

Unveiling Rhetorical Complexity: A Faircloughian Approach to Deconstructing Martin Luther King Jr.'s «I Have a Dream» Discourse

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● Received:07/05/2024.

● Accepted: 27/06/2024.

■ Abstract:

This study employs Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis to analyze Martin Luther King Jr.'s well-known speech, "I Have a Dream." Fairclough's framework offers a comprehensive lens through which to scrutinize the complex interplay of language, power dynamics, and societal influences within the speech. By exploring into the textual, discursive, and sociocultural dimensions of King's discourse, this research seeks to unveil the deep rhetorical complexity embedded within his profound words. Through this analysis, the researcher aims to shed light on the persisting significance and impact of King's iconic address in the area of social, political, and cultural discourse.

- **Keywords:** Fairclough Model, Power, Culture, Politics, Textual Practice, Rhetorical Devices and Appeals

■ المستخلص:

تستخدم هذه الدراسة نموذج فيركلاف لتحليل الخطاب النقدي لتحليل خطاب مارتن لوثر كينغ جونيور المعروف جيداً «لدى حلم». يقدم الإطار الذي يقدمه فيركلاف رؤية شاملة من خلالها يمكن فحص التداخل المعقد بين اللغة وديناميات السلطة والتأثيرات الاجتماعية داخل الخطاب. من خلال استكشاف الأبعاد النصية والثقافية والمناقشة لخطاب كينغ، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى كشف التعقيد اللغوي العميق المضمن في كلماته ذات الدلالة العميقة. من خلال هذا التحليل، يهدف الباحث إلى تسليط الضوء على الأهمية والتأثير المستمرين لخطاب كينغ في مجال الخطاب الاجتماعي والسياسي والثقافي.

● **الكلمات المفتاحية:** نموذج فيركلاف، السلطة، الثقافة، السياسة، المجتمع، الممارسة النصية، الأدوات والنداءات البلاغية.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Fairclough's (2001) model of critical discourse analysis provides a framework for examining and interpreting the use of language in communication, with an emphasis on how language exerts power and influence within social, political, and cultural contexts. This model posits that language is a social practice that both shapes and is shaped by society, and it can be employed to both maintain and challenge dominant power structures. Applying Fairclough's model to Martin Luther King's "**I Have a Dream**" speech involves analyzing the text, discourse, and sociocultural practices.

The text is the discourse being analyzed, and it includes the linguistic and rhetorical features and devices. The Discourse analysis is the social, cultural, and historical context in which the discourse is produced and interpreted. The socio-cultural analysis is the way that the discourse relates to other texts and discourses.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE SPEECH

"I have a Dream" is a public speech delivered by American clergyman and civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., on August 28, 1963, in which he calls for an end to racism in the United States. Delivered to over 250,000 civil rights supporters from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, King's speech was a defining moment of the American Civil Rights Movement. It is widely considered to have been one of the greatest speeches in American history. In a typical understanding of the speech and its historical background, the civil rights movement is located as a result of the organizational power of the speech and the march. But the conventional understanding of the speech fails to address the underlying causes for racism and other inequalities. According to Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Martin Luther King's speech 'I have a Dream' may have only altered the lives of Negroes marginally; it was far from the revolution he had hoped to incite. The very capitalistic forces that had shaped and determined individual lives were also able to determine or negate the desired changes. Hence, the constraints of the social order limited the gains that the movement could have from Martin Luther King's famous speech. What 'I have a Dream' is effective in, however, is the ability to affect its audience in real time. The speech's use of counter-discursive rhetoric aims to deconstruct and delegitimize the extant wrongs in the current racial hierarchy. By functioning in this manner, Dr. King's

speech is able to create the social coalitions necessary for radical changes and the movement (Cliché, 2020 & Mahon, 2017).

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES:

- How does Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework illuminate the rhetorical strategies employed by Martin Luther King Jr. in his 'I Have a Dream' speech?
- What are the dominant discursive structures and linguistic features within King's speech that contribute to its rhetorical power and persuasiveness?
- How does the interplay between language, ideology, and social context, as theorized by Fairclough, manifest in King's discourse, particularly in addressing issues of racial injustice and equality?

Hypothesis 1: Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework will reveal that Martin Luther King Jr. utilizes a blend of emotive and rational appeals, strategically employing metaphors, repetition, and parallelism to enhance the rhetorical impact of his 'I Have a Dream' speech.

Hypothesis 2: The dominant discursive structures and linguistic features in King's speech that contribute to its rhetorical power and persuasiveness include the use of anaphora, vivid imagery, historical references, and a hopeful, unifying tone.

Hypothesis 3: The interplay between language, ideology, and social context in King's discourse, as theorized by Fairclough, manifests through the strategic use of language to challenge existing power relations, promote social justice, and construct a vision of equality, thereby aligning his ideological stance with the broader civil rights movement's goals.

