.

What all forms of power share is that the person or group that exercises power already has a power base, hence a prominent social position enforced by affluence or influence and usually accompanied by hegemony, which entails some form of consensus ranging from basic social habits to the enactment of laws that solidify dominance.

It is important to mention here that power is not always imposed against the will of those subject to it; people may actually accept or even welcome dominance and, depending on their means, cultural background and access to information, they may even perceive it as natural.

## 5. Political Discourse Analysis (PDA)

Rather than two, distinct modes of analysis, I view CDA and PDA as complementary: PDA looks at political interactions and is simply a more specific application of CDA. PDA retains the critical element because it is not meant to describe but to explain what is happening.

In order to better understand political discourse analysis, it is crucial to note that the construct of politics extends to much more than the ruling, legislating and implementing activity exercised by our elected or appointed representatives. There are multiple definitions of what politics is and how to determine whether a discourse is political or not.

On one end of the spectrum there are more restrictive visions that associate political discourse with only what is uttered by politicians while in their official capacity; on the other end we find those holistic visions that consider every aspect of human life to be a potential field of political discourse (Van Dijk: 1997).

As Van Dijk (*ibid.*) argues, it is difficult to distinguish political discourse through specific linguistic traits, the same way it is not easy to clearly distinguish what the various subgenres of political discourse (e.g. parliamentary assembly, political debate, official announcement, protest) entail. Of course political jargon can be found in many discourse acts, and there are certain ways of addressing people or topics that are perceived as decorum, but that are mostly linked to the political process itself.

What is missing though, are strategies and structures that are exclusive to political discourse and would therefore allow for it to be clearly identified. Further, there are forms of discourse that occur in a different contextual framework and are often not governed by the same solemn and careful tone that is usually a standard in politics.

Formal language, for instance, can be used in court to respect the standard tone and register, whereas it is frequently used in political debates to gain legitimacy or to create distance with respect to

another candidate. That said, it is also true that politics, like any other field of human interaction, has certain ground rules and therefore also stylistic constraints. Nonetheless, there are ways to circumvent these constraints. This leaves us with no simple stylistic feature or tactic that can solely be ascribed to political discourse, thus creating a mixed genre and much fuzziness.

Politicians, in all cases, attempt to form coalitions, lobbies and other bases of support. A politician creates support for their ideology which, in turn, requires him or her “to build factions and lines of allegiance and opposition; work which is realized through discursive means. This is why he constructs a negative ‘other’ [...] By constructing an ‘other’ through discursive strategies of positive self- and negative other-presentation, by sharing knowledge with selected partners and referring to presupposed and implied shared values, by devising his statements in a clear rhetorical fashion, by providing a plausible argumentative chain” (Wodak 2009: 198).

Therefore, something quite prominent in political discourse is the extent to which shared information becomes a rhetorical means to create a biased description of a situation or another person (as mentioned in §4), or ‘other’ (Van Dijk 1997). Ordinarily this is associated with the dichotic pronouns WE and THEY (further discussed in §6.2). Where positive information is linked to one’s own party, specific information and anecdotal evidence is given, whereas the admission of positive features in opposing parties is usually vague with little detail, often only introduced as some sort of disclaimer that legitimizes criticism. Criticism, on the other hand, would entail the exact opposite, little detail when concerning one’s own party (or entourage of supporters), carefully portraying flaws and mistakes as exceptions, whereas for the opposing party criticism is usually aimed at generalizing their failures and flaws, in order to undermine their credibility.

It is also possible to define political discourse through context, meaning that if a speech is pronounced or read on a specific occasion, for instance an official meeting or a debate, it automatically becomes part of the political discourse linked to that context. This is true especially in democratic nations where argumentation is the main source of legitimacy and where accusations, counter-accusations, denial, interruption, imperatives, rhetorical and straightforward questions – as well as the solicitation of applause – have led to what Fairclough and Mauranen (1997) call the ‘conversationalisation’ of political discourse.

