

Language at War: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Speeches of Bush and Obama on Terrorism

By

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Abstract

The concept of terrorism (and antiterrorism) is a complex phenomenon that has received a lot of debate in the last decade. A highly complex phenomenon, terrorism stands at the forefront of national and international agendas. Taking on many forms, it is associated with a wide variety of groups and motivations. It has been presented in different ways, depending on who is speaking. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to do a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of speeches of Bush and Obama on terrorism. Using six speeches from Bush and Obama as the data and using a qualitative content analytical approach, it draws on van Dijk's concept of Critical Discourse Analysis. The study reveals that Bush and Obama projected terrorism negatively while they projected anti-terrorism positively by carefully selecting emotionally charged vocabulary and expressions. The notion of power as control, mind control and context control were common features of Bush and Obama's speeches. This study has implications for the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis and studies on terrorism.

Keywords: *Terrorism, speech, linguistic forms, critical discourse analysis, mind control.*