Ideological Discourse Analysis of Theresa May's Political Speeches

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Abstract

Feminism is a social and political movement, a theory, and an ideology which concerns itself with women's inferior status in society and educational discrimination due to their sex. It calls for change in all aspects of life whether social, economic, political, or cultural. As a social movement, feminism highlights the different ways women have been oppressed, suppressed and repressed. In this respect, feminism is a movement which has the overall emancipatory aim of redressing gender inequalities in order to create a world in which one gender does not set the standard of human value. As a political movement, feminism has been considered as a revolution which focuses on investigating gender, that is, the way women and men come to construct themselves, their identities and their views of others as more or less feminine or masculine. As a theory, it aims to discover the various reasons behind gender inequalities. As an ideology, it points out to the negative ideas and beliefs that are deeply rooted in societies.

Introduction

Throughout history, women's rights and women's beings have often been belittled. The inferior position of women is appropriated by the patriarchal systems that cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive, while women as emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive (Tyson, 2006:85). The absence of women in public life, the poor wages of working women, the educational discrimination and their objectification in popular media were women's prime motives through ages to change the status quo. Women began to think to get a rebirth into humanity, to agitate for equal educational, economic and political opportunities and to lead for an inevitable change. They found it necessary to replace the patriarchal system that renders them as subordinate with one that admits their equality in which no power or privilege is attached to one side nor disability to the other. This struggle for transformation in the societal systems led to the emergence of the feminist movements (Freedman, 2002:2).

In line of what has been mentioned, the current study attempts to analyse feminist language in Theresa May's speeches.

1. Feminism and Critical Discourse Analysis

As a field of inquiry, CDA is known for its overtly political stance and its concern with different forms of social inequality and injustice. The question, in this respect, arises is what is the relationship between feminism and CDA? To establish a feminist perspective in language and discourse studies is all what feminism about. Motivated by goals of social emancipation, feminist studies and CDA aim to develop a rich understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse (Lazar, 2007: 141). They both have a political position and a motivation for a particular analysis which brings about change due to the fact that CDA has drawn on research on discourse that it is of use to a feminist linguistics analysing sexism. Rather than seeing sexist language as simply words which convey sexist attitudes, Ainsworth and Hardy (2004: 237) argue that:

Discourse does not transparently reflect the thoughts, attitudes and identities of separate selves but is a shared social resource that constructs identity as individuals lay claim to various recognizable social and shared identities.

However, this does not mean that individuals and their relations to others are constructed in discourse. Sexism is a set of resources which individuals assume to be available to them, which are socially approved of by certain institutions and groups. Thus, the use of sexism by individuals may be a way of associating oneself with particular people within a group or distancing oneself from other people in a group and associating oneself with groups and values outside the group. As Ainsworth and Hardy (2004: 237) elucidate that:
Individual identity is constructed from social resources and far from being unitary and pre-existent, the individual is a fragmented and ambiguous construction, dependent on context and relationships with others for its self-definition and meaning.

2. The Model of Analysis

The eclectic model focuses on an ideological analysis of Theresa May's political speeches. The ideological analysis provides a micro-macro dimension. At the micro dimension, Van Dijk's Ideological Discourse (1995) is followed. It is followed to find out the discursive strategies of political speeches for the purpose of uncovering their hidden ideologies. At the macro dimension, Fairclough's Social Analysis (1989) is followed. It is adopted due to the fact that feminism is a social phenomenon influencing society and influenced by society. Thus, the researchers recognize the importance of such analysis to reproduce what is hidden in texts. The basic elements of the model are the following:

Discursive Strategies
1. Lexical Level
   - Lexicalization
   - Self Identity Description
   - Activity Description
   - Goal Description
   - Norm and value Description
2. Syntactic level
   - Transitivity
3. Pragmatic Level
   - Speech Act
   - Politeness
4. Rhetorical Level
   - Repetition
5. Social Analysis
   - Ideology

3. The Analysis of Theresa May's Extracts

Extract 1 "Across the country thousands of women endure unimaginable abuse in their homes, there are women who know what that means on a daily basis, often at the hands of those they are closest to, every single day".

The Lexical Level
Lexicalization
"Across the country thousands of women endure unimaginable abuse". May projects a negative situation that women endure in their homes every single day.

Activity Descriptions
May's task is to shed light on men's power abuse against women, saying that "there are women who know what that means on a daily basis."

Self-Identity Descriptions
May shows her sympathy towards those women who are treated aggressively in their homes.

Goal Descriptions
"Across the country thousands of women endure unimaginable abuse in their homes". The above words describe those women across Britain who are enduring men's power abuse.

Norm and Value Descriptions
May emphasizes that what happens to women in their homes represents a violation of women's rights.