A further point of reflection could be topics and participants in political dialogue. Van Dijk (1997) suggests that as a particular form of DCA, PDA needs to take into account basic communicative theories, such as the idea that communication always

involves a recipient, or text receiver, which can be generally identified with the broad public or on some rare occasions with other politicians. This seems to be reason enough to take the audience into account when talking about political discourse, since the expectations of an audience and the shared ideals that are at the base of the political ideology as presented by a candidate are sure to influence the content and form of the candidate’s discourse.

In terms of topics covered under the political umbrella, there is a wide range that cover all areas of society, which is probably the reason why it is hard to discern political discourse from, for example, educational discourse, economic discourse or environmental discourse. Typically, when contextualized as political discourse, these topics gain more relevance, probably because between a private opinion and a political view there may be a shift, mainly in terms of the speaker’s goals. It is also true that most topics, when used in politics, often become polarized or are used for passing judgment on an opponent. This is part of the dichotomy between a positive self-representation and a negative other representation. A topic is not merely introduced as a factual point of a debate, it is introduced as a way of defining one’s position in contrast to an opponent’s position on the topic, and thus a shift away from a purely theoretical exchange of opinions takes place, towards a biased perspective.

If we consider structure and syntax, political discourse is certainly prone to use particular word order, active and passive clauses, and so on. One would suppose that, falling mostly into the category of representational or appellative texts, political discourse uses linear structures to help convey messages, but often complex clausal structures are used to disguise and deceive. This is most dominantly the case when a speech or text is embedded within the framework of an official or specific subgenre of political discourse, such as parliamentary debates or campaign slogans.

Another aspect that PDA stresses is that political discourse is an abstract term, whereas the realization of political discourse consists of political acts, which are often equal to discursive acts, meaning that while it is possible to convey ideas and positions through action, it is mostly common for those who take part in the political process to express themselves through language. Given that every single act occurs at a specific point in time, this means that there is a chronological sequence and the possibility of analyzing political discourse in terms of chronological development.

Indeed, something that is fairly typical for political discourse is the use of time in a conceptual metaphor. If the speaker refers to the past as some sort of golden age, usually s/he creates a contrast with the present and therefore depicts the powers-that-be as flawed or inefficient. The opposite would

be true if a representative of the current government spoke of the present. They would obviously refer to the past as a starting point from which the situation has evolved in a positive manner, thanks to their guidance, and has led to the present, which amounts to praise in terms of change for the better.

## 6. Ideology 101

Even amongst scholars the term ideology does not find a unanimous definition, perhaps because it is as if trying to describe a fleeting phenomenon that is linked to the human mind and hence hard to find evidence for. The most common and widespread use of the term is to reference a fixed set of ideas, very much like a dogma, that is not questioned and often backed by force or other forms of dominance. It is very often associated with communism, socialism, capitalism and all 'isms'. When used in a general way, all those words represent systems of misguided or misleading beliefs that are often based on a strong dichotomy between the in-group and the out-group(s).

When the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy first introduced the term in the 18th century, it was used to describe a series of ideas, something that very much resembles the field of study that is currently associated with psychology and cognitive sciences. Despite the vagueness of those definitions, there is still one common element, the undisputed certainty that ideologies have something to do with systems of ideas, or beliefs.

Besides negatively projected ideologies there are also examples of positive ideologies, referred to by Karl Mannheim (1954) as utopias, which generally represent opposition against and justice for inequality, such as feminism and egalitarianism. It is worth noting that these positive ideologies or utopias, if you will, are not a mere representation of anger or obtuse opposition, they purport themselves to be an alternative, a different outlook and source of solution.

It is also vital to highlight the cognitive nature of ideologies, the fact that they originate from what people believe and hence sometimes have to do more with faith rather than with fact. Ideologies, unlike beliefs, are not personal, since the main purpose is that of establishing the main traits that characterize members of a group. In linguistic terms, ideologies are encoded as propositions, which can be defined as units of meaning that express a complete thought, or as something that can be described philosophically as true or false (Van Dijk 2006).

The slippery terrain we as analysts find ourselves travelling on in our research concerns linking the cognitive nature of ideology to actions.

Actions are not merely deeds, they are also words, namely discourse. When speaking as a

member of a given group, one is more likely to make choices regarding content, lexis and form that reflect the beliefs of their group. There are even certain genres of discourse, such as political propaganda or political rallies, that are specifically designed to explain and instill beliefs in new members in order to assure the growth and prosperity of the group.