4. TEXTUAL PRACTICE:

This level focuses on the language used in the speech, including the words, phrases, and sentences. Martin's use of language is highly effective in conveying his message to his audiences. He uses a variety of rhetorical devices, such as antithesis, anaphora, and metaphor, to create a sense of liveliness and hope to his speech. He also uses a variety of linguistic styles, such as formal and informal language, to convey his message to a wide audience.

2.1 Words

Words	Repeats	Words	Repeats
<i>Freedom/liberty</i>	20	<i>men</i>	8
<i>negro</i>	15	<i>together</i>	7
<i>nation</i>	11	<i>God</i>	4
<i>justice</i>	11	<i>black</i>	4
<i>dream</i>	11	<i>slave</i>	3
<i>every</i>	10	<i>racial</i>	3
<i>America/American</i>	9	<i>violence</i>	1

The table above shows the most frequent words which reflect the themes of this text. King employed the word “*freedom*” twenty times followed by “*negro*” fifteen times, in which he asserts that Negroes or black people are striving for freedom. “*nation*”, “*justice*” and “*dream*” are mentioned eleven times each, which indicates the importance of justice to the nation which is just a dream for black people in the US. Other significant words employed are “*every*”, “*American*”, “*men*” and “*together*” which indicates the importance of inclusiveness and unity of each and every American.

4.1. LEXICON:

Lexical Terms		
Manacles of segregation	Bank of justice	Valley of segregation
Chains of discrimination	Riches of freedom	Path of racial justice
Island of poverty	Security of justice	Sand of racial injustice
Vast ocean of prosperity	Urgency of now	Rock of brotherhood

Lexical Terms

Exile in his own land	Luxury of cooling off	Summer of the Negro
Architects of our republic	Drug of gradualism	Whirlwinds of revolt
Palace of justice	Cup of bitterness and hatred	Plane of dignity
Winds of police brutality	Valley of despair	Storms of prosecution
Heat of injustice	Heat of oppression	Oasis of freedom and justice
Words of nullification	Mountain of despair	Stone of hope
Jangling discords of our nation	Symphony of brotherhood	Land of liberty

King used a wide and wise selection of words that carry strong and deep meanings. He overtly employed many *of* phrases, which gave his speech a strong flavor. He made a good and novel use of his noun phrases. The pair parts of the noun phrases (E.g. *Mountain of despair*) are not usually used paired together as employed by King.

4.2. PRONOMINALIZATION:

Pronouns	Repeats	Pronouns	Repeats
<i>We / Our</i>	58	<i>They</i>	3
<i>I / My</i>	20	<i>He</i>	1

King used first pronouns extensively. He mentions “*we/our*” and “*I/my*” 58 and 20 respectively. His speech is inclusive and he tries to make the audience have a sense of involvement and inclusion.

4.3. RHETORICAL DEVICES AND APPEALS

Rhetorical devices and appeals can be analyzed as part of the “text” element in Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis. In this model, the

“text” element refers to the linguistic and rhetorical features of a discourse, including figurative language, connotative meanings, and persuasive techniques such as rhetorical devices and appeals. Below are some examples of rhetorical appeals:

Rhetorical Appeals:

Retrieved from YouTube (2024)

Appeal	Examples
Logos	<p><i>We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote» «and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote</i></p> <p><i>“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”</i></p>
Pathos	<p><i>I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the» true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that «all men are created equal</i></p> <p><i>I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a na-” tion where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the “content of their character</i></p>
Ethos	<p><i>Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow» we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momen- tous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Ne- gro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. «It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity</i></p> <p><i>But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred” years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles “of segregation and the chains of discrimination</i></p>

King appeals to the audience’s logic by presenting a logical argument for racial equality. He appeals to the audience’s emotions by using vivid language and imagery to describe the hardships faced by African Americans. He also establishes his ethos, or credibility, by citing the Declaration of Independence, the and Emancipation Proclamation. By using a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos, King was able to persuade his audience to join him in the fight for civil rights.

Rhetorical Devices:

<i>Device</i>	<i>Example</i>
Allusion	« <i>narrow jail cells ...</i> »
Repetition	“ <i>Negro’s basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one</i> ” « <i>I have a dream</i> » « <i>..., One hundred years later</i> »
Anaphora	“ <i>... We must</i> ” “ <i>... We cannot</i> ” “ <i>... We can never be satisfied</i> ”
Irony	<i>A Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York</i> » « <i>believes he has nothing for which to vote</i>
Simile	<i>until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a ...</i> » « <i>mighty stream</i>
Hypophora	« <i>... when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied</i> »
Antithesis	« <i>is not an end, but a beginning 1963</i> »
Personification	« <i>... her citizens of color ...</i> » <i>Island of poverty</i> » <i>Mountain of despair</i> <i>Vast ocean of prosperity</i> <i>Valley of segregation</i> <i>Palace of justice</i> <i>Path of racial justice</i> <i>Bank of justice</i> <i>Sand of racial injustice</i>
Metaphor	<i>Security of justice</i> <i>Rock of brotherhood</i> <i>Luxury of cooling off</i> <i>Plane of dignity</i> <i>Drug of gradualism</i> <i>Storms of prosecution</i> <i>Cup of bitterness and hatred</i> <i>Oasis of freedom and justice</i> <i>Valley of despair</i> “ <i>Stone of hope</i> ”

The speech is full of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, repetition, allusion, and simile. These devices serve to enhance the memorability of King's speech and be very convincing and persuading. For example, the repetition of the phrase "I have a dream" throughout the speech reinforces its central theme.