The Syntactic Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Process Type</th>
<th>Participant Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Across the country thousands of women endure unimaginable abuse in their homes.</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are women who know what that means on a daily basis, often at the hands of those they are closest to, every single day.</td>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>Existent</td>
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</table>

The Pragmatic Level

Speech Act
May states that "Across the country thousands of women endure unimaginable abuse in their homes, there are women who know what that means on a daily basis, often at the hands of those they are closest to, every single day".
Politeness
Positive Politeness Strategies

Intensify Interest to H
May shows her cooperation with women across the country. She emphasizes that she knows what happens to them inside their homes and therefore, she intends to mitigate such struggle on them.

The Social Analysis
The speaker’s ideology is shown to be united with those women who are oppressed and denigrated. May reveals her feminist ideology by integrating herself with the in-group members. She describes a kind of oppression which is that of home oppression. Women are deprived of their rights daily and inside their homes. Their suffering is unimaginable at the hands of those who are nearest to them such as father, brother, or husband by whom a woman presupposes to be treated kindly.

Extract 2 "I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society in the way we think about and tackle domestic abuse. That’s why today we are launching a consultation on our proposals for new laws, stronger powers and new prevention measures”.

The Lexical Level
Lexicalization
"New laws, stronger powers and new prevention measures”. May makes use of such positive lexical words to ask for a change in the beliefs of society.

Self- Identity Descriptions
The use of the personal pronoun "I" in "I believe” is important to shed light on the identity of the speaker. May who is the speaker tries to emphasize the need to change the way people think concerning domestic abuse. “I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society in the way we think about and tackle domestic abuse.”

Activity Descriptions
May's task is clear. She wants a change. It is that kind of change which leads to a better way of thinking concerning the status of women.

Goal Descriptions
May describes her goal as being a member of in-group” I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society”

Norm and Value Descriptions
May uses this strategy to refer to a violation of the norms. It is a violation of women's rights when they are boxed in a kind of "domestic abuse”.

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<td>I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society in the way we think about and tackle domestic abuse.</td>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Sensor</td>
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<tr>
<td>That’s why today we are launching a consultation on our proposals for new laws, stronger powers and new prevention measures</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Sayer</td>
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The Pragmatic Level
Speech Act
May implies the speech act of obligating ". I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society…..” She feels the necessity to change the beliefs of society.

Politeness
Negative Politeness Strategy
Include S and H in the Activity
"We need……” By using the pronoun "we”, May offers her cooperation with the hearers to change society.

The Rhetorical Level
Repetition
The personal pronoun "we” is repeated three times to highlight the idea of cooperation of both the speaker and the hearer in the activity of change.

The Social Analysis
Negatively does May present the out-group whose beliefs need be changed because they practice a kind of domestic abuse against women. Therefore, May has shown her feminist looks for women asking for new laws and stronger powers in order to get rid of women's oppression. In her speech, May recognizes the importance
of changing the beliefs of the socio-political system. "I believe we need nothing short of a complete change across the whole of society in the way we think about and tackle domestic abuse."

**Extract 3** "We can all agree on our ultimate aim of a better society. But I want to explain why equality of opportunity and equal treatment will help us to achieve that better society".

**The Lexical Level**

**Self-Identity Descriptions**
May's self-identity is obvious in the above speech. She says "But I want to explain why equality of opportunity". So, she herself wants to ask for equality.

**Activity Descriptions**
"We can all agree on our ultimate aim of a better society". Explicitly, May admits her ultimate task which is that of creating a better society.

**Goal Descriptions**
May's goal is to achieve equal treatment for both sexes "equal treatment will help us to achieve that better society".

**Norm and Value Descriptions**
May projects that the values of creating a better society is through achieving equality.

**The Syntactic Level**

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<td>But I want to explain why equality of opportunity and equal treatment will help us to achieve that better society</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Actor</td>
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**The Pragmatic Level**

**Speech Act**
May uses the speech act of agreement as she seeks the agreement of people in achieving a better society.

**Politeness**

**Negative Politeness Strategies**
Include S and H in the Activity
"We can all agree on our ultimate aim of a better society". May tries to include herself as well as the audience by using the pronoun "we". She also gives reasons "But I want to explain why equality of opportunity" to explain why she adheres equality.

**The Rhetorical Level**

**Repetition**
May repeats the phrase "a better society" twice to put heavy emphasis on the idea of having a better society.

**The Social Analysis**
May asks for achieving women's self-identity in order to help create a better society. She stresses the in-groups' self-identity and their positive values. For, her, giving women their right will help in achieving a balanced society; a society in which women and men live equally.

**Extract 4** "Morally, everyone would agree that people have a right to be treated equally and to live their lives free from discrimination. Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of discrimination knows how painful, hurtful and damaging it can be and why we should seek to eliminate it from our society. And anyone who has ever witnessed discrimination would want to stamp it out."