Ideology is a dominant force of social interaction between groups and among group members. Ideology influences discourse, what we say and how we say it, but it also influences cognition and the way we perceive, elaborate and make sense of our world. It ultimately also contributes to shaping our society through forms of political and social movements (*ibid.*).

Ideology is also closely linked to power in terms of making sense of a shared meaning within a specific context. We espouse a wider view of ideology, which also encompasses hegemony (cf. Beaton 2007, Mason 1994, Fowler 1985) as "a set of beliefs and values which inform an individual's or institution's view of the world and assist their interpretation of events, facts, etc." (Mason 1994: 25). Scholars operating in the field of CDA, such as Teun van Dijk (1998) and Ruth Wodak (2009), believe all language use can be construed, at some level, as ideological.

### 6.1. The influence of ideology on discourse and society

Our beliefs, our ideologies, derive from our experience and is linked to our memory. In cognitive sciences there is usually a distinction between long-term and short-term memory, but for ideology the distinction is one between 'episodic memory' and what is referred to as 'social memory' or sociocultural knowledge. Episodic memory boils down to our personal experiences, to what happens to us and to how we perceive things from our perspective. If we consider this to be our private, more intimate memory, then social cultural knowledge is shared experience. A special form of this shared experience is what is known as 'common ground', namely those beliefs and experiences that are virtually universal within a certain society, which often constitute the bedrock of what is recognized as knowledge (Van Dijk 2006).

Personal memory is something that needs to be explicated overtly when communicating with others in order to be shared and become part of the discourse, as Bourdieu suggests (Bourdieu 2005: 37), whereas common ground, i.e. the shared knowledge that can be assumed to be known, may be left implicit and still be part of the discourse, because members of a given culture will intuitively understand it. This process is presupposition and is often used by politicians when trying to overcome linguistic and social cultural barriers that would not

allow them to overtly and bluntly say something by simply implying it in their statement without ever having to actually say it.

We get the impression, as analysts, that we are looking for something that is not there, something that is missing. We are called upon to literally 'read between the lines', if you will.

Our aim then becomes to focus on how ideologies influence discourse and on how to detect ideology and the beliefs that linger within speech. Ideologically biased discourse is one of the reasons that lead to what PDA terms the 'front stage'. Front stage refers to the image and self-presentation of politicians when talking to the public, which might not be their true self or reflect their true, personal beliefs (Goffman 1990). At this point we can clearly see how power, discourse and ideology are closely related. Power, which translates into control, creates the framework for beliefs and ideologies relevant to those who strive for a prominent position within a given group. All this is done through the medium of language.

For example, when politicians mitigate their language in order to maintain political correctness, this amounts to a socially and culturally induced limitation. Ideologies are also linked to evaluative beliefs, since, as a value and belief-based framework, they contribute to shaping the group members' perception and perspective on what is positive or negative. Even though values are usually strictly linked to the culture as a whole, the ideological background of a person is strongly determined by the way they adapt those values in a more practical matter. For instance, the idea of freedom will be defined differently by fascist and anti-fascist groups. (e.g. Van Dijk 2015, 2016).

The fact that ideologies are closely associated with group identity is a basic premise, especially when looking at political speeches that are meant to create consensus and attract voters. In a country with a two-party system it becomes difficult to create a unanimous understanding of what it exactly means to belong to one party and what it exactly means to belong to another party. Furthermore, there are fractions and subgroups within parties that distance themselves from other members. On a practical level this has a great impact on elections and on the way candidates present themselves during campaigns.

## 6.2. Rhetorical strategies linked to ideologies

As briefly mentioned previously, ideology heavily influences a discourse in the way the dichotomy WE and THEY is transferred and perpetuated in language. Ideological rhetoric is not exclusive to any group and most forms are used by all groups, even if exactly how it is used may differ based on the beliefs and the context within which the

group operates. The main elements that influence language-related choices are the underlying WE and THEY dichotomy, social and cultural norms, and audience expectations. This dichotomy is mainly reflected in a series of general rules that guide the way one speaks about one's own group's and other groups' strengths and weaknesses, which can essentially be summed up as follows (Van Dijk 2006, Wodak and Chilton 2009):

- Emphasize positive things about US;
- Emphasize negative things about THEM;
- De-emphasize negative things about US;
- De-emphasize positive things about THEM.