4.4. LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS:

In order to conduct a rich and insightful analysis, it is important to use a variety of tools. By using more tools, one can gain a deeper understanding of how people use language to convince each other. Martin Luther King's used multiple language functions to convey his message. Here are some examples of Jakobson's language functions:

Referential: King referred to historical events and documents to ground his arguments in reality. For example, he mentions the Emancipation Proclamation and the Constitution.

Emotive: King used emotionally loaded language to express his own passion and evoke strong emotions in his audience. For example, he says, "*Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation.*"

Poetic: King used rhetorical devices to create a poetic rhythm and reinforce his message. For example, he repeats the phrase "*I have a dream.*"

Phatic: King established and maintained a connection with his audience through phrases like "*my friends*" and "*we cannot walk alone.*" This fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Metalinguistic: King reflected on the power and significance of language itself. He uses metaphors and rhetorical devices to highlight the power of words in conveying his message of equality and justice (Stokoe, 2013).

These examples demonstrate how King's speech is a powerful and persuasive piece of rhetoric. He used language in a variety of ways to convey his message and connect with his audience. This made his speech more memorable and effective.

5. INTERPRETATION: (Discourse Practice)

This processing analysis deals with text production, its consumption, and

its distribution, and its interpretation. It varies in discourse according to social contexts and factors. It focuses on the speaker's ideology and understanding of the listeners what they perceive from the discourse and how it is conveyed in society.

In his speech, King used various linguistic devices to create a sense of hope and unity among his audience. Faraci (2013) contended that King used repetition, such as the phrase "I have a dream," to emphasize his message. He also uses metaphors, such as the "valley of despair" and the "stone of hope," to create a powerful image of the future he believes in. King's use of language is not only effective in communicating his message, but it also serves to empower his audience and inspire them to continue fighting for equality. He also used powerful language throughout his speech, such as the words "injustice," "inequality," and "oppression." This language helps to highlight the challenges that African Americans faced at the time, and it also serves to motivate his audience to continue fighting for equality.

6. EXPLANATION: (Sociocultural Practice)

It reveals the relationship of participants through discourse because, without society, the discourse has no meaning. The analysis throws light on the speaker's social class, individual, political and cultural identity. King's speech serves as a support for social change, inspiring activism and challenging discriminatory practices. It exemplifies how language and discourse can shape social movements and contribute to transformative sociocultural practices.

According to Baldwin (2020) King's speech challenges the prevailing ideology of racism and advocates for a new ideology of racial equality through skillful use of language. He employs various linguistic techniques, including repetition, metaphor, and allusion, to accomplish this. For instance, the repeated phrase "I have a dream" conveys a sense of urgency and optimism. Metaphorical expressions like "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice" inspire hope. Additionally, King strategically references the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, tapping into shared values of the American Dream, to mobilize his audience. This speech, according to Weems (1995), serves as a compelling illustration of language's potential to confront injustice and foster transformative social progress. King

used the word “*dream*” extensively to describe his vision of a world where all people are treated equally, regardless of their race. This use of the word “*dream*” is significant because it suggests that King’s vision is not yet a reality, but rather something that is hard to be achieved.

He also used phrases, such as “*we shall overcome*” to express his belief that racial equality will eventually be achieved. This phrase is a reference to the African American spiritual “*We Shall Overcome*,” which was a target for the Civil Rights Movement.

7. CONCLUSION:

Through Fairclough’s CDA model, we can gain a deeper understanding of Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech “I Have a Dream” by examining the text’s linguistic features, discursive practices, sociocultural implications, and the social and cultural contexts in which it was delivered. This analysis helps uncover the underlying power relations, social ideologies, and cultural influences embedded within his speech.

The speech is a powerful example of using language to fight for racial equality and justice. Using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, we can see how King’s speech combines logic, emotion, and credibility to persuade his audience. Repeating phrases like “I have a dream” and referencing important American texts, King connects his message to shared American values.

King’s speech is full of rhetorical devices like metaphors and repetition, making it memorable and emotionally powerful. By using different language functions, such as referring to historical events and expressing strong emotions, King effectively communicates his vision and inspires his audience.

The speech also highlights how language can create social change. King’s rhetoric challenges the existing racial inequalities and promotes a vision of equality. His skillful use of language not only communicates his message but also motivates people to take action for justice.

In summary, Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech is a remarkable example of how powerful language can inspire social movements and drive change towards a better future.

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9. APPENDIX

I Have a Dream by Martin Luther King - 1963

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility

in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. They have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

As we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, “When will you be satisfied?” We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied, as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro’s basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating “For Whites Only”. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith

that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"