**The Lexical Level**

**Lexicalization**
"Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of discrimination knows how painful, hurtful and damaging it can be." May uses such negative words to describe discrimination. It leads to painful, hurtful, and damaging feelings for those who are discriminated.

**Activity Descriptions**
Morally, May's aim is to eliminate discrimination from society as she says "we should seek to eliminate it from our society".

**Goal Descriptions**
"Morally, everyone would agree that people have a right to be treated equally and to live their lives free from discrimination". May's goal is very clear. She wants to achieve equality between women and men.

**Norm and Value Descriptions**
May shows how discrimination represents a violation of the norms and she wants to "stamp it out".
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The Pragmatic Level

Speech Act
Morally, everyone would agree that people have a right to be treated equally and to live their lives free from discrimination. Here, the speech act of agreement is used. Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of discrimination knows how painful, hurtful and damaging it can be and why we should seek to eliminate it from our society. And anyone who has ever witnessed discrimination would want to stamp it out. May uses the speech act of obligating.

Politeness
Include S and H in the Activity
May wants everyone to agree on how discrimination is painful, hurtful and damaging. She asks for stopping it.

The Social Analysis
May emphasizes the importance of being treated equally. Due to her feminist ideology, she feels the pain and suffering of women. She sheds light on women's oppression and discrimination. “Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of discrimination knows how painful, hurtful and damaging it can be and why we should seek to eliminate it from our society. And anyone who has ever witnessed discrimination would want to stamp it out.” For her, discrimination is hurtful, painful, and it must be stopped.

Extract 5 “Equality is not just important to us as individuals. It is also essential to our wellbeing as a society. Strong communities are ones where everyone feels like they have got a voice and can make a difference”.

The Lexical Level

Self –Identity Descriptions
May identifies her self-identity by stating that she adheres equality and she believes that equality should be the slogan of strong communities.

Activity Descriptions
May's task is to achieve equality in order to build strong communities.

Goal Descriptions
May has a positive goal to deliver. She wants to emphasize the fact that equality among people is not just important for them, but it helps in building a strong society and reinforces women's trust in themselves so that they will be able to make a difference in their society.

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Strong communities are ones where everyone feels like they have got a voice and can make a difference.

The Pragmatic Level
Speech Act
The speech act of stating is implied in the above extract.

Politeness
Negative Politeness Strategies
Be Optimistic
Optimistically, May mitigates the FTA on women by declaring the importance of equality claiming that it is not only for individuals but for society as a whole. May wants to deliver a message for those who feel the danger of prevailing equality. For her, equality is the first step in building strong communities.

The Social Analysis
May emphasizes the good values of treating women equally. If women are treated equally, they will strengthen their confidence and they can make a difference in their society. May wants to deliver a message for those who feel the danger of prevailing equality. For her, equality is the first step in building strong communities.

Extract 6 "Economically, equality of opportunity is vital to our prosperity. It is central to building a strong, modern economy that benefits from the talents of all of its members."

The Lexical Level
Lexicalization
"It is central to building a strong, modern economy” For May equality is important for building strong, and modern economy.

Self-Identity Descriptions
May identifies how she thinks. For her, in order to build strong economical communities, equality of opportunities is the foremost step in doing so.

Activity Descriptions
May's task is to reestablish a strong country; a country which is economically strong. She emphasizes that reestablishing a strong country will be achieved by offering equal opportunities for women and men.

Goal Descriptions
May's goal is to achieve equality. She seduces people by claiming that equality will make Britain stronger and all people can benefit from their country.

Norm and Value Descriptions
Achieving equality is the norm that economically benefits the whole society while ignoring equality is considered a violation of the norm.

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<td>Relational</td>
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The Pragmatic Level
Speech Act
May uses the speech act of stating.

Politeness
Negative Politeness Strategies
Be Optimistic
May tries to encourage people to adhere equality because in doing so, the country will be made stronger and it will benefit its members.

The Social Analysis
Women’s positive values are emphasized by asking for treating them equally. For May, women and men should be equal because this will increase the economy of the country and benefit its members.

Conclusions

Language plays a crucial role in expressing, changing and particularly reproducing ideologies. Language is not produced in a context free vacuum, but in discourse contexts that are constructed with the ideology of social systems and institutions. Since language operates within this social dimension, it tends to reflect and construct ideology. Therefore, if readers want to know what ideologies are, how they work, and how they are created, changed, and reproduced, they need to investigate their discursive manifestations because discursive practices are embedded in social structures, which are mostly constructed, validated, naturalized, evaluated and legitimized in and through discourse. CDA is an appropriate method for the detection of biased and manipulative language, and can be used as a powerful device for deconstructing the texts to come up with their intended ideologies.

References


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