These general rules are also enhanced by the degree of detail a speaker provides, which in the case of positive self-presentation or negative other-presentation will be higher, whereas in the opposite case it will be lower. This is often accompanied by a tendency to generalize one's own qualities or an opponent's flaws, while portraying one's own failures and shortcomings or the opponent's achievements as exceptions or one-time-events. Moreover, since communication is mostly a reference to mental models, and hence based on ideologies and shared knowledge, many times details that are perceived as harming oneself or strengthening the opponent's position are not pronounced at all and simply left implicit.

Another means that is often employed and that is based on the link between experience, shared knowledge and discourse are *topoi*, which essentially consist of frequently used strings of argumentation that have become some sort of discourse building block, part of common ground and easily understood by the general public. It seems reasonable, then, to assume that a similar easy-to-digest string of information will bypass skepticism and make the audience lower their guard, given their previous exposure to it, which could represent a savvy way of masking a controversial statement.

One example is the slogan 'Yes, we can', used in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, where the concept of 'change' is presupposed. "Change is a sufficiently broad concept that carries with it intrinsically positive connotations, that allow associating with all the problems and dangers that people hope to get rid of" (Wodak 2009: 200).

Another example could be the image of the burden represented by migrants or, in a more positive light, the opportunity to learn from others.

This leads to the lexical level as a way to distinguish between the people of an in-group and those of an out-group. Anti-government militia being referred to as rebels or freedom fighters, shifting the focus to a more positive or negative perspective, according to one's own affiliation or contrast with

the group is a case in point. Similarly, euphemisms such as 'substandard housing' and 'friendly fire' are used to frame something negative in a more appealing way, or as is the case of a tabloid expression 'engage in disinformation' which is used to conceal a severe crime by simply making it sound innocent and of lesser importance (Van Dijk 2006, Wodak 2009).

In relation to the formal aspects of a language, such as word order or the use of certain structures, there is less room for ideological influence, since many of these aspects are determined by a language's grammar and syntax rules. Nevertheless, the use of a passive that eclipses the actor or reframes the relationship between two actors can be an ideological choice, as well as the decision to place the information that is most salient in the speakers mind in a prominent position, at the end or the beginning of an utterance (Van Dijk 2006, 2015, 2016).

Added to this is coherence of argumentative structures, which can be global and local. Global coherence can be described in discourse as prepositions that are connected seamlessly, that follow a logical order and have a topic. Local coherence on the other hand, is simply defined as functional relations between propositions themselves. Argumentative structure refers to the context and genre, it merely describes whether a certain *topos* or argumentation are irrelevant, emotionally deceiving, utter provocation, or an attempt to justify personal opinion by arguing that it is shared either universally or by a competent authority (Van Dijk 2006, 2016).

This overview should suffice to exemplify how one's beliefs and the ideologies that identify them as members of a group will influence their speech patterns all the way from the general argumentative dimension down into specific lexical and syntactic preferences.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

Politicians are perceived as more persuasive when their ideas are expressed using specific linguistic features to legitimize policies (Charteris-Black 2005: 17). We have discussed Critical Discourse Analysis and its origin. The construct of power was first linked to discourse, then Political Discourse Analysis was examined as a set of tools to seek out ideology in a political text. The somewhat fleeting notion of ideology was discussed at length, specifically how it influences discourse and society, but also how rhetorical strategies are linked to ideologies. We have thus related the notions of power, discourse and ideology.

Although literally impossible to include here all the diversified linguistic and rhetorical strategies that politicians potentially make use of, this paper aimed

to discuss a few of the basic devices politicians can exploit to promote or further develop their ideology and extend their power.

We have pointed to a few discourse strategies enacted for specific purposes, both to strengthen one's own political stance and to weaken an opponent's political power. Being aware of how politicians use language to promote themselves and belittle their opponents helps put us in a more informed position with respect to both choosing our political representatives and understanding the underlying forces that both shape consensus and foster division.

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